

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

97 operators score grants to buy lifts

WASHINGTON — The Federal Transit Administration has awarded \$8.8 million to 97 motorcoach companies across the U.S. to retrofit buses with wheelchair lifts or to help offset the cost of lifts on new coaches.

Last year, the FTA awarded \$20 million to 128 motorcoach companies to have lifts installed on buses or to help defray the cost of lifts on new coaches. The amount granted a year ago was substantially higher than previous years because there's a major deadline in 2012 for large line-run operators; they must have 100 percent of their fleet wheelchair accessible by Oct. 29.

The requirement applies to fixed-route operators having annual revenue of \$8.6 million or more.

The amount awarded this year is more in line with previous years.

A total of 136 companies requested \$40.9 million in lift grants, meaning 39 companies didn't receive any money and most received less than they sought. Some of the money awarded can be used for training.

The wheelchair grant program has been around for a dozen years and has awarded tens of millions of dollars to operators to help them comply with federal accessibility regulations.

While 63 of the 97 grants, or about two-thirds, were for less than \$50,000 to pay for a single wheelchair lift, Greyhound Lines, which has a fleet of more than 1,200 coaches, was awarded \$2.44 million to purchase roughly 70 lifts.

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UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

New at MOTORCOACH EXPO 2012



BCI America's Explorer 45 and Temsa's TS 30 are introduced. Turn to page 11.



'Bluffton crash' five years on... landmark event

BLUFFTON, OHIO — A remembrance service was conducted at Bluffton University early this month to mark the fifth anniversary of the fatal bus crash that has forever changed motorcoach safety.

The March 2, 2007, crash killed five players on the university's baseball team, plus the bus driver and his wife.

Members of that 2007 Bluffton team attended the remembrance, which included scripture readings by James Grandey, the head baseball coach then and now, and alumnus Tim Berta, who was among those seriously injured.

From the moment it occurred at 5:38 in the morning, the Bluffton University baseball team bus crash was a horrific, tragic and landmark event.

Driver Jerry Niemeyer was behind the wheel of a 45-foot Van Hool owned by Executive Coach Luxury Travel of Ottawa, Ohio, that clear, calm morning, when he mistakenly veered onto a left-hand exit ramp on I-75 in metro Atlanta.

The ramp rose to a wide elevated road — Northside Drive — and a T-junction marked by a stop sign.

Traveling at highway speed and without braking, the bus swerved rightward across the road, attempting to go southbound on Northside Drive. Unable to make the turn, it hit a low barrier wall, which caused the back end of the coach to swing around to the right, pointing it due north.

The momentum of the swing caused the entire right side of the bus to crash into and then over the low wall and through a chain-link security fence on top of it.

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Operators continue to struggle with 'GO Ground' decision

It's March. That means "March Madness" — college basketball tournament time.

And motorcoach operators across the U.S. are wrestling with the issue of whether to sign up with GO Ground Options and its motorcoach inspection arm, Transportation Safety Exchange.

GO Ground has a contract with the National Collegiate Athletic Association to handle team movements during NCAA-sponsored tournaments.

The arrangement, and its atten-

dant, expensive third-party bus inspections by TSX, has created widespread resentment in the industry among operators unhappy that GO Ground has gotten between colleges and universities the operators have served for years.

Motorcoach operators hopeful the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration might get involved, and rein in third-party organizations that claim to be using "certified" over-the-road bus inspectors, appear to be out of luck.

The FMCSA has served notice

it won't be refereeing the dispute between charter operators and GO Ground.

Instead, operators will have to decide on their own if they want to join the Chicago-based transportation management company they say is threatening their relationship with many of their long-time school and university customers.

"Joining them is a business decision you will have to make," says the FMCA's Chief Safety Officer Jack Van Steenburg. "We can't stop them."

GO Ground not only is recruiting carriers to transport college sports teams to NCAA tournaments but also to provide bus service for elementary and high school students in some parts of the country.

Many operators say they object to a requirement that they pay upwards of \$4,000 for safety inspections (of a handful of buses) that GO Ground uses to promote its business as hiring only the safest carriers in the country.

The inspections are conducted

by Transportation Safety Exchange, which is a fairly recently formed business associated with Consolidated Safety Services, which for years has been doing inspections for carriers that transport military personnel and civilian employees of the U.S. Department of Defense.

Operators worry if they don't join GO Ground they could lose some of the contracts they have had with the colleges for regular student and sports team transportation.

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Transit agency practices targeted by California Bus Association

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The California Bus Association is calling on federal regulators to investigate the public transit agency here for supposedly using some of its "scarce funds" to undercut prices of private bus operators so it could expand operations and then claim funding shortage issues to campaign for more tax dollars.

Tom Giddens, association president, said Sacramento Regional Transit Authority has been struggling financially in recent years and should not be spending

tax dollars and federal grant money to try to run competing motorcoach operators out of the market.

"There is a great need for a true independent risk assessment and financial forecast audit of the true state of SACRT's public finances, taking into consideration the risks involved in continuing to lowball third-party contracts," Giddens wrote the Federal Transit Administration, which provides transit agencies with capital and operational funds.

The transit agency said it has

received a copy of the CBA letter and would comment on the issues after reviewing it.

"We are still reviewing it," said spokeswoman Alane Masui.

Giddens said the most recent instance of undercutting by SACRT was done late last year when the agency bid for a shuttle contract with the North Natomas Transportation Management Association, a nonprofit group that offers bus service on the city's northwest side.

He contends the low bid that

won SACRT the contract will require the agency to subsidize the association to the tune of \$1.1 million in capital costs for the buses that will be used for the service, and he said the agency plans to cover the subsidy with \$400,000 from a previous bond issue and \$700,000 from another account that will be paid back when additional bonds are sold.

"No FTA recipient should be allowed to redeploy or otherwise shift scarce public capital or operating funds to either subsidize private

third parties, or to deliberately undercut or eliminate lower-cost private bus competitors from the marketplace and then campaign for more federal funds and county sales tax increases or new bond measures to pay for artificially-induced operating deficits caused by such practices," Giddens told the FTA.

"Presumably SACRT is anticipating issuing more public debt to finance its under-funded capital expansion plans."

Masui said SACRT has signed

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THE DOCKET

House/Senate highway bills beset by pots holes, detours

WASHINGTON — To the surprise of practically no one, the bumpy ride to pass new federal highway and public transportation legislation got even bumpier once the House and Senate began debating their respective bills.

Almost immediately, the legislation got bogged down in partisan political bickering and/or maneuvering.

Now, lawmakers in both chambers are trying to revive their push to pass the transportation bills, although the House seems unlikely to quickly consider a revamped version of the Republican highway bill.

House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, made news late last month when his office announced he would likely scale back his proposal to spend \$260 billion on road and transit projects over a five-year period. The Boehner announcement came after the Republican bill came under fire from both Democrats and Republicans. (See March 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Multiple House GOP aides said they did not expect revised legislation to be ready very quickly and details of proposed changes to the bill were scarce.

Boehner's office did confirm,

however, the speaker was not only considering shortening the length of the highway reauthorization, but also would likely scrap the idea of removing transit funding from the highway trust fund.

At the same time, the Senate's \$109 billion version of the transportation bill was thought to be more likely to win quick approval because it had bipartisan support in several committees.

But the bill also hit a roadblock, as lawmakers were unable to win the 60 senators needed for a procedural vote to close off the opportunity for senators to offer amendments to the bill.

The bill's supporters in the Senate have complained about what they call non-germane amendments, slowing momentum.

The House did go ahead and separate a provision in its bill that would supplement transportation funding with proceeds from domestic oil and gas drilling. That provision is now running a separate course from the core bill, HR7.

Throughout the process, lawmakers have argued over funding and whether to include mass transit as part of the Highway Trust Fund.

Republicans and Democrats

UMA Capital Hill Days are next month

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association is encouraging its members to sign up for the organization's annual Capitol Hill Days on April 25-26.

"This is your opportunity to come to Washington, D.C., to interact with your congressional delegates and important agency officials, and make sure your voice is heard during this day and a half event," said UMA Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Ken Presley.

UMA is conducting the event

who wanted mass transit to remain part of the highway trust appear to have gotten their way. The initial plan would have established an "alternative transportation" account and moved mass transit there, but the latest talk has it returning to the highway fund.

Should the length of the House version be modified and the transit

in conjunction with the National School Transportation Assoc.

Here's the tentative schedule announced by UMA for the Capitol Hill Days activities:

Wednesday, April 25

- 8-9 a.m. Capitol Hill pre-briefing for UMA and NSTA members

- 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Individual visits by UMA and NSTA members with senators and representatives (appointments arranged by Prime Policy Group)

- 6 p.m. Group Dinner for

funding issue be firmly resolved, then the major differences between the Senate and House bills will be considerably narrowed, according to several analysts.

The Senate version, S1813, is a two-year bill that focuses on highways and the consolidation of programs within the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Coalition targets 'ambush election' rule

WASHINGTON — The Senate and House are considering a measure that would nullify a National Labor Relations Board rule designed to permit so-called ambush elections for union representation.

Senate Joint Resolution 36

would halt the NLRB's efforts to allow an accelerated process for union representation elections in the workplace.

Opponents of the "ambush" election rule say it is nothing more than the NLRB's attempt "to pla-

UMA and NSTA members with invited speaker (there is a \$90 surcharge to participate in the dinner)

Thursday, April 26

- 9 a.m.-Noon Congressional and agency presentations for NSTA and UMA members

There also will likely be a fundraiser for Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Pa. Shuster is the sponsor of bus safety legislation that is advocated by the industry.

For information call UMA at (800) 424-8262, or email info@uma.org.

"At their core, both the House and Senate bills focus on similar things, such as cutting environmental red tape, consolidating duplicative programs at USDOT that divert dollars away from highways, and giving states the flexibility to dedicate funds to their core needs," said one legislative affairs specialist.

cate organized labor by effectively denying employees' access to critical information about unions and stripping employers of free speech and due process rights." The critics say the rule "poses a threat to both employees and employers."

The Coalition for a Democratic Workplace, a group of more than 600 organizations, including the United Motorcoach Association, led the charge late last year against the "Employee Free Choice Act" and other measures it said posed a similar threat to workers, businesses and the U.S. economy.

The bills died.

"Having failed to achieve their goals through legislation, they are now coordinating with the (NLRB) and the U.S. Department of Labor in what appears to be an all-out attack on job-creators and employees in an effort to enact (the Employee Free Choice Act) through administrative rulings and regulations," says the coalition.

Late last year, the NLRB published a rule containing key aspects of the legislation, with April 30, as the effective date.

"While it somewhat modified the original proposal, the final rule is identical in purpose and similar in effect," says the coalition.

