

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Only certified examiners may perform driver physicals

WASHINGTON — The administrative demands of operating a motorcoach company jumped up another notch last month with a new federal requirement that all USDOT physicals must now be performed by a certified health professional who's listed on an online federal database.

It will be up to operators to make sure their drivers are exam-

ined by medical professionals listed on the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners.

The new mandate could make it more difficult — at least in the short run — for drivers in some parts of the country to obtain their physicals, and it's likely to mean that all driver medical-certification exams will become more expensive.

The new program, which was required by federal law and addresses four National Transportation Safety Board recommendations, sets baseline training and testing standards for medical professionals who perform commercial driver physicals and for tracking driver medical certificates.

According to the FMCSA, roughly 22,000 medical profes-

sionals have completed the coursework and testing, and are listed on the national registry, and another 27,000 have begun the certification process.

Current medical certificates held by commercial driver's license holders will continue to be valid until the expiration date that's shown on the card. Only then will the driver need to seek a certified

medical examiner to perform their new physical examination.

"We have certified thousands of health professionals to conduct driver exams — with more being added every day," said Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administrator Anne S. Ferro.

"The online database is easily searchable so drivers can schedule

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**Capital Wheel.** The nation's capital becomes the newest city with a giant observation wheel. The 180-foot Capital Wheel opened last month at National Harbor, outside Washington. It overlooks the

Potomac River, providing panoramic views of the region. The wheel's 42 climate-controlled gondolas can accommodate the same number of passengers as six motorcoaches. Info: [www.thecapitalwheel.com](http://www.thecapitalwheel.com).

## Can stepped-up enforcement lower death toll on highways?

DOVER, Del. — Have you noticed an increase in driver grouching in recent weeks about state troopers stepping up their traffic enforcement?

That they're seeing more highway patrol cars making more stops — most everywhere they run their coaches?

That is not driver paranoia speaking.

State police and highway patrols from 41 states are participating in an International Association of Chiefs of Police-led initiative, called the Drive to Save Lives Campaign, aimed at producing a sizeable drop in highway fatalities — this year.

The stated goal is to reduce highway deaths by 15 percent. That would mean nearly 5,000 lives saved.

A key focus of the sustained, year-long effort is enforcement actions against unsafe behavior by drivers of large trucks and buses.

Many in the motorcoach industry will be watching the safety drive with more than the casual interest typically given such initiatives.

That's because a number of industry safety leaders have long contended that enhanced traffic enforcement would do more to significantly reduce highway crashes and fatalities than all the inspection, paperwork and regulatory strike forces pushed by federal bureaucrats combined.

State police and highway patrol leaders from states across the U.S. say their on-highway effort is data driven, and will focus on speeding, use of seatbelts, and impaired and

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## Once shutdown by feds, few operators return to service

### The smallest are worst off

WASHINGTON — Operation Quick Strike punched one-way tickets to oblivion for 45 of the motorcoach companies it removed from the road last year.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration said it put

52 carriers out of business during the intensified, eight-month campaign it conducted during 2013, targeting unsafe operators.

A search by *Bus & Motorcoach News* last month of carrier profiles on FMCSA websites found that only seven companies have recovered their interstate operating authority since receiving "imminent-hazard" or "unsatisfactory" safety

### Special Report

ratings from investigators.

The FMCSA reported last December that more than 30 of the 52 companies were known to have gone out of business or transitioned to intrastate operations, which are not regulated by the federal government.

As of late last month, the FMCSA "Company Snapshot" web pages listed 26 of last year's Quick Strike targets as "out-of-service" and 10 as "not authorized."

Another nine companies also had apparently coasted to their final destination — their USDOT numbers turned up "inactive."

During the Quick Strike initiative last year, 20 motorcoach com-

panies were declared imminent hazards and shut down immediately, according to an FMCSA press release. "Unremediated" unsatisfactory safety ratings produced shutdowns for 32 carriers.

The FMCSA also noted that 28 carriers avoided being shut down by taking sufficient corrective action to remedy "unsatisfactory" ratings.

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# 9/11 Museum includes accommodations for buses

NEW YORK CITY — The 9/11 Memorial Museum, which opened in lower Manhattan last month, is expected to be a magnet for motorcoach traffic as the attraction grows in popularity this summer.

But unlike many other Manhattan tourist destinations that offer little or no bus parking, the museum appears to have been planned with motorcoach traffic in mind.

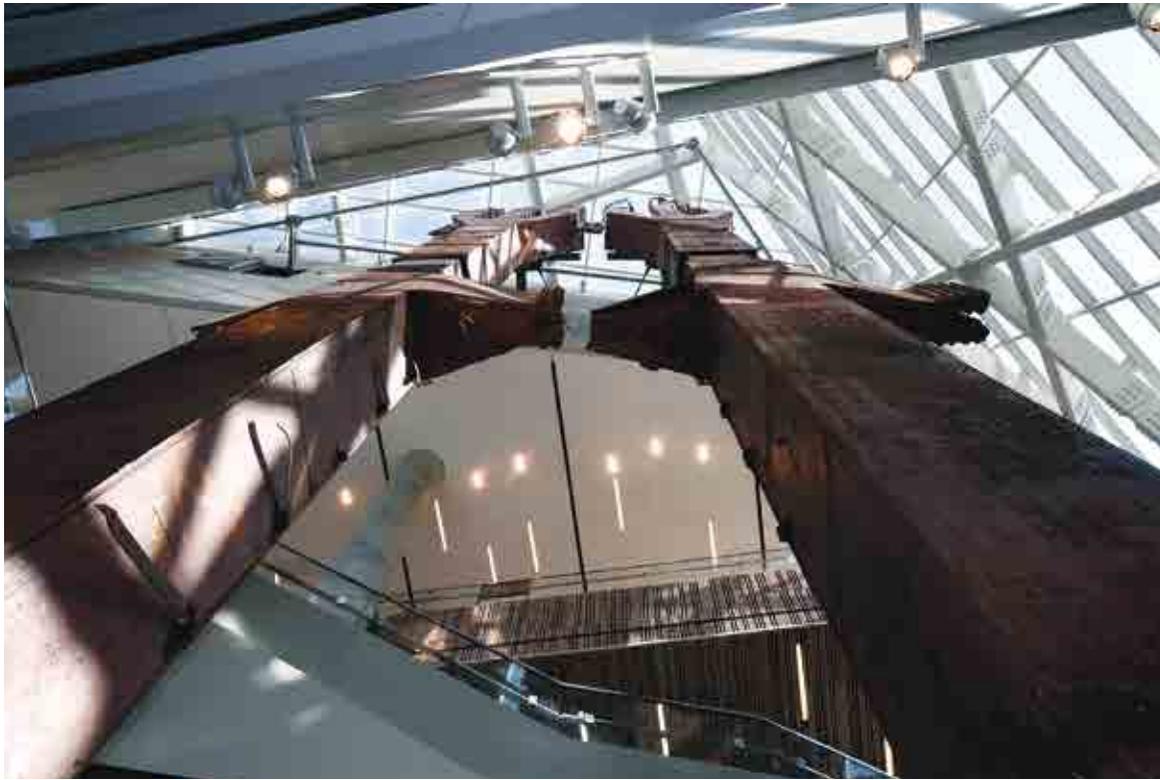
The New York Department of Transportation has designated a 9/11 Memorial Museum bus drop-off/pick-up zone that's available by reservation.

In addition, bus companies that have reserved a drop-off are eligible to apply for designated metered bus parking spaces.

The museum is part of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum located at the site of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks that brought down the towers of the World Trade Center.

The 9/11 Museum is an underground complex that includes various artifacts from the aftermath of the attacks and pieces of steel from the towers.

It is built at the former location of the Sphere, a globe that stood in



The museum atrium contains these 70-foot steel "tridents," remnants of the twin towers' façade. Each weighs about 50 tons.

Photo by Jin Lee

the middle of a large pool between the twin towers.

The 9/11 Memorial opened three years ago to commemorate the attacks and has been attracting tourists ever since. The museum is expected to result in a significant

increase in visitors to the area.

Bus operators are optimistic the designated drop-off and parking areas near the museum will make it easier for drivers who often have to drive around for hours after dropping off their pas-

sengers because of the lack of bus parking in other areas of the city.

"It is quite necessary to have rules governing drop-offs and parking," said Michael Neustadt of Coach Tours in Brookfield, Conn.

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# Registration is kicked off for Expo '15

NEW ORLEANS — The United Motorcoach Association has a suggestion: It's not too early to be thinking about (and even registering) for UMA Motorcoach Expo 2015 here in January.

Registration for the show — Jan. 18-22 — officially was opened late last month.

For the third consecutive year, UMA Motorcoach Expo teams up with the annual NTA Convention at Travel Exchange, providing a strong game plan for trade show success — great business, good times, lots of friends.

To learn more about Expo 2015 and to register, go to [www.motorcoachexpo.com](http://www.motorcoachexpo.com).

Expo 2015 kicks off Sunday, Jan. 18, with what UMA is calling a "Big Party in the Big Easy."

The event will be at Mardi Gras World, the sprawling complex where the famed Mardi Gras floats and props are built and stored.

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# THE DOCKET

## Feds add insurance minimums to regulatory calendar

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has accelerated its push to increase the liability insurance minimums for bus operators and truckers.

An official timeline for the agency's drive to raise the liability insurance minimums was released by the U.S. Department of Transportation last month, and it signals the agency plans to begin work on the regulation quickly in hopes of publishing a proposed rule in

November.

At the same time, the timeline for the long-awaited Safety Fitness Determination rule has been pushed back from mid-September as a projected publication date to mid-December.

The Safety Fitness Determination rule would allow the agency to use a data set similar to the one it uses for its Compliance, Safety, Accountability program's Safety Measurement System rankings to produce a score for carriers it

could then use to target unsafe carriers for intervention.

The FMCSA released a report in April saying it found the current liability insurance minimums for bus and truck operators to be "inadequate."

It also said then it planned to make upping the minimums a high priority. (See May 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

In its May regulatory update, the USDOT says the FMCSA hopes to send the insurance mini-

um rule proposal to the Office of the Secretary of Transportation by June 30 and to the White House Office of Management and Budget Aug. 1. The timeline says a proposed rule could be published Nov. 12.

However neither the USDOT report last month nor the FMCSA report in April set the target number for the new liability insurance minimum, which hasn't increased since 1985.

FMCSA did say in April that if

minimum insurance had kept up with the core consumer price index, a measure of inflation, it would be \$10.8 million for buses. If it had kept pace with the medical consumer price index, it would be \$21.2 million.

Both the bus and truck industries are expected to fight any increase to the current minimums. Critics already have noted that studies show very, very few crashes exceed the minimums in claims.

## Rule would prohibit coercion of drivers

WASHINGTON — A proposed rule prohibiting operators, shippers, brokers and others from coercing drivers to drive beyond hours-of-service limits or other federal rules has been released by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

In addition to the prohibition of coercion and threatening drivers to exceed hours' limits, the rule puts in place procedures for drivers to report coercion to the agency and procedures for the agency to respond to the allegations.

Given the onerous and exacting nature of the proposed rule's

reporting requirements, however, whistle blowing by drivers would appear to be problematic.

The proposed rule has a comment period, ending in mid-August, and was mandated by language in the current highway funding act, known as MAP-21.

The rule would make it illegal for carriers, shippers, brokers and others to coerce drivers by threatening them "with loss of work or other economic opportunities for refusing to operate a (commercial motor vehicle) under circumstances that those entities knew or should have known would require a driver" to violate FMCSA hours'

limits or drug and alcohol testing rules, among other rules, according to the agency's proposal.

