

## Buses perform better during safety check this year

GREENBELT, Md. — Both motorcoach operators and over-the-road truckers are maintaining vehicle and driver safety standards despite the on-going impact of the weak economy, results from this year's Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Roadcheck inspection blitz suggest.

The out-of-service rate for motorcoaches inspected during this

year's Roadcheck matched the lowest level posted by the industry during the past decade and truckers nearly matched last year's record-low rate.

The compliance rate of coaches inspected during this year's 72-hour safety marathon was 91 percent, meaning 9 percent of the coaches checked were put out of service for safety or mechanical

deficiencies.

Last year, the out-of-service rate for Roadchecked buses was 11.5 percent. In 2008, the motorcoach out-of-service rate was 12.2 percent; in 2007 it was 12.3 percent, and in 2006 it was 9.2 percent.

The last time the rate was a flat 9 percent was in 2001, the low for the decade.

The coach driver out-of-service rate this year was unchanged from last year at 3.6 percent.

The lowest bus driver out-of-service rate during the past decade was 1.7 percent in 2003. It was 2.7 percent in 2004 and again in 2005.

More motorcoaches were inspected during Roadcheck this year, reflecting the increased interest in coach safety by law enforce-

ment officials. A total of 1,097 buses were checked during the three-day inspection period in June, compared to 932 last year.

While more buses were inspected this year, the number of over-the-road trucks checked declined, reflecting both the impact of the economy on the trucking industry and safety inspection

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## Summer of Discontent

### Operators battle bad economy, worry about outlook

Many tour-and-charter motorcoach operators see it every morning when they check the day's bookings and every night when they count their receipts.

Business is in the doldrums and there appear to be few signs of things turning around any time soon.

That's the current state of affairs of the motorcoach industry that scores of operators painted in a series of interviews and in a new national survey.

Some say their business has fallen by as much as 20 percent, dramatically shrinking revenues and narrowing margins.

Instead of looking for new

equipment to update their fleets, many are looking for ways to keep their older coaches on the road.

At the same time, they're sampling ways to retain their regular customers and attract new ones.

Customers are just looking for the lowest prices. 'Everything is more about price, price, price.'

And, they're carefully examining their operations in hopes of finding creative new ways to reduce costs and outlays.

To no one's surprise, they blame the miserable national

economy for many of their woes, emphasizing that it has caused most of their regular customers from corporate clients, to seniors, to school children to keep a closer watch on their own spending.

"We're down between 15 and 18 percent from a year ago, and I don't look for it to increase dramatically over the next few years," noted Michael Moran of Reichert Bus Service in Baxter, Minn.

He said tours and charters have borne the brunt of the decline, while public and private school bus travel appears to be flat lining.

Moran's comments are typical.

Evidence of the business downturn stands out in the latest annual membership survey conducted by the United Motorcoach Association, which this year heard from 249 members, an increase over past years.

According to the survey, the number of operators who said they experienced a decline in business jumped by 16 percent from a year earlier. In contrast, the number who said business was better or

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### Second-quarter motorcoach sales remain lackluster

Sales of new motorcoaches continued at a dreary pace during the second quarter of this year, with buying by tour-and-charter operators particularly weak.

A total of 393 new over-the-road buses were purchased from five manufacturers during April, May and June, down 20 percent from the 491 coaches bought during the same three-month period a year ago.

It was the worst second-quarter

sales performance in a decade. The best second-quarter during the past 10 years came in 2001, when 836 coaches were delivered. The previous worst second quarter came in 2004 when 481 coaches were sold.

The "good news" in the latest sales figures, said Larry Plachno, editor of *National Bus Trader* magazine, which compiles the numbers, was that the second-quarter decline was far less than the first

quarter of this year when new coach sales plunged 39 percent.

"While our numbers are still down from last year, the decline as a percentage is only half of what it was in the first quarter," observed Plachno. "At least we are climbing out of the basement."

The second quarter total was aided by stronger-than-usual deliveries to government units and purchases by Greyhound.

Two of the three top-selling

models during the second quarter were coaches typically purchased by public transit agencies and Greyhound.

The No. 1 selling coach during the quarter was the MCI D4500. During the first half of this year, MCI announced significant sales to public transit systems in Connecticut and California, including a 131-bus buy by the Yolo County Transportation District in Woodland,

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### Stay is issued in charter rule Seattle dispute

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court has reversed, at least temporarily, a lower court ruling that had prohibited the federal government from allowing the public transit agency in Seattle to provide charter bus service.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia issued a stay last month of a federal district court order that required the Federal Transit Agency to begin enforcing the charter service rule against King County Metro, the only public transit agency in the country exempt from the charter rule. (See July 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The stay is expected to remain in place until a three-judge appeals court panel rules on the constitutionality of the issue, possibly sometime in September or October.

Under an expedited procedure, written briefs are to be filed by Aug. 20 and oral arguments are to be scheduled for early September.

The district court ruling that lifted the ban on the FTA enforcing the charter rule against King County Metro stemmed from lawsuits filed in U.S. District Court against the FTA by the United Motorcoach and American Bus associations.

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# Promotional successes reported for industry campaign

"Get Motorcoachified."

It may not yet be as well known as "Got Milk," "Go RVing" or "Eat Fresh," but the advertising phrase promoting motorcoach travel throughout North America is starting to draw some notice outside the motorcoach industry.

The campaign developed last year by the nonprofit, operator-led Motorcoach Council has in the past couple of months received some notable national attention.

Travelocity.com posted an upbeat interview with Pamela Wolf, the council's director of strategic partnerships and alliances, on its "The Window Seat" report, and Leisure Group Travel magazine published an article that featured the initiative and the green aspects of coach travel.

At the same time, the CBS *Early Show* televised an interview with travel expert Peter Greensburg who talked up the price and comfort advantages of traveling by coach, using as props coaches from megabus.com and LimoLiner.

The CBS interview is available via a link at [www.motorcoach-council.org](http://www.motorcoach-council.org).

It's just the kind of publicity the campaign needs to help reach

its goal of boosting public awareness of the availability, selection, usage and benefits of traveling by motorcoach, according to Heather Horton, executive director of the council.

"We need to find ways to reach the mainstream media," she said.

In addition to working to place national articles about the program, the council also has joined the social network of communicating, appearing on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter ([Twitter@Motorcoachified](https://twitter.com/Motorcoachified)).

National advertising efforts

also are on the agenda following a cash donation from the United Motorcoach Association and an in-kind contribution from the American Bus Association.

The UMA donation was earmarked for consumer advertising and public relations efforts and the ABA donation was for advertising aimed at igniting internal industry support of the campaign.

UMA also designated the council as the official host of the silent auction that will be staged at UMA's Motorcoach Expo 2011 in

Tampa in January. Proceeds from the sale will benefit the Get Motorcoachified campaign.

Although the publicity is welcomed and vital to the success of the council's mission, the organization still is banking on financing from throughout the industry.

A number of state associations, suppliers and motorcoach operators have renewed their financial support to help expand the council's outreach and development of new consumer awareness programs.

"The Motorcoach Council can-

not sustain its mission without the ongoing support of all key stakeholders within the industry," noted Horton.

Meantime, two existing major funding programs are growing.

The Coach Vendor Parts Program where businesses donate a small percentage of their net parts purchases to the council has about 50 participants and the Campaign Bus Wraps Program that provides bus wraps with snappy coach travel slogans has attracted 108 operators in 35 states.

Many more are welcome to join, emphasized Horton.

Council President Brian Annett is excited about the progress the group has made since its formation in 2007, noting that the organization is at a pivotal time where it can transition from a grassroots start-up to the next "Go RVing."

"Our combined efforts will be the ticket to our prosperity in the years to come," he said. "Let's work together to implement changes and get a positive story about our industry on the 6 o'clock news."

To become involved, go to [www.MotorcoachCouncil.org](http://www.MotorcoachCouncil.org), or email [Heather@MotorcoachCouncil.org](mailto:Heather@MotorcoachCouncil.org), or call (720) 449-9000.

## BusRates reveals upgrades, new tools

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — BusRates.com has upgraded and updated its website.

BusRates.com is the free, searchable database of nearly all USDOT-registered bus companies that makes it easy for buyers to find a charter or tour bus that best suits their needs.

The site draws more than 110,000 visits monthly by groups looking for a bus.

The upgrades to the BusRates' website provide its coach operator subscribers with new tools and options to customize and optimize

their listings to receive the highest-quality leads possible.

"These improvements help our subscribers customize their listings to make themselves even more visible to potential customers," said Eric Elliott, BusRates program manager.

"And these enhancements in turn also improve the user's experience by allowing them to more easily find the bus company with whom they want to do business," Elliott added.

The improvements include:

- One-click profile and fleet

updating

- Easily forwarded request for quotes (RFQs) to multiple email addresses

- Bid for placement options

- Easily add and remove metro areas

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More information can be found at [www.busrates.com](http://www.busrates.com).

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# THE DOCKET

## Feds push states to report faster

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has published new guidelines requiring states to speed up reporting traffic convictions for CDL holders and for keeping CDL information secure.

Rule No. 1 requires that:

- When a CDL holder is convicted of a traffic offense in a state other than the state issuing the license, that state must notify the licensing state within 10 days of a conviction.

- If a CDL holder is disqualified or driving privileges are withdrawn/suspended from operating a commercial motor vehicle for longer than 60 days in a state other than the licensing state, the penalizing state must notify the CDL holder's licensing state within 10 days.

- Whenever a state licensing agency receives notification of a conviction/disqualification from another state, it must post the information to the driver history record within 10 days of receipt. The timeline is the same if the conviction occurred in the licensing state.

## Study casts doubt on safety measurements

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Early findings from an independent review of the far-reaching bus and truck safety monitoring system being implemented by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration are raising questions about the new program's ability to accurately identify high-risk carriers.

