

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

April 1, 2011

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

BusRates.com internet traffic reaches record

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — BusRates.com has retained a tourism and hospitality marketing firm to promote expansion of its popular website to include tourism suppliers.

The hiring of Mills Marketing Group comes as internet traffic on BusRates.com climbed to record highs in March.

The motorcoach travel website drew 4,416 unique visitors on one day in March, the highest single-day total in the site's history. Two other days last month ranked as having the second- and third-highest number of daily visitors with 4,088 and 4,082 visitors, respectively.

Two other days in March made the Top 10 list of highest number of daily visitors, making March the best month ever for BusRates.

Additionally, the site hit a single-day milestone with the highest number of requests for quotes received. RFQs were received from 221 group travel planners, resulting in a total of more than 1,000 quote requests being sent out from the site to motorcoach operators.

"We have been blown away this month with the increased site traffic and the number of RFQs coming in," said Eric Elliott, program manager for BusRates.com.

"The site traffic has been growing by leaps and bounds and it seems that each week outperforms the week before. There's obviously a need by group travel planners to find motorcoach operators for their trips and we are happy they have found BusRates.com to help them with their planning."

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Selling a coach company can be a challenge

The sour national economy has helped mire the motorcoach industry in one of its longest cyclical downturns in decades.

- Charter-and-tour business is weak.
- Tire, fuel and other consumables' costs are climbing.
- Prices of new coaches have become prohibitive for many operators, resulting in new-coach sales that are way below past years.
- Used coach sales are stagnant.
- Finding financing for new equipment is shaky at best.
- Costly new government safety regulations loom.

ty regulations loom.

And yet, some operators continue to grow their businesses by buying other coach companies that have been put up for sale by operators wanting to escape the industry.

The reason for the buying interest?

To many buyers the opportunities just look too good to pass up.

"We weren't looking to expand at the time but the opportunity came up just at the right time," Dennis Miley of Bailey Coach in York, Pa., said of his company's ac-

quisition of the charter business of Red Lion Bus Co. in Red Lion, Pa.

He said the Bailey operation is just 10 miles from Red Lion, which made the purchase earlier this year a good fit and an easy transition. "And it helps us (better) utilize our coaches," he noted.

Wolfe Coach in York, Pa., wasn't looking to buy either, but saw Red Lion's tour business as a good opportunity to grow without much hassle. "We have a tour business here and because they are close enough to us it was an opportunity for us to expand," said



Dennis Miley Bradley Wolfe

Bradley Wolfe.

He said the book of business — actually a list of Red Lion's tour customers — looked like a great way to develop another avenue of

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3 crashes = new calls for safety standards

Two multi-fatality accidents last month involving low-fare shuttle buses in New York and New Jersey and a third non-fatality tour bus accident in New Hampshire have renewed calls for far-reaching new safety standards for motorcoaches.

Federal legislation that would set requirements ranging from driver training, to passenger safety restraints, to crush-proof roofs have been reintroduced in the House and Senate and lawmakers are moving to add their names as sponsors of the measures.

The legislation — the Motorcoach Enhanced Safety Act — has been simmering on the front burner of federal lawmakers for the past two years and was brought up again this year by Ohio Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Texas Republican Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson and Georgia Democratic Rep. John Lewis.

"Last year we came so close to passing this common sense, bipartisan legislation," Lewis said. "This year I hope the act will become law."

Interest in the legislation has intensified since the accidents that killed 17 people and injured 81, several of them seriously.

The first occurred March 12 on Interstate 95 in the Bronx and killed 15 passengers and injured 18 others; the second took place March 14 on the New Jersey Turnpike near East Brunswick, N.J., and killed the driver and one passenger and injured 40 others, and the third happened March 21 in northern New Hampshire and injured 23.

Since the accidents, the Brown-

Hutchinson measure in the Senate has attracted new sponsors, including both New York senators, Democrats Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, who signed on to the bill within days of the accidents.

Schumer said the tragedy of the two fatal crashes makes a thorough, industrywide review of bus safety standards by the National Transportation Safety Board even more important. "I'm not going to rest until we get to the bottom of what happened in both of these

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

Brian Crow to leave Canadian associations in July

TORONTO — One of the North American motorcoach industry's most popular, respected and effective figures, Brian Crow, president of Motor Coach Canada and the Ontario Motor Coach Association, announced last month he's retiring after 27 years in the industry.

His surprise announcement was greeted with both widespread expressions of support and good wishes, and also statements of profound loss for the industry.

"We are disappointed to be losing Brian, but we wish both him and his wife Marilyn the very

best. Brian's 27 years of leadership, successes and passion for the industry will always be appreciated and he will be tough to replace," said OMCA Chairman John Crowley.

Few executives in the North American motorcoach industry are held in higher regard than Brian Crow, who is 63.

One former OMCA chairman, Gregory Hammond of Hammond Transportation in Bracebridge, Ontario, said Crow's work ethic, professionalism and commitment to the association and its members

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When Brian Crow (at left with microphone) speaks, people generally listen, like at this UMA Motorcoach Expo session in 2009.

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Bus air-conditioning business is being sold by Carrier Corp.

FARMINGTON, Conn. — Carrier Corp., long a major supplier of air conditioning systems to the motorcoach industry, is selling its U.S. and Canadian bus air conditioning business.

The buyer is Mobile Climate Control, a leading global supplier of climate control systems to the commercial vehicle industry and a subsidiary of a Sweden-based financial investment company.

While Mobile Climate Control may not have the name recognition as Carrier among motorcoach operators, it has become a leading supplier of A/C and heating systems for cutaway and school buses, and is a supplier to MCI.

Carrier has been a fixture in the bus industry for decades. It has provided over-the-road, transit and school bus customers in the U.S. and Canada with a full line of rooftop, rear-mount and split-unit bus air-conditioning systems.

Carrier's North American bus air-conditioning business, headquartered in York, Pa., had sales of \$63.5 million in 2010, and has a staff of roughly 50 nonmanufacturing employees.

Production of Carrier units

will transition to a Mobile Climate Control plant in Goshen, Ind., from Carrier's manufacturing facility in Athens, Ga.

Executives of Mobile Climate Control say they will retain Carrier's dealer system as well as its service network.

"The acquisition of Carrier's bus business greatly enhances MCC's offer to our customers by strengthening the product portfolio with a complete range of air conditioning products, as well as providing a network of dealers and service providers all across the U.S. and Canada," said Clas Gunneberg, president of Mobile Climate Control Group.

"We're pleased that this combination with (Mobile Climate Control) will enhance the growth potential of this North American bus air-conditioning business," said Geraud Darnis, president of Carrier Corp. "The transaction is a continuation of our strategy to increase focus on our core growth platforms."

A year ago, Carrier sold its Sutrak bus air-conditioning business that had operations outside the U.S. and Canada.

Operator fined for ADA violations

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the civil rights division of the U.S. Department of Justice announced they have levied \$55,000 in fines against a Houston-based motorcoach operator for running buses without wheelchair lifts.

Omnibus Express was found in violation of the passenger carrier accessibility requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In addition to the fine, the consent agreement issued by FMCSA and DOJ requires the company to upgrade its fleet to meet ADA requirements by July 1, or have its operating authority revoked.

"This case makes it crystal clear that we will vigorously pursue commercial bus companies that attempt to evade ADA accessibility requirements," said Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "Every in-

dividual has the right to fair and equitable transportation services."

An investigation conducted by FMCSA uncovered that none of Omnibus Express' fleet of 85 leased buses was equipped with wheelchair lifts.

Additionally, in the past 12 months, the company leased 22 new buses that were not accessible by individuals with disabilities.

ADA regulations require that (as an intercity operator) at least 50 percent of its buses be accessible, and all new buses leased or purchased must be accessible by individuals with disabilities.

"Equal access to transportation is at the cornerstone of autonomous and independent living, and this agreement demonstrates the strong commitment both the Justice Department and the Department of Transportation have to joint enforcement of the requirements that make transportation ac-

cessible to all," said Thomas E. Perez, assistant attorney general in the civil rights division.

"Thousands of people rely every day on motorcoaches and other types of commercial passenger buses to travel where they need to go safely and efficiently," said FMCSA Administrator Anne S. Ferro.

"We owe it to the traveling public to vigorously enforce ADA requirements, and ensure commercial buses are safe and accessible for everyone."

Since February 2009, FMCSA and the civil rights division of the U.S. Department of Justice have had joint responsibility for enforcement of ADA requirements for commercial passenger buses.

A copy of the consent agreement issued by FMCSA and DOJ is available at: www.fmcsa.dot.gov/documents/ABOUT/News/Omnibus-ConsentAgreement-508.PDF.

