

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

N.C. transit agency accused of violating charter rule

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The United Motorcoach Association has filed a complaint with the Federal Transit Administration alleging that the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) violated the federal charter service rule by offering a shuttle service using taxpayer-subsidized buses.

The complaint was filed on behalf of Sunway Charters, which had been approached by the Meck-

lenburg County Parks and Recreation Department about operating a shuttle bus to a county swim area on weekends from June through Labor Day.

Sunway sent a bid in response to the request but never heard anything more until Lee Helms, president of the company, read in a local newspaper that the county had hired CATS to run the shuttles.

“They kept giving us the run-around, then I saw in the newspaper that CATS was running the shuttles,” Helms said. “They blatantly disregarded the federal law.”

According to the federal charter service rule, public transit agencies receiving taxpayer money to buy and maintain their buses are not allowed to run those buses in competition with private operators.

The rule, in place for four de-

acades, also requires transit agencies to notify registered charter companies upon receiving a request to provide charter service, thereby allowing other companies to bid on the charter contract.

In the Charlotte case, a county official contacted Sunway Charters on June 10 and asked the company to provide a quote for operating a weekend shuttle service to the county’s new beach at Ramsey

Creek Park.

Sunway responded with quotes for both a 55-passenger motorcoach and a 43-passenger transit bus, recommending the transit bus because it has a low floor and double doors for easy access and space for beach bags and coolers. Sunway uses the transit buses for events such as golf tournaments.

The county official then

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Citizen Auto Stage turns 100, looks at future growth

NOGALES, Ariz. — In 1916, when Thomas Morgan started a bus company in this Arizona-Mexico border town, stagecoaches were still used in some rural areas without access to railroads and with few automobiles.

So Morgan named his company Citizen Auto Stage to avoid any confusion.

“He was trying to distinguish between motorized and non-motorized forms of transportation,” said Thomas “T.J.” Morgan, the founder’s grandson and the third Thomas Morgan to run the 100-year-old company, now called Gray Line Tours/Citizen Auto Stage Co.

In the early years the company ran a regular route from Nogales to

Tucson and Phoenix using buses that looked like crosses between trucks and elongated cars.

Since then it has grown into a diverse transportation business with 200 employees and operations in Nogales and Tucson.

It now includes Gray Line Tours, its motorcoach tour and charter division; Citizen Express Lines, its freight division; Pioneer Trailer Rental, which rents trailers for storage and transport; and Citizen Transport, its school bus division.

The company runs tours and charters around the Southwest and into Mexico, provides transportation to copper mine workers, runs shuttle services for several major

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Gray Line Tours/Citizen Auto Stage Co., which turns 100 this year, offers tours and charters to attractions around the Southwest, including Mission San Xavier del Bac, the “White Dove of the Desert,” in Tucson, Ariz.

Expo 2017 will feature a variety of St. Louis tours

ST. LOUIS — People attending UMA Motorcoach Expo 2017 in St. Louis will have a choice between eight different tours focusing on the city’s history, museums, sports facilities, food and drink, shopping and other attractions.

The tours, which will be hosted by Explore St. Louis, will include:

Baseball, Brews & Blues — This tour begins with a stop at Busch Stadium, home of the 2011

World Series champions, the St. Louis Cardinals. With seating for more than 40,000 fans, this field of dreams is like no other.

The next stop will be Anheuser-Busch Brewery. Participants will tour the brewery and learn how the beer is made, and visit the stables with the famous Clydesdale horses.

The final stop will be the National Blues Museum, named one of the “12 New Museums to Visit”

in 2016 by The Smithsonian. While exploring the artifacts and cutting-edge technology, museum aficionados will revel in the history of blues music and enjoy lunch at Sugarfire Smokehouse BBQ.

Meet Me in St. Louis — Start with a driving tour through the magnificently restored Forest Park, which encompasses 1,300 acres and is home the St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis Science Center and St. Louis Zoo.

The zoo features Polar Bear Point, home to Kali, the first occupant of the exhibit, who joined the zoo family in June of 2015. The art museum, considered one of the top 10 in the country, houses a collection of more than 33,000 works.

The final stop is the Jewel Box, where the interior warmth lends itself to the tropical plants that grow inside year-round.