Paul Green, a researcher with the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute here, said the CSA 2010 system is not showing a correlation between fleets that score well in two of the seven primary safety categories, called BASICs by FMCSA, and reduced accident levels.

"Most of their BASICs are associated with crash rates in a nice way but there are two that are troublesome," driver fitness and load securement, Green told *Transport Topics*, a leading trucking publication. "They don't correlate well with crash rates, and our gold standard for safety is crash rates."

These issues have led the American Trucking Associations to issue a new call to delay implementation of the CSA program until after the review — being conducted for FMCSA — is com-

pleted in December.

According to a presentation of UMTRI's preliminary findings, a high score in the driver fitness BASIC, which includes training, licensing violations and a variety of health-related infractions, has an inverse relationship to crashes. That means that the higher the rate of violations, the lower the number of crashes experienced.

FMCSA spokeswoman Candice Tolliver said the agency was aware of UMTRI's preliminary results, but that those results "in no way suggest the driver fitness and load securement BASICs are not indicators of a safety risk."

"In general, it does identify high-risk carriers, but it is not perfect," Green said. But he warned that in the driver fitness and load securement areas the system may ultimately target safe carriers by mistake.

"Let's say a carrier just exceeded [the BASIC] in one of those two that would become questionable," he said. "They would get pinged and that may not necessarily be related to a safety issue."

To address that, Green suggested changing how the agency

weighs the BASICs relative to each other.

"Maybe [high scores] should not be such a serious thing if its one of those two; maybe that would be the correct thing to do," he said.

The UMTRI report was the subject of scrutiny during a June congressional hearing as both industry officials and members of Congress pushed the agency to wait until the report is finalized before rolling out the CSA program. (See July 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

Late last month, the American Trucking Associations renewed its call to hold off on full implementation of CSA until UMTRI completes its review.

"If parts of CSA 2010 measure compliance with rules that do not have a firm relationship to risk reduction, the system will publicly label some carriers as safety-deficient — even if they have better-than-average crash rates," said a top ATA official. He added the "program is very important and the results of the UMTRI evaluation should be known before implementation."

The ATA worries that without further study or examination, FMCSA "risks targeting the wrong carriers and erroneously labeling responsible carriers as unsafe."

Green told *Transport Topics* he didn't think delaying CSA implementation was possible, and his interpretation of discussions with FMCSA about the study was that "their opinion was that our evaluation was not designed to in any way influence the rollout of the project."

"FMCSA will use the findings of the UMTRI study as well as other data from the operational model test to continually strengthen the CSA 2010 program," Tolliver said.

Trucking industry consultant and former FMCSA Administrator John Hill said the agency "has a significant responsibility to go back and evaluate, maybe not change, but at least evaluate and make adjustments as necessary" to its program based on the UMTRI findings.

Hill was one of the architects of the program.

FMCSA plans to launch CSA 2010 in the fall.

## First-responder fees halted in Ala.

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Communities in Alabama no longer have authority to charge a fee when police and fire personnel respond to vehicle accidents.

Gov. Bob Riley signed into law a bill forbidding the levying of fees for the response to vehicle accidents by law enforcement.

Alabama becomes the 10th state to outlaw the practice. States with bans already in place are Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

Those who opposed the measure said accident-response service fees were needed to stretch tight budgets.

But those who supported the law said the fees, which can total several hundred dollars depending on which personnel respond and how long they are present, are a form of double taxation. They point out that emergency services are covered by property taxes, utility fees or other methods.

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# Unified Carrier Registration required for Canadians

Canadian coach operators that travel into the U.S. must be registered under the Unified Carrier Registration program that replaced the Single State Registration Sys-

## Olympics group makes payments

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Motor Coach Canada reports that the long-delayed remaining payments have been made to Canadian operators that provided buses for the Winter Olympics in February and Winter Paralympics in March.

However, the association noted that many payments were not for the amount carriers had invoiced Gameday Management Group, the Olympics' bus management firm.

"(The Vancouver Organizing Committee) made the payments based on the reconciliation provided to them by Gameday and what was contracted for. It appears that some changes made by Gameday to the original contracts, such as those changes just before the opening ceremony, were not properly documented in the reconciliation process and those carriers did not receive full payment," said Motor Coach Canada in its latest electronic newsletter, *MCC News*.

The association said it continues to work to get all payments made, and has been corresponding with both carriers and the organizing committee.

"We have suggested to those carriers who are still short payments, that they provide copies of all correspondence between them and Gameday outlining any agreements, changes, approvals, instructions and documents showing service was provided, and send it immediately to Gameday's lawyers, with a copy to VANOC," the association said.

## Insurance rule for Canadian carriers

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has published a final rule that says motor carriers based in Canada and operating into the United States may fulfill their U.S. insurance requirements with a policy issued by a Canadian insurer authorized to issue such a policy in the province or territory where the Canadian carrier is based.

The rule becomes effective this month. Prior to this, Canadian motor carriers needed insurance issued by a U.S. insurer.

tem three years ago.

Information on how to register and pay Unified Carrier Registration fees on-line is available on the national UCR website. Go to [www.ucr.in.gov](http://www.ucr.in.gov).

Forty-one states participate in the program and serve as UCR "base states." Canadian carriers who operate buses in the U.S. must

declare one of the 41 states as its base state. Typically, Canadian carriers select the base state in which they travel most frequently.

Fees are paid to the base state which in turn apportions the money to other states based on mileage. Although some states may issue receipts for UCR payments, no UCR paperwork or per-

mit is required to be carried in the coach.

However, some trade groups recommend carrying such paperwork as a safeguard.

Enforcement officers have roadside access to the UCR system and can issue tickets against carriers that have not registered.

UCR fees are set by the Feder-

al Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the revenue pays for truck and bus safety and enforcement programs. The fee is determined by the number of buses reported on the carrier's last MCS-150 form sent to FMCSA.

Enforcement of 2010 fees has begun. (See July 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

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## Arizona bus crash prompts NTSB recommendations

WASHINGTON — The National Transportation Safety Board has issued a new series of safety recommendations to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration following its investigation of a midsize bus crash in the northwest corner of Arizona.

The crash happened in January 2009, and involved a Starcraft 29-passenger cutaway that was on its way back to Las Vegas from a sightseeing trip to the Grand Canyon.

The NTSB said the crash probably occurred because the driver became distracted by a problem with his (left side) door — as he was cruising along four-lane U.S. 93 at 70 miles per hour — and let the bus drift.

When he attempted to get the bus back on track he overcorrected, first to the right and then to the left, sending the bus from the right shoulder to the center median where it rolled one and a quarter times.

Fifteen of the 17 people on-board were partially or fully ejected. Seven passengers were killed and virtually everyone else was injured, some seriously.

Based on its investigation, the NTSB recommended the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

- Require new commercial motor vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating above 10,000 pounds to be equipped with lane departure warning systems.
- Develop regulatory definitions and classifications for each of the different bus body types that would apply to all U.S. Department of Transportation agencies and promote use of the definitions among the bus industry and state governments.
- Include all buses with a gross vehicle weight rating above 10,000 pounds, other than school buses, in its pending rulemaking covering motorcoach roof strength, occupant protection and window glazing standards.
- Develop performance standards for all newly manufactured

buses with a gross vehicle weight rating above 10,000 pounds to require that overhead luggage racks are constructed and installed to prevent head and neck injuries and remain anchored during an accident sequence.

- Develop stability control system performance standards applicable to newly manufactured buses with a gross vehicle weight rating above 10,000 pounds. Once these performance standards have been developed, require the installation of stability control systems in all newly manufactured buses in which this technology could have a safety benefit.

- Require all buses above 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight rating be equipped with onboard recording systems that: (1) record vehicle parameters; (2) record status of additional seatbelts, airbag deployment data; (3) record data at a sampling rate sufficient to define vehicle dynamics and be capable of preserving data in the event of a vehicle crash or an electrical power loss.

For more information, go to [www.nts.gov/Recs/letters/2010/H-10-001-007.pdf](http://www.nts.gov/Recs/letters/2010/H-10-001-007.pdf).

### Unbelted driver dies

ARARAT TOWNSHIP, Pa. — A bus driver from Clarks Summit, Pa., died after two buses collided in Susquehanna County, state police said.

The woman was killed when she was ejected from the bus she was driving.

Police said the accident happened on North Road in Ararat Township.

The buses were headed to a nearby private camp. The first bus missed the camp driveway, and the driver began to slow. The driver of the second bus also missed the turn and rammed the first bus, police said.

The driver of the first bus was injured. The driver of the second bus died from injuries she suffered when she was ejected.

The June 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News* reported on the issue of unbelted drivers.

## Del. 30th state to ban texting

DOVER, Del. — Delaware has become the 30th state to ban drivers from texting; it also outlawed holding cell phones while driving.

Gov. Jack Markell signed the measure, which carries fines, into law last month. It goes into effect in January.

Both Massachusetts and Iowa also enacted bans on texting and driving last month.

In Massachusetts, the new law takes effect in October and makes texting a primary offense, allowing law enforcement officers to ticket drivers seen texting while driving or at stop signs or traffic lights. Violators will be fined \$100.

In Iowa, that state's texting-while-driving ban took effect last month, but only warning citations will be issued during the first year. After that, Iowa law enforcement officers will begin issuing tickets that carry fines of \$30, or larger if texting contributes to an accident or injury.

Texting while driving is a secondary offense in Iowa, meaning drivers can be ticketed for texting only if they are stopped in connection with another traffic violation.

Michigan's previously passed law banning texting and driving took effect July 1, with the first tickets handed out shortly after the law went into effect.

Meanwhile, a total of eight states, eight of the ten Canadian provinces, and the District of Columbia now have laws that prohibit making calls on a cell-phone while driving, unless the phone is in a hands-free mode.

The laws of Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, D.C., California, Oregon, and Washington State are in effect; the one in Maryland is effective in October, and Delaware's in January 2011.

