

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

NTSB calls for new coach regulations in wake of fatal crash

WASHINGTON — The National Transportation Safety Board called for four changes to bus and motorcoach regulations following a hearing into the 2014 cross-over crash of a double-trailer truck into a motorcoach carrying 45 passengers.

The Federal Express truck-tractor combination crossed a 58-foot-wide median on Interstate 5 near Orland in northern California on April 10. The truck side-swiped a passenger car before hit-

ting a Silverado Stages motorcoach head-on. The collision ruptured a fuel tank on the truck and sprayed fuel into the motorcoach. Both drivers and eight motorcoach passengers were killed.

The coach was carrying 42 high school students and three adult chaperones to a weekend orientation at Humboldt State University. Five students and the three chaperones died.

NTSB was unable to determine a cause for the truck's lane

departure. All four recommendations resulting from the investigation, accepted by a 4-0 vote, addressed motorcoach factors:

- Lack of adequate fire performance standards for commercial passenger vehicle interiors

- Lack of mandatory pre-trip safety briefings, which left passengers unprepared to follow emergency exit procedures or to wear seatbelts

- Need for improvements in vehicle design, including a second

passenger door, to facilitate evacuations

- Need for event data recorders that can survive crashes and fires to assist in reconstructing investigations

Members of the safety board chastised the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for failing to act on recommendations made nearly three decades ago to improve flame-resistance standards and install event data recorders.

“What is it going to take for

NHTSA to step up to the plate?” asked member Robert L. Sumwalt.

Victor S. Parra, president and chief executive officer of the United Motorcoach Association, questioned the board's focus on motorcoach factors in a crash caused by an errant truck with a fuel tank that exploded.

“Please understand that in investigating this crash and fire, our objective was to find ways to prevent such crashes from occurring

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►

Coach trips into Mexico growing, Southwest operators say

TUCSON, Ariz. — Business is gradually improving for charter and tour trips into Mexico as the economy improves and news of drug violence wanes, according to a handful of bus operators in California, Arizona and Texas.

“It's still not commensurate with where it used to be, but it is getting better,” said Thomas “TJ” Morgan Jr., president and CEO of Gray Line Tours of Tucson and Citizen Auto Stage Co.

Morgan's Gray Line Tours includes Mexican trips to San Carlos and Puerto Peñasco, also known as Rocky Point.

“People are gradually getting a little more confident,” he said. “But the American people have

definitely been frightened by all the travel advisories and the negative publicity that Mexico has basically received.”

Morgan said he doesn't have problems on his trips.

“The reality is that most of the violence that we read about, if not all, is Mexican citizens and/or other cartel members going after each other,” he said.

While business into Mexico has improved, it remains a small portion of Morgan's overall tour business, maybe 15 to 20 percent, and even a smaller portion of his overall motorcoach business, maybe 10 percent, which includes group charters into Mexico.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ►



Wineries in the Valle de Guadalupe in Baja California Norte have become popular destinations for motorcoach tours out of San Diego. Requests for Mexico tours are increasing, operators say.

Diesel now cheaper than gasoline in some U.S. areas

WASHINGTON — As many motorcoach drivers have likely noticed, those green diesel-price signs visible from freeways are now showing lower numbers than those for regular unleaded gasoline.

In many parts of the country, the average price of a gallon of diesel fuel has slipped below that of gasoline — in California it is as much as 74 cents lower — for the

first time in about a decade.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the price of regular gasoline averaged \$2.74 a gallon nationwide in late July, while diesel averaged \$2.72 a gallon.

In California, the price of diesel was \$3.07 a gallon, compared with \$3.81 per gallon of gasoline.

Diesel also is cheaper than gas

in other West Coast states and in the Rocky Mountain region, but it is still more expensive than gas on the East Coast and the Gulf Coast. In the Midwest the prices are about the same or lower in most states.

The price changes are significant considering that diesel fuel has been consistently more expensive than gasoline since late 2004.

Before that, the average price

of diesel fuel was usually lower than the average price of gasoline. In some winters, when the demand for distillate heating oil was high, the price of diesel fuel rose above the gasoline price.

But since September 2004, the price of diesel fuel has been generally higher than the price of regular gasoline year-round because of rising worldwide demand and

higher production costs, excise taxes and marketing and distribution costs.

When the price of diesel overtook that of gasoline, it was culture shock to many motorcoach operators and truckers.

Now that the reverse is happening and diesel is falling below gas in price — at least temporarily — coach operators should be smiling.

US POSTAGE PAID
PHOENIX AZ
PERMIT NO 1424

Postmaster: Please deliver before or on Aug. 15 PRESORT STD

PREVOST

<https://www.prevostcar.com/pre-owned>

THE RIGHT PRE-OWNED COACH FOR YOUR NEEDS

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Michel Dery 418.831.2046 CANADA
Carl Stevens 800.874.7740 EAST U.S.
Mark Lein 800.421.9958 WEST U.S.

ALL MAKES
& MODELS
AVAILABLE



ARRIVING SOON...the new

VANHOOL

CX35



Van Hool's 35-foot motorcoach gives you the same design, engineering and reliability you've come to love with the tried-and-tested C model.

PLUS, **interchangeable parts** between CX45 and CX35 models, including but not limited to:

- Undercarriage Parts
- HVAC Systems
- Driver's Area Components
- Glass
- Body Panels
- Electrical Components
- And much more!

Van Hool CX35



Van Hool CX45



Contact ABC for more information:

877.427.7278 option 1

or visit **www.abc-companies.com**



Exclusive U.S. **VANHOOL** Distributor

It's official: NJ Transit to buy 772 MCI coaches

NEWARK, N.J. — New Jersey's public transit board has officially approved a \$395 million contract to purchase 772 commuter coaches from Motor Coach Industries.

The contract, one of the largest between New Jersey Transit and MCI, calls for the coach manufacturer to supply the transit agency with the 45-foot, clean-diesel, cruiser-style coaches over six years, beginning in 2016.

The agreement also includes parts, service and support, and training for drivers and mechanics.

The contract price works out to an average price of \$495,037 per coach, according to New Jersey Transit.

The transit agency selected MCI over two other bidders, Prevost/Volvo and ABC-Van Hool. Although exact figures were unavailable, they reportedly bid \$540,000 and \$570,000 per coach, respectively.

MCI has been supplying New Jersey Transit with buses for the past 33 years, giving the company a leg up on the competition. The transit agency, the nation's third largest behind New York City and Los Angeles, said that based on a combination of technical specifications and cost, "Motor Coach Industries was



New Jersey's public transit board has officially approved a \$395 million contract to purchase 772 commuter coaches from Motor Coach Industries. The coaches will be delivered to the transit agency over six years.

determined to offer the best value and advantageous proposal."

"We are tremendously honored that New Jersey Transit has once again selected MCI," said MCI President and CEO Rick Heller. "Our commuter coach has been the mainstay in its express service capabilities for decades. Today's announcement for 772 additional vehicles marks another milestone in an important customer relationship centered on coach performance and innovation."

New Jersey Transit said it is purchasing two different configurations of the 45-foot cruiser bus: 712

of the buses will not be equipped with lavatories and will seat 57 passengers; 60 of the buses will be equipped with lavatories and will seat 55 passengers.

All of the buses will be equipped with Detroit diesel engines, Allison transmissions, three-point seatbelts and a vehicle stability system. They will be Wi-Fi capable.

The new buses also will have wheelchair lifts and will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and will incorporate Diesel Exhaust Fluid to reduce exhaust emissions as prescribed by the latest Clean Air Act amendment.

The new buses will replace 772 older (2000 to 2008 model year) MCI coaches in the agency's fleet, many of them with more than 500,000 miles on them.

The new buses will replace 235 45-foot and 360 40-foot cruisers operated by New Jersey Transit and 177 45-foot cruisers operated by private carriers. The transit agency said replacement of the older buses will improve service reliability and the customer experience and will reduce operating costs.

The agency said replacing the 40-foot buses with 45-foot models would increase the seating capacity

of its cruiser-bus fleet by 6 percent.

Patrick Scully, MCI's executive vice president of sales and marketing, said about 40 percent of the company's business is with the public sector. MCI, North America's leading motorcoach supplier, has far and away been the dominant supplier of commuter coaches to New Jersey Transit.

MCI won its first contract with New Jersey Transit in 1982 for 700 MC-9 cruiser buses, and the agency purchased another 415 in 1987. In 2000, the agency gave MCI the biggest public transit order in North American bus-industry history at the time with a 1,400-vehicle purchase.

New Jersey Transit also was the first U.S. public transit agency to purchase new-model CNG-powered MCI commuter coaches, starting with a 50-coach order as part of a 1999 pilot program and adding 27 more units the following year.

It replaced those models with 177 MCI CNG-powered coaches delivered in 2014 and 2015.

"This new procurement is very significant for us and for New Jersey Transit," Scully said. "We are very excited about it. From our perspective, our proposal represents the best overall value for New Jersey Transit."

AMAYA

ASTRON



✓ **Utmost Safety**

✓ **Incomparable Quality**

✓ **Outstanding Service**

• AMAYA-ASTRON SEATING MEXICO

Phone: +52 (55) 5881 2007

email: donovan@amaya-astron.com.mx

f Grupo Amaya-Astron

t @asientosamaya

• SALES REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE U.S. AND CANADA

George Farrell

Phone: (864) 895 4127

email: gfarr007@aol.com

Bob Greene

Phone: (402) 639 4454

email: bgreene45@cox.net

www.amaya-astron.com.mx



THE DOCKET

Washington State passes 11.9-cent fuel tax increase

OLYMPIA, Wash. — The state of Washington has approved a \$16.1 billion transportation revenue bill that includes a fuel-tax increase and other vehicle-fee increases that will impact motorcoach operators.

State lawmakers worked out a deal to increase the state's 37.5-cent-per-gallon fuel tax to 49.4 cents — an 11.9-cent increase — by next summer.

Gov. Jay Inslee signed the transportation revenue bill into law last month.

A 7-cent increase took effect August 1. An additional 4.9-cent increase is scheduled to kick in July 1, 2016.

The rate hike will give Washington State the third-highest diesel tax rate in the nation behind Connecticut and Pennsylvania.

The governor said the biparti-

san plan, SB5987, is the largest single investment in state history. He also touted his funding initiative as benefiting transportation work throughout the state.

"I laid out a transportation vision for our state in which transportation truly works as a system," Inslee said in prepared remarks. "No more east versus west. No more urban versus rural. No more roads versus transit."

Revenue from the fuel tax increase will be routed to the newly created Connecting Washington account within the Motor Vehicle Fund.

The biggest projects that will benefit from the new revenue deal include finishing the new state Route 520 bridge project across Lake Washington, widening Interstate 90 over Snoqualmie Pass, and the North Spokane Corridor.

Excluded from the funding plan is the governor's initiative to charge fees to carbon and industrial polluters, such as the oil and gas industry, to pay for transportation work. The Democratic governor's proposed cap-and-trade system is billed as an alternative to the fuel-tax increase.

Rep. Jessyn Farrell, D-Seattle, said the funding deal includes

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 ►

Work-zone speed cameras being considered in Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG, Pa. — A proposal to place speed cameras in work zones is being considered by Pennsylvania legislators.

Supporters of the cameras say that an increase in road construction stemming from a transportation-funding measure approved in 2013 has resulted in more work-zone traffic accidents caused by

excessive speed.

Twenty-four fatalities occurred in Pennsylvania work zones last year, eight more than in 2013, officials said.

"Our state troopers do a wonderful job, but we don't have the complement available to put a trooper on every job in the commonwealth," Bob Latham, execu-

tive vice president of Associated Pennsylvania Constructors, told lawmakers during a hearing on the proposal.

Senate Bill 840 would establish a five-year pilot program to place speed cameras in work zones. Drivers who are caught going 11 mph or more over the posted limit would receive a cita-

tion in the mail. The violation would not add points to the driver's record.

Since Maryland established a similar program in 2009, work-zone speeding has declined by 85 percent, supporters said.

The Pennsylvania legislation would funnel all revenue from citations into work-zone safety

improvements.

"We need more help out there," said Pennsylvania Turnpike CEO Mark Compton, citing three fatal crashes in work zones on the toll road system in the last two months.

