

Feds open driver records to coach, truck operators

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has officially opened its Pre-Employment Screening Program to bus and truck operators, allowing them to see the driving records of prospective hires.

“Starting today, commercial carriers will have an essential tool for making informed hiring decisions that will lead to safer drivers on our roads,” said FMCSA Ad-

ministrator Anne Ferro.

“The Pre-Employment Screening Program raises the safety bar for the motor carrier industry and helps to make our roads safer for everyone,” she added.

Some safety and human resource directors believe the system eventually will redefine how drivers are hired and kept on the payroll.

In a nutshell, the program allows operators to view drivers’

safety records — with their consent — for a fee. The screening is designed to help assure drivers with poor safety records are not allowed to hide their past actions.

According to the FMCSA website, large fleets must pay a \$100 annual fee to use the system and then \$10 for every driver history requested.

The annual fee for fleets of fewer than 100 vehicles is \$25, and

an individual driver can get his or her own report for \$10.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said the system’s launch “sends a strong message to commercial carriers and drivers that we are serious about having the safest drivers behind the wheel of large trucks and buses.”

Some truck and bus companies are expected to make granting access to driving records a condition

of employment for individuals they are considering hiring.

With the looming implementation of the Comprehensive Safety Analysis 2010 program, which replaces the FMCSA SafeStat system later this year, it’s even more critical that operators hire and use only the safest drivers. (See May 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Some in the trucking industry

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Plan unveiled for bus/truck mileage standards

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration plans to develop first-ever fuel economy standards for over-the-road trucks and buses.

President Barack Obama announced late last month the USEPA and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will team up to create fuel economy standards.

A memorandum issued by the president directs the federal agencies to identify segments of the commercial vehicle industry where significant fuel savings and emissions reductions could be realized, and to develop rules aimed at achieving the savings.

The effort apparently will be along the lines of the emissions re-

duction requirements that have been imposed on the heavy-duty truck and bus industries during the past decade.

“Tractor-trailers” were identified in the memorandum as an example that could realize up to a 25 percent fuel savings using the latest technologies. The feds likely have similar expectations for over-

the-road buses.

In fact, a new report by the National Academy of Sciences, which is expected to serve as a blueprint for the new regulatory effort, says that fuel consumption of motorcoaches could be reduced by 32 percent by 2020 (see May 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

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Senate adopts curbs on oil/energy speculation

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate has approved legislation designed to curb the kind of commodity speculation that artificially drives up oil prices.

Included in the financial regulatory reform bill adopted by the Senate late last month were provisions aimed at the reducing commodity speculation in the deriva-

tives markets.

There also are measures in the reform legislation aimed at protecting the ability of bus and truck operators to hedge their exposure to increased fuel prices.

The financial reform bill now heads to a conference committee where differences between the House and Senate versions of the

legislation will be negotiated.

Spokesmen for both houses said they hope to have the process completed and the legislation signed by President Obama sometime before the July 4 holiday.

Supporters of the bill say that once it is signed into law the new rules will help lower fuel costs and let supply and demand — not Wall

Street investors — dictate energy prices.

Basically, the legislation seeks to increase the transparency of energy markets and reign in excessive speculation.

The measure, say supporters, could be a major step toward preventing another energy bubble like

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Senate environment bill could impact diesel

WASHINGTON — Critics say a new carbon emissions reduction bill introduced in the U.S. Senate will significantly increase the cost of diesel fuel.

The nearly 1,000-page bill, introduced by Sens. John Kerry, D-Mass., and Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., calls for limitations on carbon emissions — mostly from

large stationary sources, but it also would give the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency the authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector.

Overall, the proposed American Power Act would attempt to cut carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases to 17 percent below 2005 levels. By 2050,

it would seek to reduce greenhouse gases by more than 80 percent.

“Our bill will create jobs and transform the American economy; make our country more energy independent, which in turn will strengthen our national security, and improve the quality of the air we breathe,” Lieberman said.

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Operators win \$11 million in security grants

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has awarded \$11.52 million to 69 motorcoach companies under the fiscal 2010 Intercity Bus Security Grant Program.

The amount awarded this year was down slightly from that given last year, while the number of companies getting money was roughly the same.

The fiscal 2009 grants totaled \$11.66 million and went to 71 companies. In fiscal 2008, \$11.17 million was awarded to 49 companies; in fiscal 2007, 11.64 million was awarded to 39 companies; in fiscal 2006, \$9.5 million went to 35 companies, and fiscal 2005, 25 companies received \$9.66 million.

The small number of recipients in fiscal '05 resulted from tougher restrictions that year on who could apply. Subsequently, the rules were modified, resulting in more companies getting money in recent years.

The 2010 grants mark the eighth consecutive year the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has awarded money to private operators to make security improvements.

A total of just over \$95 million

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A plan for ending N.C. inspection mess

RALEIGH, N.C. — The on-again, off-again drive to get school districts in North Carolina to use uniform safety inspection standards for student bus charters is on again.

But this time people involved in the effort say they just might get it done.

In their sights is a single set of inspection standards that could be used by all 115 county school districts. Currently, many districts have different requirements, which necessitate motorcoach operators undergoing separate inspections for each jurisdiction with which they hope to do business.

“Naturally it won’t happen overnight, but we’re certainly moving in the right direction now,” said Jim Harris, past president of the North Carolina Motorcoach Association, who has played a key role in the effort.

The association and others have been trying unsuccessfully for years to get the state and the schools to buy into a statewide permit program that would include uniform standards and eliminate the need for multiple inspections. (See May 1, 2009, Oct. 1, 2007, and Sept. 1, 2006, issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

This year they managed to get the State Board of Education to adopt a rule requiring all of the districts to file with the state a safety policy for student charters and an approved list of carriers that can be used for the trips. The rule becomes effective Sept. 1.

“This is a big step toward resolving the issues we’ve had,” said Linda Morris, executive director of the state motorcoach association.

She said the association is optimistic the requirements will lead to the school districts joining a coalition that will adopt the same inspection standards — a step that would make it easy for each of the districts to meet the school board mandate.

Consolidated Safety Services Inc. of Fairfax, Va., a private inspection company with years of bus inspection experience, already is at work building a network of school districts that would use identical inspection standards, and the association is backing the effort.

“We believe that CSS is a positive step in making sure every North Carolina motorcoach operator providing student transportation meets industry safety standards,” said Morris.