In Canada, all the provinces but Alberta in the west and New Brunswick in the east have such prohibitions, and the last two provinces are said to be considering one too.

In Washington state, using a cell-phone became a primary offense in June.

## Idling campaign initiated for Baltimore/Washington

WASHINGTON — Supported by the motorcoach and trucking industries, a diesel idling reduction campaign was launched last month that will continue throughout the summer in the metropolitan Washington-Baltimore region.

The effort is aimed at decreasing diesel emissions and improving air quality.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, in collaboration with the District of Columbia Department of the Environment, the district Department of Transportation, and the Maryland Department of the Environment, launched the campaign to:

- Increase idle reduction awareness and control diesel emissions.
- Promote idle reduction as a positive behavior that helps bus and truck drivers to avoid fines, save money and cut fuel costs.
- Improve public health, protect the environment and enhance the quality of life for Washington and Baltimore.

Under current laws, truck and bus drivers can be fined up to \$25,000 for violating Virginia's 10-minute diesel idling limit, and

## N.C. rule limits idling

RALEIGH, N.C. — North Carolina adopted a rule last month limiting idling of trucks and buses.

The rule applies to on-road gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles with a loaded weight of more than 10,000 pounds, and prohibits idling more than five consecutive minutes in a one-hour period.

The rule, issued by the state Division of Air Quality, contains a long list of exemptions, including exceptions for safety, health or economic reasons.

For example, buses can idle if necessary to perform essential functions such as loading and responding to emergencies.

Other bus-related idling ex-

emptions include:

- When nondriver passengers are on board the bus, and up to 20 minutes prior to passenger boarding
- Remaining motionless due to traffic conditions, traffic control devices or signals, congestion, or at the direction of law enforcement officials
- Following manufacturer recommendations for cold engine startup and engine cool-down, maintenance, inspection, servicing, repairing or diagnostic purposes

The state estimates the rule will reduce nitrogen oxide emissions in North Carolina by as much as 1,300 tons per year.

emptions include:

He noted that reduced dependency on foreign oil, reduced emissions, and increased savings are additional benefits that result from decreased idling.

To learn more about the campaign, go to [www.TurnYourEngineOff.org](http://www.TurnYourEngineOff.org).

## Florida to get more red-light cameras

COCOA, Fla. — Many more communities and cities in Florida are expected to begin installing red-light cameras now that the state has set standards for their use.

Some towns in the state already have red-light cameras, but others have been slow to adopt them because they wanted the state to set standards.

Now, thanks to the legislature, there are state guidelines.

The city council in Cocoa de-

cided to move forward with plans for adding the cameras in that community in the wake of the new state rules.

Florida's new law contains an estimate that the state could increase revenues through the cameras by \$29 million in the first year. A nearly \$95 million boost could result by the end of the 2014 budget year.

Local governments could get \$10 million in the first year, and as much as \$66 million in 2014.

## Illinois law targets 'excessive speeders'

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — A new law in Illinois gets tough with motorists who have a need for excessive speed. It takes effect Jan. 1.

The law addresses concerns about so-called "super speeders." It makes it a Class B misdemeanor to speed 30 to 39 mph above the limit. Punishment could include

six months in jail and a \$1,500 fine.

It also prohibits judges from issuing court supervision to anyone found guilty of driving at least 40 mph in excess of the speed limit. Exceeding the speed limit by 40 mph could result in a year in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White proposed the stricter punishment. He said drivers have no business driving more than 100 mph.

"Excessive speeders pose a greater risk to the public, and such reckless behavior does not merit court supervision," White said in a statement.

## Bus tolls announced for new Maryland connector

BALTIMORE — Three-axle motorcoaches will pay 75 cents a mile to travel peak hours on the first segment of Maryland's Intercounty Connector, scheduled to open by early next year. Big trucks will pay twice that rate.

The Intercounty Connector, which is being called the ICC, is Maryland's first all-electronically tolled highway, meaning travelers are supposed to have E-ZPass.

The roadway is designed to relieve congestion on Interstate 95, which becomes the Capital Beltway into Washington, D.C.

The Maryland Transportation Authority announced the tolls for the 5.65-mile segment last month.

Three-axle buses will be charged a total of \$4.25 at rush hour, \$3.40 off-peak and \$2.55 during overnight hours. A five-axle truck will pay \$8.50 to run the segment during peak hours, \$6.80 during off-peak and \$3.40 between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Autos using the byway will pay about 25 cents a mile.

The road, which is designated Maryland State Route 200, will ultimately be 18 miles long and link I-95 in Laurel to I-270 and I-370

near Gaithersburg.

The first segment goes from I-370 at Shady Grove to Maryland State Route 97 in the Rockville-Olney area. It is expected to be fully open by early 2012.

The tolls for the ICC will make the six-lane highway among the nation's most expensive to use. State transportation officials, who were roundly criticized last year about proposed rates, say the tolls are the lowest that could be implemented under a range approved by the Maryland Transportation Authority board.

Elsewhere in the Washington region, drivers on the Dulles Greenway pay 34 cents a mile during rush hour. Highways in California and Colorado charge even more. But in other parts of the country, highway toll rates typically fall between 3 cents and 25 cents a mile, according to AAA.

## Virginia governor wants to raise road money by selling state liquor stores

RICHMOND, Va. — Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell wants to get the state out of the retail booze business by privatizing its system of state-owned liquor stores to generate cash for transportation projects.

It's estimated the state could realize \$300 million to \$500 million by selling liquor licenses to private

retailers. Such a sale would provide a one-time cash infusion into the state's capital transportation fund. McDonnell's privatization plan is expected to be unveiled later this

HARRISBURG, Pa. — A toll increase approved for the Pennsylvania Turnpike in January likely will make it the most expensive long toll road in the nation.

However, for the first time, users of E-ZPass will get a price break on the turnpike.

The state turnpike commission approved a 3 percent increase for users of E-ZPass electronic fare collection and 10 percent for cash customers, effective Jan. 2.

That will raise the cash cost of driving the turnpike to 8.5 cents per mile, highest of the 11 U.S. toll roads of 100 miles or longer. Currently, the Pennsylvania and New Jersey turnpikes are tied at 7.7 cents per mile.

Shorter toll facilities, including highway spurs and bridges, frequently have higher per-mile costs. A March survey by the Pennsylvania Turnpike found 10 facilities with per-mile rates of 27.8 cents or more, including a

six-mile highway in California whose users pay 45.8 cents per mile.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike has ascended to the top among longer toll roads largely because of a 2007 state law requiring it to help fund non-turnpike transportation programs. Since then, the turnpike has given the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation \$2.5 billion to pay for highway and bridge work and mass transit.

That amount is the equivalent of more than three years' worth of turnpike toll income. The turnpike took in \$700 million last year.

The law, Act 44, also envisioned a stream of revenue from higher turnpike tolls and new tolls on Interstate 80 flowing from the commission to PennDOT.

Despite the Federal Highway Administration's rejection of I-80 tolls this spring, the turnpike is required to pay PennDOT \$450 million per year for the next 47 years,

and to raise tolls as necessary to meet its funding obligations.

That has meant three straight years of toll increases — 25 percent in 2009, 3 percent this year and the increase approved for January.

The smaller toll increase for E-ZPass users marks the first significant discount for electronic payment. The turnpike said two-thirds of its customers use E-ZPass.

"We believe it's essential to encourage more consumers to get E-ZPass," said turnpike CEO Joe Brimmeier. "Besides the enhanced convenience for motorists, it's four times more efficient, processing up to 1,200 vehicles per hour compared to 300 per hour in a cash lane."

A complete online toll schedule showing the new higher rates will be available this fall at [www.paturnpike.com](http://www.paturnpike.com) under the "Toll Info" menu.

month. Privatization would require legislative approval.

*The Washington Post* reports that leaders in the state legislature are divided on the issue.

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**FREIGHTLINER**

# Movie licensing: Beyond the auditors and legalities

By Kim Mower  
Motorcoach Movies

There has been much press recently regarding necessary motion picture licenses for motorcoach operators, and the auditors traveling the roadways to identify offenders. (See June 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The law states that regardless of whether a motorcoach company, the chartering group, or the passengers provide and show a movie, the motorcoach company is responsible to obtain a public performance license to legally entertain passengers and to be compliant with U.S. copyright laws.

Obtaining a legal license to show movies (on board a coach) is affordable and can save motorcoach companies thousands of dollars in potential fines.

However, another very good reason to obtain a license is the fact that a public performance license supports the hard-working men and women of the movie industry.

## Not just actors

Although most people associ-

ate the movie industry with leading actors and directors, the rich and famous make up a very small percentage of the movie industry. The vast majority of people who make their living making movies are hardworking Americans, just like motorcoach operators and their passengers.

You probably will never walk the red carpet or grace the cover of a magazine, and neither will the folks who rely on licensing to make a living. There will never be a TV show that showcases the home (or 'crib') or the luxurious lifestyle of a (movie crew) gaffer, grip or production assistant, but each one plays an integral role in the production of a film.

All the names and positions that scroll across the screen during the ending credits of a movie are the people responsible for the making of that film. These positions include publishers, graphic artists, composers, animators, and the entire production crew. Licenses pay royalties that compensate these employees for their hard work. Royalties are the shares paid out of the proceeds resulting from

the sale, performance or use of their work.

If these men and women lose ownership of their work and don't receive royalty revenue, much of which is collected through licensing fees, there would be little incentive for them to continue to invest their time, research and development costs to create future endeavors. The entire movie industry and motorcoach passengers' entertainment options would suffer as a result.

## Modest average salaries

According to the job searching website SimplyHired.com, the average salary for movie production crew members is \$26,000. While the "stars" of a film have their multimillion dollar salaries worked out in advance and are paid upon completion of the film, the production crew members must wait for their full compensation to trickle in through royalties.

