

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Safety oversight of industry becomes more onerous

WASHINGTON — For roughly 250 motorcoach companies operating in the United States, life is about to get ugly. Possibly very ugly.

For the remaining 3,300-3,400 coach companies, life is going to become increasingly uncomfortable, and the discomfort seeming-ly could last for years.

That's essentially the message U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administrator Anne S.

Ferro delivered again last month during a broad-based meeting of motorcoach industry stakeholders that included representatives from law enforcement, tourism and travel organizations, and state and local government.

The meeting was the latest in a series of warnings LaHood and Ferro have issued as part of the FMCSA's ramped-up and unprecedented efforts to expand its regulatory and safety oversight of the motorcoach industry and inform

the public about safe motorcoach travel.

The April meeting came a week after the FMCSA announced it was deploying more than 50 specially trained safety investigators throughout the country to begin targeted and in-depth inspections of higher-risk coach companies.

The "quick strike group" is specifically going after 250 companies "with poor (safety) records," focusing on outfits with lousy driver scores in the FMCSA

Safety Measurement System and on those companies that have no "known" place of business and/or maintenance facilities.

Another target is companies that applied for and failed the U.S. Department of Defense bus inspection program.

"Safety is our highest priority and we are committed to keeping those who do not follow our safety rules off the road," said LaHood. "Today's announcement builds on the recent steps we have taken to

create one standard of safety for all passenger travel."

A critical component of the crackdown is a much, much more extensive and invasive Compliance Review process that promises to make life miserable for days on end for operators subject to the scrutiny.

This is not your father's CR. Even though the Compliance Review has long been the FMCSA's touted big stick of safety enforcement, in reality the operator audit

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ▶



Antique Bus Show. The former Greyhound terminal in Blytheville, Ark., was the focal point last month for perhaps the largest-ever antique bus show in the

U.S. Stan Holter of Richfield Bus Co. in Rochester, Minn., brought the company's restored 1968 Flexliner. Story and photos on Pages 14/15.

Proposed seatbelt regulation is discussed at White House

WASHINGTON — The long-awaited federal rule mandating seatbelts for motorcoaches was the subject of a White House meeting last month involving representatives from Coach USA and megabus.com.

The White House is studying the proposed seatbelt rule, developed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration over the past four-plus years, as the last step before it is issued and becomes law.

The proposed rule, which mandates seatbelts for new motorcoaches, went to the White House for approval in February.

Typically the White House takes 90 days to clear proposed federal regulations, and the seat-

belt rule is nearing — or may already have exceeded — the 90-day window.

The Hill.com, a Congressional newspaper and news service, reported last month that executives from Coach USA-megabus and two of its lobbyists met with White House officials about the proposed rule.

John Oakman, the senior vice president of fleet maintenance and procurement at Coach USA/megabus, represented the company at the meeting, along with Christopher Falcone and David Coburn from the global lobbying firm of Steptoe & Johnson.

Various White House officials also were present, including James Williamson, a public finance

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ▶

Parts problems? Some operators say 'yes,' suppliers demur

No one likes having them around — until they need one in a pinch.

And nearly everyone likes to grouse about their cost.

No, we're not talking about lawyers.

The subject here is replacement parts for motorcoaches.

Replacement parts have long been an issue in the industry. Now, the widespread paring down of parts inventories by many opera-

tors and the increasing complexity of motorcoaches has focused new attention on the availability and shipping of parts throughout the industry.

"We use so many oddball pieces no one else uses," said a small operator. "Once upon a time, the manufacturers stocked all parts.... Now, they've decided not to stock certain parts. (When you order a part) you'll get a notice saying it's

out of stock and they're expecting a shipment in October."

Small and large operators alike report scattered problems getting timely shipments of parts as varied as dial lights, O-rings, air nozzles, wiper arms, turbochargers, oil-pressure sending units, and armrests.

And some delays can lead to serious issues, reports another operator.

He said an employee had or-

dered a wheelchair-lift wiring harness in March and was told it was on back order.

"Technically, according to (federal) regulations, if you have a wheelchair lift that cannot be serviced in five days, you need to take that vehicle out of service," he said. "So, here we're waiting for over a month. They can't even tell us when they're going to have it.

"Obviously, you're not going

to operate a coach with safety issues. But let's say it's a broken armrest, for example. (Ordinarily) you're not going to not use it because of a broken armrest, but here we've got a bus running around for three months with a broken armrest. That comes down to a real customer service issue."

The operator said that while his company maintains a parts invento-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ▶

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Bus traffic to Atlantic City continues slide

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Motorcoach traffic to Atlantic City, which has been on decline for more than a decade, seemingly accelerated its pullback during the past two years.

While every mode of transportation has seen decreases in visits to New Jersey's gambling mecca, casino bus traffic has had one of the longest stretches of decline, according to data from the South Jersey Transportation Authority.

The number of casino buses

and passengers coming into Atlantic City dropped year-over-year for the past 24 consecutive months.

In February, the latest month for which figures are available, 140,000 people traveled to the city on casino buses — 30 percent fewer than in the same month last year and about half the number riding two years ago, according to the authority's data.

In contrast, the number of vehicles passing through the Pleasantville toll plaza on the Atlantic City Expressway — a major thoroughfare into the city — decreased by 11 percent compared to the same month last year.

It is widely thought that much of the visitation has been lost to casinos in nearby jurisdictions — particularly relatively new ones in Pennsylvania — that compete with Atlantic City.

Some state lawmakers are trying to stem the tide through legislative changes, such as proposing that out-of-state buses be exempt from paying New Jersey corporate

business taxes.

The legislative proposals have been strongly supported by the motorcoach industry with representatives of both the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach and United Motorcoach associations advocating for the changes.

Lawmakers have considered such proposals for years, but Sen. Jeff Van Drew, D-Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic, says his latest bill has the best chance of being passed.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ►

Roadcheck 2013 will be June 4-6

GREENBELT, Md. — Mark your calendar and send an email or text to your directors of safety, maintenance and operations letting them know that Roadcheck 2013, the 72-hour annual safety blitz conducted by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance will be June 4-6.

During the three days of Roadcheck, the CVSA and its members across the U.S., Canada and Mexico will be aggressively enforcing compliance with commercial vehicle safety regulations.

Typically, Roadcheck specifically targets hours-of-service compliance and brake systems.

"Enforcement of hours-of-service limits is essential to ensuring compliance and combating driver fatigue," said one CVSA official.

Last year, a total of 74,072 truck and bus inspections were conducted during Roadcheck, including 652 inspections of passenger carrying vehicles.

Of passenger carrying vehicles inspected, 8.6 percent of vehicles and 2.5 percent of drivers were placed out of service.

To learn more about the program, go to www.cvsa.org.

BusRates nominated for White House designation

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — BusRates.com, the No. 1 online group travel database and charter bus operator directory, has been nominated for The White House Champions of Change program for the "Transportation Technology Solutions for the 21st Century" event being held early this month.

The U.S. Department of Transportation and the White House Office of Public Engagement are hosting the event on May 8 to focus on organizations with proven leadership in implementing technology solutions to enhance performance, reduce congestion, improve safety, and facilitate communication

across the transportation industry.

"We are grateful for the nomination," said BusRates.com General Manager Eric Elliott. "More than 1.2 million groups use BusRates.com each year to orchestrate their group travel. It's a measurable impact that we have on the transportation industry."

In addition to facilitating direct contact between group travel planners and operators, BusRates.com is also partnered with NTA (formerly the National Tour Association) to position group-friendly hotels, attractions and restaurants alongside charter operators.

The BusRates.com online data-

base allows planners to build complex itineraries with the ease of point-and-click.

Safety is of utmost importance within the group travel industry, and BusRates.com utilizes federal safety information, regarding operator compliance and authority, to prevent unsafe operators from gaining exposure to potential charter groups, Elliott noted.

