

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Expo exceeds expectations with higher attendance, sales

UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

MOTORCOACH EXPO 2016



Photos by David Braun Photography, Las Vegas

UMA Expo 2016 in Atlanta was considered a success, with a sold-out exhibit floor and a waiting list. Inside are 13 pages of Expo news and photos.

ATLANTA — UMA Motorcoach Expo 2016 exceeded expectations in almost every way, from attendance and exhibitor numbers to sales and coach deliveries.

Even Mother Nature cooperated, sending temperatures into the above-normal 70s and allowing only one rainy day.

“We’ve topped New Orleans,” said UMA President and CEO Victor Parra, noting that attendance this year was up about 5 percent over Expo 2015. “In fact, we had to order extra food.”

Parra said he sensed an overall positive atmosphere among Expo attendees and exhibitors, indicating that the motorcoach industry is

on the upswing after some lean years.

“There is a strong buzz here that things are getting better,” he said. “There are encouraging signs. OEMs are selling more buses.”

Larry Hundt of Great Canadian Holidays & Coaches in Ontario, a UMA board member and chairman of its Expo Committee, said there had been concerns that the Atlanta Expo would experience a decline in attendance after last year’s New Orleans event, which saw attendance rise by nearly 20 percent from the previous year.

“But the show this year has

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California’s draconian rules turning state into ‘bus hell’

ATLANTA — When it comes to laws and regulations, California always seems to be the busiest state.

“I have heard it called ‘bus hell,’” said Dale Krapf, chairman of the United Motorcoach Association’s legislative and regulatory committee, while presiding over the State Association Summit at Motorcoach Expo 2016.

The California legislature was a recurring topic during Expo for two proposed laws that would affect the motorcoach industry.

One would dictate drastic physical modifications to motorcoaches used in charter transportation, far exceeding federal standards. The other would greatly increase California Highway Patrol (CHP) inspections of tour buses and fund inspections by adopting “bus terminal inspection fees.”

Laws planted in California often spread east into other states, many were heard to say.

“California is California. I don’t know how to put it,” said

Tony Fiorini of Silverado Stages in Placentia, Calif., president of the California Bus Association.

“The legislators are there to do what they can for the state. Sometimes they go off without looking. In these cases, they don’t look at the scientific evaluations that have been done, the work that has been done by FMCSA (the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration),” he said.

The bus modification law was drawn from the National Transportation Safety Board’s recommendations resulting from the 2014 crossover crash of a double-trailer truck into a motorcoach carrying 45 passengers.

The Federal Express truck-tractor combination crossed a 58-foot-wide median on Interstate 5 near Orland in northern California. The truck sideswiped a passenger car before hitting a Silverado Stages motorcoach head-on.

The collision ruptured a fuel

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Prevast optimistic about transit

SAINTE-CLAIRE, Quebec — A little more than a year ago, Prevast’s marketing director, Michael Power, characterized a newly opened production line in upstate New York for building X3-45 commuter coaches as a turning point for the company.

After its first full year of production in 2015, it proved to be just that, Power said of the plant in Plattsburgh, which turned out its first coach in late 2014, thrusting Prevast into the public transit market long dominated by Motor Coach Industries.

“Obviously, going forward, it’s just solidified our commitment to the U.S. market,” Power said of the plant, which soon will have its first federal Buy American Act vehicles

coming off the line.

The plant produced more than 200 Prevast X3-45s for the public market in 2015, Power said, calling it a great achievement. Vehicles coming off the line have been among 300 ordered by the Metropolitan Transit Authority in New York City.

“A couple years ago, you would have probably asked us, ‘What do you think of the public market?’ We would have said, ‘Well, we’re not aiming for that, that’s not in our niche,’” Power said.

“But to tell you the truth, once we decided that we could be one of the main focuses, we have gotten great traction and we’re very pleased. We’ve also gotten a lot of great feedback from the different

transit agencies. They are very pleased to see us in the market because obviously now we’re giving them a choice.”

With the MTA contract winding down in April, Prevast may have to slow production on the line and lay off some employees, but neither the line nor the plant in which it’s located, operated by Prevast sister company Nova Bus, will close, Power said. Prevast is working hard to get new contracts to keep the line as busy as possible the rest of 2016 while it works to



Michael Power

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UMA members encouraged to attend Capitol Hill Days

ATLANTA — If last year's Capitol Hill Days proved anything, it's that a coordinated lobbying effort by the motorcoach industry can be quite effective.

Largely as a result of a record number of United Motorcoach Association members visiting with their representatives in Washington, D.C., during the event last March, the industry was successful in convincing Congress to kill regulations that would have hurt operators and to pass legislation

favorable to the industry.

One of the industry's greatest victories came when Congress restricted the ability of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to significantly raise insurance minimums required of motorcoach operators.

Congress also ordered FMCSA to revamp its controversial safety rating system.

"This year we have some good news from Washington, D.C.," Becky Weber, managing director

of the Prime Policy Group, said during the annual legislative update session at Motorcoach Expo 2016 in Atlanta.

"2015 was a good year," said Weber, who provides government relations and lobbying services to UMA.

UMA officials are hoping that enough members got the message and will join them in Washington for the 2016 Capitol Hill Days, also known as "fly-in," which will be held April 12-13.

"Our whole legislative effort has exploded," said Brian Annett, who completed his term as chairman of the UMA board of directors at Expo, adding that Capitol Hill Days was a major part of that effort.

"Fly-in is a great event and it's making a difference," Annett said during the UMA Active Member Meeting at Expo. "I know it's a busy time of the year, but we need you."

Last year's Capitol Hill Days drew record attendance, with UMA dispatching 80 members to

418 appointments in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. That was up from 57 members and 284 meetings in 2014.

"We still have a full plate of issues we want to accomplish," UMA President and CEO Victor Parra said in encouraging members to attend this year's fly-in.

Information about this year's Capitol Hill Days, along with a registration form, is included in an insert in this edition of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.

Bus industry expert Jim Seal remembered as 'go-to guy'

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — Jim Seal, a well-known and respected bus industry consultant, passed away last month after a long battle with cancer. He was 69.

Colleagues described Seal as a knowledgeable and passionate bus industry expert whose advice was regularly sought by industry officials around the country.

"Jim was truly passionate about our industry and his perspective on public transit was unique," said Ken Presley, vice president and chief operating officer of the Unit-

ed Motorcoach Association. "He was a real go-to guy when you needed background or perspective. I miss him already."

Seal was born July 17, 1946, and grew up in South Central Los Angeles, where he took piano lessons and acquired a taste for jazz that would last a lifetime and lead to a large record collection.

His greatest pleasure was taking a trolley car downtown with his mother or grandmother to shop on Broadway.

After graduating from high

school and briefly attending the University of San Francisco, Seal hit the road in a Chevy and worked at various jobs, including as a circus roustabout. He lived for a time in Detroit and then New York City before joining a Venceremos Brigade and spending a month cutting sugar cane in Cuba.

Upon his return to New York, Seal met his wife-to-be, Kathy, and they moved to Los Angeles and worked on auto industry assembly lines.

Seal eventually moved into the

bus industry, first as a driver then in management at Commuter Bus Lines in Lynwood, Calif. He attended meetings of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission and soon organized private bus companies into the Bus Association of Southern California, helping them compete for transit contracts.

Later he helped form the Association of Independent Rail Passenger Operators, which promotes competition for intercity rail operations, and helped fashion the or-

ganization's legislation and policy goals. Seal also worked as a consultant to the California Bus Association and to bus and rail companies.

He is survived by his wife, Kathy, and their sons Jeff and Zach. His family said a memorial service would be held sometime in April or May.



Jim Seal

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THE DOCKET

California facing major funding cuts for roads, transit

SACRAMENTO — Faced with plummeting gasoline tax revenue, California transportation officials have announced plans to cut funding for road and transit projects by \$754 million over the next five years, the greatest reduction in two decades.

The 38 percent reduction was approved by the California Transportation Commission on the same day that Gov. Jerry Brown called on state lawmakers to end the gridlock in negotiations over new taxes and fees for transportation projects.

“What this means is that almost every county in California

that relies on this source of funding for projects that improve traffic and air quality will have to cut or delay projects indefinitely,” said Lucy Dunn, chairwoman of the commission.

She warned of “even more draconian cuts next year” if funding sources under consideration by lawmakers do not improve transportation finances.