The Grand Tour — Participants will visit three of the most

architecturally, as well as culturally, interesting buildings in St. Louis, including the Fabulous Fox Theatre, built in 1929 by William Fox of 20th Century Fox fame. The theatre was designed after a Hindu temple and now presents concerts and Broadway musicals. There will be a brief performance on the theatre’s Wurlitzer organ.

The tour will head to the St. Louis Cathedral Basilica, home to

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- Don DeVivo



National Interstate reports strong second quarter

RICHFIELD, Ohio — National Interstate Corp. posted its best quarterly financial performance in 4½ years during the three months ended June 30.

The parent company of National Interstate Insurance, a leading motorcoach industry insurer, reported net income of \$9.05 million, or 45 cents a share, for the second quarter.

That compares with same-period 2015 net income of \$6.64 million, or 33 cents a share.

The last time National Interstate had a higher quarterly net income was during the first quarter of 2012, when it posted a net profit of nearly \$9.75 million, or 50 cents a share.

The strong second-quarter results boosted company net income for the first half of this year to \$15.89 million, or 80 cents a share, versus first-half 2015 net income of \$13.75 million, or 69 cents a share.

National Interstate was able to achieve the net income jump despite a slight drop in second-quarter 2016 revenue, or what insurance companies call gross premiums written.

And, the gain came despite

having spent \$1.45 million on attorneys and financial advisers who were hired to consider a buyout offer from National Interstate's largest shareholder, Great American Insurance Co.

Bottom line, National Interstate was able to achieve the higher net income largely as a result of the cumulative impact of 3½ consecutive years of rate increases that averaged 5 percent on new and renewed business. National Interstate said it also has focused more attention on risk selection; in other words, weeding out riskier

customers.

While the rate hikes cost the company some business, keeping gross premiums-growth flat, the overall impact was to improve the company's bottom line by a wide margin.

Roughly a week before National Interstate revealed its second-quarter financial results it announced it had entered into a definitive agreement with Great American in which Great American will acquire the approximately 49 percent of National Interstate issued-and-outstanding common

shares Great American does not already own.

The buyout is expected to be completed during the fourth quarter, which, depending on the timing, could mean this year's second-quarter results are the last earnings figures to be publically released by National Interstate. Company third-quarter results typically are issued deep into the fourth quarter.

Commenting on the second-quarter results, Anthony J. Mercurio, president and CEO of National Interstate, said: "Our underwriting results continued to move in the

right direction and we have had no impact from development of prior year claims reserves during the first six months of 2016.

"We achieved a 96 percent calendar- and accident-year combined ratio in the second quarter, which improved the year-to-date (ratio) to 97.1 percent. The actions we have taken over the past several years including our focus on rate adequacy and risk selection are having the desired impact.

"We averaged rate increases on renewed business of approximately 4 percent in the 2016 second quarter and 5 percent for the first half of the year."

National Interstate net investment income was \$10.8 million for the 2016 second quarter and \$21.2 million for the 2016 first six months, up 9.5 percent and 8.7 percent, respectively, from the same periods last year, reflecting an increase in average cash and invested assets.

"We are certainly pleased and encouraged by these first-half results, but also recognize that we have more work ahead of us to further improve our underwriting results," Mercurio said.

Insurer to acquire National Interstate

RICHFIELD, Ohio — National Interstate Corp. has agreed to be acquired by its largest stockholder, Great American Insurance Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of American Financial Group Inc. of Cincinnati.

Great American has wanted to acquire the 49 percent of National Interstate it didn't already own for nearly 2½ years.

The buyout will be an all-cash transaction that values National Interstate at roughly \$660 million,

including assumption of \$12 million in National Interstate debt.

All National Interstate board members (other than those directors affiliated with Great American, who recused themselves) approved the proposed merger.

That endorsement came after a unanimous recommendation from a special committee of independent National Interstate directors that the deal be approved. The special committee, which was composed of National Interstate direc-

tors (not affiliated with Great American), consulted with its own financial and legal advisers.

Both the special committee and the board recommended that National Interstate shareholders OK the merger agreement. Their approval seems certain.

Under the terms of the proposed deal, National Interstate shareholders will receive \$32 cash for each share of National Interstate common stock they hold.

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THE DOCKET

Oral arguments scheduled for lawsuit challenging ELDs

CHICAGO — The federal court overseeing a lawsuit challenging the mandate that interstate trucks and buses convert to electronic logging devices later this year has scheduled oral arguments for Sept. 13.