Opponents contend that cameras would be less effective than having a police presence in work

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 ►

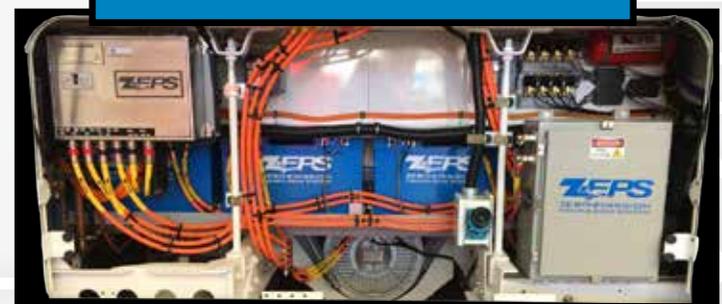


Purchase our ZEPS powered remanufactured electric bus at a fraction of the cost of a new bus or integrate our ZEPS Drive System into your current fleet



1863 Service Court • Riverside, CA 92507
completecoach.com • 800.300.3751

ZEPS Electric Drive System



- Seamlessly integrated motor control system for an optimized transit application
- Charging system that actively balances batteries to maximize range and cycle life
- Parallel energy storage system that optimizes efficiency and reduces downtime



Financing & Leasing Since 1978

Not Just a Resource ... But Resourceful



Coach Financing and Leasing Specialists

- Coach and School Bus Financing Terms Up to 84 Months
- Balloons and Skip Monthly Payments Available
- 100% Financing Available to Qualified Credits
- Low Fixed Rate Equipment Refinancing
- Fleet refinancing
- Used Equipment Financing
- Trac Leases Available



Shore Funding Ltd.

1161 Broad Street, Suite 214, Shrewsbury, NJ 07702

www.shorefundingltd.com

800.542.7467

info@shorefundingltd.com



Uber should be suspended, fined, California judge says

SAN FRANCISCO — An administrative judge for the California Public Utilities Commission has recommended that ride-sharing company Uber be fined \$7.3 million and suspended from operating in the state.

Administrative Law Judge Robert Mason contended that Uber has not complied with state laws designed to ensure that drivers are doling out rides fairly to all passengers, regardless of where they live or who they are.

Mason said Uber's months-

long refusal to provide such data is in violation of the 2013 law that legalized ride-hailing firms.

"They had a year to comply with these regulations, and didn't do it," CPUC spokeswoman Constance Gordon told the *Los Angeles Times*.

Uber competes with the taxi industry by contracting with drivers and connecting them with passengers through a smartphone app.

Mason wrote that the proposed ban would remain in effect until Uber "complies fully with the outstanding requirements."

The reporting requirements include the number of requests for rides from people with service animals or wheelchairs; how many such rides were completed; and other ride-logging information such as date, time, zip code and fare paid.

For San Francisco-based Uber, which has raised \$5.9 billion in venture capital investment, a \$7.3-million fine would amount to less than 1 percent of that amount. A suspension, however, could be devastating.

"We will appeal the decision as Uber has already provided substantial amounts of data to the California Public Utilities Commission, information we have provided elsewhere with no complaints," spokeswoman Eva Behrend said. "Going further risks compromising the privacy of individual riders as well as driver-partners."

The judge's recommendation came only a month after California's Labor Commission ruled that a driver who filed a complaint against Uber was an employee, not

an independent contractor.

That ruling could significantly increase costs for Uber if it is copied by other states and in other cases.

Uber drivers currently pay for their own vehicles and maintenance, insurance and gas because the company labels them as independent contractors. If Uber were forced to treat drivers as employees, it would bear more of those costs as well as Social Security, workers compensation and other benefits, experts said.

Uber is appealing the ruling.

Appeals court rules FedEx Ground drivers are employees

CHICAGO — In the latest blow to FedEx's independent contractor model, a federal appeals court upheld a Kansas Supreme Court decision that classified about 500 FedEx Ground drivers as employees rather than independent contractors under that state's law.

The decision by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals was issued a month after FedEx agreed to settle a California case in which the company maintained that workers were independent contractors.

FedEx agreed to pay \$228 mil-

lion to more than 2,000 drivers in that settlement.

In the Kansas case, the appellate court ruled that the state's Supreme Court "authoritatively decided" that drivers were employees under state law. The Kansas case, like the California matter, involved the status of drivers between 1998 and 2007.

A FedEx spokesman said the company no longer uses that employment model. FedEx Ground changed its approach to contractor status in 2011, requiring that the

company contract with operators that treat drivers as employees.

The appeals court also reversed a multidistrict litigation panel ruling in 2010 that favored FedEx and denied drivers' claims that they were employees.

The Kansas case was the latest in a series of suits that have challenged FedEx Ground's independent contractor model, and it could ultimately have implications for all companies that hire drivers, including motorcoach operators.

There are various factors that

come into play when determining the status of drivers. In the FedEx case, one of the main factors was the level of control the company exerted over its drivers. Courts have ruled that because the company imposed several strict requirements on the drivers, they should be classified as employees.

FedEx also has won some cases, including an 11th Circuit ruling in late May that affirmed some of FedEx's claims in another contractor case regarding Florida drivers. And, in 2008, a Washing-

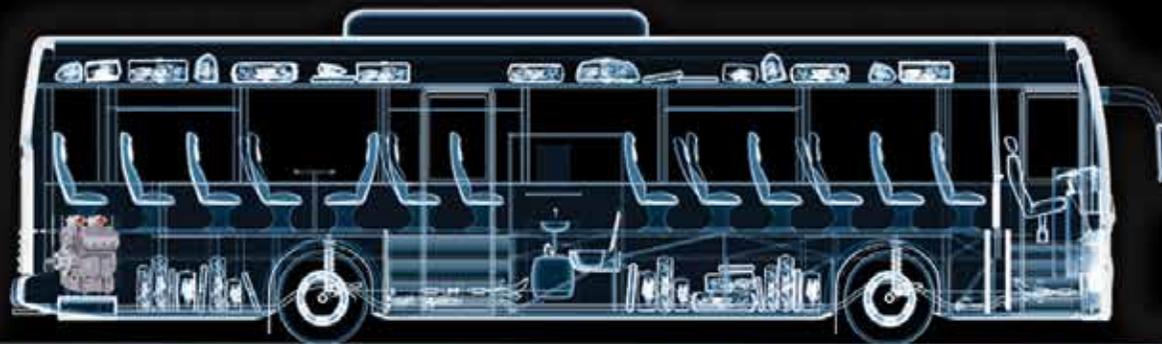
ton state jury held that service providers for FedEx Ground were properly classified.

Although a majority of motorcoach operators used to treat their drivers as independent contractors, most companies today hire drivers as employees. That means that the companies withhold taxes from the drivers' paychecks, pay unemployment insurance, and issue W-2 forms for tax purposes.

Independent contractors must pay their own federal and state taxes.

You Purchase "State of the Art" Buses...
Why not Demand a "State of the Art" A/C Compressor?

Bitzer



Demand a BITZER Compressor from Your Systems Provider

Some of the Many Features:

- Highest Reliability
- Lightest and most Compact Design in the World
- Highest Speed Range of any Transit Compressor in the World
- German Designed, American Built



BITZER U.S., Inc.

To learn more, visit www.bitzerus.com

Phone: 770-503-9226

Email: sales@bitzerus.com / mlish@bitzerus.com

Panoramic Window Standard. Panoramic View Optional.



U.S. PATENT NO. D708557



GM40 FREIGHTLINER M2

6.7L Cummins Diesel Engine, Allison 2500 Transmission, 29,500 GVWR, 155,000 BTU Roof Mounted HVAC, Fully Welded Steel Tube Cage, Riveted Aircraft Grade Aluminum Body, Reinforced Fiberglass Skirts and Front & Rear Caps, 3/4" Composite Sub Floor and Seating Up to 44 Passengers or 39 with Rear Storage. LimoBus Interior Also Available.

GRECH MOTORS

855.99.GRECH (47324)
GRECHMOTORS.COM



NORTHEAST DEALER
855.546.6060

DONBROWNBUS.COM



St. Louis police launch crackdown on unsafe party buses

ST. LOUIS — A series of incidents, including shootings, unsafe vehicles and unlicensed drivers, has led the St. Louis Police Department to launch a crackdown on party buses operating in the city.

Commercial vehicle enforcement officers from the city, in conjunction with the Missouri Highway Patrol, started periodic inspections in June.

They have since sidelined more than half the 32 buses they inspected in four nights of special

patrols: 18 for issues with the drivers and three for mechanical and bus license violations.

Police issued three citations for operating with no insurance, no Department of Transportation number, a flat tire, faulty brakes and blocked emergency exits.

On one bus they encountered, a generator blocked part of the exit, boards obscured some of the windows and a cluster of lights dangled from the ceiling, along with their battery pack, to illuminate sexually explicit messages on

the walls.

Old church pews on the floor served as seats.

According to the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, whose reporter accompanied police, the bus had one flat tire when it arrived downtown on a Saturday night after hauling a dozen passengers from an Illinois bar.

The driver was not licensed to drive passengers and lacked a medical card showing whether he had passed the required physical examination.

St. Louis police Sgt. Robert

Russo said it wasn't even the worst case encountered since the crackdown began.

"At least this one has floors," said Russo, who noted that police stopped one bus with holes large enough for passengers to see the road beneath. As for this vehicle, he told the reporter: "The church pews are appropriate. They're going to need a lot of prayers."

All the tickets require court appearances. Aside from the fines, the towing bill alone can run from \$600 to \$1,000, Russo said.

The party bus unit includes six officers, plus two assigned part-time, whose work is funded by a \$720,000 federal grant and \$144,000 in city money. They normally patrol the highways to make sure trucks and buses are properly licensed and insured and meet Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration standards.

By day, "We're like truck ninjas," Russo said. But since a party bus erupted in gunfire in June, they've been "party poopsters" by night.

Canadian news: B.C. launches motorcoach safety review

VANCOUVER, B.C. — British Columbia is launching a safety review of the province's motorcoach industry following several major accidents over the past three years.

The Motor Coach Bus Safety Review will examine multiple aspects of the industry, including safety statistics and performance, current regulations for driver licensing and training, and vehicle inspections and standards.

Best practices of other North American jurisdictions will also be

assessed, according to officials.

"B.C. has a strong framework that governs the motorcoach industry, and I want to make sure that British Columbians and tourists can continue to have confidence in bus travel," Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Todd Stone said in a news release.

The announcement came just weeks after a crash on British Columbia's Coquihalla Highway hurt 38 people, two of them seriously.

The accident involved a Universal Coach Lines tour bus that

slammed into a tow truck and car that were parked on the shoulder of the highway in June.

In August 2014, a tour bus flipped into a ditch on the Coquihalla Highway, ejecting multiple passengers and leaving all 56 people aboard with varying injuries.

Officials say the review will begin this summer and the results will be released in early 2016.

Toronto toll roads

TORONTO — The temporary high-occupancy vehicle lanes set

up in the Toronto area for the Pan American Games could be turned into toll lanes.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne said she wants to apply lessons learned from the HOV lanes set up this summer on the Queen Elizabeth Way, some 400-series highways, the Gardiner Expressway and Don Valley Parkway to creating toll lanes.

Wynne said the toll lanes would allow motorists without any passengers to pay to use HOV lanes normally reserved for vehi-

cles with a driver and at least one passenger.

She said proceeds from toll lanes would help fund a \$130-billion, 10-year transit and infrastructure plan.

Toronto Mayor John Tory said the city must eventually decide whether to toll lanes on the municipally governed Gardiner Expressway and Don Valley Parkway, but the 235 kilometers of temporary HOV lanes will be removed after the Pan Am Games and Parapan Am Games end this month.



LaFrance

Motor Coach and Transit Fabrics

- Proudly Made in The USA
- Eco Friendly Fabrics
- Many Patterns and Colors to Choose From
- Ask About Our Enhanced Fabric Finish







Jeff Goldwasser | interiors@jeffgoldwasser.com | 551-482-1608



**We STAND BEHIND Our Product
So You Can STAND SAFELY UNDER Yours!**

Offering the latest innovations in mobile lifting technology, SEFAC lifts come in capacities of 12,000lbs and 18,000lbs per column/48,000lbs and 72,000lbs set of four. With more than 30 years in the mobile lift industry we have proven that our lifts are built tough and to the highest quality. See for yourself at sefac.com



sefac@sefac.com
1.800-826.3486 ext. 105
www.sefac.com

Washington tax

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

“great reforms that will improve the efficiency of our transportation system.”