These entities have broken the agency's coercion rule if they "fail to heed a driver's objection that the request would require him/her to break the rules," the proposal reads.

However, drivers' liability to comply with safety rules is not absolved if they are coerced, the agency says.

The rule imposes a penalty of up to \$11,000 per violation on the entities prohibited from coercion in the rule. The agency also says it has the authority to suspend or re-

voke authority from a carrier or broker if it does not comply.

The agency also notes that its rule may overlap some provisions of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act, which prohibits employers from retaliating against drivers who refuse to operate a vehicle for safety reasons. Those rules are enforced by the U.S. Department of Labor, whose main goal is employee protection, whereas FMCSA says its rule is geared toward safety.

The Surface Transportation Assistance Act can protect driver wages, but FMCSA says it has "no

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## Groups want drug rule to be expanded

WASHINGTON — A number of groups have filed a petition with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration asking the agency to expand its proposed drug and alcohol clearinghouse rule to require carriers to report "actual knowledge" of drug use by drivers, including times they have seen drivers using drugs.

In February, a proposed rule establishing a database of CDL holders who have failed or refused to take a drug test was published by the FMCSA. (See March 15 and March 1 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The rule would require carriers to upload positive drug test results and query the database annually and when making new hires.

In a comment posted on the proposed rule, seven groups, including the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, the Truckload Carriers Association and the American Trucking Associations, asked FMCSA to issue a Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the rule.

They want the supplemental rulemaking to require employers to "report all instances of actual knowledge of misuse, including direct observations of misuse and acknowledgements of misuse, to the proposed clearinghouse," says the group's letter.

Another trucking organization, the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association argues, however, that "only positive test results should be documented."

"A driver's permanent record

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# NTA urges support for Brand USA reauthorization bills

LEXINGTON, Ky. — With authorization for Brand USA set to expire next year and some Republicans calling for its elimination, NTA (formerly the National Tour Association) is marshaling its members to seek Congressional support for reauthorization.

“Brand USA has been enormously successful in bringing more tourists — and the money they spend — into the United States, and our members are urging their legislators to get behind Brand USA’s reauthorization,” said Catherine Prather, interim president of NTA.

“Nearly 40 percent of NTA’s 700 tour-company members package travel inbound to North America, and Brand USA is pumping more visitors into the pipeline,” Prather added.

Currently being considered by both the House and the Senate are twin bills named the Travel Promotion, Enhancement and Modernization Act of 2014.

Both bills would renew funding for Brand USA through 2020, and both have bipartisan support, with 95 co-sponsors between them.

Besides NTA, other travel and tourism advocates are urging passage of the bills because earlier provisions to fund Brand USA were included in an immigration bill that has stalled in the House.

Backers of Brand USA say it has stimulated inbound travel to the U.S. by conducting marketing campaigns and opening tourism offices in key countries.

Last year, according to Brand USA, it generated 1.1 million ad-

ditional international visitors, a 2.3 percent increase over the growth that would have occurred without its marketing initiatives. Those added visitors created an economic impact of an additional \$3.4 billion and supported 53,000 new jobs. (See May 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

“NTA backed Brand USA before it was even named, and we’re still 100 percent on board,” said Prather, referring to the association’s support of the 2010 Travel Promotion Act, which led to Brand USA’s creation.

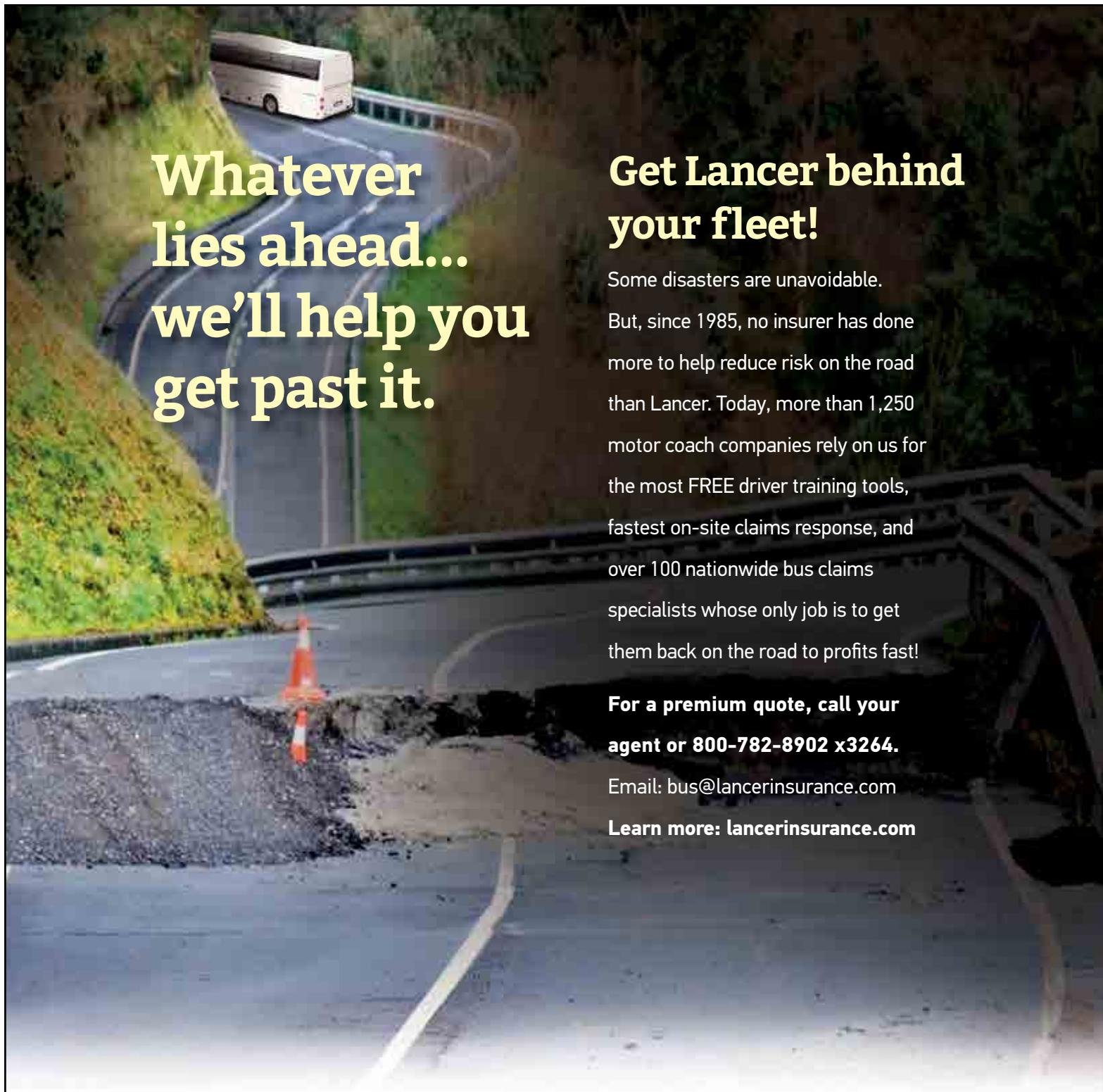
“Other countries were actively marketing themselves, and with-

out Brand USA, the United States was falling behind in tourism growth. Brand USA has put inbound tourism on the right track.”

The bills in the Senate (S. 2250) and House (H.R. 4450) authorize a portion of fees paid by international visitors to go toward funding Brand USA. The quasi-public

agency also operates on money raised from private contributions.

While the current funding arrangement for Brand USA extends through the summer of 2015, the House budget resolution for 2015, drafted by Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., calls for the elimination of Brand USA.



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## Transportation tax will be considered by Missouri voters

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Legislators have approved a measure that would let voters decide whether to raise the state sales tax to 5 cents for 10 years to generate funding for transportation.

The measure, which would raise the existing 4.25-cent sales tax, will be on the November ballot.

The final vote to put the increase before the voters was adopted last month in the state House by a lopsided vote, 105-43.

If approved, the tax increase would generate \$5.4 billion over 10 years for transportation projects.

The measure passed with the active support of a number of business groups.



# Illinois to rein in ride-sharing

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Illinois has become the latest state where lawmakers have adopted rules for the relatively new and growing industry of “ride-sharing.”

The Illinois legislation appears to be the strictest statewide regulations in the country so far.

The package of rules, passed by both the state House and Senate, are contained in a House bill and a trailer amendment bill, the latter of which needs House approval before both arrive on Gov. Pat Quinn’s desk for signing.

The legislation was largely championed by a coalition of Chicago cab companies, which claim their business has suffered as a result of the proliferation of ride-sharing activity.

“We’re not trying to stop technology, and everyone that uses it,” said Sen. Tony Munoz of Chicago, Senate sponsor of HB4075 and its amendment trailer bill, HB5331.

“The only thing we want to do is make it safer, regulate it fairly for everyone in the industry.”

The rules would apply most immediately to three services, UberX, Lyft and Sidecar, which facilitate ride-sharing primarily in Chicago.

The three California-based companies provide smartphone application technologies that allow people to use their personal vehicles for hire, much like taxis. (See Nov. 15 and Oct. 15 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

So far, the services have operated unregulated in Illinois and elsewhere, but a groundswell of consumer support and a fear of

alienating technology companies has prompted local and state governments to consider ways to bring them into a regulatory framework.

Under the Illinois bills, commercial ride-sharing companies would be required to carry primary commercial liability insurance equal to taxis, with a combined single-limit per accident coverage of \$350,000.

More critically, it eliminates concerns raised by several insurance companies in the state over when that insurance policy would apply. Under the rules, the policies would be effective from the moment a ride-share driver logs into the application to accept rides, until logging off.

Previously, companies disputed whether their insurance policies should apply, or should apply at such a high level, during times that a driver may be logged onto their app, but not yet en route to or conducting a fare.

All ride-share drivers would also have to carry distinctive registration plates and stickers on their vehicles.

More frequent drivers would be subject to additional rules, similar to taxi drivers. Those who offer ride-sharing services more than 36 hours every two weeks, on average, would have to get public chauffeur’s licenses, subjecting them to the same criminal background checks and drug testing as taxi drivers.

Chicago drivers who average at least 36 hours every two weeks would also have to comply with

city rules for taxis regarding the age of their vehicles. Currently, that means their cars could be no more than four years old, in most cases. These cars also would be subject to safety inspections.

The four-year-old-or-newer-auto requirement is strongly opposed by the ride-sharing companies.

Despite fierce rivalry among ride-share companies, they were united in their opposition to the Illinois Senate legislation.

“The bill will prohibit insured and background-checked Lyft drivers with cars more than four years old, immediately eliminating 70 percent of Chicago’s Lyft drivers,” read an e-mail from Lyft.

“This will disproportionately affect low-income drivers in the Lyft community who have come to rely on ride-sharing as an important way to earn extra money to make ends meet.”

The “vote in the senate will hurt consumers and limit transportation options across the state,” wrote Uber Midwest Regional Director Andrew MacDonald, in an e-mailed statement. Uber is the company behind UberX, the ride sharing platform.

“We will continue to work with state and city officials to ensure UberX has a permanent home in Illinois for consumers to benefit from competition and much needed transportation options,” he continued.

The Senate measure allows municipalities authority to regulate fare structures for ride-sharing services.

days of the event, detailing where the coercion happened or the principal place of business of the alleged violator.

