Support mixed for FMCSA nominee

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association, along with many other segments of the U.S. ground transportation industry, have strongly endorsed President Obama’s nomination of Anne Ferro to be administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Ferro, who must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate, is president of the Maryland Motor Truck Association and prior to that headed the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration from 1997 to 2003.

But while Ferro’s nomination is backed by industry groups, she’s being opposed by the Teamsters union and a handful of safety advocacy organizations.

In a statement, UMA President and CEO Victor Parra said the association was proud to give Ferro its full support and endorsement.

“Her effectiveness in both the private sector, by leading the Maryland Motor Truck Association, and public sector, by serving as Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration director of policy and programs, has earned Ferro the respect and support of thecoastal transportation industry,” Parra said.

“UMA is proud to give Ferro its full support and endorsement.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Deborah Hersman gets nod for NTSB

WASHINGTON — President Obama wants Deborah Hersman to be the next chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The president announced last month he would nominate Hersman to lead the nation’s transportation safety investigative agency.

Hersman, a member of the NTSB since June 2004, has served as the board’s representative at 15 major accidents, including the August 2008 crash of a chartered bus in Sherman, Texas, the November 2006 school bus crash in Huntsville, Ala., and the April 2005 collision of a school bus with a trash truck in Arlington, Va.

She also chaired the NTSB public hearing in October on the January 2008 motorcoach crash in Victoria, Texas.

She holds a CDL with a school bus endorsement, and is a certified child passenger safety technician.

Before joining the NTSB, Hersman was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

ON DISPLAY. Attendees at the annual Spring Fling of the Museum of Bus Transportation in Hershey, Pa., tour the vintage coaches on display for the event. Attendance was strong again this year. See story Page 10.

Wireless ID devices touch off dispute within CVSA

WASHINGTON D.C. — Talk by federal regulators of possibly requiring commercial buses and trucks to be equipped with wireless identification devices has touched off a dispute within the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance.

Two major committees of the influential organization of governmental motor carrier safety officials and transportation industry representatives have reached conflicting conclusions on the need for such a mandate.

The CVSA hopes to settle the differences between its Intelligent Transportation Systems and Associate Advisory committees at an executive board meeting in August, according to Steve Keppler, director of policy and programs.

At the center of the opposing opinions is growing discussion by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and other federal agencies of requiring all interstate commercial vehicles to be equipped with electronic identification devices.

Such devices would allow regulators and law enforcement authorities to easily identify motorcoaches and trucks and the companies that own or operate them.

Although such technology has been around for about 10 years, few states have taken advantage of it and it’s estimated that fewer than 15 percent of commercial vehicles in the United States are equipped with electronic identification devices. Instead, inspectors rely on visually checking vehicles markings and license plates for identification.

“Currently, all identification on trucks and buses are designed
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Atlanta investment company buys Gray Line of Nashville

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — An Atlanta-based private investment firm has acquired Gray Line of Nashville, the largest private coach operator in the Mid-South.

The acquisition came roughly two months after the death of Chris Levering, co-founder of Gray Line of Nashville. (See April 15 issue of Bus & Motorcoach News.)

The coach operator was purchased by Red Clay Capital, a minority-owned and managed firm that specializes in investing in growth-stage companies located in the southeastern U.S.

Gray Line of Nashville was founded 35 years ago by Chris Levering and his brother Dennis. It has grown into the 23rd largest motorcoach company in the U.S., according to Metro Magazine, doubling in size during the past five years.

It operates three divisions — charter, retail and tourism, and outsourcing, and has a fleet of more than 100 vehicles, including more than 80 motorcoaches.

“The hands-on operational approach of Red Clay and access to expert resources in operations, human resources, financial management, information technology, and strategic planning will continue the company’s tradition of excellence and take the business to new heights,” said Dennis Levering.

Levering will serve as special adviser to the company and a member of its board of directors.

Taking over day-to-day management is Stanton Higgs, who was promoted to general manager. Previously, Higgs served in a sales leadership role with Gray Line of Nashville.

Supporting Higgs in their key positions are Jerry Mischler, director of maintenance, and Scott Sims, director of finance and accounting.

Other members of the management team are Patty Levering, who leads retail sales; Susan Baldridge, who now leads charter and scheduled-service sales; Susan Baldridge, who now leads retail sales, including casino, sightseeing, package and airport services; and Nancy Mathis, who continues in her role focusing on safety and loss prevention.