The coalition is seeking business and citizen support of Senate Resolution 36, which would block the rule.



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Congress does away with 'bonus depreciation' – for now

WASHINGTON , Congress has ended the bonus depreciation tax break that may have helped bolster new motorcoach sales over the past 18 months.

When Congress adopted the federal payroll tax cut extension last month, one of the victims of the extension was the bonus depreciation that buyers of capital equipment, including motorcoaches, could receive.

However, some lawmakers say the tax incentive could be restored later this year. For example, Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, said there would be other chances.

"There are lots of moving pieces for tax provisions this year. There'll be other vehicles leaving the station, so I'm anticipating that if it doesn't get in here, it's not the last word," said Blumenauer.

Bonus depreciation allowed businesses that bought new equipment last year — anything from buses, to machines, to computers — to depreciate 100 percent of the purchase price during the 2011 tax year.

Until September 2010, equipment investments could be depreciated only up to 50 percent the first tax year. The remaining 50 percent had to be taken in subsequent tax years.

To stimulate investment and help manufacturers struggling in the latest recession, Congress raised the first-year depreciation break to 100 percent for purchases made between Sept. 8, 2010, and Dec. 31, 2011.

On Jan. 1, the 100 percent single-year depreciation reverted to 50 percent, but scores of business

groups have been pressing Congress to restore the 100 percent break for this year.

Bonus depreciation has proven so popular the U.S. Treasury estimates it will cost taxpayers \$55 billion for the 2011 tax year, but Treasury officials said, when the

program began, that taxpayers would recoup much of the loss in subsequent years when corporations do not have as much depreciation to write off.

The bonus depreciation doesn't change the total amount of deductions across the life of a piece of

equipment — it just shifts deductions forward in time.

Bills passed in the U.S. Senate and House to extend the payroll tax cut included bonus depreciation, but the House bill also had a provision that would have required approval of the Keystone XL pipe-

line from Canada to Louisiana.

Working with the Obama Administration, the House-Senate conference committee finally agreed to extend the payroll tax measure but also to cut both the Keystone pipeline and bonus depreciation provisions.

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DOT in Delaware under microscope

DOVER, Del. — Investigators are looking into allegations of mismanagement, incompetence and possible criminal activity within the Delaware Department of Transportation.

The investigation was requested by state Transportation Secretary Shailen Bhatt, who says reforms are needed to restore public trust in the agency.

According to media reports, Bhatt is seeking an outside forensic accounting firm to inspect the agency's books and land deals. A team of retired federal investigators will assist.

Bhatt is not ruling out the possibility that some of the activity involving land dealings may have been illegal.



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Permitting dispute defused in Quebec

MONTREAL — Authorities in Quebec have affirmed that the province's requirement that motorcoaches have a Quebec "transport permit number" does not apply to out-of-province charter bus operators.

Motor Coach Canada reported last month that an Ontario-based operator received a ticket while on a charter trip in Quebec.

The operator was accused of violating a provision in the Quebec Bus Transport Regulation requiring that a Quebec transport permit number be displayed on the side of the coach. The set fine was \$125.

The carrier, a member of Motor Coach Canada, contacted the trade association and was provided information on how the ticket could be challenged.

The association also contacted Quebec authorities and pointed out that the requirement for a Quebec Transport Permit does not apply to out-of-province charter bus operators — provided the point of departure and final destination of the chartered trip are outside Quebec.

Motor Coach Canada said it was "pleased" to report that Quebec authorities had agreed to withdraw the charge.

All American motorcoach operators not based in Quebec but traveling in the province must register as an "operator of heavy vehicles" prior to entering the province. The fee to register is \$60 Canadian for two or fewer coaches.

To register, go to www.ctq.gouv.qc.ca/pdf/ctq330a.pdf

The United Motorcoach Association can assist operators with questions about operating in Quebec.

Ohio River span reopens to traffic

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The I-64 Sherman Minton Bridge over the Ohio River between southern Indiana and Louisville has reopened to traffic much quicker than expected.

The bridge was closed Sept. 9 after a significant crack was discovered in a load-carrying element of the bridge. Inspection, testing and analysis recommended reinforcing the bridge with steel plates, which are anticipated to extend the life of the bridge at least 20 years.

Incentives, favorable weather conditions and efficient work by contractors reduced the project from an estimated six months to fewer than four. (See Nov. 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Virginia adopts CDL limits for sex offenders

RICHMOND, Va. — Both houses of the Virginia General Assembly have passed legislation that prohibits sex offenders from driving a commercial vehicle that transports school children or children enrolled in a day-care facility.

The legislation amends the state law that sets eligibility requirements for a commercial driver's license in Virginia.

Under the revised statute, persons required to register with the state under Virginia's sex offender and crimes against minors law can obtain a CDL with a passenger endorsement, but the license must carry a restriction prohibiting the license holder from operating a commercial vehicle that carries children to or from a school-sponsored event or to and from a licensed child day-care facility.

The revised law also prohibits the issuance of a commercial driver's instruction permit to drive school buses or any commercial vehicle to transport children to or from school-related activities or child day care facilities if the person is required to register as a sex offender or as someone who has committed crimes against minors.

If a CDL holder with a passenger endorsement is convicted of a

sex offense or a crime against a minor then that person has to surrender his or her license and get a new one that contains the restrictions applicable to sex offenders and those who have committed crimes against minors.

The legislation will become law once it is signed by the governor.

The Virginia Motorcoach Association worked to get the legislation adopted.

Georgia House passes bus driver sex offender bill

ATLANTA — The Georgia House of Representatives has passed a bill that would ban sex offenders from driving school and passenger buses.

The measure, which is sponsored by Republican Rep. Paul

Battles of Cartersville, was adopted by a lopsided vote of 157-4.

It would prevent state transportation officials from issuing a license — to drive school or passenger buses — to anyone who must register as a sex offender for an of-

fense that happens starting July 1.

Any sex offender caught illegally driving a passenger bus without the required license would face a maximum two-year prison sentence and a \$5,000 fine.

The bill now heads to the state

Senate where sex offender driver legislation was passed last year. (See April 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association has been active in pushing for driver sex offender legislation.

Feds OK North Carolina for interstate tolling test

WASHINGTON — The Federal Highway Administration has chosen North Carolina as the last of three states eligible to place tolls on existing interstates under a pilot program, joining Virginia and Missouri.

States generally are not permitted to add tolls to existing interstates.

However, the Interstate System Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Pilot Program allows the conversion of free interstates into toll roads in conjunction with needed reconstruction or rehabilitation that's only possible with the collection of tolls.

The program is limited to three

interstates, each in a different state, to be tolled under the pilot, and the state's collection of tolls must be for a specified term exceeding 10 years.

The other two slots are for I-95 in Virginia and I-70 in Missouri.

The Missouri program was approved in 2005, but the state legislature has not given the Missouri DOT the go-ahead. Virginia's project was approved in September.

North Carolina officials say tolls would generate the \$4.4 billion needed to add travel lanes, raise and rebuild bridges, and improve interchanges on heavily traveled I-95. Current funding would cover about 10 percent of

the cost of the improvements, says the officials.

North Carolina initiated its I-95 Corridor Planning and Finance Study three years ago. The study was a comprehensive evaluation of how to improve the safety, connectivity and efficiency of all 182 miles of I-95 in North Carolina.

FHWA approved the study's environmental assessment in January. The assessment recommends widening the interstate to six and eight lanes, repairing pavement, raising and rebuilding bridges, improving interchanges and upgrading safety standards.

North Carolina has a website devoted to the project, find it at

www.driving95.com.

R.I. plan rejected

The FHWA has rejected Rhode Island's proposal to toll I-95.

Gov. Lincoln Chafee's administration asked for permission to place tollbooths on I-95 near the Connecticut border.

Officials in Connecticut said the move would unfairly burden motorists from their state, and critics feared there would be an increase in traffic on local roads as drivers tried to avoid the tolls.

The state DOT says it will continue to study the idea with the goal of it being approved in future rounds of toll projects.

I-95 tolls = \$30 billion; costs = \$16 billion

RALEIGH, N.C. — If Interstate 95 were to be rebuilt and converted to a toll road in North Carolina, highway users and taxpayers would be paying nearly double the estimated cost of the project and ongoing maintenance, according to an analysis by *Land Line* magazine.

The publication says its figures come from a North Carolina DOT report on the I-95 corridor.

Land Line conducted the analysis after NCDOT officials took exception to a comment quoted in the magazine that said there was no commitment by North Carolina "to using existing revenue to improve the corridor without tolls."

A spokeswoman for NCDOT asked the magazine to check out documents that spell out the project and explain how the state's funding formula would only be able to generate 10 percent of the

News Analysis

estimated \$4.4 billion cost of the project.

Land Line reported that according to the documents provided by the state, the proposed toll would last 40 years, from 2019 through 2059. That would pay for the \$4.4 billion reconstruction project, plus ongoing maintenance costs estimated between \$10.3 billion and \$12 billion.

Toll rates would be increased each year to keep up with inflation, roughly 2.5 percent per year over the life of the project.

In NCDOT's own words: "During that period, it is estimated that tolls would generate nearly \$30 billion."

By their own math, said *Land Line*, \$30 billion, minus expenses, leaves \$12.2 billion. "If that is the

case, then why would toll rates be so high? It stands to reason they could cut the toll rate substantially and still meet expenses. Or, how about no toll at all?" the magazine asked.

North Carolina collects 38.9 cents per gallon in taxes for diesel fuel, but according to current laws and formulas, NCDOT must distribute that money a certain way. That leaves a small amount for any individual roadway or project.

To *Land Line*, the restrictive state laws and rules "sound like a broken formula, and a broken record as far as a number of state DOTs are concerned.

"We try to understand the logic, but it's difficult considering the interstates were built from the 1950s through the 1980s and very few states have put aside any money to fix them.

"A system is broken if it hin-

ders or prevents important infrastructure work from getting done," said the magazine.

North Carolina's fuel tax rate is among the highest in the nation "and yet they're broke at the same time because the rules require the money to be spread thin."

Commented OOIDA Director of Legislative Affairs Ryan Bowley: "A lot of states simply refuse to have these discussions.

"NCDOT wanted us to see the numbers, and we have. And any way it shakes out, tolls are going to cost billions more than the project is worth.

"Even if you include the bonding and interest costs for the project, you still have a large gap totaling billions between the money spent and the money they will take in," Bowley said.

"There's no denying their numbers on that."

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A hot dog cart license vs. bus operating authority

"It costs more to get a license to sell hot dogs on the streets of New York City and Washington D.C., than it does to obtain operating authority to own a motorcoach business that can travel the country."