CSS has for more than 20 years operated a bus transportation inspection program for the U.S. military, and for the past several years has run a pupil transportation program for school districts in Maryland and Texas.

Both programs not only maintain a list of approved carriers and have uniform inspection standards, but also include screening of the motorcoach operators and regular inspections of their driver records, facilities and equipment.

Phil Hanley, who runs the pupil program for CSS, said he’s confident the program will bring many of the North Carolina school districts together.

“I think we are going to be successful because all of the districts must have an approved list of carriers,” he said. “With our resources, hopefully we can expand it to the whole state and beyond.”

CSS already has brought together 33 of the school districts in the state, according to Reggie Hines, a former private school transportation consultant in North Carolina who was hired by CSS to run the program and who has been working with many of the school

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ABC captures Greyhound contract for bus upgrades

DALLAS — Greyhound Lines has awarded ABC Companies a large contract to refurbish 250 MCI G4500 and DL3 model coaches.

The project includes interior upgrades, complete exterior repainting using Greyhound’s updated livery, power plug-ins, and Wi-Fi capability.

Seating capacity in the coaches also will be reduced, by removing a row of seats to provide passengers more leg room.

Greyhound’s parent company, First Group of Aberdeen, Scotland, said it expects the project to take upwards of a year to complete, while ABC told its employees it anticipates the work taking 12-18 months.

In a message to employees, ABC President and CEO Dane Cornell called the Greyhound project and a smaller refurbishing program at the company location in Florida, “exciting opportunities” for the company.

Greyhound’s fleet includes more than 200 G4500s and hundreds of DL3s. Almost exactly five years ago Greyhound launched a similar refurbishing program for 400 of the DL3 and

MCI D3 coaches in its fleet.

The company has been operating DL3s since 1998 and began adding G4500s in 2001, purchasing its last ones in 2004.

Greyhound declined to indicate the dollar value of the contract with ABC.

The refurbishing work will be done at a facility ABC is leasing in Nappanee, Ind., which is in far northern Indiana, about 30 miles southeast of South Bend. The community is one of Indiana’s major recreational vehicle, mobile home and travel trailer manufacturing centers.

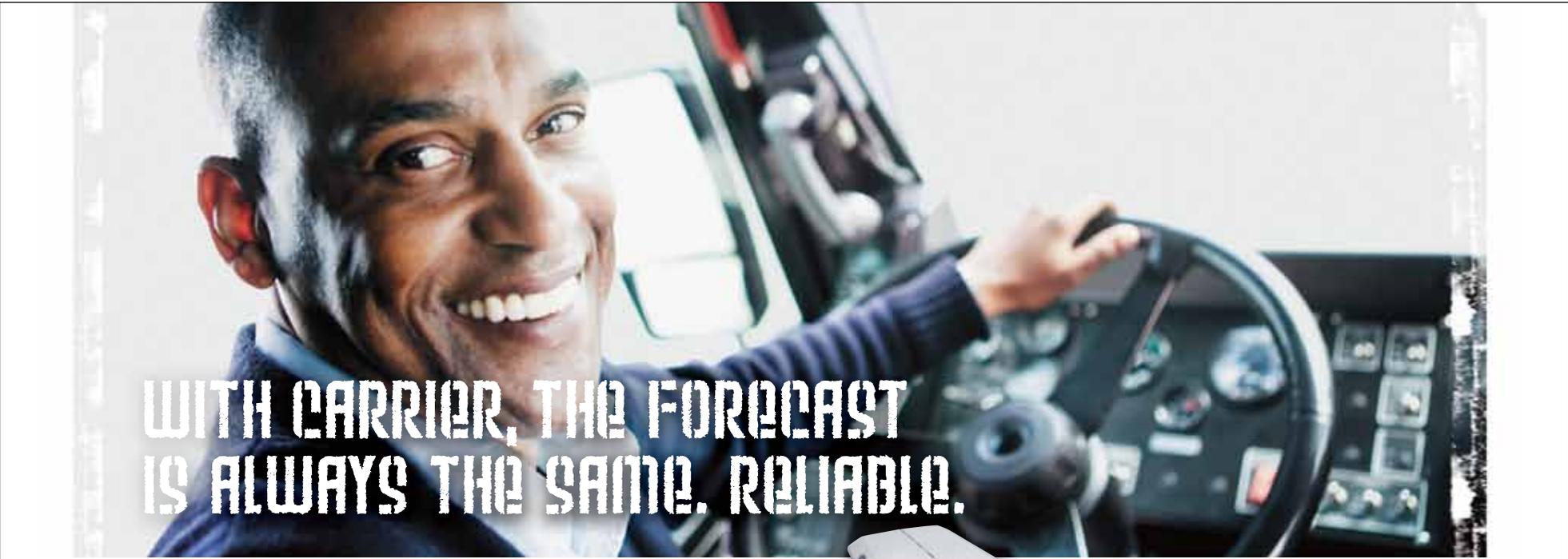
Preparation for the project and hiring already has begun.

Lee Loper, ABC Midwest regional vice president and general manager of the company service and sales center in Faribault, Minn., has been given responsibility for managing the Greyhound project.

According to Cornell, Loper will spend a significant portion of his time at Nappanee overseeing the project, but also will continue to supervise the ABC service shop in Minnesota.

Meanwhile, the Minnesota

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New rules to address sleep apnea

More emphasis by medical examiners

LINTHICUM, Md. — Officials with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration say they expect the agency to issue new rules later this year for medical examiners to address sleep apnea and other health conditions.

"Sleep apnea is an important cause of fatigue," Mary Gunnels, head of the FMCSA Office of Medical Programs, said at the Sleep Apnea & Trucking Conference here last month.

"It is an important problem that has to be addressed. We know this is a public health issue, Gunnels added."

The one-day conference was sponsored by the FMCSA, the American Trucking Associations, and the American Sleep Apnea Association.

Gunnels did not specify exactly what the proposed rules will say about sleep apnea, a condition that affects an estimated 28 percent of commercial vehicle drivers.

But she did tell those attending the conference to expect "more emphasis" on apnea as the agency

formulates new standards medical examiners can use to perform physical examinations on commercial drivers.

Drivers who are fatigued are involved in at least twice as many accidents as those who are not, according to recent studies.

Currently, commercial vehicle drivers must undergo tests every two years or more frequently, if necessary, because of health conditions.

However, the exam does not specifically disqualify drivers diagnosed with sleep apnea as it does if a driver's vision does not meet a specific standard.