Diesel fuel price moderates – very slightly

WASHINGTON — The price of diesel — the motorcoach industry's main fuel — appeared to level off late last month.

Diesel slipped to a national average price of just under \$3.91 a

gallon, its first dip since November, the U.S. Department of Energy said. Gasoline also declined.

The late March price slippage was the first since diesel fell about a penny a gallon in late November,

to \$3.16 per gallon. Since then it has gained 75 cents a gallon.

Each week, USDOE surveys about 350 diesel filling stations to compile a national snapshot average price.



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Georgia senate passes tough sex offender bill

ATLANTA — The Georgia state senate has passed a far-reaching bill aimed at blocking convicted sex offenders from driving commercial buses and school buses.

While so-called sex offender laws have been adopted in two other states, North Carolina and Alabama, the Georgia senate proposal is measurably different from the others because of its reach and requirements.

For example, it puts a significant onus on operators to keep sex offenders from behind the wheels of their buses.

If an operator knowingly allows a convicted sex offender to drive a passenger or school bus, the operator is subject to a fine of not less than \$100 per person transported by the driver.

The Georgia legislation also requires all drivers applying for, renewing, reinstating, upgrading or transferring a commercial driver's license with a passenger or school bus endorsement to submit one set of electronically recorded fingerprints.

The fingerprints will be sent to the FBI for checking, and they also will be used for culling state

criminal records.

Any person convicted of a sex offense, who currently holds a CDL with a passenger or school bus endorsement, must surrender their license to the court that convicts them.

The court will send the license to the state licensing agency, reporting the conviction.

The state agency may issue a replacement CDL but without the passenger or school bus endorsements.

The Georgia bill also prohibits issuance of a license to anyone — other than a parent — convicted of child kidnapping.

Beyond that, the proposed Georgia legislation is more conventional in that it requires the state licensing agency to conduct a criminal check before issuing or renewing a CDL with passenger and school bus endorsements.

Individuals with child-related criminal convictions will not be issued licenses nor will they have their licenses renewed.

The proposed Georgia bill would take effect July 1.

The Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association has been active in pushing for the legislation.

House, Senate vote to repeal burdensome 1099 provision

WASHINGTON — Both houses of Congress have now voted to repeal an unpopular Internal Revenue Service reporting requirement contained in the 2010 health-care reform law.

The provision requires businesses to issue an IRS Form 1099 to every vendor from whom they buy goods worth \$600 or more in a year. (See Oct. 1 and Aug. 15 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Current rules require reporting only on payments for services, such as the use of independent contractors.

Biodiesel mandated for Canada

ONTARIO — Diesel fuel in Canada will be required to contain at least 2 percent biofuel content beginning July 1.

Federal Environment Minister Peter Kent made the announce-

ment. He said the rule will cut greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.

Beginning last December, gasoline in Canada was required to contain 5 percent biofuel.

Beginning in 2012, the health-care bill expands the reporting requirement to include payments made for property and payments made to corporations, which have been interpreted to include payments for any type of goods.

While the House and Senate have voted to block the reporting requirement, the bills passed by the two chambers differ, especially in how they would offset the putative revenue loss from the repeal.

This discrepancy is likely to delay further the effort to get rid of the broadened reporting requirement.

House panel nixes Obama plan

Not enough money for transportation

WASHINGTON — The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has voted to not support the Obama administration's transportation budget proposals because administration officials have not identified revenue sources to fund multibillion dollar increases for existing and new programs.

The committee's budget overview also said the administration wants to convert the current Highway Trust Fund into a broader Transportation Trust Fund that would add two new accounts, high-speed passenger rail and the National Infrastructure Bank.

The trust fund currently covers only highway and public transit programs.

According to the administration, money for the two new accounts would not come from the highway fund's traditional sources — fuel taxes and excise taxes on transportation-related sales — but the com-

mittee said the administration did not identify a revenue source.

Because the president's \$129 billion fiscal 2012 transportation budget "fails to recognize the need to link trust fund revenues to spending to adequately establish the user-fee-based premise of the trust fund," the Republican-dominated committee said it would not support the administration proposal.

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica, R-Fla., said the panel would forward its 30-page "views and estimates" document to the House Budget Committee. The document outlines the committee's legislative and budgetary policy priorities for fiscal 2012 and beyond.

The document said the panel would "closely examine" programs within its jurisdiction to determine ways to "cut costs, streamline programs, consolidate facilities, eliminate waste and create efficiencies."

The committee also said it plans to explore "innovative financing" and public-private partnerships and hopes to reduce

transportation costs by "major improvements" to the highway project delivery process.

In addition to not specifying its 2012 budget proposals, the administration did not indicate how it planned to pay for a \$50 billion reauthorization "jump start" to foster job creation and fund improvements for highway, rail, transit and aviation systems.

The 2012 administration transportation budget represents a 66 percent increase above the fiscal 2010 budget, a plan that cannot be supported by trust fund revenues, the committee said.

For the same reasons, the committee said it would not support the president's yet-to-be-made-public \$556 billion, six-year reauthorization program that Department of Transportation officials said includes multibillion dollar increases for urban mass transit and high-speed passenger rail projects.

The administration proposal to reauthorize would create a \$435 billion revenue gap over a 10-year period, the committee said.

Senators push infrastructure bank

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of U.S. senators, joined by both business and labor leaders, are touting the creation of a government-owned bank that would fund large transportation, energy and water projects.

Democratic Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts said the bank could generate as much as \$640 billion in its first 10 years to "help bridge the infrastructure deficit that has been plaguing our nation for decades."

Appearing with Kerry at a news conference last month to promote the proposal were fellow

Democrat Mark Warner of Virginia, Republican Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Thomas Donohue, and AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

The bank would be established with \$10 billion in federal money but would eventually become self-sustaining, relying on the private sector for investments while granting loans and loan guarantees, but no outright grants, for projects of at least \$100 million in size.

Kerry said the U.S. currently spends only 2 percent of gross domestic product on infrastructure,

compared to 5 percent for Europe and 9 percent for China.

He said the bank would only be involved in revenue-generating projects and would differ from government-owned mortgage companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac because the bank would be independent, would not issue stock and would operate as a not-for-profit entity.

Donohue said the private sector would be a willing partner with the bank in backing projects. "There is capital all over the world looking for things to get a mandatory return."

N.Y. Thruway gets innovative striping

ALBANY, N.Y. — The New York State Thruway has become the only superhighway in the nation to adopt a recessed pavement striping system that can't be damaged by snowplow blades.

The pavement marking system, known as "recess triple drop," also is more visible and durable in all lighting and weather conditions, according to the New York State Thruway Authority.

Steve Velicky, an engineer in

the authority's highway design bureau, developed the system.

It uses ceramic elements that are mixed with various-sized glass beads and applied onto a recessed epoxy base, providing high reflectivity.

During winter, the authority clears snow and ice down to bare pavement. Plow blades ride on the pavement, often damaging markings applied to the road surface, reducing their effectiveness.

In the recess triple drop system, the reflective stripes are applied in grooves ground into the pavement, protecting the markings from plow damage.

The system has been installed in the Buffalo and Fultonville areas, and is now being included in all highway resurfacing and rehabilitation contracts. By the end of 2011, the authority will have treated nearly 350 lane miles of thruway pavement.

Bus parking restricted on Ohio Drive in D.C.

WASHINGTON — The National Park Service and the U.S. Park Police have temporarily restricted bus parking on Ohio Drive between the East Potomac Tennis Center and the entrance to the golf course club house. The restriction lasts until midnight April 12.

The parking restriction is designed to help facilitate traffic movement and to accommodate visitors during the National Cherry Blossom Festival. The restriction “will be strictly enforced” and violators will be subject to fines.

Emergency NO PARKING signs have been posted at various locations along Ohio Drive in the park.

Buses are being encouraged to continue along Ohio Drive to the tip, or the bottom, of Hains Point where there is a free bus parking lot. There are spaces available on a first-come, first-served basis for 10 tour buses and there is no time restriction.

Festival to charge fee

WASHINGTON — The annual Sakura Matsuri Street Festival, held in conjunction with National

Cherry Blossom Festival, will charge a \$5 entry fee for the first time.

The festival will be April 9, along Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., between 12th and 9th streets N.W.

The Japan-America Society of Washington sponsors and organizes the Sakura Matsuri Festival. It is not a National Park Service-sponsored event and it is not conducted on Park Service-controlled property.

As a result of the announcement about the festival fee, bus companies, travel agents and the general public have questioned whether the National Park Service has begun a policy of charging an entrance fee for Cherry Blossom Festival events and activities along the Tidal Basin, Hains Point, the National Mall or the Washington Monument grounds.