The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association sued federal regulators earlier this year, asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit to overturn the rule.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, which is-

sued the ELD rule, responded to that suit recently, saying, in essence, that the ends justify the means. FMCSA also labels as “meritless” the claims filed by OOIDA. (See July 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

FMCSA announced the rule Dec. 10, 2015. It is scheduled to become effective in December 2017.

In addition to OOIDA, plaintiffs in the suit include truck owner-operators Mark Elrod of Indiana and Richard Pingel of

Wisconsin. OOIDA has 157,000 members in the U.S. and Canada.

FMCSA statistics indicate that 3.51 million drivers will be subject to the ELD rule.

The plaintiffs successfully challenged the U.S. Department of Transportation’s previous attempt to mandate ELDs in a 2011 lawsuit.

The new mandate will require that truckers and motorcoach drivers who are required to keep records of duty status switch to ELDs to track hours of service

compliance.

OOIDA filed its suit in March, arguing the mandate violates truckers’ Fourth Amendment rights to privacy and protections against illegal search and seizure because it effectively calls for truckers’ locations to be tracked in real time.

The plaintiffs also argue the rule doesn’t benefit safety and places an unfair cost of compliance on small carriers.

FMCSA disagrees, saying the mandate will improve hours-of-

service compliance, create a level playing field for all carriers and improve highway safety.

In its court brief, the agency also said that truckers should have lower expectations of privacy, given the “long tradition of close government supervision” of the industry.

In announcing the oral argument date, the court said arguments will be “no more than 20 minutes for each side,” along with time for rebuttal and questions from the judges hearing the case.

Minn. wants own CDL test procedure

ST. PAUL, Minn. — The state of Minnesota is asking federal regulators for permission to design its own commercial driver’s license testing procedures.

The state applied for an exemption from Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulations governing CDL skills testing, arguing that it “can deliver CDL skills testing more efficiently in an alternative manner,” according to a notice published in the *Federal Register*.

FMCSA regulations say CDL

skills tests have to be conducted in three parts in the following order: pre-trip inspection, vehicle control skills and on-road driving.

Minnesota wants to combine vehicle control skills and on-road driving, making the skills test two parts instead of three.

It also asked to be exempted from using the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators 2005 Test Model Score Sheet, as well as from the requirement that CDL applicants pass the pre-trip inspection portion of the exam

before moving on with the rest of the test.

The state said that under its proposed approach, it can “more efficiently manage the limited space of its test sites and conduct more CDL tests each day.”

Minnesota added that if FMCSA denies this exemption request, it will result “in a less-rigorous CDL test and negatively affect motor carriers and drivers.”

FMCSA accepted public comments on the exemption request through the end of August.

Roadside drug tests focus of Michigan pilot program

LANSING, Mich. — The state of Michigan plans to launch a one-year pilot program for roadside drug testing.

The program, which will be implemented in five counties beginning later this year, was authorized by the Michigan legislature after a fatal crash caused by a logging truck driver who ran a red light. A post-accident drug test found marijuana in his system.

The law specifically states that

in order for the test to be administered, the driver must be suspected of impaired driving. The test cannot be administered during a routine traffic stop.

The officer administering the oral swab test must be a trained Drug Recognition Expert (DRE). During the pilot program, an independent accredited laboratory will conduct confirmation testing to verify the roadside test kits are not providing false positive results.

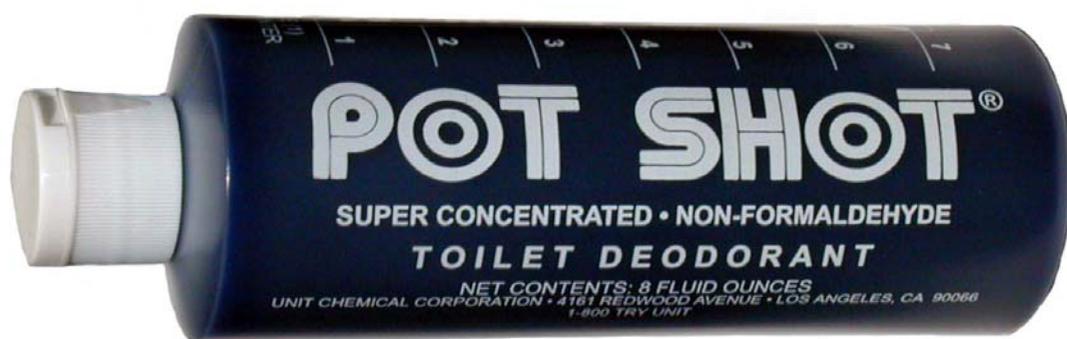
DREs possess advanced training in the assessment of a person’s impairment due to the use of alcohol, drugs or both. If they suspect someone is impaired by drugs, they will follow existing procedures to establish whether the person is in fact impaired.

