

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

## MOTORCOACH EXPO 2009



The national economic slowdown was much discussed but barely noticeable on the exhibit floor of Motorcoach Expo last month.

### Expo Overview

**Registration:** Exceeded Expo '08 in San Francisco

**Number of exhibitors:** Up 4 from '08; same as '07

**Number of new exhibitors:** 32

### Impressions

**ABC Cos.:** Traffic good; quality people in that traffic. Well organized.

**Daimler Buses North America:** Very positive show for us; very good traffic.

**Prevost Car:** Lot of energy; lot of activity.

**All Expo photos by David Braun, David Braun Photography, Las Vegas.**

## Seatbelts: The BIG story at Motorcoach Expo '09

ORLANDO, Fla. — Anyone who attends UMA Motorcoach Expo once every two or three years must have been stunned when they walked the exhibit floor here last month.

Even some who attend every year were surprised by what they saw. Everywhere there were seatbelts.

New motorcoaches outfitted with belted seats.

New midsize buses with seatbelts.

New Sprinter vans with seatbelts.

Virtually every "big bus" coach builder had a new model with stan-

dard two- or three-point seatbelts.

At the ABC stand there was the monstrous TD925 double-decker with 80+ seats, all with seatbelts.

At the Prevost stand there was the brand new Volvo 9700 with Amaya three-point belted seats — standard.

At the BCI stand there were new Falcons with standard leather seats, sporting seatbelts.

At the Daimler Buses of North America booth there was a Sprinter with optional leather seats...and seatbelts. On the other side of the Daimler stand was a new Setra S 417 that, starting this month, will

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## Coach operators organize to battle Texas pay fiasco

ORLANDO, Fla. — Fed up with the way they've been treated after answering appeals for buses to move people out of the paths of two hurricanes in Texas last year, motorcoach operators are gearing up for a showdown with the state.

A consortium of state motorcoach associations, known as the Southeastern Regional Motorcoach Operators, agreed at its annual meeting here last month to form a committee that will take a fresh look at key driver and pay problems and develop steps to see they don't happen again.

At the same time, the board of the United Motorcoach Association, which also met here at the conclusion of UMA Motorcoach Expo 2009, voted unanimously to step up its efforts to help the opera-

tors by offering administrative support for a protest — possibly at the State Capitol or governor's mansion in Austin — and developing a model contract that could be used for disaster transportation work in the future.

The efforts of both organizations could have a critical impact in Texas because a growing number of operators from both groups say they likely will not return to that state to help again, especially if their issues are not resolved satisfactorily.

Jim Harris, president of the North Carolina Motorcoach Association, and author of the proposal to create the committee, said he's open to adding others to the group, including operators from other

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## MCI gains court approval of its reorganization plan

WILMINGTON, Del. — A reorganization plan that would allow Motor Coach Industries to emerge from federal bankruptcy protection after it pays more than \$300 million in cash and new stock to its creditors has been approved by a bankruptcy court judge.

MCI executives say they hope to complete the financial transactions and plan by the end of this month, which would give the bus manufacturer a new start.

The Schaumburg, Ill.-based company filed a voluntary and pre-arranged petition for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection here in September, saying it had reached an agreement with secured lenders for a corporate restructuring that would trim its debt by about \$420 million.

"Today marks an important milestone in the restructuring of MCI and sets us on course as an even stronger and more competitive company," MCI President and Chief Executive Tom Sorrells said in a news release issued following approval of the plan by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Brenden Linehan Shannon.

Sorrells called the approval — five months after the filing — an "impressive accomplishment" in the current economic environment and said it spoke to the core strengths of the company and its future.

Under the plan, first-lien debt of about \$130 million would be paid in full with funds borrowed for the reorganization, second-lien

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## CVSA summit will tackle bus safety concerns

WASHINGTON — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance is conducting a two-day Bus Safety Summit early next month.

CVSA officials say the summit was prompted by several high-profile bus and motorcoach crashes, which have resulted in increased scrutiny of bus operators.

“To address these issues and to share best practices, as well as to identify areas where most focus is needed, the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance is holding a Bus Safety Summit, March 5-6 at the Hyatt Regency in Crystal City, Va.,” the alliance announced last month.

The summit will feature representatives from the CVSA, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the National Transportation Safety Board, transportation providers, bus manufacturers, states, bus brokerages and insurers.

Summit speakers will provide details about various programs,

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# Feds nix driving hours change for inauguration

WASHINGTON — District of Columbia transportation officials, and those in neighboring Virginia and Maryland, strongly considered seeking a waiver of the federal hours-of-service rule for motorcoach drivers who brought hundreds of thousands of people to the presidential inauguration activities last month.

The plan, however, was short-circuited by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, which issued an order saying that temporarily lifting the rule was not part of the federal emergency operation established for the big turnout of people, and the hours’ rule would be strictly enforced.

“The emergency declaration does not provide emergency relief from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations,” the agency said in a “special alert” sent to the district and the motorcoach industry just days before the buses were to begin arriving.

The district plan outraged many safety executives in the bus industry, and the FMCSA decision came as a relief to those same officials. That’s because the coach industry has long supported the safety regu-



Coaches from David Thomas Tours brought charter groups from Philadelphia to Washington for the

inauguration of President Obama. The coaches are parked across from The Smithsonian.

Colin Miller / Special Bus & Motorcoach News

lations, warning operators that their liability insurance rates and coverage, as well as the future of their companies, could be adversely affected if a driver had an accident while driving longer than the number of hours allowed under the safety rule.

The District Department of Transportation said it considered asking for the waiver so it could better control the huge crowds and the special parking areas that were set up for the buses.

“The district considered a variety of approaches to address the is-

suues of traffic management and traffic safety for the presidential inauguration and, after evaluating our alternatives, the city opted not to seek a waiver,” said John Lisle, a spokesman for the district transportation agency.

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# THE DOCKET

## States want \$\$\$

### Higher UCRA fees may be coming

AUSTIN, Texas — There likely will be a push next year by some states to raise Unified Carrier Registration Agreement fees.

The board of the Unified Carrier Registration Agreement met here last month and the topic that dominated the discussions was the level of UCRA fees for 2010.

Beginning next year, trailers and other towed equipment are eliminated from trucker fleets for purposes of calculating UCRA fees. For that reason, the current fee structure will need to be revised and this will require a federal rulemaking by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Last year and again this year, when there were no such revisions, no rulemak-

ing was necessary.

At least some states are looking at 2010 — and the required changes — as an opportunity to raise the overall level of UCRA fees to assure enough money is collected through the program for all states to be made whole. Since the UCRA system was adopted two years ago, some states have reported collecting less revenue than they did under the old Single State Registration System that the UCRA replaced.

The American Trucking Associations has taken an early position that such an increase is inappropriate until states have made a good-faith effort to enforce the program against carriers and others who owe the fees but have not been paying them.

## Environmental agency targets '10 Cummins engines for study

COLUMBUS, Ind. — The technology being used by diesel engine-maker Cummins Inc. to meet 2010 federal emission standards has been targeted for additional study by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a step that could have a serious impact on the motorcoach industry.

The EPA said in a letter to Cummins and other manufacturers that it plans to conduct independent tests to determine if engines using “copper zeolite” technology to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions emit dioxins that could be harmful to humans.

And, it warned that the engines could be rejected for federal certification if the test results are inconclusive or if they show increased dioxin emissions and the manufacturer is unable to show otherwise.

Cummins has been conducting its own tests and said it's confident of its technology, according to spokeswoman Carol Lavengood. “Our engineering community feels really confident of the results we have seen so far,” she said.

The motorcoach industry is watching the situation because Cummins soon could be the main or only engine source for many of the new coaches available to operators in the United States and Canada.

That's because, beginning in 2010, Detroit Diesel plans to sell only to companies affiliated with Daimler, including Setra of North America; Caterpillar is getting out of the on-highway market altogether, and Prevost Car is switching to Volvo engines, made by its parent company.

That could leave some motorcoach manufacturers with one engine supplier — Cummins.

Officials of the USEPA say they're concerned about the use by Cummins of copper zeolite in its SCR catalytic converters, which limit NOX emissions to levels that meet the 2010 EPA standards. Other engine manufacturers are using iron zeolite in their SCR converters.

“EPA has a long-standing concern that copper has the potential to catalyze dioxin formation in conditions experienced in incinerators and in diesel exhaust,” Karl Simon, director of the agency's Compliance

and Innovative Strategies Division, wrote in the letter. “Therefore, questions have been raised regarding the potential for copper containing diesel SCR catalysts to promote the formation of dioxin compounds.”

Dioxins long have been characterized by EPA as likely human carcinogens and are believed to harm the immune and reproductive systems and increase the risk of cancer. “An increase in dioxin emissions from any source sector is considered a potentially serious issue by the EPA,” Simon noted.

Lavengood said Cummins was not surprised by the notice it received from the EPA and is cooperating with the agency. “We have been working with the EPA for quite some time on this,” she said. “Any time we introduce new technology, we do testing and discuss it with them. It's part of the process.”

She said company officials plan to review results of its tests with EPA representatives. “We are confident we will not see any issues with the use of copper,” she stressed.

In a news release issued shortly after receiving the EPA letter, Cummins reaffirmed that its entire on-highway product range of engines will be ready to meet the 2010 EPA rules for emissions.

“The engines are already being built off our production lines for customer field tests, Jim Kelly, president of Cummins' engine business said in the release. “We're getting great feedback from our field tests, and our products, our people and our customer support are ready for 2010.”

He said the engine line will include a new lightweight, medium-bore engine — the ISX11.9 — for motorcoaches and some trucks and other vehicles.

Meantime, the EPA said it will hire an independent firm to evaluate the use of copper zeolite in the catalytic converters and the tests will get under way soon.

“If the data are inconclusive or show increased dioxin emissions, then EPA likely will not certify an engine family utilizing such products unless a manufacturer can provide data which demonstrates the intended use of the copper catalyst doesn't increase dioxin emissions, the EPA said.

## New Jersey Turnpike toll rates jump

WOODBIDGE, N.J. — Higher tolls on the New Jersey Turnpike have taken effect.

The increases, which were approved in October, boosted tolls by about 40 percent, with another 50 percent hike planned for 2012. (See Nov. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

For 45-foot motorcoaches, the cash toll for traveling the full length of the New Jersey Turnpike has jumped to \$17.85, from \$12.75. E-ZPass tolls for big coaches in-

creased to \$16.30, from \$11.65.

Tolls on the Garden State Parkway also increased.

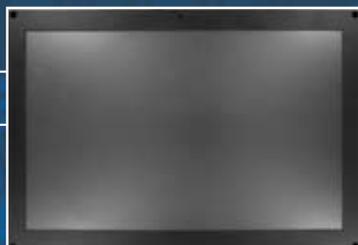
Turnpike authority officials said the increases were needed to repay bonds the agency sold to finance construction projects, and to pay for an \$8.25 billion program to widen sections of the parkway and turnpike.

The increases were the first for the turnpike since 2000, and since 1989 on the parkway.

## As Seen At The 2009 UMA Show, Orlando



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# More lunacy in New York: Draconian idling proposal

NEW YORK CITY — Motorcoach operators won't sit still for far-reaching changes to New York City's anti-idling law that one tour-and-charter operator calls "lunacy" and "unenforceable."

If enacted, the amended law would prohibit motorcoaches from idling for more than three minutes when the outside temperature exceeds 40 degrees.

A one-minute limit would be in effect near schools, regardless of whether the school is even open.

Industry executives say the proposal would add to traffic congestion because drivers would resort to what is sometimes called a "rolling idle," which increases air pollution.