The directory provides accessible records for every operator per the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"In addition to operators and travel suppliers, we also publish

consumer-advocacy articles to help first-time planners," Elliott explained.

Nearly 75 percent of visitors to BusRates.com are first-time users, many curious about the advantages of group travel by bus.

"Inbound traffic to our directory continues to grow. The charter (bus) industry is alive and well."

BusRates.com prides itself on being a dedicated partner with its charter bus members.

A weekly blog is published exclusively for operators to share strategies in marketing, technology and sales. The blog is popular with op-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ►

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THE DOCKET

Battle continues over speculation

WASHINGTON — The five-year effort by politicians, the airline industry and a host of others to reduce financial speculation in commodity markets — to moderate both prices and price swings — lingers on.

Oil, diesel, jet fuel and gasoline speculation is at the center of the drive to reduce commodities speculation.

The debate over the proper role of the financial industry in commodity futures and swaps markets (including energy, agriculture and metals) is heating up again.

An appeals court is hearing a challenge to a September ruling that vacated speculative position limits. The hearings are expected to begin this month.

The Commodity Futures Trading Commission is expected to finalize new regulations affecting commodity markets in the coming months, just as its chairmanship and two commissioner seats come up for confirmation.

And, finally, the House is moving new legislation to amend derivatives trading rules and the Senate has begun drafting a bill to reauthorize the Commodity Exchange Act.

Could driver screening program be improved?

If part-time bus drivers are coming under greater scrutiny as part of the latest federal safety crackdown, which seems to be the case, then some motorcoach operators would like to join the effort.

Unfortunately, that would require an act of Congress.

Bus operators — as well as truckers — have eagerly utilized the Pre-Employment Screening Program (PSP) that was launched by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration three years ago this month.

Through the end of February, motor carriers, individual driver applicants and industry service providers have requested more than 1.6 million driver records through the program, said FMCSA spokesman Duane DeBruyne.

PSP was enacted after years of lobbying by motorcoach and trucking industry operators and their trade organizations.

It allows operators to obtain information about prospective new hires from federal databases of driver roadside inspection histories, but only after obtaining each job applicant's consent to check the databases.

The reports cover up to five

years of driver crash data and three years of inspection data.

The information includes serious safety violations in such categories as unsafe driving, hours of service, valid medical qualifications, controlled substances and alcohol.

The FMCSA charges a fee of \$10 per request, or \$100 per year, for access to the reports. The annual fee can be discounted for small companies.

PSP would be considerably more useful if carriers were permitted to request reports on the part-time drivers already being utilized by operators but who may or may not be accumulating violations while driving for other companies, said Godfrey LeBron, president of the Bus Association of New York and vice president of Paradise Travel in Amityville, N.Y.

"PSP is a good tool when you are going to hire someone. I am able to see (the) crash activities and inspections (the potential new hire) has had for any other motor carrier," he said.

"The problem I have with it is we cannot run it on current employees. It would help me know what the individual has done when

he isn't working for me."

The Pre-Employment Screening Program was born in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) passed by Congress at the end of 2005.

The highway and public transportation legislation directed the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to provide the motor carrier industry with electronic access to commercial motor vehicle accident reports, carrier inspection reports and "serious driver-related safety violation inspection reports."

However, Congress placed limitations on information access. It directed the secretary to "ensure that such person (a carrier representative) will not conduct a screening without the operator-applicant's written consent."

The system also must "provide a procedure for the operator-applicant to correct inaccurate information in the System in a timely manner."

Finally, the law ordered that the information system "shall be designed to assist the motor carrier industry in assessing an individual operator's crash and serious safety violation inspection history

as a preemployment condition.

"Use of the process shall not be mandatory and may only be used during the preemployment assessment of an operator-applicant."

In February, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and FMCSA Administrator Anne Ferro announced a safety crackdown on high-risk motorcoach companies. One point of emphasis, they said, will be the use of part-time drivers.

But some of those drivers may have violation records that are not known by all of their employers, LeBron said.

"If a driver works 12 hours for another carrier, sleeps three hours and shows up at 3 a.m. to work for me, technically I have no way of looking into that," he said.

"Anything we can do to give us power and data is certainly going to help. You don't want to over-regulate, but it is very important to manage your drivers' performances. If a driver backs up a few points on their license, you don't want them driving for you."

Matthew Daecher, a transportation industry safety consultant, said such an expansion of PSP access might provide greater benefits to the trucking industry than to motorcoach operators.

"It is probably more relevant to the trucking industry because of the way they utilize drivers," said Daecher, president of Daecher Consulting Group of Camp Hill, Pa. "You would have to figure out how many part-time drivers are working in other places."

In the motorcoach industry, he said, a minority of drivers probably work part-time and only a small percentage of those drivers likely work for multiple employers. "I don't think it would be a huge gain for a bus company."

In any case, DOT and FMCSA cannot expand PSP through regulatory action.

"The language within SAFETEA-LU pertaining to PSP is specific that the program be designed for pre-employment screening," said FMCSA spokesman DeBruyne.

"If a driver applies to a company more than once, perhaps working for a company seasonally, the carrier can access the record anytime they are re-considering employment of the driver, provided they obtain consent."

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Deadline slides for electronic logging rule

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration will miss an October deadline set by Congress to mandate electronic logging devices in all over-the-road buses and trucks, according to Administrator Anne Ferro.

Instead, the agency will publish a supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking for the mandate in September, and the mandate itself will likely be completed a year later, Ferro told a group of trucking industry reporters.

The requirement will probably be implemented in 2016.

That time frame is later than what Congress asked for in MAP-21, last year's highway and public transportation funding law, which

called for the regulation to be completed by Oct. 1, and to take effect two years later.

"I am really driven to move this rule out. So September, for sure, you will see" a supplemental notice, Ferro said.

Ferro said the timeline for completing the rule late next year and making it effective in late 2016 is "optimistic," since the rulemaking process is lengthy.

After President Obama signed MAP-21 in July, FMCSA said it expected it could meet the October deadline.

But while speaking with the reporters, Ferro said MAP-21 added "additional clarification" about what FMCSA must do with the regulation. Incorporating

that has slowed the process, which caused FMCSA to miss its stated goal to publish the revised proposal in March, she said.

After the new proposal is released, the agency will allow the public to comment on it for at least 90 days.

In 2010, FMCSA first issued a rule requiring trucking companies with a history of hours-of-service violations to use electronic logging devices. That would have taken effect in June 2012.

In 2011, the agency proposed requiring electronic logging devices, which it called electronic onboard recorders at the time, for all companies that use paper logbooks.

Months later, the U.S. Court of

Appeals for the 7th Circuit overturned the 2010 rule, saying the agency did not meet a statutory obligation to assure the devices could not be used to harass drivers.

The universal mandate used the same technical specifications as the one overturned in court, so in 2012, FMCSA rescinded its proposal and vowed to reissue a rule that complied with the court ruling. Then, in June of last year, Congress mandated the regulation in MAP-21.

Writing a rule that stands up to court scrutiny is of paramount importance to FMCSA, Ferro said.

"It's got to withstand any legal challenges; it's very important," she said.

White House considers drug database rule

WASHINGTON — The White House has begun reviewing a proposed regulation that would create a national database of every commercial driver who has failed a required drug or alcohol test or refused to take one — the final review before the proposal can be issued.

The drug and alcohol clearinghouse is intended to ensure that truck and bus drivers who test positive for drug or alcohol use do not drive until they have completed the required steps for returning to duty, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration said in a summary submitted to the White House Office of Management and Budget.

OMB did not provide any information about the proposal beyond the summary.

The office is allowed to take 90 days to review the proposal for its adherence to the law and administration policy but can take longer if it is needed.

The FMCSA can publish the proposal after OMB signs off.