The answer is “no.” All events and activities on National Park Service property, provided by either the Park Service or the National Cherry Blossom Festival, are free and open to the public.

For more information about the Sakura Matsuri Street Festival, go to www.sakuramatsuri.org.

CVSA blasts proposed hours rule

GREENBELT, Md. — The organization that represents the nation’s highway safety enforcement community says proposed changes to federal hours-of-service rules for truckers are too complex to be enforced effectively.

In commenting on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration notice of proposed hours-of-service rulemaking, the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance indicated the planned changes could have the unintended consequence of reducing overall commercial motor vehicle and motorist safety.

According to CVSA, the proposed rule could make roadside enforcement more complex and open the door to more drivers falsifying records.

“Each year, CVSA-certified inspectors conduct nearly four million inspections all across North America, which provides CVSA with an unmatched level of real-world experience in commercial driver and vehicle safety,” said CVSA Executive Director Stephen A. Keppler.

“The consensus from our state and jurisdictional enforcement members regarding these proposed rules is that they are confus-

ing and not easily understood. The proposed rules, in our view, will be more difficult to enforce roadside than the rules in place today.”

As big truck crash rates have declined since the current hours-of-service rules went into effect early in the last decade, CVSA contends the FMCSA proposal does not appear to substantiate the need for changes.

Instead, CVSA says there should be more tools for enhancing enforcement and additional exploration of the link between hours of service, fatigue and performance before considering changes to the current rules.

CVSA cited enforceability as the most challenging portion of the proposed changes. With no regulation requiring supporting documents for drivers to maintain on the vehicle, inspectors will have a

more difficult time checking validity of record-of-duty status entries.

Additionally, CVSA said falsification is a major concern as in some cases fueling, loading, unloading and other forms of on-duty time will be listed on the record-of-duty status as resting in a parked vehicle.

The CVSA also noted that proposed FMCSA rules provide no funding provisions for training of enforcement personnel and technology upgrades that will be necessary if the hours rules are changed and electronic onboard recorders are adopted.

With no additional funding provided to enforcement entities already stretched thin by limited resources, further enforcement needs could go unmet, said the CVSA. As a result, uniformity may degrade under the proposal.

U.S. consumer confidence recedes

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Consumer confidence fell during March from a three-year high, according to the Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan consumer sentiment index.

The final index for the month fell to a reading of 67.5, from 77.5

in February, which had been the highest level in three years. A preliminary reading two weeks earlier showed a reading of 68.2.

An improvement in confidence may increase consumer spending, which accounts for 70 percent of the economy.

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Trucker support grows for electronic logs

SAN DIEGO — A consensus appears to be emerging in the trucking industry in support of electronic logging devices to monitor driver hours but not truck performance.

The Truckload Carriers Association has endorsed the technology and the American Trucking Associations appears to be moving in the same direction.

Barbara Windsor, chair of the ATA, said at the Truckload Carriers annual convention that her association's safety policy committee approves using electronic logging devices to monitor drivers' compliance with federal hours-of-service regulations.

The trucking associations' position comes in the wake of a proposal unveiled by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration in January to require electronic onboard recording devices for more than 500,000 motor carriers — truckers and bus operators.

The agency is accepting comments on that proposal until May 23.

The Truckload Carrier's action on electronic logs represents a policy shift. The group previously was on record as opposing the use of electronic onboard units that re-

cord truck performance events, such as hard braking and keeping track of a tractor as it's moving down the road, in addition to recording driver hours.

With its new policy stance, the association takes "no position" on EOBRs, but endorses the idea of electronic logging devices.

ATA's official position on electronic logs has yet to be voted on by the group's executive committee, which will meet in May.

Truckers go nuts

WASHINGTON — A firestorm has broken out in the trucking industry over a proposal by the Obama administration to buy electronic onboard recorders for Mexican trucks that travel within the U.S.

Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., and other members of Congress have sent letters to Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood outlining their opposition to the proposal.

"I do not believe this concept is fair for U.S. carriers who are not eligible for such payments," Pryor wrote in his letter.

A U.S. Department of Transportation official said last month that the USDOT will pay for on-

board recorders for Mexican trucks entering the United States under an agreement with Mexico.

The program is meant to assure Mexican drivers' compliance with hours-of-service regulations while in the U.S.

"I also do not believe U.S. taxpayers should subsidize such purchases for Mexican trucking companies, particularly under our current fiscal condition," wrote Pryor, who said he supports the use of electronic onboard recorders for all commercial vehicles to assure hours-of-service compliance.

FMCSA Administrator Anne Ferro said the U.S. plan to equip Mexican trucks with electronic recorders for driver logs would be a limited, temporary program undertaken because it's the only way the FMCSA can assure the Mexican trucks will be monitored.

Speaking at a trucking convention, Ferro acknowledged that the subject has become a flashpoint among U.S. carriers who do not like the idea of spending American taxpayer money on equipment for Mexican trucks.

She said that under the North American Free Trade Agreement, the U.S. cannot require Mexican

carriers to do anything that U.S. carriers are not required to do, but the agency still must provide a way to monitor those carriers for compliance with both the hours-of-service rules and the cabotage rules that restrict freight hauling between points in the U.S.

"We can't require them to purchase EOBRs because we don't require (U.S. carriers) to do it yet, so we propose to pay for those for a limited duration," she said.

The duration would be until the pilot program is over — probably three years — or until the agency's proposed near-universal EOBR mandate takes effect, she said.

There is a precedent for the approach. In the pilot program initiated by the Bush administration, which Congress killed in 2009, FMCSA bought GPS systems for Mexican carriers.

That program cost about \$250,000, Ferro said. The budget for the proposed new EOBR program is around \$600,000.

She hinted at the political forces that drove the decision, noting that the agreement to reopen the border to long-distance trucking is key to getting Mexico to withdraw the more than \$1 billion in tariffs it has

Legislators in session, be watchful!

Every state legislature in the U.S. meets this year and all but one of them are now in session.

The final legislature to swing into action is in Louisiana and it begins its session this month.

Many sessions this year are turning out to be difficult, with 2011 the worst year for state budgets since the 2007-09 recession began.

Federal stimulus aid expires this year and many states have run through their rainy-day funds and book of budget tricks, meaning operators should be watchful for "revenue enhancers" that could cost them money.

Even in states where the regular legislative sessions are short, there may be special sessions to deal with budget issues.

A complete state legislative calendar can be found on the website of the National Conference of State Legislatures, www.ncsl.org.

levied on U.S. producers in retaliation for shutting down the program started by the Bush administration.

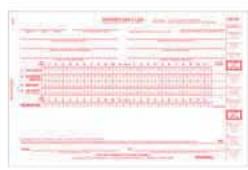
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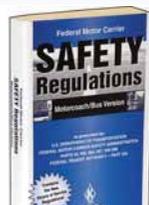
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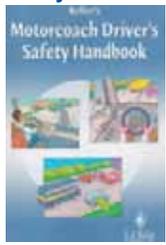
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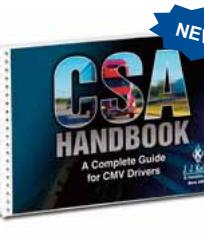
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Figuring out the used coach market is no easy chore

By Dave Millhouser

Rolling east on Route 66, the Eagle was running on fumes when we passed a sign that said "Kingman (Ariz.) 20 miles."

Salvation was just over the horizon in the form of a truck stop where we had a credit account.

The horizon kept sliding away, with no hint of the big "Union 76" sign we were expecting because it was gone. The day before a railcar loaded with propane had exploded, killing 11 firefighters and injuring dozens of bystanders, and leveling a major portion of Kingman.

The blast left the truck stop we were counting on a charred slab of cement.

Right now, a hot topic in both the motorcoach and trucking industries is the value of used equipment. For a variety of reasons, including concern about the latest EPA emissions rules, used truck values are surging.

There have been articles in some motorcoach trade publications expressing conviction that we're going to see the same thing.

Kingman taught me there are very few certainties in life, and, re-

spectfully, I'd say that it's best, as a buyer or seller, NOT to make concrete assumptions about the long-term used bus market.

The best strategy might be to run your business with as little dependence on equipment value as possible, and watch some things carefully as you decide when to buy or sell.

Trucks and buses are different, and many of the factors that influence coach values are unimportant to truck operators. The life cycle of a big rig is closer to five years, while for buses it's 20.

Any mistakes truck builders make work their way out of the system quickly. The freight they carry doesn't care about model year, seatbelts, wheelchair lifts, or being "green." Coach consumers care about all those things, to a greater or lesser degree.