Mike Johnston has joined the company as dispatch operations manager, responsible for airport, charter and sightseeing dispatch.

“We’re honored to continue the tradition begun by Chris and Dennis Levering, and excited to have the continued involvement of one of the industry’s most experienced and successful executives as a member of the team going forward,” said C. Mark Arnold, partner at Red Clay Capital.

For more about Red Clay, go to www.redclaycapital.com.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Setra in 2010

‘Better fuel economy, extended maintenance’

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Setra has become the first North American motorcoach supplier to release details about its plans for meeting the tough 2010 federal emissions standards.

To comply with the new requirements, Setra is adopting Detroit Diesel’s new DD13 engine that utilizes Daimler’s BlueTec emissions technology.

Gone will be the Detroit Diesel Series 60 that has been the motorcoach industry’s leading engine for more than two decades.

Setra says its 2010 S 417 model outfitted with a DD13 engine will get better economy than a comparable Series 60 engine that is compliant with 2007 emissions rules.

“Utilizing BlueTec technology to reduce NOx emissions, the Setra S 417 will be able to reduce dependency on exhaust gas recirculation,” said Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for Daimler Buses North America. “Less EGR charter and sightseeing dispatch.

“We’re honored to continue the tradition begun by Chris and Dennis Levering, and excited to have

means less heat rejection and greater component reliability, helping reduce fan-on time and its related fuel consumption, cycle wear and noise.

“The BlueTec emissions technology advantages will provide benefits to customers during the entire lifecycle of the Setra S 417 in fuel savings and reduced maintenance costs,” said Scully.

Daimler’s BlueTec is the name the company has given to the selective catalytic reduction process it will use beginning next year to reduce NOx emissions from its engines, meeting EPA mandates.

With BlueTec/SCR, exhaust from the engine is routed through an after-treatment system where the particulate matter is “scrubbed” through the diesel particulate filter and then is routed through the SCR filter where small amounts of diesel exhaust fluid (an ammonia mixture) reduce the oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions.

The continued involvement of one of the industry’s most experienced and successful executives as a member of the team going forward,” said C. Mark Arnold, partner at Red Clay Capital.

For more about Red Clay, go to www.redclaycapital.com.

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 Coalition asks Congress to curb speculation in oil

WASHINGTON — A coalition of industry organizations has petitioned Congress to pass legislation to rein in “excessive speculation and opaque trading activities” in oil markets.

“In recent weeks…crude oil and refined petroleum products have been trading substantially higher, despite record inventories and low demand,” the group said in a letter to the leadership of the House and Senate.

“Absent strong and sweeping reform, we will continue to witness extreme price volatility and excessive speculation,” the group added.

The Commodity Markets Oversight Coalition asked Congress to impose tighter position limits on investors that do not plan to take physical delivery of oil and to allow only “bona fide commercial participants” to obtain exemptions from these position limits.

Position limits spell out the maximum exposure commodity traders may have, often by stating the number of open contracts allowed per trader per month.

The group also asked for tighter oversight of energy trading that takes place away from regulated exchanges, such as over-the-counter derivative deals.

Some items on the oversight coalition’s legislative wish list found their way into the language of H.R. 2454, the energy and climate-change bill the House Energy and Commerce Committee approved last month.

Currently, there are federally mandated position limits only for certain agricultural commodities, such as corn and soybean oil.

For certain energy commodities, including crude oil, position limits are set by commodities exchanges, such as the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Those who hold NYMEX futures contracts for light sweet crude, the most commonly traded contract, are limited to 10,000 net futures for any one month, according to the exchange.

Some individuals and groups have attributed last summer’s record crude oil and fuel prices in part to speculative traders — such as large institutional investors or hedge funds — taking large positions in oil markets by purchasing derivative financial instruments, but didn’t intend actually to take delivery of oil. (See Sept. 15 and Aug. 1 Bus & Motorcoach News.)

However, an international task force co-chaired by U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the United Kingdom’s Financial Services Authority reported in March it “did not find evidence that various categories of financial participants, either individually or as a whole, were systematically driving commodity prices” during last summer’s fuel crisis.

New York City takes title for having worst road rage

NEW YORK CITY — The Big Apple was the least courteous city for road rage this year, up from No. 3 last year, according to the fourth annual In the Driver’s Seat Road Survey by AutoVantage.