Federal guidance getting close for apnea screening

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is "just about ready" to propose regulatory guidance that would urge medical examiners to require that some obese commercial vehicle drivers be screened for obstructive sleep apnea before being allowed to drive, an agency official says.

Under the proposed guidance, which will not have the force of a regulation or law, FMCSA will probably ask that medical examiners, who perform biennial physical exams on commercial drivers, refer drivers with a body mass index above 35 to be tested for sleep apnea, Elaine Papp, chief of the agency's medical office, said

at a trucking event here.

"I thought it would have been published by now but it hasn't," Papp said. "I'm pretty sure it's going to be published relatively soon."

If a driver is found to have sleep apnea, FMCSA's guidance would recommend that he or she receive a medical certification that's condi-

tional on obstructive sleep apnea treatment, Papp said.

After the guidance proposal is published, FMCSA will gather comments from the public before making it final. At a later point, the agency likely will propose a regulation to make the sleep apnea testing and treatment mandatory for obese commercial drivers.

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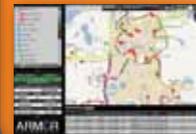
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'Pot tourism' is recommended for Colorado by task force

DENVER — Listen and you can hear the talk: Denver is puffing and huffing down the road toward becoming the Amsterdam of America.

In November, you'll recall, Colorado voters approved a measure — known as Amendment 64 — that legalized marijuana for recreational use. (See Dec. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Now, Colorado — and its capital city of Denver — appear to be taking a cue from Amsterdam to become the first state in the country to look towards marijuana tourism.

Colorado's Amendment 64 Implementation Task Force has made recommendations that Colorado allow visitors to the state to buy marijuana once state-licensed "pot stores" begin opening up next year.

The recommendation was made to the Colorado General Assembly and came with an acknowledgement that opening up marijuana tourism to visitors could potentially cause scrutiny on both a federal level and with neighboring states.

The task force went on to say that proper labeling and education (i.e., reminding visitors they cannot leave the state with marijuana in hand) could help curtail potential issues that could come out of such a decision.

The task force was set up after Amendment 64 was passed to offer recommendations for regulation of the drug in Colorado.

Made up primarily of lawmakers, law enforcement officials and proponents of marijuana, the group based its recommendation for pot tourism on the grounds that Amendment 64 states that all individuals over the age of 21 in Colorado can legally use the drug, not just residents, according to *The Coloradoan*.

If the recommendation is agreed to, visitors would be allowed the same access to the drug as residents while they are within state borders.

Proponents of a liberal selling policy say marijuana tourism would inject capital into the state economy. Already a destination for skiers and outdoor enthusiasts, Colorado could quickly become the go-to state for those who wish to smoke marijuana without fear of prosecution, advocates contend.

The group also argues that banning visitors from purchasing the drug will create a black market, effectively working against many of the reasons why the amendment was passed in the first place.

If the recommendation is ac-

cepted, however, visitors would likely have a different set of restrictions imposed on them than Colorado residents.

According to various news sources, a cap could be implemented on the amount of marijuana that visitors could purchase, restricting transactions to as little as

an eighth of an ounce.

Caps and other restrictions would serve to assure that the marijuana purchased in Colorado stays in Colorado, cutting down on the potential backlash that could result from visitors leaving state borders with the drug in their possession.

In discussing other ways in

which the drug could be kept within state borders, the task force has made recommendations for public signage at major transportation hubs clearly stating that marijuana would not be allowed to leave the state.

Some argue this is not enough, however, and that opening up the

state to marijuana tourism would create a black market in neighboring states.

The fact that the use of marijuana is still illegal on a federal level makes things even trickier for members of the task force pushing for the recommendation to be accepted.

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Investigation: Fatal crash follows Compliance Review

NATIONAL CITY, Calif. — A bus company cited for brake defects and other violations won federal regulators' top safety rating a month before one of its vehicles careened down a mountain road because the driver couldn't stop, an investigation by *Bloomberg News* has shown.

Inspectors found records of brake flaws, evidence of drivers working excessive hours, and shortcomings in paperwork on maintenance, hiring, drivers, and alcohol and drug tests in a January Compliance Review, according to documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

Owners of Scapadas Magicas LLC told investigators they hadn't reviewed U.S. regulations even after having been audited five times since 2007.

A pledge to be more attentive was enough to earn a "satisfactory" rating, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's highest, allowing the company to operate without restrictions, the records show.

Eight people died when a bus covered by the Scapadas Magicas audit went out of control in the San Bernardino National Forest in California on Feb. 3, and hit a truck en route to Tijuana, Mexico, as the driver yelled his brakes had failed, according to passengers.

Closing the barn door...

The incident fits a pattern, cited by U.S. National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Debbie Hersman three days after the wreck, of the bus regulator not closing companies with known safety shortcomings until after fatal crashes.

"Historically, the agency has always wanted to jawbone and ed-

ucate rather than take action," Henry Jasny, president and general counsel for Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, a Washington-based watchdog group, told *Bloomberg*.

The FMCSA has tripled inspections over the past seven years and took 880 drivers and 1,831 vehicles out of service in 2012, Bill Bronrott, FMCSA deputy administrator, told *Bloomberg* in an email.

Regulators have taken 255 bus companies out of service in the past two years, Bronrott said.

A May 2012 crackdown on so-called Chinatown bus operations along Interstate 95 was the largest enforcement action in the agency's history, he said.

Ramon Ramirez Garcia, described in records as Scapadas Magicas's president, didn't return Bloomberg phone calls to two numbers in U.S. and Mexico seeking comment. A third number listed in U.S. records was disconnected.

An email sent to the address listed in the company's January review bounced back, and he didn't respond to an email sent to an address listed in other U.S. Transportation Department records.

Digging deeper

The infractions found during the Jan. 9 inspection were mostly paperwork violations and technicalities, said Duane DeBruyne, an FMCSA spokesman.

Investigators deemed they weren't widespread. The five violations of the 15-hour maximum work day amounted to 3.3 percent of the 150 days checked.

"None of these violations individually or cumulatively affect a carrier's safety rating," DeBruyne said in an email.

Only after the accident did agency investigators find the company was using an unqualified mechanic and didn't have a facility adequate to maintain commercial buses, DeBruyne said.

'Ramirez Garcia and Ramirez de la Rocha told investigators they hadn't reviewed all of the U.S. regulations that applied to a passenger-bus company.'

The paperwork Scapadas Magicas produced for the audit suggested it had systems in place to ensure regulations were followed, something agency investigators later discovered wasn't true, DeBruyne said.

Scapadas Magicas, a Mexican company listing an address in National City, Calif., specialized in taking groups from Tijuana to U.S. destinations, including Las Vegas, Southern California mountains, casinos, Disneyland, Magic Mountain, and Knott's Berry Farm. The bus that crashed was returning from a skiing trip to Big Bear Lake, west of San Bernardino.

Inspectors doing the Jan. 9 review knew the bus was taken off the road for brake defects after a roadside inspection months before, records show. They didn't look at any buses or repair facilities, DeBruyne said.

A Compliance Review focuses on company records, DeBruyne said. Bus companies' vehicles are usually on the road, though investi-

gators may look at equipment if it's on the premises, he said.

In addition to noting the bus's history of brake defects, auditors in the Jan. 9 Compliance Review found records showing that loose wheel fasteners, defective axle positioning parts and improper wiring had been found in roadside inspections.

The mechanical defects, lack of records, and violations of U.S. rules on drivers' work hours that the FMCSA documented were the same issues the agency cited in ordering Scapadas Magicas to shut down five days after the fatal crash.

Failures aplenty

In the shutdown order, FMCSA said the company "fails to ensure that its commercial motor vehicles are systematically inspected, repaired and maintained and fails to ensure that its drivers are properly qualified and have appropriate licenses for the commercial motor vehicles they operate.