Complaints must include a driver’s name, address and telephone number; the name and address of the person allegedly coercing the driver; the specific provisions of the regulations the driver alleges he or she was coerced to violate, and a brief statement of the facts that substantiate each coercion allegation.

The proposed rule says FMCSA will then determine

base of CDL holders who have failed or refused to take a drug or alcohol test.

Carriers will be required to submit such information to the database and will be required to query the database when hiring a new driver. Companies will also be required to query the database annually for current drivers.

The letter from CVSA and the trucking groups calls the lack of the requirement for carriers to re-

whether the complaint is legitimate and has met the requirements of the regulation before initiating an investigation.

The driver complainant will be notified of the findings from any investigation on a “timely” basis, the agency says.

The rule also would direct the agency to study and consider driver coercion as a potential issue when developing rules.

Comments on the rule can be made online at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), using the docket number FMCSA-2012-0377.

port observational data a “long-standing loophole” in current regulations and one that would extend to the clearinghouse rule.

“Failing to capture [knowledge of use or direct observation] undermines the purpose of the clearinghouse,” the letter reads. “Under FMCSA’s current proposal, a driver could be observed engaging in misconduct or could actually admit to misconduct and successfully seek employment elsewhere.”

# Six-year highway law extension easily passes Senate committee

WASHINGTON — The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee became the first body in the current Congress to pass a federal highway reauthorization bill.

The committee made quick work last month of the reauthorization measure, passing it unanimously the same week it was unveiled.

The legislation would extend the current highway law, known as MAP-21, for six years.

The speedy and bipartisan adoption of the bill might give the impression that, contrary to widespread predictions, Congress could actually get a highway bill passed before the current law expires at the end of September. That would be wishful thinking.

The section of the law adopted by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is the policy portion — not the much more onerous and contentious piece, which is financing.

The bill, S.2322, “The MAP-21 Reauthorization Act,” now awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee, which must find a way to pay for it — even as the Highway Trust Fund moves towards insolvency.

## Heavy lifting ahead

Then, of course, the Senate Commerce committee must examine the safety and regulatory issues that will fit into the bill, while the Banking Committee will review the transit programs that are rolled into the measure.

Then there’s the House. We’ll postpone serving up that piece of the pie for another day.

Still, it probably would be unfair to belittle the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee action.

Chairman Barbara Boxer said she could not recall a transportation bill in her more than 20 years on the committee that passed without controversial amendments being offered.

“What you saw here was an amazing result of cooperation,” she said. “This is the way the Senate should be run.”

Sen. Tom Carper, chairman of the subcommittee on transportation and infrastructure, likened the overall effort to get the bill through Congress to eating an elephant: a process, however difficult, that must achieve “one bite at a time.”

“A lot of folks believe that we’re going to have a very hard time getting anything passed,” he

said. “This is a real important bite.”

## MAP-21 a template

Smoothing the process, Boxer noted, the committee used MAP-21 — which was largely fashioned by the Environment and Public Works Committee two years ago — as the template, and extended its policy reforms with a “six-year frame.”

The committee also passed en bloc a handful of amendments dealing with how much Highway Trust Fund money can go toward research, and to the formulas used to decide which bridges get repaired and which states qualify as “rural” to receive certain program funds.

Which is not to say there wasn’t disagreement along the way. Boxer credited Carper, a fellow Democrat, with being able to set aside issues he is “passionate about.”

The former Delaware governor, based on his experience there, has expressed support for the Obama administration idea of removing barriers that limit the states’ ability to toll existing interstates. Such a provision was not included in the bill adopted by the Environment and Public Works Committee.

At an appearance last month with representatives of both the trucking and railroad industries, Carper said he supports gradually increasing the federal motor fuels tax to restore buying power lost to inflation since the tax was last raised 20 years ago, and indexing the tax thereafter.

As a member of the finance committee, Carper will have a say on how to increase revenue to keep pace with the bill’s requirements — estimated at \$265 billion through 2020.

## Truckers back indexing

The American Trucking Association has endorsed indexing federal fuel taxes based in inflation and adding an annual “highway access fee” for all motorists, as well as several other options to address surface transportation infrastructure funding.

The group also backs use of royalties from new oil and gas leases, a per-barrel tax on imported oil and domestic crude production, and issuing Treasury bonds subsidized with revenue from indexing the fuel tax.

The Highway Trust Fund is projected to run out of money as earlier as August.

## Driver coercion

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

authority to compensate drivers who experience coercion,” per the rule.

Any coercion claims by drivers would lay the burden of proof on the accusing driver. Drivers must present evidence to FMCSA to back up their claims, the agency says.

A driver alleging coercion — and therefore violation of the new rule — must file a written complaint with FMCSA within 60

## Drug rule

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

should not be tainted by unverifiable accusations or assertions,” according to a statement from the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association.

When the Commercial Driver’s License Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse rule becomes effective, likely late next year or early 2016, it will establish a data-

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# Operator viewpoint: Between a rock and the FMCSA

By Rick Thielen  
Thielen Coaches

There are lots of things happening in our industry...with never-ending regulatory proposals leading the charge.

When one follows regulation of the trucking industry, you can get an early warning glimpse of the regulations coming down on the passenger industry.

The Minnesota Trucking Association had a meeting with Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Administrator Anne Ferro concerning the hours-of-service and the 34-hour restart provision in the regulations that have been recently imposed on the trucking industry.

The result of the new hours-of-service regulations has produced the following "unintended consequences":

- The accident and fatality rate has stopped its 20 percent drop and has turned upward again.

- Truck drivers are now faced with having their total "on-duty" & driving" done in a 14-hour window, and this causes drivers to travel through cities during rush hour and heavy traffic times that would/could be avoided.

- Not allowing split-sleeper berth times forces drivers to drive when they are tired and forces them to rest when they are not.

- Productivity has already dropped 3 to 4 percent.

- The number of commercial drivers in the industry needed to deliver the commerce of America is estimated to be one million short in the very near future.

Despite all these factors, the FMCSA is not backing off its never ending list of regulations.

In this meeting, Administrator

Ferro stated the FMCSA feels justified in what it has done and has no plans to make a change in the restart provision at this time.

The MAP-21 highway bill mandated a "field study" to be completed before the provisions were instituted, but the FMCSA ignored this and instituted the provisions before the study was completed.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress to suspend the restart until the study has been completed.

During an oversight hearing before the House Transportation Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, congressional members questioned Administrator Ferro about the 'unintended consequences' of the hours-of-service changes and the Government Accountability Office criticisms of the CSA

program.

Rep. Richard Hanna, R-N.Y., cited inaccurate and unreliable carrier safety scores under CSA that result in higher insurance costs, expensive litigation and loss of business. In effect, Hanna suggested that FMCSA is "hurting the people you are paid to help."

Hanna continued by saying: "These are real-world, tortuous problems that you're putting these truckers through, and frankly the organization acts like they've got all the time in the world to correct these problems."

Hanna also stated: "I think you need to back up...and take a look at some of this stuff. Are we so thick we can't hear the very people whose lives we're impacting? Is there nobody you believe except some academic who does a study?"

Administrator Ferro responded

that she and the agency are not there to protect the trucking industry. She further stated that: "I'm not hired to help the (trucking) industry.

"I'm hired to ensure the safety of the traveling public and improve the safety of the operations of trucks and buses. That's what the agency was created to do and as its lead, I'm very proud to be a part of that."

Other members of the committee cited instances of a driver stuck in traffic, or of a female driver being forced to stop in an unsafe location because her available duty hours had run out.

Rep. Markwayne Mullen, R-Okla., called the hours-of-service rules "hypocritical" and stated: "Drivers know when they're tired and when they're not, they're professional."

He continued: "Ma'am, no one regulates how many hours you can work. This is a one-size-fits-all approach and you don't want to hear about it."

Rep. Mullen makes a great point about allowing drivers to drive when rested and sleep when tired. It also allows these drivers to avoid the more dangerous heavy traffic and rush-hour times in metropolitan areas by taking a sleep break and driving through these areas when traffic is light. It is just plain commonsense.

So there you have the attitude of the FMCSA laid out before the House Transportation subcommittee. They have their agenda and have no plans to deviate from it.

In defense of the FMCSA, it is constantly being sued by a wide range of safety groups. They are also being constantly sued by industry groups, ranging from the American Trucking Associations and the American Trucking Alliance, which are suspected of using increased government regulation to hamper competition from smaller companies, as much as being safety related, and the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, which is comprised of small, independent operators and companies.

Be aware of what is happening to the trucking industry because we are also in those same cross-hairs. We are a target and, in the case of hours of service, our turn is coming.

*Rick Thielen is president of Thielen Coaches in Redwood Falls, Minn. He is a board member of the Minnesota Charter Bus Operators Association and editor of its newsletter, News-Views & Blogs. This article was excerpted from the newsletter.*

## NYC mayor: 'Zero traffic deaths'

NEW YORK CITY — Another politician has come up with another unrealistic, impractical transportation safety goal that would seem to be philosophically based, not reality based.

The first executive budget of Bill de Blasio, New York City's new mayor, puts numbers to his "Vision Zero," a plan that seeks to eliminate traffic deaths in the city by 2024.

Here are the basics of the mayor's plan to wipeout traffic fatalities.

First, the mayor is proposing to spend \$42 million on safety initiatives and street engineering, and to put an extra \$49 million toward filling potholes.

The city Department of Trans-

portation would receive \$28.8 million for more speed bumps, slow zones, speed cameras, and intersection redesigns.

The New York Police Department would get \$13 million for traffic enforcement, and \$1.1 million would go to the Taxi and Limousine Commission for a safety-focused ad campaign.

The Department of Transportation's street resurfacing budget would see a boost of \$49 million, for a total of \$226 million. About 1,000 lane miles of streets would be repaved.

Paul Steely White, executive director of Transportation Alternatives, said road resurfacing projects are a prime safety tool because once the paving is done, the city

DOT can change street markings to "give pedestrians more protected space, give bus riders a dedicated lane so that their bus isn't stuck behind a double parker."

He added that, where it makes sense, the city could add protected bike lanes to accommodate "the explosion in bike ridership we've seen, especially with the advent of Citi Bike."

Mayor de Blasio said the importance of traffic safety "hit home" for him when he realized the city had 333 homicides and 286 traffic deaths in 2103.

"And that really put a point on the fact that addressing these crashes is an incredibly fundamental part of keeping this city safe," he said.

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# Medical emergencies: What should drivers know, do?

By Dave Millhouser

Dick was training a driver, standing in the step-well of a GM 4106.

The trainee was doing a fine job, driving the airport express loaded with passengers, when he developed severe chest pains and passed out.

The coach drifted toward the shoulder of Atlanta's busy perimeter highway.

Dragging him out of the seat, Dick grabbed the wheel, and got control of the bus. This was before cell phones (heck, this was before the telegraph), so Dick did the only smart thing, and headed directly for the hospital.

He pulled up to the emergency entrance, ran in to get help, and as soon as the stricken man was on a gurney, he took off for the airport.

This story has a happy ending. Thanks to Dick's quick thinking and action, the driver recovered AND no one missed their flight.

Not too long after the incident, figuring there would be less stress involved, Dick became a bus salesman.

It made national news recently when a Florida teenager, suffering

from seizures, was dropped off — in fact, forced off — the bus he was riding by the driver. This one had a relatively happy ending, too. The boy recovered, but his mother was understandably outraged.

In this case, his family publicly demanded bus drivers be given "medical training."