Instead, it is up to the examiner to determine whether a driver with sleep apnea can be sidelined. FMCSA now considers the condition as one of several severe cardiopulmonary conditions that can idle a driver.

Apnea symptoms include poor sleep quality, falling asleep during the day and headaches.

Driver fatigue also can be triggered by other disorders such as sleep deprivation, alcohol impairment and drug interactions.

For those drivers with sleep apnea, the condition is serious

enough for them to be disqualified. However, they can remain eligible for duty or return if they receive treatment, most generally from a machine that keeps airways open, mitigates snoring and gasping for breath, and allows continued and deeper sleep.

FMCSA Administrator Anne Ferro, speaking at the conference, stressed the importance of improving driver health and the importance of removing fatigued drivers, including those with untreated sleep apnea, from the road.

Sleep apnea risk factors are greater for males and people who are obese and are aging, said Dr. Lawrence Epstein of Harvard Medical School.

FMCSA also is commissioning a study of 3,000 drivers with sleep apnea later this year to provide more details on crash likelihood when compared with drivers who don't have the condition, said Martin Walker, chief of FMCSA's research division.

In addition, the agency is preparing a driver health campaign that includes brochures, posters, compact discs and a self-assessment tool for drivers to test their sleep quality.

Virginia seeks permission for tolling portion of I-95

RICHMOND, Va. — Virginia, which tried to add tolls to Interstate 81 earlier in this decade, now wants to impose tolls on I-95.

Virginia's new Republican governor, Bob McDonnell, has asked Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood for permission to toll I-95 at the North Carolina line.

Virginia estimates that \$30 million to \$60 million could be generated annually to use for improvements to the highway "if tolls are \$1 to \$2 per axle," McDonnell said in an announcement last month.

If granted approval, Virginia would be the first state south of Maryland to toll I-95, which carries traffic from the Canadian border in Maine to the southern tip of Florida.

McDonnell's plan, which he said replaces the prior attempt by the state to toll I-81, drew immediate criticism from those who opposed the I-81 toll plan.

Critics contend it is "terrible public policy" to charge motorists for a road they already paid for with fuel taxes. They also contend that adding tolls to existing high-

ways is inefficient and costs more than it does to raise highway funds through fuel taxes.

Federal law prohibits states from tolling existing stretches of the national highway system, but under growing pressure to find funding for highway maintenance, Congress in 1998 created a pilot program under which the Federal Highway Administration was allowed to grant three states permission to toll existing interstates.

McDonnell's letter asking for permission to toll was written after the federal government turned down Pennsylvania's latest request to toll Interstate 80.

Applications from Missouri to toll I-70 and Virginia to toll I-81 previously received conditional approval.

Neither Missouri nor Virginia, however, tolled the highways and, even if federal officials agree to substitute I-95 for I-81, it is unclear whether McDonnell could proceed.

Federal officials have said the pilot program cannot move forward until a third state applies and is accepted.

Some critics of the plans say they are prepared to support tolls that are used to pay for projects that add capacity to existing roads or for new roads, but are dead set against tolling existing roads that were built using fuel taxes.

USTOA's Bob Whitley dies following surgery

RIDGEFIELD, Conn. — Robert Whitley, who guided the U.S. Tour Operators Association for more than 30 years, died last month of complications from abdominal surgery. He was 66.

Before joining the USTOA, Mr. Whitley held positions as director of the Florida and Pennsylvania departments of tourism and as director of the Virginia Beach Convention and Tourist Bureau. He headed the USTOA for 32 years.

Whitley is survived by his wife, Carol; three children and five grandchildren.

A memorial in Mr. Whitley's name has been established with Tourism Cares, 275 Turnpike St., Ste. 307, Canton, MA 02021.

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It's warming up, don't give A/C maintenance short shrift

By Dave Millhouser

"I need an A/C for a 4106." It was Violet from Muscle Shoals, Ala., one of my favorite parts customers.

"Which parts?" I asked in my most helpful manner.

"ALL of them," she replied. "You know that switch you're not supposed to use when the bus is moving? My driver did, and the A/C spilled its innards all over the road."

These buses used a Chevy truck clutch to drive the A/C compressor; engaging it at highway speed was disastrous.

A really clever guy would have written this column a month ago (when it might have been more useful). But, what the heck, here are some things to consider as hot weather approaches.

You might want to have a drivers meeting to do some training on how you want the A/C used in your coaches, and how to work the systems — WITHOUT dropping them on the tarmac.

In addition to reviewing idling laws (and the fact that you don't

want drivers napping in an empty bus with the engine running), you may want to discuss how long before a pickup they should start the engine.

Different buses may cool down faster. They should understand how the driver A/C and the passenger unit can either supplement or interfere with each other. Opening and closing fresh-air vents can make a difference.

Modern bus A/C units are so powerful they've given birth to the evil sine-curve. This phenomenon happens when a passenger complains about being too cold, and the driver changes the thermostat in a big way.

Soon the bus is hot, so the driver cranks that puppy the other way, and soon the temperature is going up and down like a roller coaster. Using the term sine-curve makes me look sophisticated, but the solution is to make small changes and wait.

Drivers who understand how thermostats work are more likely to get it right.

Newer A/C's sometimes display a code when they fail, which a

trained driver can read and give you an idea of what's wrong.

Finally, when there is an unexplained failure in a modern system, sometimes turning the electrical system off, then back on, will re-boot it successfully. It's worth a shot, but don't go too far. One definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results.

Most operators go through their HVAC systems in late winter because their buses aren't that busy, and spring almost always comes next. In addition to the obvious, like checking refrigerant levels and replacing both Freon and air filters, it's worth looking at some less obvious items that sometimes behave badly.

Somewhere in the back of your bus are some flailing belts. Turn the engine off and check them. Some belts only turn fans but one brute is turning an A/C compressor which requires lots of horsepower. Check, and preferably, replace it, because it has a right to be tired. Take a peek at the compressor mounts and brackets.

While you're back there look

for any signs that the compressor is leaking, or that Freon lines are either chafing or cracking.

There are lots of little wires back there. I have no idea what they do, but I CAN tell you that when they break, bad things happen. You may want to make sure that HVAC wires that have been resting all winter have tight, clean connections so that when your driver requests A/C, something cool happens. If your compressor clutch is old, replace it now, before the Bus Fairy gets a chance to mess with it.

You'll want to clean your condenser, and make sure that winter salt hasn't eaten TOO many of the fins.