While Miami has taken the slot for worst for the past three years, the South Florida city was not on the list for this year’s worst. The least courteous city listed included Dallas/Fort Worth, Detroit, Atlanta and Minneapolis/St. Paul.

AutoVantage conducts the survey to determine the driving habits and attitudes of commuters across the U.S., and to learn more about consumer views on the topic of road rage. The study defines road rage as angry drivers who overreact and lose their tempers and aggressive driving. Behaviors that lead to road rage included talking on cell phones, driving too fast, tailgating, eating or drinking, texting and e-mailing.

Portland, Ore., was named the most courteous city, moving up from second last year. Other leading courteous cities were Cleveland, Baltimore, Sacramento, Calif., and Pittsburgh.

Other cities surveyed include Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, Tampa, Fla., and Washington, D.C.

For more survey results, go to www.autovantage.com.

Drug testing rule upheld, allows direct observation

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia has denied a petition for judicial review of a new U.S. Department of Transportation rule that allows “direct observation” for certain federally mandated drug screenings, including return-to-duty and follow-up testing.

In its ruling, the appeals court quashed a petition filed by BNSF Railway and eight rail labor organizations.

The USDOT rule upheld by the court was designed to prevent cheating on drug tests by employees in the transportation industry who are required to take follow-up tests after successfully completing drug treatment programs.

Prior to the rule, employers had the option of conducting return-to-duty and follow-up tests using direct observation.

BNSF and the labor groups argued the requirement of follow-up tests violated the Administrative Procedure Act prohibition of “arbitrary and capricious” action and the Fourth Amendment’s protections against unreasonable searches.

Eleven of the 18 policies focus on drivers. Among ATA’s proposals are:

- Support for restrictions on distracting technologies, such as cell phones and GPS devices.
- Formation of uniform commercial driver licensing standards and a study of a graduated licensing program.
- Establishment of a national maximum speed limit of 65 mph.
- Efforts to increase the use of red-light cameras and electronic speed enforcement technology.
- Support for graduated licensing standards in all states for non-commercial teenage drivers.
- Support for tougher drinking and driving laws.

The ATÅ’s plan also focuses on improving the performance of commercial vehicle operators by giving motor carriers more information so they can put the best and safest drivers in their vehicles.

The proposal calls for the creation of a system to notify employers of driver infractions and a national clearinghouse for drug and alcohol test results.

Pending federal legislation would create a national testing database (see June 15 Bus & Motorcoach News).

ATA released the framework of its proposal last year at the federation’s annual meeting (see Dec. 1 Bus & Motorcoach News).
Nebraska eases work zone fines, finally adopts ‘move-over’ law

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska has reduced its penalty for speeding in construction zones where no one is working.

A new law cuts in half the fine for speeders caught in construction zones where workers are not present. The fines are the same as those applied for speeding outside of work zones.

Previously, speeders were required to pay double in construction zones regardless of whether work was taking place.

Supporters of the change said it’s unnecessary to slow down when workers aren’t around. Not everyone agrees with that, however. Critics say it’s dangerous to rely on drivers to know whether work is being done.

The penalty for driving 1 to 5 mph over the speed limit could net violators a $10 fine. Driving 6 to 10 mph over the limit could cost speeders $25. Speeding 11 to 15 mph over the limit could result in $75 fines. Driving in excess of 16 to 20 mph over the limit could net offenders a $125 fine. Speeding in excess of 21 mph over the limit could cost drivers $200, while driving 35 mph over the limit could be a $300 fine.

Nebraska also has a new law that ends its distinction of being one of the few remaining states that didn’t require drivers to make room for emergency workers and law enforcement officers. Come September, Nebraska drivers will be required to maintain a safe distance and reduce speed before passing emergency crews, law enforcement, roadside assistance vehicles or tow trucks parked by the road with lights flashing.

The “Move Over” initiative applies to highways with at least two lanes of traffic in the same direction.

Maryland work zones get speed cameras

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Starting Oct. 1, drivers speeding through Maryland highway construction zones will be subject to ticketing through the use of speed cameras.

A new state law allows speed cameras to be posted in construction zones.

With the backing of Gov. Martin O’Malley, the Maryland General Assembly endorsed authorizing the cameras in work zones on expressways and controlled-access highways throughout the state where the speed limit is at least 45 mph.

The enforcement tool also is authorized in school zones. According to state figures, there were 34 fatalities in work zones during the most recent five-year period — compared with 28 in the previous five-year period. Injuries rose from 4,295 to 4,741 in the same time frame.