The commission allocates money raised through the state gasoline excise tax to counties for intercity rail, state highway improvements and county transit projects.

The rate of the tax is tied to gas

prices, which have been dropping. It was set at 18 cents a gallon just a few years ago, but fell to 12 cents a gallon last year and is expected to decline to 10 cents in July.

Each penny reduction in the gas tax decreases funding for state transportation projects by \$140 million a year.

Because of the funding cut, the state for the first time in a decade was asking counties to terminate some of the 200-plus projects previously offered funding, according to Susan Bransen, chief deputy director for the commission. Past cuts have resulted only in projects

being delayed, she said.

Local agencies, including the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, have been asked to come up with a list of projects to be deleted or delayed, Bransen said.

For L.A. County, \$191 million in road and rail projects potentially could be delayed or terminated — including \$129.4 million allocated for the purchase of light rail vehicles, \$7 million for a Burbank Airport/rail station pedestrian bridge project, and money for the widening of two stretches of Route 138.

The state panel’s action in-

creases pressure on legislators who have been unable to agree on new transportation funding during a special session called by the governor last year.

“We have no choice but to maintain our transportation infrastructure,” Brown told lawmakers. “Yet, doing so without an expanded and permanent revenue source is impossible. That means at some point, sooner rather than later, we have to bite the bullet and enact new fees and taxes for this purpose.”

Some Republican, however, said the needs can be met without raising taxes.

Curbside bus companies could be in for more scrutiny

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Megabus and other intercity bus companies are falling under scrutiny from federal regulators for safety violations.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration said it is considering requiring annual inspections for curbside bus operators that the agency says have a history of skirting safety require-

ments and are more likely to be involved in crashes.

The FMCSA expressed concern about curbside bus companies that drop passengers off on street corners, rather than at a city’s main bus station. The agency said it is particularly concerned that curbside bus drivers are more likely to skirt fatigue rules and endanger their passengers.

FMCSA is looking to put these curbside bus operators through annual safety fitness assessments, it said in the *Federal Register*.

The inspections would not apply to traditional bus operators like Greyhound or public transit buses, but they could hit companies like Megabus and BoltBus.

“Motorcoach safety received increased public attention after

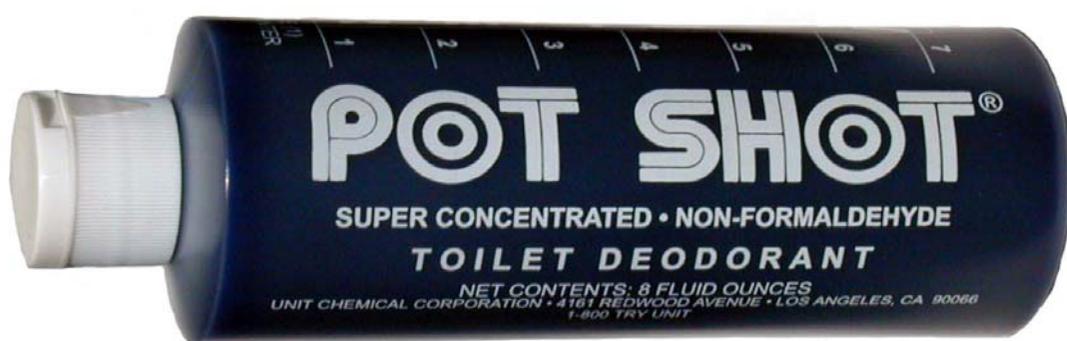
several serious crashes during 2011, some of which involved ‘curbside’ bus operators, passenger carrier operations often characterized by high passenger loads with service between urban areas,” the agency wrote.

The focus on curbside bus operators was prompted by a 2011 study by the National Transportation Safety Board, which found

these buses are more likely to be involved in fatal accidents due to driver fatigue.

The FMCSA is proposing the safety inspections for bus companies that pick up or drop off passengers at street corners and parking lots during at least 25 percent of the company’s trips.

The public has 60 days to comment.



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No weigh station stops in S. Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. — South Dakota seems to be bucking the recent trend toward states requiring motorcoaches to pull over at weigh stations, even if there are signs saying otherwise.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol recently issued the following statement in regards to motorcoaches traveling in state, much to the delight of the charter and tour bus industry:

“Motorcoach buses will not be required to stop at the ports of entries, other scale facilities, or roadside inspection sites. They are certainly allowed to stop if in need of any permits.

“There is currently some existing signage roadside that will state buses must stop, but they will be removed as soon as practical, and these buses will not be pulled over by law enforcement for not stopping at these sites.”



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PrevoSt

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

get contracts that it's hopeful will keep the line humming in 2017 and beyond.

It has a couple small Buy America Act contracts scheduled for the plant after the MTA buses are done.

With more federal funds for transit opening up through passage of the new highway bill last year, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation, or FAST Act, the future for that segment in coming years looks good, Power said.

Jack Forbes, PrevoSt vice president of public sector and corporate accounts, also is optimistic about future business for the plant

"We're looking at, in the fall, several contracts that are going to be coming up, bids are going to be out in the spring, that should be able to fulfill us all the way through — if we're successful obviously, we have to compete — but fulfill us (in) 2017-18," Forbes said. "There's enough business certainly. With the new highway bill coming through it's going to be very good for us. We have a clear radar of what's out there, what bids are coming forward ... replacement cycles, things like that."

Full production?

PrevoSt is working to bridge the production gap this year until those future orders hopefully materialize, he said.

"We're pretty comfortable moving into next year that we're going to have a full production" at the New York plant, Forbes said.

Quebec-based PrevoSt, which is owned by Volvo of Sweden and distributes the Volvo 9700, fills about 30 percent of the North American motorcoach market.

Overall business for PrevoSt is stronger, with good comments from

customers about health in their markets and PrevoSt's order book is at a level not seen in more than a decade, Power said. He cited more strength in the U.S. than in Canada, particularly western Canada, which has been affected by a slowdown in the oil-sands market.

"Obviously, I think that 2015 was an excellent year for us and we're very, very pleased overall on the outcome," he said, adding that "2016 for us looks extremely positive and we're very, very pleased with that."

Blown away

At UMA Motorcoach Expo in Atlanta, Power said the new entertainment system on the PrevoSt H3-45 was "blowing people away." It includes high-definition monitors and connectivity options for music, movies and presentations, and an improved sound system.

"It's a tool that could be used by tour guides, by the group leaders, by the operators and drivers," he said.

Vehicles have been wired throughout with HDMI high-end automotive grade wiring and the entertainment system has been opened up.

"We have really just offered to the operator a way of connecting whatever type of media center that they would like to, or whatever type of platform for whatever type of handheld device that they would like to, into the entertainment system," Power said.

While PrevoSt has improved a number of components on its models, neither it nor Volvo plans any new models in the next year or so.

"But going forward, obviously, we're looking at different opportunities and, yes, we do have a couple on the radar," Power said.

While the Volvo 9700 was introduced in 2009, it has undergone

'2015 was an excellent year for us and we're very, very pleased overall on the outcome'

recent changes that are being well-received, Power said.

"When we introduced the 9700 initially, we introduced it with a semiautomatic, the I-Shift transmission, which is a very good transmission and it's built to work with the Volvo engine, obviously," Power said.

The I-Shift is a 12-speed automated manual transmission designed to maximize passenger comfort, safety and fuel efficiency.

But many customers requested an automatic transmission and Volvo responded last year with an option for a 9700 with an automatic transmission by Allison matched with the Volvo D13 engine, he said. So customers now have the choice of a 9700 with an Allison or I-Shift.

Drives like a car

"So we are trying now in 2016 to make sure that our customers, that all customers in the industry, have had a chance to revisit the 9700 and try it and test it, drive it with the Allison transmission," he said. "I think that they'll be very pleasantly surprised. We have customers that tell us it's the best-driving vehicle out there for the driver; it drives like a car."

In the last couple years, PrevoSt and Volvo also have been getting good feedback on the Volvo D13 engine first introduced in 2008,

which has proved popular in performance, fuel economy and reliability, all while meeting the latest EPA standards, so PrevoSt has been promoting that as well.

Volvo 9700 changes

"We've done a couple of these introductions and changes that have really been well received" by customers, Power said.

Other changes to the 9700 have included a bathroom adjustment to provide more room inside and easier entry and exit.