It doesn't matter how cold you're A/C chills the air if it doesn't make it into the passenger cabin, so periodically it's a good idea to clean out the ducts. In some coaches they're part of the sidewall, in others the package rack. In every case, if they are full of candy wrappers and trash, you're A/C is not going to work. Where applicable, check the return ducts, too.

Make sure your electrical sys-

tem is in good shape (I know — we say this at the beginning of every season).

Complying with idling laws means more starts and stops, and your A/C is sucking lots of current for hours on end, so check your alternators and batteries. Alternators grow less efficient when they're hot, so just when you need them the most, they're getting tired. Batteries tend to use more water in the heat.

Your customers will tolerate all sorts of indignities, but heaven help you if the A/C doesn't chill them.

We old geezers tend to faint when it gets hot, with big headlines to follow, and nothing shouts POOR MAINTENANCE like a coach cruising down the highway on a warm day... with the roof hatches open.

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him at: dave_millhouser@hotmail.com.



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Security grants

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in taxpayer dollars have flowed from the federal treasury to private operators during the past eight years.

However, 39 percent of that money has gone to one company — Greyhound Lines, which has received nearly \$37 million. Greyhound's fiscal 2010 grant was \$4.2 million, up from \$3.67 million in fiscal 2009.

Academy Express of Hoboken, N.J. was awarded \$326,153 this year, compared to \$1.35 million last year and \$836,953 two years ago. Peter Pan Lines of Springfield, Mass., was awarded \$842,798 this year, \$256,749 last year and \$674,865 two years ago.

Coach USA received \$64,787 this year, versus \$444,075 last year, while CUSA got \$886,967 this year, compared to \$699,641 last year.

The Intercity Bus Security Grant Program has always been weighted in favor of the industry's five largest coach operators. In recent years, the five companies that have more than 250 over-the-road buses have received 55 percent of the money. Prior to three years ago, the five companies received as much as 70 percent of the grant money.

Because the security grant program has two "tiers" — one for the largest operators and the other for everyone else, smaller operators do not have to "compete" directly with the industry giants for money.

The dollar breakdown for fiscal 2010 was:

- Tier I: \$6.34 million for operators that

have 250 or more over-the-road buses.

- Tier II: \$5.18 million for operators that own 249 or fewer over-the-road buses.

There are six operators in the U.S. with 250 or more motorcoaches that were eligible to compete for the \$6.3 million, while the remaining 3,000+ U.S. operators with 249 or fewer coaches competed for the \$5.2 million share.

Applicants this year were required to commit to a 25 percent match to be awarded a grant. That means operators getting grants this year must pony up a total of \$2.88 million.

Operators applying this year also were required to have both a company security plan and a vulnerability assessment that had to be submitted to the Department of Homeland Security

There is no minimum number of motorcoaches necessary for an operator to apply, but those seeking the money must provide at least 50 trips annually into areas the Department of Homeland Security has determined to be most at risk of a terrorist attack.

Operators typically use the grant money to install security cameras and fencing, buy passenger or explosive screening equipment, install driver shields, and add global positioning satellite tracking and vehicle communication systems to their coaches. Thousands of coaches now have sophisticated GPS systems today as a result of the security grant program, aiding operators in ways that go far beyond security.

(See accompanying list of recipients.)

2010 Bus Security Grants

Abbott Bus Lines: \$30,712, Roanoke, Va.
 Academy Express: \$326,153, Hoboken, N.J.
 All Aboard America!: \$138,307, Santa Fe, N.M.
 American Star Trailways: \$201,577, Pismo Beach, Calif.
 Autobuses Ejecutivos: \$26,696, Houston
 B & W Charters: \$60,183, Kalamazoo, Mich.
 BK Charter: \$5,008, Mitchellville, Md.
 Blue Ridge Tours: \$32,734, Culpepper, Va.
 Brewster Travel: \$55,347, Martinsburg, Ohio
 Buckeye Limousine and Charters: \$23,099, Columbus, Ohio
 Buses By Bill: \$16,210, Dallas
 Capital Trailways: \$166,377, Montgomery, Ala.
 Coach Ride: \$122,256, Starkville, Miss.
 Coach USA: \$64,787, Paramus, N.J.
 Colonial Trailways: \$45,181, Mobile, Ala.
 Custom Coach and Limousine: \$48,775, Gorham, Maine
 CUSA: \$886,967, Dallas
 Daniel's Charters: \$141,757, Gainesville, Ga.
 DATTCO: \$300,977, New Britain, Conn.
 David Thomas Tours: \$50,849, Philadelphia
 Dixieland Tours: \$15,829, Baton Rouge, La.
 Dreamers Travel: \$16,210, Phoenix
 EBT Bus Tours: \$38,329, Fort Washington, Md.
 Excellent Bus Service: \$163,503, Brooklyn, N.Y.
 Excursions Trailways: \$101,950, Fort Wayne, Ind.
 Executive Coach: \$104,587, Lancaster, Pa.
 Fabulous Coach Lines: \$158,213, Branford, Fla.
 Florida Trails: \$146,679, Sebring, Fla.
 Fullington Auto Bus Co.: \$53,967, Clearfield, Pa.
 Gentry Trailways: \$106,446, Knoxville, Tenn.
 Gotta Go Express Trailways: \$21,656, Fort Worth, Texas
 Greene Coach Co.: \$17,368, Greeneville, Tenn.
 Greyhound Lines: \$4,216,061, Dallas
 Haymarket Transportation: \$111,366, Sterling, Va.