What's more, most production crews work from project to project; meaning that when one film wraps, many don't know when their next job will come.

Thom Davis of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts Union Local 80 confirmed "revenue from licensing has the biggest impact on the back end, in terms of health-and-welfare coverage for our members."

The Motion Picture Association of America and its member companies are dedicated to stopping film and video piracy in all its forms, including unauthorized public performances.

The motion picture companies can go to court to ensure their copyrights are not violated. Showing a movie without a license can subject a coach operator to civil penalties ranging from \$750 to \$30,000 per movie, or as high as \$150,000 per movie if the unlicensed showing was committed willfully.

"If a company exhibits a film without the proper licensing, it's downright theft. They are literally stealing a product they do not own," said Davis.

## Ease of licensing

Obtaining a legal license to

show movies is easy and affordable. There are two types of licensing available for motorcoaches. A traditional "Movie Leasing Plan" provides motorcoaches with both the license and the movies, including edited versions.

A "Fleet Licensing" service option provides only the license for the motorcoach to legally exhibit movies that they or their customers own, borrow or rent. Discounts are available for members of certain motorcoach associations (including the United Motorcoach Association).

Public performance licenses can be obtained through Motorcoach Movies ([www.motorcoach-movies.com](http://www.motorcoach-movies.com)), the exclusive licensor for the majority of the major Hollywood studios.

Once licensed, motorcoach operators can show movies licensed for "Home Use Only" by leasing titles from Motorcoach Movies or by renting, buying or borrowing titles from a video store or other legal source.

Motorcoach Movies is division of Swank Motion Pictures Inc. of St. Louis.

# Study: \$77.7 billion needed for rail, bus transit systems

Almost daily, it seems, news reports surface suggesting the federal government has become too big, too bloated, too cumbersome, too overextended to succeed at most anything.

Whether it's dealing with economic challenges or environmental calamities, intelligence gathering, sustaining critical infrastructure or health care, the government is falling down on nearly every front.

Now comes a new Federal Transit Administration study that estimates the cost of bringing the

nation's rail and bus transit systems into a state of good repair at a whopping \$77.7 billion.

In addition, a yearly average of \$14.4 billion would be required to maintain the systems.

Clearly, years of unfettered federal spending for public rail and transit bus systems has built a conglomeration that U.S. taxpayers simply cannot afford to sustain or maintain.

The FTA's *National State of Good Repair Assessment Study*, requested by U.S. Transportation

Secretary Ray LaHood, provides a comprehensive analysis of the costs required to bring the nation's rail and bus transit systems into good operating order.

"Transit remains one of the safest forms of transportation, but this report shows the clear need to reinvest in our bus, subway and light-rail systems," said LaHood. "As a nation, we must lead when it comes to infrastructure development and commit ourselves to rebuilding America."

"Investment in the nation's

transit infrastructure is important to a healthy economy and most importantly, the safety and well-being of our riders," added FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff.

"For millions of Americans, having a safe and reliable transit system is the difference between seeing their children before bed or not, making it to work on time or arriving late, or getting to a doctor's appointment or foregoing it."

While most of the \$77.7 billion backlog can be attributed to rail, more than 40 percent of the nation's

transit buses and bus facilities are also in poor to marginal condition.

In April, Rogoff announced the availability of \$775 million through a competitive State of Good Repair funding program. The FTA received roughly 400 project applications, totaling \$4.2 billion, for the \$775 million.

To reach \$77.7 billion, the FTA would have to dole out \$775 million every week for the next two years.

The FTA assessment can be found at [www.fta.dot.gov/news/news\\_events\\_11865.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/news/news_events_11865.html).

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# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

ISSUE NO. 174

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

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# Rampant regulatory growth stymies economic recovery

WASHINGTON — The avalanche of new and proposed rules and regulations introduced by the Obama Administration and its federal agencies is creating great uncertainty among businesses and stifling job creation, according to business owners and academics attending a forum hosted last month by the National Chamber Foundation, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce public policy think tank.

“We’re not hiring because we don’t know what’s going to happen,” said James Vitrano, general counsel and vice president of corporate affairs at New Orleans-based Blessey Marine Services Inc.

This year was the first Blessey’s employees did not receive raises, noted Vitrano, speaking as a panelist at the chamber foundation event. The company is also reviewing its employee health care coverage in light of the new health care law.

Vitrano said his company has two departments devoted entirely to scouring the Federal Register for new and revised regulations. He estimates that the 700-employee company faces \$40 million in additional costs due to regulations from the USEPA, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the federal Equal Employment Op-

portunity Commission.

“The chamber has an initiative calling for business owners to ‘Dream Big,’” said Vitrano. “The biggest threat to dreaming big is that nasty alarm clock in a hotel that goes off without warning at 3:40 a.m. That alarm clock represents every administrative regulatory agency in this country. It wakes up my CEO who is dreaming big. Congress is the hotel manager who won’t rein in those agencies that are keeping us awake.”

The ideal solution would be to reduce regulations, Vitrano said. But at the very least, small business owners should have some recourse to fight regulations, and the federal

government should be held more accountable for the consequences of burdensome regulations.

Administrations of both political parties are responsible for the growing regulatory burden, said Christopher DeMuth, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a panelist at the forum.

President Bush expanded his regulatory reach in response to the Enron scandal, the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and the financial crisis that began to take hold in 2008, DeMuth noted.

The Obama Administration continues the trend of reactionary regulations, DeMuth said, and is “enthusiastic and unconflicted” in

its pursuit.

“The trend of regulation growth is one that should worry all public-spirited citizens,” said DeMuth, who released a paper, *Contemporary Conservatism and Government Regulation*, at the event.

Increasing regulation is every bit as debilitating as tax increases but is more acceptable to politicians and the general public, noted Ted Gayer, co-director of economic studies at the Brookings Institution. “It’s a paradox — everybody hates taxes but are OK with regulations and subsidies,” he said.

## Costly regulations

A report issued jointly by

George Washington University and Washington University in St. Louis has come up with new figures measuring the growth of federal government spending to develop and enforce regulations.

President Obama’s budget request for fiscal 2011 provides for regulatory spending of \$59 billion and a regulatory staff of more than 280,000 individuals.

But, the report notes, “these on-budget costs of regulation represent a small fraction of the full burden of regulations to society.” For example, the report does not measure state and local regulatory programs.

In the past decade, according to the report, regulatory outlays have increased by more than 75 percent, and regulatory staff by more than 100,000 people.

The largest increases in both spending and people have been at the Transportation Security Administration.

The 30-page report, written by Susan Dudley and Melinda Warren, is titled *A Decade of Growth in the Regulators’ Budget, Regulators Budget Report No. 32*.

To see a copy, go to [www.gwu.edu/~regstudies/Reg%20Budget%202010-05-18.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~regstudies/Reg%20Budget%202010-05-18.pdf).

## IRS to require electronic payroll tax filing

WASHINGTON — According to an announcement from the U.S. Treasury Department, the Internal Revenue Service will shortly initiate a rulemaking that will require almost all entities that file federal employment taxes to file them electronically, using the Treasury Department’s Electronic Federal Tax Payment System, or EFTPS.

The Treasury Department notes that 98 percent of employ-

ment tax dollars already move through the system, which has nearly 10 million registered users.

It also notes that a great proportion of small family businesses, a category that apparently includes many of the continuing paper filers, have Internet access and bank online.

The department points out that processing the paper coupons submitted with the filings costs banks

a relatively large amount, which they are prohibited from passing on to customers. More and more financial institutions, says the department, no longer allow their branches to accept employment tax deposits.

For these reasons, and because the system is also cheaper and less prone to error, electronic filing is expected to become mandatory effective at the end of this year.

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## Stay issued

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The district court had agreed with claims by the two trade groups that new federal legislation that prohibited the FTA from spending money to enforce the charter rule against King County Metro was unconstitutional.

Known as the Murray Amendment, the law was authored by Washington Democrat Sen. Patty Murray, who said she wanted King County Metro to be able to operate parking lot shuttle service for Seattle Mariners baseball games.

Under the federal charter service rule, King County Metro was prohibited from running the shuttles when private carriers are available to do the work.

King County Metro, which began operating the shuttles at the start of the current baseball season, dropped the service after the initial court ruling in June, but resumed it after the appeals court issued the stay, according to Linda Thielke, a spokeswoman for the King County Transportation Department, which oversees the transit agency.

The two trade associations and others in the motorcoach industry view the Murray Amendment as an effort by the public transit industry to weaken or destroy the charter

## TV ad targets Washington state's Sen. Murray

SEATTLE — The conservative American Action Network has initiated a major political advertising purchase in Washington state, hammering Democratic U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, and using her famous 'mom in tennis shoes' iconography against her.

The memorable spot depicts an unidentified woman in scuffed-up sneakers walking on people's backs as an announcer says "you wore your tennis shoes out on our backs," and accuses Murray of increasing spending, raising taxes and killing jobs.

rule, and they worry that if it is allowed to stand other federal lawmakers will attempt to extend it to their communities.

While UMA and ABA both vigorously oppose the ban on enforcement of the charter rule, their legal strategy in fighting it has differed, resulting in their filing of separate lawsuits, and taking different steps after winning the initial order and before the U.S. Department of Justice sought the stay or appealed the ruling. The associations' suits later were joined by the appeals court.

One issue — ABA's filing of a

The group is spending more than \$750,000 on a statewide buy of broadcast TV, a significant purchase for Washington.

The network also has created a website, [www.makemurrayworry.com](http://www.makemurrayworry.com), to drive the message home. To view the anti-Murray ad, go to the website.

Murray has become the bane of motorcoach operators in Washington because she pushed through legislation that exempted the public transit agency in Seattle, King County Metro, from the federal charter service rule. (See July 1

formal charter rule violation complaint with the FTA against King County Metro — raised concerns at UMA that it would strengthen the chances of a stay being approved in an appeal by the FTA.