"Individually and cumulatively, these violations and conditions of operation substantially increase the likelihood of serious injury or death to Scapadas Magicas's drivers, passengers and the motoring public."

Federal inspectors on Jan. 9 met Ramirez Garcia and the company's operations manager, Ramon Ramirez de la Rocha, at an office in a San Diego industrial park.

FMCSA had notified the company of the review on Nov. 20, about six weeks before inspectors arrived. The records made available to the inspectors showed buses had been operated when drivers were supposed to be off duty on five occasions between August and October. In one case in August, a driver spent three hours

behind the wheel after the federal 15-hour limit, making it an 18-hour day.

We know nothing...

Ramirez Garcia and Ramirez de la Rocha told investigators they hadn't reviewed all of the U.S. regulations that applied to a passenger-bus company, the records show.

The two took notes and assured FMCSA they would do better.

"They were going to make sure they follow up more often with their in-house policies and procedures in order to avoid future violations," the FMCSA report said.

At the conclusion of a 2008 audit, FMCSA investigators had noted: "For the closing of this investigation, Ramon Ramirez, owner, was explained in detail and educated on how to comply with all the violations cited."

After shutting down Scapadas Magicas on Feb. 8, the FMCSA closed six more companies between Feb. 15 and March 25. They included Fung Wah Bus Transportation, the largest company operating between Chinatown neighborhoods in Boston and New York. (See March 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

DeBruyne said the FMCSA is using new authority it gained under the federal highway and public transportation law Congress approved last year. The agency has twice suspended or revoked operating authority for companies that obstruct safety investigations, he said.

FMCSA conducted special training for its top investigators last month, DeBruyne said. They're equipped with new tools and strategies to improve the agency's ability to remove unsafe companies from the road, he said.

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Safety: Are regulators measuring the right stuff?

By Dave Millhouser

It was a miracle...the diesel pump shut off at 30 gallons and it had been 600 miles since we last fueled the Flx VL-100.

The coach had no fuel gauge, so, to make sure we had pumped in plenty of fuel, we "sticked" the tank. All good.

Three hundred miles later we sputtered to a stop — out of fuel.

It's not certain what the damp stick was showing but apparently it wasn't what really mattered... the amount of diesel fuel.

In recent months, a number of coach operators have been shut down by federal authorities because they posed an imminent risk to public safety. Several of these shutdowns have been highly visible.

Superficially, at least, it appears the bad guys were really... bad guys.

At the same time, there seems to be a disconcerting disconnect.

One Northeastern curbside carrier was shut down only a few weeks after receiving a "satisfactory" safety rating (following a Compliance Review).

The shutdown came at the insistence of state regulators (who may

have been politically goaded).

In some instances the opposite has happened.

Companies conscientious about safety find themselves in the awkward spot of running with "conditional" ratings and those nasty little flags on the SAFER System website. Many of these operators have diligently embraced safety procedures and technology for years because they have a great deal at stake.

How could this be?

Part of the problem is that parts of the system are relatively new, and will gradually improve. Another issue is that reporting from law enforcement is not yet universal or uniform (a police pun).

Operators traveling to certain destinations are inspected far more often than carriers that either don't serve (or actively avoid) such destinations. In some instances nit-picking violations are recorded, perhaps to justify the inspection.

On the other hand, one might make the case that sometimes they're measuring the wrong things.

While we're still the safest way to travel, a variety of situations have converged to cause slippage.

My concern is that, in an effort to improve safety, and to appear to be doing "something," bureaucrats have set up a sophisticated system that measures stuff that is oft-times not relevant, then they discipline businesses based on that matrix.

I once heard a functionary brag about tricking a driver into admitting he slept on his parked bus (on-duty, not-driving) as opposed to sleeping on another bus (off duty). Perhaps a logging violation, but a distinction without a difference that had no affect on safety.

When that sort of thing happens, both the industry and the public lose respect for the system.

For example, counting accidents makes sense. If a company's coaches are bumping into things regularly, that's bad.

On the other hand, as things are currently set up, if a coach stopped at a red light is rammed by another, the "rammer" and the "rammee" are often scored the same on their rating. If your loaded bus was in the Russian parking lot that was recently struck by a meteor, you might have been dinged (pun intended).

In fairness, efforts are being made to fix this particular issue, but how could such a glaring glitch get

into the system in the first place? How many others are lurking?

In the case of the apparently schizophrenic Northeastern curbside that went from the highest possible rating to bussy capital punishment in three weeks, how do you make the case that the SAFER System and Compliance Reviews are measuring things that really matter?

Why should the public, or the industry, trust the current system?

It's clearly not getting everything wrong, but how much of what is currently being measured is irrelevant, and what important metrics are being missed?

I'd make the case that bureaucrats respond to three motivations. One is a genuine desire to do "good," another is to justify their existence by doing "something," and finally to do that "something" with maximum visibility and minimum effort.

As an industry we need to genuinely support realistic efforts to improve safety, and regulators need to listen to us regarding what is real versus what is illusion on safety issues. Regulations should be influenced by people who've actually participated in the industry.

We need to help them do genuine "good," so the other motives melt away.

In my view, they got it right at Rimrock Stages in

Montana, but look at the discom-bobulation travelers experienced while things sorted out. When a company is shut down, or fined, there are consequences for the public, so it's important to get it right.

A recent space shot went awry because some of its software was measuring in metric, while the rest was calculating in imperial units. The rocket got confused and had to be destroyed.

The result could be the same for our industry if we are not communicating with regulators in the same language and they aren't measuring the "right stuff."

That's not good for the industry and hurts the traveling public.

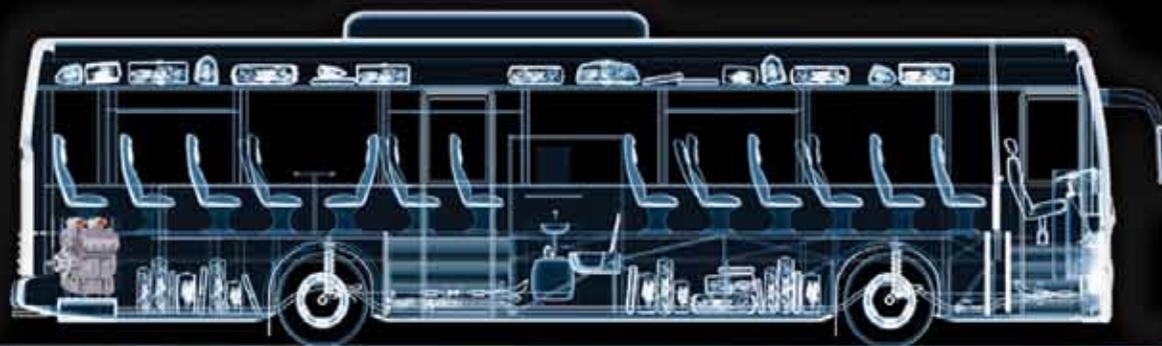
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People

FAIRFAX, VA. — **Trailways Transportation System** has appointed veteran federal motorcoach safety expert *Philip J. Hanley Jr.* as its safety compliance director.

Hanley will support the safety efforts of Trailways' affiliated companies, helping them navigate local, state and federal safety issues related to motorcoach passenger transportation.

"Trailways remains committed to transportation safety first as we have been for our entire 77-year history," said *Gale Ellsworth*, Trailways president and CEO.

"Phil Hanley has a singular wealth of experience and knowledge of motorcoach safety matters that will be of tremendous value to our team of bus company owners as they strive to remain on top of the many government regulations and guidelines that affect our industry. We are privileged to have Phil join our team."

Hanley has more than 35 years of federal service, specializing in commercial passenger safety with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Motor

Carrier Safety Administration/Federal Highway Administration.