She also pointed out that it includes the “poison pill” that prevents the governor from enacting a low-carbon fuel standard. The low-carbon restriction will be in place through 2023.

Opponents have said they are disappointed voters will not get the final say on the fuel-tax increase.

“Passing one of the largest tax increases in state history in the dead of night while most folks were sleeping is simply wrong,” said Rep. Norma Smith, R-Clinton.

The revenue plan devotes \$8.8 billion for new road projects. Another \$1.4 billion is allotted for existing roads. An additional \$1 billion will be applied to non-highway work, such as transit.

Certain fees are also included in the new funding plan:

- CDL reinstatements increase from \$20 to \$35.
- CDL instruction permits increase from \$10 to \$40.
- CDL knowledge exams increase from \$10 to \$35.
- CDL classified skills exams increase from \$100 to \$250.
- Enhanced driver’s licenses and identicators increase from \$15 to \$54.

Registration for vehicles weighing more than 40,000 pounds also increased by \$90.

Work zones

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

zones.

But Sen. Camera Bartolotta, R-Monongahela, who is co-sponsor of a separate bill to impose stiff fines on those who endanger, injure or kill construction workers, said people slow down when they see a police cruiser because they are afraid of getting a ticket.

“If a speed camera’s there, they know they’re going to get a ticket,” she said.

Under current state law, drivers cited for going 11 mph or more over an active work-zone speed limit can be fined and have their licenses suspended for 15 days. The fines and costs total about \$200. But citations are rare because it is often unsafe for police to pursue and pull drivers over in work zones.

Lawmakers also heard testimony about red-light enforcement cameras, now in use in Philadelphia and authorized in Pittsburgh; the longstanding ban on radar use by local police; and distracted driving and legislation banning handheld cellphone use by drivers.

New York capitol gets first red-light cameras

ALBANY, N.Y. — This city’s first two red-light cameras have started filming, and police have started issuing \$50 fines for running the lights.

The cameras became active in early July but motorists had until the end of the month to get used to

them before the city started issuing tickets.

The cameras focus on the eastbound approach of Shaker Road and Northern Boulevard and the westbound approach to Washington Avenue and Quail Street.

The equipment takes a picture

of a vehicle’s rear license as it goes through the red light, said Officer Steve Smith, a police spokesman. The \$50 citations are similar to parking tickets and do not add points to a driving record.

Eighteen more cameras are to be installed at city intersections.

Police said a number of features will ensure citations are issued and processed fairly. They include making yellow lights at the intersections last four seconds and issuing citations only when vehicles enter the intersections after the light has turned red.

Whatever lies ahead... we'll help you get past it.

Get Lancer behind your fleet!

Since 1985, motor coach companies have known that, when disaster strikes, no insurer has their back like Lancer. Today, more motorcoach companies rely on Lancer than any other insurer for on-site support from our exclusive Catastrophic Response (CAT) Team...and over 100 nationwide bus claims specialists whose only job is to get them back on the road to profits fast!

For a premium quote, call your agent or 800-782-8902 x3264.
 Email: bus@lancerinsurance.com
 Learn more: lancerinsurance.com

LANCER INSURANCE
 The Difference is Our Attitude.

Logan's Super Lines, LM, ABA, Chevrolet, Trailways, IMG, Motorcoach

370 W. Park Avenue, P.O. Box 9004, Long Beach, NY 11561 | lancerinsurance.com | [in](#) [f](#) [t](#)

FirstGroup stretches meaning of the word 'turnaround'

By Ben Marlow
The Telegraph

LONDON — For a company that has destroyed as much shareholder value as FirstGroup has over the past few years, it is certainly very optimistic about its situation.

Management at FirstGroup, the struggling transport operator and parent of North American companies Greyhound, First Student and First Transit, has an interesting interpretation of the word "turnaround."

The dictionary definition is "an abrupt or unexpected change, especially one that results in a more favorable situation."

In the corporate world, where the word has become commonplace, the term means "the financial recovery of a company that has been performing poorly for an extended time," according to Investopedia, the financial website.

For some time, the Aberdeen, Scotland-based train and bus operator has been telling investors its turnaround is on track, and on July 14 the company was similarly upbeat, describing its first-quarter 2015 performance as making "strong progress."

For a company that has destroyed as much shareholder value as FirstGroup has over the past few years, it is an optimistic assessment of the situation and one some shareholders might struggle to agree with.

The company's three-month trading update wasn't without positives, but the highlights were fairly scarce and even those were tempered by concerns.

Its rail division, which includes First Great Western, TransPennine

Express and Hull Trains, recorded passenger sales growth of 6.3 percent. However, its contribution to overall earnings "will be substantially lower in the first half and the current year," after losing out on new contracts to continue running services across several big franchises, the transport group warned.

And while performance in the UK bus operations picked up, with revenue increasing 1.4 percent, this was offset by a decline in the public sector transport concessions that it also runs.

North American woes

Across the rest of the business, it was a familiar tale of woe. In North America, its First Transit operations, which provide shuttle services for government departments and institutions such as hospitals and schools, were hit by falling demand in Canada's oil sands region, where the economy is suffering from lower oil prices.

As a result, growth in that part of the company is expected "to be challenging" this year, FirstGroup said.

The oil price also whacked its Greyhound bus division in the U.S., with like-for-like revenue slipping 5.7 percent, as it has become more affordable for people to drive.

In considering if a turnaround really is under way, it is worth remembering just how much has gone wrong at FirstGroup. The company's troubles can be traced as far back as 2007 and an ill-timed \$2.9 billion takeover of U.S. rival Laidlaw, the biggest operator of yellow school buses and the owner of the Greyhound long-distance coaches.

The top-of-the-market deal gave FirstGroup about half the U.S. school bus market, once it had integrated it with its existing business, but it also piled a huge amount of debt on the company's

balance sheet just as the financial crisis was erupting.

To be fair to Tim O'Toole, the chief executive, the takeover happened under his predecessor, Sir Moir Lockhead. The Scottish industry veteran launched a \$366 million share placing to reduce borrowings shortly afterwards, but it wasn't nearly enough to alleviate the huge pressure on FirstGroup's balance sheet.

Lockhead had also supposedly agreed with the company's banks to help finance the Laidlaw deal by selling Greyhound, but then made a surprise U-turn and refused to sell it.

Creaking debt pile

Still, O'Toole took charge in late 2010 and it took another two-and-a-half years before he made a further attempt to tackle its creaking debt pile.

Despite repeatedly ruling out a need for more capital, in May 2013

the American-born former London Underground boss launched a humiliating stock sale to investors to raise \$930 million. It came more than five years after its American mishap, with the credit rating agencies threatening to downgrade the company's debt to junk.

In the meantime, the company had also lost the West Coast rail franchise and its constrained balance sheet dramatically reduced management's ability to invest in its UK bus business. As a result, profits tumbled at a division once regarded as the group's cash cow and margins are now significantly lower than at rivals.

Some progress is being made. Annual profits last year jumped 80 percent to \$164 million, yet in 2012 the bus division alone notched up a figure of \$208 million, and margins have improved slightly, but in truth 2014 was pretty disastrous.

In a busy period for train contracts, not only did FirstGroup fail to retain the ScotRail and First Capital Connect franchise, it also lost out on four other contracts.

It's fair to say O'Toole inherited a tough job, but he should have acted much more decisively.

For investors, the sorry, relentless saga has been ruinous. From a high of \$1,253 at the end of 2007, FirstGroup's shares largely went south for five-and-a-half years and since mid-2013 have languished between \$140 and \$217. Perhaps most tellingly, the company is still laboring under \$217 billion of borrowings, eight years after the Laidlaw deal.

If that's what a turnaround looks like, it must be the slowest and most arduous the financial sector has witnessed in a long time.

Congressman continues efforts to raise insurance

WASHINGTON — U.S. Representative Matt Cartwright, D. Pa., hasn't given up his quest to increase liability insurance minimums on commercial motor vehicles.

Cartwright tried unsuccessfully in June to amend a House transportation funding bill to remove language that would block regulators from raising the insurance minimums.

He has since followed up with a letter to Scott Darling, chief counsel and acting administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, expressing strong support for an FMCSA rule

to increase the minimum levels of financial responsibility for motor carriers, including trucks and buses.

Twenty-six other members of Congress signed the letter.

"Every year, nearly 4,000 Americans are killed in truck accidents alone, and many more are injured. It is time that the FMCSA enhance highway safety and encourage adequate protection for these and other families by increasing level insurance minimums," Cartwright said in announcing the letter.

Currently, the minimum insurance level for motorcoach opera-

tion is \$5 million, but the FMCSA has proposed at least doubling the insurance limit for motorcoaches. There has been speculation that the limit could be raised to as high as \$20 million per incident or claim, leading to strong industry opposition.

The motorcoach and trucking industries have been fighting the increase and have gotten support from many Republicans in Congress. But Cartwright's letter is a reminder that the fight isn't over.

You can read the letter at: <https://cartwright.house.gov/sites/cartwright.house.gov/files/2015%20FMCSA%20Letter.pdf>.

How to contact us

To submit or report news, Letters to the Editor, articles, news releases or to report corrections:

E-mail: hmatter@busandmotorcoachnews.com

Fax: (602) 559-4153

Mail: 2235 E. Lincoln Way
Phoenix, AZ 85020

Call: (602) 535-5952

To subscribe or inquire about your subscription:

E-mail: ebalm@busandmotorcoachnews.com

Fax: (405) 942-6201

Mail: 3108 NW 54th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73112

Call: (866) 930-8421

To advertise: Interested in placing an ad, and new to Bus & Motorcoach News?

Call: Jamie Williams at (352) 333-3393

E-mail: JWilliams@naylor.com

Existing advertisers, or to submit advertising materials:

Call: Johnny Steger at (866) 930-8426

E-mail: jsteger@busandmotorcoachnews.com

Mail: 2200 N. Yarbrough, Suite B

Box No. 336, El Paso, TX 79925

To contact the United Motorcoach Association:

Call: (800) 424-8262

Online: www.uma.org

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 290

Staff

Editor & Publisher: Victor Parra

Senior Editor: Hal Mattern

Sales Director: Johnny Steger

Industry Editor: Ken Presley

Associate Editor: Ellen Balm

Art Director: Mary E. McCarty

Editorial Assistant: Terri Tackett

Editorial Assistant: Maggie Vander Eems

Editorial Assistant: Greg Lange

Accountant: Ted Williford

Advisory Board

William Allen
Amador Trailways
Sacramento, Calif.

Brian Annett
Annett Bus Lines
Sebring, Fla.

James Brown Sr.
Magic Carpet Tours
Richmond, Va.

Dave Dickson
Elite Coach
Ephrata, Pa.

Gladys Gillis
Starline Luxury Coaches
Seattle

Bob Greene
Amaya-Astron Seating
Omaha, Neb.

Larry Hundt
Great Canadian Trailways
Kitchener, Ontario

Dale Krapf
Krapf Coaches
West Chester, Pa.

Joan Libby
Cavalier Coach Trailways
Boston, Mass.

Marcia Milton
First Priority Trailways
District Heights, Md.

David Moody
Holiday Tours
Randleman, N.C.

Michael Neustadt
Coach Tours
Brookfield, Conn.

Jeff Polzien
Red Carpet Charters
Oklahoma City

Tom Ready
Ready Bus Lines
LaCrescent, Minn.

Ron Sargoni
Gray Lines of San Francisco
San Francisco

Brian Scott
Escot Bus Lines
Largo, Fla.

Tim Stout
Stout's Transportation
Ewing, N.J.

Dennis Strief
Vandalia Bus Lines
Caseville, Ill.

Alan Thrasher
Thrasher Brothers Trailways
Birmingham, Ala.

Tim Wayland
ABC Companies
Faribault, Minn.

T. Ralph Young
Young Transportation
Asheville, N.C.

Regulations? We don't need more stinking regulations

By Dave Millhouser

In the summer of 1976 I embarked on a mission. The bus sales company I worked for handed me a one-way plane ticket to Fayetteville, N.C., and told me an FBI agent would meet me and take me to repossess a coach that had been stolen.

The FBI had found a 4104 that had been snatched from our facility and sold to an unsuspecting Indian tribe's gospel group in Lumberton, N.C.