UMA planned to argue against the stay by maintaining the request was moot because King County Metro had already given up the Mariners' shuttle service. However, with the ABA's formal complaint against the transit agency still pending, the FTA was able to argue that it actually was not moot and the stay was necessary.

Although the court eventually

*Bus & Motorcoach News.*)

The commercial, like many spots against Democratic incumbents this year, aims to make the case that Murray has forgotten her roots. But it's notably personalized through the use of tennis shoes, a play on Murray's 1992 mantra that she was a commonsense "mom in tennis shoes."

The message the American Action Network is using against her has worked against other Washington senators in the past, including Democrat Warren Magnuson and Republican Slade Gorton, and con-

servatives hope it will resonate again in an anti-Washington year.

"People are tired of watching our government decrease small business opportunity while increasing the federal debt," said Rob Collins, president of the American Action Network.

See related articles on pages 1 and 11.



Sen. Patty Murray

did issue the stay, lawyers involved in the case said they were unable to say how much of a factor the active complaint may be in the appeals court's decision.

UMA Vice President Ken Presley said UMA had considered filing a formal complaint against King County Metro but decided that such a strategy and timing were not right.

"We correctly anticipated the Department of Justice, acting on behalf of the FTA, would file an appeal and felt additional deliberations could complicate future arguments," he said. "We prevailed

in the lower court and a federal judge directed the FTA to enforce the charter service rule forthwith."

ABA attorney Richard P. Schweitzer said the ABA, which filed its complaint after the initial court ruling, but before the appeal was filed, said it took the step because the enforcement ban had been lifted and the FTA was clear to move against King County Metro.

"The court said the charter rule applied to King County Metro and we wanted to hold them accountable," he said.

See related articles on this page and page 11.

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# Sen. Murray's folly: Public transit is 'more efficient'

By Dave Millhouser

Talk about having it all: A government job where you have the ability to make pronouncements that no one examines closely or takes seriously. If you sound authoritative, folks assume there must be a bit of truth in there somewhere.

You may be assuming this is about Cliff Claven, the great Postman Philosopher from the 1980s television series Cheers, who could utter nonsense so convincingly that folks didn't argue. They just shook their heads.

Nope. This is about Patty Murray, one of Washington state's contributions to the U.S. Senate, who opined that a court decision enforcing FTA charter bus regulations "forces local (Seattle) fans and event goers to use overpriced and inefficient private charter buses."

([www.stnonline.com/home/top-stories/2435-uma-murray-amendment-case](http://www.stnonline.com/home/top-stories/2435-uma-murray-amendment-case))

The only visible difference between Claven and Murray is his uniform.

Does any thinking person honestly believe public transit operates more efficiently, or cheaper, than the private sector? If so, why do

public transit agencies require ever-increasing subsidies?

The only way a public transit authority could match costs is by cooking the books.

If you accurately fold in ALL the money spent on public transit, the cost per mile or hour is substantially more than in the private sector.

Now, don't get me wrong, public transit is not a bad thing, and plays an important role in our society. But, let's be honest about what it really costs.

To provide the "cheap" shuttle Sen. Murray envisions involves all sorts of subsidy dollars that are conveniently overlooked when the transit authority prices the work. Some estimates place actual public transit costs at 300 percent plus of private sector.

Those subsidy dollars came from somewhere. What this REALLY means is that the tax dollars of a New England Patriots supporter (me) are being spent subsidizing the public transit-operated shuttle used by Seattle Seahawks fans. That ain't right.

Is Murray intellectually dishonest? or ignorant? Can't tell for sure, but she's typical of today's politicians. There are a couple of

points worth making here:

First, too many of these "leaders" begin projects that look good to constituents, only to lose interest once legislating is done. Have any of these government projects come in on budget?

How often do you see a legislator ride herd on something they've championed?

How many legislators who support transit subsidies make any effort to ensure they are well spent?

Press the issue on public transit, and they point out how important it is in making cities livable. It's green, fuel efficient and all things good. That's not the question. The question is: How much does it really cost? And, are they doing it efficiently?

If politicians are so poorly informed on this one little slice of government that we happen to understand, what is happening in other disciplines?

The second point is that when public transit agencies compete with us, they use our tax dollars to do it. Long Island operator Bill Schoolman (Hampton Luxury Liner, Classic Transportation) makes that point in a lawsuit against New York MTA. ([www.mtaxpayerabuse.com](http://www.mtaxpayerabuse.com)).

His position is that the MTA operates on an unsustainable business model. Every time it goes in the hole because of poor business practices, politicians raise taxes on individuals or companies to bail MTA out.

In this case, they arbitrarily raised a payroll tax, and make people like Schoolman pay for their mistakes. In several instances Long Island operators are providing parallel service, of better quality, for less money. They are net contributors to the local economy because they pay taxes, rather than suck up subsidies.

In an interesting side note, at least three towns subject to the payroll tax are considering joining Schoolman's litigation, or are suing on their own.

His position (in part) is that it is not fair for them to punish private companies and the public because the MTA can't get its act together. Every time they screw up...we pay.

Does anyone really believe that, once public transit costs are honestly identified, a significant amount of waste couldn't be eliminated? Too bad it isn't sexy to cut costs.

The reason for the FTA charter bus regulation, covering public transit agencies competing with

private companies, is because, sometime in the deep, dark past officials briefly understood the real nature of transit funding and costs.

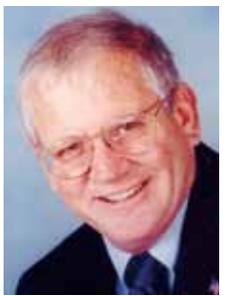
We're not foes of public transit, but as taxpayers and citizens we want to see them do their job properly, and transparently. That might not leave them time to mess around in our sandbox.

Maybe what we should do is offer to run these sorts of services at cost. Not our cost, but THEIR cost.

If the transit authorities were forced to accurately account for every dollar of expense, and price operations accordingly, my guess is that the private sector would be delighted to do the job for transit authorities' "cost."

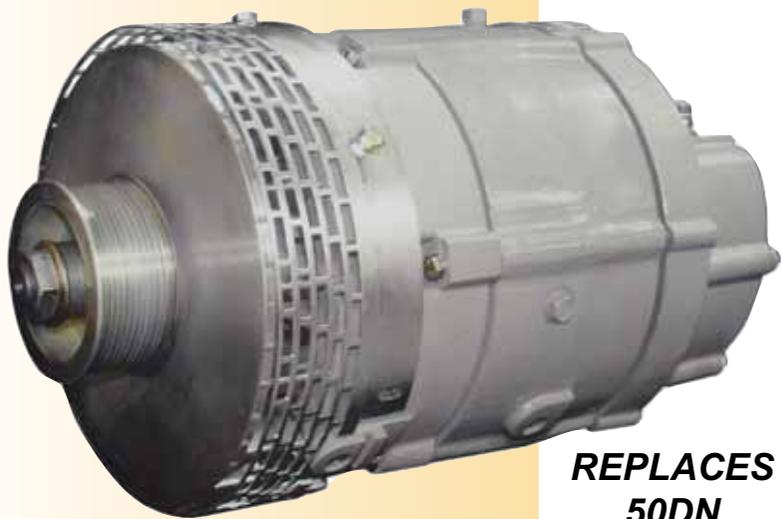
Then we'd see who was "overpriced and inefficient."

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him at his new email address: [Davemillhouser@gmail.com](mailto:Davemillhouser@gmail.com).



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## Baseball takes the field at museum

HERSHEY, Pa. — *The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League and its Buses* is a new display this month at the Antique Automobile Club of America Museum here.

The exhibit includes an encore presentation of the Buses of the Negro Leagues Baseball Teams which was displayed earlier this year at the museum.

The Museum of Bus Transportation, which displays 12 vintage buses on the lower level of the Antique Automobile Club museum, arranged the special exhibit.

During World War II, many minor league baseball teams disbanded because millions of young men were being drafted into the armed services.

Chewing-gun magnate Philip Wrigley, owner of the Chicago Cubs, led an effort that came up with the idea of a women's professional baseball league.

The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League gave more than 600 women athletes the opportunity to play professional baseball and to play it at a level never before attained. The league

operated from 1943 to 1954, and represents one of the most unique aspects of baseball history.

Like the Negro players, the women's teams traveled to away games in buses.

The auto club museum display includes team uniforms, posters and memorabilia, and similar vintage buses the teams rode in during the 1940s and 50s.

The Antique Auto Museum displays carefully restored automobiles, buses and motorcycles in lifelike scenes representing the 1900s-1970s.

## S.C. operator arrested for customer scam

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The owner of a Columbia-based coach company has been arrested for accepting payments to take a group on a trip to Florida, then failing to provide the service.

According to the Richland County Sheriff's Department, Darnell Williams, 33, turned himself in and was charged with breach of trust.

According to local news accounts, web postings and public records, Williams spent much of the past 15 months victimizing customers, other coach operators,

suppliers, and even Girl Scouts.

The Public Service Commission of South Carolina granted Williams a charter bus certificate in April of last year. He operated under the name of Palmetto Coach and Tours.

In March of this year, the PSC issued an order revoking Palmetto's certificate of public convenience and necessity because Williams had no insurance.

Palmetto apparently continued to operate anyway with one customer filing a report with the sheriff saying Williams accepted payments on

May 13 to take a group to Florida the next day but didn't show.

Web postings by other disgruntled customers also point to Williams appearing to be in business after the PSC revoked his certificate.

Coach companies and others who are owed money by Williams or may have been scammed by him are being urged to contact the Richland County Sheriff's Department in Columbia. You're not likely to get your money but your complaint could have a bearing on his prosecution.

## Operators partner in Chicago for tour/airport shuttle deals

CHICAGO — Two of Chicago's oldest ground passenger transportation companies, Chicago Sightseeing and GO Airport Express, have partnered to offer discounted airport shuttle and tour deals.