Most recently, Hanley worked for Consolidated Safety Services as project manager for the U.S. Department of Defense audit and inspection program, and as assistant manager for the FMCSA New Entrant Program.

"Trailways' new safety support center is only a phone call or email away," said Hanley. "My goal is to

help our team better understand all facets that surround safety compliance and eliminate any issues before they can become a problem. And, if the need should arise, we'll assist carriers in adjusting operations to hone safety practices."

Separately, Trailways announced its annual awards that honor member companies and individuals for outstanding work and dedication.

Birnie Trailways of Rome,

N.Y., was recognized for welcoming the next generation of leadership.

The Outstanding Operational Achievements for Environmental Excellence Award went to **North-east Trailways** of Lewiston, Maine.

The Outstanding Employee Achievements Award went to **Kobussen Trailways** of Kaukauna, Wis.

The Most Team Spirit Award in the charter and tour division went

to **Gotta Go Trailways** of Fort Worth, Texas.

The Most Team Spirit Award in the scheduled route division went to **Capital Trailways** of Montgomery, Ala.

The Outstanding Volunteer for 2012 Award went to George Farrell, sales representative for **Amaya Astron Seating**.



Phil Hanley



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Calendar

MAY 2013

30-31 Tourism Cares for Coney Island restoration project (co-sponsored by UMA), Brooklyn, N.Y. Info: www.tourismcares.org.

JUNE 2013

1 Museum of Bus Transportation Spring Fling, AACA/MoBT Museum Campus, Hershey, Pa. Info: www.busmuseum.org.

4-6 Roadcheck 2013, commercial vehicle safety inspection blitz throughout the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Info: www.cvs.org.

17-20 Pennsylvania Bus Association Annual Meeting, Resort & Conference Center, Hyannis, Mass. Information: www.pabus.org.

20-23 New England Bus Association Annual Meeting, Sebasco Harbor Resort, Sebasco Estates, Maine. Info: www.newenglandbus.org.

25-27 United Motorcoach Association Board of Directors and Board Committee Meetings, Washington, D.C. Info: (800) 424-8262.

26 United Motorcoach Association Capitol Hill Day, Washington, D.C. Info: kpresley@uma.org, or (800) 424-8262.



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Loading zone picked near Alamo Square in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO — A tour bus loading zone has been designated near one of the city's most popular destinations, the Alamo Square area.

Alamo Square is a famous residential neighborhood surrounding a large park. The park sits at the top of a hill overlooking much of

San Francisco, with a number of large and architecturally distinctive mansions along its perimeter.

On a clear day, the Transamerica Pyramid building and the tops of the Golden Gate Bridge and Bay Bridge can be seen from the park's center. The San Francisco City Hall can be seen directly

down Fulton Street.

A row of Victorian houses, facing the park on Steiner Street and known as the "Painted Ladies," are often shown in the foreground of panoramic pictures of the city's downtown area. A number of movies, television shows and commercials have been filmed in or around

Alamo Square.

The area contains the second-largest concentration of homes of more than 10,000 square feet in San Francisco.

The new loading zone is on the north side of Fell Street just west of Divisadero Street. The zone is meant to serve tour bus passengers

who wish to visit the Alamo Square area without generating bus traffic around the square itself.

The zone is for passenger drop-off and pickup only. The stopping time limit is five minutes. Drivers may drop passengers off in the zone and return at a later time to pick them up. Parking is not allowed in the loading zone. It is operational from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

The zone was approved as a trial that will end in August.

Operators using the zone are being asked to respect the residents of the nearby buildings by being as quiet as possible and not overstaying the posted five-minute time limit.

The stop is a 5-7 minute walk to the summit of the Hayes Street hill, which affords views of the Victorian homes and the San Francisco skyline.

Price of diesel falls below \$4

Diesel fuel and gasoline prices have declined during the past month and a half to the point that the national average price of diesel has fallen below \$4 a gallon.

The price of diesel has dropped nearly 20 cents a gallon, while gasoline has slid by 18 cents.

The U.S. Department of Energy reported that the price of diesel slipped last month to its lowest point since late January, to around \$3.97 a gallon, while the national average for gasoline — at \$3.60 a gallon — also was near its 2013 low.

Diesel is 17 cents a gallon below a year ago, while gasoline is 33 cents a gallon under a year ago, USDOE figures show.

The USDOE surveys about 400 diesel filling stations and about 800 gasoline stations to compile national average prices.

Meanwhile, U.S. crude oil inventories have risen to their highest level in more than 22 years as production has surged and refineries have wrapped up annual maintenance programs.

National stockpiles have reached more than 388.2 million barrels.

The Energy Department said crude production in the U.S. rose to 7.16 million barrels in March, the highest level since July 1992.

U.S. crude output has climbed 23 percent in the past year, while oil prices have dropped 6 percent.



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Safety oversight

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

often was little more than a paper shuffle.

The process' shortcomings have become painfully more obvious in recent months as seemingly poorly trained, unmotivated or intimidated auditors handed out satisfactory ratings to companies that clearly had no culture of safety and were sending out unsafe vehicles and drivers daily.

Rimrock Trailways, Fung Wag Transportation and Scapadas Magicas are just the latest examples of noncompliant companies whose unsafe operations and vehicles were belatedly halted by regulators. (See March 1, March 15 and April 15 issues and page eight of this issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

During the past two months, the FMCSA says it has shut down 15 passenger carriers. Seven were declared imminent hazards and eight were rated "unsatisfactory" following Compliance Reviews. It wasn't that many years ago when the FMCSA was putting one company a year out of service.

What to expect

Now, when a pair of quick-strike-group inspectors land on a bus company doorstep, here's what the operator can expect.

If you have three or fewer coaches, the Compliance Review likely will last four-plus days. Four buses in your fleet? Expect the Compliance Review to last seven business days.

When a pair of inspectors showed up at an 18-coach company last month, the auditors told the owner they would be there for a minimum of 10 days.

In the past, a Compliance Review of a motorcoach company had five elements that focused largely on paperwork: Accident review; financial responsibility check; maintenance records assessment; evaluation of CDL and substance testing records, and hours-of-service review and logbooks look-see.

Now, inspectors are examining more diligently those same elements and also are probing tax returns,

BusRates.com

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

erators, providing testimonies and praise for the honest, transparent content designed to help charter businesses.

BusRates continues to be a leader in online technology with an upcoming app designed to increase its user base and provide geo-targeted accessibility from any mobile phone.

The tool should prove to be invaluable for planners and operators, providing all of the directory's exhaustive information in a clean, portable format.

Tour operators urged to take safety approach

WASHINGTON — NTA and the United Motorcoach Association, working with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, hosted a Motorcoach Safety Roundtable here last month.

Attendees included FMCSA Administrator Anne Ferro and key members of her staff, plus tour operator members of NTA (formerly the National Tour Association) and coach operator members of UMA.

The session was designed to build awareness and educate tour providers about FMCSA safety oversight of the motorcoach operators, and to exchange ideas and information about industry safety.

A key aspect of a briefing by the FMCSA was to ask tour opera-

tors to review the trips they arrange from a safety perspective.

They were urged to check coach company safety performance using FMCSA websites, verify that itineraries don't stretch driving hour restrictions, and avoid using motorcoaches as rolling motel rooms.

Tour operators got a high-level overview on FMCSA's role and resources, and the operators advised FMCSA on how well their message was getting through.

A dozen tour operators, along with members of the NTA board, attended the session at the Rayburn House Office Building. Motorcoach operators participating were from Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

payroll records, corporate minutes and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance documents.

They are interviewing drivers and mechanics, often many drivers and many mechanics.

They will look at tour schedules to see if operators are stretching hours-of-service rules to the limit or beyond.