Folks, you can't make this stuff up.

Apparently my chief qualification for this mission was a unique combination of youthful naivety and ignorance.

I jumped into the driver's seat, fired up that 20-year-old jewel and drove it 500 miles on Interstate 95 through three major cities to our office in New Jersey.

Bear in mind this was a coach that was listed in the FBI's computer as stolen, had no license plates and no inspection or fuel stickers, and sported a decorative coating of dirt.

Did I mention there was no

logbook?

I never thought about what would happen if law enforcement took a look at me.

There are tons of laws and regulations out there, and every time there's a visible incident, folks agitate for more. Maybe it would be better if we had fewer rules — and we enforced them.

Recently *Bus & Motorcoach News* ran a story headlined "Serial bus thief arrested...but remains free." Boiled down, this gentleman is so determined to operate coaches that he steals them regularly, and no one has found a way to actually put him in jail.

Call me naive, but it seems certain that there are laws against bus theft, but enforcement appears lax.

Forget about theft. Could there be a safety issue here? Is his logbook filled out properly? How DOES a bus thief get proper insurance? I wonder how he scores on the FMCSA's SaferBus app?

Feel-good rules

Every time there's an accident, well-intended people create new rules that make everyone feel better, but accomplish little. Good opera-

tors spend time and money trying to obey regulations that are complex and often contradictory, while bus thieves and other bad guys just ignore them and don't seem to suffer serious consequences.

Recently an Amtrak train derailed while traveling at twice the speed allowed on that particular section of track. Seven people died and more than 200 were injured.

In addition to the effort to find out why train was speeding, at least two alternative, competing theories were advanced to prevent this from happening again.

The union suggests putting a second person in the cab to make sure the engineer doesn't speed. Other experts point to a system called "Positive Train Control" that prevents travel at speeds unsuitable for the train's location.

Golly, am I missing something here? From what you can look up, locomotive engineers make between \$50,000 and \$120,000 per year. Admittedly, they probably don't get tips, but this ain't chump change.

They don't have traffic problems. Heck, they don't even need to steer. They have the choo-choo

version of gas and brake pedals. It can't be rocket science to read signals and speed limit signs.

Lest you think this is criticism of engineers, it isn't. I suspect that there are some real skills involved (no one has ever let me drive their train, so I can't be certain).

Back-seat driver

Nope, what I'm questioning is the politics of everyone piling on with new rules and technology that shouldn't be necessary. Do we really need the regulatory version of the mother-in-law back seat driver or a technology that does things that wouldn't be necessary if the engineer was paying a modicum of attention?

Which raises the question: Do we need a driver at all? It used to be fun to get on the automated trains at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and pretend to drive, but the fact is they do quite well without human intervention.

I'm trying to make the case that we DO need drivers/engineers. We need trained responsible ones who are paying attention to safety and what is going on around them, rather than being overwhelmed with

technology and rules that are difficult to understand, let alone obey — rules and technology that the bad actors ignore.

Too many rules overwhelm us. We can't keep track, and we're aware that it's virtually impossible to obey them all. That diminishes respect for the law in good folks and gives excuses to bad ones.

Wouldn't it be better if we simplified the regulatory burden, but held real bad guys truly responsible?

Since no one will let me drive their locomotive, I'm going to take a ride on one of the new double-deck motorcoaches. The plan is to sneak aboard with a steering wheel, sit in the front seat of the upper deck and pretend I'm driving. When the bus goes left, I'll turn right, and see how the passengers react.

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



Dave Millhouser

CH BUS SALES Summer Sale on Pre-Owned Vehicles



(2) 2007 Setra S417 \$162,500

- Detroit S60 engine
- Allison B500 transmission
- Mileage: 333,227 (VIN 457) 348,596 (VIN 532)
- 110V outlet every 3rd seat
- Pre-wired for wi-fi and satellite
- 5 flat screen TV monitors
- 54 passenger
- Alcoa wheels
- Location – Florida



2005 Setra S417 \$149,000

- Detroit Series 60 engine
- Allison transmission
- Mileage: 253,000
- 7 video monitors
- 56 passenger
- Location – Texas



2014 International Turtle Top \$89,000

- International engine
- Allison transmission
- Mileage: 23,951
- 22 passenger
- Rear luggage
- Location – Florida



Call 877-723-4045 or contact your CH Bus Sales Account Executive for more information.
www.chbussales.com/pre-owned-coaches

Motorcoach destinations: LEGO boats and death museums

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Think what kids build with LEGOs is impressive? Wait until your passengers see the new exhibit at the Queen Mary here.

The iconic ocean liner-turned-tourist attraction and hotel has unveiled a LEGO model of the Queen Mary that ranks among the most ambitious LEGO creations ever.

The 25-foot-long model took a team of four professional LEGO craftsmen almost four months to complete.

Assembled by certified LEGO builder Bright Bricks Inc., the model required more than 250,000 individual bricks and weighs more than 600 pounds. It's the largest ship ever built from LEGOs.

The model will be permanently displayed at the Queen Mary in an exclusive space called The Shipyard that includes Bright Brick building stations for LEGO fans.

One of the most famous ocean liners, the 1936 Queen Mary sailed for the last time in 1967 and has been permanently docked in Long Beach as a popular tourist attraction and hotel since the early 1970s.

It draws more than a million



A 25-foot-long model of the Queen Mary took a team of four professional LEGO craftsmen almost four months to complete and required more than 250,000 individual blocks. It weighs more than 600 pounds.

visitors annually, many of them arriving by motorcoach.

Museum of Death

NEW ORLEANS — Long a low-key but popular stop on off-beat tours of Los Angeles, Hollywood's Museum of Death has a new franchise in New Orleans.

The New Orleans Museum of Death has a series of exhibits that feature skulls, funeral garments, crime scene photos, a video of an autopsy, skulls, skeletons, letters and information having to do with killers, a video of people dying in public, and the machine that Dr. Jack Kevorkian used to administer

death to individuals seeking assistance in committing suicide.

To the casual observer, it would seem that the new museum should fit right in with a common theme in the New Orleans inventory of tourism products — the city already features tours of its cemeteries and is home to a Voodoo Mu-

seum, not to mention the fact that the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans features Napoleon's death mask.

For more information, go to www.museumofdeath.net or call (504) 593-3968.

Virgin spaceport tour

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, N.M. — While test flights at the \$219 million site have been put on hold, Spaceport America, home base for the Virgin Galactic space flight enterprise, has opened its facilities for tours.

The Spaceport America Experience includes life-size replicas of some of Virgin Galactic's spacecraft, including SpaceShipTwo, views of the 45,000-square-foot terminal's hangar from a massive "Gateway Gallery," a ride down the 12,000-foot runway, and a "G-shock simulator."

Tours begin at a visitor center a short distance from the actual facility, and then a bus takes guests onsite.

According to news reports, the move to make Spaceport America into a tourist attraction is largely

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ►

A 45-foot coach has never seemed so manageable.

Replacement Rear-view Mirror Observation System

Traditional rear-view mirrors can't give you adequate vision behind your coach.

- 7-inch TFT LCD screen
- Can support up to three cameras
- Attaches to existing rear-view mirror mount on multiple chassis
- Highly-reflective surface serves as a rear-view mirror when back-up camera system isn't active

Voyager
EXPAND your vision

For more information contact:
www.BusElectronics.com • Toll-free: 877.378.2267 • Tim@RVCams.com

TRANSLITE BUS GLASS DISTRIBUTORS
ENTERPRISES, INC. SINCE 1993

Proudly Celebrating 20 Years

Bus Glass and Windshield Distributors for Coach, Transit, School, Speciality Vehicles

Same Day Shipping • Customized Fleet Plans • Large Inventory
Superb Customer Service • Options for All Budgets

CALL TODAY!

800.934.3450 • www.translitebusglass.com • info@transliteent.com

Destination update

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

an attempt to offset costs of running the place, which is near Truth or Consequences, about 150 miles south of Albuquerque.

Retail ticket price for an adult is \$45. For more information, go to <http://spaceportamerica.com> or call (844) 727-7223.

Script-to-Screen tour

BURBANK, Calif. — The tour at Warner Bros. Studio has been given a multimillion-dollar upgrade.

While not as well known as the neighboring Universal Studios Tour, nor anywhere near as popular as the different attractions at Disneyland in Anaheim, the Warner Bros. Studio Tour in Burbank has remained a popular staple for years.

It is particularly popular among people interested in inside views of the movie and television production process, which, from time to time, might include the actual filming of a scene in the studio's lot.

Now, however, the studio has added a \$13 million upgrade. Stage 49: Script to Screen offers visitors a more comprehensive look at the production process, including script development, casting, visual effects, post-production, sound mix-

Top 10 places to visit in U.S.

WASHINGTON — Eight of the top 10 vacation destinations in the U.S., as selected by readers of *U.S. News & World Report*, also happen to be among the most popular motorcoach destinations.

The other two are in Hawaii and difficult to reach by coach.

To compile its 2015-16 Best Vacation Destinations in the U.S., the magazine used a methodology based on user votes and expert analysis of factors such as the variety of attractions, accommodations and dining options.

In all, *U.S. News* came up with a list of 20 best places to visit. The top 10 are:

1. Maui
2. Yellowstone National Park
3. Grand Canyon National Park
4. San Francisco
5. Yosemite National Park
6. Washington, D.C.
7. New York City
8. Honolulu
9. San Diego
10. Orlando — Walt Disney World

Rounding out the top 20 best places to visit are Charleston, S.C.; Jackson Hole, Wyo.; Chicago; Cape Cod; New Orleans; Las Vegas; Anchorage; Sedona, Ariz.; Seattle; and Portland, Ore.

ing and even the awards season.

Highlights include the Central Perk coffeehouse from the "Friends" TV show and a green-screen setup that lets guests fly on Harry Potter's broomstick.

Other enhancements include recorded messages from the stars of "2 Broke Girls," "Pretty Little Liars" and "The Ellen DeGeneres Show."

The tours have a degree of inti-

macy to them because they are conducted in oversized multi-passenger golf carts, and patrons get off and on at different tour stops in the studio lot.

For more information, go to www.wbstudiotour.com or call (877) 492-8687.

African-American history

LUBBOCK, Texas -- The site of what is believed to be the first

black-owned pharmacy in the western U.S. is now the Caviel Museum of African American History here.

For 49 years, the building was the location of Caviel's Pharmacy, owned by Alfred and Billie Caviel.

The couple retired in 2009 and two years later they donated the building to the Roots Historical Arts Council, a nonprofit Lubbock arts and humanities organization,

in hopes of transforming it into an African-American museum.

The newly opened museum contains photos, exhibits and other material that traces the history of African Americans in west Texas.

Initially, the museum is open Fridays, with its hours of operation expected to expand in the future.

For more information, go to <http://rootscouncil.weebly.com> or call (806) 745-0088.

INTRODUCING THE NEW FORD TRANSIT



The 2015 Transit Wagon with the high roof has a **CENTER AISLE THAT'S 6'5" HIGH.**
*Medium roof shown.

BEST-IN-CLASS FACTORY-BUILT CARGO CAPACITY IN A 15-PASSENGER WAGON**

UP TO 100.5 CU. FT.

Hauling lots of people usually means hauling lots of their stuff. The Transit Wagon offers generous cargo space behind the last row of seats.† There's plenty of room for briefcases, computer bags, luggage and steamer trunks. All are easily accessible, thanks to widely opening rear swinging doors and a cargo floor as low as 28.2 inches.†

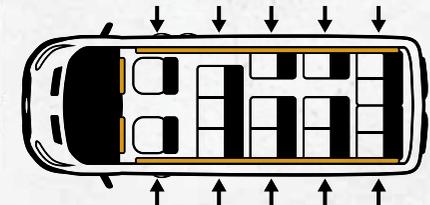
THE NEW 2015 TRANSIT

6 SEATING CONFIGURATIONS

With available seating for 8, 10, 12 or 15 passengers, you can choose the Transit that best fits your needs. All 15 passengers can take their seats easily,† thanks to a center aisle. And to make sure no one feels boxed in, it's available with flip-open windows on both sides, front and rear.



15 PASSENGERS 5 ROWS – 1 AMAZING – INNOVATION



The new 15-passenger Transit Wagon is equipped with the industry's first 5-row side airbags.†† Standard. And with multiple safety features designed to help protect passengers, safety is clearly the top priority in Transit.