The arrangement provides for discounted roundtrip airport travel on GO Airport Express shuttles combined with reduced-fare sightseeing tours of Chicago on Gray Line Tour buses, operated by Chicago Sightseeing.

As long as customers book through either company's website, GO Airport Express and Gray Line are offering a \$78/per person roundtrip ticket (regularly \$90) that provides transport from

O'Hare International Airport to any downtown hotel, with the option of either a four-hour Chicago Gray Line Grand Tour or a two-day, on-and-off Gray Line Trolley and Upper Decker pass.

For transportation to and from Chicago Midway Airport, a similar package costs \$68 (regularly \$80).

Booking is online at [www.grayline-chicago.com](http://www.grayline-chicago.com) or at [www.airportexpress.com](http://www.airportexpress.com).

GO Airport Express has been around since 1853, when it began business as a carriage service operating between train lines.

Chicago Sightseeing pioneered Chicago's sightseeing industry in the early 1900s.

**19-22 National Association of Motorcoach Operators 2010 Annual Conference**, Doubletree Boston/Waltham, Waltham, Mass. Info: [www.namocoaches.org](http://www.namocoaches.org).

**23-26 Motorcoach Association of South Carolina Annual Meeting and Marketplace**, Spartanburg Marriott at Renaissance Park, Spartanburg, S.C. Info: [www.scmotorcoach.org](http://www.scmotorcoach.org).

## Calendar

### AUGUST 2010

**1-4 Alabama Motorcoach Association and South Central Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting & Marketplace**, IP Casino, Resort & Spa, Biloxi, Miss. Info: go to [www.southcentralmotorcoach.org](http://www.southcentralmotorcoach.org) or [www.alabamamotorcoach.org](http://www.alabamamotorcoach.org).

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# Travel group wants \$500 million from BP for oil spill

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Travel Association has demanded that British Petroleum pay \$500 million to help mitigate up to \$23 billion in losses in tourism spending it anticipates along the Gulf Coast in the next three years.

“(BP’s) oil spill will have long-term effects on businesses and jobs in the Gulf Coast region unless we counteract the usual course of events with an unprecedented response,” said Roger Dow, CEO

of the association.

The U.S. Travel Association conducted an economic study with research firm Oxford Economics USA that came up with the \$23 billion figure.

Tourism generates about \$34 billion in spending in the Gulf Coast region and 400,000 jobs, says USTA. Losses that could accumulate as a result of the oil spill can range from \$7.6 billion to \$22.7 billion, depending on the

rate of recovery, according to Oxford’s assessment.

Spending \$500 million in marketing to attract visitors could save jobs and reduce the impact by \$7.5 billion, the study says.

The association called on the federal government to secure the funds, but hasn’t determined who would distribute or receive the money, Dow says.

BP hasn’t commented on the idea.

Among the association’s other proposals:

- Develop a central website that provides accurate information about safe areas for travel.

- Get the U.S. Commerce Department to organize travel-related trade missions to the region for international buyers.

- Expand the categories eligible for federal tax credits for tourism-related businesses.

- Get federal government inter-

vention to provide increased access to capital and low-interest loans.

Tourism officials say a marketing campaign could help avoid the kind of lasting economic damage that followed the Exxon Valdez oil spill and Hurricane Katrina.

BP has offered to provide \$70 million for travel marketing in four Gulf states, with \$25 million for Florida and \$15 million each for Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

## Seminars foster ideas to aid Gulf Coast travel industry

BILOXI, Miss. — Fresh ideas for battling the false perception that the BP oil spill has despoiled all beaches the length of the Gulf Coast were offered up at a pair of regional seminars last month.

Travel industry experts participating in the seminars said the impact of the oil spill on Gulf Coast beaches has been overblown, unnecessarily harming the visitor and travel industry.

“The people in these areas have been through so much — (hurricanes) Katrina, Ike, Rita and Gustav — and now they’ve been hit with the aftermath of the oil spill,” said Lisa Simon, president of the

National Tour Association.

“Our purpose is to help change the perception that the ‘Gulf Coast is closed.’ Not to minimize the seriousness of the oil spill, but its impact on the beaches is not as widespread as it appears,” said Simon.

“We want to make sure visitors and the travel trade receive complete and accurate information about all there is to do in the region. The Gulf Coast is open for business.”

The NTA and Edelman, the world’s largest independent public relations firm, conducted two half-day educational sessions last month in Biloxi and Houma, La.

The seminars will be repeated later this month in Gulf Shores, Ala., and Pensacola, Fla. The Gulf Shores seminar will be Aug. 10 and the Pensacola session Aug. 11.

These are new dates for the seminars; the dates were changed because of storm fears after they were reported in the July 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.

The seminars are free and anyone in the travel and tourism industry is invited to attend. Registration is open for both seminars at [www.NTAOnline.com/gulfcoast](http://www.NTAOnline.com/gulfcoast).

Contact NTA public relations specialist Madeline Vied at [madelin.vied@NTAstaff.com](mailto:madelin.vied@NTAstaff.com) with

questions.

During the sessions, a team from Edelman’s offices in Chicago, Atlanta and Austin share their knowledge and expertise on crisis management, traditional media relations and digital media.

The workshops were interactive, and ideas and questions flow throughout, allowing attendees to leave with ideas to sell their destinations.

“All along the Mississippi and Louisiana Gulf Coast, tourism professionals have stories to share about their culture and heritage, gaming and nature-based tourism, as well as some incredible culinary

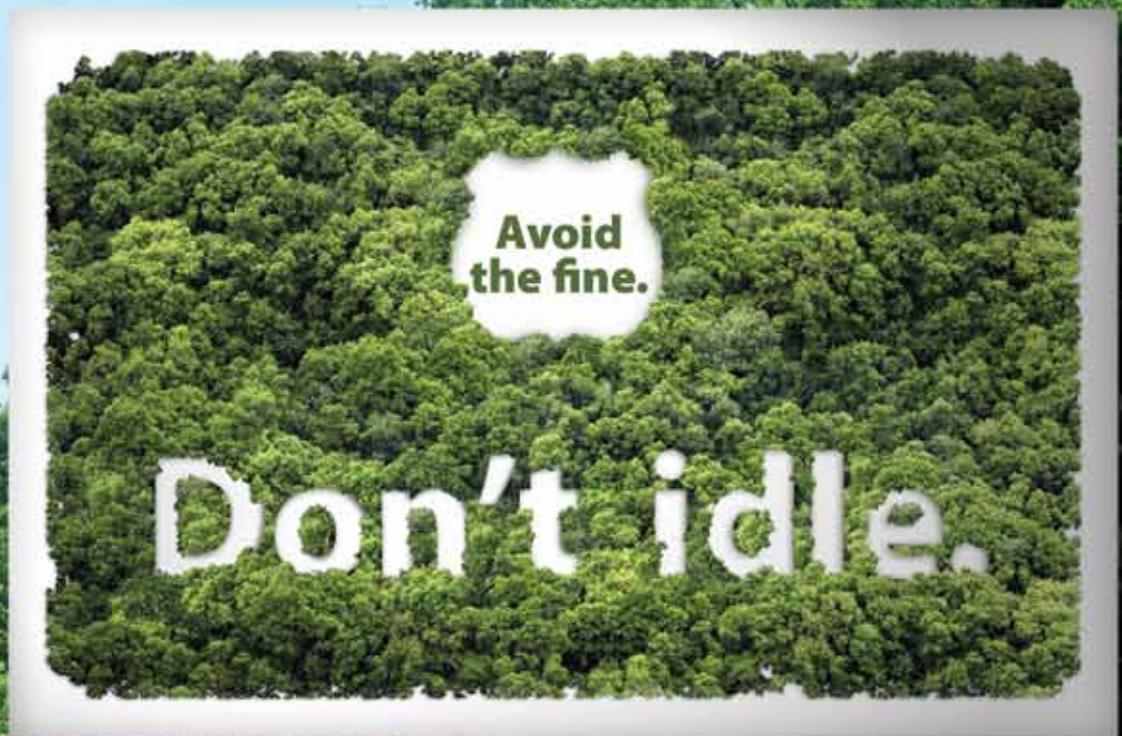
experiences that will easily sell their destinations,” said Cathleen Johnson, executive vice president of Edelman’s Tourism practice.

“We were here to draw out these ideas and help attendees see the ways to move through this crisis and use media and social media to get these stories out to travelers everywhere.”

Simon reviewed opportunities and ideas for attendees to reach tour operators, travel agents and other travel retailers to continue promoting the states’ coastal areas. She said NTA tour operators had committed to bringing business to their areas now and through 2011.

Turning the engine off is one of the easiest steps for drivers to take to help improve air quality. This simple act will help drivers and companies avoid costly fines, save money and curb fuel use.

For more information, visit [TurnYourEngineOff.org](http://TurnYourEngineOff.org).



## Today's buses, coaches strain charging systems

Shuttle bus, motorcoach and transit bus manufacturers are increasingly faced with electrical loads that put a lot of strain on vehicle charging systems.

This is particularly true in smaller, demand-response vehicles that operate for more than 12 hours a day at low average speeds and high electrical loads.

To address the increased loads, especially when there is extended use of air conditioning and other systems, heavy-duty charging systems are required to supply more power to adequately handle the increased loads.

A heavy-duty alternator and regulator should provide a sufficient amount of amperage to keep the vehicle's batteries properly charged. A higher voltage level is normally required for maintenance-free batteries, group 31 style, and a lower charge rate is needed for group 8D style batteries, usually about .5V lower.

Proper battery maintenance is essential to maintaining the other charging system components.

Key features of a heavy-duty alternator design, such as the rating

and number of diodes used, as well as the heatsink structure, help dissipate heat and lower operating temperatures.

This is critical in improving alternator performance and prolonging service life, especially in high-heat environments.