The giant hammer

And, should an operator decide it doesn't want to cooperate with the FMCSA colonoscopy, the agency has new powers that allow it to shutdown companies that fail to supply records it is seeking.

There is no due process to this new power. It's slam, bam, you're shut down.

While the FMCSA says its aggressive new efforts are targeted at the industry's bad actors, it seems likely, perhaps even probable, the stepped up enforcement effort will become "the new normal" and operators will have to learn to live with it from now on.

FMCSA auditors also are reportedly talking to casinos across the U.S., one of the industry's primary destinations, possibly about safety oversight, or lack of it, and/or passenger counts and revenue that might not square with what operators are reporting to the IRS.

"Each group that discovers the convenience of motorcoach travel means lessened congestion on the roadways," notes Elliott

"It is a greener solution, making a smaller carbon footprint, and it is a safe and reliable form of transportation."

BusRates.com was launched in 2005 as a charter bus operator database, providing free and easy-to-use charter information for consumers and group travel planners, and as well as an economical venue for bus owners to promote their services.

To learn more, go to www.BusRates.com.

They were joined by leaders from UMA, including Victor Parra, president and CEO, who was approached by Administrator Ferro in February with the idea of holding a safety roundtable for tour operators.

"UMA was pleased to take the initiative at the request of Administrator Ferro, and we naturally called on NTA to involve its members," Parra said.

"We want to help tour operators make a smart decision about choosing a safe and high-quality motorcoach company for their customers."

For its part, NTA is closely tied to motorcoach travel and has a vested interest in motorcoach safety.

urging "their active participation in improving bus safety through stepped-up traffic enforcement to combat dangerous driving behaviors and outreach to their residents on choosing safe operators for their next motorcoach trip."

Industry split

At the same time, an interesting dichotomy has developed in the motorcoach industry, with the American Bus Association pushing, goading and cheering the FMCSA on in its aggressive inspection regime and expanded Compliance Review program.

"The American Bus Association vigorously supports FMCSA's efforts..." the association trumpeted in a news release issued last month after the meeting at which LaHood and Ferro briefed law enforcement, travel groups, industry representatives and others on its initiatives.

The ABA releases have attempted to convey the impression that the broad-based LaHood and Ferro meetings were exclusively with ABA leaders, and at least one industry publication bought into the ruse.

The ABA pronouncements say the association "is pledging its full support" for the feds' far-reaching crackdown, and emphasize that "ABA has been a steadfast ally with the Department of Transportation and FMCSA and we are pleased

Atlantic City

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Concerns the state will lose money by lifting the tax have eased, according to Van Drew.

"We're finally getting it done," he said. "I have had this bill at a minimum five years."

Van Drew said the business tax has deterred out-of-state buses from coming to Atlantic City because it placed an additional financial burden on operators.

The association's 600 tour-operator members move more than 9.5 million travelers each year, and nearly all of them are transported by a motorcoach for all or part of their tours.

"Successful tours begin and end with safety, and nobody understands that better than NTA tour operators," said NTA President Lisa Simon.

The NTA members attending the safety roundtable were in Washington for *Destination: Capitol Hill*, an industry-wide advocacy event. Members of NTA and other associations called on elected officials to discuss legislation important to travel and tourism.

UMA is sponsoring a similar event in late June.

this crackdown is working."

UMA's approach

The United Motorcoach Association, on the other hand, has had a much more measured response to the feds' zeal.

At the meetings with Ferro and LaHood and in public statements, the association has urged the FMCSA to focus its efforts on tackling those elements most likely to result in crashes (bad driver behavior being at the top of the list), instead of the things bureaucrats do best — chase paper.

Seemingly lost in the hub-bub have been a few numbers the FMCSA tucked in one of the news releases announcing its coach industry crackdown.

In recent months, the FMCSA reported, it and its "state enforcement partners" have conducted more than 13,500 roadside inspections, resulting in nearly 1,500 driver and vehicle out-of-service violations being issued.

For the mathematically challenged, that's an out-of-service rate of roughly 11 percent, which is less than half the out-of-service rate for over-the-road trucks and their drivers inspected during last year's highly publicized and annual Roadcheck 2012.

And it came during a period when inspectors are under increasing pressure to put more pressure on the motorcoach industry.

"It was the wrong thing to do," he said. "It was a bad policy."

The Office of Legislative Service estimates the state would lose \$90,000 to \$500,000 annually by lifting the tax, but Van Drew said he and those in the industry believe the estimates are high and if the tax was eliminated, New Jersey would benefit because tour companies may start running more buses into Atlantic City.

"They are very anxious, still," Van Drew said of the bus operators.

Greyhound buying 90 Prevosts, quarterly revenue growth slows

DALLAS — Greyhound Lines has signed an order for 90 additional Prevost X3-45 coaches, which it has been buying since late 2007-early 2008.

The order will bring the total number of X3-45s operated by Greyhound and its BoltBus unit to 280, making it the No. 2 coach model in the line-run company's fleet — after the 900-plus MCI 102DL3s Greyhound utilizes.

"Prevost is proud to once again supply high quality coaches which realize the criteria established by Greyhound and its passengers," said Prevost President and CEO Gaetan Bolduc.

The 90 X3-45s will be equipped with such safety features as Prevost AWARE, which includes adaptive cruise braking, following distance alert and stationary object alert.

Other safety features include the Prevost electronic stability program, plus tire pressure monitoring and automatic fire suppression systems.

The coaches also will have dual, 1,800-watt inverters powering 110-volt outlets and Wi-Fi, providing Internet access for passengers.

Other components include

AESYS electronic destination signs, Prevost Swap & Plug wheelchair-lift systems, DriveCam, Cadec global-positioning and communications solution, PowerVue, and Volvo D13 engines.

"We have been pleased with the Prevost X3-45 coaches, which have been used in both our Greyhound Express and BoltBus services," said Dave Leach, president and CEO of Greyhound.

"Our customers like the comfortable ride and modern amenities, and we're focused on the latest safety features...."

Delivery of the X3-45 coaches is scheduled to begin this month and be completed in April 2014.

Weak economy noted

ABERDEEN, Scotland — The parent company of Greyhound Lines, FirstGroup plc, announced that revenue growth slowed at Greyhound during the first three months of this year.

FirstGroup said Greyhound "is seeing some effects from continuing softness in the U.S. economy."

Greyhound revenue during the first three months of the year increased 1.1 percent compared to



We LOVE Buses. Destination DC and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation partnered with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the American Bus and the United Motorcoach associations, the National Park Service and the local hospitality industry for its annual 'We LOVE Buses' initiative last month. The campaign thanks group tour and bus operators for making Washington, D.C., the top group

tour destination in the U.S. From left, Brandon Buchanan of ABA, Eulois Cleckley of the D.C. DOT, Theresa Belpulsi, at right, of Destination DC, and Ken Presley, far right, of UMA recognize drivers Tim Auble and Wayne Stewart of Southern Express in Durham, N.C. for bringing visitors to D.C. More than 40 volunteers canvassed the city, thanking dozens of drivers with gift bags, snacks and sandwiches during the day-long event.

the first quarter of last year.

FirstGroup said that as a result of actions taken to create a more flexible and agile operating model at Greyhound, "we have been able

to reduce the impact of a weak economic backdrop and lower consumer confidence, with anticipated operating margin performance in line with our expectations."

During the quarter, Greyhound continued to expand its Greyhound Express service to new markets in British Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

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Vintage Hounds



Fooled ya. This 1960 GM PD-4104 was never a Hound, but owner Tom Evans of Spokane, Wash., matched the Greyhound livery perfectly.



The icon. Organizer Tom McNally brought his 1956 Scenicruiser.



Stunning. This 1947 PD-3751 owned by Mark Renner of Tacoma, Wash., looks better than new.