• THE NUMBERS DON'T LIE •

**Class is Full-Size Vans. When properly equipped. †When properly equipped. ††Always wear your safety belt and secure children in the rear seat.

Discount bus operator Fung Wah says it is closing

BOSTON — Fung Wah, the discount intercity bus operator that was shut down two years ago for safety violations, has reached the end of the line.

Fung Wah owner Peilin Liang told the Boston media he has no choice but to shut down the company after losing its two pick-up and drop-off spots at the city's South Station.

"It's hopeless," Liang said. "Fung Wah cannot continue to keep going."

"If there are no buses (running), the company cannot operate normally, so (people) won't invest. If there's no investment, then the company has no money, and without money we have to close our doors."

Liang said that he has sold 80 percent of his buses.

The pioneering low-fare operator, which ran buses between Manhattan's Chinatown and Boston for nearly 20 years, was granted federal authority late last year to resume operations. (See Jan. 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Since then, the company has received approval to operate in

New York City, but has been stymied in its efforts to reclaim its Boston gates.

FMCSA shutdown

Fung Wah, which has a history of maintenance violations and accidents, was shut down in March 2013 by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The shutdown occurred after state safety inspectors in Massachusetts found cracks in the frames of some of its buses and federal regulators were denied access to company safety records.

Those records, which the FMCSA obtained through a subpoena, revealed shoddy repairs, falsified maintenance records and a failure to monitor drivers' hours of service and screen them for drugs.

Fung Wah applied four times in 2013 to get back its operating authority — in July, October, November and December.

The FMCSA rejected the company request to resume operating in January 2014, noting that Fung Wah had submitted multiple applications "in an apparent attempt to

avoid FMCSA's passenger carrier vetting process."

Fung Wah appealed the rejection, saying the multiple applications stemmed from confusion over the process. The company also argued that inspectors had made mistakes in their inspections of its buses.

Last October, an FMCSA official denied the company bid for reinstatement, but gave it 30 days to submit additional evidence. (See Oct. 15, 2014, *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Permission to operate

The company and federal regulators finally reached an agreement last November allowing Fung Wah to resume "limited operations to prove they can safely transport passengers and protect the motoring public."

That agreement, announced in December, required Fung Wah to meet several conditions and stressed that the "FMCSA will aggressively and continually monitor Fung Wah's operations and subject its vehicles and drivers to unannounced inspections to ensure that



Fung Wah, the discount intercity bus operator that was shut down two years ago for safety violations, is going out of business after losing its two pick-up and drop-off spots at Boston's South Station.

the company fully complies with all federal safety regulations."

Barry Lewis, a consultant for Fung Wah, said the company was planning to buy new buses, improve its maintenance and raise driving standards. But he complained that Massachusetts regulators were unwilling to allow it to resume operations.

Joe Pesaturo, a spokesman for the Massachusetts Bay Transporta-

tion Authority, which runs Boston's South Station, told *Bus & Motorcoach News* that Fung Wah approached the MBTA about resuming operations out of the station.

But he said the MBTA couldn't accommodate the request because other carriers occupy all the station's bus berths. One of Fung Wah's former spots is now occupied by Megabus, a competing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ►

RELATIONAL BUS SYSTEMS

Charter & Tour Software

g^oChart

Charter Management System

g^oTour

Tour Management System

g^oChart: Features include customer and contract management, vehicle inventory, scheduling and dispatch, accounts receivables, and numerous accounting and operations reports. Additional modules include: Prophesy Mileage and Routing, g^oMile (IFTA reporting), Driver Duty (payroll and time management), Email, Advanced Accounting and Advance Dispatch management and reporting; and more!

Web Manager Module: Provides online credit card processing, integrated quote requests, online access to Drivers' schedules and other custom g^oChart data access via the web.

Data Backup and Recovery: Remote services includes daily, scheduled backup of RBS data files over a secure connection.

g^oTour: Our browser based tour management system designed specifically for the motorcoach industry. Manages reservations, itineraries, receivables, payables, produces management reports and escort, driver and customer documents for group and retail tours. Real time, fully integrated credit card processing is available using a secure and reliable gateway service. Accessible from any computer with internet access. Hosted at RBS secure data facility. RBS professional staff manages server hardware and software and performs all updates and daily backups.

New release coming soon!

Visit www.rbs2000.com for the latest news, timeline, features, and more related to g^oTour version 3.

Call us today at 1-800-448-7001 or visit www.rbs2000.com to request an evaluation of g^oChart or g^oTour

RBS Relational Bus Systems

www.rbs2000.com

COACH GLASS

IT'S NOT JUST OUR NAME
IT'S WHAT WE DO



ABC
BCI
DINA
GILLIG
GLAVAL
IRIZAR
MCI
NABI
NEOPLAN
NEW FLYER
NOVA
ORION
PREVOST
SETRA
STALLION
TEMSA
VAN HOOL
VOLVO

Featuring

The Industry's Deepest Inventory
Quick Delivery & Shipping
Great Pricing, Exceptional Service

Warehouse Locations

Oregon, Indiana, Florida & Arizona

(800) 714-7171

www.CoachGlass.com

(541) 684-7868

Bus@CoachGlass.com

Motorcoach seating company focused on safety, comfort

When it comes to riding on a motorcoach, two of the most important considerations are safety and comfort.

Seating contributes to both. Motorcoach seating companies, including Mexico-based Amaya-Astron Seating, have been focusing on both the comfort and safety of their seat designs for the last several years.

Much of that focus has been on seatbelts, which will be required on new motorcoaches after November 2016 but which already are included on most new coaches sold in the U.S.

“Amaya-Astron Seating was the first seat manufacturer to introduce seatbelts on our seats for motorcoaches in the North American market six years ago,” said Donovan Albarran, export sales director for the company, which is based near Mexico City.

“We believe that this process provided us an opportunity to support not only the coach builders but also the coach operators in preparing for the new U.S. seatbelt regulation starting in 2016,” Albarran said.

“Right now, our three-point seatbelt seats represent 70 percent of our complete production with the goal to be ready for 2016.”

Even though the seatbelt mandate, which was finalized in 2013, only applies to new motorcoaches, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has indicated that it is rethinking its decision to exempt motorcoach operators from adding seatbelts to their existing buses.

Mark Rosekind, who became NHTSA administrator in late December, also said the agency is studying the possibility of mandat-

Fung Wah

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

discount intercity bus company.

Lewis said the company provided a 105-page briefing book to officials in both Boston and New York demonstrating its ability to provide safe transportation between the cities under MAP-21 regulations, which contributed to New York’s approval.

MBTA officials said Fung Wah was offered space at Alewife Station in Cambridge and Riverside in Newton as alternatives, and also has the option of petitioning the city of Boston or another municipality to request permission to pick up and drop off passengers on a municipal street.

However, Boston officials said Fung Wah never contacted the city to ask for such permission.

ing safety belts on school buses.

“It’s absolutely appropriate for us to look at every possible way we could make things safer,” Rosekind said.

“It’s very clear there’s a safety issue, and then there’s an econom-

ic one — and that’s the discussion everyone has.”

Seatbelts more common

Motorcoach manufacturers supplying the U.S. market routinely began making seatbelts avail-

able on their new coaches in 2009. They became standard on most — but not all — new models in 2010.

By 2011, most new coaches being sold in the U.S. were ordered and equipped with seatbelts.

Albarran said that in anticipa-

tion of an eventual requirement for equipping existing coaches with seatbelts, engineers at Amaya-Astron Seating have been working with engineers at the motorcoach manufacturers to resolve retrofit-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

DUE TO INCREASED SALES VOLUME AND STREAMLINED MANUFACTURING PROCESSES, COACH-TRANSIT HAS REDUCED COST AND WE'RE PASSING THE SAVINGS ON TO YOU "OUR VALUED CUSTOMERS"

03-21-1366	E/J MODEL FRONT BUMPER FOG LIGHT COVER PANEL.....	\$ 393.75
03-27-6056	E/J MODEL GLAZING, REAR TRANSOM LH (FIBERGLASS).....	\$ 168.90
03-27-6057	E/J MODEL LAVATORY WINDOW, J4500.....	\$ 168.90
03-29-1554	E/J MODEL DOOR ASSEMBLY, BAGGAGE LONG OLDER VERSION STILL AVAILABLE.....	\$2,068.04
03-29-1645	E/J MODEL DOOR ASSEMBLY, BAGGAGE SMALL OLDER VERSION STILL AVAILABLE.....	\$1,711.83
03-29-1898	E/J MODEL BAGGAGE DOOR NEW STYLE 08 AND NEWER MODELS.....	\$1,711.83
03-31-1986	E/J MODEL PANEL ASSEMBLY FRONT J BOX.....	\$1,206.46
03-31-2076	E/J MODEL RIGHT REAR SIDE SERVICE DOOR.....	\$ 855.54
03-31-2255	E/J MODEL DOOR ASSEMBLY, BATTERY.....	\$1,375.27
03-31-2291	E/J MODEL PANEL ASSEMBLY, FUEL COMPARTMENT, RH.....	\$ 961.89
03-31-2852	E/J MODEL RADIATOR DOOR ASSEMBLY.....	\$3,399.74
03-31-3377	E/J MODEL FUEL PANEL ASSEMBLY W/DEF DOOR.....	\$1,375.00
03-35-1601	E/J MODEL FENDER, L/H FRONT.....	\$1,164.51
03-35-1602	E/J MODEL FENDER, R/H FRONT.....	\$1,164.51
03-35-1599	E/J MODEL LH DRIVE AXLE FENDER 03-35-1605.....	\$1,529.26
03-35-1600	E/J MODEL FENDER, RH REAR 03-35-1606.....	\$1,529.26
03-35-1830	J MODEL PANEL, LH TAIL LAMP (ASSEMBLY).....	\$ 387.81
03-35-1831	J MODEL PANEL, RH TAIL LAMP (ASSEMBLY).....	\$ 387.81
03-21-1276	D4505 RUBRAIL, ENTRANCE DOOR.....	\$ 351.90
03-21-1332	D4505 BUMPER ASSEMBLY, FRONT.....	\$1,434.30
03-31-2432	D4505 RUBRAIL, FRONT SERVICE DOOR L/H.....	\$ 391.48
03-35-1919	D4505 R/H FENDER, REAR.....	\$ 924.69
03-35-1957	D4505 R/H FENDER, FRONT.....	\$ 648.39
03-35-1958	D4505 L/H FENDER, FRONT.....	\$ 648.39
03-35-2074	D4505 L/H FENDER, REAR.....	\$ 924.69
03-35-2433	D4505 PANEL ASSEMBLY TAIL LAMP R/H.....	\$ 930.42
03-35-2434	D4505 PANEL ASSEMBLY TAIL LAMP L/H.....	\$ 930.42

"A good product, a good price."



PLEASE DARE TO COMPARE OUR PRICES

www.CoachTransitComponents.com

877-500-6999

Coach-Transit Components

Your Source for Aftermarket Solutions!

Prevost CEO Gaétan Bolduc to retire after 33 years

SAINTE-CLAIRE, Quebec — After a distinguished 33-year career at Prevost, the last 11 as president and CEO, Gaétan Bolduc is retiring.

Bolduc will step down in the fall but will serve as an advisor to the Prevost executive team through the end of the year.

During Bolduc's time with the company, Prevost has grown from a small-but-respected operation with 280 employees — a fairly minor player in the industry — to a

1,500-employee operation and an industry leader in seated-coach sales.

It was by coincidence that Bolduc joined Prevost. During a college internship at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. in Montreal, he happened to be in the office of a vice president of human resources who had just accepted a position at Prevost, and there was a model of an articulated coach on his desk.

The VP said, "Well, if you ever decide you'd rather build buses in-

stead of cigarettes, give me a call."

Bolduc called. Armed with a college degree in motorized equipment and a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, Bolduc joined Prevost in 1982 as a process technician.

Four years later he became manager of industrial engineering, methods and tooling, and he kept moving up: he was promoted to vice president of production and material in 1993, to executive vice president of operations in 1998,

and to president and CEO in 2004.

Along the way he learned the business from the ground up.

Bolduc credits a supportive company environment and the people he worked with for giving him the training and opportunities to grow and advance.

A big risk

"At the time I became president, the leaders of the company were taking a big risk," Bolduc said. "I didn't come with a big list

of achievements. I came from within the ranks, with nothing else to offer but what I had done previously at Prevost."