Still, it is worthwhile to learn from truckers' experience. You may find, for example, that your local market has different expectations than other parts of the country. A "green coach" may have more market potential in a "blue state," for example.

One "harbinger" (which is

NOT a mixed drink) of future resale value might include the efficacy (two sophisticated words in one sentence) of the 2010 emissions hardware. If this stuff works, then folks won't pay more for an earlier coach.

Federal regulations on seatbelts will certainly have an impact. A used coach with belts has more value than one without, but how much? Is a retrofit worthwhile, and are there liability issues?

Some groups will only consider belted buses, some will...shop price. If seatbelt retrofits are mandated, the dynamic changes.

The green movement could help, or hurt. If we, as an industry, convince the market that all buses are green, we win. If people believe that only new coaches are clean and green, used values will tank.

A manufacturer leaving the market has a huge impact on resale of its coaches. That's a downer if you are selling, but a bonus if you have the skills to buy a used caveat-emptor model cheaply, and keep it running. Clever operators have made tons of money running coaches others laughed at.

Financial markets will have an

impact. If credit is available for used equipment, values tend to rise. If the banks stay picky about whom they'll finance, then strong companies will be buying used equipment for less, and weaker companies will have to make do.

The economy is huge factor. If people have no money or confidence in the future they won't ride buses, and values will drop.

Any flood of repossessed coaches will depress values, unless there is some sort of disruption to the flow of oil. (Egypt and Libya DO matter). You get it, this is a complex equation.

This column is about 800 words of affirming what you already knew, like the inept Sgt. Shultz of the TV sitcom Hogan's Heroes, "I know NOTHING."

Predicting the used coach market is next to impossible because of all sorts of moving pieces. Making long-term assumptions is dangerous and depending on them shouldn't be part of a business plan.

Know your business and your market, keep watching things with an eye towards seizing opportunities to buy or sell when they pop up, when it makes sense. It doesn't

matter how little you pay for a used coach if customers won't ride it.

Thirty-five years ago a small operator had nationwide charter operating authority (at a time when that was a rare-and-valuable thing). His three coaches were junkers but he offered the business for a million dollars, based on the value of his "charter rights." For several years he turned down smaller but reasonable offers, insisting on a million.

He didn't watch what was going on, and while he was dithering, the industry was deregulated. His "authority" became worth zilch.

He paid a huge price for not paying attention to his industry and the market. Predicting is dangerous, paying attention is critical.

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



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Driver alert: Watch out for winners after big games

RALEIGH, N.C. — Here's a question safety directors might pose at their next driver's meeting: When leaving a major sporting event, who should drivers be more wary of — drivers who are fans of the winning team, or drivers who supported the losers?

The answer: Closely contested major sporting events are followed by a significant increase in traffic fatalities for fans of the winning team, according to new research from North Carolina State University.

The basis or jumping-off point for the research was a previous study showing that traffic fatalities increased in the hours following the Super Bowl.

The university researchers

wanted to see if that held true for other high-profile sporting events and, if so, whether the number of fatalities was influenced by whether the game was a close one.

The researchers also considered whether blow-outs are more dangerous because they're boring and people may drink more. And, whether close games are more dangerous because the excitement drives up testosterone levels.

What they found, reported Dr. Stacy Wood, Langdon Distinguished Professor of Marketing at N.C. State and lead author of a paper describing the research, was that games rated as nail-biters are far more likely to result in traffic fatalities — but only for fans of the winning team.

Wood and researchers from the University of South Carolina evaluated traffic fatalities after 271 games played between 2001 and 2008, including championship, tournament and rivalry games in professional and college football and basketball.

The researchers looked at traffic fatality data in the area where the game was played, and in the hometowns of the winning and losing teams.

The researchers also used a panel of experts to rate how close each game was on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being a blow-out and 5 being a nail-biter.

They found that traffic fatalities increased significantly after close games, and games that were

rated as nail-biters were far more likely to result in traffic fatalities than blow-outs.

Each increase in the closeness rating was associated with a 21 percent increase in fatal accidents at the game site. To go from a blow-out to a nail-biter resulted in a 133 percent increase in observed fatal accidents.

Furthermore, researchers found that the increase in fatalities occurred only in places where there were winners — the site of the competition and the hometown of the winning team.

This pattern of results is important because it suggests that the cause of the relationship might be associated with competition-induced testosterone, Wood said.

According to Wood, previous studies have established that during a close game testosterone increases for the fans, as well as the players. After the game, testosterone levels drop for the losing side, but spike for the winning side.

Because testosterone is linked to aggressive behavior and potentially aggressive driving, "we hypothesize that this may play a role in the increased number of traffic fatalities in areas with a high proportion of winning fans," the study said.

The paper, *The Bad Thing about Good Games: The Relationship between Close Sporting Events and Game-Day Automobile Fatalities*, will be published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Gridlock returns across U.S.; it's only going to get worse

KIRKLAND, Wash. — The traffic reprieve resulting from the Dec. 2007-June 2009 national recession has ended.

Traffic tie-ups increased nationwide throughout 2010, with drivers experiencing increased congestion nearly every hour of the day, according to a company that provides traffic and navigation services.

INRIX, which is based in Kirkland, released its 4th Annual INRIX National Traffic Scorecard revealing gridlock and longer commute times have returned to America's roads.

"America is back on the road to gridlock," said Bryan Mistele, INRIX president and CEO. "Population growth combined with increases in interstate commerce — spurred by economic recovery — are fueling these increases.

With only 150,000 new jobs created in our nation's urban centers last year, we can expect even worse gridlock when the 6 million jobs lost (during) the recession return to the nation's cities."

Despite only modest employment gains in 2010, drivers began experiencing an average 10 percent increase in travel times. If unemployment drops to 7 percent by 2012, as economists predict, 9 million more daily work trips will jam the nation's road network, INRIX predicts.

Seventy of the 100 most populated cities in the U.S. are experiencing increases in traffic congestion. Nine cities already have surpassed their 2007 peak

After analyzing traffic on major highways in the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas in 2010, INRIX says the 10-most-congested

U.S. cities are:

1. Los Angeles. The worst day? Thursday at 5:30 p.m., the average trip takes 71 percent longer than normal.

2. New York. On Friday at 5:15 p.m., the average trip takes 47 percent longer than normal.

3. Chicago. On Friday at 5:15 p.m., the average trip takes 41 percent longer than normal.

4. Washington, D.C. On Thursday at 5:30 p.m., the average trip takes 51 percent longer than normal.

5. Dallas. On Friday at 5:15 p.m., the average trip takes 36 percent longer than normal.

6. San Francisco. On Thursday at 5:30 p.m., the average trip takes 63 percent longer than normal.

7. Houston. On Friday at 5:15 p.m., the average trip takes 33 percent longer than normal.

8. Boston. On Friday at 5:30 p.m., the average trip takes 33 percent longer than normal.

9. Philadelphia. On Friday at 5:15 p.m., the average trip takes 29 percent longer than normal.

10. Seattle. On Thursday at 5:15 p.m., the average trip takes 49 percent longer than normal.

The 10 cities account for more than half the nation's traffic congestion. New York, San Francisco and Philadelphia experienced increases of almost 20 percent.

Of the 341 traffic corridors of at least three miles that experience heavy traffic congestion every day, the five worst were:

1. New York: An 11-mile stretch of I-95 Southbound NE Thwy, Bruckner/Cross Bronx Expys) from Conner St. to the Hudson Terrace exit that takes 43 minutes on average with 30 minutes of delay.

2. Los Angeles: A 20-mile stretch of the Riverside Fwy/CA-91 EB from the CA-55/Costa Mesa Fwy interchange to the McKinley St. exit that takes 57 minutes on average with 37 minutes of delay.

3. Los Angeles: A 13-mile stretch of the San Diego Fwy/I-405 NB from I-105/Imperial Hwy interchange through the Getty Center Dr. exit that takes 41 minutes on average with 28 minutes of delay.

4. Chicago: A 16-mile stretch of I-90/I-94 EB (Kennedy/Dan Ryan Expys) from the I-294/Tri-State Tollway to the Ruble St. exits that takes 49 minutes on average with 32 minutes of delay.

5. Los Angeles: A 15-mile stretch of the Santa Monica Fwy/I-10 EB from CA-1/Lincoln Blvd. exit to Alameda St. that takes 42 minutes on average with 28 minutes of delay.

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Museum flings open doors in June

HERSHEY, Pa. — The Museum of Bus Transportation is giving its annual Spring Bus Fling a different twist this year, plus unveiling the latest addition to its fleet. The fling will be Saturday, June 4.