Kelley Transit Co.: \$107,793, Torrington, Conn.
 Kelly Tours: \$128,318, Savannah, Ga.
 Kelton Tours Unlimited: \$14,332, Gadsden, Ala.
 Kincaid Coach Lines: \$331,680, Edwardsville, Kan.
 Kobussen Buses: \$15,750, Kaukauna, Wis.
 Lakeland Bus Lines: \$202,230, Dover, N.J.
 Louisiana Coaches: \$15,750, Marrero, La.
 Martz Trailways: \$50,400, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
 Miller Transportation: \$47,031, Louisville, Ky.
 Myers Coach Lines: \$101,728, Export, Pa.
 Newton Bus Service: \$221,377, Gloucester, Va.
 North Fork Express: \$44,529, Hampton Bays, N.Y.
 Pacific Coachway's Charter Services: \$16,210, Garden Grove, Calif.
 Peter Pan Bus Lines: \$842,798 — Springfield, Mass.
 Plymouth & Brockton Street Railway Co.: \$7,500, Plymouth, Mass.
 Prairie Trailways: \$11,812, Chicago
 Red Carpet Charters: \$305,953, Oklahoma City
 Rimrock Trailways: \$15,986, Billings, Mont.
 Riteway Bus Service: \$11,250, Richfield, Wis.
 Royal Charters: \$20,627, LeMars, Iowa
 Safety Bus Service: \$98,403, Pennsauken, N.J.
 Shalimar Travel and Tours: \$90,085, Ontario, Calif.
 Sierra Trailways: \$11,812, South Houston, Texas
 Silver State Trailways: \$24,255, Placentia, Calif.
 Silverado Stages: \$27,011, San Luis Obispo, Calif.
 Starline Luxury Coaches: \$6,371, Seattle
 Time Lines: \$48,538, Oklahoma City
 TourCoach International: \$65,490, Commerce, Calif.
 Travel Kuz: \$107,620, Gill, Mass.
 Valley Connector: \$15,986, Linden, Va.
 Vandalia Bus Lines: \$82,922, Caseyville, Ill.
 West Point Tours Trailways: \$87,564, Vails Gate, N.Y.
 Wilson Bus Lines, Inc. \$35,210, East Templeton, Mass.
 Windstar Lines: \$273,353, Carroll, Iowa
 Winn Bus Lines: \$16,210, Richmond, Va.

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Tough economy hampers Greyhound earnings

ABERDEEN, Scotland — Operating earnings at Greyhound Lines dropped sharply during fiscal 2010 as the recession-racked U.S. economy took a toll on the nation's largest line-run operator, its Scottish-based parent company reported last month.

First Group said Greyhound achieved a "creditable operating profit" of \$39.6 million during the 12 months ended March 31, down sharply from year-earlier operating earnings of \$91.7 million.

Total revenue for fiscal 2010 was \$963.4 million, a dip of nearly 14 percent from fiscal 2009 revenue of \$1.11 billion (at constant U.S.

and Canadian dollar exchange rates). "Greyhound performed in line with our expectations despite the significant impact of the weaker North America economy on trading," said First Group in its fiscal year-end financial report.

Overall, First Group reported total company revenue of \$9.07 billion for fiscal 2010, up from gross revenue of roughly \$8.8 billion for fiscal 2009. Profit before taxes for fiscal 2010 was \$257.8 million, down from \$287 million for the prior year.

Despite the earnings dip, First Group said it intended to increase its dividend this year and for the

next two years.

To slow the profit slide at Greyhound, First Group said the company had reduced bus miles by 11.4 percent in the U.S. and 10.7 percent in Canada, "while retaining capability to restore service levels when demand returns.

"Through rigorous management of the network and targeted mileage reductions we maintained revenue per mile which is now ahead of prior year despite the difficult trading environment," said First Group.

At one point last fall, Greyhound revealed it had parked more than 20 percent of its fleet, cut its corporate staff by 70 percent, and reduced its field staff by about 30 percent.

During the summer of 2009, Greyhound ridership dropped an average 20 percent.

Other cost-cutting measures at Greyhound include lowering the cost of sales through agency commission rates, and retiring a slew of old buses.

It wasn't all cost reductions, however. First Group said Greyhound had retained "a strong focus on customer service and reliability" during the year.

On-time performance contin-

ued to improve across both U.S. and Canadian operations.

BoltBus, Greyhound's curbside operation in the northeastern U.S., "continues to perform well." Thirty-eight new coaches were added to the BoltBus fleet and the company is "actively developing plans to expand BoltBus to new destinations."

"The actions we have taken during the year have ensured the sustained cash generation and profitability of (Greyhound)," said First Group. "As a result, we have established a considerably stronger and lower cost base.

"Greyhound is on a firmer footing with improved operating

leverage and is well placed to realize the benefits of future economic recovery."

Separately, First Group announced it will not be filling the First Group North America CEO position vacated by Mike Murray.

Instead, First Student President Linda Burtwistle, First Transit and First Services President Brad Thomas, and Greyhound President and CEO Dave Leach will report directly to Sir Moir Lockhead, CEO of FirstGroup plc.

Burtwistle will be responsible for all functional responsibilities at First Group North America headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio.

N.C. plan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

districts for several years.

A few years ago Hines formed a coalition of 52 school districts in the state that agreed to operate under the same inspection system. He said he expects to have the remaining members of his old network signed up with CSS by July.

Harris said CSS and Hines make a good match, and he's hopeful they can pull off the task of

bringing the school districts into the fold. "It will benefit us tremendously," he said.

The action by the school board came after a committee of school, law enforcement and motorcoach officials that were charged by the State Legislature to develop a statewide permit system were unable to agree.

Instead, the committee sent to lawmakers a proposal that the school board issue the policy it eventually approved.

ABC contract

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

sales and sales support activities have been assigned to Clint Guth, who is regional vice president and general manager of ABC's western region. Guth will split his time between Minnesota and California.

Brenda Borwege, ABC marketing director, will work closely with Guth, supporting sales efforts in both regions.

ABC also won a contract to re-

furbish transit buses operated by Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission of Woodbridge, Va., which is off Interstate 95 in northern Virginia. Ed Harmon, director of operations at ABC's Florida center, was instrumental in winning the PRTC bid.

At the end of March, Greyhound announced it was purchasing 70 new MCI D4505 coaches, with deliveries to start in June (see April 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*).



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Letter to the Editor

Articles regarding El Camino Trailways, Accelar and the San Francisco 49ers in the May 1 and Feb. 15 issues contain unsubstantiated allegations, gross inaccuracies and misrepresentations of facts, which I wish to acknowledge as such and address in this letter.

When the facts, rulings and resolves are finally revealed, El Camino Trailways and Accelar will be exonerated and vindicated.

Let me, as president and CEO of El Camino Trailways, an independently owned motorcoach operator, and Accelar, an internet tour operator, affirm categorically that neither company has engaged in any wrongdoing or done anything that is not legal.

While I am affiliated with both El Camino Trailways and Accelar, the two companies have their own slate of directors and different ownership structures.

Neither company has ignored any directive from the (California Public Utilities Commission), and all services have been delivered in full consultation with the PUC.

Currently, we are engaged in constructive discussions with the PUC to create new models for private enterprises to deliver services previously provided by federally subsidized transit agencies.

El Camino Trailways has had California PUC charter party carrier authority and sightseeing certificate since 1962. The company is in good standing with the California PUC, Department of Transportation, NMFTA and FMCSA. The company is a Trailways stockholder, a member of the American Bus Association, California Bus Association, Student & Youth Travel Association and several other industry organizations.