And, say operators, it would send a clear message that New York City is not tourist friendly, causing a loss of tourism dollars.

In addition, the amended law would perhaps present health hazards for passengers, including school children, on tour buses that would not be adequately cooled in hot weather or heated in near-freezing temperatures.

Godfrey Lebron, chairman of the United Motorcoach Association and vice president and general manager of Paradise Trailways in Hicksville, N.Y., said he could sum up the proposal in one word — "lunacy."

"What they're looking to do is very unenforceable. All it's going to do is (force) us to spend a lot of time in court. What is a driver supposed to do — measure the temperature to see if it's more than 40 degrees? We'll have to give them thermometers."

Ken Presley, vice president of the United Motorcoach Association, said the proposal calls for "certified smoke watchers" to file complaints against bus operators that appear to be violating the anti-idling provisions.

"It sounds like it'll be a boon for attorneys," said Lebron.

Cases brought under the law would be heard in a criminal court, and only lawyers who are members of the New York State Bar could represent clients. Owners of a bus company could not represent themselves.

Presley noted that "it would be very easy for an out-of-town operator to not even have a clue that he's near a school. It sends a very bad signal to the motorcoach industry that New York is not welcoming the tourism dollars and the shopping dollars that pour into the city every day via buses."

If the proposed amendments are enacted, Lebron predicted that drivers "will start their coaches, build the air up," and then "they'll drive the coach around to get it either warm or cool inside. So, what have we done? We have added to the traffic congestion, and proba-

bly added more pollution to the air.

"Driving around at slow speeds will create more pollution than idling for five minutes."

That practice is known as a rolling idle.

"Instead of sitting there idling,

they will roll around like they do in (Washington) D.C.," said Presley. "Rolling around burns more fuel and emits more emissions."

What's more, the possibility of an accident increases, Lebron said.

"The bottom line is I'm going to have more exposure," he said.

"If the bus is parked, I don't have to worry about a car running a light or a pedestrian walking into its path."

Dale Moser, president and CEO of Coach USA, said he was disappointed by New York's attempt to

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# The challenge of more high-tech gadgets on coaches

By Dave Millhouser

The old Scenicruiser was cranking south on Chicago's Dan Ryan Expressway early one morning when the driver decided to turn on the A/C. He reached to his left and flipped a switch.

Suddenly, the drive-axle brakes locked up and the bus came to a shuddering halt in the middle of (arguably) America's busiest highway.

The driver was used to driving a GM PD4104 that had virtually the same dash as the Scenicruiser. "Virtually" is the key word; the Scenic had an extra toggle that energized the high idle, while locking the brakes.

Oops.

Motorcoach operating and safety systems are changing rapidly — more rapidly than the manufacturers change models.

Bus builders are traditionally careful about changing models, striking a delicate balance between increasing curb appeal for passengers, while not changing appearance so frequently it hurts resale value.

To enhance efficiency, many fleets have made an effort to stan-

dardize on a single coach brand, and even model. This simplifies maintenance, dispatch and driver training.

At the same time, the combination of government mandates and rapidly developing new and innovative technologies has created the potential for problems. Your fleet of identical looking coaches can offer a bewildering combination of features, and the way they are used can have dramatic consequences.

Boiled down, drivers can't step in a coach and know, by appearance alone, if it has such key features as ABS, stability control, tire pressure monitoring, onboard diagnostics, or several other systems that should influence the way they drive.

When you're skating on ice, there's a world of difference between a coach with ABS and traction control and one without.

If your coach insists on regenerating its particulate trap at an embarrassing moment, it pays to know how long that light can stay on without consequence, and where the exhaust exits the coach.

Two distinctly different transmissions are in wide usage by motorcoach operators. If you don't pay

attention, one likes to creep forward, while the other goes wherever gravity calls.

Procedures for things as mundane as jump starting a bus can vary, and the manufacturers' have a secret torture program that involves changing the entertainment system controls on what seems like an hourly basis.

In addition to providing entertaining stories for future columns, the significant operational differences between seemingly identical coaches create liability concerns for drivers, operators and manufacturers.

Any strategy for dealing with this issue clearly involves training.

Coach builders provide manuals and part of a professional driver's job should involve studying them. You might want to have your drivers sign off on having read them. You don't want a situation where a driver's response to an incident is "So THAT'S how it works."

In addition, you'll want a system for making sure the driver is aware of what systems are on the particular bus he or she is driving. The ideal solution is to assign each driver to a specific coach. This is

one of those great ideas that, regrettably, doesn't often work in big fleets.

Some sort of signage may help, or having your operations folks sort of "group" the coaches by significant features. Drivers qualified on school buses, in mixed fleets, aren't automatically used on coaches. That principle might be applied to coaches with specific features. At the very least, you'll want to make sure that drivers know what they've got.

A pilot doesn't get to just leap into any aircraft and take off. They're "type rated," and have demonstrated knowledge of the particular aircraft they'll fly. That's a ton more than we want to get into, but it shouldn't be too much to ask that a professional driver understand the specific vehicle she or he is operating.

Some coaches have traction control, others spin merrily on ice. A 45-foot coach may sweep outside on turns, while the 40-foot version of the same coach doesn't. You get it.

It's easier to identify a problem than to fix it. I'm doing OK with recognition here, but falling way

short on solutions. If any of you have ideas, please let me know. I'll steal them, take the credit, and get them out there.

You're probably thinking that I'm the dummy that threw the wrong switch on the Dan Ryan. NOT SO. That was another dummy.

I'm the one who hydroplaned a coach in Kansas City. It was raining and I forgot that I was driving the one Flxible in our fleet that had the power steering option.

My reward was a wild fishtailing experience for about a mile of elevated Interstate 70. We (my passengers and I) regained traction just in time to follow the interstate around a curve.

One shaken passenger asked: "Do you always take curves that way?"

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him at: [dave\\_millhouser@hotmail.com](mailto:dave_millhouser@hotmail.com).



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## UMA call to action

### Transits attack proposed school bus rule

The United Motorcoach Association has issued an urgent call to action by private operators to support a rule proposed by the Federal Transit Administration aimed at protecting private school bus companies.

The proposed FTA rule would shield private school bus contractors from unfair competition from public transit agencies whose buses and operating costs are funded in large measure by the federal government. In other words, with your tax dollars.

"Every bus and motorcoach operator has a stake in this rule," said UMA in an appeal to its members. "This proposal is good for school bus operators and bad for transit agencies.

"The transit industry, which is well organized and funded, is already hard at work to halt the new rule. We must work harder to save (the rule) as the school bus rule closely parallels the charter service rule that is so important to every UMA-member operator."

According to UMA, the FTA is being besieged with comments on the issue from local transit authorities.

"They must hear from private operators who are in favor of maintaining the protections Congress intended — to benefit not just private contractors but also students who deserve the safety and security of yellow school buses when traveling home to school and back.

"If FTA is forced to back down on this issue, transit authorities all over the country will seize the opportunity to use their federal subsidies to undercut the cost of school transportation. We all know that

private operators cannot compete with entities whose bus purchases and operating expenses are underwritten by government grants, your tax dollars.

"You need to act now," says UMA. "We need every UMA operator member to write a letter to FTA supporting the proposed rules."

UMA has a draft letter to help guide operators. It can be obtained by contacting Ken Presley at the association: (800) 424-8262, or e-mail [kpresley@uma.org](mailto:kpresley@uma.org). Completed letters can be faxed to UMA at (703) 838-2950.

The association encourages members to use their own words or to add more information than is contained in the draft letter, including examples of transit encroachment they have seen in their own area.

"An original letter is better than a copied one," says the association. "If you have more than one location, please submit separate comments from each location.

"We also ask that you send a copy of your comments to your congressional representatives. If you have a relationship with your U.S. senator or representative, let him or her know personally how this issue threatens your business and the safety of the students you transport.

"Ask him or her to submit a comment supporting FTA in their proposal.

"Whether you operate private school buses or not, we need you to speak up now. Time is short and if this rule is undermined, it is only a matter of time before the charter service rule is challenged," says the association.

## Tips for keeping OSHA...at bay

STERLING, Va. — "OSHA is here."

Those three words can strike horrible fear in the mind of a motorcoach operator.

But, if an operator is prepared and keeps up with the regulations of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, then he or she should have little to worry about.

"We're not there to take up your whole day," said Paul Schilinski, regional director of the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry, which enforces OSHA rules in Virginia. "We just want to go in, get information and be on our way."

Schilinski, who appeared recently at a United Motorcoach Association Safety Management Seminar, said the key to getting safely through an OSHA visit is to always be prepared.

Operators not only should have someone in their operation who keeps up with the rules, but all employees should be keenly aware of the regulations that affect them, including the proper handling of fuel, chemicals, tools and equipment.

In addition, companies should encourage employees to report any possible violations to their supervisors so the situations can be corrected before they cause an accident or lead to a violation and possible fine.

"Hopefully you have a good enough relationship with your employees that they'll come and talk to you about any safety concerns," Schilinski said. "They should be comfortable enough to tell you the same thing they're going to be telling me."

OSHA, or state safety and health officials, generally visit businesses randomly or after they receive a complaint, often times from a disgruntled employee.

Their visits typically consist of an opening conference where the purpose of the visit is discussed with management, a walk-around inspection that includes confidential interviews with employees, and a closing conference where preliminary findings are discussed.

Schilinski said companies often are given time to address problems and if a violation is issued, fines are frequently reduced substantially if it is a first-time offense, the company is cooperative, and the violation is corrected quickly.

However, he warned that serious violations, especially those involving injuries or death or are potential health hazards, can lead to hefty penalties and possible court appearances.

Schilinski said motorcoach operators concerned about the regulations or a possible inspection can ask for an informal conference

with OSHA or state officials to discuss any concerns they may have.

Additionally, he said, if a company has questions about violations or procedures after an inspection, company personnel should ask to meet with the agency that conducted the inspection.

"If you have questions, ask," he emphasized.

While OSHA has no special categories for motorcoach garages and therefore no specific data on inspections, it does keep tabs on violations found at automobile repair shops, and the agency considers those closely related to bus maintenance facilities.

Schilinski said that in the past year, the most violations found at garages were for not having required information available on the use and storage of hazardous materials, the lack of protective guards on power equipment, the use of respiratory safety devices, bad electrical wiring, cutting and welding equipment, and unworkable or missing fire extinguishers.

"Those are the typical violations we would expect to find in a motorcoach garage as well," he suggested.

Schilinski said the auto repair shops also had a number of violations for "general duty" or failing to provide employees with a workplace free of hazardous that could cause serious injury or death.

## Feds bail on issue of California meal-break relief

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has denied a request by a group of motor carriers asking the agency to declare California's meal- and rest-break regulations are pre-empted by federal law because they're incompatible with hours-of-service regulations.

According to the American

Trucking Associations, the motor carriers wanted FMCSA to use its authority to pre-empt state commercial motor vehicle safety laws that are incompatible with the federal safety regulatory scheme.

The petitioners argued that while the meal- and rest-break regulations themselves were not safety related, they were nevertheless

pre-empted because they conflicted with and were incompatible with the federal hours-of-service regulations.

FMCSA, however, concluded that only state laws that are actually directed at commercial motor vehicle safety are within the scope of its pre-emption authority. So, no pre-emption.

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## Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

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## Texas fiasco

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

states, as well as from other organizations.

"The way you solve problems is collectively," he said.

Harris, president of Cardinal Coach Inc. in Warsaw N.C., said the committee will take aim at three key issues — driver treatment, hours of service, and prompt payment.