Probably an overreach, and fraught with legal potholes, but it does raise a valid concern: How should we train our drivers when it comes to medical situations? How do we expect them to act in medical emergencies?

In the first instance, Dick wasn't medically trained, but he was smart (and quick thinking). That was fortunate, but not a plan that works every time.

As usual, I'm long on questions and short on answers, but it does seem important that we consider how we want drivers to handle medical situations, and educate them accordingly. A substantial part of our demographic is senior citizens (you know...like me), which adds emphasis to the need for drivers to be able to handle emergencies.

Medical emergencies also are

not unknown to our other major demographic, children.

There are two general areas that bear consideration. While you probably don't want drivers offering medical treatment, you probably want them to understand the signs that a real emergency is occurring or exists. Some discussion and formal education might be in order. At what point should they take action?

Once it's clear that something bad is happening, how should drivers react?

First Aid isn't a bad thing, but in this modern age of cell phones, GPS and texting, unless they're deep in the boonies, skilled help isn't far away. The problem is that electronic tools need to be used correctly or aid will be delayed.

Again, advanced discussion in drivers' meetings might make things go better when the world is turning to doo-doo.

For example, calling 911 from a mobile phone might not connect to the closest services, depending on where the active cell tower is located. The driver needs to know his or her location, and be able to communicate it to the dispatcher.

That might involve understanding the coach's GPS system or (gasp) the ability to read a map. Most drivers understand how mile-markers work, and those may be valuable in helping responders know where to find the emergency.

Texting might not be helpful because on occasion texts are backed up in an electronic que, and you can't be sure when they're read.

The more your drivers think about this stuff in advance, the more likely they are to react quickly and correctly when the poopie heads for the spinning fan.

Near the end of my worst trip ever, a passenger began suffering shortness of breath. Actually, it was stoppage of breath.

In 1,500 miles we'd had an accident, blown a front tire at 75 mph, slid sideways under a bridge and discovered the spare was useless. We were running 12 hours late and now one of the chaperones was having a seizure.

We pulled the Scenicruiser into the New York Thruway's median, and the kids passed him hand over hand down the aisle and dumped him on the grass. We flagged down a state trooper who radioed for an

ambulance. In an inspired "two-fer," we stuffed him into the ambulance with a second chaperone who had a cold (why take chances it would turn into the plague?) and continued on our merry way.

They both made out fine, and it turned out that the guy with the seizure was withdrawing from heroin. He was so inspired by the spiritual content of the meetings they'd attended that he decided to go cold-turkey. Bad idea.

I'm not sure if there was a better way to have handled it, but one BIG regret was giving all our cash to the second guy in the ambulance, figuring he might need it. As a result, after dropping off our passengers, the other driver and I had to dead-head home nearly 1,500 miles without eating.

Obviously, as my waist line has shown from time to time, I recovered from that privation.

*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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# Highway spending: Are more dollars really needed?

By Conrad deFiebre

Every one of President Obama's infrastructure proposals since the 2009 stimulus has gone nowhere in Congress.

That's likely to be the fate of Obama's latest plan for spending \$302 billion on transportation projects over four years, beginning Oct. 1.

Still, something will happen in Washington before the current federal transportation bill expires and the Highway Trust Fund hits empty.

The most likely outcome is a status quo extension, similar to the current two-year legislation, with extra cash from who knows where.

Obama's proposed generosity to both roads and transit probably won't be a factor.

In some ways, that might be a good thing.

## Getting it wrong

As pointed out by Phineas Baxandall and Tony Dutzik in a fascinating new blog, federal projections of increased driving that support arguments for more spending on roads have been wrong on the high side for years.

"The USDOT's most recent biennial report to Congress on the state of the nation's transportation system...forecasts that total vehicle miles will increase between 1.36 to 1.85 percent each year through 2030," they report.

"Just how out of whack is that? ...Vehicle travel hasn't increased by even 1 percent in any year since 2004.

"The new report uses for one of its scenarios the same flawed forecasting model that has overestimated vehicle travel 61 times out of 61 since 1999...In a particular-

ly absurd twist, the USDOT forecast doesn't even get the past right. The report 'projects' based on 2010 data that Americans drove 5 percent more miles in 2012 than they actually did.

"To hit the DOT forecast for 2014, Americans would need to increase their driving by 9 percent this year alone."

Phew!

## Sloooooooooow growth

To be sure, U.S. driving did increase last year by 18.1 billion miles, which sounds impressive until you realize it was just 0.6 percent more than 2012, lagging a 0.7 percent rise in the population.

The long-term trend is clear, acknowledged even by the statistical wizards at the USDOT: "A number of indicators point toward saturation in vehicle trips and ve-

hicle miles of travel per person, with the peak of most per-person and per-household statistics occurring in 1995.

"Several factors could be possible explanations for this apparent saturation, such as the desire to limit the time spent in travel and replacing physical trips with electronic communication or online shopping."

Other factors figure in as well.

## Driving alternatives

Baby Boomers and their fading elders will increasingly be forced to give up their car keys in the face of time's toll, and they're not being replaced on the road by tech-savvy young adults. In place of diminished driving, transit, Amtrak, foot-powered transportation and, especially, intercity bus ridership are up.

According to a DePaul Univer-

sity report, new discount operators like megabus.com have nearly doubled their daily operations since 2010, saving their riders more than \$1 billion a year with comfortable vehicles that allow Internet and cell phone connections, advantages over faster but five times costlier airline travel.

Minnesota's nearly century-old Jefferson Lines is growing as well, up 8 percent in available seat-miles serving 65 towns and 25 colleges in the state.

"The car is our No. 1 competitor and it's an expense people can eliminate," Jefferson's Kevin Pursey told the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.

"For that kind of money, people are saying, 'I'm taking the bus.'"

*Conrad deFiebre is a transportation fellow with Minnesota 2020, from which most of this article is excerpted.*

# Truckers push to eliminate tire under-inflation violation

Sometimes, safety is subjective.

Like determining when a tire on a commercial motor vehicle is underinflated.

It becomes a more complicated issue when state safety inspectors start writing tickets for underinflated tires.

The fundamental problem is that there's no official definition of underinflated against which to write citations, so the enforcement crowd historically has been sort of making it up as it went along.

Nationwide statistics show that since 2012, state inspectors have issued more than 30,000 citations for underinflated tires.

That's why the American Trucking Associations, with support from The Technology and Maintenance Council, has filed a petition with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to remove language relating to underinflation from the federal rule book.

Here's how Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulation No. 393.75(h) is written: "(1) no motor vehicle shall be operated on a tire which has a cold inflation pressure less than that specified for the load being carried. (2) If the inflation pressure of the tire has been increased by heat because of the recent operation of the vehicle, the cold inflation pressure shall be estimated by subtracting the inflation buildup factor shown in Table 1 from the measured inflation pressure."

In other words, part 2 says inspectors are directed to deduct ei-



ther 5 psi or 15 psi from the recorded pressure of any tire suspected of being underinflated based on the load rating of the tire and how long it had been traveling at speed.

## Questions abound

That, of course, raises several questions that an inspector at roadside may or may not be able to determine.

"I can't determine what the load on the tire is, I don't know how long it has been running, or even how long it might have been sitting still...waiting for an inspection," said an Ontario Ministry of Transportation enforcement officer at a TMC event last year.

And that's what is meant by saying the cops have been making

it up as they go along.

All an inspector can do is interpret the regulation, follow what guidance might be available, and write the ticket or not. How many "underinflated" tires have not been written up is anyone's guess, but certainly 30,000 tickets — possibly unnecessary tickets — in two years is something to be concerned about.

One expert says the problem is there is no guidance at all, but there is a penalty for underinflation. They can write tickets or warnings, which are the same thing as far as the FMCSA's Compliance, Safety and Accountability program is concerned, or nothing at all.

The 5 psi or 15 psi temperature adjustment was a USDOT initia-

tive introduced back in the days of tube-type tires, designed to compensate for increases in pressure over cold inflation pressure resulting from naturally generated heat within the tire.

## Why now?

Since then, it has never been a serious concern until the CSA program forced bus and truck operators to start looking very closely at every ticket they got.

Suddenly, a ticket for underinflation became more than an expensive annoyance. Under CSA, under-inflated tires are a three-point violation.

The fundamental problem with the language of 393.75(h) is that it makes no mention of what the tire inflation pressure is when a tire is

considered flat or underinflated, only that the vehicle should not be operated when the tire pressure is less than that specified for the load being carried.

The ATA petition has this to say about how proper inflation pressure should be determined:

"Determining the appropriate tire pressure for a given tire load is not particularly challenging or confusing [using load and inflation tables]. However, when a vehicle is in operation the load weight changes with every drop and hook operation.

"For most motor carrier fleets it is not practical to adjust tire pressure with every load change. As a result, many motor carriers set a tire inflation pressure policy that specifies a constant tire pressure for all of the tractor and trailer tires in that motor carrier fleet.

"Some carriers will have a separate tire pressure policy for steer axle tires which generally carry a higher but more constant weight.

"On the other hand, the motor carrier enforcement community, when inspecting tires for the correct tire inflation pressure, must read the tire markings to determine tire size, determine the axle load, calculate tire load, check the tire pressure, and then adjust for cold or warm tire condition. They must then find the appropriate Load Limit Table (generally not available to them at roadside) in order to determine if the tire is underinflated or not."

Really. And that's just the beginning.

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## Underinflation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

### The changing load factor

What about a motorcoach whose load could possibly change — often dramatically — at every stop.

Over the past year, the TMC Tire & Wheel Study Group has been trying to resolve the issue. However, every time there was a discussion participants introduced so many angles and variations from tire size to ambient temperature that the issue seemed unresolvable.

As it turned out, it was.

At the request of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, the Study Group committee looked at several options, but in each case they found exceptions where an operator of one description or another could be unfairly penalized, particularly those that run pressures in the 75-85 range — and there apparently are more in this camp than might be supposed.

Or, fleets than run load range H tires with 120-psi indicated on the sidewall as the maximum pressure.

The committee also tried to create a list of the most common tires found in over-the-road opera-

tions and come up with a chart that provided underinflated pressure of tires after 15 psi was deducted. That proved impractical as well.

### No easy answers

In the end, TMC Study Group concluded that it cannot come up with a simple, practical and fair way of determining under-inflation during an on-a-trip inspection. Here is a sampling of the committee reasons.

- Different tires will build up heat differently depending upon the amount of operating time, the construction of the tire, the ambient temperature, and so on, and routinely deducting 15 psi is not a good nor fair practice.

- Often motor carrier inspectors are not aware of the length of time the vehicle has been operating. Deducting 15 psi unfairly penalizes vehicles that have been running for a short time and have not built up that level of operating heat.

- Vehicles that are empty or lightly loaded do not require tires to have the required amount of air as when fully loaded. To be fair, the load has to be known and Load and Inflation Tables must be used.

Example: A tire with 75 psi, (60 psi after deducting 15 psi due to heat buildup) may still be per-

fectly fine to run if the vehicle is not loaded even though the maximum pressure on the sidewall is 110 psi.

- Many vehicles require high-load range tires for use on heavy steer axles. These tires have high maximum inflation pressures molded on their sidewalls.

But, after their first life, these tires are often retreaded and used on rear axles which do not put as much load on them and they require less inflation pressure. However, during an inspection, if the inspector uses the high maximum inflation pressure written on the sidewall, this would not be fair in these applications.

- Commercial vehicle operators that inflate their tires to 75-85 psi due to the light loads normally carried, will be more apt to be unfairly penalized for under-inflated tire conditions when the maximum inflation pressure on the sidewall is 110-120 psi.

