

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

June 1, 2016

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

New coach sales rose to pre-recession numbers in 2015

WASHINGTON — Sales of new motorcoaches surpassed the 2,000 mark in 2015 for the first time since the start of the Great Recession.

Combined private- and public-sector sales of new MCI, Prevost, Setra, Van Hool and Volvo motorcoaches totaled 2,141 last year, a 21.2 percent increase from the

1,766 coaches sold in 2014.

The last time more than 2,000 new coaches were sold was in 2008, when sales totaled 2,017.

Sales of new coaches dropped to 1,654 in 2009 and to 1,131 in 2010 and have been gradually increasing since then.

The sales numbers were compiled for the American Bus Association

Foundation's Coach Manufacturer Survey.

Here is a breakdown of the sales figures for new 30-, 35-, 40- and 45-foot motorcoaches sold by quarter in 2015:

- First quarter — 440 coaches were sold, up from 280 in the first three months of 2014
- Second quarter — 623 coaches

were sold, compared with 497 during the second quarter of 2014

• Third quarter — 459 coaches were sold, up from 410 during the same quarter in 2014

• Fourth quarter — 619 coaches were sold, down from 631 during the fourth quarter of 2014

Forty-five-foot coaches made up the bulk of the purchases, with

private and public sales totaling 2,035 for the year. Sixty 40-foot coaches, 21 35-foot coaches and 25 30-foot coaches were sold in 2015.

Private operators purchased the largest number of new coaches — 1,599 — while 542 were bought by public-transit agencies.

Missing from the report are sales of Temsa and Caio coaches.

Women motorcoach operators earning industry respect



Michelle Petelicki, president and majority owner of Panorama Tours in Clifton, N.J., joined the bus business founded by her father "for a little while" and never left. "I love this business," she said. "Every day is different."

Women are accepted as leaders in the motorcoach industry but still account for just a handful of owners and operators.

"I know of three other women in the United States who own bus companies," said Gladys Gillis, CEO and co-owner of Starline Luxury Coaches in Seattle. "There are plenty of women in operations."

Joan Libby, president, CEO and owner of Cavalier Coach Trailways in Boston, said when she started in the industry in 1987, "it was a man's world."

"As time has gone on, women have become more accepted in the industry," Libby said. "The good-old-boy network isn't as bad as it used to be. Being a woman in some

respects is difficult, in other respects it is fine."

Whatever your gender, running a transportation company is a tough way to make a living, according to the women operators, who are active in the United Motorcoach Association.

"This is not a business that you take lightly," said Marcia Milton, president and CEO of First Priority Trailways in District Heights, Md. "It is seven days a week, 24 hours a day. There is always something going on."

Libby launched Cavalier Coach by accident, she said.

"I used to own a travel agency. Because of sickness in my family, I sold my company and went to

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California seeks to increase tour bus inspections

SACRAMENTO — An enhanced tour bus inspection program is likely to pass the California legislature this year, but the industry has negotiated compromises that would make the final law less onerous for law-abiding operators.

The California Senate's commitment to boosting inspections was evident in committee hearings held during April. The Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee voted 11-0 to pass an

amended version of Senate Bill 812. In the Transportation and Housing Committee the vote was 10-0.

"The legislators started looking at the different recent crashes, no matter if it was a bus crash caused by a bus or a crash caused by another vehicle," said Josh Pane, lobbyist for the California Bus Association. "Legislators started asking, 'What else can we do?'"

One major fatal crash cited by

lawmakers occurred near Orland, Calif., in 2014, when a Federal Express double-trailer truck-tractor combination crossed a 58-foot-wide median on Interstate 5, sideswiped a passenger car and hit a motorcoach head-on. The collision ruptured a fuel tank on the truck and sprayed fuel into the motorcoach. Both drivers and eight motorcoach passengers were killed.

Follow-up investigations focused more on the motorcoach

than on the truck that caused the crash and fire.

SB 812 was filed by Sen. Jerry Hill, a Democrat representing San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, to increase inspection frequencies on tour buses, which the bill defines as any vehicle designed to carry 10 or more passengers and operated by or for "a charter-party carrier of passengers or a passenger stage corporation."

Existing California law requires the California Highway Pa-

trol (CHP) to inspect every maintenance facility or terminal at least once every 13 months. A minimum of 25 percent of each fleet is inspected during the current visits to maintenance or terminal facilities.

The law applies to carriers domiciled in the state.

The added examinations would be financed by an increase in the \$15-per-inspection fee currently charged by the state Public Utilities Commission for inspections

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IRP for charter operators going smoothly — sort of

OKLAHOMA CITY — Five months have come and gone since it became mandatory for charter and school bus companies whose fleets engage in interstate travel to sign up for the International Registration Plan. (See Dec. 15, 2016, *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

At a meeting here last month, representatives from the states and provinces, plus the District of Columbia, that are members of IRP reported that introduction of the plan to the charter and school bus industries generally came off without a hitch.

That doesn't mean, however, there wasn't grousing by bus op-

erators about the change.

IRP is the commercial motor vehicle registration reciprocity agreement among the 48 contiguous states, the District of Columbia and 10 Canadian provinces. The plan issues apportionable registration credentials for commercial vehicles for the current year based on the mileage traveled in each jurisdiction during the previous year.

After years of wrangling, charter and private school bus vehicles engaged in interstate travel became subject to the plan's requirements on Jan. 1.

Motorcoaches and other buses, running in interstate service that

previously operated on a base state — intrastate only — plate, are now subject to being cited for not being registered as IRP-apportioned. The fine for failing to register with IRP can be hefty.

During the IRP annual meeting here, representatives from both the IRP and its state members indicated there were only a handful of speed bumps in bringing charter and school bus operators into the plan. None of the hurdles or issues were of the major variety.

Still...

Ken Carey, director of plan compliance and education for IRP Inc., reported that as the deadline

for charter and school buses to register began approaching, his phone rang off the hook.

"I've never been attacked as much about any issue as the charter bus changes," Carey said during a breakout session devoted to state representatives reporting their experiences implementing the IRP bus program.

Carey said he got questions like: "Who did this?" "Why were we not told earlier?" "Why do I have to pay additional fees?" and, perhaps the most common question, "Are school buses included?"

As regular readers of *Bus & Motorcoach News* know, extension

of IRP provisions to the charter and school bus industries has been an issue for a half-dozen years.

In 2011, the industry beat back an effort to add charter buses to the plan but advocates for including buses didn't give up. Finally, in December 2013 (see Dec. 15, 2013, *Bus & Motorcoach News*) the states and provinces that compose the IRP adopted the biggest change to the plan in more than two decades by voting to adopt a full reciprocity plan for truckers and bus operators that join the plan.

That meant that when full reciprocity took effect last year, every

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Electronic credentials: Heading for a bus near you?

OKLAHOMA CITY — Efforts by state licensing and registration officials to develop "electronic credentials" that would replace "cab cards" and windshield decals are back on the front burner.

At the annual meeting of the International Registration Plan here last month, those pushing for electronic credentials unveiled the outline of a plan for developing digital cab cards and decals.

The idea of transitioning from paper commercial vehicle registration and compliance documents to electronic versions — that are essentially images on a smartphone, tablet or computer screen — has been a topic of conversation in the enforcement and carrier industries for going on five years.

Two and a half years ago, a proposal that would have allowed electronic credentialing failed to

receive enough votes from IRP members to move forward.

Changing the International Registration Plan requires a three-quarters "yes" vote from the organization's 59 state and provincial members. The ballot measure that would have allowed electronic credentialing came up 10 percentage points short. It was approved by about 65 percent of the voters.

The International Fuel Tax As-

sociation, which administers the International Fuel Tax Agreement, also is wrestling with the issue of changing that organization's credential for commercial vehicles to a digital form and possibly eliminating its longstanding decals.

It is generally conceded that the biggest stumbling block to electronic credentials is law enforcement personnel and agencies.

Commercial vehicle enforce-

ment inspectors like decals and cab cards because they can visually check compliance without getting in the vehicle or dealing with a driver.