### A trio of problems

The three issues have been at the center of mounting complaints that surfaced after drivers from throughout the country began arriving in Texas to transport residents from the paths of hurricanes Gustav and Ike, both of which struck in September.

Many of the drivers involved in the evacuation efforts said they were not provided with sleeping quarters and shower facilities and they were forced to drive for long periods without rest, stay with their buses for hours at staging sites or face arrest, and turned away at dining tents where other rescue workers were being fed.

And then, after the rescue effort ended, most of the bills the operators sent to Texas for their work went for weeks unpaid and unanswered.

Many operators say they have received only partial payment for

their work and some say they have yet to see any money at all. Several also report they have been contacted by the state and asked — directed in some cases — to reduce the amount of their bills.

Texas gave a series reasons for the payment delays, ranging from the vouchers were not filled out properly, to the state being overwhelmed by the number of bills it received from vendors, to the Federal Emergency Management Agency being slow in paying for its share of the evacuation costs.

In addition to the payment issues, Harris said he was especially concerned about the hours-of-service rule, which was lifted by federal regulators during the evacuation efforts, asking "What if one of the drivers had an accident after driving for hours and hours? What would happen to our insurance? Who would be responsible to pay for the damages?"

He said other arrangements have to be made in the future so drivers are not put at risk by being required to stay behind the wheel long after they have worked their maximum number of hours.

The nonpayment issue, though, has triggered the most resentment and anger among operators, many of whom spoke up at meetings and workshops held at Motorcoach Expo. Some of the harshest complaints came from operators from Texas.

### Texans complain loudest

"Texas has lost complete credibility with me," Don Dinger of Gotta Go Express Trailways in Forth Worth told other operators. "We have to do something about this now."

Several other Texas operators scorched their home state officials at other Expo sessions, saying the long delay in paying for the evacuation effort has been ridiculous and action should be taken to see that the problems are never repeated.

One operator even suggested trying to attract national media attention to the situation by surrounding the State Capitol or Governor's Mansion in Austin with a caravan of 30 or more coaches.

It was a suggestion that drew quick support from others in the audience and was picked up at the UMA board meeting the following day.

Jeff Polzien, a UMA board member and owner of Red Carpet Charters in Oklahoma City, who met with some of the operators who have not been paid — he's among those still owed money — agreed to take the issue to the UMA board.

The board unanimously supported his resolution, which called for UMA to provide administrative support to organize an effort to raise awareness of the problems with emergency management in Texas, as well as other states, and

## Birnie Bus joins Trailways

FAIRFAX, Va. — Birnie Bus Service, one of the largest bus companies in New York, has joined the Trailways Transportation System.

The renamed Birnie Trailways generally traces its roots to 1946, when Martin K. Birnie went to work for his brother-in-law who operated three school buses, two coaches and a station wagon. There were 12 employees.

Today, the Birnie operation has 1,000 school buses, 23 motorcoaches and 1,200 employees working at 16 locations.

Company headquarters are in Rome, N.Y.

Besides school and charter

business, the company also has transit contracts, provides all non-emergency Medicaid transportation for three counties, operates scheduled service between Syracuse and Little Falls, N.Y., and offers casino runs.

"We are always looking for new business opportunities and the Trailways brand will bring many to us because of its credibility with the traveling public," said company President Tim Birnie.

"Birnie's affiliation broadens the (Trailways) system to 82 independent transportation companies positioned across North America and Europe," said Trailways President and CEO Gale Ellsworth.

to develop terms and conditions to be included in a model proposal/contract that would lay out how operators interact with states to provide disaster relief.

### Protest being planned

At least two Texas operators, Dinger and Autumn Dipert Brown of Dan Dipert Coaches in Arlington, Texas, agreed to help Polzien organize the protest, including the possible protest in Austin.

At the same time, Polzien suggested looking into the possibility that Texas may have violated the law by signing contracts with mo-

torcoach operators without having the money available to pay them.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry's office said the governor tried a year ago to get the State Legislature to budget money for storm disaster expenses, but he was unsuccessful. However, the office said money finally was made available in late December, long after the contracts with motorcoach operators and other vendors had been signed and the work performed.

"I think maybe they signed those contracts with no intention of paying on a timely basis," Polzien said.

## Inauguration

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

There was speculation in the motorcoach industry that the real motive behind the waiver plan was to boost revenues by attracting as many drivers and coaches as possible into district.

The district currently requires motorcoach operators to obtain a \$50 trip permit for each bus they bring into the district. For the inauguration, the district charged a total of \$60 to park in one of its special lots, meaning operators had to pay

\$110 per bus.

Lisle said the district was expecting as many as 10,000 coaches, based on a survey it took of carriers in advance of the event, but only about 3,000 actually used the parking lots.

According to some operators, the district developed a sound inauguration plan for handling motorcoaches by setting up the parking facilities and redirecting traffic, but it apparently forgot until the last minute about the hours-of-service regulation.

Drivers unable to find a hotel or

motel near the D.C. lots — most of them were booked well in advance by people attending the inauguration — would have had to stay in their buses and, technically, would have been considered on duty.

Instead of taking a chance on finding a nearby hotel or motel and not wanting to purchase a D.C. trip permit and pay the parking fee, many drivers opted to deliver their passengers to METRO train stations in suburban Maryland or Virginia, and then drive some distance away where they could find a place to rest until they were needed for

the return trip.

Although D.C. was unable to temporarily lift the hours of service rule, it did ignore its own idling regulations, but for good reason.

Rudy Hulett of Vision Tours in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, said the Federal Emergency Management Agency contracted for 15 of his coaches and used them as "hand warmers" — places where people attending the event could go to warm up.

To keep the buses ready and warm, he said the engines had to be kept running the entire time and

none of the drivers received tickets or was told to shut down for excessive idling. "It was a needed service, though, because it was very cold that day," Hulett said.

D.C., which issued almost 3,000 trip permits for the event, did strictly enforce its permit requirement, according to drivers who reporting seeing enforcement officers checking coaches in the parking lots and ticketing those that did not have current permits.

However, district officials said they were not aware of any tickets being issued for permit violations.

## MCI

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

debt of about \$160 million would be paid with funds received from a rights offering to other debt holders, and third-lien debt of about

\$200 million would be converted into new equity.

MCI says it's confident it will emerge from bankruptcy court on the schedule it set when it filed the petitions. That would mean it would be out of bankruptcy this month.

"As presented to the court this week and approved, MCI has proposals in hand for financing to support the plan and move forward, anticipating emergence from Chapter 11 by the end of February," the company said in its statement.

## Virginia Motorcoach Association offers two scholarships

BROOKNEAL, Va. — The Virginia Motorcoach Association is offering two \$1,500 scholarships for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Those eligible to apply for the scholarships must be full-time employees or the dependent children of full-time employees of association operator-member companies.

Also eligible is the contact for

the association's associate-member companies or the dependent children of the contact.

The eligible employees must have been employed for at least one year by Jan. 1 during the year in which the scholarships are awarded.

Both scholarships will go to individuals studying in a field related

to the travel and tourism industry.

The selection of the winners will be based on a combination of academic merit, character, athletics, volunteerism, leadership, work ethic and other factors.

The deadline to apply is March 1. Go to [www.applylists.net](http://www.applylists.net) and enter access key: VMA. Follow the prompts.

## Bus summit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

projects, crash investigations, regulatory, legislative, research and policy activities related to passenger carrier safety.

In addition, the summit will provide breakout sessions designed to identify problems and to promote discussion of key issues and best practices. A plenary session will include a working activity for all attendees.

"The principal objective of the summit is to bring together a diverse group of government and industry professionals in the bus and

motorcoach industries to share knowledge and information and to help provide up-to-date information and solutions for enhancing passenger carrier transportation, as well as to address the challenges that exist in this industry," the CVSA said.

The fee to attend, if paid by Feb. 20, is \$249 (U.S.), and \$349 (U.S.) after Feb. 20.

The CVSA promotes commercial motor vehicle safety and security by providing leadership to enforcement, industry and policymakers.

For more information, go to [www.cvsa.org](http://www.cvsa.org).

## Converters, RV builders in the pits

The North American recreational vehicle and luxury coach conversion market plunged to a 12-year low in 2008, according to industry publications, and likely will tumble further this year.

Major RV coach manufacturers and converters are furloughing workers, implementing extended plant shutdowns, consolidating, seeing higher-than-normal dealer closings, and even admitting they may be forced to shutdown entirely if they aren't able to shore up their financial positions.

Amadas Coach of Suffolk, Va., which has been a coach converter for more than 25 years, is acquiring the brands, intellectual property and manufacturing rights of leading converter Featherlite Coaches Inc. of Sanford, Fla.

For years, Featherlite has been the "Official Coach of NASCAR," with many NASCAR officials, top drivers, owners and sponsors using Featherlite luxury coaches. Like the RV industry, NASCAR has fallen on tough economic times.

Featherlite is best known for two distinct luxury coaches, the Vantaré H3-45 and Vantaré XLII, both Prevost bus-shell conversions.

Amadas will continue the sales, service and warranty support of the Featherlite Coach brand through a select network of authorized dealers.

Amadas also will assume production of Featherlite coaches once Featherlite has closed out its inventory of new models and completed coaches in production at its Florida facility. The Sanford location will then become the Featherlite dealer for Florida.

Said Robert Jones, motorhome sales manager for Prevost Car: "The tough economy inspires innovation and teamwork, and I am pleased to see the highly regarded Featherlite Coach brand continue under the capable direction of Amadas Coach."

Meanwhile, Country Coach, a leading high-end RV manufacturer based in Junction City, Ore., has notified employees it will be forced to shutdown its factory at the end of February unless it finds financing. And even if it does come up with more money, it expects to make "mass layoffs" after March 1.

Country Coach extended its normal two-week season holiday shutdown to four weeks.

Similarly, Coburg, Ore.-based Monaco Coach Corp., another luxury RV maker, also furloughed its 1,800 workers for a month.

## megabus.com cites solid growth in America, UK

PERTH, Scotland — Stagecoach Group, parent company of Coach USA and megabus.com, says the number of passengers riding megabus in North America has grown to roughly 150,000 a month.

Now operating in 28 cities, megabus.com has gotten almost two million bookings since it

was launched in April 2006.

Stagecoach says further megabus.com expansion is planned in northeastern states.

It also has been announced that Coach USA has ordered 45 MCI coaches. The order includes 27 MCI J4500s; 13 D4505s that will be used in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, and

five MCI J4500s for Coach Canada. Coach USA ordered the buses with Cummins engines, ZF AS-tronic transmissions, Ricon wheelchair lifts, and Amaya seats with three-point seatbelts.

Stagecoach Group said its megabus operation in the United Kingdom has boarded its 10 millionth passenger since it was started in 2003.

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# MOTORCOACH EXPO 2009



Motivational speaker Curtis Zimmerman helped Motorcoach Expo attendees "live the dream" with his presentation and antics, including student Jason Guralnick, far left, and other victims.



Elaine Farrell, executive director of the Pennsylvania Bus Association, with microphone, briefs other bus association executives on challenges in Pennsylvania at the State Association Summit at UMA Motorcoach Expo last month. To Farrell's right is Linda Morris, executive director of several state associations, and James Brown Sr., UMA board member.



The UMA Motorcoach Expo Maintenance Interchange provided food for thought for attendees.