This year the entire event will take place on the museum campus in Hershey (161 Museum Drive) — one mile north of famous Hersheypark.

The fling is dedicated to the motorbus — over the road, transit and school. Featured will be a bus- and transportation-related flea market conducted on the lower level of the museum next to the antique buses the museum has on display.

Vendors from all over North America will be present, offering everything from timetables, to fare boxes, to bus parts. As the day winds down, an auction is being planned.

Antique and contemporary buses also will be parked outside on the museum tarmac. Last year, nearly 20 buses were driven to the event and put on display.

In addition, the museum will offer shuttle service, every 30 minutes, to its nearby storage facility where another set of antique buses



Museum gains 1945 Ford model 59-B crackerbox bus

will be available for viewing.

On display this year for the first time will be the museum's newest acquisition — a 1945 Ford model 59-B.

The bus was recently donated by the original purchaser, Michael J. Demeter, the owner of the former Peninsula Charter Lines of East Palo Alto, Calif.

One of nearly 12,500 Ford

“crackerbox” buses built from 1939 to 1947, the Demeter bus was one of four delivered to Palo Alto City Lines (the name of his company at the time). Few of the 65-year-old plus buses survive.

The Spring Bus Fling will run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. More information may be obtained by calling (717) 566-7100 ext. 119, or at www.buseum.org.

MCI plans events, auction

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries is conducting a trio of open houses this month, plus its first-ever online bus auction.

“April is synonymous with spring showers and MCI is pouring on the savings on pre-owned coaches with...open houses and don't-miss sales,” said a company spokesman.

MCI is inviting motorcoach operators and their staff to attend MCI Sales and Service Center open houses at locations in:

- Blackwood, N.J. on April 5
- Los Alamitos, Calif. on April 15
- Des Plaines, Ill. on April 26

MCI said attendees will find “super savings” on many of the pre-owned coaches available for sale. Plus, it said it has a wide range of budget and model choices, including units with warranties and maintenance options.

Lunch will be served at all locations and there will be chances

at prizes.

On April 27-28, The Branford Group will auction surplus pre-owned coach inventory on behalf of MCI.

Up to 45 pre-owned coaches will be auctioned online, with bidding starting at 6 a.m. April 27 and closing at 11 a.m. April 28 (eastern times).

“The online auction presents a rare opportunity for operators,” said Brent Maitland, vice president of MCI Pre-owned Coach.

“Both the open houses and online auction will make it easier for operators to get the equipment they want and need in time for the busy season ahead. There's never been a better time to buy a pre-owned MCI.”

For more information about the auction, go to www.TheBranfordGroup.com, or call (203) 488-7020. For more information about the open houses, call (877) 428-9624 or go to www.mcicoach.com.

Calendar

MAY 2011

2-3 UMA Board of Directors Meeting, Alexandria, Va. Info: (800) 424-8262.

4-5 UMA Days on the Hill, meeting with Congressional leaders, Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. Info: (800) 424-8262.



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Bus & Motorcoach Academy offers six courses for spring

LA PLATA, Md. — The Bus & Motorcoach Academy is offering six online courses during the spring session that begins April 5.

Through its two programs, the Clarence Cornell School of Business and the Motorcoach Operator/Driver Program, the Bus & Motorcoach Academy offers authoritative business knowledge, not only for bus and motorcoach owners and operators, but also to drivers, key industry personnel and the industry's suppliers and vendors.

The adult learning courses offered by the academy are conducted entirely online using the College of Southern Maryland's extensive online course modules, which are designed for today's busy motorcoach industry professional.

For the spring session, the Clarence Cornell School of Business is offering three courses:

Business & Marketing II. This course provides an opportunity to become familiar with grant applications, job costing and estimating, customer service, cost control, and insurance and risk management for the motorcoach industry.

Upon completing this course, students will be able to prepare comprehensive cost estimates, determine return on investment, and develop cost control plans.

Human Resources. This course provides an overview of issues related to human resources in the motorcoach business.

Topics include: managing hours of service; employment law; employee relations and practice; recruiting, hiring, retaining and training personnel, and compensation and benefits.

After completing this course, students will understand the basics of employment law, develop plans for tracking hours of service, and be able to develop a human resources plan.

Safety & Compliance. This course explores issues of safety and regulatory compliance specifically for the motorcoach industry.

Topics include driver compli-

ance issues, inspection and maintenance, security, SafeStat and safety ratings, and general regulatory compliance. After completing this course, students will be familiar with safety ratings, understand how to develop safety plans, and understand requirements for tracking and reporting safety-related issues.

Learners who complete all five courses in the Clarence Cornell School of Business will receive an Accredited Passenger Transportation Operator designation.

The Clarence Cornell School of Business is named after the founder of ABC Companies, Clarence 'Clancy' Cornell.

Motorcoach Driver Program

Learners who successfully

complete the five courses in the Motorcoach Operator/Driver Program will receive a Certificate of Academic Achievement in Motorcoach Operation.

Courses offered during the spring session are:

Passenger Issues. This course provides an overview of passenger issues, such as transporting baggage and passengers, including special needs passengers, special considerations for school buses, transit considerations, and issues of customer service and customer care relevant to the motorcoach operator.

After completing this course, students will be familiar with basic customer service considerations and special customer ser-

vice situations relevant to the motorcoach industry. Students will also learn how to defuse difficult customer service situations.

Safe Driving. This course explores safe driving procedures under normal and special conditions, off-road vehicle handling and in-depth case studies in safety as related to the motorcoach industry.

After completing the course, students will be familiar with safe driving practices.

Vehicle Maintenance. This course provides an opportunity to become familiar with motorcoach equipment and its usage, procedures to follow in the event of a breakdown or emergency, and explores the area of fuel economy relevant to the motorcoach operator.

After completing this course, students will understand the importance of various motorcoach characteristics, understand how to make a vehicle inspection and how to handle emergency situations. Students will also develop strategies to enhance fuel economy.

Each academy course requires a minimum of 20 hours of study and the course must be completed within seven weeks.

To learn more about the academy's program and enroll, go to www.uma.org/academy.

Tour guide training course offered for drivers

SAN FRANCISCO — International Tour Management Institute, which offers training and certification programs for tour directors and guides, says it's now offering a similar training and certification program for motorcoach drivers.

"Motorcoach drivers are a critical factor in the success of any tour," said Ted Bravos, CEO of ITMI. "How drivers interact with passengers and tour directors impacts the entire experience.

"While all drivers receive safety training, most have not been given the tools to effectively handle the people-related issues that often arise. Our program is

designed to give them the knowledge to deal with unexpected situations with grace and confidence. Motorcoach operators benefit because happy passengers are their best form of advertising."

The ITMI program aims to help drivers learn valuable interpersonal skills, enhance their customer service, and more effectively interact with tour directors and tour guides. The program delves into the psychology of group travel, illustrating how critical the driver's role is to the success of a group tour.

For more information, go to www.itmisf.com, or call (415) 957-9489.

Safety spotlight

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

crashes and put in place the necessary safety guards to make commercial buses as safe as they possibly can be," said Schumer.

Gillibrand urged lawmakers not to wait until another fatal bus crash occurs before taking action. "This bipartisan legislation is an important step toward reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries caused by motorcoach accidents," she said. "Congress must come together and prevent any further bus trips from turning into tragedies."

Lewis' office emphasized that general interest in the companion measure in the House has been strong, but he only recently sent a "Dear Colleague" letter to other congressional representatives and still is awaiting responses from potential co-sponsors.

In addition to the legislation, Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, announced plans to chair hearings March 30 on why new bus safety rules that federal regulators and lawmakers have been seeking the past several years have not been implemented.

The motorcoach safety legislation was introduced in 2009 and the

NTSB and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration have been talking up new safety regulations for buses for more than a decade.

The New York accident also caught the attention of Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who ordered the state Department of Transportation and police to begin immediate inspections of buses in the state, especially those in Manhattan.

A statewide "sting" at 13 locations led to 41 of 164 buses that were inspected being ordered off the road for various safety and driver violations.

Of 26 buses pulled over at three Manhattan checkpoints, 16 — that's 62 percent — had serious violations and were taken out of service. Citations for 72 minor bus infractions also were issued.

In other parts of the state, 25 out of 138 buses and drivers had violations serious enough to be taken out of service. Police also issued 45 moving violations to bus drivers during the operation.

"While the actions of a few should not tarnish an important and reliable industry, the memory of those who lost their lives last week demands that additional action be taken to safeguard the traveling public," said New York Transportation Commissioner Joan McDonald. "As always, drivers and buses found to be unsafe

will be removed from the road."