You may have heard or seen that comparison before, as some in the motorcoach industry have used the colorful statement while trying to make a point about bus safety, suggesting it should be more costly for new operators to get into the business.

In other words, they imply or assert that if it cost more to obtain federal operating authority, safer bus companies would result.

Others in the industry, however, say the comparison is bogus, a non sequitur that perpetuates a myth that might not be the best so-

lution for addressing industry safety issues.

The latest use of the comparison came from the American Bus Association, which highlighted the point in a *Washington Times* article about federal transportation regulators stepping up efforts to get unsafe carriers off the highways.

"It's too easy for people to get into the industry," ABA Communications Director Dan Ronan emphasized in the article, pointing out the fee comparisons between a hot dog stand and bus operating authority. "It's insane."

In Washington D.C., the fee comparison is correct. Hot dog street vendors there pay a little more than \$400 for a license, which is \$100 more than the \$300 that a new bus operator pays to obtain op-

erating authority from the U.S. Department of Transportation

But in New York City, it's a bit different. The city charges \$200 for a food-cart permit, which is \$100 below the cost of what a new bus operator pays.

However, because the city limits the number of licenses to 3,100 and there are more than 2,000 applicants on a waiting list, current license holders have turned the permits into a hot black market commodity and are leasing them to other vendors for as much as \$20,000 for two years.

The ABA and some others in the motorcoach industry also suggest that raising the new-entrant fee for motorcoach companies might discourage noncompliant operators from obtaining multiple

USDOT numbers, which they keep handy so they can quickly re-open under a new name if they are shut down by federal regulators for safety violations.

"Some of them have five or six numbers and if they had to pay a higher fee then they might not have as many," said Ronan. "A little more of an entry fee would pinch them in the pocket."

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration views the reincarnation of bad bus companies as a critical safety issue and has aggressively chased down carriers that have resurfaced with new names and USDOT numbers after being ordered out of service because of safety violations.

While the hot dog cart vs. motorcoach company analogy might

seem like a spicy analogy to bus travelers, the United Motorcoach Association says it is not one that should be used in the campaign to make the industry safer.

One reason, according to the trade group, is because it is not accurate for New York, which is the city cited most often by those who use the comparison as an argument for higher new-entrant fees, and where vendor charges are skewed by the black market activity.

"Clearly it is not so in New York City," said Ken Presley, UMA vice president and chief operating officer, noting that the selling of vendor permits there reminds him of the days before motorcoach deregulation when bus operators had to pay competitors for the privilege of driving over their routes or passing through their states.

More importantly, though, he said raising the new-entrant fee could drive new operators underground, which was a major problem in the 1980s and is certainly not needed in the industry today.

"We believe the more practical approach is to tie the authorization to operate to an individual, not a company," he said. "There are many professional licenses that use that approach — as it reduces the likelihood of duplicate authority."

He said UMA also believes start-up carriers should not have to invest their often precious capital with the federal government for operating authority. Rather, it should go into their companies.

"No matter how you look at it, a high entrance fee that discourages entry is economic regulation at its worst," he suggested.

Presley contends, too, that raising the new-entrant fee could be used more as an impediment to entry than anything that resembles a solution, and probably would see a court challenge if adopted.

John Stossel tries to open a lemonade stand

By John Stossel

Want to open a business in America? It isn't easy.

In Midway, Ga., a 14-year-old girl and her 10-year-old sister sold lemonade from their front yard. Two police officers bought some. But the next day, different officers ordered them to close their stand.

Their father went to city hall to try to find out why. The clerk laughed and said she didn't know.

Eventually, Police Chief Kelly Morningstar explained: "We were not aware of how the lemonade was made, who made the lemonade, and of what the lemonade was made with."

Give me a break.

If she doesn't know, so what?

But kids trying their first experiment with entrepreneurship are being shut down all over America. Officials in Hazelwood, Ill.,

ordered little girls to stop selling Girl Scout cookies.

It made me want to try to jump through the legal hoops required to open a simple lemonade stand in New York City. Here's some of what one has to do:

- Register as sole proprietor with the County Clerk's Office (must be done in person)
- Apply to the IRS for an Employer Identification Number.
- Complete 15-hour food protection course.
- After the course, register for an exam that takes one hour.

You must score 70 percent to pass. (Sample question: "What toxins are associated with the puffer fish?") If you pass, allow three to five weeks for delivery of Food Protection Certificate.

- Register for sales tax Certificate of Authority
- Apply for a Temporary Food

Service Establishment Permit. Must bring copies of the previous documents and completed forms to the Consumer Affairs Licensing Center.

Then, at least 21 days before opening your establishment, you must arrange for an inspection by the Health Department's Bureau of Food Safety and Community Sanitation. It takes about three weeks to get your appointment. If you pass, you can set up a business once you:

- Buy a portable fire extinguisher from a company certified by the New York Fire Department.
- Set up a contract for waste disposal.

We couldn't finish the process. Had we been able to schedule our health inspection and open my stand legally, it would have taken us 65 days.

I sold lemonade anyway. I looked dumb hawking it with my

giant fire extinguisher on the table.

Tourists told me they couldn't believe I had to get "all those permits."

A Pakistani man said: "That's crazy! You should move to Pakistan!"

But I don't want to move to Pakistan.

Politicians say: "We support entrepreneurs," but the bureaucrats make it hard.

The feds alone add 80,000 pages of new rules every year. Local governments add more. There are so many incomprehensible rules that even the bureaucrats can't tell you what's legal.

In the name of public safety, politicians strangle opportunity.

John Stossel is host of Stossel on the Fox Business Network. Copyright 2012 by JFS Productions Inc. Distributed by Creators.com.

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What would the industry impact be of a second Obama term?

WASHINGTON — So, what should the ground transportation industry expect if President Obama is re-elected in November?

No one knows for certain, of course, but the federal budget Obama submitted to Congress last month may provide strong clues.

Obama proposed spending \$476 billion on transportation over the coming six years in a plan that includes \$50 billion for immediate infrastructure spending to spur job creation.

While many Americans are calling for a smaller federal government, three agencies with a major impact on the motorcoach industry would get a whole lot bigger during a second Obama term.

The proposed fiscal 2013 Obama budget, which is a scaled-down version of the \$560 billion plan Obama proposed in his 2012 budget, would increase funding for the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

“Of the president’s \$476 billion proposal, \$305 billion would fund road and bridge improvements,” U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray

LaHood told reporters.

Obama proposed paying for the increases in transportation funding with half the expected savings from winding down the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The other half of the “war savings” would be used to lower the federal budget deficit.

Under Obama’s latest budget, the FMCSA would receive \$580 million in fiscal 2013, a 5 percent increase over its 2011 allocation of \$554 million. By 2018, FMCSA funding would top \$1 billion.

LaHood said that over the six years of the Obama plan, FMCSA would spend \$4.8 billion in its effort “to ensure that commercial truck and bus companies maintain high operational standards while getting high-risk truck and bus

companies and their drivers off our roadways.”

In the previous six-year spending authorization, effective in 2003, FMCSA was allocated \$2.9 billion over the six years, meaning that under the Obama plan, its budget would be 65.5 percent higher.

Based on LaHood’s statement and the projected increased dollars flowing to the FMCSA, it seems certain more regulations and an aggressive inspection and enforcement regimen would be the modus operandi during a second Obama Administration.

According to Transportation Department estimates, \$250 million in 2013 FMCSA money would be spent on administration and on “technology and programs that reduce serious injuries and deaths re-

sulting from commercial motor vehicle crashes.”

The president’s fiscal 2013 budget also contains \$142.6 million for DOT’s Compliance, Safety, Accountability program.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration would get \$7.5 billion over six years, \$330 million of which would be spent promoting USDOT’s campaign against distracted driving, which LaHood called an epidemic.

In the previous reauthorization, NHTSA was allocated \$4.4 billion, meaning that, under Obama’s plan, the agency’s six-year budget would be 70 percent higher.

For fiscal 2013, NHTSA’s allocation would be \$981 million, a 23 percent increase over its estimated 2012 spending of \$800 million.

Obama proposed \$42.6 billion in FHWA spending for fiscal 2013, although that would be supplemented by the \$50 billion in immediate infrastructure investment that includes money for rail projects, as well as roads and bridges.

FHWA’s estimated spending for 2012 is \$39.9 billion, down from the \$41.8 billion authorized for 2011.

However, by 2018, annual highway spending under Obama’s plan would rise about 47 percent, reaching \$58.5 billion in 2018.

The Congressional Budget Office recently said the Highway Trust Fund, which depends heavily on the 24.4-cent diesel tax and the 18.4-cent gasoline tax, will run out of money in 2013.

Like the Obama proposal of last year, his new transportation plan also contains billions of dollars for high-speed passenger rail projects.

In all, Obama requested spending \$47 billion over six years on high-speed rail, \$2.7 billion of it in 2013.

The Obama plan also would “modernize and simplify the highway program structure by consolidating more than 55 programs into five,” LaHood said.

Tips for keeping customers coming back

COLDWATER, Mich. — Ever wonder why you can’t seem to keep new customers coming back? Here are a few ideas that will help:

Never let your customers forget who you are; use every method possible to keep yourself at the top of their minds.

Try giving customers more

than they paid for, or a little extra they didn’t expect.

Customers should perceive your service has having greater value than that offered by your nearest competitor. It’s not enough to meet your customers’ needs; you have to anticipate them.

Look at your business as a cus-

tomers. What could you be doing better, and what is your competition doing better?

Think ahead to what the market is going to be demanding months from now and determine what you can do better then.

By Angela Shupe, a freelance writer.

If you’re looking to be entertained, REI has the solution for you. Our digital media center plays movies, music, or displays photos on passenger monitors, eliminating the need for DVDs or VHS tapes. With easy-to-use passenger controls, the center provides hours of entertainment.

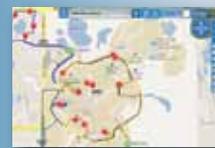


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Driver in fatal crash may have gotten CDL in N.Y. scam

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — The driver involved in a high-profile motorcoach crash that killed four people on Interstate 95 last spring may have gotten his license through a high-tech scam operated by a husband and wife team over the past decade.

Federal prosecutors charged Phillip and Pui Ng last month with operating a “driving school” that illegally helped unqualified bus and truck drivers get commercial driver licenses.

According to prosecutors, the scheme was straightforward and remarkably simple: Ng fitted his customers with a “varsity-style” jacket and attached a beeper to the would-be driver’s belt on the day the individual was to take the CDL test.

A minicamera was hidden inside a sleeve of the coat, beaming test questions to a video screen inside Ng’s minivan parked outside

the Department of Motor Vehicles office where the test was being conducted, authorities charged.