Also a big focus for the company has been its PRIME energy management system for the Volvo and PrevoSt platforms. PRIME stands for Power Recovery by Intelligent Management of Energy. It reduces fuel consumption by using the engine downtime to charge the batteries and compress air, according to the company.

In a stop-and-go environment, PRIME can generate anywhere from 2 to 4 percent fuel economy, Power said.

"That's been a big one for us and there's a road map going forward with that, so we're obviously going to be focusing on that," he said. "I can't necessarily go into too many details right now, but stay tuned because we're going to have a lot of things being introduced" in the PRIME category in the next year or two.

On the service front, PrevoSt continues its commitment and expansion, he said. It now has 45 service trucks throughout the U.S. and Canada available to help customers. It also works with more than 160 service providers.

"It started with one or two service trucks just a few years ago and it's just expanded exponentially," he said.

PrevoSt also has continued to expand its tablet and smartphone

applications, equipping its sales team with a large suite of apps, he said.

There are different applications "to really help the customers understand the value of the products, how to build specifications, what option's better in their condition or environment and all of these things are available through the regional sales manager at PrevoSt, to consult, to help our customers understand what is the best configuration for their vehicle," Power said.

PrevoSt also has a new interior design app to help customers create a virtual interior before placing the final order.

"Our customers can talk to us for hours about engines and transmissions and axles and so on, but when it comes to the interior of the vehicle, then they are starting to ask other people" for help, he said.

Visual rendering

"So we thought it would be very positive to have a tool, a virtual tool, that our customers can see on the spot how the vehicle will look," he said. "So they can do the whole interior, the seats, the sidewalls, ceiling, put options on the seats, footrests and magazine pockets, things like that, so that they can create a visual rendering of the interior of the vehicle."

In the conversion market, PrevoSt also has been enjoying its NASCAR affiliation as the Official Luxury Motorcoach of NASCAR since 2013. PrevoSt noted in the announcement then that its motorcoaches are fixtures at NASCAR events, populating driver, team owner and spectator motorcoach campgrounds and compounds.

"We're an official sponsor of NASCAR and that has been overwhelming, the sheer response that we're getting, the visibility," Power said.

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If you sell your bus to a terrorist, take your name off

By Dave Millhouser

I am a *bad* man, but you knew that. In ye olden days when I sold buses, I scrutinized news accounts of accidents in case one of my customers might need a new coach.

Fires could be productive too. I'd squint at the news photos, trying to read company names on broken buses.

Even in retirement, I still follow accidents, but now in hopes that they don't involve friends.

In early November a coach left the road and rammed an overpass near Little Rock, Ark., killing six people and injuring lots more. Bus accidents are always tragic, and industry people read the accounts with an eye towards learning from them, trying to make sure we don't make the same mistakes.

The initial accounts of this one were sadly similar to others — early morning hours, bus left highway, driver fatigue suspected.

In this case, there were at least two quirks.

It was a surprise to me (and I bet many of you) that vehicles hauling migrant farm workers are

not subject to the same regulations as commercial bus lines. Who'd a thunk that migrant workers deserved less protection than we civilians?

I was once friendly with a family that owned an orchard in New Jersey. They depended on migrants to harvest their crops and consistently expressed enormous respect for the crew that annually showed up to pick apples and peaches, bragging about what hard workers, and good people, they were.

My guess is that if we had more migrant farm workers and fewer "public servants" we'd be better off because farm workers only get paid for what they actually produce.

But I digress.

The other thing that jumped out from the Arkansas accident was the fact that the company name on the wrecked bus was not the current owner. A Florida company specializing in transporting migrants had just bought the coach and hadn't removed the lettering.

The charter operator that sold the coach quickly produced the bill of sale, which stated the buyer

"must remove lettering on bus before running bus," but a ton of damage has been done to their reputation and, perhaps, their wallet.

Wanna bet some lawyer will try and link lettering to deaths? The bus company is insured, but the actual owner might not be.

The real point here is that when you sell a bus take your name (and DOT number) off it. Aw geez, you knew that. Even if you're selling to someone you know is trustworthy you can understand the temptation to delay removal for a day or so to get in a revenue trip.

No hairdryers

Most lettering today is decals — heck, you can heat-gun those suckers off. Do NOT use your wife's hairdryer and do NOT ask how I know that.

If the lettering is real paint (or your spouse is bald and doesn't own a hairdryer), take a can of spray paint and obliterate your name.

Years ago I asked a customer about the origin of his company's unusual name. He said he'd started with a couple of used Eagles he

bought from a defunct operator. He loved the paint scheme and didn't want to ruin it, so he simply replaced the first letter of the seller's name. That became the name of his new company.

Which raises another consideration. If you have a distinctive graphics scheme or logo, consider trademarking it and remove it before you sell a bus (unless you agree to let the buyer use it).

A manufacturer once built two buses in a prominent company's distinctive livery, only to realize that the order was only for one bus. The company was in the West, and the second bus, with the logo intact, was sold to a Florida operator. What could go wrong?

A multi-week western tour is what, and when the Florida bus pulled into the western guy's facility for a wash and lav dump, sparks flew.

The western operator didn't want its carefully maintained reputation blurred by someone with similar coaches, but it hadn't trademarked its graphics.

A recent news photo sort of crystallized the importance of ap-

pearances. A Texas plumber traded his pickup for a new one and was stunned when he began getting hundreds of angry phone calls. It seems that his old truck was now in Syria with a big machine gun mounted on its bed and used for fighting by Islamic militants.

The angry callers were sure it was his pickup because his name and phone number were still on it. Apparently the dealer had not removed his graphics before selling the truck. Advertising is good, but in this case it's a safe bet he's not getting any plumbing referrals from ISIS.

Make sure your coaches are stripped. If the bad guys can stick a machine gun on a pickup, imagine what they can mount on a motorcoach.

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him by email at Davemillhouser@gmail.com.



Dave Millhouser

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MOTORCOACH EXPO 2016

Keep an eye on legislatures, state associations warn

ATLANTA – Busy state legislators were the talk of the roundtable as Motorcoach Expo 2016 kicked off with the annual UMA State Association Summit at the Georgia World Congress Center.

“Based on the feedback we are getting at UMA, some of the state legislatures have really been busy with new regulations and new activities,” said Dale Krapf, chairman of the association’s legislative and regulatory committee.

Several speakers, however, noted successful efforts to overturn or modify legislation by lobbying legislators across their states.

“My point is — make sure you are up on everything that is happening in your state. Be active,

participate and work together,” said Tom Cassaza of Starline Luxury Coaches in Seattle, who represented the Northwest Motorcoach Association.

The perennial issue of taxation has taken a new twist as many states are considering fuel tax increases to offset the lack of federal funding for road and bridge repairs.

However, noted UMA President and CEO Victor Parra, Congress recently passed the first long-term highway funding bill in more than 10 years. It was signed into law by President Obama in December.

“In the past year we have seen a number of states increase their fuel taxes, mostly in anticipation

that Congress wouldn’t do anything with highway spending with the quagmire Congress has been battling through the last couple of years,” Parra said. “We were all surprised when the 114th Congress actually did come up with a \$305 billion, five-year reauthorization bill called the FAST Act, which stands for Fixing America’s Surface Transportation.”

Upon passage of the bill, the Federal Highway Administration announced, “States and local governments may now move forward with critical transportation projects, like new highways and transit lines, with the confidence that they will have a federal partner over the long term.”

Additional state funding still

may be necessary, particularly in states that have not raised fuel taxes in decades.

In New Jersey, “The major issue is the transportation trust fund and how we are going to fix our crumbling infrastructure with a gas-tax increase,” said Tim Stout of Stout’s Transportation and the New Jersey Motorcoach Association.

A bill is being introduced to increase fuel taxes by a dime in South Carolina, from 16 cents to 26 cents, said Buddy Young of Capitol Bus Lines, past president of the Motorcoach Association of South Carolina.

“This was tried two years ago,” Young said. “This time they are offsetting the increase in fuel tax

by relief in personal property taxes to try to make it more palatable. There is a lot of smoke and mirrors. I am not sure where this is going to go.”

Sales tax win

Swift action by Pennsylvania operators saved their sales tax exemption, said Elaine Farrell, executive director of the Pennsylvania Bus Association.