Since the acquisition of the company by an investor group — of which I am the managing partner — in 2005, we have been on the *Inc.* magazine Top-100 Fastest Growing Transportation Services Company list three years in a row, moving up the ranks from 70th in 2006 to 40th in 2007 and 29th in 2008.

According to *Inc.* we also were the fastest-growing motorcoach operator in the U.S.

in 2008. We are proud of this distinction attained through the power of innovation and by following sound, legal business principles.

We did not respond to the *Bus & Motorcoach News* articles earlier because of our company policy to not discuss any legal matter in an open, public forum. Any such public statement during pending legal matters contaminates the matter and hinders the company's progress in resolving it.

Moreover, since both the articles were published during our on-going discussions with the PUC, any statement at that time or now is inappropriate and premature.

I do, however, want to share with *Bus & Motorcoach News* readers our perspective on the opportunity created for our industry with the adoption of the revised (Federal Transit Administration) charter rule for transportation services in conjunction with sports and other public events.

Prior to 2008, a local transit agency ran the shuttle service for San Francisco 49ers home games. Under the FTA charter rule they were prohibited from doing so when several private operators stepped up to offer the service: California Wine Tours from Marin County; San Luis Obispo-based Silverado Stages and others. Their service is similar to the service previously provided by the transit agency.

In fall 2009, seeing an opportunity to offer a different game day experience, Accelar launched "49ersExperience" packages, which included game day and tailgate party tickets, round-trip transportation, memorabilia, promotional giveaways, etc.

Accelar chartered coaches from multiple operators for the transportation component of these packages. Each package, however, included a lot more and delivered a vastly different service and associated revenues compared to transit-like service offered by others.

The FTA charter rule was intended to spur competition and offer consumers choices and options, which is precisely what Accelar did.

As evidenced by the 49ersExperience offerings, we all can benefit handsomely from free markets, open competition and

differentiation through innovation. Our industry needs to engage in progressive business principles and not revert to the dark ages of a few companies taking shelter behind government regulation to limit opportunities for all of us.

As for the 49ers games, all the motorcoach companies combined bring fewer than 3,000 fans to the game, or less than 5 percent of the 60,000-seat stadium capacity. We have an opportunity to grow our market share, but not if we are stuck in the mode of in-fighting and blocking other private charter operators from competing, which was the unfortunate focus of the *Bus & Motorcoach News* articles.

When we do grow our market share to 10-to-20 percent and beyond it will create demand that none of the operators in question will be able to handle on their own.

I encourage our industry and your publication to engage in a more meaningful discussion of how to:

- Capitalize on the opportunities created by the FTA Charter Rule,
- Leverage sports, special events and other destination specific services, and
- Become an innovative industry that works together in developing new ideas, services, and programs

Our industry is at a crossroads. The question is whether we want to be like the stagnant railroad industry, controlled by a few semi-government agencies, or the vibrant airline industry that continues to innovate and grow.

For our industry to thrive, we must bring more innovation to consumers, new brands, concepts, varying means of delivery, and a new array of services and paralleling price differential.

My companies' leadership is committed to the path of open and free markets, and differentiation through innovation. We invite our industry colleagues to join us in cultivating and building the path to growth opportunities through new services, packaging ideas, etc., leaving behind old-fashioned business models and seeking shelter behind regulatory barriers.

—Kumar Shah

kumar@elcaminotrailways.com

UMA founders to be recalled at Tampa Expo

TAMPA, Fla. — When UMA Motorcoach Expo 2011 convenes here early next year, one of the important items on the agenda will be to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the United Motorcoach Association.

It was in 1971 that UMA's predecessor organization, the United Bus Owners of America, was created after a dozen renegade bus operators went to then-U.S. Transportation Secretary John Volpe to discuss their concern that large national carriers were dominating the industry to the detriment of smaller companies.

The "Group of 12" was led by operators Thomas Chieppo and John Almeida Jr.

A few months after that meeting, UBOA was formed with Wayne Smith as executive director. Twenty-five years later, Smith was still around when UBOA changed its name to UMA.

Earlier this year, at Motorcoach Expo 2010 in Las Vegas, outgoing Chairman Godfrey LeBron paid homage to a handful of UMA founders, mentioning eight by name: Joseph M. Lewis of Lewis Brother Stages; Harry Eyre of Eyre Bus; Joe Ready of Ready Bus Lines; Chuck Busskohl of Arrow Stage Lines; Pete Zanetti of Zanetti Bus & Fast Express; Alex Allen of Amador Stage Lines; Warren Miller of Pacific Coast Bus Service, and Robert Quick of Quick-Livick.

Missing from LeBron's list were such 1970s industry stalwarts as J. Alex Michaud of Michaud Bus Lines in Salem, Mass.; John Shoup of Shoup Buses in Middlebury, Ind.; Paul Keeshin of Keeshin Charter Services in Chicago, and Ray Dupuis of The Arrow Line in East Hartford, Conn. The four also were founding directors of UBOA/UMA.

The enterprising bus operators who saw a need and stepped forward to form UBOA/UMA will be recalled at Motorcoach Expo 2011 — Jan 19-23 at the Tampa Convention Center.

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D.C. takes tough(er) stance on tour bus/parking rules

WASHINGTON — The District of Columbia appears on a path designed to make the nation's capital as unwelcoming of tour buses as New York City.

"Though hard to believe they could be any more difficult, D.C. intends to increase enforcement of bus compliance in the district," said one industry executive who has monitored the district's practices for years.

Late last month, D.C. officials issued an "enforcement notice for motorcoach operators" that says the district department of transportation is initiating a new "focus on enforcing specific regulations relating to bus operations."

Specifically, district police will target motorcoach parking, idling, and travel through prohibited areas, notably residential neighborhoods. Enforcement will be "strict" and violators will be ticketed and receive a fine of up to \$500.

"Certain locations within the district are more sensitive to buses parking, therefore, all motorcoach operators should abide by all traffic and parking regulations," said Eulois E. Cleckley, manager of the motor carrier program in the transportation policy and planning administration of the district department of transportation, in a memorandum to the industry.

The key traffic and parking regulations targeted for enforcement include:

- Stopping and loading at Metro bus stops
- Parking at meters
- Stopping, loading or parking on streets with rush-hour prohibitions, and parking in any area posted "no parking" or "no standing"
- Parking in a tour bus zone longer than the posted time limit
- Parking or traveling through a residential neighborhood
- Idling for more than three minutes.