Ng then communicated the correct answers to the multiple-choice questions via the beeper: Two buzzes for A, four for B and six for C.

The scam operated with a “money-back guarantee” for anyone paying \$1,800 for the right answers to the written state test, prosecutors said.

The test — applicants have to score 80 percent to pass — covers topics like passenger safety, air brakes, and general driving knowledge.

Tragic connection?

One of the individuals linked to the sham driving school owned by the Hong Kong immigrants was King Yiu Cheng, the driver of a New York Chinatown-bound

coach that crashed last May on I-95 in Virginia, killing four people and injuring 52 others, authorities said. (See June 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

“The defendants’ conduct appears to have had deadly consequences,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul Tuchmann said in court papers.

Investigators reportedly are continuing to hunt for cheating test-takers, with the intention of pulling the illegally licensed drivers off the road.

Undone by undercover

Ng, a naturalized U.S. citizen, boasted about his long history of duping state DMV workers. The couple also bragged to an undercover federal agent about the ease and beauty of their unprecedented, long-running con.

“He will teach you what to do... You won’t have to worry

about it,” promised Pui Ng.

Her husband recalled the deceit had failed just once: When the World Trade Center terror attacks knocked out local wireless service on 9/11/2001.

The undercover agent, speaking in Mandarin, presented himself as a wanna-be driver who spoke little English before Ng drove him to a state Department of Motor Vehicles office in Staten Island and guided him through the CDL test via the minicamera and beeper.

“I’ve helped people with the written test for more than 10 years,” Ng told the undercover agent before helping him get 86 out of 95 questions right on the exam.

According to court papers, the investigation found that potentially “hundreds of drivers” who couldn’t read or speak English were issued commercial licenses by the state of New York.

The drivers needed to pass a road test once they passed the written test and paid \$12.50 for a commercial driving permit.

Authorities said at least 720 people in the last 26 months took their road tests in vehicles registered to the Ngs’ business, state-licensed N&Y Professional Service Line.

No scruples

U.S. Attorney Loretta Lynch said the couple showed a wanton disregard for life and limb, sending dangerous drivers onto the streets.

“The defendants put the public — passengers, pedestrians and drivers alike — at grave risk to line their own pockets,” Lynch said.

Ng and his wife, the parents of three, face up to 20 years in prison if convicted on federal conspiracy to commit mail fraud charges in the case.

Bluffton crash

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The coach then flipped and rotated, dropping 19 feet to the freeway below, landing on its left side and hitting a pickup truck.

The pickup driver, who rapidly accelerated when he saw the bus plunging, was not hurt, but five passengers died, plus Niemeyer and his wife, who was sitting behind him. Seven others were seriously injured and 21 passengers received minor injuries.

Niemeyer, 65, was a relief driver who seemingly had spent a restful night in a motel before getting behind the wheel at 4:30 a.m.

The chartered coach was carrying the Bluffton team from Ohio to a tournament game during spring break in Sarasota, Fla.

Many of the players and other passengers were sleeping or dozing when the crash occurred. Some reportedly were sprawled across seats and even sleeping in the aisle. The violence of the crash threw passengers everywhere.

Almost immediately, there were passionate outcries from a wide range of individuals, including parents, safety advocates, politicians and others, about the need for seatbelts on the Bluffton bus and on motorcoaches generally.

In fact, the industry’s accelerating transition during the past five years to seatbelts on most new coaches can be traced directly to the Bluffton crash and its aftermath.

Doctors from Grady Memorial Hospital, where many of the crash victims had been taken, began phoning congressmen from Ohio and Georgia soon after the acci-

dent, urging them to push for legislation mandating seatbelts on charter buses.

Parents John and Joy Betts became outspoken advocates for bus safety legislation, prevailing on U.S. senators in Ohio and Texas to introduce the Motorcoach Enhanced Safety Act of 2007, a far-reaching bill that is still being pushed in the Senate and the House.

A competing bill, favored by much of the industry, is pending in the House.

The National Transportation Safety Board, which conducted an extensive investigation of the crash, concluded that contributing to the severity of the accident was the motorcoach’s “lack of an adequate occupant protection system.”

The NTSB identified four major safety issues related to the crash: Inadequate HOV traffic control devices, inadequate motor carrier driver oversight, lack of event data recorders on motorcoaches, and “lack of motorcoach occupant protection.”

The Bluffton crash prompted the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to develop a broad-based bus safety initiative and conduct crash testing of motorcoaches for the first time.

Out of that testing the safety agency has proposed seatbelts be mandated for all new motorcoaches. A final seatbelt rule could be issued this year.

Also under consideration by NHTSA are standards for roof strength and window glazing.

“The impact of these tragic accidents can last for decades,” observed UMA Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Ken Presley.

GO Ground

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

In addition, they fear their companies could be perceived by the schools as being less safe than those working for GO Ground because of the inspections offered by TSX.

The issue surfaced during the annual State Association Summit conducted last month at UMA Motorcoach Expo in Long Beach, Calif.

Joan Libby, president of Cavalier Coach Trailways in Boston, Mass., asked Van Steenburg to comment on GO Ground, TSX and other third-party inspections that are not associated with federal regulatory agencies.

While Van Steenburg said he could not judge GO Ground and its safety inspection program, he emphasized that his agency is the only one authorized by federal law to

perform safety inspections of buses and motorcoach companies.

“We can’t delegate this to another agency,” he stressed.

He did point out that while FMCSA inspectors are specially trained by the government, he did not know the extent of the training TSX inspectors have or if they are certified to perform inspections.

“But we need a little bit of help here,” said Libby. “They are gaining momentum.”

Gladys Gillis of Starline Transportation in Seattle said the FMCSA could help change the perception the public might have of companies not working for GO Ground by simply upgrading the titles to its motorcoach safety rating system.

“The highest safety rating from the federal government is ‘satisfactory’ and that’s not a very good selling tool,” she said.

CBA complaint

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

the contract with North Natomas and it will begin operating the shuttle this month.

CBA said the lowball bidding for the North Natomas service was not the first time SACRT has been involved in such conduct. It cited bids the agency filed for shuttle services in Granite Regional Park last year and Rancho Cordova in 2009.

The association said the Rancho Cordova bid came at a time SACRT was planning to reduce its own bus service due to operating expenses exceeding available funds.

“These are examples of diverting resources to operate non-core bus service and risking losses by lowball bids,” Giddens said.

In addition to price undercutting and shifting of funds, CBA also asked the FTA to include in an audit SACRT’s construction of a \$25.6 million satellite bus maintenance facility that’s projected to cost much more to operate than the agency’s current facility.

“This second facility is symbolic of SACRT staff’s management model, which is to expand its infrastructure and facilities beyond available resources, then devote management time and resources by hiring outside consultants to ultimately lobby and organize support for more public tax dollars to sustain its overstretched, underperforming bus and rail network,” Giddens said.

CBA recommended the FTA audit include an analysis of the facility, and recommendations that private companies contracted to

Several other operators suggested the best way to fight back is not to join GO Ground and, instead, work to maintain and grow other types of transportation services with the universities and schools.

In an interview following Expo, one large operator whose company transports a number of university teams said he has taken a hard-line stand against GO Ground.

“It’s our own fault if we allow them in the industry,” he said.

The respected operator says he just says “no” when GO Ground and TSX call and try to coerce him into joining the program and signing up for the costly inspections.

“I say ‘no, and here are my rates.’ I say ‘no, and here are my rates.’ I say ‘no, and here are my rates.’”

So far his strategy has worked. He has hauled several teams under Go Ground’s aegis.

operate public transit routes be allowed to share the facility, reducing operating costs for SACRT.

Masui said the new facility is being built in phases and funding for some of the work has not yet been secured. The facility is important to the agency, she said, because it currently only has one maintenance garage and fueling station for its entire fleet of buses.

Giddens said the overall situation has been exasperated by SACRT’s reduction over the past few years of 20 percent of its bus service and 16 percent of its light-rail service.

“This was primarily due to an excessively high operating cost (structure) and an irrational bus network that needs to be restructured with inherently high-cost routes being operated by lower-cost operators,” he added.

New at MOTORCOACH EXPO 2012



Prevost-Volvo/New Features

Volvo has given its 9700 model, at right, a revamped interior that includes new seat fabric packages, improved lighting, upgraded overhead passenger service panels that are attractively outlined in LED lighting, an enhanced entry area, and redesigned overhead parcel racks. A new audio/video system features the Bosch Professional Line III. Among other things, the system is USB compatible so any audio device can be connected, allowing audio selections to be customized to passengers. For drivers, the tire pressure monitoring system dis-

play has been relocated to the top of the dashboard and a cup holder is within easy reach. The coach has a universal key, making key management simpler. Additionally, new handles in the entry area, contrasting step edges, LED step lighting, and an easily identifiable emergency door latch promote passenger safety.

The Volvo 9700, as well as all Prevost coaches, including the H3-45, top left, have the latest version of the Prevost Liaison vehicle management system. Prevost said the updated Liaison 2.0 offers more reliable commu-



nications, more efficient data transfer, more advanced features, and an easier-to-use interface. The system now utilizes a cellular network to improve signal reliability and provide wider coverage. "Fault alerts," which are provided in real time, can be customized by vehicle type. The upgraded system introduces a digital messaging system, allowing pre-set or customized messages to be sent

between dispatcher and driver.

Prevost says its Liaison is the only integrated telematics system in the motorcoach industry and the only one developed by a manufacturer for its coaches. Liaison continuously monitors many on-coach electronic systems and lets users check on the vital statistics of each motorcoach at any time, or on a schedule.



Temsa/A new 30-footer

Temsa introduced the TS 30, at right, during Motorcoach Expo. Bob Foley, president and CEO of CH Trading Co., the U.S. distributor of Temsa, said the compact TS 30 will help operators diversity their fleets. The 30-foot, Turkish-built coach seats 34 passengers with a restroom and 36 without. It has an ergonomic driver's cockpit, 141 square feet of under-coach luggage space, automatic A/C system, and an all-American pow-

ertrain. The TS 30 is equipped with a Cummins ISB 6.7-liter, 250-horsepower engine, an Allison B300 transmission, roof-mounted Thermo King air conditioning unit, dual Leece Neville alternators, seating with three-point seatbelts, cruise control, LED-type interior and exterior lights, Knorr disc brakes, and Meritor Wabco ABS and ATC.

Both the TS 30 and its big brother, the TS 35, above left, are the only small motorcoaches



sold in North America that are integral construction (monocoque) using stainless steel. Foley and other CH executives, as well as those with Temsa, said the companies are not only committed to the U.S. market but committed to supplying competi-

tively-priced coaches that meet the demands of U.S. operators, including after-sales service and support.