Arrest policies and procedures for impaired driving will not change due to this pilot program and arrests will not be made solely on the results of an oral fluid test.

Any motorist who refuses the roadside test would face a civil infraction. Commercial drivers who refuse will be placed out of service for 24 hours and face misdemeanor charges.

A conviction would be punishable by up to 93 days in jail and/or a maximum fine of \$100.

If results from the pilot appear favorable from a safety standpoint, the program would most likely be expanded to cover the entire state.



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Surprise inspections a precursor to Brake Safety Week

GREENBELT, Md. — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance held its annual unannounced brake check day in May on 6,128 commercial motor vehicles in North America, resulting in 12.4 percent of the vehicles being placed out of service with brake violations.

Another 13.9 percent of the vehicles were placed out of service for non-brake violations.

The surprise inspections were conducted on May 4 by CVSA-certified inspectors in 31 participating U.S. states and Canadian provinces and territories.

The inspections were a precursor to CVSA's annual Brake Safety Week, an outreach and enforcement campaign designed to improve commercial motor vehicle brake safety that will be held Sept. 11 to 17.

During Brake Safety Week, law enforcement agencies across North America will conduct inspections

on large trucks and buses to identify out-of-adjustment brakes and brake-system and anti-lock braking system violations.

Properly functioning brake systems are crucial to safe CMV operation. CMV brakes are designed to hold up under tough conditions, but they must be routinely inspected and maintained carefully

and consistently so they operate and perform properly throughout the vehicle's life.

Improperly installed or poorly maintained brake systems can reduce braking efficiency and increase the stopping distance of trucks and buses, posing serious risks to driver and public safety.

Brake-related violations com-

prised the largest percentage (43 percent) of all out-of-service violations cited during Operation Air-brake's companion International Roadcheck campaign in 2015, which focused on inspections of both vehicles and drivers.

Inspections conducted during Brake Safety Week include inspection of brake-system compo-

nents to identify loose or missing parts; air or hydraulic fluid leaks; worn linings, pads, drums or rotors; and other faulty brake-system components.

ABS malfunction indicator lamps are also 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.

Many inspectors will be conducting Level 1 inspections, and in the 10 jurisdictions currently using performance-based brake testing equipment, vehicle braking efficiency will be measured. These systems include a slow speed roller dynamometer that measures total vehicle weight and total brake force from which braking efficiency is determined.

More than 3.4 million brakes have been inspected since the program's inception in 1998.

Operation Safe Driver Week Oct. 16-22

GREENBELT, Md. — Law enforcement agencies throughout North America will engage in heightened traffic-safety enforcement and education during the week of Oct. 16-22.

The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's annual Operation Safe Driver Week will focus on combating unsafe driving behaviors by commercial motor vehicle and passenger-vehicle (car) drivers.

Unsafe driver behaviors con-

tinue to be the leading cause of crashes. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's "Large Truck Crash Causation Study" cites driver behavior as the critical reason for more than 88 percent of large truck crashes and 93 percent of passenger-vehicle crashes.

CVSA's Operation Safe Driver program was created to help reduce the number of crashes, deaths and injuries involving large trucks, buses and cars due to unsafe driv-

ing behaviors.

During Operation Safe Driver Week, there will be increased enforcement targeting such unsafe driver behaviors as speeding, failure to use a seatbelt, distracted driving, failure to obey traffic control devices, traveling too closely, and improper lane change.

For enforcement event information visit <http://cvsa.org/contactpage/contacts/law-enforcement-lead-agency-contacts>.

FMCSA warns drivers about the dangers of e-cigarettes

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has issued a warning to commercial motor vehicle operators about the potential dangers of storing, transporting and using battery-powered portable elec-

tronic smoking devices in their vehicles.

FMCSA said the use of such devices — including e-cigarettes, e-cigs, e-cigars, e-pipes, e-hoo-kahs, personal vaporizers and electronic nicotine delivery sys-

tems — has resulted in explosions, serious personal injuries and fires.