The petition submitted by the ATA asks that 393.75(H) be dropped from 393.75, leaving only 393.75 (a)(3) “flat tires or tires that have an audible leak” as an enforceable item.

The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance reportedly is supporting the letter submitted by the ATA.

## Two lawsuits against FMCSA DataQs system are consolidated

WASHINGTON — Two lawsuits filed by the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association against the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration DataQs traffic violations-appeals system have been consolidated after the association filed a motion seeking consolidation.

The two cases, OOIDA v. the U.S. Department of Transportation and Weaver v. FMCSA, center on the agency's use of violations against drivers and carriers after the citations have been dismissed in subsequent adjudication.

Though the FMCSA has put in motion steps to mitigate the issue, the agency's Motor Carrier Management Information System is still unable to remove citations unless a state allows the change.

The Motor Carrier Management Information System is the database from which the Compliance, Safety, Accountability program's Safety Measurement System scores are derived.

It's also the data used in the agency's Pre-employment Screening Program.

The FMCSA published a proposed rule in December that will allow it to remove violations from the Motor Carrier Management Information System if a citation is dismissed in court or a carrier or driver is found not guilty.

Both CSA and PSP reports would reflect any dismissals.

Until that rule is enacted, however, the FMCSA says it does not have the authority to direct states to change or alter data in the system. A state's final ruling is considered “final resolution of the challenge,” the agency says.

The OOIDA's case against the USDOT involves four member plaintiffs who filed DataQs requests to change the agency's data after a violation was dismissed. All four requests were rejected, and the FMCSA did not alter its data.

Similarly, the Weaver case against the FMCSA stems from a violation against him in Montana that was dismissed but never removed from federal records. The OOIDA filed the lawsuit on behalf of trucker Fred Weaver.

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# DataQing: Nine tips that may help navigate the system

All motorcoach operators, as well as their drivers, should be familiar — by now — with the crash, inspection, traffic citation and registration data collected and used by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

There are two primary reasons such awareness is important: First, the FMCSA uses the data to prioritize and initiate enforcement activities. Second, the public can view much of it on FMCSA websites.

If an operator or driver believes data listed on an FMCSA website is inaccurate, he or she can submit a “request for data review” through a system set up by the FMCSA called DataQs.

To get the official lowdown on the DataQs system and process, go to <https://dataqs.fmcsa.dot.gov>.

To learn how to view data in the FMCSA systems, go to the relevant Frequently Asked Question in the DataQs Help Center (How can motor carriers view their safety data?) at <https://dataqs.fmcsa.dot.gov>. The Help Center link is on the left side of the home page.

Like all things bureaucratic, there is a step-by-step process for gathering the necessary details and submitting a DataQs’ data review request.

As part of the process, the sys-

tem allows operators and drivers to upload supporting documents. It also automatically routes the data review request to the appropriate agency for consideration, and it tracks the request.

Below are nine tips designed to help make a successful DataQs’ request for data review, or RDR, in the event of an erroneous inspection or violation, or incorrectly assigned crash.

While these unofficial tips tend to make the DataQs process appear to be neat and tidy, it isn’t. That’s because, ultimately, there are often two (or more) sides to a story, meaning the process can get bogged down or stymied.

So, here’s the guidance for completing a challenge through the FMCSA DataQs system.

1. Make the request as timely as possible. While there is no time limit on challenging a piece of information contributing to a CSA score or profile, getting the challenge in before two years is up, when it falls off the CSA radar, is a no-brainer.

2. Specify the correct request-for-data-review type. From the get-go when inputting a request for data review, make sure the appropriate action type is selected, delineating it has to do with a particular violation, an inspection, crash, and so on.

3. Provide the accurate report number; this refers to the inspection report. Giving the accurate number will help the appropriate reviewing state agency determine whether the inspection or crash actually belongs to that agency.

4. Provide a clear and detailed explanation of what is to be reviewed. In the event the initial category is insufficient to cover the full scope of what is needed in the review, use the section for explanation to elaborate on problems.

5. Provide as much possible supporting documentation that is valid and relevant. Send pictures documenting a supposed maintenance violation, for instance, time-stamped if possible. In events where a violation or inspection is wrongly assigned to a company’s USDOT number or the wrong driver, providing bills of lading, vehicle registration documents, and/or driver’s license, lease agreement copies, may be appropriate.

Experts say providing supporting documents is one of the most important things that can be done to help resolve a request for data review. If what is being disputed is a violation, coupled with a state citation that a judge overturned in court, whatever evidence was presented to the judge to have it thrown out

should be provided to the feds as well.

6. Keep a request for data review professional and detailed.

7. Make factual statements. Whenever possible, stick to the facts of the case without injecting opinion/emotion into the request.

8. Ask for additional time as necessary. State agencies reviewing requests for data review often come back to carriers, requesting additional information, and give the carrier or driver a time limit in which to get the data. If more time is needed to assemble the additional information, simply fire off an email to the reviewer to let him or her know you’re working on getting the data.

It is not a good idea to give reviewers the idea the person requesting the data review is dragging his or her feet. State officials say they want to get data problems resolved in a timely manner.

9. Follow up as appropriate. “Final decisions” made by state DataQs reviewers can be appealed. Two states, Arizona and New Hampshire, have set up official boards with industry representatives, in addition to law enforcement representatives, to review appeals.

Other states handle them less formally, but will typically re-review information.

During a discussion of the DataQs system at a Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance meeting, two trucking company executives reported they had drivers receive out-of-service violations for operating a vehicle without corrective lenses (yes, their eyeglasses) after having taken them off when the officer stopped them.

Such incidents provide a clear example of the difficulty of trying to use the DataQs system to have an out-of-service violation removed from the drivers’ records.

If the enforcement officer sticks to his story, saying he actually “observed the driver driving” without glasses, then the state data reviewer is pretty much stuck.

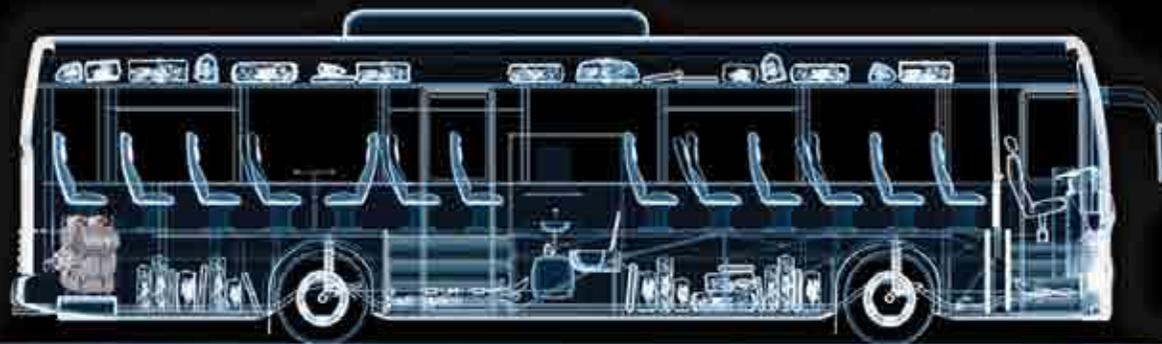
Another possible area of frustration is challenging a citation on a technicality. For example, when an enforcement officer references the wrong statute or regulation when issuing a citation or out-of-service order.

If the officer says the violation happened, that’s likely the end of the story (and the DataQs appeal). There apparently are no hard and fast requirements that officers must cite the correct statute or Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulation.

Little wonder then so many safety directors use ugly epithets to describe the DataQs process.

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## Comment period is extended for e-logging device rule

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration extended the comment period for its proposed electronic logging device mandate, pushing back the comment period 30 days to June 26.

Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Executive Director Stephen Keppler requested the extension

last month in a letter to the FMCSA, citing the complexity and significance of the rule as reasons.

The comment period originally was set to conclude May 27.

In its notice for the extension, the FMCSA says it “acknowledges CVSA’s concerns” and has granted the extension “to provide all inter-

ested parties additional time to submit comments on this rulemaking.”

The rule, when made final, will require all bus and truck drivers who currently must keep records of duty status to use an electronic logging device, formerly known as electronic onboard recorders. (See May 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Paper log books will go away.

After the comment period ends, the agency will begin work on the final rule, which could be published later this year. Delays related to the rule have been commonplace, however.

The effective date of the rule will be two years after publication of the final rule.

## Highway blitz

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

distracted driving. Plus, watching for unsafe behavior by drivers of large, over-the-road vehicles.

The troopers also aim to alter high-risk behavior by motorists that leads to crashes through education and awareness, partnerships, and high-visibility traffic enforcement.

“Far too often, troopers, officers and deputies are called upon to notify a family member that a loved one is not coming home,” said Col. Michael Edmonson, superintendent of the Louisiana State Police and general chair of the International Association of Chiefs of Police division of state and provincial police.

“We, as law enforcement leaders, have an obligation to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to reduce highway fatalities in our communities, hence the Drive to Save Lives campaign.

“Through our collective efforts to educate and raise awareness about the leading causes of fatalities, our expanded partnerships to address these causes, and high-visibility, proactive enforcement to change behaviors, our goal is to reduce highway fatalities nationwide by 15 percent in 2014,” said Edmonson.

## 9/11 Museum

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

“Reservations are needed, otherwise it would be like the wild West, with whoever gets there first getting the spots.”

But Neustadt said it’s still too early to tell how well the system will work because “we’re just starting to see the demand rise.”

Information about bus access to the museum can be found at [www.911memorial.org/group-bus-access](http://www.911memorial.org/group-bus-access).

## Expo 2015

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

The evening, sponsored by the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau, will feature local-themed music, food and drink, with views of the Mississippi River, plus the Mardi Gras accessoire.

The preliminary schedule, complete with specific dates and times, for Expo 2015 and Travel Exchange has been posted on the Expo website.

“Start planning for your trip now,” suggests UMA.

Those interested in Expo are urged to visit [motorcoachexpo.com](http://motorcoachexpo.com) periodically in coming months as UMA will be adding new opportunities and events.

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## Van Hool plant in Macedonia dedicated; new model planned

SKOPJE, Macedonia — Van Hool dedicated its new bus manufacturing plant here last month, with the prime minister and other members of the Macedonian government on hand.

The \$34 million plant, which was announced nearly 2½ years ago, began producing the Van Hool CX model for the North American market roughly 11 months ago. The CX is an upgraded and rebranded version of the Van Hool C2045 that was introduced in the U.S. in 2000.

CX coaches from the Macedonia plant were officially unveiled late last year by Van Hool's North American distributor, ABC Companies, at the ABC sales, service and headquarters complex in Winter Garden, Fla. (See Dec. 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The first completed CX coach left the plant in Macedonia in mid-October. It was driven 1,100 miles to the Van Hool plant in Belgium where new passenger seats, wheels and tires are installed — before being shipped to the United States.

Since then, more than 125 other CXs have followed the same trail.

The CX is assembled by a workforce of 431 Macedonians (410 men and 21 women). This year, around

300 CXs are expected to be built in Macedonia for the North American market.

Van Hool said the Macedonia plant reaffirms the company position in the international coach and bus market, and will strengthen it in the years ahead.

Additionally, company CEO Filip Van Hool, announced during the “official inauguration” ceremony that starting late this year the Macedonia plant will begin production of a “new type of coach” — the EX — that will be built for European and new markets.

Said Filip Van Hool: “For the first time since the worldwide financial-economic crisis began, we’re again thinking in terms of growth.”