Next up for Temsa and CH Trading will be a 45-foot model.



Setra-Daimler Bus/More stability

Setra announced at Motorcoach Expo that its proprietary ESP System (electronic stability control program) is now standard on both Setra TopClass S 417, above top, and ComfortClass S 407, above middle, coaches. Setra said its ESP System works in conjunction with the automatic traction control and the anti-lock braking systems to help maintain driving stability in critical situations. If the ESP system detects a critical condition, such as an evasive maneuver, it will automatically reduce engine output and/or activate the brakes on specific wheels, until vehicle stability has been regained. "The ESP feature brings us a step closer to minimizing accidents through technological innovations, and ensuring the highest possible safety in our coaches," said Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for Daimler Buses North America.

Also on display at the Setra/Daimler stand at Expo was a new Mercedes-Benz Sprinter MiniBus, above. The Sprinter is available in a number of floor-plan configurations suitable for hotel, airport, commuter and paratransit shuttle work; it can seat up to 16. Rear or side wheelchair-lift mounting also is available.

LZ/Falcon 45

LZ Busline is the U.S. manufacturer's representative for Bonluck Bus Co. of China, builder of the Falcon 45, which was developed and formerly sold by the defunct Bus & Coach International. The Falcon 45 was introduced at UMA Expo 2007 in New Orleans. LZ is distributing the Falcon from its headquarters in suburban St. Louis, and it maintains a parts warehouse in St. Louis. Service centers have

MCI/Campaigning

Motor Coach Industries emphasized its new marketing campaign during Expo. "This year's UMA Expo is particularly significant for us," said Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president of sales and marketing. "The biggest news we want to share focuses on our most recent improvements in manufacturing, parts and service. We consider these accomplishments among the biggest in our history, and we're looking forward to demonstrating our 'Reliability Driven' promise in all customer encounters MCI-wide." MCI honored Ambassadors Gray Line of Halifax, Nova Scotia, recognizing the operator's emission-cutting policies developed in cooperation with the Children's Clean Air Network. MCI's stand featured two J4500s, at right, the nation's top-selling motorcoach for seven consecutive years. The latest J4500s feature updated Amerex fire-suppression systems, with optional new steerable tag axle, upgraded Wi-Fi, and Amaya A-2TEN seating with three-point seatbelts.



BCI/New coach

BCI America introduced the Explorer 45 at Motorcoach Expo. The Explorer is essentially an American-

ized version of a coach developed by BCI Bus of Australia, and assembled in a new joint-venture Chinese plant managed by BCI Bus. The Explorer features North American and European components, including Cummins, Allison, Parker/Vansco, Bitzer, Knorr-Bremse, Bendix, Grammer, Monogram and ZF. BCI America is establishing a dealer network that already includes Matthews Bus Sales, Illinois Bus Sales and Schetcky Northwest Sales, and is giving the Explorer an extended introduction that includes being driven from coast to coast. Financing for the coach is being handled by Innovative Leasing Services. For information, go to www.bciamerica.net.



been established in Missouri, Texas, Nevada and Florida. For information, go to www.lz-busline.com.



Alexander Dennis Enviro 400. The United Kingdom's leading bus builder brought its new open-top, double-deck tourist bus, designed specifically for the North American market, to Expo. The 35-foot coach seats 80, 51 up top. It uses a Cummins ISL engine.

ABC/Announcements

ABC Companies came to Motorcoach Expo with announcements for a variety of company initiatives, including expanding its coach refurbishing services, expanding its social media outreach, and acquiring Fleet Fueling Systems Inc. It also announced it plans to expand its newly acquired Hudson Body Co. operation in New Jersey, and to make a real-time remote engine diagnostic system available later this year as standard on all new Van Hool coaches equipped with Detroit engines, including C2045 models, at right. Additionally, ABC launched a new branding campaign designed to communicate the variety of services available under the ABC name. "The ABC One campaign is designed to communicate the simplicity and one-stop convenience of doing business with a trusted, diverse organization," said ABC President and CEO Dane Cornell. ABC's re-



furbishment business unit now includes specialized programs for refurbishing Van Hool coaches, partial and total refurb options for fleet owners, and powertrain replacement. To encourage Expo at-

tendees to join its social network, ABC gave away five classic beach cruiser bicycles, which were mounted on a special rack on the back of a Van Hool TD925 double decker on the show floor, at top.



Stallion 900. The 35-foot, 38-passenger Stallion uses a Cummins/Allison powertrain mounted in a rugged Freightliner XBR chassis that features ZF-independent front air suspension.



Caio G3600. Caio North America and Caio Induscar of Sao Paulo, Brazil, returned to Expo with this G3600, an integrated coach that mates a Freightliner sled-style chassis with a Caio Induscar body. A new Caio distribution network appears to be in the offing.

Museum/Masterpiece

The Pacific Bus Museum of Sacramento, Calif., brought its latest acquisition to Expo, a pristine 1969 Flxible model 223 DD FlxLiner, the last intercity model produced by the old Flxible Corp. of Loudonville, Ohio. The FlxLiner was purchased new by San Joaquin Delta Junior College District in Stockton, Calif., in 1970. For the next 40 years it transported the college's sports teams throughout the state. Roughly two years ago, the college decided it was time to get a new coach and it traded its venerable FlxLiner in on a Setra. Thanks to the generosity of Setra of North America, the museum



was able to acquire the FlxLiner last year. Only minor, largely cosmetic, touching-up was needed to

restore the coach to its 1969 glory. Remarkable. Contact the museum at www.pacbus.org.



Glaval Synergy. Elkhart, Ind.-based Glaval Bus had two buses at Expo, one of which was its coach-style Synergy, above. Built on a Freightliner XBR chassis, the Synergy has a Cummins/Allison powertrain. The 35-foot coach can seat up to 41, with a restroom.



Expo gives operators a chance to see products first hand. Above right, Sean O'Neil, CEO of IDrive, the vehicle monitoring system supplier, demonstrates the company's event data recorder to (from left) Scott

Lee, Earl Reed and James Edward of Royal Coach Tours in San Jose, Calif. Below left, Richie Rodriguez of Cougar Bus Lines in Laredo, Texas, discusses parts with Bob Kirkman of Kirk's Automotive.



Cary Martin of Little Rock Tours & Travel in Little Rock, Ark., last year's winner of the Vision

Award/Small Operator, asks a question at the General Session that kicked off Expo.



Ray Land of Fabulous Coach Lines in Branford, Fla., kicks off the UMA Young Guns Roundta-

ble by letting everyone know that anyone who's "young at heart" can participate.

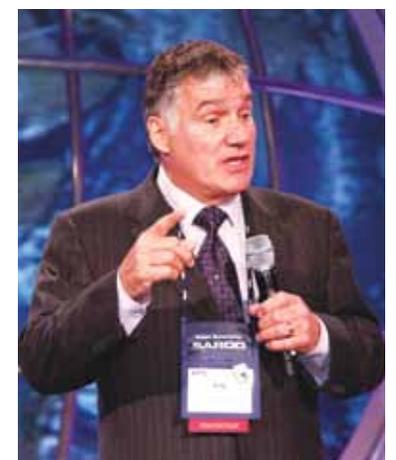


From left, Jeff Polzien of Red Carpet Charters in Oklahoma City, Larry Hundt of Great Canadian Holiday & Coaches in Kitchener,

Ontario and Doug Switzer of the Ontario Motor Coach Association in Toronto, take a break during the annual golf tournament.



Leadership Luncheon attendees are amused by speaker Bruce Kimbrell of the Disney Institute.



Lou Sardo of Sardo Bus & Coach Upholstery in Clermont, Fla., performs his stand up comedy routine during the Vision Awards Banquet.

Photos by David Braun Photography, Las Vegas — www.DavidBraun.com



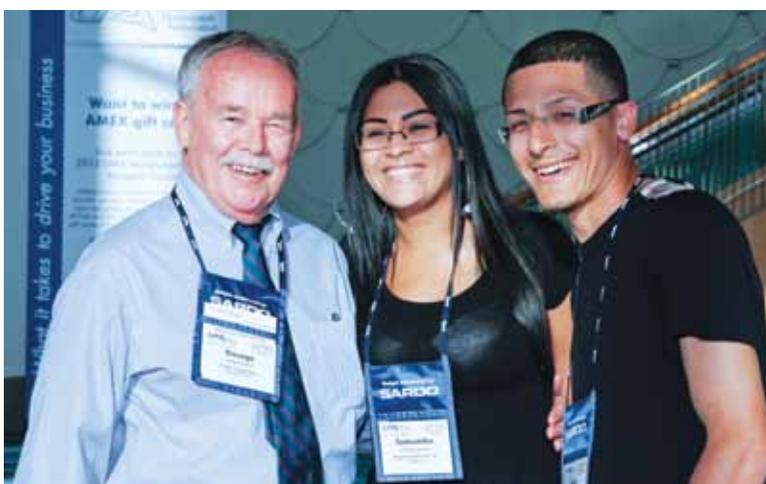
From left, Joe Kobussen of Kobussen Trailways in Kaukauna, Wis.; Joe Cyr of Cyr Bus Line in Old Town, Maine; Tom McCaughey of Flagship Trailways in Cranston, R.I., and Alan Thrasher of Thrasher Brothers Trailways in Birmingham, Ala. meet at Expo.



From left, Frank Farrow of Peter Pan Bus Lines in Secaucus, N.J., is joined by James Brown of Magic Carpet Tours in Richmond, Va.; Eddie Mason of First Priority Trailways in District Heights, Md.; Larry Williams of L.W. Transportation in Chantilly, Va., and Charles Morgan of Morgan & Sons Week-End Tours in Greensboro, N.C.



UMA President & CEO Victor Parra and NTSB Chairman Deborah Hersman, front at right, arrive at Expo on a new MCI J4500, along with Brent Thacher, left front, from MCI, Tom Ready of Ready Bus Lines in La Crescent, Minn., center back, and Mitch Guralnick and Brent Maitland of MCI.



Operators from Florida connect at Expo in California. George Childers of Magic Carpet Ride, left, in Vero Beach, and Samantha and Eddie Serrano of Empire Coach Line Inc. in Orlando.



Maintenance Interchange participants are all smiles after a day of problem solving.



Kevin Whitworth of Whitworth Bus in Dayton, Ohio, leads a Maintenance Interchange discussion.

Tourism Cares helps Pensacola at end of month

PENSACOLA, Fla. — Tourism Cares, the non-profit industry organization with a mission to preserve the travel experience for future generations, will bring volunteers here later this month to tackle two Pensacola projects.