“Currently motorcoaches and any parts that go on them are exempt from the 6 percent state sales tax,” she said. “When we heard that we were on the list to lose that exemption, our members went to work and called their legislators. They did a fabulous job and that is

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‘Beyond Compliance’ must be fair to small operators

ATLANTA — Fairness and cost concerns were prevalent comments voiced to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration officials soliciting input on FMCSA’s pending Beyond Compliance program during an opening-day listening session at the UMA Motorcoach Expo here.

FMCSA officials, including Acting Director Scott Darling, took input from motorcoach operators, consultants and others over two hours of civil discourse.

Congress requires FMCSA to create a Beyond Compliance program to give carriers recognition, including credit in the Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) program, for voluntarily using advanced technologies or enhanced driver fitness measures.

FMCSA may authorize qualified entities to monitor motor carriers that receive recognition, including credit or an improved Safety Measurement System (SMS) percentile.

“Public input is essential to the success of this program,” Darling told the packed meeting room at the Georgia World Congress Center.

FMCSA later this year plans to publish a Federal Register notice proposing a program and soliciting input on its details and design, he said.

Beyond Compliance “would include voluntary programs or



Anthony Griffith of A.W. Griffith Transportation Consulting LLC in Springfield Gardens, N.Y., tells FMCSA officials that old-school driver training is as important to safety as new technology.

technologies implemented by motorcoach carriers that exceed regulatory requirements and improve the safety of commercial motor vehicles and commercial driver’s license holders operating on our nation’s roads,” Darling said.

FMCSA sought input on three questions:

- What voluntary technologies or safety program best practices would be appropriate for Beyond Compliance?
- What type of incentives would encourage motor carriers to invest in technologies and best practices programs?
- How would FMCSA verify

that the voluntary technologies or safety programs are being implemented?

“We’re for it, just as long as the playing field is level,” Timothy Wilson of AP Xpress Bus Co. in Capitol Heights, Md., told FMCSA officials. “One of the harder parts of being a small operator is being able to afford a lot of the technologies that are out there that some of our large carriers can afford.”

Incentives for additional safety enhancements could include credit on SMS scores or perhaps a point system on safety ratings similar to how some driving records allow good points to offset bad ones, he said.

Grant opportunities

Marcia Milton of First Priority Trailways in District Heights, Md., said small operators don’t mind new technologies and doing things differently, “but when you’re already concerned about your bottom line and then you get new things, I think that we need to look into grant opportunities designated for small operators.

“So I think specifically if we could do something to help small operators get the funding that they need to do these innovations, I don’t think it would be a problem, but we just have to put more emphasis on funding to carry out the

operations,” Milton said.

Gladys Gillis of Starline Luxury Coaches in Seattle and Wheatland Express in Pullman, Wash., also expressed concern about the cost of safety technology, for small operators in particular.

“The forward-facing radar and lane-departure technologies I think are excellent technologies for attacking...cognitive distraction,” she said. That kind of technology is a “terrific accoutrement to an overall compliance or safety plan; however, it’s very expensive. That technology is more like \$3,000 per bus and across a small fleet of 10, that’s \$30,000 – that’s a huge thing to a small operator.”

Those are costs operators can’t pass on to customers in such a cost-competitive industry, Gillis said. Simulators for driver training also are attractive, but costly, she said.

Loretta Bitner, chief of FMCSA’s passenger carrier safety division, asked Gillis about best-safety practices, including those that may not use technology.

Non-tech solutions

Gillis outlined her programs, including requiring drivers to take annual snow training, using drive-cams to evaluate drivers, employing a full-time safety person, requiring nine hours between driver movements instead of the mandated

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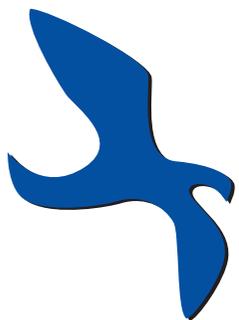
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Young says motorcoach industry helped Atlanta grow

ATLANTA – Civil rights leader, congressman, U.S. ambassador and former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young welcomed Motorcoach Expo 2016 to his city with an inspirational speech about America and the role motorcoaches play in shaping the country.

“I don’t think you can grow up in America without having some exciting experiences on a motorcoach,” Young said. “At 14 I was business manager of our band in New Orleans and I had to charter a motorcoach to get us to Little Rock, Ark., for a band contest.”

That trip, he said, “is when I ceased to be a child. I didn’t get to be a man, but the trip from New Orleans to Little Rock took us through the scenery of this great country. It gave young people a chance to realize that they were not limited by place of birth. It opened up all kinds of horizons that you can only see if you get out of your comfort zone and begin to travel around this great nation.”

“I have been fortunate to do a lot of traveling, and amongst the most meaningful travels have been on a motorcoach,” Young told Expo attendees at a breakfast meeting.

“I was blessed with my wife right after college to be selected to go to Europe to help build refugee camps for people who were coming in from the communist countries into Germany and Austria in 1953. We were

able to drive around Europe, students from 14 different nations. We got a view of the world. When I look back on my life, so much of it happened in the back of a bus.”

Young, 83, was introduced by United Motorcoach Association President and CEO Victor Parra.

“We all know Ambassador Young is a truly extraordinary person,” Parra said. “First, he helped write the Civil Rights Act of 1964, then the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He was then persuaded to run for Congress. After that President Carter tapped him to be the ambassador to the United Nations. Then he served as the mayor of Atlanta.”

As mayor, Young said, he realized the central role of transportation in the remarkable development of Atlanta. Air transportation was the major catalyst, he admitted, but the motorcoach industry was essential, too.

“You have helped make this city what it is today,” he said.

“Before I became mayor, this city decided that it had to be the center of the South. The business community understood that Atlanta had to move fast because we were in a neck-and-neck competition with almost every other city in the South,” he said.

“The critical decision that was made by this business group was that in order to move forward we had to move forward black and white together. We had a coalition be-

tween the business community and the black colleges.”

Those leaders decided to use tourism and convention business to drive growth. “We understood that if we can get people to come here and visit, if we treat you right and you like us, you will come back. You might think this would not be a bad place to live and do business.”

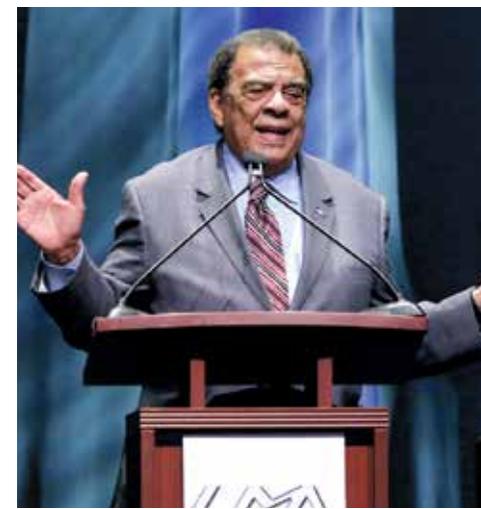
The foundations of that strategy, Young said, were “the airport, the highways and the motorcoach industry.”

The strategy has succeeded.

“I look at Detroit — they were 6 million people and we were 1 million people in 1970. Now we are 6.5 million people and they are 1 million people. They have all kinds of resources; they had the whole automobile industry. We didn’t have anything but brains and dirt,” he said.

“We were very proud when we would get 5,000 visitors a year. Now there are 49 million. In the middle, there has always been the motorcoach industry. Conventions work when everybody doesn’t have to have a car to get to the meeting.”

Buses and motorcoaches enabled Atlanta to smoothly handle visitors during the 1988 Democratic Party convention and the 1996 summer Olympics, which brought 2 million visitors to see athletes from 200 countries.



Andrew Young

“We had the largest Olympics in history. We said people would not even need to bring a car,” Young said. “We will set up a motorcoach operation from every hotel to every venue. And when you buy your tickets you not only buy your hotel rooms, you buy your motorcoach pass and you buy everything else you need to get back and forth to make this work.”

Buses and motorcoaches drive the region’s economy today, too.

“When you take people back and forth from community to community, you are creating jobs, you are creating vision, you are creating opportunities.”



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Industry standouts recognized at Motorcoach Expo

ATLANTA — The United Motorcoach Association honored its top performers during the UMA Motorcoach Expo here last month, with seven major awards going to outstanding companies and individuals.

Three of the awards were presented during the UMA luncheon and the other four were handed out during the UMA Leadership Awards Celebration, the social highlight of Expo.