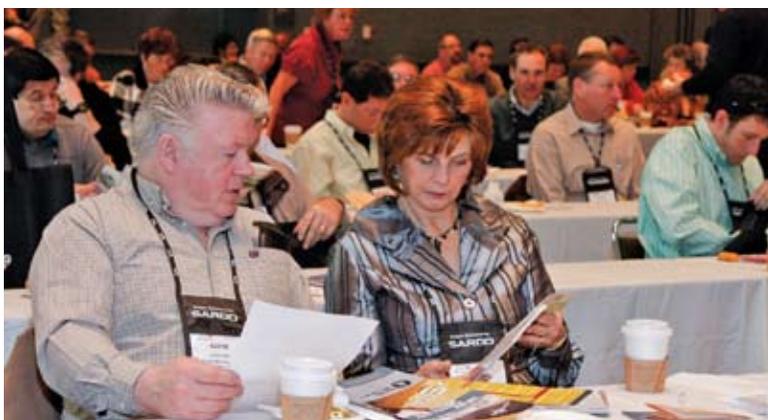
UMA member services coordinator, Maggie Barr, center pointing, and UMA Chairman Godfrey Lebron, right pointing, help attendees register for Motorcoach Expo.



Alan Thrasher of Thrasher Brothers Trailways in Birmingham, Ala., listens for valuable bon mots during Motorcoach Expo seminar.



Peter King of TCF Equipment Finance in Minnetonka, Minn., discusses financing issues during Expo education session.



Keith and Laura Budd of Frontier Bus Lines in Red Deer, Alberta, plan their day before the start of a morning session at UMA Motorcoach Expo.



Mitch Guralnick, MCI sales executive and UMA meetings/convention guru, enjoys the entertainment at UMA Motorcoach Expo Operator Lunch.



Master juggler Victor Parra, UMA president and CEO, focuses on keeping three balls in the air during Expo lunch fun.

# MOTORCOACH EXPO 2009



NTSB member Kathryn Higgins urges operators to focus on critical safety issues.

## Industry safety is criticized

ORLANDO, Fla. — Motorcoach industry safety is moving in the wrong direction, a member of the National Transportation Safety Board told attendees at UMA Motorcoach Expo here last month.

Kathryn 'Kitty' Higgins, who has sat on the NTSB for three years, noted that while the motorcoach and airline industries carry about the same number of passengers each year, the commercial airline industry has not had a single fatal crash since 2006.

The coach industry, on the other hand, suffered crash deaths totaling 27 in 2006, 37 in 2007 and 28 in 2008.

"That trend is in the wrong direction," asserted Higgins.

"Shouldn't the motorcoach industry be as safe as the airline industry?" she asked.

Higgins was the featured speaker during the Legislative and Regu-

latory Update session at Motorcoach Expo.

She reviewed a series of high-profile over-the-road bus crashes that happened during the past decade, pointing out how design flaws, driver error or other issues resulted in deaths or injuries to coach passengers.

She also bemoaned the lack of progress by other federal safety agencies in developing enhanced safety standards and rules for buses and their drivers.

For example, she cited the fatal plunge of a coach off an overpass in Atlanta two years ago, asking "couldn't most of those people have been saved if the bus had been designed differently and passengers hadn't been ejected?"

The NTSB has advocated improved roof strength and window glazing for motorcoaches for years.

She also mentioned and showed photos of a coach that plowed into a low bridge in Washington, D.C. She said the coach driver "lost situational awareness" because he was talking on his cell phone.

One of the NTSB's "most-wanted" highway safety improvements is a ban on cell phone use by motorcoach and school bus drivers except in an emergency.

The NTSB also wants electronic onboard recorders required for motorcoaches and over-the-road trucks to better enforce hours-of-service rules, reducing fatigue-related crashes.

She urged coach company owners and managers to do their utmost to assure they operate safely by, among other things, adopting a cell-phone use policy, closely monitoring scheduling and fatigue management, and maintaining aggressive training regimens for drivers.

## *Do it for Joshua*

### UMA, March of Dimes plan major fundraiser in early fall

ORLANDO, Fla. — The budding partnership between the United Motorcoach Association and the March of Dimes Foundation took a major step forward at UMA Motorcoach Expo here last month with the announcement that a special March of Dimes fund-raising program has been created for all UMA members.

Called "Miles for Babies," the one-day event in September has a goal of raising \$500,000 for March of Dimes' programs that support its mission of improving the health of babies by preventing birth defects, and reducing premature births and infant mortality.

"UMA members can be champions for babies," said UMA Chairman Godfrey Lebron, in announcing the cause-related program.

The Miles for Babies initiative will raise the profile of coach industry companies that join in the event, create goodwill for the industry in communities where operators and suppliers participate, and engage company employees in a worthy cause, Lebron told hundreds of coach operator and associate UMA members at the opening session of UMA Motorcoach Expo.

Plus, it supports "healthier moms and healthier babies," he added.

UMA members and their spouses attending the UMA Vision Awards Banquet at Motorcoach Expo heard a powerful appeal to



Joshua Hoffman

participate in the program delivered by an incredibly articulate and precocious six-year-old boy and his mother from Weston, Fla.

The child was Joshua Hoffman and he was born four months premature, weighing all of 1 pound 11 ounces. He spent the first 3½ months of his life in a neonatal intensive care unit.

For weeks it was uncertain whether he would live or if he would be able to walk, talk or hear.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ►

## UMA, NTA to explore co-locating annual conventions

ORLANDO, Fla. — The United Motorcoach Association and the National Tour Association have announced a cooperative effort to explore co-locating their annual conferences, the UMA Motorcoach Expo and the NTA Annual Convention, some time during the next three to five years.

The exploration is part of both organizations' ongoing efforts to build alliances and foster travel industry collaboration as a means of bringing more business to their members.

The announcement of the new initiative comes roughly 14 months after the two organizations formed a strategic partnership and began taking a more active role in each other's annual conventions.

NTA currently hosts the Destination and Attractions aisle at UMA Motorcoach Expo, while UMA reciprocates by sponsoring the motorcoach exhibit area during NTA's Convention.

Over the coming months the two organizations will explore the details of co-locating, even though

a "combined event" could be a few years off because of contractual commitments. In the interim, the organizations will look for ways to gradually build toward a combined location.

"We believe co-locating has value for UMA and our members," said UMA Chairman Godfrey Lebron in announcing the exploration plan.

"First, NTA members bring us business, and that's a good thing. Second, by better connecting with NTA's supplier members — hotels,

attractions, destinations, etc., we'll have a better idea of new opportunities where we can take our charter-and-tour customers so they keep coming back to us trip after trip," said Lebron.

"We're all in this together — the tour operator, the coach operator, the destination, the attraction, the hotel and so forth because we share the same customer, the group traveler," Lebron added.

"For years, our members have talked about the many shows they have to attend for doing business

with the various market segments," said NTA Chairman and CEO Michele Michalewicz, CTP, who joined

Lebron in making the announcement at UMA Motorcoach Expo here last month. "It's costly — in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ►



Michele Michalewicz

# Charter rule advocate says rule may need fine tuning

ORLANDO, Fla. — One of the chief architects of the revised charter service rule says some provisions of the nine-month-old rule may need to be revised or refined.

Linda Lasley, assistant chief counsel for legislation and regulation at the Federal Transit Administration, said that “once we have an Obama (administration) appointee (as FTA administrator), there is talk of updating the rule. It could happen in 2009.

“On the other hand, you may have a political appointee say, ‘give it a year and see how it works.’ We want to give our political appointee as much room as possible to look at what changes might need to be made,” she said.

In remarks made last month at UMA Motorcoach Expo here, Las-

ley cited a handful of provisions of the charter service rule that have resulted in confusion, misunderstanding, challenges, and complaints.

For example, she said the “emergency provision” may need to be reconsidered to allow more flexibility when there are disasters, like a large local fire and the fire department needs to move a number of residents quickly.

One unanticipated problem that has developed is that some private operators are responding to charter notice e-mails where the service is far from their service area.

To be able to perform the service, the private operators would have to run the price up by four or five times, said Lasley.

“It’s obviously not a success for the rule. No one envisioned that op-

erators from two, three states away would say they could provide the services.

“I don’t know how we might solve that problem but it definitely needs to be looked at in the future.”

Another issue to look at is refining the e-mail procedures that transit authorities are required to fulfill if they’re interested in performing charter service.

“When a transit authority is interested in partnering with an operator, how can we change the e-mail notification process to include that? Maybe put the intent in the e-mail to make it work better and make it more transparent.”

Also, when an operator wants to lease equipment from a transit authority, it can be interpreted that the operator has to exhaust the possibil-

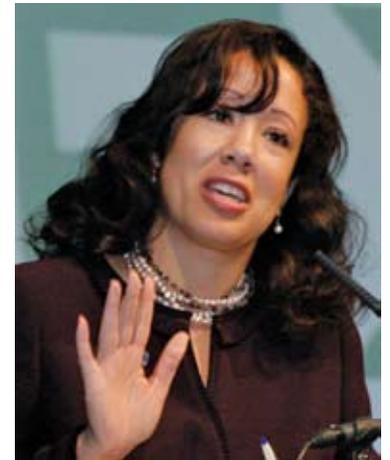
ity of working with any other operators. “Some private operators have tried to assert that,” said Lasley. “There could be some refinements in that area as well.”

Other provisions that may need to be revised include the:

- Amount of time private operators have to respond to a charter notice.
- Handling of petitions to the FTA administration for events of regional or national significance.
- Right of the FTA to clarify advising opinions.
- Right of event organizers to file complaints.

But, said Lasley, “I think (the revised rule) has generally worked out very well.”

Ken Presley, vice president of the United Motorcoach Associa-



Linda Lasley of the FTA

tion, presented Lasley with an engraved plaque honoring her for her effective work in implementing and administering the new charter service rule.



Dwight Lacey



Ronald Bast



Dale Krapf



Gary Bauer



Thomas Bazow



Stephen Story



Wes Kanaga

# Coach operators are honored at gala Vision Awards

ORLANDO, Fla. — A Richmond, Va.-based motorcoach company won two of the top awards presented at the 2009 UMA Motorcoach Expo, which honors the industry’s best-and-brightest operators and individuals.

For the motorcoach industry, the annual UMA Vision Awards Banquet has become the premier event for honoring coach industry stars, and the social highlight of Motorcoach Expo. It is a festive evening, and invariably contains a few surprises.

This year, the big surprise was a disabled six-year-old boy, representing the March of Dimes, who made a heart-tugging appeal for UMA members to support a funding raising program in September. See story that begins on Page 13.

Seven major industry awards were presented during the evening at this year’s awards banquet. Here are the winners:

**UMA Safety Leader of the Year:** Dwight Lacey of James River Bus Lines in Richmond. The award honors an individual who has made a measurable impact on the safety culture at their company or within the industry.

Lacey, who spent 26 years in the U.S. Navy, is a jack of all trades at James River where he manages a small terminal, oversees drivers, handles light maintenance and drives a coach — all the while fostering safety, strong customer service and good corporate relations with an important customer.

Lacey was presented the award by Matthew Daecher of Daecher Consulting Group, which sponsors the award and selects the winner.

**BusRide Motorcoach Industry Achievement Award:** Ronald Bast of Rite-way Bus Service in Richfield, Wis.

The award, which honors companies that have overcome obstacles or built a record of success over many years, honored Riteway for its can-do spirit and growth during the past 50+ years.

The company operates a fleet of more than 30 motorcoaches, 500 school buses and 30 limousines and cars from eight locations. It has 700 employees.

Bast received the award from *BusRide* Editor David Hubbard.

**Metro Magazine Motorcoach Operator of the Year:** Dale Krapf of Krapf Coaches in West Chester, Pa.

Krapf was honored for his industry contributions and for being an exemplary bus operator. The Krapf operation includes 19 motorcoaches, more than 100 other commercial buses and upwards of 1,200 school buses. It has 1,500 employees.