“True to tradition, we stay in close contact with what’s going on at our customers and keep a sharp eye on how the market is evolving. What we’ve been seeing prompted us to build a new type of coach.

“With this new vehicle type we can even tap new markets that until recently were virtually unattainable for us.”

Van Hool’s announcement was short on details; the EX was simply

## Distinctive Systems adds Google maps

BINGHAMTON, N.Y. — Distinctive Systems Inc., a leading supplier of software for motorcoach, bus and tour companies, has announced a partnership agreement with Google, the search-engine, high-technology giant.

Under the arrangement, Distinctive Systems has been appointed a Google OEM Partner and has licensed Google Maps for Business for integration into Distinctive Systems’ Coach Manager charter- and contract-booking system and its Tour Booking System.

“Google Maps for Business is the most-advanced mapping solution on the market and the annual cost for us to license it for integration into our software is substantial,” said Distinctive Systems President Don Greenglass.

“Despite this, we will be providing the integrations free of charge to all clients with a current

characterized as a “standard-type coach,” aimed at the “lower segment of the international bus and coach market.”

Filip Van Hool noted that for his company to produce a competitive, low-cost coach it had to be built as cost-efficiently as possible, meaning assembly had to be somewhere other

software maintenance agreement and to every user of our software at those clients,” Greenglass added.

Support for Distinctive Systems’ existing Microsoft MapPoint integration will continue for the foreseeable future.

“However, we expect most clients will migrate to Google Maps immediately when they receive the updated software version,” said Greenglass.

“A major benefit of Google Maps is that — as a web-based solution — it is effectively permanently up to date,” Greenglass continued.

“Our integration will also include all the familiar features of the standalone free version, including street views, satellite views and awareness of traffic conditions and road works.

“In common with our existing Coach Manager MapPoint inte-

gration, Google Maps will be fully integrated with our built-in price calculator and will be able to plan routes and calculate travelling times and distances.

“In our Tour Booking System it will be used for defining and displaying home pick-up areas and any associated supplements, for locating and displaying standard pick-up points and for optimizing home pick-up routes,” said Greenglass.

gration, Google Maps will be fully integrated with our built-in price calculator and will be able to plan routes and calculate travelling times and distances.

“In our Tour Booking System it will be used for defining and displaying home pick-up areas and any associated supplements, for locating and displaying standard pick-up points and for optimizing home pick-up routes,” said Greenglass.

The release date for the Coach Manager integration is expected mid-to-late July, with an update for the Tour Booking System software to follow shortly.

For more information, contact Greenglass via email at [don.greenglass@distinctivesystems.com](mailto:don.greenglass@distinctivesystems.com), or phone at (646) 448-9982.

The web address for Distinctive Systems is [www.distinctivesystems.com/us/](http://www.distinctivesystems.com/us/).

their own.”

The two-axle EX will be unveiled at the giant IAA Commercial Vehicles 2014 exposition in Hannover, Germany, beginning Sept. 25 and ending Feb. 10.

Whether an Americanized version of the coach will eventually find its way to the U.S. market is unclear.

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# How to keep a motorcoach fleet clean — affordably

By Bruno Albanesi

Every bus and coach operator knows a clean fleet is good business.

Coach cleanliness improves the company image, extends vehicle life by reducing corrosion, and allows for easier, faster vehicle maintenance and repair.

That opinion is pretty unanimous.

What is somewhat more confusing is HOW to maintain a fleet consistently clean, and how to do so affordably.

“Affordably” is, of course, a key consideration.

What are the practical choices a fleet owner has to mechanize

washing a large vehicle?

The equipment range runs from the very basic broom and bucket to a fully automatic, three-brush portal with all the bells and whistles.

Roughly \$30 on one side and up to \$300,000 on the other, counting the real estate and large building often needed to house the big

systems.

Somewhere in between lies a category of machines which has hit many a fleet owner’s return-on-investment sweet spot, winning them over in North America and around the world — the single-brush, bus wash machine.

Simple, compact, fast and affordable, single-brush vehicle

wash machines have evolved to all shapes and sizes, each able to turn a single operator into a virtual wash crew.

For the operator, washing a full-size coach now becomes a leisurely walk around the vehicle.

From the very basic electric models (tied to a fixed wash area, usually by a festoon system), to the high-tech, “unplugged” machines that are cordless and able to take the wash to the bus, the sector has evolved remarkably during the past 20 years.

Prices are reasonable, ranging from \$15,000 to \$50,000 — installed.

The two major players in this sector in North America are Awash and Bitimec.

Awash Systems Corp. in Canada bought ACC International in late 2010 and specializes in electric fixed-bay units.

Bitimec International, with offices in Greenwich, Conn., is a manufacturer and pioneer in the sector, with many innovations such as the first fully autonomous machine (diesel powered in 1993), first battery-powered machine (24-volt, Model 626 in 1997), and the first hybrid-powered, ride-on machine (Pony H model in 1999).

Being compact and reasonably priced, these systems are popular among bus and coach wash bays by the thousands throughout North America and Europe.

The narrow version of the machines can operate in wash bays as narrow as 15 feet.

All models are workhorses with relatively few moving parts. Drivelines are directly linked motors and sealed reducers.

Awash has preferred aluminum frames with water activated inclination mechanisms which lean the whole frame forward.

Bitimec uses all stainless-steel frames and “brush-only” inclination systems which keep all wheels firmly on the ground and lean less weight for more stability.

Both companies have autonomous machines with multiple power options, with battery being by far the favorite.

When vehicles come in after a trip, they need to be refreshed before the next group comes on board.

Single-brush wash companies, such as Bitimec and Awash, offer affordable solutions with small foot-prints and a lot of wash muscle, all at the touch of a button.

No more excuses for buses that are other than spotless.

Bruno Albanesi is president of Bitimec International.

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## People

BALTIMORE — The **Maryland Motorcoach Association** has installed two new board members.

Joining the board are *Tim Wilson*, director of sales and operations at **Gunther Charters** and **Hunt Valley Motor Coach** in Hanover, Md., and *David Schmidt*, regional sales manager for **Prevost**.

Wilson holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, where he graduated cum laude.

He initially got involved in the motorcoach industry by driving buses during his college years. In 2005, he became a driver for **Peter Pan Bus Lines** in Washington, D.C.

After graduating, Wilson joined the District of Columbia School System as a counselor in its College Access Program. After a year, Wilson decided to follow his passion and pursue a fulltime career in the motorcoach industry.

Prior to joining Gunther Charters in 2010, Wilson worked for Haymarket Transportation in Sterling, Va.

Schmidt has spent 40 years in the industry, the past 27 representing Prevost as regional sales manager in the eastern U.S. He is a graduate of Dickinson College with a degree in history.

FORT ATKINSON, Wis. — **The Fireside Dinner Theatre**, which draws tens of thousands of

visitors annually to its performances, has honored *Karen Schwabe* of **Sunshine Motorcoach Tours** in Moline, Ill.

Schwabe has been bringing groups to The Fireside theater for 26 years. She was presented the "Flame of Friendship" award.

*Ed Flesch*, longtime Fireside producer/director, said that among The Fireside's group sales staff, Sunshine Motorcoach Tours is known as the "one-note group."

"Generally, that is all that is involved," he said. "The shows are booked, confirmed and paid without a reminder needed."

Over the years, Schwabe consistently has brought four tours to the theater each season, sometimes more.

"Even through the tough economic crises of late, she came through with full coaches," Flesch noted. "For her many years of loyalty, her can-do spirit and demonstration that the extra effort really can pay off, we're pleased to honor Karen Schwabe."

The theater, which has been operating for 36 years, has four remaining productions this year: "Driving Miss Daisy," June 12-July 20; "Smokey Joe's Café," July 24-Aug. 31; "Les Miserables," Sept. 11-Oct. 26, and "A Fireside Christmas," Oct. 30-Dec.21.

SUPERIOR, Colo. — **Key Equipment Finance**, one of the nation's largest bank-held equipment finance companies and an affiliate of **KeyCorp**, has named

*Cramer Owen* its national leasing manager, specialty vehicles.

In this role, Owen will focus on establishing new relationships with manufacturers, dealers and end-users with the objective of providing equipment financing solutions to medium- and large-fleet specialty vehicle operators.

Prior to joining Key, Owen was

business development manager with **De Lage Landen Financial Services** of Wayne, Pa. Previously, he spent more than two decades in various roles with **Wells Fargo Equipment Finance**, **CIT Group**, **GE Capital**, **CNH Capital**, **Daimler A.G.**, and **PACCAR Inc.**

Key Equipment Finance is active in the motorcoach industry.



Tim Wilson



David Schmidt

## Bus ticket aggregator includes Greyhound, Greyhound Express

BOSTON — Wanderu, the startup company with ambitions to become the Kayak.com of bus and train travel, announced it has added Greyhound and Greyhound Express to its ticket-buying service.

Travelers can now use Wanderu to book Greyhound travel to 57 cities, which are concentrated in the northeastern U.S. and Canada.

Before the addition of Greyhound, Wanderu offered search and booking for a number of carriers, including megabus.com and BoltBus.

Wanderu enables users to find bus travel itineraries and fares — by comparing them side-by-side — and is free to use for consumers (the bus companies pay a fee to Wanderu).

The company said in April it had crossed 1 million bus trips booked by its users. The service launched out of beta last summer. (See Sept. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Last year, Wanderu raised about \$2.5 million in funding from investors, including Alta Ventures Mexico, Orbitz.com Chairman Jeff

Clarke, and former Greyhound Lines CEO Craig Lentzsch.

Wanderu's service was initially available for booking travel in the Northeast, and has been expanded since to the Southeast and West Coast.

Wanderu aggregates both bus and train schedules, which would otherwise require checking a number of websites to find the cheapest tickets and connections between cities.

Clicking on a search result directs the consumer to the bus or train provider's site similar to airline travel aggregators like Kayak.

Wanderu is not the only company attempting bus industry ticket aggregation. A year ago, a Canadian start-up, Busbud, launched internationally with a similar goal of becoming the "Kayak for intercity bus travel."

The best known website, however, is GoToBus.com, which aggregated the so-called Chinatown bus operators years ago.

For more information, go to [www.wanderu.com](http://www.wanderu.com).



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## Faith Travel Association role growing at Travel Exchange

LEXINGTON, Ky. — The new Faith Travel Association has announced plans to host its first “FTA Day” conference during NTA/UMA Travel Exchange in New Orleans in January.

The association also will host a pavilion at Travel Exchange, which will showcase faith-based travel exhibitors from around the world.

“As the only association dedicated to bringing the global faith-based travel industry together with faith leaders, FTA continues to gain momentum,” said Z. Allen Abbott, executive director of the association.

Travel Exchange attendees will

be able to participate in FTA professional development seminars, as well as network at sponsored-FTA events, and tour the exhibits in the FTA Pavilion, all at no additional charge beyond the standard Travel Exchange registration.

Travel Exchange combines the annual NTA Convention and the United Motorcoach Association Motorcoach Expo under one roof. The joint show will be Jan. 18-22.

The FTA Day conference will be Jan. 19. For more information, go to [www.faitravelassociation.com](http://www.faitravelassociation.com).

The Faith Travel Association was officially launched at Travel Exchange 2014 in February.

## Calendar

### JUNE 2014

**12-14 The Bus History Association 2014 Annual Convention,** Country Inn & Suites at Mall of America, Minneapolis. Info: [www.bus-history.org](http://www.bus-history.org).