Compliance officers also have resisted any electronic credentials that would require them to handle a driver electronic device. In other words, enforcement personnel don't want to have to take hold of and manipulate a driver's smartphone or

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THE DOCKET

House members encourage FMCSA to back off safety rule

WASHINGTON — A group of 36 members of the U.S. House sent a letter to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration urging the agency to halt work on its new Safety Fitness Determination carrier rating system pending congressionally mandated reforms to the Compliance, Safety, Accountability program.

The representatives' letter, sent to FMCSA Acting Administrator Scott Darling last month, follows a long line of letters and comments from industry groups raising concerns over the agency's procession with the proposed rule based on flawed CSA data.

The members of Congress, as well as transportation industry leaders, point out that the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, passed in December, directs FMCSA to reform CSA before approving any new rules based on the controversial program.

The proposed Safety Fitness Determination rule would change the agency's three-tier rating system (satisfactory, conditional, unsatisfactory) to a two-tier system: authorized to operate or unfit. The rule would also more heavily tie

that safety fitness determination to data derived from roadside inspections and violations, like CSA's Safety Measurement System.

Spirit of the law

The 36 lawmakers, all Republicans, argued in their letter that even if the SFD rule isn't in direct violation of FAST Act stipulations, it does violate the spirit of the law and the required overhaul of the CSA program.

"While you are in the process of implementing the FAST Act re-

forms, it is inconceivable that you would propose using the same data and analysis Congress has agreed is faulty in a new safety fitness determination methodology," the lawmakers wrote, adding that the CSA reforms should be "fully completed" before the new carrier rating methodology is formed.

FMCSA, however, has said it's well within its legal boundaries to produce the Safety Fitness rule, despite the required CSA reforms in the FAST Act. In a media briefing, FMCSA's head of compli-

ance, Joe DeLorenzo, said the rule does not make use of the most questionable parts of CSA — the percentile rankings and alerts, which were pulled from public view by the FAST Act — and that the rule would expand FMCSA's ability to target high-risk carriers.

Industry groups and lawmakers have consistently disagreed, with several major transportation industry organizations filing a series of letters with FMCSA and Congress.

The United Motorcoach Asso-

ciation organized a coalition of groups representing the commercial motor carrier industry to encourage Congress to block the Safety Fitness Determination rule. UMA suggested that language be added to the fiscal 2017 transportation-funding bill that would prevent FMCSA from using federal funds to implement the new system.

In April, a group of 33 members of Congress sent a letter to House leadership asking them to take up the matter in the upcoming legislation.

Most major industry groups, including the American Trucking Associations, have joined UMA in opposing the rule.

ABA has concerns

The American Bus Association has yet to sign on, but is considering it, its leader told *Bus & Motorcoach News*.

"We are currently preparing our comments to reflect the industry view and share our deep concerns regarding the initial proposal, but appreciate that it is early in the rulemaking process," ABA President and CEO Peter J. Pantuso said in an email.

"We believe FMCSA is not in line with the spirit and intent of the FAST Act provision concerning regulatory proposals. We are maintaining an ongoing dialog with appropriate congressional offices who are also monitoring the proposal."

In response to industry concerns about the rule, FMCSA agreed earlier this year to extend the public comment period on the proposal for 60 days. Final comments on those comments are due June 23.

State inspections proposed by feds

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is considering requiring states to establish annual inspection programs for commercial motor vehicles used to transport passengers.

FMCSA said it plans to assess the risks associated with improperly maintained or inspected CMVs designed or used to transport passengers; the effectiveness of existing federal inspection standards in mitigating the risks associated with improperly maintained

vehicles and ensuring safe and proper operation; and the costs and benefits of a mandatory inspection program.

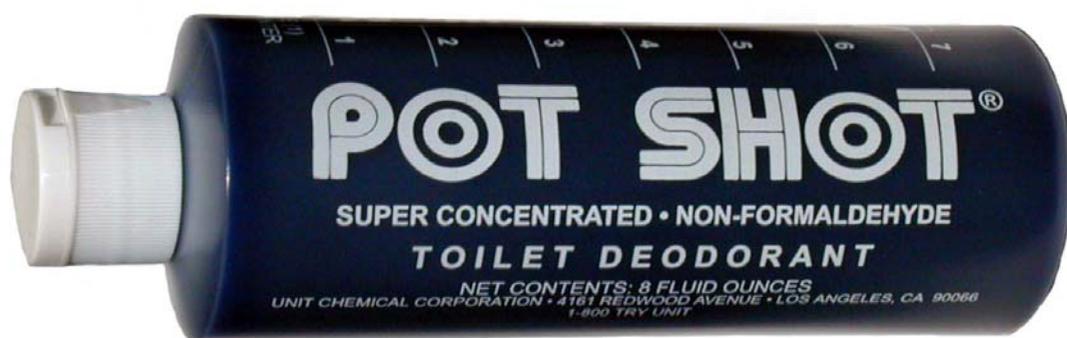
The agency said the program for annual inspections would apply to commercial motor vehicles designed or used to transport passengers, including motorcoaches, school buses, mini-buses and 9- to 15-passenger vans.

FMCSA is encouraging parties with knowledge of the industry and existing state inspection programs to provide information about the

impact such a rule would have on current regulations, operating costs, business practices, safety and any other areas that would be affected by a rule requiring states to establish inspection programs.

Public comments are being accepted through June 27.

For more information or to read the proposed rule and to submit comments, go to: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/04/27/2016-09846/state-inspection-programs-for-passenger-carrier-vehicles>.



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N.Y. bridge, toll freeze funded by bank settlements

NEW YORK CITY — The replacement for the Tappan Zee Bridge, which is rising out of the waters of the Hudson River 27 miles north of New York City, is called “The New NY Bridge” by Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

A better name might be the BNP Paribas Bridge or the Global Banking Malefactors Bridge, said E.J. McMahon, president of the Empire Center for Public Policy, a research group that advocates for less government spending.

In the past two state budgets, Cuomo and the New York Legislature have allocated \$2 billion in

bank settlement money to the New York State Thruway Authority to pay for a new \$4 billion span and to freeze tolls on the Thruway’s 570-mile system through 2020.

The windfall is limiting the authority’s need to borrow for the 3.1-mile bridge connecting Rockland and Westchester counties, which is expected to be completed in 2018.

At the same time, it’s allowing the Thruway Authority to put off toll increases to back that project and billions of dollars in other borrowing needed for roads and bridges.

The Thruway Authority has been the biggest recipient of \$8.3 billion of settlement funds New York has collected from 15 banks and insurance companies for offenses, including transactions on behalf of countries such as Iran and Sudan that are subject to U.S. embargoes.

The biggest chunk, \$3.6 billion, has come from BNP Paribas, France’s largest bank, which in 2014 agreed to plead guilty for violating sanctions. In addition to settlement funds and its own bond sales, the Thruway Authority also is using a \$1.6 billion federal loan

to finance the new bridge.

The bank settlement cash has enabled the authority, which oversees one of the longest U.S. toll roads, to subsidize drivers’ fees that already are low compared with its peers. The Tappan Zee Bridge’s current \$5 passenger-car tolls are a third less than the \$15 it costs to cross the George Washington Bridge or take the Holland and Lincoln tunnels from New Jersey to New York.

On the thruway itself, passenger cars pay 5 cents per mile. That compares with 13 cents for cars on the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

“The thruway is a vital artery for commerce and transportation, and that’s why the governor has frozen tolls until at least 2020 and established a task force to look closely at the issue before increased tolls impact anyone’s cost of living,” said Morris Peters, a spokesman for Cuomo’s budget division.

The task force set up in November has yet to meet. The Tappan Zee opened in 1955 and was built to last 50 years. It carries 138,000 vehicles a day, 40 percent more than its original design intended, clogging traffic, according to the Thruway Authority.

Pa. raises speed limit on 800 miles of roads

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Drivers can now zip along most of the Pennsylvania Turnpike at 70 mph and keep cruising that fast on most of Interstate 380.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission and state Department of Transportation announced permanent increases in the speed limit to 396 more miles of turnpike and 400 miles of interstates, including almost all of the turnpike’s northeast extension through Lackawanna and Luzerne counties.

As part of a pilot program experimenting with higher speed limits, PennDOT raised the limit from 65 mph to 70 mph in the

summer of 2014 on I-380 between its junction with I-84 in Lackawanna County and Exit 3, the Mount Pocono/Pocono Pines/Route 940 interchange in Monroe County.