Transit bus applications are usually subjected to an enormous amount of idling with little or no air flow in the engine compartment. Consequently it is imperative the end user understand how the vehicle will be used (duty cycle), so a heavy-duty charging system is specified to the OEM, if required, as opposed to an automotive-style alternator, to meet the charging system needs of vehicles used in many commercial applications.

As more and more loads are added to buses and coaches to enhance passenger comfort, it becomes increasingly important to understand the role of the alternator in the vehicle's electrical system to provide adequate power to handle the vehicle's electrical loads.

This should include momentary high amperage loads like a wheelchair lift on ADA-compliant vehi-

## Las Vegas coach collision center opens

LAS VEGAS — BRC Coach & Transit (formerly Big Rig Collision) has opened its 53,000-square-foot motorcoach collision center at the Las Vegas Speedway Center.

"We are excited about the positive reception BRC is receiving from insurance companies, motorcoach operators and maintenance directors regarding the opening of our new... center," said company executive Rob Pek.

BRC is a "one-stop shop" for motorcoach collision repair, refurbishment, mechanical work, frame

straightening, paint, fire restoration, and transportation logistics to and from the facility, said Pek.

The Calgary, Alberta-based company has been in business for more than 30 years, serving bus operators, transit authorities and insurance companies.

The Las Vegas operation and the name change are part of a rebranding that includes the expansion of BRC locations, as well as an expansion of the focus on coach and transit collision repair.

BRC also is expanding its Cal-

gary operation to 50,000 square feet of bus collision repair facilities. The combined facilities will allow for 75-80 buses under repair at one time.

The specially designed facilities with double drive-through bays help to maximize efficiencies for motorcoach collision repair. The facilities boast the latest collision repair equipment and technology, and three 60-70-foot paint booths.

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

cles, which puts strain on the system if the alternator is forced to operate near the rated output capacity.

Maintenance factors that affect performance at the user level include routine battery and cable terminal maintenance, as well as a periodic load test on the electrical system.

A premium heavy-duty alternator will normally have the reserve, in most worst-case applications, to overcome these maintenance factors to ensure that the vehicle's electrical system will perform beyond typical expectations.

Prepared by PennTex Industries Inc. More information at [www.penntexusa.com](http://www.penntexusa.com).

## 'Hot fuel' case advances

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — The class-action lawsuit against fuel companies that sell so-called "hot fuel" has moved a step closer to proceeding to trial.

U.S. District Court Judge Kathryn Vratil of the District of Kansas certified a class of plaintiffs following oral arguments.

Certification of the class is a critical step in the case going to trial. No certification, no class action.

Plaintiff groups from across the U.S. began filing lawsuits in 2007 against oil and fuel companies, alleging retail fuel sold without re-

gard for temperature changes is a violation of consumer protection laws.

The higher the temperature of the fuel is above 60 degrees Fahrenheit, the bigger the rip-off, the plaintiffs contend.

(See Aug. 15, 2009, and Aug. 1 and March 15, 2008 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The plaintiffs seek a ruling to make automatic temperature compensation mandatory on all retail fuel pumps. They are also seeking financial compensation from dozens of oil and fuel companies in 26 states.

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## UMA, NTA co-locate meetings in '13

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association and the National Tour Association have announced they will hold their first co-located convention in Orlando, Fla., Jan. 19-23, 2013.

The "Show of Shows" will be at the Orange County Convention Center.

"We are very excited for this opportunity," said Victor Parra, UMA president and CEO. "We think Orlando is the perfect venue for inaugurating what will singularly be the largest and most important industry event."

NTA President Lisa Simon noted that "it was just last year that NTA and UMA announced our two conventions were coming together.

We're thrilled we've been able to work so quickly to make this a reality. Financial and time resources are so valuable these days, and bringing our events together will bring more business to our members for less time and money."

The jointly located conventions will bring together 2,000 buyers with thousands of supplier and destination partners. Additionally, the World Religious Travel Association Expo will co-locate with these events, creating maximum return on investment from one convention experience, said Simon and Parra.

NTA is the leading association for professionals serving North American travelers. Since its

founding 60 years ago, the association has served a diverse membership and helped it expand market reach with business tools, strategic relationships and collaboration within the industry.

UMA is North America's largest association for operators of motorcoach companies, providing charter, tour and regular-route services. Founded 40 years ago, UMA represents more than 900 bus and motorcoach companies, plus more than 250 supplier, manufacturer and travel partner members.

The two associations announced their intention to co-locate their annual meetings/conventions at UMA Motorcoach Expo 2009 in Orlando.

## NTA promotes UMA Expo among members

LEXINGTON, Ky. — The National Tour Association is promoting UMA Motorcoach Expo 2011 among its members by offering them free registration to Expo if they register for the 2010 NTA Convention in Montreal in November.

Not only will NTA members receive free registration to UMA

Motorcoach Expo — Jan. 19-23 in Tampa, Fla., but they also will receive free registration to the World Religious Travel Association 2010 Expo, which will be co-located with the NTA Convention in Montreal.

The free UMA Motorcoach Expo registration offer is open only to those NTA members who

are travel-and-tourism suppliers and to NTA tour operators who don't own coaches, and they must attend the NTA convention in Montreal.

UMA and NTA plan to co-locate their annual conventions/meeting in 2013. See story above.

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

## MCI, Illinois Motorcoach Association establish Entrepreneurial Spirit Award

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries and the Illinois Motorcoach Association have created an industry award designed to recognize individuals or companies creating venues that grow, improve or promote the industry.

The Entrepreneurial Spirit Award will be given annually.

The initial award has gone to Chicago Classic Coach in memory of Richard Hausman, who founded the tour-and-charter company in 2006, after a 25-year career in operations for a number of leading bus companies.

Sam Hausman, Richard's brother, accepted the award at an Illinois Motorcoach Association meeting.

Believing motorcoaches provided a green transportation solution, Richard Hausman was one of the first operators to promote his company's clean-diesel coaches to national travel groups.

He was elected vice president of the Illinois Motorcoach Association a month before his death in February.

"Richard Hausman loved our industry, and the award honors all that he stood for," said Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president and chief customer officer. Donald Ferrone, president of the Illinois Motorcoach Association, said "we look forward to honoring other individuals or companies each year."

## Maryland association picks leaders

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Board members of the Maryland Motorcoach Association have elected officers to one-year terms.

The new officers are: President, Al Spence of A.S. Midway Trailways; vice president, William Baker of Avalon Tour & Charter Service; secretary, Carol Huber of Hubers Bus Service, and treasurer, Kay Gaddy of Hubers Bus Service. Other members of the associa-

tion board are: Barbara Bayer of Woodlawn Motorcoach Inc.; Sam Shea of Golden Ring Travel & Transportation (past president); Janet Campbell of Best Western Hotel & Conference Center (allied member), and Ben Cook of Sackett Cook & Associates (allied member).

For information about the association, go to [www.marylandmotorcoach.org](http://www.marylandmotorcoach.org), or call (571) 312-7117.

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## Coach sales

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Calif., near Sacramento.

The No. 3 selling coach was the MCI D4505. Delivery of 70 D4505s to Greyhound Lines was to begin during the second quarter.

The No. 2 selling coach during the second quarter this year was the MCI J4500, a favorite of tour-and-charter operators. The other most popular models during the quarter were Van Hool 2045, the Prevost X3-45, the Setra S 417 and the Volvo 9700.

This was the second consecutive quarter the Volvo 9700 has appeared on National Bus Trader "Hit Parade" of the most popular seated-coach models.

The three top-selling MCI models captured 51.6 percent of the market.

The figures compiled by *National Bus Trader* cover sales of over-the-road integral coaches in the U.S. and Canada. Manufacturers whose models are tracked by the magazine are MCI, Prevost Car, ABC/Van Hool, Setra and Tamsa.

Typically, the fourth quarter has the most sales followed by the second quarter and the first quar-

ter, with the third quarter normally having the fewest sales.

For this year's second quarter, Plachno said there were a couple of items worthy of note.

"One is that we are again finding the decline in sales is not across the board but limited to specific models. Our records are based on 23 different models. In this second quarter of 2010, 10 of those models increased in sales over the second quarter of 2009 while the other 13 models declined in sales or remained the same.

"Unfortunately, there is no pattern for the models that increased or decreased although public sector sales and sales to major carriers were an influence," said Plachno.

"A second point is that information has reached us that sales of heavy trucks are starting to trend upward, which may be a positive indication for the future," he added.

*WardsAuto.com* reports that June sales of Class 8 trucks were up 11 percent from a year ago, the sixth straight month of year-over-year big rig sales gains. Overall, retail sales of heavy-duty trucks are up 13.3 percent during the first half of this year.

Some motorcoach industry ob-

## Prevost hosts 'sales academy' in Nashville

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A week-long training session designed to sharpen the skills of Prevost and Nova Bus new- and used-coach sales executives was conducted here last month.

The 2010 Volvo Bus Sales Academy was held at the Prevost Nashville Service Center. Volvo Bus is the corporate parent of Prevost and Nova Bus and its sales academy is a global initiative.

The academy focused on three

key areas: customer satisfaction, product knowledge and communication strategies. Other topics covered during the sessions included customer needs, customer segmentation, and credit management.

Prevost vice president of new coach sales, Robert Goodnight, said the Academy was "a great opportunity for the Prevost sales team to reinforce its commitment to our customers' businesses and strengthen its efforts to bring value

to each customer's business model."

Two members of the Prevost sales team recently marked milestones with the company.

Ward Hicken, regional sales manager for the western United States, celebrated his 10th anniversary with Prevost, and Dann Wiltgen, vice president of new coach key accounts, pre-owned coach sales, and bus shell sales, just marked his 15th year.

servers have suggested that new bus sales typically trend behind over-the-road truck sales by six months.

"In general," said Plachno, "it appears that that our current level of sales is due less to concerns about 2010 engines and more to current economic conditions and government policies."