The automated cameras snap pictures of vehicles traveling over the posted speed limit. A ticket is mailed to the vehicles’ owners, regardless of who was driving at the time.

Currently, Montgomery County is the only place in the state where cameras are permitted.

The enforcement tool can be used on streets in school zones or with speed limits of 35 mph or less.

The state’s new law authorizes fines up to $40 to be handed out to the registered owners of vehicles caught on camera traveling at least 12 mph in excess of the speed limit.

Wireless dispute

Continued from Page 1 to be read visually,” Keppler said.

The FMCSA, which has been studying electronic identification for some time, plans to use the technology in a wireless inspection pilot program due to begin early next year. (See June 15 issue of Bus & Motorcoach News.)

The electronic device the agency plans to use will allow inspectors to easily identify vehicles as they are driven past highway inspection or weigh stations. Using electronic reading equipment and special software, inspectors then will be able to almost instantly obtain a variety of critical information about the vehicles and drivers, including safety violations, tax and fee data, and hours of service.

The CVSA Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee, which is led by law enforcement officers, has signaled support of the use of the electronic identification devices, which backers maintain would improve roadway safety, protect the highway infrastructure, maintain road fund revenue and create a more level playing field for the motor carrier industry.

The CVSA already has prepared a draft petition calling on the FMCSA to begin a rule-making procedure for a regulation mandating that interstate commercial vehicles be equipped with special, low-cost windshield decals that are embedded with radio frequency identification tags.

The CVSA Associate Advisory Committee, which is headed by truckers, contends, however, that such a move would create new problems for truckers and be costly for states because they would have to install back office equipment to read the decals.

A resolution it adopted in April recommends “in the strongest terms possible” that the CVSA not petition the FMCSA to establish new requirements for the electronic identification of commercial vehicles.

“There are all kinds of advanced technology methods of identifying commercial vehicles and we should wait to see what they are all about before asking the feds for a requirement,” said committee chairman Rick Craig of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, which also opposes any effort to require commercial vehicles to be equipped with the identification decals.

He said although the decals may only cost a couple of dollars to purchase, truck windshields crack and break often, which means truckers would have to keep replacing them. “And if they get caught without one they could be fined,” he added.

Keppler said both committees have appointed ad hoc committees to further study the issue before the August meeting of the executive board.

“At the end of the day, we are looking for more information,” he said.
More advances expected for bus surveillance systems

OMAHA, Neb. — Since they were introduced about 20 years ago, on-board bus surveillance systems have matured significantly and even more changes are on the way, says an executive with leading coach industry electronic supply Radio Engineering Industries.

“In 2009, the catch phrase will be, ‘solid-state hard drives,’” said Gunnar Guenette, director of marketing at REI. “Conventional hard drives use moving parts and are thus more susceptible to damage due to vibration and environmental issues. Solid-state hard drives have no moving parts,” said Guenette.

However, the new hard drives are “very pricey and there is no expectation that prices will come down anytime soon,” So, Guenette expects initial wide-scale acceptance to be slow.

REI sold its first bus surveillance system 1992, and its systems have matured along with the industry.

Today, computer hard drives are used to store video images and other data recorded by surveillance systems.

While many digital video recorders employ 3.5-inch hard-drives, which are designed for in-home use, REI uses 2.5-inch, mobile-rated hard drives and “we go to great lengths to design our hard drive mechanisms with vibration-dampening materials to ensure long life and reliability,” said Guenette.

With the record times for today’s surveillance system now measured in weeks, instead of hours, attention has been turned toward cameras, said Guenette.

“High-resolution cameras provide vast improvements in image quality over conventional cameras, and costs are coming down to affordable levels.”

Guenette noted that REI currently has an extensive mix of high-resolution cameras available with more internal and external cameras due out this year.

He also expects to see the use of wireless systems increase “as infrastructure costs come down and the technology that delivers video wirelessly improves.

“Video by its very nature, however, requires huge amounts of bandwidth, and this bandwidth does not come cheaply. On-site infrastructure costs are very high and download times are also very slow, but REI recommends downloading only the images that are essential to an operation. This allows a property to decrease its up-front infrastructure costs as well as implementation time,” said Guenette.

The REI BUS-WATCH® digital surveillance system is specifically designed for use on school buses. Since it was introduced 17 years ago, 125,000 systems have been installed on buses in North and South America.