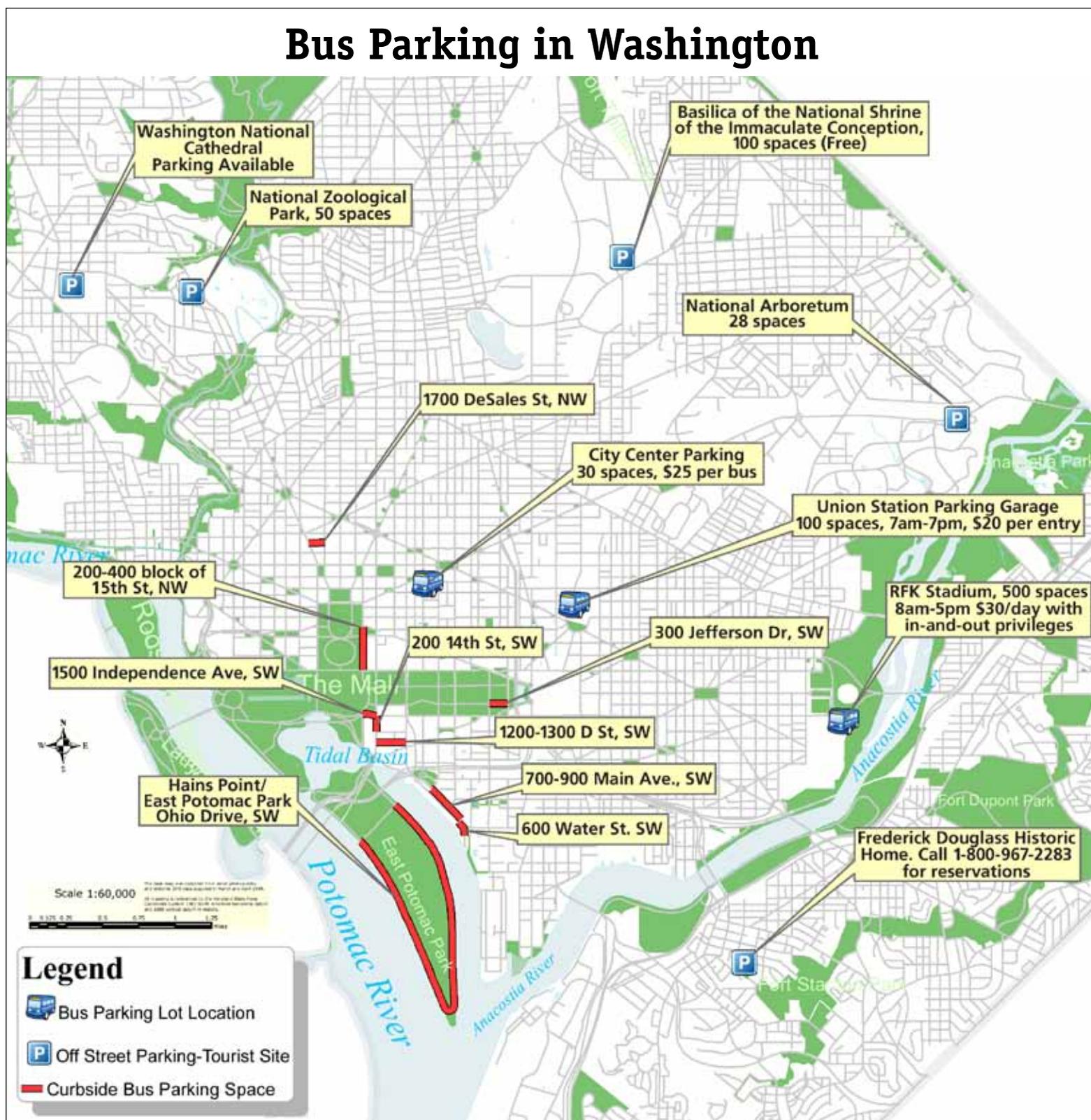
Violation of any of these regulations is subject to a fine of up to \$500 per incident. All of the regulations will be "strictly enforced" at the following locations:

- Pennsylvania Ave. from 22nd to 4th streets NW
- Maine St. from 6th to 9th streets SW
- Water St. SW
- 10th St. between E and G streets NW
- K St. between 30th and 31st streets NW
- 9th St. between H and K streets NW

The district also has identified the following bus parking locations.

Bus parking lots:

- Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Stadium, Lot 8. 500 spaces. 8 a.m.-



5 p.m., \$30/day with in-and-out privileges. Info: (202) 608-1113.

- Union Station Parking Garage, 30 Massachusetts Ave. NE. 100 spaces. 7 a.m.-7 p.m., \$20 per entry. Info: (202) 898-1950.
- City Center Parking (former site of DC Convention Center), 900 9th St. NW. 30 spaces. \$25 per bus. Info: (202) 265-0010.

Off-street parking:

- Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Concep-

tion, 400 Michigan Ave. NE, 100 spaces. Free. Info: (202) 526-8300.

- Frederick Douglass Historic Home, 1411 W St. SE. Info (including reservations): (800) 967-2283.
- National Arboretum, 3500 block New York Ave. NE. 28 spaces, 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday. Free.
- Washington National Cathedral, 3101 Wisconsin Ave. NW. Group reservations required. No stopping or drop offs permitted.

Info: (202) 537-6207.

- National Zoological Park, 3000 block Connecticut Ave. NW. Park in lot E, 50 spaces. Free parking for zoo visitors; otherwise \$15/day. Bus parking reservations are required from September to mid-June. Info: (202) 673-4989.

Curbside bus parking:

- Bureau of Printing & Engraving/Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1200-1300 D St. SW. 10 spaces/24 hours/4-hour limit. Free.

- Bureau of Printing & Engraving/Holocaust Memorial Museum, 200 14th St. SW. 4 spaces/15-minute tour bus stand.

- 700-900 block Maine Ave. SW. 11 spaces/4-hour limit. 7 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Free.
- Hains Point/East Potomac Park, Ohio Drive SW. 11 spaces. 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Free.
- National Geographic Museum, 1700 block DeSales St. NW. 8 spaces/south side. Free.

- Washington Monument (south side), 1500 block Independence Ave. SW. 10 spaces. Free.

- White House, 200-400 block 15th St. NW. 9 spaces/2-hour limit. 7 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Free.