If it was a risk, it paid off, and all of Bolduc's hands-on experience ultimately gave him the ability to address customer issues and challenges with levels of



Gaétan Bolduc

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 ►

BusRates.com >>>
Charter & Group Travel Directory

Statistic Center *Eastern PA at a Glance*

BUS OPERATORS

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

DEPARTING **EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA:**

35.3% of trips

3.24 trip nights (avg)

69.7% of trips last 3+ days

61.2% requested a full-size coach

11.8% requested a minibus

Average pax was 44.9

SAME-DAY TRIPS

DEPARTING **EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA:**

64.7% of trips

50.9% requested a full-size coach

11.1% requested a minibus

Average pax was 48.9

TRAVEL PARTNERS

INBOUND CHARTER GROUPS TO PHILLY

REPRESENT POTENTIAL HOTEL REVENUE:

Departure City, State	Avg Pax	Avg Days	Revenue Per Group*
Baltimore, MD	43.1	2.9	\$9,374
Wilmington, DE	45.8	3.1	\$10,648
Newark, DE	44.6	2.1	\$7,024
Salisbury, MD	41.7	4.5	\$14,073
Trenton, NJ	45.7	4.8	\$10,183
Atlantic City, NJ	48.2	3.1	\$16,452
New Castle, DE	35.8	3.8	\$10,203
Dover, DE	42.0	4.3	\$13,545
Bear, DE	33.4	4.5	\$11,272
Middletown, DE	72.9	3.7	\$20,229

*Night room rate of \$75 used to illustrate Potential Revenue per Group

Philadelphia, PA

is the most popular departure area in Eastern Pennsylvania

Charter-seeking customers requested the following equipment:

Bus Type	Percentage
Charter Bus	54.6%
Minibus	11.3%
School Bus	25.1%
Entertainer	0.05%
Executive	0.08%
Trolley	0.05%
Double Decker	0.01%
Van	1.4%
Limo Bus	2.6%
Party Bus	0.04%

Learn more about the BusRates.com® Market Analysis Report
www.busrates.com/marketanalysis/

**FOR STATISTICS ON YOUR LOCAL GEOGRAPHIC AREA,
CONTACT ERIC ELLIOTT AT 866-375-0800 OR EMAIL ERIC@BUSRATES.COM**

Add Your Company to BusRates.com | 866-375-0800 | info@busrates.com



Mexico-based Amaya-Astron Seating has been focusing on both the comfort and safety of its seat designs for the last several years.

Seat company

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

issues.

"The U.S. federal mandate for seatbelts will be just for new coaches, but many of our after-market customers are looking to install complete sets of seats with three-point seatbelts," Albarran said. "We are sure that many operators will look for the option to implement a retrofit program in order to offer belted seats to their passengers."

Amaya-Astron entered the North American motorcoach seat market in 1990. The company has its own engineering and design area, technologically supported by a leading European seat fabricator.

It also has a strategic alliance with Freedman Seating, which has given the company an opportunity to increase its participation in different segments of the transport market with specific models for each one.

Family owned business

Amaya-Astron, a family owned company that has been in the bus and motorcoach seating business for more than 60 years, includes six companies with more than 500 employees.

Three of the companies manufacture seats for buses, school

buses and motorcoaches in Mexico and for export to the U.S., Canada, Central America and South America. One of those companies also manufactures driver seats and refurbishes coach seats.

A fourth Amaya-Astron company specializes in van conversions. The remaining two companies in the group provide polyurethane foam components and plastic thermoformed parts for the seats.

Amaya-Astron seats are recognized in the industry for their ergonomic design and hip-to-knee room that gives more legroom between rows, providing more comfort to passengers.

It periodically subjects its seat models to static fatigue tests as required by code, which proves the uniformity and resistance of the structure and anchoring points of the seat belts.

Albarran said because regulations are constantly changing in the motorcoach industry, Amaya-Astron stays current by always working closely with regulatory agencies.

"Amaya-Astron Seating has been and will continue working with all entities, along with the coach manufacturers, to make coaches safer while also providing stylish and comfortable seats for passengers," he said.

Bolduc retiring

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

insight and knowledge that proved invaluable.

“He’s been a great friend professionally and personally, and a great asset to Prevest over the years,” said Ron Moore, President of Burlington Trailways. “Gaétan understands the product, and he and Prevest always support their product.

“Like any business relationship, ours had its glitches from time to time. But Prevest always stood up and backed its products, and Gaétan was always right there with them. He was quick to say, ‘Hey wait a minute. That’s not right. We need to fix that.’ And he would get it fixed — fast. We are going to miss him, and we wish him well.”

Because Bolduc knew exactly how the products were being built, and who was doing the work, it was easy for him to talk to the right people and find solutions.

“As a leader, being capable of having those discussions and being connected with our service team, and really having an in-depth understanding of our products...I think that opened up a new dimension for Prevest, and for our cus-

tomers as well,” he said.

Complex coaches

That also was fortuitous because over the years the industry changed dramatically. Motorcoaches have become much more complex, evolving from being primarily mechanically driven into highly complex and software-intensive machines. That, in turn, requires different skill sets on the part of technicians, drivers and operators, and an ever-evolving mindset on the dynamics of the business on the part of senior management.

During the same time, economic forces changed as well. There has been a transformation in how buses are used by transportation companies. Today, making a decent return on investment is much more challenging for operators.

“This is a much more complex business, operating on very thin margins,” Bolduc said, “and only the excellent operators are still there today.”

When he refers to the “business” he is not talking exclusively about manufacturing coaches, but about how those coaches are used by the owners and operators in their businesses, and how Prevest can best support those businesses

‘...Gaétan is a professional in every way. He is a quiet yet powerful leader in the industry; steady and honest.’

with its products and its service network.

Bolduc has had close ties to the United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association, and both organizations praised him for his contributions to the industry.

“Without question, Gaétan is a recognized industry leader who will be missed when he steps down from his position at Prevest and leaves an industry he has served so effectively for 33 years,” said Victor Parra, president and CEO of UMA.

“I’ve always found Gaétan to be a reasoned and thoughtful leader. Despite his prominent position, he always listened to the views of others, continually searching for new and better ways to serve his customers.”

Peter Pantuso, president and CEO of the ABA, said, “Gaétan has

been an asset to the industry and he’s very passionate about the industry. I have always admired his ability to focus on both of his customers. He has operators who pay for Prevest’s products, and they have their needs and expectations, and he has the operators’ customers and their needs and expectations.

“I think he has done a marvelous job understanding and delivering to both of them.”

Dave Leach, president and CEO of Greyhound Lines, Inc., has enjoyed a rapport with Buldoc that began in the early negotiations for Prevest’s first sale to Greyhound.

“He led the building of Prevest’s relationship with us,” Leach said. “He spent the time to understand our business needs, took care to deliver them, and followed up with the after-sale support that is so important. Gaétan is a professional in every way. He is a quiet yet powerful leader in the industry; steady and honest. I consider him a friend and wish him well in retirement.”

Culture of excellence

Tributes from these industry leaders are the result of Prevest’s culture of excellence — a culture that Buldoc has passionately fos-

tered over the years.

It is not something that can be measured in terms of product quality data. In reality, all coach manufacturers draw from the same base of suppliers, so dramatic differences in the end products are hard to find.

But, while many companies are exclusively financially driven by performance indicators, it’s different to some extent at Prevest.

“Sure we watch all the indicators,” Buldoc said, “and we introduced lean manufacturing in 1995 when nobody was talking about it. But what makes the difference here is the way everybody puts their hearts and souls into building the vehicles.

“I don’t think we’re selling a product,” he added. “I think we’re selling a partnership for the future — entering a long-term relationship with our customers. We are there to help their businesses succeed, and doing whatever it takes, anything we can do to honor our part of the relationship. That’s our mission, and we have a fantastic team that keeps doing it better every day.

“That is the essence of a partnership, after all. When our customers and partners win, we win; when they grow, we grow.”



Don't miss this **FREE** seminar!



**PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION**

**CLAIMS +
SAFETY**

2015 SEMINAR

NOVEMBER 2 – 3, 2015

Get the knowledge to enhance your risk management solutions.

Hosted by Protective Insurance Company in Indianapolis, Ind., the **Public Transportation Claims + Safety Seminar** is your chance to hear from industry experts and network with other safety professionals. Seminar topics include, among others:

- passenger control/driver safety
- driver-dispatcher relations
- negligent hiring and punitive damages

We will also offer the option to extend your stay for an OSHA 10-hour General Industry Training course following the seminar. We hope to see you there!

Register today!

Space is limited! Contact **Stacy Renz** for details at **(800) 644-5501 x2570** or **srenz@protectiveinsurance.com**.

New regulations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

again or taking such a toll again,” said NTSB Chairman Christopher A. Hart. “The investigation brought to light double standards in regulations protecting motorcoach passengers versus passengers in other modes of transportation.

“A passenger on an airline, for example, receives a safety briefing prior to departure. Fireproofing on airplanes is designed to withstand a major fire. There is emergency evacuation lighting. Because of these safety improvements in aviation — often resulting from NTSB investigations and recommendations — when plane crashes are survivable, many more passengers now survive.

“Present regulations require none of these safety protections

for motorcoach passengers. Today, we will ask why.”

No driver factors

Investigators could find no driver factors that could have caused the accident. The FedEx driver was 32 years old and experienced with no history of medical, alcohol, drug, licensing or violation issues.

His activities over previous days ruled out fatigue as a possible factor. Witnesses identified no traffic or debris issues that could have caused the truck to swerve. Weather, cellphone use and the mechanical condition of the truck also were ruled out.

“Based on the driver’s lack of braking or other appropriate action prior to or during the crash sequence — and witness accounts concerning the driver’s behavior

and condition — he was unresponsive due to an unknown cause, which prevented him from controlling his vehicle and led to the crash,” the NTSB findings stated.

Only one clue, which investigators could not pursue further, was found.

“The FedEx driver was in Weed, Calif., two hours before (the crash) and appeared to be clammy and pale,” testified Dennis Collins, an NTSB human performance factors investigator.

“Physical evidence on the scene depicted a consistent path of shallow-angle departure for the truck...drifting with no steering or brake input...there was no reaction to stimuli. Staff also considered whether a medical condition or medical incapacitation could explain the driver’s response,” Collins said.

“Unresponsiveness like this could potentially be associated with certain medical conditions such as a seizure or fainting as a result of dehydration.”

The driver was taking no prescription or over-the-counter medications and had no pre-existing medical condition, Collins said. Autopsy and toxicology reports could provide no findings.

“Staff cannot reach a conclusion on medical or physiological conditions as factors in this crash,” he said.

The conclusion, Collins said: “Due to an unknown cause, the truck driver was unresponsive, which prevented him from being able to control his vehicle.”

Fireball

Photographs and video taken by witnesses arriving on the scene show the cab of the truck and the front half of the motorcoach, a 2014 Setra, enveloped in a fireball.

“The catastrophic rupture of the truck-tractor fuel tank released fuel that sprayed into the interior of the motorcoach, resulting in fire and causing fatal and serious injuries to numerous motorcoach occupants,” according to the findings.

“Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 302 does not adequately account for modern vehicle interior components or conditions experienced in real-world vehicle fires, nor does it include specific fire resistance material standards more appropriate for large commercial vehicles with increased passenger capacity,” the report continued.

“The lack of a pre-trip safety briefing led to confusion and panic during the motorcoach evacuation, as many passengers struggled to locate and open the emergency exit windows. The quick-spreading fire and thick smoke prevented at least two passengers from extricating themselves from the motorcoach, resulting in their fatal injuries.”

About two minutes after the impact, a dash cam video showed passengers still attempting to evacuate as the bus was filled with “smoke, heat and toxic gases,” said Joseph Panagiotou, fire initiation and propagation investigator.

He said the current standard for fire resistance in buses “involves a test that is representative of a small-scale ignition source like a cigarette. However, it does not simulate the ignition course that typically results in vehicles fires such as an engine fire or the forced fire resulting from a collision.”

Panagiotou said the current standard for interior materials was developed in the 1970s.

“Today’s vehicles, particularly vehicles with high occupancies,

have synthetic, lightweight materials such as plastics and foams that are more combustible than the materials available when the test was developed,” he said. “The burning characteristics of these materials, in combination with thermal and toxic gas emissions, severely limit escape time and a passenger’s odds of survival.