In addition to recording activities in and around the bus, the system also will record other activities, such as speed, brakes, turn signals and warning lights. Optional equipment and features such as BUS-TRACKER™ GPS mapping systems, inertia sensor/accelerometer modules, and wireless network upload of data are available.

The system begins recording data when the bus is started and can be programmed to record up to 10 hours after the bus ignition is shut off. Indicator lights provide positive feedback the system is functional.

PORTLAND, Ore. — WiFi in Motion, a leading coach industry supplier of mobile internet and cellular data network services, is changing the brand name of its commercial products to SinglePoint.

Beginning late last month, SinglePoint Communications LLC, essentially split the brand identity of its cellular broadband gateway products and services.

The company’s WiFi In Motion brand and website is now being used for the promotion of its RV and boat products, while all commercial-grade products and services that is, those sold to the bus industry — are now marketed under the SinglePoint brand.

A site, www.your1point.com, has been set up to serve commercial users.

“Now, charter (bus) companies can go to our site, download product sheets, check out product specifications and even request a web presentation all at one place,” said Rob Taylo, CEO of SinglePoint.

“Moving forward, our customers can expect greater detail and information on the new site,” Taylo added.

SinglePoint distributes and sells the Moovbox line of products, which act as a bridge between a vehicle and high-speed cellular data networks, providing Wi-Fi access and an ethernet-based local area network for connecting onboard systems such as CCTV and passenger information systems.

SinglePoint also sells wireless antennas, amplifiers and wireless data services.

“As we continue to gain more and more interest from the commercial markets, we have found it is crucial that we properly brand ourselves,” said Dan Pech, a sales executive at SinglePoint.

“The term ‘Wi-Fi’ tends to paint a company like ours in the corner of only providing one thing: wireless internet access. Our products do so much more than this by acting as a central hub inside a bus, which allows mission critical data to be transferred back to headquarters, while also providing the amenity of passenger Wi-Fi.”

WiFi in Motion becomes SinglePoint for bus products
Staff support is key to maximizing onboard systems

By Dave Millhouser

The sun was setting and before we drove through the night, it was time to reconfigure the two coaches.

We were hauling 75 hormone-soaked teenagers on a multi-day trek. Since it was impossible to monitor them in the darkened coaches, we cleverly put all the guys on one bus, and the girls on the other. Problem solved.

This was a few years ago, before competent air conditioning, so it was important to maintain good convoy discipline. Open windows meant we remained in single file because who knew what the kids were capable of doing if we ran side by side.

Things have changed (buses, not hormones), and it’s now possible to monitor all sorts of onboard activities, not just from the drivers seat but even on your office PC.

The sun was setting and before we drove through the night, it was time to reconfigure the two coaches.

Several years ago a transit property had so many false claims that it staged a fake accident and arrested all the folks who claimed an injury. These machines can accomplish the same thing, without the drama.

Event recorders have been available for some time, and have grown increasingly sophisticated. These are the gizmos that continuously and simultaneously record a view of the driver and the road ahead. When an increase in G forces gets its attention, the camera saves a predetermined amount of the recording, before and after the event, and lights an LED on the machine.

This can be a two-edged sword, depending on who goofed, but you do know what really happened. If a driver completes a trip without irritating the camera, no record is saved. No news is good news, and avoiding the dreaded LED tells the driver that a low clearance is near.

Some double-deck coaches have a camera in the upper passenger compartment that allows the driver to monitor what’s happening above.

Any new technology offers both advantages, and pitfalls. Over the years lots of options have been introduced. Some became standards, while others faded because they were either impractical or didn’t really do what we hoped. Think about that when you’re deciding what to try.

Many of these systems have security implications, so there may be grants available.

Interior monitors (and even options like WiFi) may offer some privacy concerns. Your staff needs to understand and respect that. You don’t want to see your passengers acting frisky…on the internet.

Choose your suppliers with care, make sure they offer support and training, and that they will be around as long as you own their system. This is particularly critical if you’re dependant on them for handling your data. Think about the headache of combining a scatterbrained driver and an obsolete low-cleared database.

Make sure the equipment is compatible with your coach, and see if it is portable, so you can transfer it when you replace coaches.

Train your folks. They need to understand how these things work to get the most benefit, and to prevent aforementioned headaches. Drivers who know how event recorders work try to avoid incidents that trigger them, and passengers who’ve been informed about interior monitors tend to behave.