The interchange is about 2½ miles north of I-80. About 242 miles of I-80 now have a 70 mph limit, including a 52-mile stretch between Union and Columbia counties.

Penn State University transportation researchers studied the effects of the higher limit and found no increases in average speeds or accidents due to the higher limit, PennDOT spokesman James May said.

The researchers found similar effects on the turnpike. Turnpike officials said 493 of the turnpike’s 552 miles will have a 70 mph limit. The only spots on the northeast extension — known as I-476 — that won’t have a 70 mph limit are the approaches to toll plazas that stretch across the extension just south of the Wyoming Valley interchange in Luzerne County and near Keyser Avenue in Taylor in Lackawanna County.

The same goes for the approaches to construction zones and the highway’s five tunnels. No other local PennDOT-owned interstate will have speed limits higher

than 55 or 65 mph.

Two potential spots for a 70 mph limit were I-81 north of Clarks Summit and I-84 to the New York state line. The highways’ curvature, mountainous terrain and instances of heavy fog worked against increasing the speed limit from 55 or 65 mph, research concluded.

So did the fact that the same interstates in New York still have 65 mph limits. Stretches of interstate that pass cities such as Scranton and Wilkes-Barre are considered too congested with traffic to increase speed limits from 55 mph, May said.

CVSA Roadcheck starts June 7

GREENBELT, Md. — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance’s 29th annual International Roadcheck is coming to a highway near you in a week.

This year’s Roadcheck will focus on tire safety.

During the annual inspection blitz, which will take place from June 7 to 9, approximately 10,000 CVSA-certified local, state, provincial, territorial and federal inspectors in jurisdictions across North America will perform large truck and bus safety inspections.

International Roadcheck is the largest targeted-enforcement program on commercial motor vehicles in the world, with nearly 17 trucks or buses inspected, on average, every minute in Canada, the United States and Mexico during a 72-hour period. During the event, inspectors conduct compliance, enforcement and educational initiatives targeted at various elements of motor carrier, vehicle and driver safety.

Each year, International Roadcheck places special emphasis on a category of violations. The special emphasis for 2016 is tire safety, meaning inspectors will measure tire tread depth, check tire pressure, check to make sure no items are lodged between dual tires, and examine the overall condition of tires to ensure no deep cuts or bulges exist in the sidewalls.

While checking a vehicle’s tires is always part of roadside inspections, CVSA is highlighting tire safety as a reminder to drivers and carriers.

During International Roadcheck, inspectors primarily conduct the North American Standard Level 1 Inspection.

For more information, visit http://cvsa.org/programs/int_roadcheck.php.

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What to look for when choosing a charter booking system

By *Distinctive Systems*

There comes a time when motorcoach operators realize that their current charter booking and management systems no longer align with their long-term operational and growth strategies.

Or, even truer for some, they realize that pen and paper no longer is an option.

So what do you look for in a charter booking and management platform when determining what system will best handle your quotation and sales, operations and dispatch, payroll and accounting, and reporting needs?

Think Longevity

When selecting a new charter booking and management system, it is important to understand if that system is built utilizing some of the latest technology on a solid foundation and if it is developed

for the future.

A system that is developed with a Microsoft SQL Server database not only ensures you are on the cutting edge in technology, but also gives you assurance that it will be around and supported as your business continues to grow.

The SQL Server will be able to handle as many simultaneous users as are required for your company, along with providing stunning performance with unparalleled reliability and security to your information.

Are you getting the latest?

How often is the product updated? Are these enhancements included or do they require additional costs? Similar to longevity, the question needs to be asked if your chosen software is going to grow with your company.

Modern charter booking and management systems should pro-

vide multiple product enhancements over the years and be supported by an internal professional staff of programmers. Support staff should be active in learning your operations and finding recommendations on future development considerations.

Will it be supported?

Does your chosen vendor offer unlimited support and what does that entail? Look for a company that provides world-class support, along with advanced support tools, ongoing education webinars and available knowledge-based articles, as well as an annual user group meeting.

It is not uncommon for a company to have an annual maintenance plan required for support services, which will give you peace of mind knowing that your issues can be handled quickly and effectively.

Integrations available?

Modern charter booking and management systems should be able to integrate with a variety of services to include GPS Provides (Saucon Technologies, FleetComplete, FleetMatics, XRS Corporation, Zonar Systems, among others); mapping systems, including Google; lead generation tools like BusRates.com; and accounting and revenue control programs such as QuickBooks and Authorize.net.

These types of integrations not only provide ease of use for your sales, operations and administrative staff, they also increase the operational efficiency of your motorcoach operation.

Communication increased?

As the industry is continually shaped by communication challenges, you need to ask whether a new charter booking and management system will help your cus-

tomers and drivers feel more connected.

Systems that allow for Mobile Work Tickets and other tools such as pre-departure and follow-up emails (thank you notes) can strengthen the communication between drivers, customers, operations and maintenance staff, ultimately increasing your charter operation's effectiveness and customer facing image.

In addition to receiving a demo and understanding on how the system will work in your company, these are the questions to be asking when making that final long-term decision.

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Hotels struggle with guest demands for Wi-Fi bandwidth

David Kong
Best Western International

It wasn't too long ago that the telephone department was a profit center for hotels — local and long-distance access charges, surcharges for long distance, charges for fax, etc.

However, as cellphones and emails became mainstream and consumers stopped using telephones in guestrooms or fax service, the telephone department quickly became a cost center.

Similarly, consider Internet access. At first, hoteliers charged for the amenity to cover their costs. However, in order to meet consumer expectations — even McDonald's restaurants offer free Wi-Fi — hoteliers were compelled to

provide free high-speed Internet access, which has become another cost center.

But the analysis does not stop there. The incessant demand for bandwidth is mind-boggling. Our guests want to do more and more with their devices, including streaming audio and videos and making voice calls over IP.

Consider that the major media companies allow on-demand streaming of their programs and they are buying up one another to offer even more content. It's no wonder we struggle to keep up with bandwidth expectations.

Making the matter even worse, the number of devices in each room has also grown exponentially. Each guest will likely have two to five devices, and often there are

multiple occupants in our rooms.

Internet issues

With this backdrop, it is no wonder that JD Power's "2015 North America hotel guest satisfaction index study" reports that "Internet remains the highest incidence problem across all hotel segments."

The percentage of guests experiencing Internet issues at hotels (31 percent) is almost twice the percentage of the next area of significant complaint, which is the checkout process (16 percent).

Given the strong correlation between access to a reliable and fast Internet connection and guest satisfaction, hoteliers are forced to continuously invest in higher bandwidth and more sophisticated equipment

to allocate bandwidth. Many hoteliers struggle with how they can offset this ever-increasing cost.

It is interesting that midscale hotel chains were the first to offer free high-speed Internet access to compete. Upper-upscale and luxury hotel chains begrudgingly acquiesced a few years ago and introduced tiered pricing, which offers basic Wi-Fi to all guests for free with an option to pay a fee for a faster connection or additional devices.

So far, there has not been much backlash from guests for the optional fee (but for these hotels the Wi-Fi fee is only a fraction of the room rate).

Tough questions

As we move through this year, it will be interesting to see if mid-

scale hotel chains will follow the lead and implement tiered pricing as well. To do so, we have to answer a few tough questions:

- Do we want to make investments in the necessary equipment to do the accounting and billing of tiered pricing, or should we simply spend the money on increasing the bandwidth to meet guest expectations and accept the harsh reality?

- Can we deliver a premium Wi-Fi experience throughout a hotel consistently to justify charging extra for it?

- Should we consider guests' perspective that access to the Internet should be free?

David Kong is president and CEO of Best Western International. This article first appeared in Hotel News Now.

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How to avoid booty bashing when turning right in a bus

By Dave Millhouser

I've always been cheap, and the opportunity to visit two European cities for \$500 was hard to resist.

That was round-trip airfare, lodging, ground transportation and meals. No matter that the cities were Moscow and Leningrad — and it was winter. What could go wrong?

So, back in the 1970s when “detente” with the Soviet Union made it possible, my dad and I jumped on a Pan Am 707 and headed east.

We got to our hotel, the nearly new Rossiya. For those of you less versed in the language, “nearly new” is Russian for “almost complete.”