There also was a call from Schumer for New York officials to audit tour bus operators, particularly carriers that make daily runs to area casinos.

The deadliest of the two crashes that renewed interest in bus safety issues involved a World Wide Tour bus that ran off the road, flipped on its side and slid into a large road sign that nearly sliced the bus in half. The bus was returning to Manhattan's Chinatown from Mohegan Sun Casino in Connecticut.

The driver, who survived the crash, told investigators his bus was clipped by a passing tractor-trailer that did not stop. However, the truck driver, who was located later by police, denied his vehicle struck the bus and several passengers on the coach said they did not believe the bus was struck by another vehicle before it left the highway.

The FMCSA is reviewing pictures taken by a camera inside the bus and analyzing engine control instruments that could show how fast the coach was traveling at the time of the accident.

World Wide Tours said in a statement it was fully cooperating with investigators. "We will continue to use every resource at our disposal to assist and work with investigators to determine what hap-

pened," the company said.

The coach driver, Ophadell Williams, 40, of Brooklyn previously had his license suspended for allegedly using aliases when applying for a commercial driver's license. He also has a criminal record for manslaughter and grand larceny.

The New Jersey accident involved a Super Luxury Tours bus that was bound for Philadelphia from Manhattan's Chinatown when it ran off the road and struck a concrete overpass support. According to federal transportation officials, the company's drivers were involved in four accidents in the past two years.

In the New Hampshire accident, the coach was carrying about two dozen Koreans from Quebec to Boston when the driver lost control on snowy Interstate 93 in Littleton, sending the bus into the median where it rolled over.

An analysis of FMCSA records by USA Today revealed that the two bus companies involved in the fatal accidents had not received full safety audits in more than two years even though they were placed on "alert" status because of safety violations found during roadside inspections.

World Wide Travel was last audited in September 2008, despite five violations of "fatigued driving" rules since May 2009, the

newspaper said. It said FMCSA warned the company about the high number of violations in a letter dated Feb. 25.

Super Luxury was last audited in January 2009 and since then has been cited for 33 violations, including 16 related to driver fatigue and six for speeding, the newspaper analysis showed.

The FMCSA said the "alert" program began in December to highlight companies with poor safety records.

The accidents upset motorcoach industry executives who said they were saddened by the loss of life and injuries.

"There always seems to be a handful of operators that believe they can ignore basic safety practices," said United Motorcoach Association Vice President Ken Presley. "We urge regulators and enforcement to close these safety gaps for the safety of passengers and the health of the industry."

He said UMA is always prepared to assist operators who reach out to the association with compliance and safety issues.

"While the American Bus Association supports and embraces the enforcement efforts of the FMCSA and its leadership, more needs to be done to shut down unsafe bus operations," noted ABA President Peter Pantuso.

ExpressPass is implemented for Niagara bridges

LEWISTON, N.Y. — The Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, operator of three of the four Niagara River bridges between western New York and southern Ontario, has introduced ExpressPass for buses crossing the Rainbow and Lewiston-Queenston bridges.

The ExpressPass program is the first commercial automatic crossing pass of its kind on northern border bridges. It's designed to increase convenience and reduce wait times.

The pass also can be used by trucks for the Queenston bridge. Trucks and buses are not permitted on the commission's third crossing, the Whirlpool Bridge.

The new program utilizes automated, unmanned toll booths. The driver pulls up to a booth and flashes the ExpressPass card, essentially a debit card, at the designated sensor.

The system counts the number of axles on the vehicle and deducts the appropriate charge from a pre-deposited account maintained by enrolled bus and truck operators. There is a web-based system that allows companies to manage their ac-

BANY members talk safety with commissioner

ALBANY, N.Y. — Months ago, leaders of the Bus Association of New York scheduled a sit-down meeting with New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Joan McDonald.

As it turned out, it was fortuitous that the meeting was scheduled for March 21 because it came just days after two high-profile fatal bus crashes — one in New York and the other in New Jersey. (See story on Page 1.)

Fourteen members of BANY, representing 11 companies, sat with the commissioner, and members of her staff, to discuss concerns about the bus industry and possible remedies in wake of the deadly incidents.

BANY leaders took the position that, generally, there are sufficient regulations in place governing bus safety, but they said they would like to see additional resources available for more comprehensive enforcement of the rules, with the goal of rooting out bad operators before count online.

"The new commercial ExpressPass is the fastest way through the toll booths and will help commercial vehicles operate more efficiently by re-

ducing the time they spend crossing these bridges," said Lew Holloway, bridge commission general manager.

Operators interested in learning more about the program can go to

www.niagarafallsbridges.com. Click on "Crossing Info," then "Truckers Services."

Initial registration information can be submitted on the commis-

sion website. Operators also may contact the commission by phone at (716) 285-6322, ext. 4143 in the U.S., or (905) 354-5641, ext. 4143 in Canada.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the commissioner said "the motorcoach industry is a very important industry to the state."

The next day BANY representatives met with local state legislators, as well as State Sen. Charles Fuschillo, chairman of the senate transportation committee.

When meeting with legislators, the BANY representatives asked for consideration in closing a loophole in DMV regulations that allows bus and van drivers who may be on the sex offender registry.

at least eight troopers trained in bus inspections and driver review/hours-of-service inspections.

• Concern was expressed about on-the-road enforcement and the safety problems created by police stopping a motorcoach with 55 passengers on board, and pulling the bus over on the shoulder of a high-speed Interstate to write tickets.

• NYSDOT will work with BANY to assess automated systems that can reduce the burden of various state DOT paperwork requirements, specifically, the driver vehicle inspection reports for pre-trip and post-trip inspections. Using some of the systems would require new legislation; BANY said it would support such legislation.

• BANY requested the commissioner to remind public transit districts that outsourcing to the private sector can be a reasonable and cost-saving alternative to curtailing local transit services. The commissioner stated: "I am committed to pushing the envelope on outsourcing."

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tion website. Operators also may contact the commission by phone at (716) 285-6322, ext. 4143 in the U.S., or (905) 354-5641, ext. 4143 in Canada.

When meeting with legislators, the BANY representatives asked for consideration in closing a loophole in DMV regulations that allows bus and van drivers who may be on the sex offender registry.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the commissioner said "the motorcoach industry is a very important industry to the state."

The next day BANY representatives met with local state legislators, as well as State Sen. Charles Fuschillo, chairman of the senate transportation committee.

When meeting with legislators, the BANY representatives asked for consideration in closing a loophole in DMV regulations that allows bus and van drivers who may be on the sex offender registry.

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Selling a company

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

revenue for the company.

Interestingly, both sales were made by Krapf Bus Co. of West Chester, Pa., which earlier had purchased Red Lion Bus after seeing it as a good opportunity to expand its school bus operation.

"We heard about their wanting to sell while attending a state school association meeting, and one thing led to another and we negotiated a deal that worked out for both of us," said Jim Folkes, a Krapf executive.

He said Krapf wanted Red Lion's school operation and its 130-bus fleet, but was not interested in either the tour or charter businesses, so it put them on the market.

A natural move

It also was perceived opportunity that led Windstar Lines of Carroll, Iowa, to acquire the Lincoln, Neb., branch of Kincaid Coach Lines of Edwardsville, Kan.

"It was an opportunity that just came along," said Windstar executive Jeff Greteman. "We do a lot of work in Omaha and this location is not too far from there, so it was kind of a natural move for us at this time."

Kincaid continues to provide charter service from five terminals in four states.

While many of the buyers may be cashing in on the right opportu-

nity, the sellers — and there are many more of them than there are buyers — are coming from very different perspectives.

Some are operators who simply have had enough and aren't willing to wait any longer for things to turn around. Others are tired of the daily grind and are looking for other businesses in which to invest.

Many are long-time operators who are looking for an exit strategy — to retire and step away from the business, according to transportation business broker The Tenney Group.

"Many business owners have been in this industry for 20 to 40 years and endured a variety of economic swings during that time," said Charles Tenney, president. "As the age of owners increases, the appetite for taking on financial risks often decreases dramatically because the owners are less sure they can continue to invest in their business and get the money back in the future."

No more 24/7

William Dufour, owner of Dufour Tours in Hinsdale, Mass., is among those who wants out of the motorcoach business because he's tired of it all. He simply wants to retire so he can spend more time with his family in Arizona.

In fact, he just bought a home outside of Phoenix and is negotiating to sell the business to a one-time bus company owner.

"My wife and I decided we were not motivated enough to keep up with it, so we want to sell," he said.