“NTSB has been concerned about motorcoach and bus interiors for 30 years and has issued numerous recommendations to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration,” he said. “The 302 standard has not been updated in that time. However, other modes of transportation, like rail and aviation, have made improvements to the standards.”

Parra, president of UMA, questioned the report’s emphasis on motorcoach factors.

“It’s puzzling — they dismissed the truck as being a factor in any of this. We don’t know why the driver crossed the median and hit the bus, and they dismissed any factors about the truck although two of its fuel tanks exploded and spewed fuel into the bus,” he said.

“The fuel tanks are what caused the explosion and the fire. Instead of saying, ‘Let’s look at how we can better protect those fuel tanks in a collision,’ they said, ‘Let’s look at the bus.’”

Safety briefing

Surviving passengers told investigators that they struggled to escape from the burning bus, said Ronald Kaminski, survival factors investigator. “Because a pre-trip safety briefing was not conducted, they did not know how to evacuate the bus.”

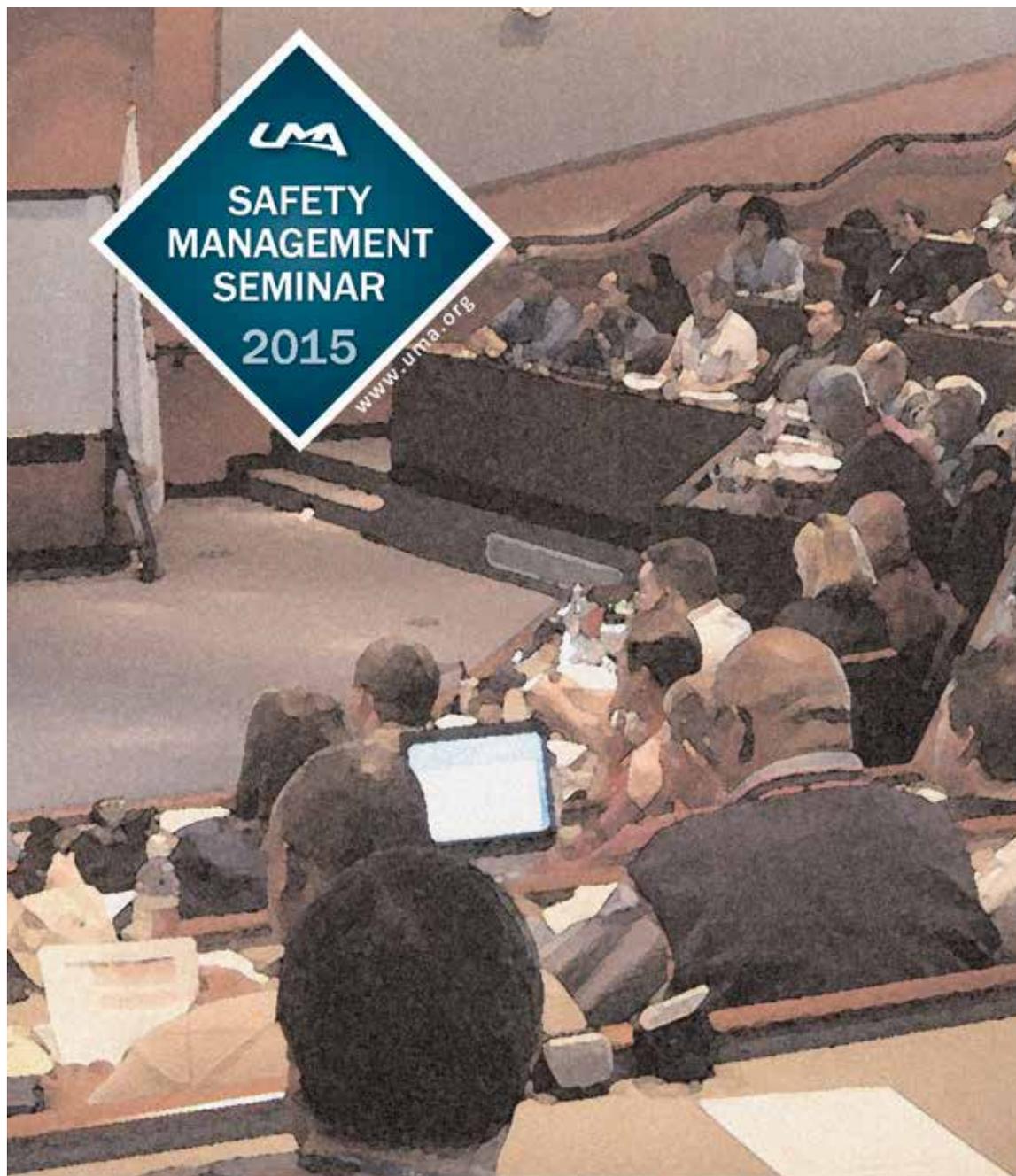
Although the front door of the bus was blocked by flames, emergency exit windows could have been used, he said. Due to confusion, some passengers left the bus through left-side windows, which placed them outside between the burning truck and bus.

“Had they exited from the right side of the vehicle they would have been farther away from the post-crash fire,” Kaminski said.

He also noted the height of the leap from the exit windows to the ground. Some passengers “sustained minor injuries from the collision and the evacuation as they had to jump out windows that were seven feet off the ground.”

“A secondary door would allow passengers to stay low, avoid the fire-related heat and rapidly evacuate the vehicle,” he said. Improvements in emergency signage and lighting inside the coach also may have allowed faster evacuations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 ►



UMA Safety Management Seminar
December 2-3, 2015
NTSB Training Center Virginia

Essential Topics. Critical Information. Invaluable Knowledge.

New regulations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

A second door, on the right side of the coach ahead of the rear wheels, is fitted to many European motorcoaches.

"We support the recommendations on safety briefings," Parra said. "The idea of a pre-trip announcement, so people know where the exits are, is certainly appropriate and sadly was not done on this trip."

Black boxes

NTSB has been asking NHTSA since 1998 to mandate event data recorders in commercial vehicles, which would provide information for safety recommendations, said investigator Steven Prouty.

"There was limited information available for the reconstruction of the crash event," he said. Both vehicles were fitted with engine-data recording modules but these save a limited amount of data and both were rendered unreadable by the collision and fire.

"The lack of available event data recorders hindered the staff's ability to determine the precise impact forces imparted on the vehicle or the occupants in this collision," Prouty said.

"In 1998 the NTSB first introduced the issue of equipping commercial motor vehicles with recording devices. These recommendations were made to the trucking industry association but no action was taken."

Recommendations

The board directed the new recommendation for more rigorous fire performance standards and a secondary door on new motorcoaches and buses to NHTSA. It recommended that the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration require pre-trip safety briefings and update its website guidance on the mandated three-point restraint ruling that takes effect in November 2016.

NTSB reiterated its previous recommendation to NHTSA on "bus window retention and release," standards for onboard data recording and interior luminescent material marking emergency exits.

The recommendation for recorders in heavy passenger vehicles was made to NHTSA in 1999, noted board member Sumwalt.

"To put it in perspective, my daughter had not even started school in 1999 and now she is about to graduate from college," he said. "Clearly we want this to move and move quickly."

Hart, the NTSB chairman, added: "We cannot undo the terrible toll of the crash that we discussed today. We can, however,

repeat our urgent message to regulators to take appropriate action to give motorcoach passengers a better chance of walking away from any such crash in the future.

"We urge NHTSA and the FMCSA to act on today's new recommendations, and for NHTSA to act on the recommendations reiterated today, to help prevent such crashes in the future, and to help prevent crashes that do nonetheless occur from taking such a toll."

CVSA's Brake Safety Week Sept. 6-12

GREENBELT, Md. — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's annual Brake Safety Week will be held during the week of Sept. 6 to 12.

Law enforcement agencies across North America will conduct brake system inspections on large trucks and buses to identify out-of-adjustment brakes and brake-system violations.

Outreach and educational efforts by commercial motor vehicle inspectors, participating motor carriers and others in the industry also will take place during Brake Safety Week.

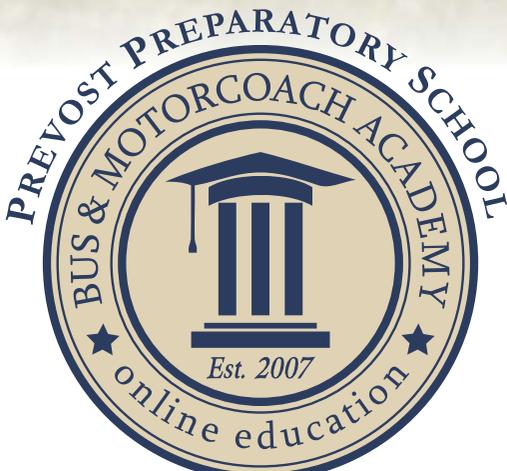
CVSA said inspectors will look for "brake-system components to identify loose or missing parts, air or hydraulic fluid leaks, worn linings, pads, drums or ro-

tors, and other faulty brake-system components."

Antilock braking system (ABS) malfunction indicator lamps also are checked. Inspectors will inspect brake components and measure pushrod stroke where applicable. Defective or out-of-adjustment brakes will result in the vehicle being placed out of service.



Drivers Wanted.



For Professional Motorcoach Drivers

Introducing the *Bus & Motorcoach Academy's Prevost Preparatory School for Professional Motorcoach Drivers.*

Developed to help new drivers prepare for their CDL, *Prevost Prep* also gives experienced drivers an opportunity to keep current on the unique skills and responsibilities of a professional motorcoach driver.

Fall Semester starts August 28th!

www.uma.org/academy

Mexico

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Alfonso Hernandez, general manager of Five Star Tours in San Diego, also sees improvement in Mexico bookings, largely from international visitors more comfortable crossing borders. Typically, they're traveling the West Coast and, after arriving in San Diego,

add a trip into Mexico, he said.

His company's half- and full-day tours include trips to Tijuana, Ensenada, Rosarito and Puerto Nuevo.

"One of the key things that has really increased in popularity in this region is the beach area and also the Baja wine country," Hernandez said. "A lot of people from all over the world want to go to

Mexico for the wine."

With tour business into Mexico up about 30 percent over the last year, Five Star Tours is increasing its marketing to maintain the momentum, he said.

"It really just started," Hernandez said of the rebound.

Because of rising interest, he's considering starting a 10-day round trip tour from San Diego to

Cabo San Lucas.

Separately, charter business has ticked up, too, with the largest segment being missionary groups working in the border areas, plus travel from companies looking to do business in Mexico, Hernandez said.

He estimated that Mexico comprises 15 to 20 percent of overall business now, up from 3 to 5 per-

cent a few years ago.

Negative news

News about drug violence fueled that drop, even though violence wasn't targeted at tourists, who visit areas that are well policed, Hernandez said.

Not every bus operator, however, feels as comfortable traveling in Mexico.

James Seaton, president of Sundance Stage Lines Inc. in San Diego, ceased charter trips into Mexico at least 10 years ago after he became increasingly concerned about client safety. Sundance had offered corporate trips into Mexico and also would shuttle cruise ship passengers to and from Ensenada.

After youths threw rocks at his buses on the highway to Ensenada, he started weighing risk versus reward.

"That road started getting a little bit nerve-racking," Seaton said. "It just became more of a liability than an asset."

Adding to that, reports of violence in and around parts of Tijuana where he had taken groups were unnerving, said Seaton, who also had concerns about ever-changing rules in Mexico about permit requirements.

While Mexico was a small part of his overall business, maybe 5 percent, it all added up, Seaton said.

"Nothing lasts forever; you move on," he said.

Best destination

Stephen Bernier, president of South of the Border Tours in Tucson, has been offering motorcoach tours into Mexico for 21 years and calls it "the best destination to travel in" for its hospitality.

"Security is a nonissue; it's a media thing," he wrote in an email.

At his peak he had 15 to 20 departures a year for tours, plus charter service, Bernier said. Business slumped from 2010 to 2013 after he lost an Elderhostel contract, "but now trips are on the upswing," he said, noting that he does six to eight tours a year in Mexico focusing on natural and cultural history. They're "highly educational, but very fun."

Tours include day trips to the Andalusian-style gardens in northern Sonora, three-day Kino Mission tours to both the Altar and Rio Sonora valleys, seven days at Hacienda de los Santos in Sonora for the international music event Festival Alfonso Ortiz Tirado and 14-day Baja trips.