The volunteers will clean and fix up the Pensacola Lighthouse and the shoreline on Bayou Texar.

The project workday will be Friday, March 30.

Pensacola Lighthouse has towered over Pensacola Bay since 1859 and is still in use today. Extensive painting projects of both the exterior and interior of the house will be done by Tourism Cares volunteers.

Landscaping and parking lot upgrades also are slated.

Volunteers will join with The Ecosystem Restoration Section of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection northwest district in partnership with others to participate in the conservation of Pensacola Bay.

Volunteers will install vegetation and near-shore oyster reefs along 1,500 feet of shoreline on Bayou Texar. The project will enhance and restore habitats, stabilize the shoreline, and serve as a natural filtration system for runoff and potential pollutants.

For information and to register, go to www.tourismcares.org/volunteer.

Calendar

MARCH 2012

21 Maryland Motorcoach Association Group Leader Marketplace, Ellicott City, Md. Info: www.marylandmotorcoach.org.

29-30 Tourism Cares for Pensacola (Fla.), Pensacola Lighthouse and Bayou Texar, Pensacola. Info: www.TourismCares.org/Volunteer.

APRIL 2012

1-4 Ontario Transportation Expo, Toronto, Can. Info: Go to www.ote.ca.

10-11 Northwest Motorcoach Association General Meeting and Annual Mechanic Training, Noah's Ark, Woodland, Wash. Info: Email nwmotorcoach@aol.com.

24-26 United Motorcoach Association Washington Fly-In 2012, Washington, D.C. Info: Email kpresley@uma.org.

Operators are awarded wheelchair-lift grants

ALABAMA

Capital Trailways, Montgomery: \$35,000

Colonial Trailways, Mobile: \$56,610
Thrasher Brothers Trailways, Birmingham: \$26,770
Spirit Coach, Madison: \$29,738

ARKANSAS

Little Rock Tours, Little Rock: \$35,000

Arizona Mountain View Tours, Tucson: \$35,000

CALIFORNIA

All West Coachlines/Coach

America, Sacramento: \$25,200

Bauer's Intelligent Transportation, San Francisco: \$29,700

Coach America, Los Angeles/Long Beach: \$105,582

Gold Coast Tours/Hot Dogger Tours, Brea: \$35,000

Pacific Coast Sightseeing Tours, Anaheim: \$52,650

Pacific Trailways of Southern California, Garden Grove: \$35,000

Silverado Trailways, San Luis Obispo: \$32,778

CONNECTICUT

DATTCO, New Britain: \$70,000

Post Road Stages, South Windsor: \$33,000

FLORIDA

American Coach Lines of Miami: \$70,000

Annett Bus Lines, Sebring: \$28,283

Astro Travel and Tours, Tallahassee: \$34,350

Daytona-Orlando Transit Services, Orlando: \$25,200

Escot Bus Lines, Largo: \$13,595

Florida Cruise Connection, Sarasota: \$25,200

Midnight Sun Tours, Lake Worth: \$25,833

Magic Carpet Ride, Vero Beach: \$32,960

GEORGIA

American Coach Lines of Atlanta: \$23,244

Southeastern Stages, Atlanta: \$64,513

HAWAII

Polynesian Adventure Tours/Gray Line, Honolulu: \$71,036

IOWA

Burlington Trailways, West Burlington: \$70,153

ILLINOIS

Chicago Trolley/Coach USA: \$25,200

Vandalia Bus Lines, Caseyville: \$29,700

INDIANA

Free Enterprise System, Lansing: \$35,000

Royal Excursions Chauffeur, Mishawaka: \$26,877

Star of Indiana/Free Enterprise Co., Bloomington: \$29,700

Tri-State Coach Lines/Coach USA, Gary: \$77,500

KENTUCKY

Shockey Tours, Louisville: \$33,000

LOUISIANA

Calco Travel Inc., Geismar: \$29,700

Gaten's Adventures Unlimited, Hammond: \$27,000

Hotard Coaches, New Orleans: \$210,150

Tri-City Charters of Bossier City: \$20,376

MASSACHUSETTS

Bloom's Bus Lines, Taunton: \$50,400

Cavalier Coach/Cavalier Trailways, Boston: \$35,000

Wilson Bus Lines, East Templeton: \$29,700

MARYLAND

AP Xpress, Hyattsville: \$35,000

Golden Ring Travel Inc., Baltimore: \$35,000

Woodlawn Motor Coach, Woodlawn: \$29,900

MAINE

Custom Coach & Limousine, Gorham: \$25,504

MICHIGAN

Indian Trails Inc., Owosso: \$28,175

MINNESOTA

Jefferson Lines, Minneapolis: \$129,025

Lorenz Bus Service, Minneapolis: \$74,534

Trobec's Bus Service, St. Stephen: \$22,500

Voigt's Bus Service Inc., St. Cloud: \$52,650

MISSOURI

Mid-American Coaches, Washington: \$35,000

MISSISSIPPI

AGR Coach, Starkville: \$31,200

NORTH CAROLINA

American Charters, Winston-Salem: \$70,000

NEBRASKA

Arrow Stage Lines, Omaha: \$227,250

NEVADA

Celebrity Coaches of America, Las Vegas: \$35,000

NEW JERSEY

Academy Express, Hoboken: \$761,029

Suburban Trails/Coach USA, Paramus: \$245,506

NEW MEXICO

All Aboard America!, Santa Fe: \$136,193

NEW YORK

Adirondack Trailways, Hurley: \$225,794

Chenango Valley Bus Lines, Binghamton: \$30,000

Excellent Bus Service, Brooklyn: \$34,508

Hampton Jitney, Southhampton: \$86,017

North Fork Express, Hampton Bays: \$35,000

Paradise Travel, Franklin Square: \$31,500

Upstate Transit of Saratoga, Saratoga Springs: \$29,700

Yankee Trails, Rensselaer: \$29,700

OHIO

Lakefront Lines/Coach America, Brook Park: \$53,568

Precious Cargo Transportation, Chagrin Falls: \$35,000

OREGON

Raz Transportation/Coach America, Portland: \$29,700

PENNSYLVANIA

Carl R. Bieber, Kutztown: \$116,481

Central Cab Co./Coach USA, Waynesburg: \$25,331

David Thomas Tours, Philadelphia: \$35,500

Martz Trailways, Wilkes Barre: \$331,523

Trans-Bridge Lines, Bethlehem: \$123,649

Transportation Management Services, Sewickly: \$27,668

SOUTH CAROLINA

Champion Coach, Greenville: \$25,834

RHODE ISLAND

Bonanza Bus Lines/Peter Pan Bus, Providence: \$173,690

TENNESSEE

Gray Line Nashville: \$34,349

TEXAS

Americanos USA/Greyhound Lines, Dallas: \$236,546

El Expreso Bus/Coach America, Houston: \$66,305

Executive Coach, Irving: \$30,297

Greyhound Lines, Dallas: \$2,444,312

Kerrville Bus Co./Coach America, San Antonio: \$129,025

Lone Star Coaches, Grand Prairie: \$35,000

Omnibus Express, Houston: \$35,840

Star Shuttle & Charter/Gray Line of San Antonio: \$29,700

VIRGINIA

Chariots for Hire, Sterling: \$35,000

James River Bus Lines, Richmond: \$25,830

Venture Tours Inc., Virginia Beach: \$21,771

VERMONT

Bristol Tours, Bristol: \$32,785

Washington

MTR Western, Seattle: \$81,540

WISCONSIN

Badger Coaches, Madison: \$78,849

Kobussen Trailways, Kaukauna: \$27,450

Lamers Bus Lines, Green Bay: \$68,600

Riteway Bus Service, Richfield: \$35,000

Wisconsin Coach Lines/Coach USA, Waukesha: \$91,393

WEST VIRGINIA

Mountaineer Coach/Coach USA, Beaver: \$26,081

Lift grants

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Over the years, Greyhound and other large operators have received the lion's share of the wheelchair lift grant money because of the federal requirement that their fleets had to be 50 percent accessible in 2006 and must be 100 per-

cent accessible later this year.

Other big winners in the latest round of grants included Academy Express of Hoboken, N.J., \$761,029; Frank Martz Coach Co./Martz Trailways of Wilkes Barre, Pa., \$331,523; Suburban Trails (a Coach USA Co.) of New Brunswick, N.J., \$245,506, and Americanos USA (a Greyhound Lines

Co.) of Dallas, \$236,546.

Operators in a total of 38 states received grant money.

For more information about the program, go to www.fta.dot.gov.

For grant-specific questions, contact the FTA regional office in your area or call Blenda Younger, Office of Program Management, at (202) 366-4345.

Diesel spikes above \$4; will there be a repeat of '08?

The average U.S. price of diesel fuel has climbed above \$4 a gallon after spiking late last month, reports the Energy Information Administration in its Gas and Fuel Update.

The climb to more than \$4.05 a gallon marked the first time the average diesel fuel price has been more than \$4 since November.

Diesel prices have been rising steadily for a month and a half, with the average U.S. diesel price increasing by nearly 25 cents a gallon.

Compared to a year ago, diesel

prices are up by an average of roughly 35 cents a gallon.

The U.S. West Coast has seen the biggest surge in diesel prices, climbing to more than \$4.33 a gallon.

Bloomberg reported that ultra-low sulfur diesel supplies might be tight in the U.S. East Coast during the next year due to refinery shutdowns and transportation constraints limiting shipping from the Gulf Coast. (See related story below.)

In a separate report, the Energy Information Administration said

diesel will be "the most challenging product to replace as there are few alternative supply sources outside the U.S. Gulf Coast."

Average gasoline prices have climbed above \$3.72 a gallon.

Oil prices have generally stabilized above \$100 a barrel, affected by Western nations' fears of Iran building a nuclear weapon, as well as the dollar strengthening and lingering concerns over the European financial crisis.

Price forecast Diesel prices in the U.S. aren't likely to hit the all-

time highs seen in 2008, say two forecasters.

Tom Kloza, chief analyst for the Oil Price Information Service, says the upward pressure on diesel fuel has more to do with global demand than it does speculation or the oil markets.

"I think there's a better chance that diesel would hit \$5 than gasoline would hit \$5, but I think it would be an excessive price," Kloza said in a radio interview.

"You may see, at some point in 2012, diesel prices on the edges of

the country — the Pacific Northwest, California, maybe New England — flirt with a \$5 price. But no, I think that's probably hyperbole for the most part."

Kloza believes diesel will stay below 2008's historic highs, which helped put the nation into recession.

The Energy Information Administration, in the February edition of its Short-Term Energy Outlook, estimated an average diesel price of \$3.91 this year and an average gasoline price of \$3.53 for the year.