In accepting the award from Metro Publisher Frank Di Giacomo, Krapf said he was blessed with having great employees and a family committed to the business. Seven family members are employed by the company, including three Krapf sons.

**Green Highway Award sponsored by Motor Coach Industries:** Bauer’s Intelligent Transportation of San Francisco.

Bauer’s is a limousine company that also operates coaches, shuttle buses, vans and hybrid vehicles. Among its various “green” initiatives is a carbon offset program.

The award was presented to Gary Bauer by Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president and chief customer officer.

**UMA Vision Award/Small Operator (fewer than 15 coaches):** Excursions Trailways of Fort Wayne, Ind.

Thomas Bazow and Patrick O’Brian started Excursions Trailways in August 2000, meaning they were in business just over a year when 9/11 and its aftermath hit the industry.

Yet, through perseverance and good business practices they were able to grow the company from one coach to seven, and purchase another small motorcoach operation in the fall of 2007.

In accepting the award, Bazow said the company’s success was based on customer service, customer service and customer service. He also noted that by attending UMA Motorcoach Expo, he had been able to “take away things that we apply to our business.”

**UMA Vision Award/Large Operator (15 or more coaches):** James River Bus Lines.

UMA Treasurer Jeff Polzien, who chairs the association’s Vision Awards Committee, said James River won the large-operator Vision award because of its record on safety, security, experience, passenger satisfaction, financial strength and integrity.

James River President Stephen Story said he accepted the award on behalf of company team members back in Virginia.

Story employs “servant leadership” management at James River, which empha-

sizes the leader’s role as steward of the resources (human, financial and otherwise) provided by the company. It encourages leaders to foster employee growth, development and team building while staying focused on achieving results in line with the organization’s values and integrity.

**The UMA Maintenance Interchange Maintenance Competition** was conducted for the third consecutive year at UMA Motorcoach Expo. Those individuals attending the interchange were invited to participate in a competition involving a written test and a timed diagnostic inspection. The competition was conducted at Escot Bus Lines.

This year’s grand champion was Wes Kanaga of Peoria Charter Coach Co. in Peoria, Ill. Kanaga’s winning score was one point from perfection.

He was awarded a plaque and a \$500 gift certificate by Kevin Whitworth of Whitworth Bus in Dayton, Ohio, who coordinates the Maintenance Interchange and Maintenance Competition.

First runner up was Don Zimmerman of DZ Services in Rio Linda, Calif., and second runner up was Richard Wenzel of Rockford Charter Coach in Rockford, Ill.

This year’s UMA Motorcoach Expo Maintenance Interchange was the 11th annual interchange and its participants had combined motorcoach maintenance experience totaling 1,554 years. “Wow,” said Whitworth.

UMA Motorcoach Expo 2010 will be in Las Vegas next February.

# Good marketing doesn't have to cost a lot of money

ORLANDO, Fla. — Money isn't the key to successful marketing, guerrilla marketing coach Al Lautenslager told attendees at a UMA Motorcoach Expo seminar here.

"Time, energy and imagination are the primary investments of a guerrilla marketer," said Lautenslager, who went on to give examples of marketing campaigns that didn't cost a lot of money:

- The owner of a plumbing service company had the bottom half of a man sitting on a toilet painted on the driver's door of his truck, so it appeared the driver was on the john.

- Sonic drive-in restaurants made cups that would stick to an automobile, making it look like the driver had accidentally left his Sonic drink on the roof or truck.

- Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurants give a free burrito to anyone who comes to the restaurant on Halloween dressed like a burrito.

"Guerrilla marketing is achieving conventional goals through un-

conventional means," said Lautenslager.

He said he has fashioned himself as an advertising expert, making himself available to the press to analyze the Super Bowl ads each year. The co-author of *Guerrilla Marketing in 30 Days* encouraged motorcoach operators to do the same, to sell themselves as experts in their field.

## Be an expert!?

What kinds of experts can motorcoach operators bill themselves as?

Try event expert; inauguration expert; vacation excursion expert; airport shuttle expert; luxury motorcoach expert, or transportation expert, he said.

As an expert, you can offer advice. Look at writing (an article): "Seven mistakes people make when choosing a commercial bus service," for example. Or, "12 things to do to make bus transportation for your event more efficient and pleasing."

Whether it's the inauguration, fuel costs, airport shuttles or school district and public transit issues, Lautenslager advises you put yourself out there as an expert.

"Guerrilla marketing is common sense but it's not common practice, is what I find," he said.

You have to decide what your "call to action" is, he said. Do you want prospects to call, log on, enter a contest or visit your business?

## Who's your customer?

Another tip he gave is that you need to focus on who your ideal client is. And no, it's not everyone, he said. And the best prospect is a current customer.

Tailor your message through your tagline, the Chicagoan said. For example, there is a plumbing company in Chicago that says: "We never close." It's the first plumbing company you think of when you need one at 3 a.m. "Taglines increase revenue," he said.

Lautenslager said there is a difference between features and bene-

fits. "Features tell. Benefits sell." Features are things like: a self-cleaning oven, 24/7 operators, and being in business for 110 years. Benefits include: reliability, convenience, immediate response.

Your benefits may not be obvious, he said. So, ask your customers.

His co-author drives 25 miles to his favorite bookstore. Why? The carrot cake.

Be clear about your market. "Dog toys aren't designed for dogs," he said. "They're designed for people who buy dog toys for dogs."

Fusion marketing is an easy way to sell yourself by selling others. For example, he saw a pizza place that displayed coupons for a dry-cleaning store in the same shopping center. And the dry-cleaning store did the same for the pizza shop.

## Be careful networking

On networking, he warned against trying to sell your service

at networking events. Instead, make it your goal to build relationships. And: "Arrive early, leave late. Help at registration. Act like a host, not a guest." Meet 10 new people, he said. Receive eight business cards; write a follow-up note to five; and call three to meet them.

On direct mail, Lautenslager favors postcards — they're cheaper to print and mail. And it's more effective to send a postcard to 1,000 people five times rather than 5,000 people one time.

On public relations, he advised attendees to think about the editor and reader, or the producer and listener/viewer. "Editors speak their own language. Editors love news, hate promotion. You won't get a flood of business from your name in the paper, but you'll put your name out."

A press release can focus on a new service, awards, promotions, reorganization, new employees, celebrations or survey results. "Pick one or two things you're comfortable with," he said.

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# Say 'no' to accounts receivable

ORLANDO, Fla. — Want to know how to manage your accounts receivable successfully?

It's easy, suggests certified public accountant and motorcoach operator Jeff Polzien, just don't have any.

"Just say 'no,'" he urged at a 2009 UMA Motorcoach Expo workshop designed to help motorcoach operators better control their businesses and collect money owed to them by their customers.

Polzien, owner of Red Carpet Charters in Oklahoma City, said that's what he does and it really works, saving him both money and time.

In most cases, he said, he requires charter customers to pay up front before he delivers his buses, just like what is done in most of the business world.

"What do you think the airlines would say if you told them that you want to fly with them but you didn't want to pay them for 30 days?," he asked. "No. They get their money before you ride."

Polzien said he has few excep-

tions to his policy, limiting his credit customers to long-time corporate clients and most government agencies, all of which have built good records with him of paying their bills and paying them on time.

Operators who do carry customers, he advised, need to have a firm collection plan in place that helps them stay on top of their accounts and increases their chances of getting paid as quickly as possible.

He recommends that bills be sent promptly requesting payment in 30 days and that customers who miss the deadline get a personal telephone call asking if they received their bill and reminding them their payment is overdue.

If no payment is received after 45 days, then a "final" notice should be sent and after 60 days, more drastic action should be taken, including more phone calls and mailings followed by possible legal action.

In addition to his tight policy on credit, he said operators should encourage customers to pay by

check so their company does not have to pay the 3 percent fee normally charged by credit- and debit-card companies. "It can add up," he stressed.

Polzien even has a plan for customers who say they can't immediately pay with a check. He said he obtains their credit card information, but promises not to run it for 30 days so they have time to get the money together and make the payment by check.

He warned, too, of customers who usually don't pay until the last minute because that could mean they're paying for each charter with money they've collected for future trips.

"They're not the kind of customers you want to give credit to and it might be better if they go down the road to someone else," he said



Jeff Polzien



Cary Martin of Little Rock (Ark.) Tours asks a question during an Expo panel discussion.



Larry Northup, left, of Ottumwa (Iowa) Coaches, and Dennis Streif of Vandalia Bus Lines in Caseyville, Ill., wait for an Expo educational session to begin.

## Seatbelts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

have lap seatbelts as standard equipment.

Elsewhere on the show floor there were both familiar and new bus seat manufacturers, featuring their latest model passenger seats — many with seatbelts.

As recently as three years ago, few in the industry would have imagined such a thing.

But a high-profile bus crash in Atlanta two years ago, another in Texas three years ago, a trio of "seatbelt bills" in Congress, and the first-ever series of bus crash tests conducted by the federal government has changed all that.

Now, the industry seemingly is racing pell-mell to embrace seatbelts even though the federal government has yet to develop standards for seatbelts on motorcoaches in the U.S.

That fact alone amazes many long-time industry safety experts.

Thus far, federal safety administrators haven't officially announced the likelihood they'll be issuing revised standards for the over-the-road bus industry that include seatbelts, or what standard they might adopt for belted seats.

Still, most industry safety experts believe a seatbelt requirement is coming and it will have standards.

Prevost Car evidently thinks that's true because it announced at Motorcoach Expo its new H-series coaches are now equipped with a



Darrell Niswander, left, of Amaya Astron Seating points out features of a three-point belted seat to Brian Crow, president and CEO of Motor Coach Canada and the Ontario Motor Coach Association. The Canadian motorcoach industry is working with their government to develop Canadian standards for seatbelts on coaches.

welded rail system that can accommodate any kind of seat installation, up to a 20G standard.

Meanwhile, the deliberate pace of safety bureaucrats isn't slowing operators, coach builders and seat manufacturers from rushing ahead and plopping belted seats in new coaches.

Much of the demand for seatbelts, say coach operators, is coming from customers. Some operators report that, with greater frequency, when customers call they ask if coaches are equipped with seatbelts.

"In recent years, customer demand for seatbelts in motorcoaches

has risen dramatically," said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for Daimler Buses North America. "We are fortunate we are able to leverage our Setra and Mercedes-Benz resources in Europe to take advantage of seatbelt testing that has already taken place."

David Oldridge, chief engineer for BCI, echoed Chezem, saying operators are starting to want restraints on their coaches — mostly in response to their charter-and-tour customers who are asking for them. Oldridge says BCI is happy to accommodate.

"All of that talk in the industry

that they are too expensive and won't work well is just hogwash."

Dan Eisentrager of Coach America said two of that company's large corporate customers in Wyoming — Rio Tinto Energy America and Powder River Coal — insisted that three-point seatbelts be installed in 24 new MCI D450s Coach America was ordering for shuttles it operates for the coal mining companies.

"Safety is paramount at (Rio Tinto Energy America)," said Rio Tinto Vice President of Operations Gary Rivenes. "We continuously evaluate employee risks and ways to reduce or eliminate those risks.

"The finalized arrangement for these special buses culminates a three-year extensive effort by (Rio Tinto) to provide buses equipped with three-point passenger seatbelts to ensure greater travel safety for our employees."

Kobussen Buses Trailways in Kaukauna, Wis., is buying four new MCI J4500s with three-point seatbelts. "We think seatbelts are going to be a standard part of the future coach," said Dan Kobussen.

Another Kobussen executive said at Motorcoach Expo the company is convinced seatbelts installed in new coaches today will essentially pay for themselves when those coaches are resold or traded in the future.