The celebration included a reception, dinner, drawings for cash prizes, the awards program and an after-dinner cigars and cordials event.

The top awards given at Expo are the UMA Vision Awards, presented annually to two companies — a large and a small operator — that have established high standards of performance.

UMA President and CEO Victor Parra said the event celebrates successes and recognizes companies and individuals “raising the bar in this industry (and) setting a new standard.”

Introducing the two Vision Award winners, UMA Chairman Brian Annett said winners excel in

all areas, including marketing, maintenance, safety and operations.

“In short, these companies give us all something to aim for,” Annett said.

The UMA Vision Award/Small Operator (15 or fewer coaches) went to Lewis Coaches Inc. of New Orleans.

Lewis is run by the second and third generations of the Lewis family, with the fourth generation in training.

Lewis started in 1960 running schoolbuses before moving into charters in 1980, Annett said in announcing the winner. When the company takes delivery of a new coach, a fourth-generation child signs the paperwork as a symbolic gesture of the family legacy continuing, he said.

The children also have buses named after them, including an MCI J4500 dubbed Princess Logan last April after Logan Lewis, an MCI J4500 dubbed Prince Braden



Harold Lewis Jr.



Donald Storer



James Galusha



Scott Gallegos



Michelle Wiltgen



Don Kincaid



Dennis Streif

in 2013 after Braden Lewis, and an MCI J4500 named Prince Caleb last October after Caleb Lewis.

General Manager Harold Lewis Jr., whose grandfather, Earl Lewis Sr., started the business, accepted the award for the company.

“It is their vision that laid the foundation for where we are today,” Lewis told attendees gathered in the Georgia World Congress Center’s Georgia Ballroom.

His parents, Harold Lewis Sr. and Barbara Lewis, are semi-retired, “but they still call the shots,” he said, adding that he and his brother, Chad, “couldn’t ask for a better set of parents.”

The fourth-generation, ages 8, 10 and 13 and the children of Harold (Braden) and Chad (Caleb and Logan), are considered co-vice presidents.

“Seeing them involved in the

bus business is what drives my brother and myself every day to go further and further in this great industry that we have,” Lewis said.

He praised the company’s drivers and other staff and complimented the audience for being visionaries and doing it right.

The UMA Vision Award/Large Operator (more than 15 coaches) went to Storer Coaches of Modesto, Calif.

The company was founded in 1952 when a husband-and-wife team bid to transport 13 physically disabled children from their homes to a newly developed special-education program in their school district.

They got a one-year contract and then, with their son, developed door-to-door schoolbus service for disabled students using modified station wagons and stretch limou-

sines. Over the years, the company diversified into tour coaches.

President and CEO Donald Storer, the company’s third-generation leader and grandson of founders Walter and Gladys Storer, called his grandfather’s vision unbelievable and said the company still transports special-needs students throughout California.

In 1962, Storer said his father bought a charter bus and the company entered the charter business.

Storer recalled that when he was 9, his grandfather said, “Donald, you are going to be the best bus washer that we ever had.”

The young Storer did that until his father said he needed to be a mechanic and driver.

The next thing he knew, Storer was a driver. “I’m still a bus driver,” he said. “I still understand the

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Awards

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business.”

In 2001, the company had one terminal, he said. Today it has 10 terminals, operates 653 buses throughout California and has about 950 employees.

“Long story short, we have many challenges in this industry,” he said. “Our challenges are we need youth...in this business.”

Storer has a son and daughter, the fourth generation, who went to college then worked on their own — one playing pro football for three years and the other working for an international firm in San Francisco, London and Australia.

“They’re now in the company,” he said to applause.

“To receive this honor is the best privilege I’ve ever had,” Storer said, praising the audience for the countless people they safely transport each day and UMA for its support of the industry and watching members’ backs in the highly regulated industry.

The UMA Green Highway Award went to Silverado Stages of San Luis Obispo, Calif.

In accepting the award, Silverado Stages Chairman James Galusha said, “I always thought that being in the bus business was green enough,” because the industry takes so many cars off the road. But he said members of the employee-owned company suggested environmentally friendly procedures and policies that they said also would increase the company’s

profit margin.

“It turns out they were right,” Galusha said, citing a money-saving list that included more fuel-efficient equipment, electronic logs and paperless contracts.

“I would recommend to everyone that they try some of these things and see if they work for them as well,” he said.

The UMA Maintenance In-

terchange Maintenance Competition was conducted for the 10th consecutive year as part of Motorcoach Expo. Individuals attending the Interchange were invited to participate in a competition involving a written test and a timed diagnostic inspection.

This year’s grand champion was Scott Gallegos of Holland America Princess in Fairbanks, Alaska. Gal-

legos was first runner-up at the 2015 Expo in New Orleans.

First runner-up in the Atlanta competition was Darren Haines of JAG Motorcoach in Gladwin, Mich., and second runner-up was Pete Haunold of Holland America Princess in Anchorage.

Awards presented at the UMA luncheon were:

Safety Leader of the Year

Award: Michelle Wiltgen of National Interstate Insurance, Richfield, Ohio

BUSride Motorcoach Industry Achievement Award: Don Kincaid of Kincaid Coach Lines, Edwardsville, Kan.

Metro Magazine Motorcoach Operator of the Year Award: Dale and Dennis Streif of Vandalia Bus Lines Inc., Caseyville, Ill.

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Calendar

March 2016

7-10 Spader Workshop: Total Management 2, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Info: www.spader.com.

15 Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association Spring Meeting & Awards Luncheon, Bally’s Hotel & Casino, Atlantic City, N.J. Info: www.gnjma.com.

15-18 2016 Van Hool Training Workshop, Costa Mesa, Calif. Info: <http://abc-companies.com/service/training-and-support/workshops/register>.

30 Pennsylvania Bus Association Marketplace...a Group Leader Show, Spooky Nook Sports Complex, Manheim, Pa. Info: www.pabus.org.

31 Annual 2016 Maryland Motorcoach Association Group Leader Travel Showcase, Spooky Nook Sports Complex, Manheim, Pa. Info: www.marylandmotorcoach.org.

100 Years and Going Strong

Thomas Built Buses celebrates a century in the bus business

ATLANTA — One hundred years ago, in 1916, engineer Perley A. Thomas found himself out of work when economic hard times caused by World War I forced the closing of Southern Car Works, a streetcar designer in High Point, N.C.

A few months later Thomas was contacted by Southern Public Utilities Co. and asked if he would assemble a crew to renovate several streetcars he had designed for his former employer.

Within weeks, Thomas rounded up some of his former coworkers, purchased a building in High Point and opened Perley A. Thomas Car Works. Before long, Thomas-built streetcars were carrying passengers in many of North America's largest cities.

The company manufactured the Desire line of streetcars made famous in the book "Street Car Named Desire." One of them is still operating on Canal Street in New Orleans.

Today, Thomas Built Buses is the sec-

ond largest school bus manufacturer in the U.S. behind First Student, said Mario DiFoggio, manager of the center for education and marketing at Thomas Built.

The company also makes commercial buses for use by childcare centers, church groups and transit companies.

Thomas began shifting the company's focus to school buses in 1936, when it won a contract to supply wooden-bodied school buses to the state of North Carolina. The next year the company made steel buses for the state.

"He never turned back," DiFoggio said of the company's founder.

Thomas Built was purchased in 1998 by truck-maker Freightliner, a Daimler company.

In 2004, the company built a 275,000-square-foot plant in High Point to manufacture the Saf-T-Liner C2 bus. Three years later it introduced a hybrid version of the bus powered by both a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ►

Sardo name is a badge of honor for upholstery firm

ATLANTA — It's hard to miss the Sardo name if you attend UMA Motorcoach Expo. The company name graces every badge holder worn by Expo attendees.

But there is a lot of history behind that name.

Sardo Bus & Coach Upholstery, which was established in Boston in 1916, is still run by the family of its founder, Phillip Sardo, who moved his family to the U.S. in 1911 from Sicily.

The first Sardo business was a furniture upholstery location, but the company eventually moved into auto upholstery as cars became more popular.

From there the company started reupholstering bus seats, now its core business, and was taken over by Phillip's son, Antonio.

The company is now run a third-generation Sardo, Lou.

"My grandfather (Phillip) raised all of his sons in the business, including my father (Antonio)," Lou Sardo said.