A total of 88 imported coaches were sold in the second quarter, which amounted to 22.4 percent of total sales. That percentage was up slightly from 107 coaches, or 21.8 percent, sold in the second quarter of 2009, but down slightly from 53

coaches, or 23.3 percent, of total sales in the first quarter of this year.

In general, the import market share tends to fluctuate between 20 and 25 percent, meaning the second-quarter figures were not unusual.

Ten of the imported coaches sold during the second quarter were 35-foot Tamsas.

Sales into Canada during the second quarter totaled 54 buses, or 13.7 percent of the total. The percentage was down from the second quarter of last year, when it was 17.3 percent of the total, the first quarter of this year when it was 18.1 percent. Historically, sales into

Canada average around 10 percent.

Sales of conversion shells fell again during the second quarter after a slight bump in the fourth quarter of last year and first quarter of this year.

Shell market share rose to 6.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009 and to 9.7 percent in the first quarter of 2010. But in the second quarter of 2010, only 14 conversion shells were delivered, or 3.6 percent of the market.

Auto stick transmissions were installed in 56 coaches, representing 14.2 percent of all coaches and 14.7 percent of seated coaches.

## Operator outlook

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

unchanged decreased from last year's survey.

Also, about 60 percent said their revenue declined, while fewer than 20 percent reported increased income. Almost half — 49 percent — of the operators who responded to the questionnaire said they were worse off financially as a result of the downturn in business.

"As we would expect, our members' financial performance reflects the uncertainty of the economy and tells us that operators will be cautious going forward," observed Victor Parra, UMA president and chief executive.

The decline in business has torched many operators' plans to improve their fleets with new or pre-owned motorcoaches. Fewer than 28 percent of those surveyed purchased new coaches this year, while 29 percent bought used buses. In the 2009 survey, 43 percent purchased new coaches and 35 percent bought used ones.

"We had to delay the purchase of new equipment and are looking for other ways to increase efficiency," said Moran. "We're leaning things out to the point where it is painful."

### Making adjustments

Dan Shoup of Cardinal Buses in Middlebury, Ind., said he, too, has had to adjust his equipment pur-

chase plans because of a downturn in his business of about 4 percent.

"We've already done just about everything we can do to cut costs," he said. "Now we're looking at our equipment purchases and this year probably will buy just two coaches and sell three from our fleet rather than an even swap."

Rose Marie Wertz of Wertz Motor Coaches in Marcus Hook, Pa., said she is holding off on buying coaches as well because of the slowdown in business.

"We would like to have a few more newer coaches but our trips just don't warrant it," she said. "And, besides, they cost too much."

According to several operators, corporate work has been hit the hardest, with companies doing much less travel and fewer conventions being held in their areas.

"Our biggest drop has been in corporate travel," said Shoup. "With school out for the summer, we rely heavily on corporate business and convention shuttles but that business now is either nonexistent or much smaller than in past years."

He noted, too, that senior group charters also are way down and that the senior groups still traveling are taking far fewer trips and have far fewer people. "The Baby Boomers don't seem to be here to replace the seniors," he said.

Bob O'Brien of Time Lines in Oklahoma City also is seeing smaller senior charters and he re-

sponded to the trend by purchasing two 35-foot buses earlier this year. "They're working real well, too," he said.

### Schools hang on

Although schools are struggling with financial issues, their use of motorcoaches for school trips have not been hurt as much as had been expected, according to some operators. They said the schools seem to be financing many of their trips with fundraisers and donations from parents.

"Our state budget is a mess and school money has dropped off, which has led to a dropoff in school charters," said O'Brien. "Now most of the trips seem to be financed by fund raisers or parents."

Operators also have seen a switch in the demands of many of their customers.

Wertz said her customers used to ask for the newest coaches all of the time, but now they're just looking for the lowest prices. "Everything is more about price, price, price," she noted, adding that clients care less about the service and more about the cheapest price."

The price issue has changed how some operators do business, too, with companies undercutting the prices of their competitors and larger companies using their size to slash prices substantially.

"Bids are really low and some large companies are bidding jobs

at what has to be well below cost," noted a California operator who asked not to be identified.

He said he recently bid \$300,000 for a charter, but lost it to a national company that asked for \$200,000. "It had to be a cash flow distress bid," he suggested.

Others have experienced low ball pricing as well.

"We've seen rate cutting and we are determined to maintain our customers and have done what we need to do within reason," acknowledged O'Brien.

### Don't fight 'em — sell

Stephen Archambault of Archway Bus Transportation in West Warwick, R.I., reacted differently when his competition began hammering him with low bids — he sold his business.

"My competition began engaging in a price war, offering services for almost less than what it cost. They were pricing out of fear and their prices were ridiculously low. I did not want to get involved in that because it just wasn't worth it and it didn't make good business sense," he said.

Archambault sold his six-coach company and terminal to Academy Bus in Hoboken, N.J. in June and agreed to stay on and manage Academy's new Rhode Island operation.

"The economy, of course, was the reason for me selling," he said, noting that his business had been

on a steady 20 to 25 percent growth surge until last year when things began to turn down. "Business turned flat and it was projected to stay that way this year, too,"

Archambault said the sale to the much larger and well-funded Academy will allow his former operation to expand and he expects to double his fleet and add six to eight new drivers before the end of the year.

"It's a win for everyone — customers, my company and Academy," he said.

Meantime, operators continue to look for ways to draw riders and trim costs.

O'Brien has added wireless internet service and seat power outlets to half of his coaches. Moran has switched his advertising to the less costly web, and Wertz is filling in at the office much more rather than hiring another employee.

Most operators said they have gotten some relief from lower insurance rates and steady fuel costs.

While the downturn has caused most operators grief, some see a bright side to the situation.

Moran among them.

"It makes you take a close look at your business. When times were good, we just put the pedal to the metal and went about our business. We did not look at ourselves very much, so in the long run, I think it will be good for us. It is painful but worth it," he said.



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**Bus checks are popular in parks**

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. – Each summer, operators sending coaches to national parks in the western U.S. know that besides spectacular scenery there also could be federal and state officials waiting to conduct safety inspections.

This year, there were five days of "surprise inspections" for all commercial tour buses in Yosemite National Park and two days of inspections at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.

Last summer, Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming conducted two days of inspections and officials in Arizona routinely conduct bus inspections at the Grand Canyon.

More than 250,000 of the 3.5 million visitors who visit Yosemite each year arrive at the park in buses.

During 5 of the 12 days between June 9 and June 20, officials from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the California Highway Patrol and the National Park Service conducted inspections of tour buses entering Yosemite.

Park law enforcement rangers, CHP officers and federal commercial carrier safety inspectors examined 153 buses, with 22 of the coaches being put out of service for mechanical deficiencies for an out-of-service rate of just over 14 percent.

Drivers of 55 coaches received minor fix-it tickets. In addition, 35 written citations and 27 verbal warnings were given for mechanical deficiencies.

Ten drivers were ordered out of service for logbook violations, or a driver out-of-service rate of less than 1

percent.

A total of 47 buses were found to be safe and were released with no citation.

The roadside inspections conducted at the national parks adhere to the North American Standard Out-of-Service Criteria established by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance.

The large majority of tour bus passengers coming to Yosemite each year are international visitors from such countries as Japan, Korea, Germany and England. Many of these visitors travel to the park in conjunction with visits to other parts of California and other western states.

"It is a primary concern of the National Park Service in Yosemite that these visitors are safe during their travels in the park," said Kari Cobb, public affairs officer at the park.

"Yosemite National Park, the FMCSA, and the CHP strive to ensure visitor safety and appreciate the mutual support of the other agencies involved in these surprise bus inspections."

Cobb said additional surprise inspections will be conducted throughout the year.

At Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks, rangers team up with the Wyoming Highway Patrol and the FMCSA for inspections.

Interagency inspections have been taking place at Yellowstone for 12 years.

Most park inspections happen in June or May, but fall inspections are not uncommon.

**Better performance**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

staffing, and an increased focus this year on mobile roadside inspections.

The total number of inspections conducted this year was 65,327, down 10 percent from last year. The number of inspectors was down by roughly 200.

The 2010 out-of-service rate for truck drivers was 4.4 percent — the same as last year. The overall out-of-service rate for trucks was 20 percent, up modestly from 19.6 percent in 2009.

The 2010 results show that despite the recession's impact, safety benchmarks are holding and highway safety remains a high priority among government

units, said Stephen Keppler, CVSA's interim executive director.

"The number of (commercial motor vehicle) inspections is an indicator that, even in these continued tough economic times, state, provincial, local and federal agencies are committed to enforcing truck and bus safety standards," said Keppler.

"Roadside enforcement remains committed to this critically important role in saving lives on North America's highways and helping to provide all travelers a safe and secure place to travel."

Other Roadcheck sponsors besides CVSA are the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Transport Canada, the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, and Mexico's Secretariat of Communications and Transportation.

For more information, go to [www.cvsa.org](http://www.cvsa.org).

**Diesel price dip continues**

WASHINGTON — The average price of diesel fuel in the U.S. fell below \$2.90 a gallon last month, the lowest it had been since it averaged \$2.86 a gallon on March 1.

Despite the steady price decline during the past two-plus months, the motorcoach industry's main fuel still remained 40 cents a gallon higher than it was a year ago, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Gasoline, meanwhile, averaged just over \$2.70 a gallon late last month, leaving gas roughly 25 cents a gallon higher than a year ago, the USDOE said.

**China: No. 1 energy consumer**

China has overtaken the United States as the world's largest energy consumer, according to a report in *The Wall Street Journal*.

China consumed 2.25 billion tons of oil equivalents last year — about 4 percent more than the 2.17 billion consumed by the U.S., the Journal said, citing the International Energy Agency.

The oil-equivalent metric represents all forms of energy consumed, including crude oil, nuclear, coal, natural gas and renewable sources such as hydropower, the paper reported on its website.

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