Hungry anyone? This fleet of antique coaches transported 150 people from Blytheville to Memphis for some of that city's famous barbecue and on to Elvis Presley's Graceland.



Leading the parade. Many of the 60 buses participated in a parade through downtown Blytheville, led by this GM PD-4104 from St. Louis.



Strange visitor. The rarest bus at the show was this 1948 Spartan Coach owned by Don and Sandy Moyer of Eastlake, Ohio. Spartans were assembled 1946-49 in Sturgis, Mich. Only 162 were built before the post-World War II explosion of auto sales made mid-size buses, like the 21-passenger Spartan, obsolete. Depending on what source you use, this is believed to be one of only two surviving Spartans.



Flxible not forgotten. Among the Flxibles at the show was this gorgeous StarLiner conversion coach. StarLiners were built 1957-67.

All photos by Fred Rayman, Oklahoma City

Industry historical materials going to The Henry Ford

SPOKANE, Wash. — Bill Luke, one of the motorcoach industry's foremost historians, has announced that his extensive collection of bus industry historical materials is being donated to The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Mich.

Luke, the former owner, editor and publisher of *BusRide* magazine and the originator of the *Bus Garage Index*, the *Bus Industry Directory* and the *BusRide* Bus Maintenance Forums, has been collecting industry materials for nearly 65 years.

Luke entered the industry in 1948 when he went to work for Jefferson Lines in Minnesota and accelerated his collecting when he founded *BusRide* in the mid-1960s.

He sold Friendship Publications, which produced *BusRide* and the other publications, 16 years ago, but continued his historical collecting and stepped up his historical writing. He and his principal collaborator, Linda Metler, compiled and wrote nearly a dozen books, often called "photo archives," that chronicle the histo-

ry of various aspects of the industry, focusing primarily on bus types and brands.

Going to The Henry Ford (as the museum is now called) is Luke's extraordinary collection of photographs, publications, tour and travel literature, timetables, maps and other information.

"I am pleased...The Henry Ford museum is accepting my gift of this valuable bus history collection," said Luke.

"The Henry Ford people are very interested and enthusiastic about having the bus industry rep-

resented. I am very happy about this because The Henry Ford is a prestigious organization, in a very accessible location, and has an excellent research department."

The Henry Ford and its world-famous Greenfield Village have been preserving and displaying the culture of the United States for more than 80 years.

"Certainly, the bus industry has been and is an important contributor to the culture and history of the U.S.," said Luke.

The Henry Ford calls itself "America's greatest history

attraction."

The complex has 26 million objects and documents, including such icons as Thomas Edison's Menlo Park laboratory, Henry Ford's Quadricycle, the world's oldest steam engine, Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House, the presidential limousine in which John F. Kennedy was assassinated, the camp bed George Washington used during his tour of Revolutionary War sites, the chair in which Abraham Lincoln was sitting the night he was shot, and the bus on which Rosa Parks took her stand for civil rights.

Vintage bus event draws interest from far and near

BLYTHEVILLE, Ark. — Upwards of 150 antique bus enthusiasts and 60 vintage buses made their way to this eastern Arkansas community last month for the Ghosts of Highway 61 Antique Bus Tour.

The gathering attracted visitors from all across North America, as well as other continents, including bus aficionados from Australia.

Most of the pre-1980 buses that came for the event have been converted into motor homes but there were a handful of seated coaches as well.

They were used to transport 152 attendees 75 miles to Memphis for barbecue and a visit to Elvis Presley's Graceland.

Tom McNally, the environmental engineer and bus enthusiast who organized the show, told the Blytheville newspaper that the reasons people restore vintage buses are nearly as varied as the vehicles themselves.

"A lot of people who attend events like this are retired bus drivers, or people who had bus drivers in their family," he said.

"But the thing about commercial vehicles like these, as opposed to antique cars, is that they hold



Tom McNally and his Scenicruiser

vast amounts of public history. So many people have memories connected to bus travel.

"Maybe they're ex-military and it was one of these buses that took them to war, or they rode the bus back and forth to college, or they were salesmen and rode the bus for work.

"A lot of people have these romantic memories about bus travel — people would dress up; it was an event to travel by bus. So, a lot of the attraction is also that whole good-old-days thing."

Additionally, he said, many people attend bus rallies because

they are interested in antique cars and "the leap from cars to buses is not as big as it would sound."

McNally owns three vintage buses, including a stunning former Greyhound Scenicruiser.

His zeal to keep his restorations as authentic as possible led him to scour the country for individuals to join him in having the factory in England that made the original Scenicruiser seat fabric reweave some of the original seat material, using the same looms that were used in the 1950s.

He said he got into bus restoration as an extension of his love for

antique cars, which he also owns. His day job is as an environmental engineering consultant in Peoria, Ill.

McNally used the Internet and trade magazines to promote the Ghosts of Highway 61 event, which was based around Blytheville's newly restored antique Greyhound station, a prized community landmark.

"I first saw (the) station in 1997," said McNally. "I was making a trip with my wife and some friends in our bus for my wife's birthday. We were going to Memphis...and we passed through and saw this station.

"Of course, at the time, it hadn't been restored yet, but I kept tabs on its progress over the years because I knew it would be perfect for an event like this," he told the Blytheville newspaper.

According to McNally, the Blytheville show was a departure from most bus rallies because of its focus on vintage buses. He said it may even have established a record for most antique buses in one place at one time.

McNally said it was the 74-year-old former Greyhound terminal, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has

been restored to its art deco glory, that inspired him to place an emphasis on antique buses for the Ghosts of Highway 61 rally.

The terminal is believed to be the only free-standing, deco-modern station remaining in the U.S.

The station was a stop on the Dixie Line that connected the South to the North, helping transport the blues to St. Louis and on to Chicago. It also provided the last goodbye for many soldiers as they left for four wars, and its structure even preserves one dishonorable aspect of the past, separate entrances for "coloreds" and "whites."

In addition to the day trip to Memphis, attendees participated in a bus parade through the historic district of downtown Blytheville. There was outdoor music throughout the event, photo sessions, a flea market, book signings, and bus displays. Some of the downtown streets were closed during the show for the displays.

The event received strong and active support from the community, the mayor, the area chamber of commerce, Main Street Blytheville, and many residents who made their way downtown to view and watch the historic fleet.

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MCI revamps sales organization

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries has announced an overhaul and consolidation of its new-coach sales operation.

Under the revamped set up, all

MCI sales executives will be responsible for selling MCI and Setra coaches to both private- and public-sector customers.

Previously, MCI maintained

three separate sales groups — MCI private sector, MCI public sector, and Setra. Now it will have "one cohesive group."

Talk of the changes has been industry fodder for weeks.

Patrick Scully, who has been vice president of public sector sales and marketing at MCI for the past eight months, has been named to head the new sales organization.

Scully has been given the title of executive vice president sales and marketing, making him the No. 2 executive at MCI behind President and CEO Rick Heller, who announced the changes.

"We're making this move for several reasons," said Heller.

"First, we want to provide our customers with one point of contact for new coach sales. Our sales team will be responsible for selling MCI and Setra product to both public- and private-sector customers alike," said Heller.

"We have heard from customers who have said they would prefer one sales contact for either MCI or Setra purchases and we are ensuring we meet that customer requirement.

"Second, we will have a tightly unified sales organization focused on customer responsiveness. There's a great deal of experience and talent at MCI, and the new sales structure will give customers greater access to it," Heller added.

MCI's pre-owned sales team, which is based out of the MCI service centers, remains unchanged.

Reporting to Scully under the new structure will be Pat Ziska, who continues as vice president of the field sales group; Mitch Guralnick, who continues as head of the pre-owned sales group; Mike Denny, head of a new sales and financing operations group; Brent Maitland, who leads the newly formed marketing team; Tom Wagner, who will be responsible for major commuter accounts, and Pam Lawrence, administrative support.