Antonio Sardo moved the company to Los Angeles in 1954, and it is still based



Lou Sardo, the third-generation owner of Sardo Bus & Coach Upholstery, addresses the crowd during a cake-cutting ceremony to celebrate the company's 100th anniversary.

there, although it operates a national sales office in Florida.

When Lou Sardo took over the business, he and his wife of 44 years, Jeanie, decided they wanted to specialize in buses and trains.

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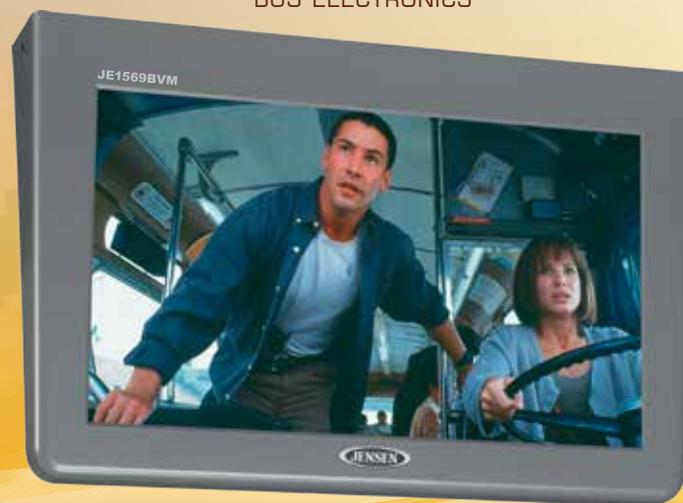
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Beyond compliance

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

eight, and mostly avoiding trips that require overnight driving. When late-night driving is required, such as for a military transport, a manager on duty calls drivers every two hours to check on them.

"If anyone even suggests that they're fatiguing, we make the entire caravan pull over at the next rest stop and everybody's working together, so those are non-technology solutions," Gillis said.

She said she sees two inequities in the current system: one created by the affluence of some companies, which could be addressed by financial incentives for implementing solutions. The other inequity she sees is variations in scope and severity of safety audits.

Godfrey LeBron, former owner of Paradise Transportation in Franklin Square, N.Y., said crashes are a result often of the driver's head not being in the right place, not that they don't know how to drive – and technology isn't necessarily the answer to that.

Event recorders have shown crashes where drivers are looking straight ahead, have both hands on the wheel, but their mind is someplace else, he said.

"I'm very (leery) when we keep throwing so much technology out and all we keep doing is taking the driver...further and further and further and further away from the equation," he said. "I would plead with you as an agency not to fall into a trap to think because someone has got the financial means to get every bell and whistle in the vehicle and think that that's going to lead to crash reduction, because I feel that that would be fool's gold."

Frequent training

Larry Minor, associate administrator for policy at FMCSA, asked LeBron what innovative things he would suggest FMCSA could consider accepting as Beyond Compliance that would address the cognitive distraction issue.

LeBron answered, "If I would be an investigator for you and I'm going into a fleet to do an investigation, one thing that I would want to see is what sort of training, what's the frequency of training that you're bringing your drivers in."

Drivers appreciate training, he said.

"One of the biggest things with the SMS scores is that many of those violations are adjudicated, so certainly a fleet that could show you...motor vehicle records that

have got no adjudicated points, that should certainly show something because the driver that is paying attention is not going to be racking up violations on their motor vehicle record," LeBron said.

Anthony Griffith of A.W. Griffith Transportation Consulting LLC in Springfield Gardens, N.Y., agreed with LeBron.

"The mindset of a driver is the most important thing," Griffith

said. From the point of hire, "the driver should understand that this is not a job, it's a skill."

Drivers who approach it that way learn the skills necessary for the position, he said.

Griffith asked, "What happens when technology fails?"

Old-school drivers relied on a different set of training, he said, but "the old-school training should still apply. The new technology

should assist that, but the old-school training should still apply."

Balancing act

Kevin Creighton of West Valley Trailways in Campbell, Calif., said there must be a balance between technology and time with drivers, who he said are a company's greatest asset.

Referencing frequent calls for safety enhancements to buses, he

said, "This stuff comes up so much more frequently now in the interest of safety, but then it gets back to your driver, that's your biggest, and should be your biggest, investment. That's your best technology. That's the best brain that works."

Creighton, like others, thanked FMCSA for reaching out to operators.

"We feel like we're being heard

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Expo Atlanta: 'The real thing'

Right, Motorcoach Expo attendees enter the World of Coca-Cola for a night of food, drink and fun at one of Atlanta's most popular attractions.

Below, (from left) Tammy Moyer of Worldwide Monochem, Clarence Gaten of Gaten's Adventures Unlimited in Hammond, La., and Kasanya Vines and Duane Bohannon of Bohannon & Vines Transportation Group in Milford, Conn., enjoy the band during the cigar and cordials event.

Bottom left, UMA President and CEO Victor Parra announces that the first 50 people to register for Expo 2017 in St. Louis will receive cuddly bears.



Above, (From left) Mary Sanders of Louisiana Coach Inc. in Marrero, La., Shari Sanders of ABC Companies and Dona Pitstick of Tri City Charter in Bossier City, La., don colorful disguises.

At left, Jerilyn and Nathan Harrington of Teton Stage Lines in Idaho Falls, Idaho, pose with the Coca-Cola polar bear.



Expo 2016 in Atlanta was kicked off with a well-attended UMA Chairman's Reception at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta.



Shea Turpin (from left), Vicki Kettler and Mollie Pruneau of Huskey Trailways in Festus, Mo., enjoy the Chairman's Reception.



(Bottom row, from left) Deborah Glover of Friendship Tours in Decatur, Ga.; J. Morgan Brown of Magic Carpet Tour Bus Service in Richmond, Va.; and Terry Glover of Friendship Tours join Alan Robinson (top left) of R & W MotorCoach Inc. in Stone Mountain, Ga., and Dexter and Gary Ferguson of TranSouth Motorcoach LLC in Warner Robbins, Ga., at the Chairman's Reception.



From left, Greg Sickmeier of Allison Transmission Inc. shares a laugh with Dan Koehler, Patty Roddy and Malcolm Brooker of Brooker Transportation Agency in Strongsville, Ohio.



Sarah Walker of Star Shuttle & Charter in San Antonio, Texas, and her husband, Cameron Hufford, with their 4-month-old daughter Kennedy, a future motorcoach industry executive.



Participants in the Maintenance Interchange at UMA Expo 2016 pose for their traditional class photo.



Scott Gallegos of Holland America Princess in Fairbanks, Alaska, winner of this year's UMA Maintenance Competition, searches for problems during the event.

New UMA chairman takes office, directors re-elected

ATLANTA — Dale Krapf officially took over as chairman of the United Motorcoach Association board of directors at the end of Expo 2016, and five sitting board members started new three-year terms after running unopposed for re-election.

Krapf, board chairman of Krapf Bus Companies in West Chester, Pa., replaces Brian Annett as UMA chairman. Annett, president of Annett Bus Lines in Sebring, Fla., remains a member of the UMA board.

“It’s sad to me that nobody (new) ran for a seat on the board,” Krapf said during his first board meeting as chairman.

“I think every seat should be

competitive. We need new blood.”

Annett made similar comments during Expo.

“I love the people (who were re-elected),” he said.

“But we need competitive elections. Fresh eyes and fresh blood make the association stronger.”

The board did vote to allow non-board members to serve on UMA committees in an effort to bring new perspectives to board issues.

Board members who were re-elected are:



Dale Krapf



Brian Annett



Bill Allen



Gladys Gillis



David Moody



Brian Scott



Marcia Milton

- Region I (the West): Bill Allen of Amador Stage Lines in Sacramento and Gladys Gillis of Starline Luxury Coaches in Seattle.

- Region II (the Midwest): David Moody of Holiday Companies in Randlemann, N.C., and Brian Scott of Escot Bus Lines in Largo, Fla.

- Region III (the Northeast): Marcia Milton of First Priority

Trailways in District Heights, Md.

Nineteen members of the 21-member UMA board are regional directors who must be coach operators and who are elected to three-year staggered terms from the three regions of the U.S., plus a single director elected from Canada (Region IV).

In addition, there are non-coachbuilder and coachbuilder as-

sociate-board representatives who also serve three-year terms.

Maps showing the UMA regions are available in the *UMA Membership Directory*. The names of the current directors and a list of the states included in each region can be found on the association website, www.uma.org. Click on About UMA and then the *UMA Board of Directors link*.