**16-19 Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association and Pennsylvania Bus Association**

**Joint Annual Meeting, Industry Expo and Sales Retreat,** Sands Bethlehem (Pa.) Info: [www.pabus.org](http://www.pabus.org) or [www.gnjma.com](http://www.gnjma.com).

**18-21 New England Bus Association 2014 Annual Conference,** Hilton Mystic, Mystic, Conn. Info: [mitch.guralnick@mcicoach.com](mailto:mitch.guralnick@mcicoach.com).

**24-25 UMA Capital Hill Days,** Washington, D.C. Info: Ken Presley at UMA, email [kpresley@uma.org](mailto:kpresley@uma.org), or call (800) 424-8262.

## Croc on board: Questions abound

MURMANSK, Russia — On occasion, news articles seem to raise more questions than they answer.

An example of this conundrum occurred late last month when United Press International transmitted an account of a crocodile that was hurt and vomited for several hours after an overweight accountant landed on the reptile during an accident on a Russian circus bus.

When the bus hit a pothole, the 264-pound female accountant went flying and smashed the 6½-foot crocodile, the Russian news agency, RIA Novosti, reported.

The crocodile, named Fyodor, got sick after the unexpected slam and threw up for three hours.

However, a medical examination of the animal revealed he had not suffered internal injuries but he was held out of his next performance, the Russian newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reported.

Circus officials said they expected Fyodor would be able to return to performing by the following weekend.

### JULY 2014

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Fyodor also reportedly experienced shock symptoms, as did the Soviet Circus accountant who squished him. Additionally, the accountant suffered cuts and bruises.

A reprimand was issued to the accountant, and she was “advised to lose weight” and “observe safety precautions” by wearing her seatbelt in the future.

Interesting tale, but ya gotta wonder:

Should U.S. bus operators be taking a cue from the incident and expanding their passenger demographics? Seniors and snakes? Gators and girl hockey teams? Of course, operators would have to make sure drivers conduct passenger safety briefings.

Just where do you buy buses designed to transport both crocodiles and accountants?

What is the seating layout for such a coach? Of all the floor plans published by all of the cut-away bus makers in the U.S., have you ever seen one that has crocodiles on one side and accountants on the other?

Do the accountant and the Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina Motorcoach Associations, Richmond Mariott,

crocodile share the bus restroom? Just how big was the pothole that sent a 264-pound individual flying?

Are the infrastructure problems in Russia exponentially worse than they are here?

Just how fast was the bus flying at the time of the incident?

Shouldn't the National Transportation Safety Board be encouraged to send one of its Go Teams to Murmansk to investigate the incident to make sure it doesn't occur here?

Shouldn't the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration be sending a copy of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations to their Russian counterparts?

Or, should the FMCSA be dialing back its domestic enforcement efforts, recognizing that, compared to the real world, U.S. bus safety really isn't so bad?

You think Russian authorities ever conduct a drug search on that bus?

And, finally, who has the fun job of fastening the safety belt on the croc?

Richmond, Va. Info: [www.scmotorcoach.org](http://www.scmotorcoach.org), [www.ncmotorcoach.org](http://www.ncmotorcoach.org), or [www.vamotorcoach.com](http://www.vamotorcoach.com).

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<b>MID CENTRAL</b>	Dwight Barnett	248-421-3631	Dwight@CTCCoach.com
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## Medical exams

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

their medical certification exam with a qualified healthcare professional wherever they might be — coast to coast, including Hawaii and Alaska.”

### Enough examiners?

In allowing the rule to become effective late last month, the FMCSA rejected appeals from trucking groups that contended there may not be enough certified examiners for the number of drivers who live in certain areas. The American Trucking Associations, for example, asked for a six-month delay.

“Not only will the registry lack sufficient numbers of examiners in sum, but the system will be hindered by the inadequate geographic coverage,” ATA President and CEO Bill Graves wrote in a letter about the requirement.

“Without an adequate supply of medical examiners appropriately dispersed around the country... drivers and motor carriers may be unable to fully comply without excessive expense and costly delays,” the letter said.

The FMCSA responded by asserting that with 22,000 medical professionals registered on the start date, and more signing up, there was an adequate number of certified examiners available.

In its rule, however, the agency set a goal of 40,000 examiners to cover the needs of the 4.4 million bus and truck drivers subject to the rule. As of early this month, it was at 62.5 percent of the 40,000-examiner target.

Drivers must be medically certified every two years, which the rule does not change.

“It is also important to emphasize that most drivers will not need a new physical exam immediately following the...deadline, FMCSA

spokesman Duane DeBruyne told one publication. “Their medical certificates will continue to be valid until the expiration date that is shown on the card,” he said.

Others who had sought a delay of the mandate cited “high costs” and “unnecessary downtime spent traveling to an approved examiner.”

### Expect to pay more

The day before the requirement went into effect, one large medical provider announced that “due to the increased certification requirements for clinicians and a new regulation requiring clinicians to send exam results on a monthly basis, the cost of DOT physicals will be increasing in the upcoming months.”

“This price adjustment will reflect commercial drivers’ access to a higher level of clinical expertise and to thousands of FMCSA-certified clinicians nationwide,” said Dr. Anne-Marie Puricelli, regional

medical director for Concentra medical centers in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin and Nebraska. Concentra is a subsidiary of medical giant Humana Inc.

Dr. Puricelli recommended that drivers schedule their medical exams, rather than just walk in, as many have done in the past. An appointment will assure that a certified clinician is available, she noted.

A USDOT medical exam looks at a range of conditions to assess a driver’s ability to safely operate a commercial vehicle, including cardiovascular disease, respiratory and muscular functions, vision, and hearing.

All interstate commercial truck and bus drivers must pass a USDOT medical exam at least every two years to obtain a valid medical certificate, maintain their CDL, and legally operate a commercial motor vehicle.

Medical examiners on the national registry are required to

maintain and demonstrate competence through periodic training and recertification testing and those who fail to maintain federal standards will be removed, says the FMCSA.

To learn more or to check the registry, go to <http://nationalregistry.fmcsa.dot.gov>.

### No change in Canada

Motor Coach Canada, responding to calls and emails asking if the new U.S. medical certification requirement had any impact on Canadians holding a commercial driver license issued by a Canadian province or territory, said the answer is “no.”

“By virtue of the Canada-U.S. commercial driver license reciprocity agreement, Canadian driver license medicals are not affected by the new rule in the U.S., which requires medical examiners to be certified by FMCSA,” Motor Coach Canada told its members.

## Out of service

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

All of the carriers were among 250 selected for stepped-up safety inspections due to roadside inspection and safety data that identified them as “most at risk,” the FMCSA said at the time.

The carriers regaining operating rights were: Lucky River Transportation Corp. of Boston; Ricardo Transportation Co. of Orlando; Rotel North American Tours of Orange, Calif.; South Carolina VIP Tours of Columbia; Spaulding Charters and Tours Inc. of Charlotte, N.C.; TranSouth Motorcoach of Warner Robins, Ga., and Uniworld Tours of Long Island City, N.Y.

### Costly comeback

One of the largest carriers shut down last year, Lucky Star of Boston, spent nearly \$1 million over five months to revamp its operations so it could reclaim permission for interstate operations. The carrier replaced a third of its 22 vehicles and had to hire a number of new drivers.

During the months it was shut down, many of its drivers found new jobs and four were let go because they could not pass an English-language test.

TransSouth in Georgia took what appears to be a unique route back to service, returning to the road under a federal consent order after filing a civil lawsuit against the FMCSA. It took the unusual step of challenging an FMCSA shutdown order in federal court.

The feds had ordered TransSouth, an eight-bus carrier, off the road when they said the carrier had failed to comply with the terms of another consent order negotiated a year earlier.

### Lawsuit succeeds

The company filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia, asserting that its FMCSA inspector “piled on” the company, making it an “innocent victim” in the FMCSA “Operation Quick Strike” campaign to shut down unsafe operators. Negotiations prompted by the court filing put TransSouth back in service with a “conditional” safety rating.

Rotel North American Tours was based in Indiana when it was ordered off the road in September. The *Terre Haute Tribune-Star* reported that the German company had hired a couple living there to handle its business in the U.S. The couple had lived in Germany and spoke German. The company’s name and USDOT number now are listed at an address in Orange, Calif.

Online records show Rotel filed corporate papers in California on April 14. A man who answered the carrier’s new phone number declined to discuss the changes.

One of the successful service returnees, Ricardo Transportation of Florida, now displays a U.S. Department of Transportation logo on its web site and wraps up its home page with the declaration: “Five Star Service, Safety & Comfort!” It also carries another logo that says “CDL — Certified Driver Licensed.”

A Canadian carrier that lost its U.S. operating authority last year, FTS Forest Transport Services Ltd. of British Columbia, is advertising a busy slate of spring and summer casino trips north of the border. It is currently listed as a “general authorization licensee” by the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Half of the carriers parked during Operation Quick Strike last

year list five or fewer “power units” on their FMCSA snap shot page. That includes four single-bus operators, eight with two-bus fleets, and six with three vehicles.

Just five of the 52 companies declared having 20 or more power units, although some of those are smaller vehicles such as shuttles, vans and limousines.

The seeming emphasis on smaller carriers has led to some motorcoach industry grumbling that the FMCSA has picked on small potatoes targets — that are easily bullied and don’t have the expertise or resources to contest the aggressive inspection tactics of zealous investigators and government attorneys — to bolster its shutdown numbers and the perception it is taking action to prevent accidents.

While a number of industry safety experts harbor such thoughts, they are reticent to respond to the issue on the record.

“I am not seeing any big carriers being hit with the consent agreements,” said one veteran safety specialist. “They are not perfect — they have crashes and paperwork issues, too,” he noted.

“This is a very complex issue, but the effects seem to be disproportionately borne by small, and often minority-owned, operators,” said another expert.

### Fewer resources

“These groups traditionally have less access to the capital and revenue opportunities that produce the profits that allow more staffing for compliance. There also seems to be a number of operators that have contracted with Chinatown scheduled-service carriers or brokers — to operate line-run service — that have little or no experience in the rigors of hiring, training, su-

pervising, and fatigue management of regular-route drivers.

“And small minority operators seem to have a reduced chance of recovering from an out-of-service order, particularly since FMCSA generally lacks specificity for obtaining reinstatement.”

However, another expert in the field said an emphasis on motorcoach carriers that are under-capitalized may be warranted.

“There are so many underground bus carriers who don’t even have drivers with commercial driver’s licenses — it is really ugly. Something should have been done before now.”

Smaller companies that cannot afford a dedicated safety officer may need to work with a part-time consultant to keep their program and paperwork in order, he said. “Bus companies probably need to have a safety director before they get to five buses, but they probably can’t afford it until they get to 10.”