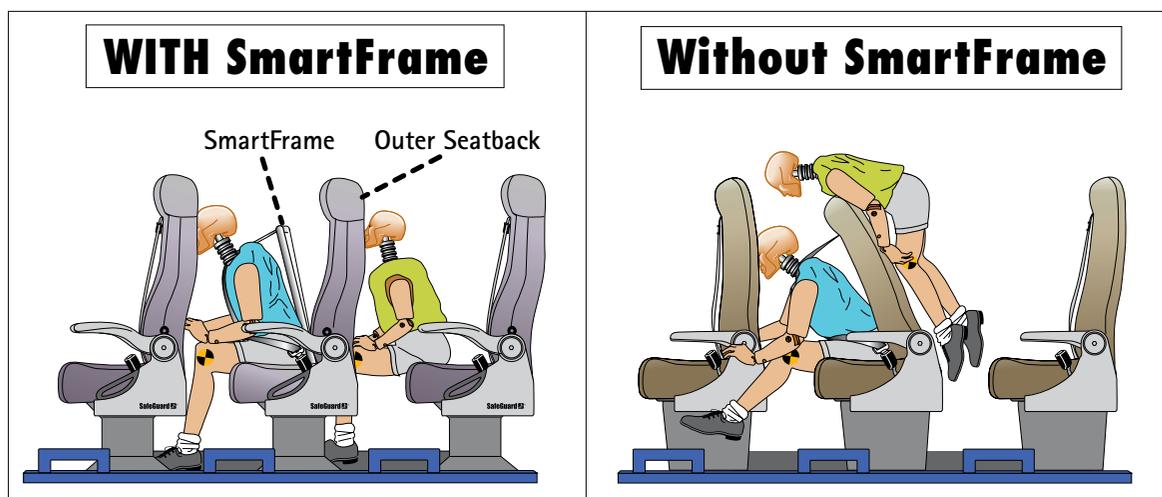
Their thinking: Used, seatbelt-equipped coaches will command a premium price in the future when seatbelts are mandatory.

Other operators may be reaching the same conclusion, but many worry about another aspect of the seatbelt story: the transition period. They're concerned about customer reaction when they send three or four coaches out for a charter move and only two have seatbelts.

Unlike coaches equipped with WiFi or high-end entertainment systems that can be sold at a premium, operators may not get a warm reception if they try to sell coaches with seatbelts at a higher price than those without belts.

"Like the airlines, motorcoach industry safety should be a given," said one industry veteran.

# SafeGuard, American unveil revolutionary belted seat



During a frontal impact, the SafeGuard seat separates, above left, with the "smartframe" supporting belted passengers and the rest of the seat restraining unbelted

passengers. Traditional seat backs collapse forward in a frontal crash, right, leaving no protection for unbelted passengers.

ORLANDO — For the first time in a decade, a motorcoach seat has created a sensation at a UMA Motorcoach Expo.

What makes the seat unique is its patented construction that provides crash protection for both belted and unbelted passengers, and for both adults and small children.

The seat was developed by SafeGuard of Westfield, Ind., the leader in child passenger protection and the largest child seating safety products manufacturer in the world.

SafeGuard has formed a partnership with American Seating of Grand Rapids, Mich., to produce the innovative Premier seat for the motorcoach industry.

The Premier employs a dual-frame technology, which SafeGuard calls SmartFrame. The seat essentially separates into two pieces during a crash, providing protection to passengers who are using its three-point integral seatbelt, as well as those passengers who aren't buckled up.

The seat's inner structure, with its lap-shoulder belt, absorbs crash energy for belted passengers, while the outer seatback structure remains vertical to cushion anyone behind the seat who is not belted, providing full compartmentalization protection in frontal crashes.

SafeGuard and American Seating say the Premier is the only motorcoach seat combining lap-shoulder belts with full compartmentalization.

A slide mechanism on the shoulder belt allows small children, those weighing more than 40 pounds, to use the seat and have its full protection without special gear.

Perhaps the best testament to the seat's capabilities is the fact that Greyhound Lines has spec'd it for scores of Prevost X3-45 coach-

es it has ordered. At the time the 140-coach order was announced the name of the seat supplier was not revealed, only that the Prevosts being purchased by Greyhound would be seatbelt equipped. (See Oct. 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Greyhound has a long history of not identifying its key suppliers, and neither SafeGuard nor American Seating executives would confirm Greyhound had specified the SafeGuard seats on its new X3-45s. But other industry executives did.

Unlike some manufacturers, SafeGuard maintains its own aggressive crash-testing program. To support the development of its bus seat products, SafeGuard has conducted more than 200 sled tests and 20 school bus rollover tests,

plus tested thousands of components to assure performance and durability.

With the introduction of the Premier seat, "American Seating and SafeGuard are working to address one of five federal highway safety priorities on the NTSB 'Most-Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements for 2008,'" said James Johnson, director of sales for SafeGuard, a division of IMMI, which specializes in designing and manufacturing restraint systems for off-highway vehicles, buses, boats and pets.

Johnson says the Premier is the only seat tested and capable of meeting Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards 208, 209, 210, 213, 222 and 225.



James Johnson, left, director of sales at SafeGuard, and Gary Thompson, marketing manager at American Seating, are interviewed about SafeGuard's innovative passenger seat. Clearly visible on the seats in front of Johnson and Thompson is the slide mechanism that adjusts the shoulder belt for small children.

Dave McLaughlin, vice president of transportation sales for American Seating, said the partnership between American Seating and SafeGuard, "enables us to combine our transportation seating experience with the safety expertise of SafeGuard, together offering an exciting, revolutionary safety solution to the U.S. motorcoach market."

Adds Johnson: "The partnership with American Seating allows us to change the discussion in the motorcoach industry about safety.

SafeGuard brings 30 years of experience in designing and developing integrated safety systems, while American Seating has set the industry benchmark for transportation seating for over 70 years."

While the Premier is currently available on Prevost coaches, other bus builders are looking at the seat for their coaches.

Also at Motorcoach Expo, American Seating unveiled a new, motorcoach slider-seat securement system, the Autoslide®.

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## Daimler sees gains in '08, touts features on its Setras

ORLANDO, Fla. — Marketing gurus often urge business owners and managers to strive to make their products and services unusual and unique. Accomplishing that, of course, is frequently easier said than done.

“Differentiating yourself from your competition is a challenge every motorcoach operator faces today,” says Tom Chezem, vice president of coach sales at Daimler Buses North America.

“We offer a great number of exclusive options to make your passengers’ travel experience even more special — and your coaches even more distinctive.”

For 2009, Daimler Buses’ motorcoach brand, the Setra S 417, is offering a handful of new features and options designed to differentiate its coaches and strengthen its claim to being “the benchmark in the premium segment of the market.”

Unveiled at UMA Motorcoach Expo here last month was a linear fade paint scheme that goes from black to maroon, thanks to a computer-controlled paint system.

The '09 S 417 also offers seating — “the Ambiente” that is ergonomically shaped for “unique levels of comfort”; synthetic hardwood flooring; a handsome optional gal-

ley installed under the optional large rear window; overhead LED reading lights; six, 19-inch flat screen LCD monitors, optional WiFi, and a finished luggage bay shelf that can be used to separate smaller bags and freight from larger cargo.

Beginning this month, the S 417 will come standard with two-point lap belts, which currently is the safety requirement in Europe, where Setras are built.

Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for Daimler Buses N.A., said the company is considering the innovative Safeguard/American Seating seat, which has an integral three-point belt system, as an option for the S 417. (See story Page 17.)

In addition to the S 417, Daimler Buses also showcased the Dodge Sprinter shuttle bus at Motorcoach Expo.

The Sprinter, which had record sales in 2008 and has become increasingly popular with motorcoach operators seeking to diversify their fleets, is available in a variety of seating configurations suitable for tour-and-charter groups of up to 16 passengers, plus commuter, airport, hotel and paratransit seating arrangements.

Seatbelts and leather seats are



Patrick Scully, left, and Dr. Andreas Strecker discuss new Daimler models, with a vintage Setra S6 bus on display behind them. The early 60s S6 was brought from Germany to mark the 25th anniversary of Setra in the U.S.

an option.

New this year is an integrated side-entry wheelchair lift, with an access door that matches the vehicle’s body lines. The lift-equipped Sprinter provides seating for eight passengers, plus driver with two wheelchairs, or 14 passengers with driver.

Dr. Andreas Strecker, president and CEO of Daimler Buses N.A., said 2008 was a record year for the North American bus unit of automotive giant Mercedes-Benz.

Both Sprinter and pre-owned bus sales set records last year, while Setra had its third-best year since the brand was introduced to North America 25 years ago. Total unit sales, including the Setra, Orion and Sprinter brands, were up 30 percent and revenue up 16 percent from 2007.

Scully said Setra S 417 sales were on pace to set a record last year before the credit crunch hit near the end of the third quarter. He said Daimler was “positive” about

the outlook for 2009, but there would be challenges — “credit being primary among them.”

He predicted 2010 would be a “watershed” year because of new federal emissions standards for over-the-road diesel engines.

However, he noted that for the first time since the federal government began imposing emissions standards on diesel-engine builders a decade ago, the 2010 Detroit Diesel engines in Setra coaches would show a “positive fuel gain.”

## Double-decker Van Hool gets closer to the heavens

ORLANDO, Fla. — ABC Companies unveiled a sky-view model of the Van Hool TD925 double-decker coach at UMA Motorcoach Expo here last month.

The TD925, introduced a year ago at Motorcoach Expo in San Francisco, seats up to 83 passengers and has been put into widespread service by megabus.com and a handful of smaller operators.

ABC said it has gotten two orders, so far, for the sky-view model. “It’s just a great touring coach,” says Brenda Borwege, vice president of marketing.

The TD925 comes standard with lap seatbelts but other Van Hool models available from ABC are offered with three-point belts.

A wheelchair ramp and two wheelchair tie-downs come standard on the TD925, as does the Saucan TDS GPS system; bright yellow safety rails, step markers and other interior safety indicators, and zoned climate-control system.

There’s a 23-inch lower deck TV monitor and six eight-inch upper deck monitors, as well as a

15-inch monitor above. An upgrade provides eight audio channels for headset listening.

The TD925 ranges in price from \$650,000 to \$753,000 for a high-end model with all the bells and whistles.

ABC Companies also had a restyled T2145 on the show floor, featuring a retro, European front and rear. The T2145 offers optional three-point belts, rear- and side-view cameras, driver’s protection shield.

“We’re keeping up with the Joneses,” joked Borwege.

The two-piece windshield allows for better viewing for the passenger — as well as easier restocking for the operator in the case of breakage.

Newly available contour parcel racks are an option for improved viewing of monitors. LED lighting and a rear window both are new and standard.

“The younger generation is influencing us. They are the ones riding and driving. If our customers are not successful, we’re not suc-



Steve Olesen, left, of ABC discusses Van Hool coaches with Robert Johnson of Cross Country Trailways in Spartanburg, S.C.

cessful,” says Clint Guth, vice president and general manager of ABC’s western region.

Also on display at the ABC stand was the year-old, midsize 3035RE upgraded rear-engine coach.

“Bigger engine, bigger capacity, bigger payload,” said Guth.

The 35-foot upgraded model features 14-inch monitors, a rear window, contoured parcel racks,

full-leather seats and two-point Amaya seatbelts.

The standard RE costs \$245,000-\$265,000; a high-end version comes in at \$294,000. Both models seat 39, 41 without the lavatory.