These systems are tools, and only as good as your people. They should be used but never entirely trusted. GPS has been known to goof, and sometimes there’s a new low bridge your database didn’t know about. The driver has got to look out the windshield.

In ye olden days, when overhead package racks were bigger (and I was smaller), the ultimate, organic monitor was the relief driver.

We used to sleep in the racks when we were off duty, and on occasion passengers would forget we were up there. From time to time we were treated to some interesting sights, sounds and the smell of controlled substances burning.

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

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

heading the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, has given her the experience and skills necessary to advance motor carrier safety to the next level.

Ferro faces a number of motorcoach industry-related challenges should she win confirmation, including helping develop a “Motorcoach Safety Action Plan” called for by U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood; new-operator compliance regulations, including performing compliance reviews more timely, and a slew of proposed regulations covering everything from electronic onboard recorders to drug testing.

“The bus and motorcoach industry is experiencing a unique transitional period and the next (FMCSA) administrator will need to understand the capacity of our industry and the measured solutions,” said Parra. “I look forward to working with future Administrators Ferro and Cho to achieve the solutions that assure improved bus and motorcoach safety.”

Among those supporting Ferro are the American Trucking Associations, the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, the Virginia Trucking Association, the National Tank Truck Carriers and the American Moving and Storage Association.

“She has extensive experience on a variety of trucking issues, both from within government, as well as representing the private trucking industry,” said Linda Bauer Darr, president of the momers association.

Those opposing Ferro said she “is an apologist for the failure of FMCSA to improve the safety record of commercial vehicles.”

Their comments were contained in a letter sent to President Obama.

But not all advocacy groups joined the opposition. Public Citizen, which has sided with the Teamsters and other safety groups in the past, did not sign the letter opposing Ferro. Neither did Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

If confirmed, Ferro would be the fourth permanent administrator of the nine-year-old, over-the-road bus and truck safety agency.

She would succeed John Hill, who was administrator during the last 2½ years of the Bush administration.

As he studied the picture, the man was quoted as saying: “Look at that seat, it is in perfect condition. Why did the seat survive and my son die?”

Said Rosenker: “That student was, of course, ejected from the motorcoach. But quite frankly, I am tired of answering that question from parents and I can assure you that you don’t want to answer that question either.”

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COSTA MESA, Calif. — ABC Companies announced the opening of a full-service sales, service and parts center here, two blocks off Interstate 405 in Orange County. The facility is situated on 6.5 acres with 75,000 square feet under roof.

“The Costa Mesa center offers operators a true A-Z experience for sales, service, parts and day-to-day fleet requirements,” said Dane Cornell, president and CEO of ABC Companies.

The facility features indoor bays for showcasing new and used vehicles, and more than 80 vehicles are kept on the property for sale. Customer amenities include two waiting areas with Wi-Fi internet, satellite TV, guest lockers/restrooms/showers, kitchenette, billiards and ping pong tables, and children’s play area.

The 22 service bays are being used to deliver a broad range of fleet services, including comprehensive transit and coach vehicle care, maintenance and mid-life refurbishment; collision repair and body services; digital graphics and wraps; wheelchair-lift installation; refurbishment, and warranty service. The transit bus and coach parts support includes more than $2 million in inventory.

It also has a training center.

Athens hosts Georgia operators association

ATHENS, Ga. — The annual meeting and marketplace of the Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association will be July 18-21 at The Classic Center in Athens.

The event will be highlighted by operator education sessions, meetings between operators and representatives from destinations, regulatory updates, legislative briefings, new coach displays, and partnerships, how your website can work for you, and the commercial vehicle safety alliance.

The featured speaker for a sales session is Antonio Smith, sales trainer and business strategist.

“Now more than ever, members need members,” said John Garrett of American Coach Lines in Atlanta, president of the Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association. “It’s more important now that we maintain current relationships and create new ones.”

For information, go to motorcoachoperators.org.

ATLANTIC CITY — The Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association has picked new officers and directors for 2009-2010.

The new leaders were announced at the association’s annual meeting last month at Showboat Casino in Atlantic City.

The new president is Thomas Dugan of Safety Bus in Pennsauken, N.J.