For additional information about D.C. parking, call Cleckley at (202) 671-0682.

Ottawa, Ont. updates tour bus parking guide

OTTAWA, Ont. — The city of Ottawa has issued a revised tour bus parking information card, which the city says is an effective navigation tool for bus and tour operators. The card provides infor-

mation about:

- Designated tour bus parking
- Drop-off and pick-up areas
- How to obtain a 24-hour tour bus parking permit

To obtain copies of the cards

and for additional information on bus parking in Ottawa, call Christine Renaud with the city at (613) 580-2424 Ext. 32575, or go to www.ottawa.ca/residents/parking/tour_bus_en.html.

Chris Levering to be honored

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A resolution has been introduced in the Tennessee House of Representatives that would name a bridge in honor of the late Chris Levering, former vice president and co-founder of Gray Line Nashville.

Mr. Levering died last year at age 55 (see April 15, 2009, *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

Rep. Ben West Jr. of the Nashville suburb of Hermitage, Tenn., introduced the resolution seeking the honor for Mr. Levering.

The resolution says “no Ten-

nessean is more deserving” of being honored by the state General Assembly.

Mr. Levering and his brother, Dennis, got into the motorcoach business by founding Country & Western Round-Up Tours in 1974. Working out of their father's motel and operating a station wagon, they provided two daily tours of Nashville.

From that modest beginning they grew the business and in 1989 purchased the Gray Line franchise for Nashville. Twenty years later,

they had a fleet of 78 buses and 240 employees.

Mr. Levering was active both in the motorcoach and tourism industries.

The legislative resolution proposes naming the bridge spanning Briley Parkway (State Route 155) on McGavock Pike in metro Nashville the “Chris Levering Memorial Bridge” as a “lasting tribute to one of the finest citizens this state has ever known.”

The resolution is pending House committee action.

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Calendar

JUNE 2010

4 Tourism Cares for America at Angel Island, San Francisco Harbor. Info: www.tourismcares.org, or call (781) 821-5990.

4-5 Museum of Bus Transportation Spring Fling, Hershey, Pa. Info: www.buseum.org.

14-17 Pennsylvania Bus Association Annual Meeting, Marriott Chesapeake, Chesapeake, Va. Info: www.pabus.org.

21-22 United Motorcoach Association Mid-Year Board Meeting, Orlando, Fla. Info: Call (800) 424-8262.

24-27 New England Bus Assn. Annual Meeting, By the Bay Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference Center, Portland, Maine. Info: go to www.newenglandbus.com.

JULY 2010

25-27 Georgia Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting & Marketplace, Chattanooga, Tenn. Marriott at the Convention Center. Info: go to www.gamotorcoachoperators.org.

Driver records

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

fear, however, that companies using the system might disqualify quality applicants.

“A lot of that information may or may not be relevant to whether an individual is a good driver,” said an official with a driver-based organization. “Many of the violations will be things the driver has limited ability to control.”

The FMCSA Pre-Employment Screening Program offers access

to up to five years of driver crash data and three years of inspection data regardless of the state or jurisdiction.

By using driver safety information during pre-employment screening, commercial carriers will be able to better assess the potential safety risks of prospective driver employees, say federal officials.

The program provides drivers opportunities to verify the data in their driving history and correct any discrepancies. Driver records will be protected in accordance

with federal privacy laws.

The program will be updated monthly by the FMCSA Motor Carrier Management Information System. That system is comprised of driver performance data, including inspection and compliance review results, enforcement data, state-reported crashes and motor carrier census data.

For details on the Pre-Employment Screening Program fees for driver safety records and how carriers and drivers can participate, go to www.psp.fmcsa.dot.gov.

Emissions bill

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

It also would give coastal states the right to veto oil drilling within 75 miles of their shores and would provide incentives for the construction of nuclear power plants.

Ultimately, critics contend, it would boost the cost of diesel and gasoline without reducing the output of carbon dioxide by the ground transportation industry, which is a nondiscretionary user of the fuels.

Also, critics assert, the bill would impose a tax on transportation fuels and reallocate revenue from that tax to nontransportation purposes. Only a small portion of the tax would go to the Highway Trust Fund for needed improvements and repairs to the nation's highway infrastructure.

The legislation would create a “linked fee” system that would dictate the price refiners will pay for carbon allowances. In 2013, the bill would impose a minimum carbon price of \$12 per ton.

If refiners pass that cost on in equal amounts across their refined products, it would translate to a diesel fuel price increase of at least 15 cents per gallon, according to one estimate.

The bill also establishes a carbon price ceiling of \$25, which would translate to an increase in the cost of diesel of 31 cents a gallon.

Both the floor and the ceiling prices contain automatic inflation escalators, which will further increase the cost refiners must pay for carbon allowances.

Fuel standards

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Achieving such fuel savings would be expensive, of course, boosting the price of a new coach by more than \$36,000, according to the report.

Mileage for the new standards would be calculated using a new formula of gallons per ton-mile. That is, basing mileage on payload and vehicle size rather than strictly

on distance traveled.

In his announcement, Obama said a national truck and bus standard could be established by the middle of next year, with implementation during the 2014-18 model years.

Coupled with the truck and bus announcement was the second part of a federal initiative begun last year that calls for increasing mileage standards for cars and light trucks by 2016. Future phases will

include standards beyond 2017.

By deciding to set the first fuel efficiency standards for over-the-road buses and trucks, Obama handed environmentalists a victory. The president said the standards were needed to ease the U.S. dependency on foreign oil and to help reduce greenhouse gases and pollutants.

The memorandum also directed EPA and NHTSA to push for new alternative fuels and to help develop electric cars.

Speculation bill

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the one during summer 2008 when oil, diesel fuel and gasoline prices skyrocketed.

The lack of transparency in derivatives markets and exemptions for speculators, derivatives dealers and other financial players has made it largely impossible for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to effectively regulate and

oversee commodity markets, which largely determine the price for crude oil, gasoline and diesel.

The overhaul legislation includes mandatory clearing and trading requirements and real-time reporting of derivatives trades — steps designed to close loopholes in the energy futures markets.

The bill also reins in financial players, like hedge funds and insurance companies, that speculate in energy derivatives by creating

centralized clearing and aggregate position limits, while leaving an exemption from clearing and exchange trading requirements for legitimate commercial hedgers like bus and truck operators, petroleum marketers, utilities, airlines and farmers.

The United Motorcoach Association has supported the regulatory reform effort as part of a group that calls itself The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now.



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