Guth said the 3035RE engine is fully accessible, and the 102-inch-wide interior features plenty of room. ABC bills the 3035RE as a midsize coach with full-size

amenities.

ABC and Van Hool, which have been offering customers the choice of three engines — Caterpillar, Detroit Diesel and Cummins — in recent years, will switch exclusively to Cummins in 2010.

However, Borwege indicated that company executives are exploring other possible engine options. Negotiations are underway with other engine suppliers, she said.

# Expo tire kickers give new Volvo 9700 high marks

ORLANDO, Fla. — For the first time in more than 20 years, North American bus operators got a chance to kick the tires and test drive a new Volvo-brand motorcoach at a U.S. bus show.

That's because Volvo Buses unveiled and launched its 9700 model for the U.S. and Canadian markets at UMA Motorcoach Expo here last month.

And judging by the reaction and comments of those Expo attendees who strapped the 9700 on for size, there was a lot to like about the coach.

Coming in for particular notice were the:

- Interior, which one person described as one of the best fit and finishes he'd ever seen
- Standard, three-point belted seats with stain-resistant fabric
- Lavatory, which has all the amenities, looks easy to clean and has a toilet angle that assures fewer embarrassing passenger incidents during sudden stops
- Pivoting lavatory door; seen as a nice touch
- Stainless steel frame
- Two-piece windshield

• Volvo I-shift transmission; described as commendably smooth

• Impressive ride quality  
The combination baseboard heat and overhead A/C reportedly performed well in Canadian testing.

The only criticisms heard were the front steps, which appear to have uneven risers and one step that's indented less than the others; a little wind noise noticed in test runs, which seems like an easy fix, and a front overhang that is measurably longer than its corporate cousin, the Prevost H3.

Still, as one observer said: "Heck of a job for an economy bus."

The new Volvo will be marketed and supported in the U.S. and Canada by Prevost Car, a subsidiary of Volvo Bus Corp.

"Prevost offers the most luxurious coaches available in North America today," said Tore Bäckström, senior vice president responsible for Volvo Buses' North and South America business area. "By launching the Volvo 9700 in the segment slightly below the Pre-



There was plenty of people and activity at the stand of Prevost Car.

vost coaches, we foresee good possibilities to further enhance our penetration within tour and charter and line-haul traffic."

The Volvo 9700 for North America is manufactured in Volvo Buses' plant in Mexico. The engine is assembled in Volvo's plant in Hagerstown, Md.

"The Volvo 9700 offers outstanding Volvo safety features, a striking modern design and a superb driver environment. At the same time this coach will provide our customers with a reliable

coach, providing years of productive service," said Dann Wiltgen, Prevost vice president of sales.

Meanwhile, Prevost introduced an updated version of its H-model at Motorcoach Expo.

The most noticeable exterior change is a new front end that features a pronounced black mask, new headlight design, restyled front bumper, and enlarged spare tire compartment capable of handling the larger (i.e. wider) 365 tire.

The new headlight configuration has functional improvements,

too. The headlamps deliver the highest halogen output ever, special lenses broaden the range of vision for better visibility in rain or fog, and high-contrast LED directional signals make driver intentions clear.

Best of all, from a maintenance stand point, both the standard halogen and optional Xenon headlight clusters are hinged, making bulb replacement a snap.

"This redesign, which illustrates our passion for continuous improvement, has produced a vehicle that is unmatched for quality and reliability," said Wiltgen.

Another notable improvement this year is a welded rail system that can accommodate any kind of seat installation, built to any standard.

Inside, there's a new entertainment system and under the skin are improved tire pressure monitoring and fire suppression systems.

"As the tallest high-decker in the industry, (the H-series) provides the best panoramic view on the market, as well as the largest luggage capacity," notes Prevost.



The prototype 39-footer from IC Bus uses a body from Brazil's biggest bus maker.

## IC unveils second coach model

ORLANDO, Fla. — IC Bus picked UMA Motorcoach Expo to unveil the second of two over-the-road bus models it intends to launch next year.

The newest IC prototype is a near 39-foot, 38-seat single-axle coach built on a Navistar platform using a body from Brazilian bus maker Neobus.

On a parallel track, IC is developing a 45-foot, 55-seat conventional dual-rear-axle coach that will be purpose built in the U.S. by IC, a subsidiary of Navistar International Corp.

A prototype of the 45-foot coach was unveiled in October at the American Public Transportation Association EXPO in San Diego. (See Nov. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Even though the two coaches are being developed simultaneously and both will carry the IC nameplate, they apparently will be very different models except in one important aspect — they will use In-

ternational EGR engines.

International is the only major diesel engine maker that will not need to have urea added to the exhaust stream to comply with 2010 federal emissions standards.

All other 2010-compliant diesel engines will use urea-based selective catalytic reduction to meet the '10 emissions rules and to improve fuel economy.

The 39-foot IC coach will use International's midsize DT engine, while the 45-foot coach will use International's new MaxxForce 13 engine.

IC believes its non-urea engines will give it a competitive advantage, along with its network of truck dealers and service outlets.

IC says its 39-footer will be equipped with WiFi and laptop stations, outlets for plugging in computers or other electronic gear, recessed cup holders, audio/video gear, and other features.

IC executives have said they expect their coaches to be among the

safest on the road, suggesting among other things that belted seats likely will be standard equipment.

"The traveler in the future is going to request these features," says Ramses Banda, marketing manager of IC's bus product platform.

Banda also said the IC buses will be durable and serviceable.

"It gets a lot of miles," said Banda. "If you take care of it, you can get one million miles."

The engine is described as being fully accessible for maintenance. "You don't have to snake around the engine to do maintenance," Banda noted.

The 45-foot model will have stadium seating, rear-view cameras, a multi-disc CD/DVD player, and fully integrated dual air-conditioning and heating.

In the initial IC coaches, the International engines will be married to Allison transmissions and Dana axles. In the future, there will be a choice of transmissions.

## First Temsa coaches delivered

ORLANDO, Fla. — Temsa, the Turkish bus builder, and its North American distributor, Trident, announced the first delivery of Trident coaches to a U.S. customer.

The announcement came at the conclusion of UMA Motorcoach Expo here last month.

Cardinal Buses of Middlebury, Ind., has taken delivery of two Temsa TS 35 coaches.

The 38-seat Temsas are equipped with Caterpillar C9 engines, Cat CX28 transmissions and REI entertainment systems with four monitors and a DVD player.

Cardinal plans to utilize the Temsa TS 35 coaches to service all segments of its customer base as passenger capacity dictates.

Cardinal Buses is an 85-year-old coach operator and its president, Dan Shoup, is widely known in the industry for his technical and mechanical expertise. Cardinal is a UMA 20 Group member.

In its announcement, Temsa said it has a production and delivery schedule of 70 U.S. units between now and July.

The bus builder said many of its customers are interested in the 35-foot coach because of its maneu-

verability in heavy urban areas and because of increased customer demands for a smaller coach.

"Customers do not always need or require a 45-foot, 57-passenger product, but they do require all of the same luxury appointments that come with such a product. The Temsa TS 35 offers them just that," said Trident marketing director Brian Mumaw.

Temsa and Trident have set up a national parts center in Atlanta, and say they have enough inventory to service the first six months of deliveries.

A parts catalog is available now,

## BCI coach line expanding, 35-foot model on the way

ORLANDO, Fla. — Keying off of the success of its Falcon 45, Bus and Coach International is now turning to a smaller version of the coach in hopes of becoming a player in another segment of the charter-and-tour market.

Being readied for delivery in April or May is the Falcon 35, a big-ride, big-look, 35-foot coach the company hopes will attract operators looking for buses to accommodate the smaller tour-and-charter groups most carriers have been seeing the past few years.

"There's been a lot of downsizing in groups and we've gotten a lot of inquiries for it from our customers," said BCI's chief engineer, David Oldridge.

The Falcon 35 will offer many of the same features as its 45-foot sister, which BCI says has been very successful since its introduction three years ago.

"We've had very few issues with the Falcon 45 and it has been a very good bus for us," said Oldridge.

Both coaches have power trains using Caterpillar engines and transmissions, as well as safety packages that include the Bendix (formerly Eaton) VORAD anti-collision warning system, adaptive cruise control, backup camera and lap belts.

In addition, many of the components of the two coaches are cross compatible, making life easier for mechanics and parts managers at motorcoach companies with both models in their fleets.

"We couldn't make all of the components compatible but we've made as many as we could," said Oldridge.

Oldridge said select customers drove and road in the prototype 35-foot coach and critiqued it from front to back and top to bottom. Many of their suggestions — inte-

rior materials, rear-noise abatement, window design and restroom modifications among them — were incorporated into the production model.

"They had some great ideas and they all did a pretty good job for us," he noted.

Safety has been a key ingredient in BCI coaches since they were introduced and this year was no exception.

Standard equipment for both Falcon models includes the Vorad warning system that uses Doppler radar to sense when other vehicles get too close, the adaptive cruise control that alters the speed of the coach to match the speed of traffic and advanced braking capability that can stop the coach in shorter distances.

In addition, each seat is equipped with retractable lap belts and BCI plans to make three-point belts available on its 2010 models.

While the 2009 Falcon 45 has few changes from the previous year, both the 45 and 35 models will be seeing at least one major change next year. Because Caterpillar is getting out of the on-highway market in 2010, BCI says it will be switching to International MaxxForce engines.

However, Cat plans to continue producing automatic transmissions for buses, so BCI plans to stick with them for its two Falcon models.

Oldridge said he does not expect any problems making the switch, although the International engines are taller than the Cat motors, meaning some modifications to the engine compartments.



David Oldridge



Frank Sorvino of Trident, U.S. distributor of Temsa motorcoaches from Turkey, discusses the 35-footer with Warren Newton of Newton Bus Service in Gloucester, Va. with online capability coming in March.

A service network is being established with the first location

coming in Hawthorne, Calif., and future expansions to be completed within 12 months in New Jersey, Texas and Indiana.

# UMA elects three directors, to add Canadian director

## Association reaches members milestone

ORLANDO, Fla. — The United Motorcoach Association has added three new board members, and its members have voted unanimously to add a board member representing Canadian operators.

The association's board, meeting here last month at the conclusion of UMA Motorcoach Expo, heard a report that UMA's operator membership has climbed to 900 for the first time. New members recruited during Motorcoach Expo pushed the number of active (i.e. coach operator) members to the milestone.

The new UMA board members elected to three-year terms are:

- Brian Annett of Annett Bus Lines in Sebring, Fla. He was elected from UMA Region II and will help represent operators from Michigan to Florida and from Louisiana to Virginia.

- Autumn Dipert Brown of Dan Dipert Coaches in Arlington, Texas. She was elected from UMA Region I, which includes most states



Daryl Johnson



Brian Annett



Autumn Dipert Brown



Bob Hume

west of the Mississippi River.

- Tim Wayland of ABC Companies of Faribault, Minn. He was elected the coach-builder representative on the UMA board.

Annett succeeds Robert Hume, formerly of Travel Mates of Virginia in Harrisonburg. Hume is believed to hold the longevity record for a UMA board member, having served as a director for 15 years. He and his wife sold their company last year.

Brown succeeds Daryl Johnson of J&J Charters in Crosby, Texas, who served two terms on the board.

Wayland succeeds Bob Foley, who left ABC Companies last

year.

Four UMA directors were re-elected: Ralph Young of Young Transportation in Asheville, N.C.; Joan Libby of Cavalier Coach Trailways in Boston; Godfrey Lebron of Paradise Trailways in Hicksville, N.Y., and Tom Ready of Ready Bus Lines in LaCrescent, Minn.