The bar wasn't finished and we wanted a drink and were told that the nearest available adult beverage was in the historic Metropole Hotel. While no taxis were available, “arrangements could be made.”

We wandered outside and were picked up by — a hearse.

The driver worked for a funeral home and moonlighted by transporting people around in a state-

owned hearse.

After a drive so long and convoluted that we thought we were in a spy movie, he dropped us at the Metropole.

A bit nervous about getting back to our hotel, we asked him to wait, and shaking his head he nodded across Red Square, pointing to the Rossiya, which was visible only a few blocks away.

Apparently Moscow, like some European cities, didn't permit left turns, so we'd meandered several kilometers and numerous right turns to travel a couple of blocks as the crow flies.

And that's how I learned that left turns are different than right turns. Each has its charms and perils. Left turns have that nasty oncoming traffic, which may be why Europe dislikes them so much.

Turn to the right and it's a different kettle of fish. Drive axles seem lethargic, and take a serious short cut. Rear duals may be lazy, but they're mean, flattening unwary people or cars that get in their way.

If that wasn't tricky enough, getting a 45-foot bus around a tight turn means that the rear end is

swinging outside the dual wheels' track. This multitasking allows a clever coach to wreak havoc on both sides at once.

In an effort to protect pedestrians, some cities (New York in particular) are being extremely aggressive in enforcing all sorts of traffic laws. It has reached the point where, in the event of an accident, the bus driver is often presumed guilty.

At least one was hauled off to jail for an accident in which it was later determined that the victim had ignored traffic signals and wandered into the bus's path. That may be a bit over the top, but avoiding accidents seems like a good thing.

There are a couple of things that can help, and pointing out stuff you already know makes me look smart.

Know what bus you're driving. Different wheelbases and how sharply the steering axle turns make a difference in how you set up a turn. Does the tag axle steer? (If so, your right rear bumper may range farther looking for prey.)

Mixing new 30-foot and 35-foot coaches into a fleet means the

first few turns might require a bit of thought.

Take attendance. As you set up the turn, scan the sidewalk for potential victims. The inattentive ones are easiest. A gaggle of texting teens wearing ear-buds is a target rich environment.

Use your directional signals. This isn't “Hunger Games,” so play fair.

Modern coaches have remotely adjusted mirrors. Use those jewels. In congested areas, aim them to cover the most dangerous areas. You can't eliminate blind spots, but you can move them to less relevant points.

Use both mirrors. Don't forget that the left corner of a 45-foot bus swings outside the radius and can do some serious booty bashing.

When you swing wide, cars and pedestrians sometimes try to cut inside your track (WHAT are they thinking?). I have no idea what to do. I'm just reminding you that it happens.

Know what's behind you. If you misjudge the turn and have to back up, check first. I hate those mystery crunches.

Go slow. It gives you more time to spot lurking solid objects and offers the distracted and infirm a sporting chance to scurry out of the way. And take time to enjoy watching them scramble. We old guys are particularly entertaining.

Riding through Moscow we were surprised at how carefully and smoothly our driver negotiated the streets, scrupulously obeying traffic laws. Eventually we realized that was because he was terrified of the consequences of a traffic stop. How could he explain that the guys in the back of his hearse were alive?

It's tempting to do a sequel to this column. Left turns deserve some respect too. After careful consideration there seems no demand (or even tolerance) on the part of the industry for that.

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



Dave Millhouser

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New MCI engineering team provides technical expertise

DES PLAINES, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries recently launched a new engineering team dedicated to supporting MCI technical staff in the field — a move intended to improve customer service and identify issues engineers can use to more quickly modify coach systems and designs in the factory.

MCI created the Design Engineering Field Support Team (DEFS) to work with the company's 26 Technical Solutions Managers (TSMs) positioned throughout North America as front-line contacts for customers.

TSMs provide technical expertise and other assistance to customers, but if issues arise requiring additional expertise or operators want to customize fleet software, for example, TSMs now have a direct line to DEFS.

"We thought that if we could get a closer relationship between them (TSMs) and our engineering staff, it would really help us getting better proactively with new designs coming out," said Bryan Couch, vice president and general manager of operations for MCI manufacturing plants.

"At the same time, we also

have seen an increase in the electronics and the programming of the vehicles," he said.

For example, if a customer taking delivery of a coach wants his outside lights to illuminate when the entry door opens and the coach wasn't delivered that way, an engineer could modify the coach software to make that happen. MCI is getting more requests for customized features because vehicles today have that software capability, Couch said.

"So we thought that would be another reason to have this dedicated team that could work really close with our TSMs to help improve our products, serve our customers better and then in the instance where there is a challenging technical issue in the field, then these guys (TSMs) would know exactly who to call, they could talk face to face and already have a relationship set up and from that we think we're getting much quicker solutions also to our costumers," Couch said.

Three DEFS engineers plus a supervisor are dedicated to the TSMs and have expertise in electrical systems and coach program-

'The challenge we've had is getting real fast direct information back into the factory...'

ming, ride and drive systems, and interior and exterior components.

Assembly line link

Beyond helping TSMs when needed, DEFS provide a direct link to the assembly line. When they see an issue through the TSMs, they can quickly address that for new coaches in the factory, where the engineers are based.

"The challenge we've had is getting real fast direct information back into the factory...so we can make those changes on future products," Couch said.

And it's not all software and electronics.

"Maybe we need to change a lubrication point or something," Couch said. "It's all about refining what we have, so the TSMs may notice our customers' mechanics have a hard time getting at an area that they have

to service frequently, so that information can get fed back in."

TSMs have an intimate knowledge of vehicles' use, he said, "and we're trying to get that knowledge into our engineering organization."

MCI, which was acquired by Winnipeg-based New Flyer Industries Inc. in December, set the plans in motion for the DEFS team last August during its strategic planning, Couch said. The team was announced internally in March and publicly in April.

Besides adding the engineers to create the DEFS team, MCI also added five TSMs this year, said Wolfgang Winzer, MCI vice president and general manager of after-market operations. Of the 26 TSMs, 15 are dedicated to private-sector operators in the U.S. and Canada and 11 to the public sector.

The DEFS team formation was driven by MCI's private-sector business and customer feedback, Winzer said.

"Some of the customer satisfaction surveys that we've done in the recent past have shown us that there is room for improvements in that area and we tend to react to the

voice of the customer and actually wanted to really provide that additional layer of service to those private customers," he said.

Brent Maitland, vice president of marketing and product planning for MCI, said the DEFS team is part of a comprehensive approach the company is taking to transform the way it provides service and support to customers. The goal is a much higher level.

Market research showed MCI was perceived as best in class in service and support overall, which was pleasing, Maitland said.

"But we also learned ... there are some areas where we can get even better, more responsive," he said. "There are a lot of initiatives we put in place from more parts stocking, better parts pricing, getting rid of parts-order minimums — that's the parts side. And this really takes it to the next level on the service, support and sort of the field technical side of it, so it's really part of a broad vision."

Added Couch, "A lot of this is proactive so that the products continue to get better and better and better from this relationship between the engineers and the TSMs."

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Rose Chauffeured Transportation now part of Trailways

FAIRFAX, Va. — Charlotte, N.C.-based Rose Chauffeured Transportation has joined the Trailways Transportation System.

“We are most pleased to add this Carolina star to our team,” said Ron Moore, chairman of Trailways and president of Burlington Trailways in Iowa.

“The company’s 30-plus years of award-winning operating expe-

rience in the transportation industry and impressive fleet of vehicles will enhance our ability to serve customers from an important region on the East Coast.”

Rose was founded in 1985 by the Thompson family as a limousine company specializing in transportation for weddings. It had only three employees.

Since then, Rose Trailways has

grown to more 100 employees and a fleet of 50 vehicles that includes full-size motorcoaches, minibuses, vans, SUVs and sedans. The company’s major service markets now include corporations, schools and professional sports teams.

“We’ve gone from being a Rolls limousine company in the 1980s that specialized in weddings to a full-service provider with an

array of vehicle services for our varied customer base,” said general manager Tom Holden. “We still do personal events but they are no longer exclusive in our operations.”

Holden said Rose’s Trailways affiliation joins two important brands in the motorcoach industry.

“Trailways is a brand with 80 years of success behind it, and Rose is a leading brand in the Car-

olinas with recognition as one of the South’s top 100 small businesses and 31 years in the business,” he said.