Compliance

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

now,” he said.

Joe Gillis of Northwest Navigator in Portland, Ore., told FMCSA, “We would love to be part of the solution, not looked at as part of the problem.”

Gillis explained how he started opening his locations or other loca-

tions for quarterly voluntary bus inspections by the Oregon Department of Transportation for his fleet and for others who want to bring their buses. Vehicles get their stickers, operators get regular interaction with DOT inspectors and the inspectors are able to meet their inspection numbers, a win for both sides.

“I think there’s a great incentive there for you and for us to be

able to do a voluntary setup like that,” Gillis said. FMCSA also could use a third party, but like others who spoke, he said he fears third parties trying to assume FMCSA’s regulatory role.

Gillis also expressed concern about the SMS ratings. To most people, a satisfactory score seems like barely squeaking by, he said, calling the scoring an inequity in

the system when other companies can get the same rating for less rigorous measures. For companies that take actions before they’re required or other steps to enhance safety, there should be a benefit, something that says a company is safer than others, he said.

Perhaps there could be a tax benefit for installing extra safety features, he suggested.

“If we’re going to put those things in, can you get us some kind of tax credit for doing those things, where we’re spending the money?” he asked, noting operators’ choices when they weigh investing in a new bus that produces revenue versus new technology.

“If we had a tax incentive to do that, then we can kind of recoup some of those funds,” Gillis said.

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UMA officials and board members chat with Andrew Young before the former ambassador, civil rights leader and Atlanta mayor's speech at Expo 2016.



Participants in the 12th Annual Ray Dupuis Memorial Golf Tournament enjoyed relatively warm temperatures for the outing, held on the first day of Expo.



Brian Parker, director of development for Southeastern Stages in Atlanta, leads a tour of the company's facilities during the UMA Member Bus Operations Site Visit.



Marvin Brooks of MNB Transportation in Camp Springs, Md., checks out the driver's seat in a Volvo coach on the Expo floor.



Christian Riddell, executive director of the Motorcoach Marketing Council, congratulates John Benjamin of Northfield Lines in Eagan, Minn., whose winning bid of \$383,500 won him a VanHool CX 35 in the council's live auction. Also pictured (from left) are Roman Cornell of ABC Companies, which donated the bus; Marketing Council board member Michelle Petelick; and John McFarlane and Tim Wayland of ABC.



Expo 2016 attendees head for the entrance of the exhibit hall floor when the doors officially opened Monday afternoon.



The exhibit hall floor continued to draw crowds on Wednesday morning prior to the official noon closing of Expo 2016.

State Summit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

off the table right now.”

Registration fees are a target of his legislature, said Jimmy Cantrell of Daniel's Charters and Tours and president of the Georgia Motorcoach Operator's Association.

“They decided they were going to raise funds by putting a \$100 fee on every vehicle over 26,000 pounds and a \$50 fee when you renew your tags,” he said. “Whatever way you think you have gotten out of, there is going to be another way they can find to do it.”

A few state and local governments have taken up actions to increase employee benefits.

Employers in Oregon are facing the prospects of a \$15-per-hour minimum wage, said Joe Gillis of Northwest Navigator and the Northwest Motorcoach Association.

“We also about a year ago passed a sick leave act in the city of Portland that says for every 30 hours you get an hour of paid sick leave and you could move them from year to year,” he said. “It's a frog in boiling water. They get you to do it in just the city and — guess what? — it now is statewide. That is a huge expense, especially if you have a lot of part-timers.

“Be careful. When you start hearing these things, you'd better get up and start fighting before they get a foothold. Things can move very quickly after that,” Gillis said.

The Maryland Healthy Working Families Act is back on the leg-

islative table this year and is a top concern of the Maryland Motorcoach Association, said Tim Wilson of AP Xpress Bus Company. “It would require employers to let employees earn up to seven days in paid sick leave annually.”

Licensing delays

Backlogs in commercial driver's license road tests are compounding the woes of driver recruitment in New Jersey, Stout said.

“Everybody is aware of how tough it is to hire CDL drivers. Then we are as far as three months out to schedule a CDL road test for people who have gone down to the office,” he said. “April 20 was the appointment my driver got last week. It is pretty hard to keep people interested when you tell them they can't get the job until April.”

The New Jersey association has scheduled a meeting with state officials to discuss the problem.

A complication has been added to the CDL renewal process and Pennsylvania is adding its own nuance, said Farrell. “Anyone renewing their CDL nationwide has to show proof of citizenship. In Pennsylvania a birth certificate has to be certified and our guidelines say it ought to have a raised seal. We have thousands of drivers who weren't born in Pennsylvania and don't have that.”

She advised operators to warn drivers to plan ahead for license renewals. “This is something I encourage you to find out from your DOT. You had better start now. If you lost your birth certificate, you



Dale Krapf, chairman of UMA's legislative and regulatory committee, moderates the State Association Summit at Expo.

are going to have to show some sort of proof of identification.”

Party buses

Well-publicized party bus accidents have activated legislators and regulators. An effort that could have made life difficult for motorcoach operators was successfully modified in the state of Washington, Cassaza said.

“There have been a lot of accidents around the country with party buses. The head of the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission charged his staff with finding a way to very strongly regulate party buses,” Cassaza said. “When they drafted this legislation they, in effect, turned our drivers into policemen for the liquor control board. We assumed full responsibility for the actions of our passengers.”

Meetings with the commission staff resulted in alterations that apply the laws to buses with open

floor space, perimeter seating and dance poles, Cassaza said. “We explained to them what we do and how our passengers use our coaches. The final legislation excluded traditionally seated buses.”

While operators in some states face the nuisance of roadside inspections, operators in South Carolina are burdened by the lack of inspections, said Young of the state's motorcoach association.

“Since 2013 we have not been able to get our buses inspected in the state other than through a compliance review. We are classified as a self-inspection state,” he said.

But it certainly is helpful for South Carolina coaches to carry a current certified inspection when they visit other states.

“Our friends in Georgia have been most accommodating. We actually drive to Georgia and get our buses inspected and given a CVSA sticker before we go to New York,” Young said.

The closing speaker of the State Summit brought good news from Oregon regarding inspections.

“Our local officials were doing all kinds of roadside inspections,” Gillis said. “The process is now defined and they have stopped doing those. They are looking at doing a lot more destination inspections, which we are behind. We're all for that. Let the passengers off the vehicle, then do the inspection.

“If there is a big event and there are going to be 100 buses there, we ask them to cover that and inspect all those buses,” he said. “We are not against inspections, we are helping them.”

Sardo

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

There also are other Sardo companies operated by Lou's siblings — he has five brothers and 11 sisters. Those businesses also do upholstery, but they focus on furniture, boats, small aircraft and cars instead of buses.

“Most of our family lives within 30 miles of one another in southern California,” Lou Sardo said.

Sardo Bus & Coach Upholstery operates a 20,000-square-foot factory in Gardena, Calif., and also has seven road crews, each with four members, that travel around the country doing installations. It employees 76 people.

Sardo also sells its patented seat inserts to transit agencies across the U.S. Lou Sardo invented the inserts, one of eight products on which he holds patents. One of his inventions is a racking device for billiard balls that is used around the world and is frequently seen on pool tournaments aired on ESPN.

“My hobby is shooting pool,” Sardo said.

Another hobby is telling jokes, which began years ago when the late Clancy Cornell, founder of ABC Companies, invited Sardo to an open house and asked him to tell some jokes.

Sardo has since performed at several motorcoach industry events, including UMA Expo.

“I'm not a comedian, but people enjoy me getting up and making them laugh,” he said.

Sardo said he began sponsoring the badge holders at Expo and other industry events because he feels it is important to support industry associations, “which make the wheels turn in the industry.”

His father also told him that it is important to be visible and stand behind your products.

“Our name is the most important thing,” Sardo said.

Thomas Built

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

diesel engine and an electric motor/generator. It also makes school buses that run on propane and natural gas.

Thomas Built also introduced the 52-seat Transit-Liner C2, which is based on its popular school bus design and is used for a variety of commercial purposes, including day trips.

“We found this niche in day trips,” DiFoggio said. “The vehicle offers the safety, reliability and durability of our school buses.”

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Expectations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

been successful in many ways," Hundt said. "We didn't expect it to be so strong. The (exhibit hall) floor sold out and there was a waiting list. Vendors are thrilled with the exposure they are getting."