Ana Sarmiento, president of OK Tours in San Antonio, said requests for tours and charters into Mexico are slowly warming up,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21 ►

ALL ROADS LEAD TO UMA MOTORCOACH EXPO 2016

UMA MOTORCOACH
EXPO  2016

January 31 - February 4, 2016 · Atlanta, GA



UMA

www.motorcoachexpo.com

Mexican bus company opening U.S. terminal in Phoenix

PHOENIX — Bus passengers traveling between Mexico and the U.S. will soon have a new, more comfortable place to wait for their buses to arrive here.

TAP Royal International is building an upscale \$2 million bus terminal in Phoenix for travelers heading to and from Mexico and

Arizona, Nevada and California.

The 5,500-square-foot terminal, which is scheduled for completion this fall, is owned by Guadalajara-based Transportes y Autobuses del Pacifico, or TAP, and will be operated by TAP Royal International, the Mexican company's Arizona-based U.S.

affiliate.

The second floor of the terminal will feature a soundproofed dormitory for up to five drivers, complete with bath facilities, lounge and kitchen.

The Phoenix terminal will have room for 90 people inside. Outside, there will be room for two

buses at the same time, plus three additional bus parking spots and eight vehicle-parking places.

TAP Royal began offering bus service in Phoenix more than two years ago from storefronts it rents at two locations.

The buses travel to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Tucson and No-

gales, Ariz., in the U.S., and many destinations in Mexico, including Obregon, Guadalajara, Hermosillo, Culiacan, Mazatlan, Guaymas and Nogales, Sonora.

TAP, Mexico's second-largest bus company, operates about 30 buses in the U.S. and about 300 in Mexico.

Greyhound launches Mexico bus service

DALLAS — Greyhound has launched service in Mexico, making it the first U.S.-based intercity bus company to operate domestic service south of the border.

Greyhound operates 23 departures per day connecting Monterrey to Nuevo Laredo and major hubs in Texas.

It will operate 13 daily schedules between Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo, while 10 daily schedules will connect Monterrey to several Texas cities, including San Antonio, Austin and Dallas.

During the first two weeks of operation in July, Greyhound offered promotional fares starting at \$1 or 25 pesos on a set number of seats per schedule.

"Service in Mexico has long been an aspiration of Greyhound, making the launch an especially meaningful event," said Greyhound CEO Dave Leach. "As an iconic American brand that has more than 100 years of experience providing the gold standard of bus travel to our customers, we're looking forward to bringing our high-quality service, safety and convenience to Mexico."

The company has constructed private terminals in both Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo, which offer amenities such as free Wi-Fi and charging stations. Its new buses have three-point seatbelts and amenities that include free on-board Wi-Fi and power outlets.

Mexico

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

but remain far below levels before news stories started scaring away visitors a few years ago.

"Little by little, it has been picking up," Sarmiento said of a trend she noticed last year.

In January, OK Tours chartered eight buses to Monterrey for a weeklong convention.

Last July, it did a package tour that included a visit to San Miguel de Allende, which is popular with Americans and Canadians, she said.

Smooth sailing

"It was so smooth," Sarmiento said. "All those people have been calling us, (asking), 'When is the next trip?'"

Next, she's planning a summer

trip from San Antonio to Guadalajara, with stops in between both ways.

OK Tours also will pick up groups in Mexico for trips into the U.S. The company has never experienced problems in its 24 years of business, she said.

"It's going to take some time and we know that," she said of people's comfort with Mexico. "We are going to take them to the places where we know that it's safe."

More positive stories in the media would help business return to where it used to be, but without that, OK Tours has to rely on its own marketing and customer word of mouth to generate more business into Mexico, Sarmiento said.

She believes, though, that 2015 is the year tour and group business might finally return to high levels.

Fernando Rodriguez, director

of Tornado Bus Co. and El Expreso Bus Co. in Houston, said the companies offer scheduled service between the U.S. and Mexico and focus on doing that well, so charters are not its priority.

The few times the companies have done charters into Mexico have gone well, he said.

"We take all the precautions."

Border crossing is slow

If Morgan of Gray Line Tours in Tucson and Hernandez of Five Star Tours in San Diego have a complaint, it's the time it can take to re-enter the U.S. Both say the countries need to improve the border crossings.

Wait times are unpredictable and can span 20 minutes to three hours, Hernandez said, calling it one of the biggest obstacles for a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ►

Win!

CLARENCE CORNELL SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
BUS & MOTORCOACH ACADEMY
Est. 2007
online education

With the support of ABC Companies

Developed to help bus and motorcoach owners, operators and key industry personnel prepare to ... **Win!**

Fall classes begin August 28th
www.uma.org/academy/

Mechanics Wanted

We have immediate openings for 2 experienced Bus Fleet Mechanics

- 1 MCI Motor Coach Technician with 5 years experience
- 1 International School Bus /Truck Technician 5 years experience

Technical knowledge of major vehicle systems and diesel engines required.



**Qualified Candidates Should Call
(410) 744-3300 Ext. 125
Woodlawn Motor Coach Inc.
6523 Baltimore National Pike
Baltimore, MD 21228**

MGM planning venue to lure artists

LAS VEGAS — MGM Resorts International plans to build a \$100 million, 5,300-seat theater at its Monte Carlo casino-hotel to attract top musicians for weeks at a time.

The project will be built next to a larger, 20,000-seat arena now under construction.

MGM also plans to overhaul and likely rename the Monte Carlo, its least recognizable property on the Las Vegas Strip.

The company already offers boxing matches, sporting events, Cirque du Soleil shows and concerts at multiple venues in Las Vegas.

But it hasn't been able to attract artists to anchor a lengthier series of performances because its existing venues are either too small or too large, MGM Resorts president Bill Hornbuckle said.

"You need that kind of scale," he said. "You've seen it at Caesars clearly."

The MGM theater is expected to be about 1,000 seats larger than The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, which has featured artists such as Celine Dione and Elton John. Mariah Carey is currently performing.

Hornbuckle said he hopes to

offer shows by an artist over a weekend or two in the larger arena, followed by a longer stay, perhaps 10 weekends, in the smaller theater with the possibility of having the production tour MGM's other properties in Maryland and the Asian-enclave of Macau.

The smaller theater would be part of the company's outdoor entertainment development known as the Park and located between the New York-New York and Monte Carlo casinos.

The theater is expected to open by the end of 2016, months after MGM's larger arena debuts. Clark County commissioners are expected to review the newest proposed venue by early August.

The outdoor development, with its planned retail, arena and theater projects adjacent to MGM's hotels, resembles L.A. Live in Los Angeles, where Hornbuckle said he got the idea for where to locate the 5,300-seat theater.

The construction causes a bit of a shuffle for a couple of popular shows. Blue Man Group, which performs nightly at Monte Carlo, moves back to its first Las Vegas home, Luxor, in the fall. Hip-hop dance crew and current Luxor resi-

dents Jabbawockeez will take over the newly renovated Beacher's Madhouse at MGM Grand.

Project Neon

Project Neon, a huge construction project designed to improve the infrastructure of Las Vegas, is expected to cause traffic headaches for years to come.

Project Neon is a \$1.8 billion, 20-year highway improvement project that in five major phases will add more than 13 lane-miles of new bridges, a high-occupancy connector between U.S. Highway 95 and I-15 and an access ramp at Wall Street, as well as improvements to Charleston Boulevard, Martin Luther King Boulevard and Grand Central Parkway.

The goal is to untangle the so-called "Spaghetti Bowl" so that it will be able to handle a projected 500,000 cars per day in 2030, nearly double its current traffic load.

The first phases of Project Neon are expected to take about four to five years to complete.

The project will affect locals and tourists that use the freeways to travel to, from and around Las Vegas, as well as buses and motorcoaches.

Mexico

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

great experience.

"It puts a real pall on the end of a good tour to spend three hours just trying to cross the line," Morgan added.

Not all of Morgan's tours cross the border, though.

He operates a tour called "Border Crisis: Fact and Fiction," that

takes an apolitical look at issues surrounding the border and which won him a global Gray Line award in 2012.

The trip, from Tucson to the Arizona border city of Nogales, attracts government representatives and other people "just trying to get an idea of what's really going on at the border," Morgan said.



FOR SALE – 5 Thomas 30 Foot Transit Buses

2008 Model Year, 30 perimeter seats + standees, double door, MBE Engine, Allison B300 transmission, Carrier A/C, clean white paint, excellent interiors, mileages vary from 233,000 to 255,000. Owned and operated since new by ESCOT Bus Lines in Florida. **Priced to sell: \$24,999 each or all 5 for \$115,000.**

Call Brian Scott for information at (727) 545-2088

REPOS FOR SALE

• "Bank Repos" across the US • Priced to Sell
• Variety of Makes & Models

1-877-737-2221 x30716

www.Bus-Buys.com — View "Repo Inventory"



FOR SALE – 2 VANHOOL T2140 COACHES

1-1998 & 1-1999 models, 49 passenger, Carrier HVAC, restroom, Cummins M11 engine, Allison B500 trans, REI 3-monitor video, very good interiors, paint & body, aluminum wheels, Approx. 700K Miles, Florida buses...

NO CORROSION! Priced to sell: \$42,900 each

Call Brian Scott for information at (727) 545-2088



Low Mileage 2006 International Chassis 2008 El Dorado Aero Elite

2 Year Jasper Engine Warranty! • 28 non-reclining Fabric Seats
Simulated Wood-look Flooring! • Parcel Racks with Reading Lamps
(no rear luggage) • International Diesel Engine VT 365 with Auto
2 Monitors with DVD Player and PA • Only has 76,209 miles on it
Very clean and still in service!

Contact James William at 757-494-1480

2009 MCI E4500 * VERY LOW MILEAGE * ONE OWNER

Excellent Condition—none nicer!
Cummins • B500 • 58 pax w/lav
200k TCM • Michelin Tires
Alcoa Rims • Cordless Mics
CD/DVD • Lots more options
Partial Financing O.A.C.
\$264,900

Trade for MCI D or DL3 Considered • More available

Call / Email today for photos and more info!

sales@royalstarhawaii.com / 808.832.6261



Calendar

August 2015

13-16 2015 NAMO Annual Conference, Crowne Plaza Riverfront Hotel, Jacksonville, Fla. Info: www.namocoaches.org.

20-23 Motorcoach Association of South Carolina, North Carolina Motorcoach Association and Virginia Motorcoach Association Regional Meeting, Doubletree by Hilton, Columbia, S.C. Info: www.scmotorcoach.org.

October 2015

17-20 42nd Annual California Bus Association Convention and Trade Show, Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite, Fish Camp, Calif. Info: www.cbabus.com.

25-27 2015 BANY Annual Meeting and Marketplace, Villa Roma Resort and Conference Center, Callicoon, N.Y. Info: www.BANYbus.org.

30 California Highway Patrol Commercial Vehicle Safety Summit, Wyndham Anaheim in Garden Grove, Calif. Info: www.chp.ca.gov/html/cvss_master.html.

SAVES FUEL. WASTES THE COMPETITION.



The Volvo 9700 makes productivity a priority, with superb handling, minimal maintenance and superior uptime. Now with a choice of transmission integrated with the power of a Volvo engine for maximum fuel efficiency. Your passengers will get a coach experience they'll choose again and again.

www.prevostcar.com



DRIVEN BY EXPECTATIONS

THE NEWEST MODEL IN OUR FLEET



TEMSA



TEMSA TS 45

With top quality manufacturing and key standard safety features such as tempered & laminated side windows, lane departure warning system, ABS, ESC, ATC, RSC and engine fire suppression system, the TS 45 is not only safe, but has a luxurious handle and ride that is sure to impress your customers. CH Bus Sales is the only distributor to offer motorcoaches of 30-, 35-, and 45-feet to accommodate a group of any size and help you best utilize your fleet, affordably. CH Bus Sales is dedicated to after-sales support and service to keep your coaches on the road.

Surpass your customers' expectations with Temsa.

For more information, contact CH Bus Sales at:
877-723-4045 or visit WWW.CHBUSSALES.COM



www.chbussales.com

"TEMSA", "TS35" and Circle Design marks are trademarks owned by TEMSA GLOBAL SANAYI VE TICARET ANONIM SIRKETI.