“We are the largest in our region, so it made great business sense to bring these two powerful brands together with this partnership. We believe Team Trailways can assist us in expanding business outside our region.”

ABC Companies receives environment and safety award

WINTER GARDEN, Fla. — The Winter Garden location of ABC Companies has received the Environment & Safety Elite Award from the Clean Auto Alliance.

ABC joins a select group of automotive, truck and equipment

dealerships and service companies that have demonstrated dedication to excellence in regards to overall concern for their community, employees and customers.

“The goal of the Environment & Safety Elite Award is to reward

automotive businesses that go above and beyond simply complying with environmental, health and safety regulations,” said Eric Schmitz, board chairman of the Clean Auto Alliance.

“More and more often, con-

sumers prefer to do business with companies that value good environmental practices and the safety of their employees.

“That’s a big competitive advantage that these businesses deserve to have.”

ABC activities that led to the award included preserving the local environment by properly disposing of waste, minimizing emissions and utilizing air conditioning equipment that protects the ozone layer.

People

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — The Motorcoach Marketing Council named new officers during its semi-annual board meeting in Philadelphia.

The new officers are:

- President/Chair: *Jeff Rogers* of **First Class Tours** in Houston
- Vice President: *Scott Riccio*

of **Northeast Charter & Tour** in Lewiston, Maine

- Secretary/Treasurer: *Michelle Petelicki* of **Panorama Tours** in Clifton, N.J.

- Ex-Officio: *Peter Shelbo* of **Tour West America** in Phoenix

In addition, *Andrea Lorentz* of **Great Canadian Holidays** joined the board, and the **Ontario Motor Coach Association** was awarded a fourth standing board position,

joining the **United Motorcoach Association**, the **International Motorcoach Group** and the **American Bus Association**.

Doug Switzer, president and CEO of the Ontario Motor Coach Association, will be its appointed board member.

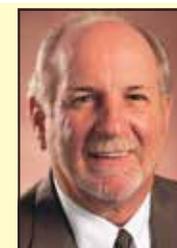
FARIBAULT, Minn. — **ABC Companies** has announced the appointment of *Joe Lunny* as transit

bus and service sales specialist for the Eastern region of the U.S.

Lunny brings more than 25 years of bus sales and management experience to ABC, most recently as Southeast regional sales manager at **New Flyer Industries**. He also was owner and CEO of the first commercial-only **Blue Bird** bus dealership in New England.

Lunny will be serving customers east of the Mississippi River,

working with industry veteran *Jim Morrison*, who manages the Western region. They are teamed with two dealerships in the sales and service of **New Flyer** transit buses.



Joe Lunny

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IRP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

vehicle registered under the IRP automatically qualified every year for registration purposes to operate in all of the 48 contiguous states, the District of Columbia, and the 10 Canadian provinces.

Full extension of the plan to charter bus operators, however, was delayed by one year (to Jan. 1, 2016) to give the industry time to adapt and plan for the change.

The primary argument for eliminating the decades-long motorcoach exemption held that because charter buses use the same roads and bridges as trucks, truck-tractors and non-chartered motor buses they shouldn't be exempt from IRP registration.

"Charter buses engaged are subject to (the same) regulatory requirements as trucks, truck-tractors and other motor buses, including USDOT, International Fuel

Tax Agreement, and Unified Carrier Registration requirements," said the proponents.

The lure of full reciprocity is that it provides greater travel flexibility for truck and bus companies, supposedly saving time and money spent on administrative issues.

For example, there is no need for trip permits for IRP vehicles, no estimated miles and no fee for adding a new state in the middle of a year.

The trade-off, of course, is higher fees to purchase apportioned plates.

However, all vehicles in a fleet do not have to have IRP plates, only those that travel interstate. There is still the option for a carrier to purchase a trip permit in lieu of having IRP.

Generally, that option is only feasible for carriers that make few trips outside their base state. Otherwise it is often costly and cumbersome to trip-permit all the time

for those companies that operate interstate on a regular basis.

When contemplating which vehicles require apportioned tags and those that can get by with base-state plates, operators should consider contingencies, such as out-of-state breakdowns. Operators could find themselves short of apportioned buses when they are needed on short notice.

Several state IRP representatives reported they had developed outreach programs — before the Jan. 1 deadline — to educate charter and school bus operators about the program.

"We pushed out to motorcoach companies," said a representative from Maryland. "We answered questions. We had no issues."

Identifying bus companies that would become subject to the plan was an issue in some states. In Nebraska, state IRP officials went to the local office of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administra-

tion and got a list of companies.

"We sent letters. We got a few phone calls. It was relatively painless," the Nebraska representative reported.

Many of the questions directed to state officials had to do with private school buses. Generally, school buses used strictly to transport children to and from school do not have to register under IRP.

However, those school buses used for charter purposes do.

Some of those attending the charter bus session speculated that because the implementation went so smoothly — "too smoothly," said one — a shoe may be ready to drop somewhere.

Enforcement may be that shoe.

There was speculation that some bus operators may not have bothered to register under IRP because of the widespread reluctance of state troopers and other commercial vehicle enforcement personnel to stop buses, especially charter and

school buses, to verify correct registration and plates. Such operators may think they can skate by on their old base-state plates.

"Nobody likes stopping buses," said a representative from Oklahoma. "They leave 'em alone. I'm sure there's not rigid enforcement."

Eventually, commercial vehicle inspectors may discover IRP scofflaws.

So, have bus operators signed up for IRP?

General numbers are not yet available, but the IRP state representative from New York said that the number of IRP-registered bus operators in that state went from around 40 to nearly 100.

The New York representative also reported they were going after IRP scofflaws. By coordinating with enforcement agencies, the state Department of Motor Vehicles is policing vehicles by having officers stop buses after they drop off children and passengers.

Electronic

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

tablet to view credentials.

But while electronic cab cards did not receive official sanction in late 2013 voting, IRP Inc., the plan administrative organization, pledged to initiate formal planning for the eventuality.

Those attending the IRP meeting here last month were briefed on potential concepts developed during the past nine months.

James Poe, deputy commissioner of the Indiana Department of Revenue and a long-time champion of electronic credentials, walked attendees through the preliminary concepts.

Electronic credentials are favored by advocates for a variety of reasons, including an expected improvement in compliance, increased compliance revenue, enhanced ability of enforcement personnel to cross-check credentials, upgraded ability to identify at-risk carriers, and a speed-up of renewals.

At the same time, some states

are concerned about a possible loss of revenue from decal sales (18 states currently charge for decals); the cost of implementing a real-time electronic credentialing system; and the ability to deliver quality and timely data quickly and reliably.

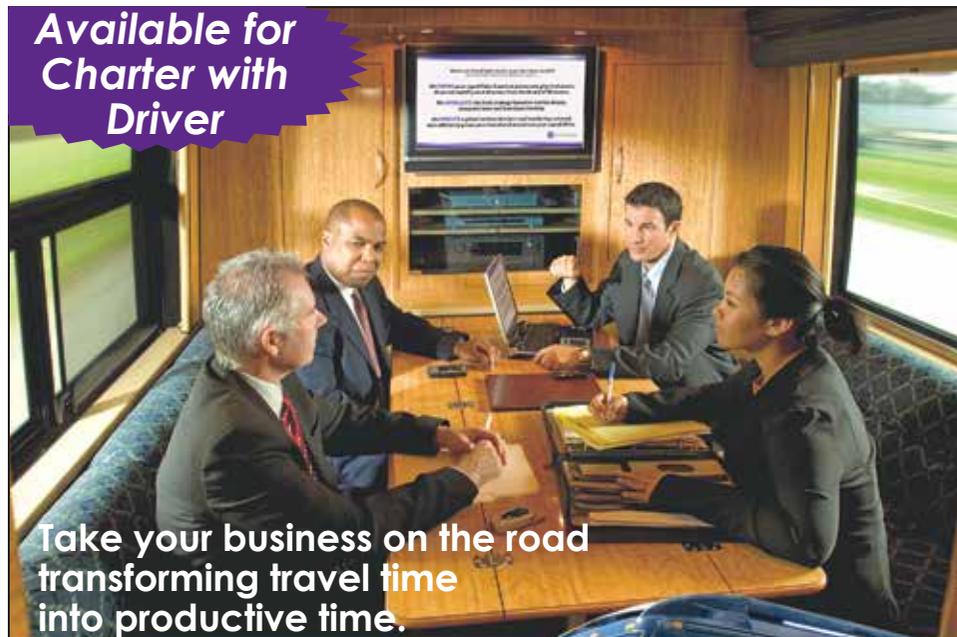
For the industry, electronic credentials would eliminate the time and cost needed to distribute cre-

denials to vehicles, level the playing field by better assuring everybody pays their fair share, and improve bypass rates.