The new vice president is Mark R. Waterhouse of Classic Tours in Trenton, N.J.; treasurer is Joseph P. Fernandez, CPA, of West Islip, N.Y.; secretary is Scott E. Henry of Martz Lines in Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; first vice president is Joseph P. Fernandez, CPA, of West Islip, N.Y.; and second vice president is G. Merle Young, III, of Stout’s Charter Service in Trenton, N.J.; treasurer is Joseph P. Fernandez, CPA, of West Islip, N.Y.; secretary is Scott E. Henry of Martz Lines in Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; first vice president is Joseph P. Fernandez, CPA, of West Islip, N.Y.; and second vice president is G. Merle Young, III, of Stout’s Charter Service in Trenton, N.J.

Other board members are: David Benedict of David Tours & Travel in Philadelphia; Tim Stout of Stout’s Charter Service in Trenton, N.J.; Joshua Bennett of Capital Bus Co. in Harrisburg, Pa.; Mitchell Sussman of Star Tours in Trenton, N.J.; Nate Karp of Greyhound Lines in New York City; Wayne Klein of Klein’s Bus Service in Douglasville, Pa.; James Murphy of Saddle River Tours in Wallington, N.J., and Thomas JeBran of Trans-Bridge Lines in Bethlehem, Pa.

“Now more than ever, members need members,” said John Garrett of American Coach Lines in Atlanta, president of the Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association. “It’s more important now that we maintain current relationships and create new ones.”

For information, go to motorcoachoperators.org.
Shower's soak museum's Spring Fling

Hershey, Pa. — Spring rain failed to dampen spirits (or attendance) at the annual Museum of Bus Transportation Spring Fling here last month.

Despite a heavy downpour on the first day of the two-day event, total attendance exceeded 450.

According to museum spokes-

man Frank Beard, each succeeding fling has attracted more participants from both the industry and the general public.

Typically, most attendees are from the Mid-Atlantic region, but Canada, Florida and the U.S. West Coast were represented this year.

Gary driver, owner of a number of coach operations in Austra-

lia, included the event on his U.S.

travel itinerary.

In addition to the museum's various exhibits, some dating back to the early days of the 20th cen-

tury, a number of collectible buses were driven to the event by their owners, including Flagship Trai-

nways' newly restored 1975 Silver Eagle. It flew in from Rhode Island.

Greyhound lines displayed a new Prevost X3 45, providing a real-world reminder of how far motorcoaches have progressed.

Vintage buses were displayed at the museum, and at the George Sage complex, named for the late owner of Bonanza Bus Lines, an industry icon and museum benefac-

tor. This facility is normally used for bus restoration.

But for the Spring fling it was converted into North America's largest bus memorabilia flea market. There were 40 vendors, up from last year's 28.

Transportation between the two sites was provided by Wolf bus Lines of York Springs, Pa., and Conestoga tours of Lancaster, Pa.

Sponsorship was strong again this year. ABC companies, Lancer Insurance, Michaud Bus Sales, Motor Coach Industries, Prevost Car, Setra and Vernon & Mar all participated, as well as the Ameri-

can Bus, American Public Transit and United Motorcoach assns.

N.M. operator Knittel dies at 52

CARLSBAD, N.M. — Jack Knittel, who co-owned and operated New Mexico Transportation with his wife Maria, has died after suffering an apparent heart attack while playing golf. He was 52.

Mr. Knittel got into the transpor-
tation services business after working several years for the Santa Fe Railway and later operating a retail store business with his cousin.

He and Maria operated their charter coach company in Carlsbad and Lubbock, Texas, where his son, Christopher, attends Texas Tech University and works for the family business part-time.

During the 30 years he lived in Carlsbad, Mr. Knittel was involved in a number of community organiza-

tions, frequently taking a leader-

ship role.

These included the Carlsbad chapter of Rotary International; the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce, where he served as president from 2002-03 and was in charge of the “Christmas on the Pecos” non-profit organization for several years, and the Carlsbad Riverside Country Club, where he served as president last year.

Mr. Knittel enjoyed golfing, boating, skiing and home carpentry.

Following high school, he enlisted in the Army, spending three years in Germany.

He is survived by his parents, Robert and Pauline; his widow; his son; his daughters, Alexia; his broth-

er, Mark, and his sister, Lee-Anne Kongs, Susan Spradley and Amy Curnow.

A memorial has been established with the Carlsbad Foundation for the Katie Sepich Scholar-

ship Fund, 116 South Canyon St., Carlsbad, NM 88220.

Minnesotan operator Knutson dies

BROOKLYN CENTER, Minn. — Mark Knutson, a long-time leader of the Minnesota Charter Bus Operators’ Association and “the glue” that held the organization together died last week.