However, Dufour does not plan to abandon the industry completely. He said he intends to keep his 200-vehicle school bus business because it's much easier to manage, even when he's not around.

"We run on three- to five-year contracts and it's not 24/7 like the motorcoach business, which you really have to work hard at," he said.

When an operator does decide to sell, one of the most difficult challenges is setting a price for the business.

Let's make a deal

According to Tenney, a multitude of factors may figure into setting the price, including the size, profitability and terms of the proposed deal. Profitability is often evaluated as a percentage of sales, or general earnings, or earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization.

However, he cautioned that rules of thumb rarely apply to the motorcoach industry.

"For example, let's say a bank is willing to lend three-and-a-quarter times discretionary earnings toward the purchase of a bus business. However, this sale price is not acceptable to a seller. Does the deal process end there? No. If that were the case, far fewer deals would get done," he said.

(Discretionary earnings are an

estimate of the total financial benefit a full-time owner-operator of a business would derive from the business on an annual basis. It also is often referred to as seller's discretionary cash flow or adjusted cash flow.)

Tenney noted, however, that as the bus and motorcoach customer base has shrunk during the past decade — by as much as 10 to 40 percent, the value of continuing customers to a potential buyer has increased and is in demand.

"Even when a bus business is not making money or even losing money, the value of the business' customer base and revenue stream may be more valuable today to a strategic buyer than it may be to the open market when the economy fully recovers," he said. "A strategic buyer can, in many cases, justify paying more because of what the new revenue, combined with the elimination of duplicating overhead (and competition), can allow the buyer to accomplish financially in both the short and long term."

Cloudy outlook

Although operators often raise concerns about the lack of financing available to potential coach company buyers, Tenney said bank money is still out there, although the requirements are stricter than in the past.

He said lenders can place caps on the amount of goodwill they will finance and the money avail-



Charles Tenney Spencer Tenney

able may not always reach the sales price.

"Many lenders require sellers to finance at least 10 percent or more of the transaction because when all parties have a vested interest in the continued success of the business it stabilizes the transfer of ownership," he noted.

The Tenney Group expects an increase in bus company sales activity this year and into the near future, according to Spencer Tenney, vice president.

However, he noted that competition will be tougher and that will impact selling prices. He said Baby Boomers are turning 65 and a recent survey showed that 800,000 of them who own businesses will be selling over the next few years.

"Bus business owners are not solely competing against other bus businesses for sale in their region. They are competing for the attention of buyers against all other types of businesses for sale as well.

"As the inventory of businesses for sale greatly increases over the next few years, it will inevitably drive demand and sale prices down for all businesses," he said.

Brian Crow

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

has been "truly above and beyond the call of duty."

Jamie Murray, chairman of the OMCA executive committee, said that given time he could write a book "of all the positive things Brian has done for our industry.

"One of Brian's biggest contributions has been the heightened awareness of the private-sector bus industry to various levels of government throughout Canada, and respect from other associations throughout North America. ... Always being proactive and forward thinking, (Crow put) the industry and members' best interests forward," said Murray.

"Brian Crow has been a great leader and ambassador for the motorcoach industry in Canada," added Douglas Badder of Badder Bus Service in Thamesville, Ontario.

"He has worked tirelessly on behalf of OMCA and MCC and for every operator member, making sure we have a voice and are heard in Ottawa and Toronto at our provincial and national governments.

"Brian is very knowledgeable about our industry and always presents our industry in a positive

way which benefits all member companies. He has always been professional and interested in how business has been going and how things are going personally.

"He worked hard to make sure the Canadian motorcoach businesses were used in the Vancouver Olympics and everything he has done, I believe, has benefited all in the industry. Our association has had in my eyes the best president an association could have in Brian Crow," said Badder.

OMCA executive committee member Ghislain Leduc of Leduc Bus Lines in Rockland, Ontario, noted that he became a member of OMCA at about the same time Crow became the organization's president.

"We grew together all those years," said Leduc. "What impressed me from Brian was the re-

spect for the membership, big or small. He took the time to listen to everyone. He is a great leader for our industry."

Aside from his contributions to the industry, to the two associations he headed and to the many boards on which he sat, Murray said Crow also is a down-to-earth individual — sincere, humble, genuine, respectful, professional and possessing great dignity.

Hammond adds two other attributes: "Integrity and an unwavering moral compass."

The high regard in which Crow is held extends beyond Canada.

United Motorcoach Association President and CEO Victor Parra said UMA and other organizations in the U.S. relied on Crow when their members had cross-border issues. "Brian was always

there to assist U.S. carriers," said Parra. "We will miss him terribly."

Parra said Crow's retirement came as both a huge surprise and a disappointment.

Crow came to OMCA in 1984 from the Ontario Trucking Association. In 1995, OMCA created Motor Coach Canada to represent coach and tour companies at the national and international level, and Crow became its president.

In 1999, OMCA and the Ontario School Bus Association and the Ontario Community Transportation Association created Ontario Transportation Expo, building on a seven-year partnership.

That same year, OMCA was presented with the "Motorcoach Industry Innovator of the Year Award" by *BusRide* magazine.

Over the years, Crow's abilities

complete motorcoach trip easier and less time consuming.

"We have done that now and with Jeff's help, we will get the word out to tourism suppliers that BusRates.com is the place to be."

Mills said that BusRates.com can help tourism industry suppliers gain immediate exposure to buyers and "that's a very exciting message to be sharing."

BusRates.com

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, BusRates.com has hired Mills Marketing, led by hospitality industry veteran, Jeffrey Mills, to promote the site to tourism suppliers.

Mills' background includes three years as vice president of sales at Atlanta's DeKalb Conven-

tion & Visitors Bureau.

"Jeff brings invaluable knowledge and relationships within the hospitality and tourism industry and we are thrilled to have him working on behalf of BusRates.com," said Elliott. "When our customers started looking for the group contacts for hotels, restaurants, and attractions, we set out to create a site that makes planning a

and leadership were tested by events, perhaps none more significant than the SARS scare of 2003.

SARS coronavirus is a virus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). In April 2003, following an outbreak of the highly contagious virus in Asia, it spread elsewhere in the world. In North America it seemed to center in Toronto. For Ontario-based motorcoach operators, it quickly became a genuine crisis because of widespread travel fears.

Crow helped Ontario operators get through the crisis because of his "flexibility and leadership" which "very quickly concentrated our industry efforts towards recovery," said Hammond.

Crow is leaving OMCA and MCC on July 31.

"This was a very hard decision for me but it is time for me to have more personal time to spend with family and friends," Crow said in a letter to the boards of both organizations.

"It has been a fabulous ride. I am so appreciative of the support I have received and the friends I have been so fortunate to make across Canada and the United States."

A search is under way for a successor.

UMA unveils lubricants, shop supplies programs for members

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association announced it has expanded its network of services providers to include a leading supplier of lubricants and a company that specializes in providing systems that improve the efficiency of ordering and stocking maintenance repair parts.

UMA said it has partnered with Petro-Canada of New York and Imperial Supplies of Green Bay, Wis., two companies that operate throughout the U.S.

Imperial Supplies not only distributes maintenance repair parts and inventory management programs but it also carries a full range of fasteners, hardware, vehicle lighting, electrical products, tubing, air brake products, hoses and hose ends, cutting tools, shop supplies, chemicals and paints, vehicle parts and accessories, and safety products.

Imperial says it is dedicated to using innovative services and technology to help reduce expenses and increase profits.

The “UMA Shop Supplies Program through Imperial Supplies” will provide UMA members with a dedicated service advisor and access to a full range of products.

Expo '12 to get marketing boost

BETHESDA, MD. — The company that manages the recruiting of exhibitors for UMA Motorcoach Expos has hired an integrated marketing communications firm to promote the 2012 Motorcoach Expo in Long Beach, Calif.

Frost Miller Group of Bethesda was hired by NaylorCMG to promote the Feb. 8-12 Expo in Southern California.

This will be the first time Frost Miller has worked in conjunction with Naylor on the oldest trade show for the motorcoach industry in the U.S.

Frost Miller will immediately start producing exhibitor marketing materials, including an exhibitor prospectus, sponsor brochures, postcards, direct mail pieces, and floor plan mailers.

“Understanding client needs is the key to producing high quality and effective sales and promotional materials. We are delighted to be a company our client NaylorCMG can rely on,” said Frost Miller Group President Kevin Miller.

Since 2005, Frost Miller has worked on eight different tradeshows with NaylorCMG.

The United Motorcoach Association hosts Motorcoach Expo annually.

Fairfax, Va.-based Naylor CMG manages exhibit sales for Motorcoach Expo, which attracts more than 2,000 attendees each year.