Refinery shutdowns could impact Northeast diesel supplies, prices

PHILADELPHIA — Supplies of ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel in the U.S. Northeast could be greatly impacted if Sunoco Inc. follows through with plans to shut down its Philadelphia refinery in July if no buyer is found.

That's the warning in a report from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The refinery produces 335,000 barrels a day, making up 24 percent of the refining capacity on the East Coast as of August, the EIA says.

Last month saw the closure of Hovensa SA, a 350,000-barrel-a-day joint venture refinery operated by Hess Corp. and Venezuela's state-owned Petroleos de Venezuela.

"Ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel will be the most challenging product to replace, as there are few alternative supply sources outside of the U.S. Gulf Coast," the Energy Information Administration says.

"Transportation constraints may also hamper the movement of all replacement products through Pennsylvania and into western New York, areas currently supplied by pipelines originating in the Philadelphia area refinery complex. The industry may not be able to overcome all of the logistical challenges in the Northeast for a year or

more, as infrastructure changes will be necessary to accommodate the changing product flows," the EIA said.

The impact on diesel fuel prices in the Northeast are "highly uncertain" in the event the Philadelphia refinery closes, said the agency.

"If areas cannot be adequately supplied in the short term, prices can spike," the EIA said. "In the longer run, higher prices and possibly higher price volatility can result from longer supply chains. The potential loss of the Sunoco Philadelphia refinery presents a complex supply challenge, and no single solution has been identified by industry participants that will address all of the logistical hurdles that must be overcome."

In 1988, Sunoco acquired the refinery in South Philadelphia as part of its purchase of Atlantic Refining and Marketing Company and, in 1994, purchased an adjacent refinery from Chevron.

Integrating the two refineries into one facility with two operating areas, Sunoco created the Philadelphia Refinery, the oldest continuously operating petroleum facility in the world with origins dating back to the 1860's when the petroleum industry was in its infancy.

Biodiesel sets output record

The U.S. biodiesel industry set a production record in 2011, producing more than 802 million gallons of biodiesel in plants from Florida to Iowa to Washington state.

Last year's output more than doubled 2010 production of about 315 million gallons, and broke the previous record of about 690 million gallons set in 2009.

The record came after a \$1-per-gallon federal tax credit for biodiesel

was reinstated at the end of 2010. The incentive expired again on Dec. 31, 2011, from lack of congressional action.

The 2011 production supported more than 31,000 jobs -- up from fewer than 13,000 in 2010 -- while generating at least \$3 billion in economic activity and \$628 million in federal, state and local tax revenue, according to a study conducted by Cardno-Entrix.






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IMG president sets goals, predicts industry growth

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — When the International Motor Coach Group began its wide-ranging search for someone to replace its long-time president last year, it wanted to find an executive who had extensive experience in the motorcoach industry.

In selecting Bronwyn Wilson, it got much more than that.

Wilson, who took over as president of the organization of select operators last month, not only understands the motorcoach business but she also has a wealth of experience in the travel and tour industry as well.

In fact, she has spent her entire 25-year professional career getting the two industries to not only work together but to prosper as well.

Wilson began her career in 1987 as a production manager for Australian Pacific Touring, one of Australia's largest escorted operators that run tours and cruises worldwide.

When she started, the company owned a fleet of more than 100 Mercedes-Benz motorcoaches that were used for sightseeing tours in major cities and for taking Australian and international travelers into the Outback and other remote regions of Australia.

A few years later, Australian Pacific Touring moved her to Los Angeles to establish the company's first international escorted program, which offered tours in both the United States and Canada. Among her responsibilities was contracting with motorcoach companies.

"As APT was a motorcoach operator, we were very keen to use quality operators and, at that time, those operators who had more European-styled coaches," she said. "By 2010, APT had become one of the largest inbound operators of escorted touring in western Canada."

Wilson, who was among more than 150 people who applied to replace Steve Klika at IMG, said she was attracted to the organization because of her work in the escorted touring industry.

"With the main mode of transportation being motorcoaches, there was a natural affinity with the motorcoach industry," she said. "IMG represents companies that I have worked with in the past and I have always been impressed by the quality of IMG operators, the attention to safety through driver education, plus the ability of the IMG network to support each other."

In her new job, she said her primary goal will be to raise the profile of IMG within the various

transportation fields and increase the business opportunities for its members.

"With a network that operates throughout the United States and Canada and a commitment to excellence, both in vehicles and customer service, this is a message that should resonate with customers and a message we need to ensure is prominent," she said.

Additionally, she plans to focus on IMG as an organization and what it can bring to the customers of its members.

"By enhancing that message and communicating it broadly, we will look to expand the marketing opportunities for everyone," she stressed.

Wilson sees strong growth in the industry, partially because it has done a good of job listening to its customers and responding to their needs.

"Look at vehicles today, more luxury in seating, better viewing, features such as Wi-Fi, developments in technology for microphones, so commentary can be heard clearly," she said. "All of these factors create a superior experience."

Additionally, she cited improvements in the motorcoaches that have produced better fuel economy, less road noise and less pollution, all of which have enhanced the customers' experience while helping the environment.

Wilson also noted the increased attention to improving driver professionalism — from driving skills to customer care, which she suggested is a mantra for IMG companies and has increased the value of motorcoach travel.

"With all these improvements, the motorcoach industry today, particularly in North America, finds itself looking at new growth opportunities, not only from foreign visitors taking advantage of the U.S. dollar, but also domestic travelers, who with gas prices rising, see motorcoach travel as an extremely viable travel option."

Klika, who headed IMG for 11 years, left the organization in December to take over management of two sister companies in the employment staffing business. He remains connected to the transportation industry through his membership on the boards of the Kansas City Transit Authority and the Global Passenger Network.



Bronwyn Wilson

Drivers: Also pay attention to what's going on *behind* you

By Dave Millhouser

Hammering his Scenicruiser west through the night, Leon noticed a familiar odor wafting through his coach.

A couple of facts might bring clarity to the situation. In his life before buses, Leon had been a musician and had some familiarity with the aroma illegal substances make when burning.

And, one of the weaknesses of the Scenicruiser design was the fact the air intake for the HVAC was next to the lavatory door. The whole coach smelled like marijuana...and all the passengers were giggling.

Always the clever one, Leon stopped the bus, knocked on the bathroom door and told the three kids inside to come out and throw away the dope.

In ye olden days, we hauled mostly high school kids and every trip was an adventure.

With some of our passengers, the cloud of hormones hovering above the group was so thick that, at sundown, we put boys on one bus, girls on the other, and NEVER passed each other.

One group opened the win-

dows and stuck lacrosse sticks out, rowing in unison, as if we were a Viking longship.

Two things to consider: Yes, I am old enough to remember buses with windows that opened. And, second, we always tried to be aware of what was happening behind us, inside the coach — whether it was responsibility or self preservation.

Back in the day, one objective was making sure the kids weren't hanging body parts far enough out the window to get them lopped off.

Some recent incidents make it clear that what is happening behind the driver remains a major concern.

The tragedy involving hazing in the back of a charter coach is one example. The jury is out as to the ultimate responsibility but there is a ton of anguish for everyone involved. A major concern is what the driver knew... and when.

A line carrier was recently embarrassed nationally when a passenger exposed himself to a lady (who later complained the company did not take the incident seriously).

Lavatory wrestling matches have resulted in the loser being ejected and quickly becoming a

tumbling pedestrian when window latching let go.

California is considering a "Party Bus" law that would hold drivers legally responsible for such things as underage passengers using illegal substances.

If we accept the concept that drivers, like ship captains, are responsible for all that happens on their passage, then it's worthwhile to give thought to how you want them to handle things.

One part can surely involve training.

Bus builders mount mirrors, inside and out, for a reason. Remind drivers to use them for both traffic and awareness of what is going on inside the coach.

In driver meetings, consider discussing how to handle situations that might arise. Role playing might work and you can bet many of your drivers have stories to share.

Sometimes (GASP!), alcohol may be aboard, and ultimately it may be the carrier who pays for any mischief that results, so have policies in place.

There are some new technologies that help. One major carrier that operates double-deck coaches

has monitors on the upper level, so the driver can see what is happening. A mirror does fine on most buses but the fact this company spends big dollars on an electronic system demonstrates how important it considers the interior environment.

Some "event recorders" have the ability to record the interior if there is an incident, and many school and transit operators now mount interior cameras to capture unusual occurrences. These generally are "after the fact," but may provide deterrence, as well as evidence.

Not so long ago, sophisticated operators boasted of having "Radio Equipped" coaches...accurately implying that communication via airwaves was a safety feature. Medical, logistical or police help was immediately available (a big deal to seniors).

With cell phones and other modern electronics, virtually every coach is "Radio Equipped"... but it's worthwhile to provide training in how you want them used.

In addition to explaining new regulations regarding driver cell phone use, consider offering guidance on who to call in various cir-

cumstances... how, and what, to report.

Scenicruisers had another quirk. The batteries were on a rolling tray above the radiator.

Someone forgot to replace the locking pin one day, and a left turn rolled the tray out. Then, those jewels fell off.

As the coach rolled down the two lane, banging, dangling batteries spewed acid all over the bus' back end, as well as fellow travelers. Then the cables broke.

The driver's first hint of trouble came when he tried to re-start the bus after a stop. When he called in, we told him to check the batteries. "What batteries?"

An early glance at the mirror might have given him a hint of trouble, and prevented the convoy of acid-etched "fellow travelers" that soon "explained" to him where his batteries had gone.

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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Greyhound icon Fred Dunikoski dies

SUN CITY WEST, Ariz. — Fred Dunikoski, who was a top executive at Greyhound Lines during what was perhaps its most tumultuous era, died here last month. He was 86.

Mr. Dunikoski went to work for Central Greyhound Lines in New York as a clerk-typist at the tender age of 16. When he retired from Greyhound Bus Lines in 1987, he was president and CEO.

Mr. Dunikoski reached Greyhound's management ranks around 1970, which happened to coincide with the company's long, slow decline, resulting largely from the build out of the Interstate system and the growing popularity of the automobile. These factors and others sent Greyhound ridership downward.

The parent company, Greyhound Corporation, saw the trend and used the cash flow from the bus line to extensively diversify, starving the bus operation of resources.

Mr. Dunikoski remained with the bus line, however, moving up the corporate ladder, holding various vice president positions, until 1978 when he became an executive vice president.

A year later, he was named president and chief operating officer, a title he held for four years, until he was elevated to president and CEO in 1983.

His senior executive years at Greyhound were filled with challenges, notably the bitter driver's strike that began in late 1984.

Three years later, Greyhound Lines was sold by Greyhound Corporation to a group of investors headed by Fred Currey, becoming a standalone bus company.