### Who was shutdown

The 2013 Quick Strike carriers still listed “out-of-service” as of last month were: Autobuses Rayon Inc. in Phoenix; FTS Forest Transport Services of Parksville, B.C.; Salcido Tours of Los Angeles; A Ray Land Productions Company (dba Fabulous Coach Lines) of Branford, Fla.; Best Limo Service of Tucker, Ga.; All Pro Motor Coach in Atlanta; Nealson Coach Inc. of Riverdale, Ill.; Sztork Family Tour & Travel Corp. in Wood Dale, Ill.;

Midnight Express of Olathe, Kan.; MHBS Inc. of Mortons Gap, Ky.; Lynette’s Limousine Service of Wilmington, Mass.; MTZ Tours of Springfield, Mass.; Azaria Tours Inc. of Attleboro, Mass.; Carbo Limo of Oxford, Miss.; All Nations Coach Inc. of Clayton,

N.C.; DAPTCO Motor Coach Services of Greensboro, N.C.;

Southeastern Tours Inc. in Greenville, N.C.; Executive Charter Lines Inc. in Greensboro, N.C.; Pocono Progressive of Irvington, N.J.; Gotham Coach Service Inc. of Bellport, N.Y.; Bus Go Bus of Philadelphia; Wilcar Tours Inc. of Tobyhanna, Pa.; Destiny Tours of Kingstree, S.C.; Autobuses Zacatecanos of Fort Worth, Texas; Salt Lake Shuttles of Kearns, Utah, and Advanced Ventures of Springfield, Va.

Carriers listed as “not authorized” were: People to Places Inc. of Bridgeport, Conn.; Washington DC Party Shuttle in Washington; Acrosstown Charter of Park Ridge, Ill.; Irma J Tours Inc. of Chicago; Illini Tours of Champaign, Ill.; Furtado Bus Lines Inc. of Assonet, Mass.; CC Rider Coach of Pearlinton, Miss.; Travel Time Transportation of Danville, Pa.; S&V Tours Inc. of Tobyhanna, Pa.; and The People’s Choice of Hardeeville, S.C.

### The inactive list

The USDOT numbers owned by these carriers are now inactive: River City LLC of Lake Havasu City, Ariz.; New Haven Bus Service of West Haven, Conn.; McRea Transportation Inc. in Hialeah, Fla.; Coach USA Tour Inc. of Niagara Falls, N.Y.; Horizon Coach Inc. of Bellport, N.Y.; Destiny Tours of Toledo, Ohio; GWC Enterprises of Memphis, Tenn.; Hotel Mexicano in Von Ormy, Texas, and Agape Tours Inc. of Wichita Falls, Texas.

Fabulous Coach Lines (see out-of-service list above) was sold early last year to A Candies Coachworks Inc. of Gainesville, Fla.

The former owner of Fabulous Coach Lines, Ray Land, continues to operate Players Coach, a five-coach casino shuttle.

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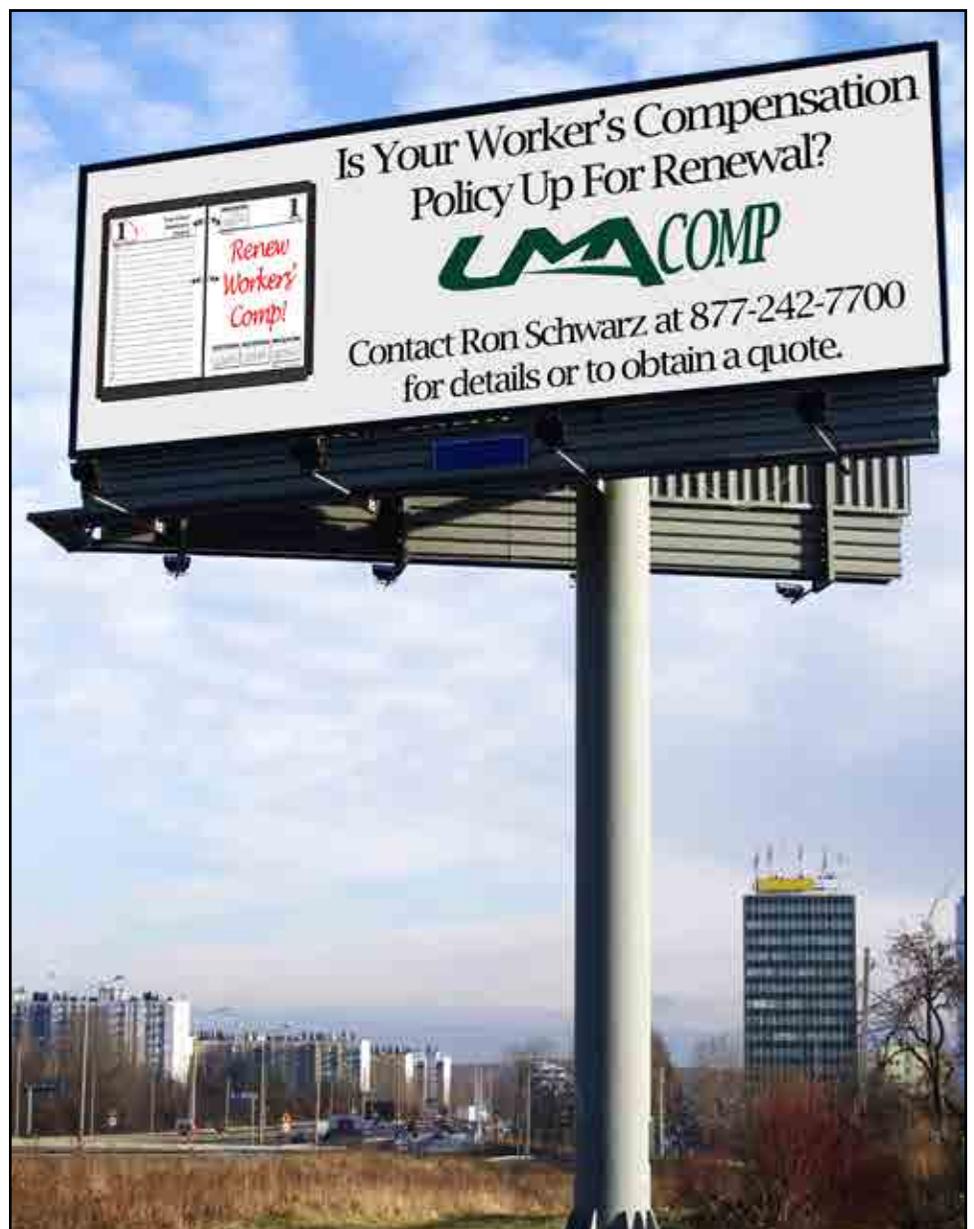
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# FirstGroup profit picture mixed

## Greyhound Lines, First Student lag

LONDON — FirstGroup, the Scottish-based corporate parent of Greyhound Lines, First Student and First Transit, has reported a 23 percent increase in fiscal 2014 earnings, but its North American businesses failed to contribute to the gain.

Still, the overall corporate profit gain was in line with analyst forecasts, and occurred despite a slower-than-expected turnaround of its U.S. school bus unit, First Student.

Still, FirstGroup announced it would not be paying a final dividend for the fiscal year, scrapping a plan announced last year to reinstate payouts after it pulled last year's final dividend and this year's interim dividend.

The move conserves cash.

FirstGroup's pretax profit for the 12 months ended March 31 was \$189 million, compared with \$137.5 million reported a year ago.

Among its three North American operations, First Transit was the only unit to report higher operating profits for fiscal 2014.

First Transit had an operating profit of \$95.7 million on revenue of \$1.29 billion, resulting in an operating margin of 7.4 percent. A year ago, First Transit earned \$77.7 million on revenue of \$1.28 billion, for a margin of 6 percent.

Operating profits at Greyhound dropped to \$73.2 million for the 12 months ended March 31, on revenue of \$990.6 million, producing an operating margin of 7.4

percent.

A year ago, Greyhound earned \$85.2 million on revenue of \$1.02 billion, resulting in a margin of 8.3 percent.

First Student operating earnings declined to \$152.8 million on revenue of \$2.34 billion, for an operating margin of 6.5 percent.

In fiscal 2013, First Student had an operating profit of \$175.2 million on revenue of \$2.38 billion, resulting in a margin of 7.4 percent.

First Transit, Greyhound and First Student produced combined revenue of \$4.62 billion in fiscal 2014 and operating profits of \$321.7 million.

That compares with fiscal 2013 combined revenue of \$4.69 billion and operating earnings of \$338.1 million.

## Winter's impact

The performances of First Student and Greyhound were severely impacted by the prolonged winter weather in the U.S. early this year.

FirstGroup had warned in April it would be taking a \$23.57 million hit to fiscal 2014 profits from the weather. (See May 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

FirstGroup also said that much of the 3.1 percent drop in Greyhound revenue during fiscal 2014 was caused by the bad weather during January, February and March that "caused significant disruption to the network."

Excluding weather, like-for-like revenue at Greyhound for the fiscal year was roughly 0.7 percent lower, "although the revenue growth trajectory improved over the course of

the year," reflecting modestly improving economic conditions in the U.S. as the year went along.

FirstGroup noted that the weather also offset gains resulting from "the continued profitable growth of our point-to-point services."

## Bright spots

Greyhound Express, one of those point-to-point services, was reported to have continued "to perform well," with year-over-year revenue increasing by more than 10 percent.

"The multiple price points we now offer (at Greyhound Express) gives us broader market potential and helps us to attract users back to coach travel, as well as encouraging new customer demographics," said FirstGroup.

Greyhound Express now covers more than 30 percent of the U.S. Greyhound system, including most major city pairs.

Meanwhile, Greyhound's Bolt-Bus unit expanded in California during the year, adding Los Angeles-to-San Francisco, San Jose-to-Oakland and Los Angeles-to-Las Vegas runs, and the YO!Bus brand, which links Chinatowns in the Northeast, "saw positive year-on-year performance."

Among other developments:

- Terminals are to be opened in Miami, Seattle and Baltimore in the next few months

- Pilot testing of yield-managed pricing on Greyhound's traditional route system will occur during the next year

A medium-term goal for Greyhound, said FirstGroup, is a profit margin target of 12 percent.

# megabus drops Pittsburgh, Cleveland routes

CLEVELAND — megabus.com, the nation's largest curbside operator, has eliminated service to three destinations from its downtown Cleveland station because of low ridership.

Similarly, service has been cut to 13 of the 19 destinations megabus once served out of Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh was designated a hub city by megabus three years ago and remains one even though the number of destinations has

been slashed.

Clevelanders can no longer travel to Pittsburgh, Detroit or Ann Arbor, Mich., via megabus. All four cities were connected on one route, which originated in Pittsburgh and traveled west to Detroit, stopping in Cleveland and Ann Arbor.

"Unfortunately, due to insufficient ridership service, the Pittsburgh-Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit-Ann Arbor route was discontinued," said Sean Hughes, associate director

of corporate affairs for Coach USA/megabus.com North America.

"Customers in each market still have access to other service routes, including 12 cities to and from Cleveland."

The Cleveland-Pittsburgh route was launched in spring 2011. At one time, megabus offered six roundtrips daily between Pittsburgh and Cleveland. The route to Ann Arbor was launched in 2012; service to Detroit also began in 2011.

# Quebec City: Nice to visit, watch the idling

QUEBEC CITY — With motorcoaches pouring into this popular summer travel-season destination, operators and their drivers need to keep in mind Quebec City has strict anti-idling restrictions which appear to be rigorously enforced.

From now through Oct. 31, it's illegal for a motorcoach or bus to idle for more than five minutes in a 60-minute period within city limits.

And tickets are issued to the owner of the coach, not the driver.

The operator will receive a "statement of infraction" for the idling violation. The citation will demand payment, which can amount to hundreds of dollars, within 30 days.

In addition, according to Motor Coach Canada, the city can apparently seize the vehicle if the fine is not paid on time.

One coach operator who was cited last summer checked with a paralegal firm in Quebec who advised that the charges are difficult to contest and carriers have not had much success in making a defense to anti-idling charges.

Motor Coach Canada says operators should remind their drivers of Quebec City's strict enforcement of idling laws and to severely limit idling within city limits.



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