Petro-Canada Lubricants produces a comprehensive line of lubricants and oils formulated to the highest standards.

It can supply motorcoach operations with a wide variety of lubricants capable of meeting the duty cycle of a motorcoach fleet. And its products are available in all package sizes, helping save operators money.

UMA members may order through a local distributor to assure efficient service, and be billed through Petro-Canada so the purchasing power of all UMA members will be utilized.

“In looking to find programs that can save our members money, Imperial and Petro-Canada stand out for their efficiency and savings poten-

tial,” said Michele Nosko, UMA director of membership and marketing.

“We received high praise from members who are current customers of Imperial and Petro-Canada and feel they are perfect additions to our menu of member benefits.”

To learn more about Imperial’s program, UMA members should

contact Imperial service adviser Corey Reymont at (800) 558-2808, ext. 5451.

To learn about Petro-Canada’s program, UMA members should contact their local Petro-Canada representative or national representative Bruce Hyatt at (518) 441-9879. More details about both programs also can be found at www.uma.org.



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Bridgestone encourages fleets to retread more

MUSCATINE, Iowa — Bridgestone Bandag Tire Solutions, a division of Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations, has launched a campaign designed to promote the use of retreaded tires.

A key aspect of the campaign is an appeal to fleets to consider extending their casing age limits when retreading. For example, some fleets may want to consider extending their casing life from five to seven years.

Chris Ripani, director of marketing strategic brands and channels at Bridgestone, said that tightness in the market supply of new replacement tires this year has made retreading more attractive for all types of fleets.

"Fleets that now retread are extending their age limits to realize the most value from the casings they own," he said. "We've also seen fleets return to retreading, or

perhaps evaluate retreads for the very first time, as a strategy to maximize their tire programs and keep their (vehicles) rolling."

Bridgestone has conducted studies of more than 13 million tires rejected for retreading and determined that 30 percent of those commercial vehicle tire casings could have been retreaded at least one more time if repair specifications had been different.

BBTS has launched a website, www.retreadinstead.com, to provide fleet managers with tools and information to get the most out of retreading.

The site includes a wheel position analyzer tool, a cost-analysis example for considering extending current casing age limits, and an informational video on shearography, a modern casing inspection technology that ensures retread reliability.

Marilyn Holter dies at 80, co-founded Richfield Bus

RICHFIELD, Minn. — Marilyn Holter, who with her husband, George, founded Richfield Bus Co. here more than 50 years ago, died last month. She was 80.

The Holters started their company in 1959, in the Minneapolis suburb of Richfield, operating a school bus route.

Seven years later they created Rochester City Lines, which operates the public transit system in Rochester, Minn., home of the renowned Mayo Clinic medical complex. Rochester City Lines also operates a network of commuter buses, transporting mainly Mayo Clinic employees back and forth from three-dozen southeastern and south central Minnesota communities.

The Holters' Rochester City Lines is one of the few remaining family companies to run a city bus network in the U.S.

In addition to Richfield Bus and Rochester City Lines, the company also operates Heartland Tours and Travel, running tours throughout North America.

Mrs. Holter is survived by her husband; two sons, Dan and Stan, who are general managers of the family bus companies; a daughter Marilyn Jorgensen, and a sister and brother.



Marilyn Holter



Autumn Dipert-Brown Tom McCaughey Shannon Kaser Mike Costa Tom Morgan Elaine Fickett

Motorcoach Council expands board 2 more operator members added

ERIE, Colo. — The Motorcoach Council, the industrywide initiative aimed at promoting motorcoach travel, has named six operator members to its board, expanding the number of directors by two.

The new directors are:

- Autumn Dipert-Brown of Dan Dipert Coaches in Arlington, Texas
- Tom McCaughey of Flagship Trailways in Cranston, R.I.
- Tom Morgan of Citizen Auto Stage and Gray Line of Tucson (Ariz.)
- Mike Costa of A Yankee Line in Boston
- Sannon Kaser of Royal Excursion in Mishawaka, Ind.
- Elaine Fickett of H&L Charters in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. Fickett represents the California Bus Association, as the council's state association member.

"These individuals were selected because of their strong leadership skills, commitment to the industry, innovation in marketing, and proven track records with the consumer market," said Motorcoach Council Chairman Brian Annett of Annett Bus Lines in Sebring, Fla.

"We are extremely excited to have such a talented, savvy group of individuals and visionaries on this year's board of directors," added Heather Horton, executive director of the Motorcoach Council.

"The addition of the new board members ensures the campaign will continue to benefit from a diversity of knowledge and opinions, and will help grow the depth and success of the council's nationwide public awareness campaign."

The six new board members will serve two-year terms but can be re-elected. Board members are selected by the "old" board.

Rotating off the board were operator members Gladys Gillis of Starline Luxury Coaches in Seattle; Scott Merriman of Scenic America in Bealeton, Va.; Sandy Allen of Royal Coach Tours in San Jose, Calif., and James Mills of Wise Coaches in Hermitage, Tenn., representing the Tennessee Motor Coach Association.

The new directors join five continuing directors, Annett, the council chairman; Jack Wigley of All Aboard America!, council vice chairman; Ron Bast of Riteway Bus Service; Peter Pantuso of the American Bus Association, and Vic Parra of the United Motorcoach Association. Steve Klika of the International Motor Coach Group and Todd Holland of Ramb-

lin Express (immediate past chairman of the council) are ex-officio members of the board.

Ryan Kelly, CEO of Terrapin Blue in Athens, Ga., was named a "contributor to the board" and has been invited to attend all board meetings to assist in pursuing funding, developing strategy and contributing ideas that foster growth of the Get Motorcoachified campaign.

"The Motorcoach Council is very focused on innovation, PR, marketing and leveraging social media, and the board feels Mr. Kelly's insights and experience will be valuable in helping to guide the direction of the campaign in the years ahead," said Horton.

Kelly and the council's reconstituted board will meet for the first time in Chicago next month.

"I'm excited about the two-day strategic planning session in Chicago," said Annett. "In the past, the annual meeting produced things like our five-year strategic plan, the bus wrap campaign, and relationships with national PR firms such as Barton Gilanelli & Associates.

"We have a half-dozen key projects on the agenda this year and will explore new ways to send a positive message to the consumer about bus and coach travel, and put our industry in a positive spotlight with the mainstream media," he added.

Greyhound gains in tough economy

ABERDEEN, Scotland — Greyhound Lines, North America's largest intercity carrier, posted a modest revenue increase during fiscal 2011 despite a tough business environment, its parent company reports.

FirstGroup plc issued a "trading update" for its business units last month, saying it would report actual numbers for the fiscal year in mid-May.

Early results for Greyhound indicate the company will post a 0.6 percent increase in revenue for the year ended March 31, versus a year ago.

For the most-recent three months, Greyhound experienced "an encouraging return to revenue growth," FirstGroup said.

"Against a challenging trading environment, Greyhound has con-

tinued to apply a rigorous management of the network and cost base to enable the business to achieve an improved operating margin," FirstGroup added.

During the three months ended March 31, Greyhound continued to expand service by rolling out Greyhound Express to additional markets in the Midwest, and expanded its BoltBus unit by creating a hub in New Jersey, providing service between Newark and Washington and Baltimore.

Greyhound Express is a no-terminal, curbside service being provided by Greyhound in select markets, and BoltBus is the company's curbside operation in the east and northeast.

Looking ahead, FirstGroup said it was encouraged by the improving trends at Greyhound, as

well as its rail business in the United Kingdom, and continued steady performance by its UK bus and transit operations.

At the same time, the company's North American school bus business, known as FirstStudent, will "continue to see pressure on margins in the new financial year."

The business environment for FirstStudent remains "challenging" because of significant budget pressures on school boards. The three months ended March 31 were particularly difficult for FirstStudent because of severe weather during February.

Margins have been further pressured by cost increases, including higher contract-labor costs, resulting partly from route changes as school boards look to reduce their transportation costs.

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ON HOLD Deal 2001 MCI D4500 DD S60 12.7L, Allison B-500. VIN #53755 **\$153,500**

Deal 2001 MCI E4500 DD S60 12.7L, Allison B-500. VIN #61527 **\$141,100**

Outlet 1989 MCI 102AW3 DD 8V-92T, Allison HT-740. VIN #42945 **\$18,600**

Outlet 1997 Van Hool T940 Cummins M-11, Allison B-500R. VIN #29073 **\$23,200**

ON HOLD Outlet 1993 MCI 102DL3 DD S60 12.7L, Allison B-500, 6 monitor video system. VIN #44999 **\$40,800**

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