Scully joined MCI last year following MCI's acquisition of the U.S. and Canadian distribution rights for Setra coaches from Daimler Bus.

At Daimler, Scully had been chief commercial officer responsible for both private and public sector sales.

"I'm honored to be leading such an experienced and dedicated MCI sales team. The higher degree of responsiveness we will achieve through a seamless operations structure, together with smaller, more focused regions, will improve our already high customer service levels," said Scully.

Added Ziska: "We're creating a much more fluid sales structure with clear points of contact for our customers. ...By having one sales force it becomes easier for our customers to choose which product and price point best suits their needs — supported by one aftermarket team for parts, training, and technical assistance."

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Bus company manager to be sentenced for phony records

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. — The manager of a shuttle bus and motorcoach company based here is scheduled to be sentenced later this month after pleading guilty to federal charges of falsifying driving records.

Federal attorneys said Dariusz Stzeborowski, 49, of Rocky Hill, Conn., scheduled drivers at Wisla Express for trips that exceeded the maximum allowable number of

driving hours and then had drivers falsify their driving logs.

“Federal regulations on passenger-carrying vehicles exist to keep drivers, passengers and American highways safe,” said David Fein, U.S. attorney for the district of Connecticut.

“Transportation companies and their employees who violate these important laws face federal prosecution.”

Wisla Express operates vans and midsize buses to and from airports, and tour buses to places outside Connecticut.

Between September 2008 and September 2011, Stzeborowski scheduled and assigned drivers to trips, knowing the drivers would be exceeding federal hours-of-service rules for on-duty driving time, and instructed drivers and others to falsify logbooks by re-

coding the drivers were off-duty during times when they were, in fact, driving, according to federal prosecutors.

To pay drivers for the time they actually worked for Wisla, Stzeborowski had them submit separate pay sheets and notes that accurately detailed their hours, then he destroyed the documents, prosecutors said.

Stzeborowski pleaded guilty to

the allegations.

The maximum possible prison sentence is five years and up to a \$250,000 fine. Sentencing is scheduled for May 17.

Stzeborowski already has agreed to a three-year term of supervised release during which he cannot be involved, directly or indirectly, in Wisla or any other business under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Criminal charge looms for driver, struck overpass

BRIGHTON, Mass. — The driver of a charter bus that struck an overpass in Allston, Mass., early this year will face a criminal charge stemming from the crash.

The incident injured dozens of Pennsylvania youths and chaperones who were heading home after visiting Harvard University.

Samuel J. Jackson, 67, of Philadelphia, is being charged with operating negligently to endanger, plus two civil infractions, State Police said.

Jackson will be arraigned in state district court here.

Thirty-five passengers were injured in the crash on the night of Feb. 2, when the coach Jackson was driving hit the overpass on Soldiers Field Road in Allston, Mass.

Most of the injuries were minor, but four passengers were seriously hurt.

Police said Jackson failed to heed warning signs prohibiting buses from that stretch of the roadway before he tried to enter the tunnel under the Western Avenue Bridge, which has a posted 10-foot height limit.

“The investigation determined that the bus did not slow down as it entered the tunnel, causing significant damage to the roof on the front portion of the bus and the portions of the frame that held up the roof,” the State Police statement said.

Jackson was driving for Philadelphia-based Calvary Coach at the time of the crash.

Raymond Talmadge, the company's owner, told the *Boston Globe* on the night of the accident that Jackson is a “very, very good driver,” and later told a Philadelphia television station that Jackson informed him he was checking his GPS shortly before the crash.

In addition to the criminal charge, Jackson also faces civil violations of failing to obey a sign on a state Department of Conservation and Recreation roadway and operating a bus on a DCR roadway, State Police said

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Parts problems

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ry worth more than \$500,000, "it's impossible to stock everything."

"When you call the manufacturer to get something that you don't have, or to replenish the stuff that you do have in stock, and they tell you that it's going to be 90 days, you're thinking, 'what?'"

But complaints are not universal. A manager at one coach company said he deals with MCI and hasn't experienced problems with parts delays. And a parts manager who encountered parts on back order from ABC Companies, said she rated the problem as minor.

On a scale of one to ten, she said, "I would rate it more as a one or two."

One operator said he tries to

avoid problems altogether by maintaining a large parts inventory.

"We stock a half-million dollars in bus parts, which according to every book I've read is way too much — except on Friday evening when something breaks," he said.

"I stock more than most guys I know for our size. And it only makes sense on weekends because it's usually the only time we're full. During the week, I can normally switch out buses, but on the weekends, we're full. But the important stuff doesn't break until 5 o'clock Friday. It never does."

Wolfgang Winzer, vice president and general manager of after-market and service with MCI, was surprised that even a handful of operators had problems to report.

"For me, as a manufacturer, we have to make our goods more read-

ily available than ever before because there is just not enough inventory available in the entire chain," he said.

To do so, he said, the coach maker has worked with operators to identify approximately 1,500 parts that are "coach critical," or essential on a daily basis to keep a coach operational. The company guarantees those parts will be shipped within 24 hours upon receipt of order and has achieved a success rate of 97 percent, he said.

Further, he said, 90 percent of the approximately 40,000 parts in the company's inventory that are in active use are also shipped within 24 hours upon receipt of order.

"Those are historically high numbers and don't match up with the comments you have heard from the operators," he said.

He noted that the company maintains roughly \$40 million in inventory that is ready to be shipped to customers. "I can say for MCI, that is an all-time high number," he added.

Winzer said MCI employs a team of five product managers, whose "whole mission in life is to make sure we have the right product, at the right time, at the right price available to our customers.

"They go through the entire portfolio and make decisions on which products we keep on our shelves at which price levels that our customers need. This group is actually trying to predict the demand our customers may have based on our knowledge of the failure rate that we know from our suppliers, or from the predicted maintenance," he said.

Based on their findings, he said, they attempt to advise customers on what inventory to stock and to ensure that MCI can "best make products available to our customers at the right price at the right time."

In February, MCI notified operators that free shipping is available on orders of \$250 or more, rather than the previous \$100 minimum, and that it has imposed a \$30 fee for orders under \$250.

Winzer explained that the increase to qualify for free shipping was an inflation adjustment, and that the \$30 fee is in line with the industry standard.

"If you look at other automotive, truck or coach manufacturers, they all have similar rules in place. Even if you go on *Amazon.com* and order a book and you don't reach the \$25 which is their minimum, you pay a shipping and handling fee," he said.

"The goal is not to collect the \$30 fee. The goal is mostly to be smarter in consolidating shipments, and by doing so, get our freight costs under control."

Still, the fee rankles at least one small operator, who said he thinks some operators may forego placing an order — that might include — safety-related components — until they've reached the \$250 threshold and to avoid the \$30 surcharge. Such a policy, he contends, falls particularly hard on smaller operators.

"Are cheapskates like me going to wait until we have an order totaling \$250, so we can avoid the \$30 penalty and the shipping charges?" he asked. "Maybe we won't order that windshield washer control valve and hope it doesn't rain."

Officials at ABC Companies have also noted the trend of operators reducing levels of in-stock parts and have instituted changes in response.

"ABC Companies has made a commitment to enhance our parts availability through expanding both our inventory levels and distribution centers," said Shaun Huxford, vice president of the parts division at ABC Companies.

According to Huxford, the company has increased its parts inventory levels by 30 percent in the past 18 months, and has added a primary parts distribution center at the ABC Hudson Service facility outside of New York City, and expanded its Costa Mesa, Calif., parts distribution center, bringing its total to eight such facilities in the U.S. and Canada.

With these changes, ABC is now within 24-hour delivery range for 90 percent of its customers, and 48-hour delivery range for all of its motorcoach and transit parts customers, according to Huxford.

A representative of Prevost did not return a call seeking comments.

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