He added that because there are several motorcoach operators in the Atlanta area, walk-in traffic was strong.

Vendors and exhibitors also praised Expo 2016.

"We were busy the entire time the show floor was open," said ABC Companies Executive Vice President Roman Cornell. "We did a lot of business, which was nice."

In fact, ABC turned over the keys to three new motorcoaches and one used bus to buyers, something that hasn't occurred at Expo in recent years.

Motor Coach Industries Vice President Brent Maitland also said traffic was good at the company's booth.

"The vibe was great and people stayed until (Wednesday)," the last day of the show, he said.

Robert Foley, president and CEO of CH Bus Sales, which distributes Temsa motorcoaches,

echoed the experiences of the other coach companies.

"The foot traffic and the attitude of the attendees were the best I've seen in years," Foley said.

Temsa also delivered a new coach to a buyer during Expo.

Irizar, a Spanish coach manufacturer that recently entered the North American market and was attending its first Expo, had praise for the event and the industry.

"The show was a great success," said Chad Dixon, chief operating officer of INA Bus Sales, the U.S. distributor of Irizar coaches. "I've been involved in several industries, and you should know what a great industry, what a great group we have. We should all be thankful for that."

Too busy?

Some companies even said they were too busy, which isn't a bad thing.

"We sold coaches, we did business, it was very positive," said Michael Power, director of marketing for Prevost. "Suppliers complained that we couldn't get to them because there were too many people, which is positive."

Operators and suppliers also reported positive experiences at

'There is a strong buzz here that things are getting better'

this year's Expo.

Business partners Dane Christian and John Simon Jr. of Checker Elite Inc. in Mount Vernon, N.Y., were looking to buy buses for the company, which they started in October 2014.

"Yes we are in a market for a bus and this is a great place to look for one," Christian said. "They have a lot of amazing pieces of equipment here."

Simon said this was their first time attending Expo.

"We're kind of like getting to know people here and it's going to help us out in the long run when we're out on the road," he said. "We're basically networking, we're here and we're actually meeting and we're greeting people and we're exchanging information. This is how you get to know other people who are in the business and we can help each other out in the long run."

Glen Bartel, president of Golden Arrow Buses Ltd. in Edmonton, Alberta, said Expo is informative and well worth attending.

"It's good for our team to come," he said. "It covers all aspects, our maintenance department, our procurement, and it's good networking. I think overall it's a good-quality show."

Bartel said that as a bus operator he attends the show to shop and catch up.

"We just want to see all the new changes in technology, any changes in buses (and) just touch base with some of our suppliers — just see what's new or what's on the horizon."

Face time

Brian Stanton, sales manager at American Fleet Inc. of Springfield, Mo. which rebuilds Detroit bus engines, said Expo is the perfect venue to share what the company has to offer.

"People just don't know what American Fleet can do," Stanton said. "A lot of people come by, they see the engine and they recognize it and they're curious, so you have to approach them."

"What they like is the access they have to companies like ours at

these places because I can't reach everybody all day long, even though I have files on everybody. Some people, when you call on them, they won't take your call, but if they meet and see you, that's the benefit of conventions like this.

"Everybody here's been real nice," he said. "It's real good interaction and mingling of customers and potential clients and what not."

Fresh off the success of Expo 2016, UMA officials are already looking ahead to Expo 2017 in St. Louis, which will be held from Feb. 26 to March 2.

Hundt said the city "really threw out the welcome mat and is providing a lot of services to enhance our show. They gave us a great package."

He said that more than 90 companies already have made a commitment to Expo 2017 and that sales have been strong out of the gate.

"Next year should sell out," Hundt predicted.



Larry Hundt



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California

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tank on the truck and sprayed fuel into the motorcoach. Both vehicles were engulfed in a fireball. The drivers and eight motorcoach passengers were killed.

In response to the NTSB report, California Senate Bill 247 was introduced by Sen. Ricardo Lara, a Democrat from Bell Gardens who was elected to the body in 2012.

The bill would require charter bus drivers to deliver a pre-trip safety briefing, encourage seat belt use and provide the same information in writing. It also would require charter buses to be equipped with burn-resistant materials in passenger compartments; emergency lighting systems powered by an independent source; reflective emergency signage; windows that can be easily opened and remain open during an emergency; and event data recorders triggered by sudden deceleration or braking.

Retrofits of that equipment would be required of existing motorcoaches. Secondary doors would be required on buses manufactured after July 1, 2017, for charter use in California. The CHP would be required to adopt standards for these features by July 1, 2017.

"Unfortunately, we as an association feel the bill is too ambiguous," Fiorini said. "There are no parameters, no set standards. What he (Lara) did was he simply took the NTSB report, the recommendations it said should be looked into for motorcoach safety, put his name on top and entered it as a bill."

What about trucks?

NTSB's Orland recommendations and SB 247 neglect the basic facts of the accident, Fiorini said.

"He never addresses the truck. This was a truck accident that involved a motorcoach. The actual cause of the loss of life was not the unsafe bus, it was dumping all that fuel from the truck into the cab of the bus, (which) then ignited."

Furthermore, Lara "never addresses the median. Maybe something could have been done to the median so the truck couldn't run across the median and run into the bus," Fiorini said. "He just took those recommendations and threw



Tom Giddens

them out there."

Other buses exempt

Even more baffling to the motorcoach industry is the fact that the bill would exempt transit buses, school buses and line-haul buses from the safety requirements, said Bill Allen of Amador Stage Lines in Sacramento.

Why? "Because it was a charter bus involved in the accident," said Allen, a member of the UMA board of directors.

The California Bus Association asked senators to take a broader view of the accident, said Tom Giddens of Pacific Coachways Charter Services in Garden Grove, Calif., past president of the association.

"Every time we suggest something, they pretty well don't take it," he said. "Such as the truck fuel tank — the assembly says they don't want to go there. I don't know if it has anything to do with the fact that this happens to be the port area and there is a great deal of trucking going on. This could be a real hit to us."

Fiorini said the effect on the industry could be dramatic.

"It could easily put many of the small companies out of business, especially if we have to retrofit existing motorcoaches in order to operate them," he said. "That retrofit can run between \$25,000 and \$35,000 per vehicle. The manufacturers are saying that to redo the windows so they can stay open in an emergency they may have to redo the window frames.

"A lot of companies couldn't afford to do that and would end up laying off people, maybe getting rid of some of their equipment. It would put some people out of business. Everybody wants safety. This particular accident they are using as

an example realistically could never happen again. They really have no evidence that this (bill) would have saved any more lives."

Critics of SB 247 say it would allow California to assume regulatory authority that is vested in the federal government.

"We are not sure if there is a legal issue here because if we are following federal law, it generally takes precedence over state law, especially in interstate commerce," Fiorini said.

"That is not for us to argue. For us to argue is letting the science make the vehicle more safe than it is and doing it in a proper manner so we are not told we are having to retrofit our vehicles in the next 24 or 12 months."

He said the bill makes it appear the buses don't have any type of safety features.

"When we were at the UMA Expo, during the NTSB presentation they showed four animations of accidents (involving motorcoaches). The first three were literally caused by trucks crossing the median. I said, 'It looks like you have common denominators — one is the truck and two is crossing the median.'

"I am not saying trucks are not safe. It's just that the FMCSA has been studying this stuff and trying to make it safer every day. California is making a mistake by trying to push this in a knee-jerk situation."

The California Bus Association has scheduled a meeting with Lara to discuss adjustments to the bill, Fiorini said. It has been passed by the Senate and sent to the state Assembly.

More inspections

Senate Bill 812 would require CHP to develop and adopt bus terminal inspection fees for charter carriers in sufficient amounts to administer the inspection program for those carriers.

The patrol would be directed to inspect as many charter coaches as possible. The state Public Utilities Commission would be required to collect the fees.

The bill was introduced by Sen. Jerry Hill, a Democrat representing San Mateo and Santa Clara counties who also joined the Senate in 2012.

"He wants 25 percent more inspections," Giddens said. "The kick for us is they want to charge us more than what we are paying now."

"We are meeting with the CHP to discuss their stance, how they would implement some of the changes that Hill is proposing because, quite honestly, there probably is not enough manpower in the state to do all the inspections that he is proposing," Fiorini said.

SB 812 was introduced on Jan. 4 and has been referred to committees.

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