Mr. Dunikoski decided the time was right to retire — even at the tender age of 61.

During his years at Greyhound, Mr. Dunikoski was a zealous company advocate, dogged in his pursuit of the best for the company and quality service. His company ardor tended not to endear him to those outside Greyhound.

"Fred was the penultimate bus guy," said one long-time admirer. "Whether you loved him or not, he was absolutely committed to the best in our industry."

Mr. Dunikoski retired from Greyhound but he didn't slow down.

ABC Companies' Founder Clarence 'Clancy' Cornell asked Mr. Dunikoski to join the ABC board. He accepted and served with distinction until his death — 24 years later.

"Fred's impact on ABC and our industry is immeasurable," said Dane Cornell, president and CEO of ABC Companies. "ABC and numerous organizations have benefited from his tireless and wide-ranging leadership over the past two decades. He will be greatly missed as a leader, a mentor and a friend."

Mr. Dunikoski was involved in numerous travel-related and civic organizations, not only serving on their boards but also playing a key role in their activities. For example, he served for years on the board of the Phoenix Visitors and Convention Bureau, becoming its president, as well as the Devereux Center for Autistic Children, and the Sun Dome Performing Arts Association.

He helped promote a busload of benefit golf tournaments and fund-raising cruises.

Mr. Dunikoski was a first-generation American, his parents having immigrated to the U.S. from Poland. He grew up on New York's Long Island.

At 17, he joined the Marines shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. He participated in the Normandy invasion, as well as the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

After the war, he spent the next 40-plus years at Greyhound.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Rita, sons Fred and Bob, and daughters Sue Porizek and Donna Schlenger.



Fred Dunikoski

Driver cleared in fatal crash

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — A driver for megabus.com was acquitted last month of homicide charges in the deaths of four passengers killed when his double-decker coach crashed into a low overpass in upstate New York.

A county court judge announced the verdict after a non-jury trial for 60-year-old John Tomaszewski of Yardville, N.J.

Tomaszewski faced up to four years in state prison on each of four counts of criminally negligent homicide.

"It was a tragic accident and four people lost their lives," Tomaszewski said as he left court. "It's something I'll have to deal with the rest of my life."

There were 29 passengers on the megabus that Tomaszewski was driving when it hit a low railroad bridge in Salina, N.Y., just outside Syracuse, early on the morning of Sept. 11, 2010.

Tomaszewski was driving from Philadelphia to Toronto — with a planned stop in Syracuse — when he missed an exit from Interstate 81 and ended up on the parkway instead.

Assistant District Attorney Chris Bednarski said during the

trial Tomaszewski was using a personal GPS device as he tried to find his way to the bus station and passed 13 low-bridge warning signs, some with flashing yellow lights, before the crash.

Tomaszewski's lawyer argued the state and CSX railroad officials were responsible for failing to fix the danger presented by the bridge, the scene of numerous accidents over the years. He also said Tomaszewski had limited experience and was on the parkway for the first time.

Several civil lawsuits have been filed in connection with the incident. They were put on hold pending the outcome of the criminal case.

Earlier this year, commercial traffic was banned from the highway where the crash occurred.

State transportation crews installed signs warning of the ban on the Onondaga Lake Parkway, also known as Route 370.

Other safety measures include warning lights and a laser detection system that alerts drivers that their over-height vehicles are in danger of hitting the bridge that spans the highway.

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Casinos spreading farther and wider across the U.S.

Casinos, which are a major destination and significant revenue stream for hundreds of motorcoach operators, continued expanding across the U.S. last year as gambling revenue posted its first annual increase in three years.

The growth of casino properties is being fostered in large measure by states looking to reverse their fortunes in the continuing tough economic climate.

Also contributing to the expansion are those states that see residents fleeing across state lines to deposit their dollars in slot machines and on gaming tables, benefiting the neighboring states. These states want to get in on the action, too.

Now, the competition for gambling dollars appears to be headed to a new level with several states considering major casino projects of the type that until now have largely been confined to Las Vegas, Atlantic City and a few other places.

If approved, some observers see the new projects as posing a threat to Las Vegas, long the nation's Mecca for casino gambling.

- In Florida, a bill is making its way through the legislature that would pave the way for up to three casinos, including one possibly in Miami.

- In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo has proposed expanding casino operations at the Aqueduct Racetrack in the New York City borough of Queens and is calling for a constitutional amendment to allow casino gambling across the state.

- Lawmakers in Illinois are trying to revive an effort to bring a casino to Chicago.

These efforts come on the heels of a new Massachusetts law that authorizes up to three resort-style casinos and one slots parlor, with one possibly in Boston.

Gaining authorization for casino gambling is generally seen as being politically easy right now, according to experts.

Douglas Walker, associate professor of economics at South Carolina's College of Charleston and author of *The Economics of Casino Gambling*, says people want jobs and they don't want higher taxes. "Legalizing casinos can be argued to create jobs and tax revenues," says Walker.

Several gaming analysts contend, however, that gambling doesn't help the long-term financial stability of a state.

"States see an uptick in revenues when they expand gambling," says Robert Ward, deputy director of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Insti-

tute of Government. "That does not mean they become more fiscally stable."

The potential expansion of casino operations across the country — especially in major cities like New York, Miami and Boston — has Las Vegas on edge, just as it's pulling itself out of a prolonged rut.

The biggest threats

The 41 casinos on the Las Vegas Strip have seen an upswing in gambling revenue in recent months. Fueling the additional revenue has been the increased number of visitors to Las Vegas, which saw a nearly 5 percent gain last year.

The upscale casinos and accompanying entertainment and dining options that developers envision in cities such as New York and Miami could ultimately cut into Vegas' growth rate, some analysts say.

"They're a much more competitive threat than an Indian cas-

ino in Oklahoma," says William Eadington, a gambling industry expert at the University of Nevada at Reno. "The world is not going to collapse next year but it's not great news (for Las Vegas) over the next five or 10 years."

Of the states considering

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ►

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Nat'l Interstate reports 2011 gains

RICHFIELD, Ohio — Higher investment income bolstered both fourth quarter and full-year 2011 net after-tax earnings from operations at National Interstate Corporation, the company reported late last month.

During the final three months of last year, National Interstate had net after-tax earnings from operations of \$10.9 million, or 56 cents per diluted share, compared to final quarter 2010 net after-tax earnings from operations of \$7.1 million, or 36 cents per share, a 53 percent increase.

For the year, net after-tax earnings from operations were \$34.6 million, or \$1.78 per diluted share, compared to 2010 net after-tax earnings from operations of \$305 million, or \$1.58 per share, a 14 percent gain.

The strong fourth quarter reflected increased investment and underwriting income, while the full-year gains were the result of higher net investment income offset by lower underwriting profits.

Gross premiums of \$114.7 million during 2011's fourth quarter were up 9 percent from the same period in 2010, while gross premiums for all of 2011 totaled \$526.3 million, up 20 percent from 2010.

National Interstate said the growth in premiums reflected the expansion of existing businesses as well as the Vanliner Insurance Company acquisition in 2010.

The fourth-quarter and full-year results at National Interstate are in line with preliminary numbers the company released earlier last month and reported in the March 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.

National Interstate's combined ratio for all of 2011 was 94.4 percent, compared to 92.1 percent in 2010.

"Combined ratio" is a measure of profitability used by insurance companies to indicate how well they're performing. A ratio below 100 percent indicates the company is making an underwriting profit. The further below 100, the more profitable the company.

National Interstate said its higher 2011 combined ratio reflected rising claims costs and slightly lower underwriting expenses than in 2010.

"The prolonged competitive commercial market conditions contributed to rising loss and loss adjustment expense ratios in 2011," the company added.

National Interstate's return on equity was 11 percent last year. At the same time, the company per-share book value increased 13 percent, a similar gain is expected this year.

The National Interstate board increased the company quarterly dividend to 10 cents per share, with the first dividend payable at the new higher rate March 23, to shareholders of record on March 9.

The 10 cents per share dividend represents an 11 percent increase over quarterly dividend payments made in 2011. The company has increased its dividend each year since it went public in 2005.

Casino growth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

gambling, analysts say Florida could be the most successful at drawing tourists from Las Vegas. Well-healed visitors from Mexico and Central and South America that now head to Las Vegas may get no further than Miami if Florida approves big-time casinos.

The bill in its legislature that would pave the way isn't a done deal. It faces opposition from the likes of the Florida Chamber of Commerce and Walt Disney World.

The Malaysia-based Genting Group, one of the world's largest gambling corporations, already has planned a \$3.8 billion waterfront complex in Miami with a casino, shopping mall and restaurants.

The Genting Group also is behind the proposed Aqueduct Racetrack project in New York, which would include the country's largest convention center.

Plans there call for three hotels with 3,000 rooms total, an entertainment facility and an expansion of a casino that began operating at the racetrack in October.

Cuomo, a Democrat, has made the Aqueduct project a key component of his job-creation strategy.

And...in the hinterlands

While much of the attention focuses on possible mega-projects in major population centers, smaller casinos continue to pop up across the U.S.

Wichita, the largest city in Kansas, got a casino the day after Christmas when the Kansas Star Casino opened on Interstate 35 in the suburban community of Mulvane. The 24-hour casino features more than 1,300 slots and 32 table games.

The Hollywood Casino at Kansas Speedway opened last month in Kansas City, Kan. The Hollywood Casino offers 2,000 slots and 52 table games.

Opening this month near Cleveland is Ohio's first gaming palace, the Horseshow Casino. The facility has trained 600 prospective dealers and expects to provide jobs for another 750-1,000 people.

In Kentucky, the state legislature is expected to consider allowing casino-style gambling in the Bluegrass State.

Las Vegas' appeal

Some analysts and industry leaders say they're not particularly worried about Las Vegas' future.

The introduction of regional casinos in states such as Connecticut and Pennsylvania hurt neighboring places like Atlantic City, but didn't dent Las Vegas much.

"It's the concentration of first-rate hotels, the shows, the shopping that bring people to Nevada," says Frank Fahrenkopf, president of the American Gaming Association.

Impact of the economy

The recession that began in late 2007, and the slow economic recovery have had a big impact on many casinos and state lotteries.

The parent company of the Indian-run Mohegan Sun casinos in Connecticut and Pennsylvania has had major difficulties trying to re-finance \$811 million in debt.

The neighboring Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation in eastern Connecticut has worked to restructure hundreds of millions of dollars in debt after its Foxwoods casino was hit hard by the downturn and increased competition.

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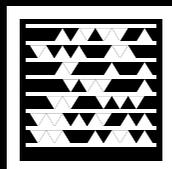
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