At the association's annual meeting held in conjunction with Motorcoach Expo, UMA members ratified a board of directors' resolution that the bylaws be amended to add a 21st board member who would represent operators in Canada.

UMA officials noted that the association's Canadian member-

ship had grown and there was a need for a board member representing Canadian operators.

Next July and August, UMA will seek nominations for a Canadian board member, who will be elected in an open and contested election in the fall, and seated in January when the organization annually reconstitutes its board.

New UMA board member Brian Annett is president of the coach company bearing his family name. He transitioned the company to second-generation ownership seven years ago. He co-owns the company with his brother David.

He serves on the board of the Motorcoach Council, the Florida

Motorcoach Association and the Madison County (Fla.) Rotary Club.

New board member Autumn Dipert Brown has been active in the tourism and transportation industry since joining her family's business, Dan Dipert Coaches, in 1995, after receiving an MBA from Rice University in Houston.

Three years ago, she received the UMA Safety Leader of the Year Award. She was honored for the work she did developing a driver training program. She has been the human resources instructor for the Bus and Motorcoach Academy Clarence Cornell School of Business since its inception.

She currently serves on the board of the Arlington (Texas) Chamber of Commerce and has served on the Tarrant County Workforce Development Board.

Tim Wayland, the new coach-builder representative on the UMA board, was named senior vice president and chief financial officer of ABC Companies just over a year ago. During most of the 15 years he has been at ABC he also headed ABC Financial Services.

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## March of Dimes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

When Joshua was three months old, his parents, Lee and Melanie Hoffman, were told he would be blind.

The Hoffmans went into what Melanie Hoffman called "full-on battle mode" to get the finest care they could for Joshua, and doctors were able to save the vision in his left eye.

Two years later, Melanie got pregnant again and thanks to a progesterone-type hormone therapy, championed by the March of Dimes, her second pregnancy went almost to term and a healthy son, Alex, was born.

But it was the first words spoken by Joshua himself that wowed and captivated the Vision Award attendees.

"Good evening," he said. "I'm Joshua. I just turned six 11 days ago, and I LOVE BUSES."

Standing center stage on a banquet chair, and with minimal prompting from his mother, Joshua recounted to the spellbound audience his bus travel experiences. His first bus ride, he said, was when he was three when he went with a group on a field trip to a fire sta-

tion. This past summer, when he was five, he went to summer camp.

"One day, we went on a field trip to the zoo. And, do you know what we rode in? A motorcoach! The seats were so fluffy, and it was so cool how the air conditioning came out from the bottom of the windows. I felt so lucky to be able to ride in such a big, beautiful bus," Joshua told the crowd to great laughter.

He also told how the March of Dimes had done "so many wonderful things to save my life." He said the foundation had invented the surfactant that helped his lungs get "really strong, really fast, so I could breathe better."

"They built the (neonatal intensive care unit) where I lived for the first 111 days of my life.

"And my little brother Alex... wasn't born early like I was because of the amazing medicine shots my mommy got so she could stay pregnant for nine months."

Joshua, who is a state "ambassador" for the March of Dimes, thanked "everyone at the United Motorcoach Association for believing in the March of Dimes and for helping it give all babies a healthy start.



March of Dimes 'ambassador' Joshua Hoffman talks about his bus adventures as his mother, Melanie Hoffman, looks on.

"Even though my life started out pretty tough," he said, "it made me stronger. ... My dream is to be an architect. Maybe one day, I'll design new motorcoaches."

UMA presented senior March of Dimes executive Rob Lucas with a check for more than \$12,600 that was raised by a handful of UMA board members who participated in a pilot fund-raising project last year. (See Feb. 1 *Bus & Motor-*

*coach News.*)

The March of Dimes is establishing a website, [www.milesforbabies.org](http://www.milesforbabies.org), where coach operators and industry suppliers can sign up to participate in the Sept. 24 Miles for Babies fund-raising event.

Companies must register by the end of June to participate. UMA will be communicating with its members about the program throughout the year.

## New York idling

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

tighten the existing anti-idling law and expand regulatory authority to additional agencies. The move, he said, diminishes New York City's consumer-oriented focus.

"Coach USA transports almost seven million passengers a year in and out of New York City — a combination of commuters, local riders, consumers and tourists to partake in restaurants, theaters and shopping," Moser said.

The proposal comes at a time when the city has embarked on a significant initiative to increase tourism.

"This goes counter intuitive to what they're trying to do," Moser said.

Regarding the one-minute limit near schools, Moser said, "We do a lot of school transportation. With this, children will be getting into a bus in June or September that hasn't had an opportunity to cool down or in winter it might not be warm enough, which sometimes could be deemed unsafe conditions, especially in frigid weather."

What's more, Moser said, starting a bus and shutting it down numerous times is not the best way to

take care of the vehicle. "It seems they don't understand that a motorcoach is one of the most energy-efficient, environmentally friendly vehicles out there for transporting passengers," he said.

New York's elected officials should be focused on there not being enough bus-friendly parking facilities, Moser said, adding that the trend should be toward more public transportation as the nation tries to reduce its dependency on foreign oil.

"They seem to consider the bus an inconvenience," Moser said. "It's not the bus, it's the people inside the bus who won't be coming to the city. If you think they're going to get in their car and come back, they're not. New York City will lose some significant revenue."

Jerry Kremer, counsel to the Bus Association of New York State and a former member of the state legislature for 23 years, said BANY opposes the proposed measure, which he said was poorly drafted, on three grounds.

"It's difficult enough for the bus industry to park in New York City without more restrictions on where they can stand," Kremer said.

"Second, this legislation says buses can't idle near schools more

## UMA, NTA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

both time and money. With today's economy, the financial implications are even more important.

"Bringing our two conventions together makes perfect sense — there's little duplication among our memberships and yet we clearly need each other in the tour business. Each of our members will be exposed to new products and because our shows are so different — this will create a new energy and new business possibilities and build on the synergies that already exist," said Michalewicz.

"UMA has already co-located with several other organizations, which has proven successful, and next year, NTA will be joined by the World Religious Travel Association, bringing the world of faith-based tourism to NTA members.

"Bringing all of these shows together will not only provide more and better business, but it will result in cost-effective buying and selling, now... and into the future.

"We are excited to partner with UMA and explore this new combined convention and we look forward to a long and prosperous relationship," Michalewicz added.

The boards of both organizations approved the co-location initiative.



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# Top ABA positions go to Craig Lentzsch, Jim Jalbert

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Long-time motorcoach industry executive Craig Lentzsch has been elected chairman of the American Bus Association.

Lentzsch is the former president and CEO of Greyhound Lines (1994-2003) and Coach America (2003-07), and chief financial officer of MCI prior to his years at Greyhound.

Since leaving Dallas-based Coach America, he has remained on that company's board of directors.

Lentzsch succeeds outgoing ABA Chairman Doug Anderson, president of Anderson Coach & Travel in Greenville, Pa.

Succeeding Lentzsch as ABA's vice chairman is Jim Jalbert, president of C&J, a coach company based in Portsmouth, N.H. Lentzsch and Jalbert will serve two-year terms.

"I am honored to serve ABA and its members as we work to show policymakers how motorcoaches are part of the transportation solution," said Lentzsch. "With the 2009 highway reauthorization bill coming up, we must deliver the message of how buses, unlike any other travel mode, are uniquely deployable across the country."

Added Jalbert: "We are the greenest way to travel. We offer hassle-free, convenient, affordable, customer-driven service. We infuse

tourism dollars into every destination, helping to create jobs and drive local economies."

New ABA board members are Michael Colborne, president and CEO of Pacific Western Transportation in Calgary, Alberta; Bryan Cole, president of Super Holiday Tours in Orlando, Fla.; Ripley Hunter, president of WorldPass Travel Group in El Dorado Hills, Calif.; Stephanie Lee, CEO of Group Sales Box Office in New York; Ruth Mensch, of Premier Alaska Tours in Anchorage; Albert Spence, president of A.S. Midway Trailways in Baltimore, and Linda Spruill, sales manager at the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino in Biloxi, Miss.

Twelve directors were re-elected and two left the board, Bill Bergstrom and Charlie Neal.

Frank Montgomery III, president of Capitol Motor Lines Inc. in Montgomery, Ala., was named Marketplace chairman for 2010.

The board members were elected unanimously by a voice vote of ABA members at the association's annual meeting held in conjunction with the 2009 Marketplace here.



Craig Lentzsch

## People

**Peter Pan Bus Lines** of Springfield, Mass., has named two vice presidents and a director of human resources.

Company President *Peter Picknelly* announced the appointment of *Frank Farrow* as vice president, corporate relations, and *Bruce Westcott* as vice president of business development.

At the same time, *Joanne Berwald* joined Peter Pan as human resources director. Berwald previously was director of human resources and vice president of operations at **Buxton Co.** She is a graduate of Springfield College.

Farrow has worked at Peter Pan, primarily in operations and regional management, since 1994. Most recently, he was vice president, business development. He was with **Greyhound Lines** for 20 years before joining Peter Pan.

In his new job he handles labor matters, including serving as the chief negotiator for all company labor agreements. He also oversees the central and southern district of Peter Pan, including its main oper-

ations from the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City.

Westcott joined Peter Pan Enterprises from **The Stanley Works**, where he was executive vice president. In his new job he is responsible for sales and marketing strategies for Peter Pan Bus Lines and two Peter Pan-owned companies, **Camfour-Hill Country** and **Belt Technologies**.

*Brian Pinckney* has joined **Daimler Buses North America** of Greensboro, N.C.

In his new position, Pinckney will be southeast regional sales manager, overseeing new motorcoach sales efforts of the Setra S 417 motorcoach in the southeastern U.S.

"Brian has a tremendous reputation in the motorcoach industry and he will be a great addition to our Setra sales team," said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for Daimler Buses North America.

Pinckney joins Daimler from **ABC Companies** with a background that includes 14 years of motorcoach sales experience. He is a graduate of Georgia Tech with a degree in management.

## Calendar

### FEBRUARY 2009

**15-18 North Carolina Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting**, Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke, Va. Info: Go to [www.ncmotorcoach.org](http://www.ncmotorcoach.org), or call (336) 495-4970.

**16-18 California Bus Association Spring Maintenance Seminar**, Classic Charter, Visalia, Calif. Info: [www.cbabus.com](http://www.cbabus.com).

**23-24 Motorcoach Association of South Carolina Annual Coach Rodeo**, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Info: [www.scmotorcoach.org](http://www.scmotorcoach.org).

### MARCH 2009

**1-4 Trailways Transportation System 2009 Conference and Meeting**, Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort & Spa, San Antonio, Texas. Info: Go to [www.trailways.com](http://www.trailways.com), or call (703) 691-3052.

**2-4 12th Annual Pacific Bus Expo/Aloha Bus Maintenance Forum**, Hilton Waikiki Prince Kuhio, Honolulu. Info: (808) 834-1417.

**5 MCI Customer First Event**, Houston. Info: [www.mcicoach.com](http://www.mcicoach.com).

**5-6 CVSA Bus Safety Summit**, Hyatt Regency, Crystal City, Va. Info: Go to [www.cvsa.org](http://www.cvsa.org).

**12-13 ABC Bus Collision Workshop**, Winter Garden, Fla. Info: (800) 222-2871.

**22-23 Pennsylvania Bus Association Marketing to the Motorcoach Industry Seminar**, Holiday Inn, Grantville, Pa. Info: Go to [www.pabus.org](http://www.pabus.org).

**23 Pennsylvania Bus Association Drivers and Employees of Distinction Awards Program**, Holiday Inn, Grantville, Pa. Info: Go to [www.pabus.org](http://www.pabus.org).

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