IFTA decals are distributed annually to carriers, and failure to display them is probable cause for stopping a vehicle and grounds for a fine.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ►

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Coalition pushing safety regulations for self-driving cars

SAN FRANCISCO — A group of companies that includes Alphabet Inc.'s Google, Ford Motor Co. and Uber Technologies Inc. are forming a coalition to advocate for safety regulations for self-driving cars and to help bring them to American roads.

The group, which also includes Volvo Cars and Lyft Inc., aims to work with lawmakers, regulators and the public to "realize the safety and societal benefits of self-driving vehicles," according to a

statement.

Some 1.3 million people die every year in traffic accidents, many of them young people, according to a statement from Uber.

"Self-driving cars can help save millions of lives," the company said.

Autonomous cars will make

roads in the United States safer and less congested, according to the group, but "one clear set of federal standards" is needed to help facilitate bringing the vehicles to market.

One of the group's first tasks will be to work with civic organizations, municipalities and busi-

nesses to accomplish that goal, according to the statement.

"Fully autonomous vehicles will help people travel more safely and efficiently, as well as facilitate mobility for those currently unable to drive," Ford said in a separate statement.

David Strickland, a former ad-

ministrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, will serve as the coalition's counsel and spokesman.

"Eventually, the world will move to one where autonomous vehicles are a major mode of transportation," said Taggart Matthiesen, a director of product at Lyft.

Electronic

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Large fleets, especially, don't like the decals because putting stickers on dozens of vehicles and making sure they do not get bleached out by the sun or washed off during cleaning is a chore. Maintaining the decals can be an issue even for small carriers.

There may be growing sentiment, especially among younger operators, enforcement personnel and state administrators, that while decals on vehicles have been the accepted standard for indicating a carrier is registered since the 1980s, technology has changed to the point some believe it is time to move on.

A top official with the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, attending the IRP meeting, said that Millennial-age roadside inspectors and officers (those between 21 and 34) "expect it to be electronic. The resistance has been from the older enforcement folks."

One concept being considered would be a system in which credentials are digitized when created or renewed and uploaded by carriers, IFTA, IRP and others to a cloud repository that would be accessible by enforcement officials. The interface for officers would be as simple as possible, providing them green/red, OK-suspended/revoked/not paid messages.

A key aspect of the proposed system is a roadside response time by enforcement officers of 15 seconds.

The system also would be capable of handling high-volume renewals, trip permits and file downloads.

Advocates are confident data and system vendors can develop such a system.

Pressing ahead with such a system will require another vote by IRP members, plus — in the words of Poe — "a lot of work."

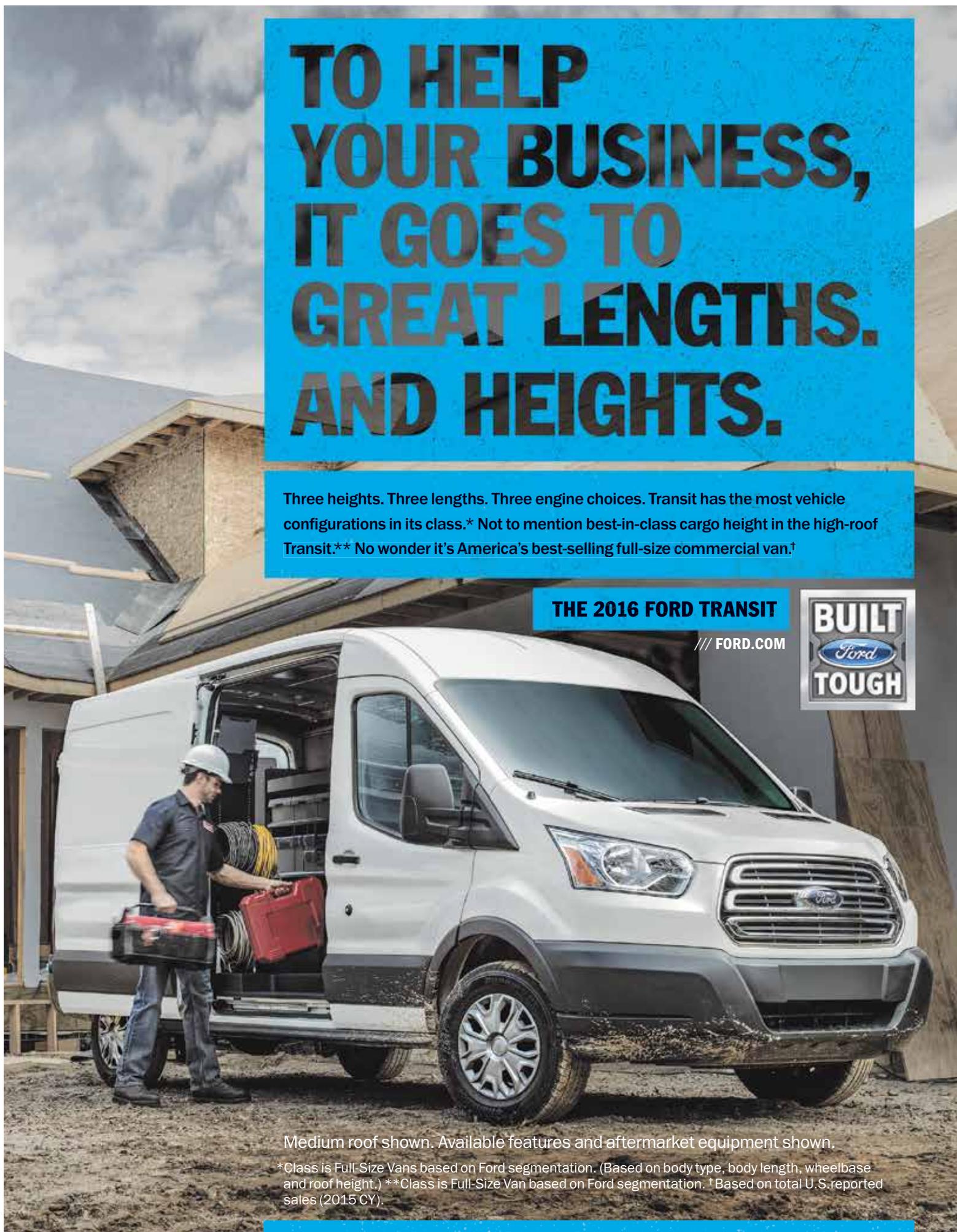
But given that electronic credentials are becoming, or have become, ubiquitous in other areas of life, can they be too far away for buses and trucks and their owners, operators and regulators?

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Women operators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

work for a transportation company.

“That company went into bankruptcy and I had this established clientele. I thought that I needed to do this on my own. I said to myself, ‘This can’t be too hard.’ Biggest mistake I made!”

Libby’s company operates 45 pieces of equipment, including activity buses and minibuses as well as motorcoaches.

“I started Cavalier Coach from nothing,” she said. “We have kept growing, thank God, and I guess I like the excitement. We do a good job — I’m not blowing my own horn, but we give good service. We listen to complaints and act on them. We are about the clients and I think that comes across because we have a phenomenal amount of repeat business.”

Autumn Dipert Brown joined the management team at her family’s business a quarter-century ago, but only after spending nine years in a successful banking career.

“I was working in Houston for what was then the fourth-largest bank in the U.S. I was the youngest female vice president at the bank,” Brown said.

About the time she completed an MBA in accounting and finance and was ready to return to work, the Texas banking industry turned sour.

“I was 32 years old and the jobs I was being offered would have put me on the road 50 weeks a year,” she said. “I didn’t want to be doing the job of a 24-year-old.”

Family ties

Meanwhile her father’s business, Dan Dipert Travel & Transportation in Arlington, Texas, came calling.