At the time of his death, Mr. Knutson was semi-retired, working part time at Voigt’s Bus Service in nearby Fridley, Minn. He had worked at Voigt’s for more than 20 years, much of that time as general manager.

Prior to joining Voigt’s, he worked at Jefferson Lines in Minneapolis, where he also was a manager.

He was a veteran of the Navy.

But it was through the Minne-

sota Charter Bus Operators’ Asso-

ciation and other industry activities that Mr. Knutson became widely known to his peers throughout the state. He served several terms as president of the association and was on its board when he died.

A colleague described him as a great asset to the state school bus industry.

Mr. Knutson is survived by his widow, Nancy; three sons, Paul, Tim and David; two daughters, Tammy and Terri Bicket-

ton, and a brother Jack Tyler.

A memorial has been established in Mr. Knutson’s name with the Hennepin County Humane Soci-

ety, Development Department, 845 Meadow Lane North, Golden Valley, MN 55422.
Navistar says EPA set illegal guideline, favored SCR

WARRENVILLE, Ill. — Navistar Inc. has leveled new charges against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, accusing the agency of privately and illegally giving its competitors the go ahead to adopt selective catalyst reduction emission control technology that could be implemented only with an “illegal relaxation” of EPA’s 2010 nitrogen-oxide emission standard.

The new allegations are included in a 10-page document filed in federal appeals court last month that opposes a request by several of Navistar’s competitors to be granted “friend of the court” status in Navistar’s petition for court review of the U.S. EPA decision. (See June 15 and May 15 issues of Bus & Motor Coach News.)

“Navistar filed the petition because EPA has been diverted from its mission and somehow talked into an environmentally hostile action,” the Navistar document says.

Navistar’s court brief asserts that EPA “illegally accommodated SCR manufacturers outside of the public eye and allowed them to deploy an emission control technology that can only be implemented with a de facto and illegal relaxation of the NOx emission standard.”

Navistar has asked the court to review several issues related to EPA’s February 2009 memorandum giving engine makers guidance on SCR, after the agency had said years earlier that it did not believe SCR would be feasible.

Navistar, whose brands include IC buses and International trucks, said EPA skipped an important regulatory step in allowing SCR technology after expressing serious doubts in 2001 that it would work.

Navistar said one of the reasons the SCR manufacturers sought EPA’s help was because they had “an obvious marketing problem — the unattractive necessity of (commercial vehicle) drivers being required to locate and fill up with urea every 6,000-8,000 miles.”

Navistar said EPA avoided the public rulemaking process because it could not demonstrate that SCR technology was viable.

“Navistar further submits that the continued infeasibility of SCR is the reason why the SCR manufacturers and EPA never triggered the public hearings and/or afforded the due process mandated by Congress to reverse EPA’s prior rulemaking,” Navistar said.

Volvo promotes SCR technology

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Volvo Trucks North America has launched a website to tout its selective catalytic reduction technology that will be used in 2010 and beyond Volvo engines.

The site, www.volvoscr.com, explains how SCR works and shows what Volvo says are its advantages over the competing exhaust gas recirculation technology. It includes information about the D-13 engine used in Prevost and Volvo motorcoaches.

In the document filed last month, Navistar specifically alleges that an attorney for the Engine Manufacturers Association on behalf of the SCR manufacturers “convinced EPA that EPA had no choice but to reverse course and conclude that SCR was a viable technology for meeting the 0.20 g NOx standard.”

“In reality, the SCR manufacturers who led the effort to get EPA to approve SCR and allow them to pollute with impunity are predominantly foreign manufacturers who previous to the 2001 rulemaking were using SCR technology in foreign countries,” Navistar said.

The SCR engine makers convinced EPA to change its mind, Navistar said, “not because [SCR] was cleaner, but because it was cheaper to deploy, since they had already developed it and used it elsewhere.”

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The new Volvo 9700 is the safest coach we have ever built. We would be able to fill this entire page with details of equipment and characteristics that contribute to high safety. Such as our ESP electronic stability program. Instead, we intend to focus on just a few important new features that we are alone among bus manufacturers in offering. Front Impact Protection is one example, Knee Impact Protection is another. Both considerably reduce the risk of the driver being injured in a frontal collision. What is more, the Volvo 9700 is equipped with the Front Underrun Protection System. It’s there to protect the occupants in an oncoming passenger car if it is unlucky enough to collide with the coach. Welcome aboard.

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