“My family needed me and I needed them. I have stuck around,” said Brown, who serves as chief operating officer of the 17-coach carrier. “Most women joining the industry are coming into their family business like I did.”

In 1990 it was rare to see a woman in an industry meeting, she said.

“When I started going to the UMA Expo, I would be the only woman in the room,” she said. “The whole world was more sexist then. When I was in banking it was sexist. When I first came into the motorcoach business it was sexist. Things have changed for everybody.”

While the transportation business was somewhat of a fallback career, Brown has come to enjoy it.



Autumn Dipert Brown joined the management team at her family’s business, Dan Dipert Travel & Transportation in Arlington, Texas, a quarter-century ago, when she said the industry “was sexist. Things have changed for everybody.”

“I am making a good living. My family is making a good living. I am employing a lot of wonderful people,” she said. “Our business is providing for their families and providing a great service for our customers that I do not believe they would get if we were not in the picture. I am contributing to the industry in a lot of big ways. Why would I want to leave?”

Liked the business

Milton earned a business degree in college and hoped to own a business some day. Circumstances directed her into transportation.

“I used to be director of a school grant program and hired a lot of buses. Friends started to know that I worked with bus companies and said I should put together shopping trips. Other people who needed buses would come to me, too,” she said.

“I liked the business. When I started looking into it, it seemed it wasn’t as lucrative to be a tour agent for a career as being an owner-operator. I decided to go to a UMA Expo and started asking people for information on how to get financed.”

She wrote a business plan that secured financing to purchase one bus.

“I thought I would do maybe two buses and work out of my home,” Milton said. “Then it just grew into other opportunities. Now we have a fleet of 16 buses.”

A woman running a bus company is still a relative rarity, she said.

“We deal all the time with people who assume your husband started the business. I don’t have a



Marcia Milton



Gladys Gillis



Joan Libby

CDL and don’t wish to have a CDL. That throws people off, too, because most operators come from driving.

“Most women who go into the travel and tour businesses will be tour operators without equipment. There are very few who want to go in as equipment owners.”

Milton said she feels very comfortable with her position as an industry leader. She serves on the board of directors of the United Motorcoach Association, Trailways and the National Association of Motorcoach Operators.

“I attend all the major shows and meetings,” she said. “I enjoy it. I feel I have a lot of respect in the industry.”

Opportunity knocks

Gillis, vice chairman of UMA, entered the industry in 1998 when a business partner, Becky Pritchett, saw the need for women-owned transportation companies to help private and public organizations meet contracting goals.

“My business partner had been in the taxi and limo service and had worked for some of the large operators in the region. I talked to transit companies that agreed they were having trouble meeting their minority- and women-owned business quotas,” Gillis said.

The pair’s first contract put three minibuses on the road. Starline recently hit the 100-vehicle plateau.

Gillis brought her own technical training to the motorcoach industry. After earning a degree in industrial technology, she spent 13 years in the engineering department at Boeing.

“I was a shop teacher,” she said. “I know just enough to be an irritation to my mechanics.”

Born to bus

Michelle Petelicki is another child born into the bus business.

“I have been in the industry since 2001,” she said. “My father founded Panorama Tours in 1995. When I graduated from college in 2001 he said, ‘Michelle, come help me out for a little while.’

“That little while has turned out to be a long while. I love this business.”

Panorama, based in Clifton, N.J., is a relatively small company with nine coaches, but that is enough to create plenty of work.

“Every day is different,” Petelicki said. “I don’t just sit behind a desk and do the work. I don’t like monotony. I love this business’ challenges. Overcoming them is my feel-good at the end of the day, whether it is a logistical challenge or the challenge of a customer trying to do something out of the norm and trying to find a way to make that happen.

“That is what I love about this business,” she said.

Petelicki, president and majority owner of Panorama, has experienced growing awareness that women can and do operate motorcoach companies.

“At my first few UMA Expos, vendors would talk to my husband and wouldn’t talk to me. Even a

few years back, people talking about the mechanical aspects of the business wouldn’t necessarily talk to me. If they would talk to me it would be at a level that was much lower and more basic. That has changed a lot. I find there is no difference today.”

Same as men

Being a woman in a service business may or may not bring advantages.

“I don’t know,” Brown said. “I don’t know how to describe what people think women are like. Women are the same as men — there are very sensitive, loving, nurturing men and there are very cold, hard, difficult men. I believe that is true for women, too.”

Milton said women business owners tend to “put our feelings into it a little more.”

“We are more people-oriented whereas males are more equipment-oriented. We are more nurturing by nature.”

Women may enjoy the service aspects of the business more than the joy of owning buses and maintenance shops.

“You have to be people-driven and need to cater to people’s needs,” Petelicki said. “That may have something to do with attracting women.”

Gillis said she doesn’t feel that the business is different for women.

“A lot of times people assume that women don’t have as much technical knowledge about the buses and how to set up maintenance programs,” she said. “In my experience, a lot of men don’t have that knowledge, either. You either get that experience or you find people to work for you who bring that knowledge.”

All of the women operators said females looking to get into the business should expect to work hard.

“There is a lot of sacrifice, whether you are a man or a woman,” said Libby, who is a member of the UMA board of directors.

“You don’t control your destiny. Everybody controls it for you — the bus driver, the federal government, the state government. If you can hang in there it is viable, but you are going to have to give up your home life to a point.”

Brown, who describes herself as a feminist, said women should be treated exactly the same way as men.

“But I also believe men should be treated exactly the same way as women,” she said. “The day we stop having this conversation is the day we are equal.”

Newton's Bus Service founder Alvin Newton dies at 85



Alvin Newton

GLOUCESTER, Va. — Alvin L. Newton, a 60-year veteran of the charter and tour bus industry, died last month. He was 85.

Newton's strong work ethic was evident throughout his life, starting with his first job in 1944 as a salesman and mechanic with his father, Robert Newton, and his brothers, Robert, Elton and Malvin, in the Newton Motor Company Chrysler dealership.

While working there he started Newton's Bus Service in 1953 as a

hobby. It began with a school bus that ran to the Naval Weapons Station where his wife, Lucille, worked along with many other Gloucester residents.

In 1956, Newton started the Brother's Motors International Trucks dealership with Malvin and Elton. By 1970 the bus business was his full-time occupation as it had grown to be a charter bus operation and a major carrier of employees to the Newport News Shipyard, the Naval Weapons Station

and the Surry Nuclear Power Plant.

In 1976, he started Atlantic Charter Bus Service with the help of a friend in order to expand the charters in all 50 states and Canada. Newton and his wife also established a travel agency, Newton Tours.

He sold the charter portion of his business in 1988, but within three years he was back operating a thriving charter service. Newton's Bus Service has always been a family owned and operated business, employing his brothers, a

nephew and at times each of his children.

Newton's legacy continues through his son, Warren, and grandson, Casey, as the company he founded continues to operate and serve the area today. He was a master of his trade, able to fix almost anything and generous with his skills for both friends and family.

Newton is survived by his wife of 65 years, Lucille W. Newton; sister, Virginia Gnatwosky; four children and their spouses: Elaine

and Robert Hutcheson, Diane and William McIntyre, Warren and Sabina Newton, and Annette and Mark Tamblin; nine grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

Newton was an entrepreneur and respected businessman, an active member of the Bellamy United Methodist Church and a volunteer in his community.

APTA CEO resigns; vice president named acting head

WASHINGTON — Michael P. Melaniphy has resigned as president and CEO of the American Public Transportation Association

His resignation followed consensus between the APTA executive committee and Melaniphy.

To assure a smooth transition, the board of directors appointed Richard A. White, vice president for member services, as acting president and CEO of APTA.

White previously served as APTA's chair (2004-2005) and has a distinguished career in public transportation. He has held top

management roles at New Jersey Transit, the Bay Area Rapid Transit in San Francisco and later at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in Washington, D.C.

White will lead the organization until a permanent president and CEO is selected.

APTA Chair Valarie J. McCall said Melaniphy's resignation and the appointment of White mark a new chapter of dynamic leadership for APTA, the premier association for the public transportation industry in North America.

"APTA is sharply focused on continuing its legacy as a leader that represents all modes of public transportation while advancing the future of public transportation in North America," McCall said.

"We thank Michael for his valuable service and for being a strong advocate and champion for public transit. APTA will conduct a national search and ensure that this process will be transparent as we work to appoint the next president and CEO."

McCall said the change in leadership will encourage all

APTA stakeholders, from APTA members to coalition partners, to step forward with their thoughts and suggestions for improving the association at all levels.

She said APTA is welcoming constructive input to make the association as transparent and open as possible.

"APTA and its members remain committed in their efforts to improve public transportation, which enhances the quality of life in America and makes our nation more competitive in the global marketplace. We thank the hard-

working and dedicated APTA staff as we look forward to continued collaboration and unity while we work toward building an even brighter and more mobile future for every citizen."

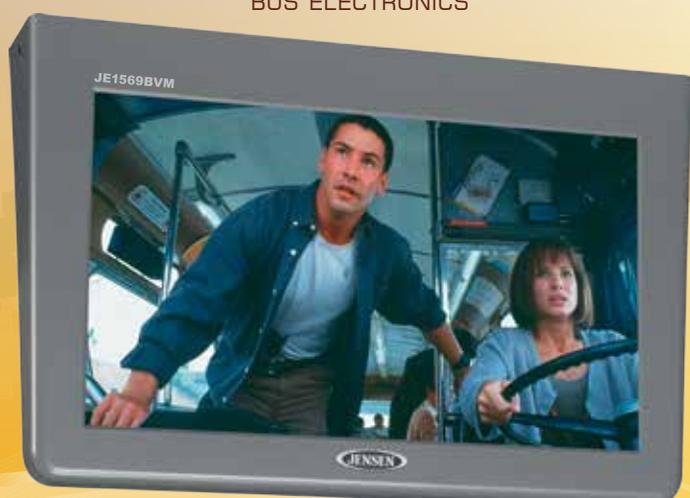
Melaniphy said he was honored to lead this association.

"Working with an outstanding board of directors, wonderful membership, an amazing and dedicated staff of passionate experts, and the myriad of coalition partners as well as the U.S. Congress and Administration has been a real pleasure," he said.

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California

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

conducted by the CHP. The bill directs the CHP to develop and adopt fees “in an amount sufficient to offset the costs to administer the program for these companies.”

The original bill has been modified to steer the added scrutiny to carriers that have poor safety records, Pane said.

“We have done a good job, I think, of letting legislators know through our testimony that the association stands for safety. A good majority of operators follow the law with no problems. We don’t want it to be more cumbersome for them,” he said.

“At the same time, the senator is looking to enhance inspections

on those carriers who have had problems. One piece of the bill identifies carriers who have three unsatisfactory inspection ratings. If you have had three unsatisfactory inspections, you obviously are having problems. That is a pretty high threshold,” Pane said.

Problem carriers

The bill’s current language calls for disciplinary action and increased inspection schedules for problem carriers while reducing the burden on carriers that pass successive inspections. It states:

“This bill would require the department, if a tour bus or modified limousine carrier has received an unsatisfactory compliance rating for three consecutive terminal inspections, to recommend to the

commission that the carrier’s operating authority be suspended, denied, or revoked, or to the United States Department of Transportation that appropriate administrative action be taken against the carrier’s interstate operating authority, whichever is appropriate.

“The bill would also require the commission to suspend an operating certificate of a charter-party carrier of passengers or a passenger stage corporation in those circumstances. The bill would also require the department to inspect a maintenance facility or terminal that receives an unsatisfactory rating every 6 months until the operator achieves a satisfactory rating, unless the satisfactory rating is the result of a re-inspection, as specified.”

As for compliant carriers, “The bill would additionally authorize the department to inspect a maintenance facility or terminal that receives two or more successive satisfactory ratings once every 26 months” rather than the current 13-month schedule.

In a letter to Sen. Hill, CBA said it supports revised language that “requires the CHP to modify its existing tour bus terminal inspection program, beginning no later than January 1, 2018, to ensure that the performance-based program targets companies that are noncompliant, have a history of noncompliance with safety laws or regulations, or have received unsatisfactory ratings and to prioritize those companies for unannounced surprise inspections.

“It further requires no fewer than 10 percent of the total number of tour bus carrier inspections conducted by CHP to be unannounced surprise inspections and require the department to conduct a follow-up inspection 30 days after an operator receives an unsatisfactory rating.”

Manufacturer recalls

“The concept involved in the original bill was that every bus involved in a parts recall should be grounded,” Pane said. “We said that couldn’t work because there are many pieces that are recalled without any manufacturer call for grounding the vehicle. The senator understood and saw that he had gone too far and accepted what we brought forward as a compromise.”

As the SB 812 heads to the full Senate for consideration, it states that “this bill would require the commission to monitor the recall notifications of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) (and) would require the commission, upon determining that a bus, limousine, or modified limousine is the subject of a safety recall by NHTSA that involves parts or accessories necessary for the safe operation of the vehicle, to contact any private carrier...affected by the recall to ensure that the registrant...is aware of it and has a plan in place to correct the defect.”

The bill still would authorize the commission to issue an out-of-service order for any vehicle affected by the recall until the recall repair is completed.

The bill’s current language requires any newly acquired coach or bus that is more than two years old to be inspected by the CHP before it can enter service.

In a letter to Sen. Hill, the CBA suggests that this provision also is too cumbersome.

“We would request an amendment to allow the CHP to accept a dealer ‘road worthy inspection,’ a company annual inspection or a current Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) sticker (good for 90 days) as compliance for this safety inspection for buses over 2 years of age,” the letter states. “We would further recommend that the bill mandate sellers and or dealers of buses to give the buyer a notarized Safety Inspection Ready for Service document upon transfer of the bus.”

Another sticking point for the California operators is the new inspection fee structure that will accompany SB 812.

“The fee has been \$15 per bus since the 1980s and obviously hasn’t kept up with inflation,” Pane said. “Right now the senator is proposing that the CHP get full cost recovery. We do recognize that the fee is extraordinarily low. We are negotiating that piece to get the fees up and make sure there is a relationship to what they are really spending on the inspection.”

Bus and motorcoach operators already support CHP programs through the state’s motor vehicle fund, which receives money from

Department of Motor Vehicle registration fees, Pane noted.

The CBA suggests the state adopt a sliding fee structure currently applied to commercial truck inspections. “As you have more vehicles the rate goes down and levels off at a point,” Pane said.

The letter to Hill suggests, “If the Commercial Truck Fee structure is used, a 100-bus carrier would pay \$43 per bus inspected but a 10-bus fleet would pay \$84 per bus. We would recommend that you amend this provision with a phase in over a four-year period with a maximum not to exceed \$75 per bus.”

The association also asks that a cap of \$6,500 in annual fees apply to fleets over 100 buses.

“We probably have just a couple of operators that are that large. Many of our members are in the 50- to 70-bus range,” Pane said.

It’s coming

“The odds favor passage this year,” Pane said. “The senator has worked very closely with the industry to bring out some compromises that make sense. We are still working on the fees because we can’t go from \$15 to several hundred dollars per bus. We are trying to find a happy medium.”

SB 812 will need to pass the full state Senate by early June then go to the California State Assembly, which would need to act during the summer, Pane said.

California operators have repeatedly stressed the positive safety records of most carriers under the current inspection process, he said.

“We have tried to emphasize that the crash in Orland that killed 10 people was a truck-caused crash. It is too bad that the National Transportation Safety Board didn’t emphasize that this crash was totally on the truck with fuel tanks that were unprotected and spewed fuel into the cabin of the motorcoach,” Pane said.

“People hear all of these things about the crash and start thinking that something must be done with these coaches. The fact is just the opposite — the motorcoach is one of the safest modes of travel as we see in many statistics. By and large, as I have testified, the CHP has done a very solid job with their inspection program.”

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3-4 Museum of Bus Transportation Spring Fling, Hershey, Pa. More information available at: www.buseum.org.

20-23 Pennsylvania Bus Association Annual Meeting, Gettysburg Wyndham Hotel, Gettysburg, Pa. For more information: www.pabus.org.

23-26 New England Bus Association Annual Conference, Essex Resort & Spa, Essex, Vt.

For more information: www.newenglandbus.org.

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16-20 AMA-SCMA-GMOA Regional Meeting, Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa, Florence, Ala. Info: www.gamotorcoachoperators.org.



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