Defective lithium-ion batteries used to charge the units can sometimes explode without warning. There have been a number of reported incidents of e-cigarette bat-

teries spontaneously exploding in the consumer's pockets or hands, causing serious injuries in some cases.

There also have been explosions involving the ejection of a burning battery case or other com-

ponents from the device, which subsequently ignited nearby flammable or combustible materials.

FMCSA encouraged drivers to follow smoking prohibitions while loading, unloading or transporting hazardous materials.



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Canada should buy old bridge to make way for new span

By Anne Jarvis
Windsor Star

WINDSOR, Ontario — Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority chairman Dwight Duncan, whose job is to get the new, multibillion-dollar Gordie Howe International Bridge built, is recommending the federal government investigate buying the competing Ambassador Bridge, owned by Grosse Pointe billionaire Matty Moroun.

Duncan, the former Ontario finance minister, and bridge authority president and CEO Michael Cautillo have already met informally with Moroun and his son Matthew.

"We had two good meetings," Duncan said. "I recommended to the government of Canada that it's worth further discussions."

Duncan says the meetings were prompted by an email from Matthew Moroun to the *Toronto Star* in February. Moroun stated that his family and the government have been fighting for a decade "unproductively" and they're "both wrong," that he's "inspired" by new Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and that the border could be a "shining example of efficiency and co-operation."

The Morouns have fought ruthlessly on every front for 15 years to preserve their monopoly.

But some people think buying the bridge could solve a truckload of troubles.

It would mean that one of Canada's most important international border crossings would be owned by the government, not some guy who has ignored governments, flouted the law and given millions of dollars in political donations to key decision-makers.

Twenty-five percent of the

\$670 billion a year in trade between Canada and the U.S., our biggest trading partner, goes through Windsor and Detroit, much of it across the Ambassador Bridge.

One of the reasons for the new bridge is redundancy: if something shuts down one crossing, it won't shut down our economy.

"So the big question, among others," Duncan said, "becomes who should own the Ambassador Bridge? In my view it makes sense to look closely at whether or not an important border crossing such as the Ambassador Bridge should be in private or public hands."

If Canada owned that bridge, the border would be seamless, with all six crossings between Windsor and Sarnia operating in concert.

If Canada owned that bridge, we could also ensure that it's safe. Windsor had to close three streets

last fall when chunks of concrete rained down from the bridge.

If Canada owned the bridge, we could salvage Indian Road and the surrounding neighborhood, where the Morouns bought and left to rot more than 100 houses they wanted for a new twin span.

If Canada owned the bridge, governments wouldn't have to spend millions of taxpayers' dollars defending themselves from the Morouns' lawsuits.

And we could build the new bridge.

The Morouns own 20 of 30 needed properties that Duncan describes as potentially "adverse," including key properties like part of the 42-acre Central Transport truck terminal near where the new bridge would touch down in Detroit. Moroun bought it in 2010 because of the location, no doubt.

The government hasn't made an offer for the property yet, but

there's concern Moroun will not only fight expropriation but demand years to move. This could be about more than money. It could be about winning, pride — even spite. This is a guy who spent a night in jail before finally obeying a government and court order.

The government isn't sure how long the Morouns could drag this out. Every year is \$60 million in toll revenue and millions more in gas and duty-free sales for them.

That explains the latest possible interest in buying the Ambassador Bridge: to get rid of Moroun.

"If we can remove, at a reasonable price, any obstacle to building the (Gordie Howe bridge) and improving the overall functioning of the Windsor-Detroit border crossing, I think we have an obligation to look carefully at that," Duncan said.

What's a "reasonable price?"

Duncan says he doesn't know. Moroun is said to have demanded \$3 billion in the past. The bridge is 87 years old and needs significant repairs.

And would a deal include the Morouns' duty-free store, which they operate with the University of Windsor, which gets \$250,000 a year from it? Their gas pumps? Their property on Indian Road? The property for the new bridge?

Who's got what leverage? It's estimated the Ambassador Bridge, which still doesn't have the needed permits to twin its span, will lose 75 percent of its revenue when the new one, where preliminary work has already started, opens. But the new one can't be built until the government has the land.

Are the Morouns even serious about selling? Or is this another delay to preserve the monopoly and rake in money until 2018, when Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette, who lists the Morouns as top campaign donors and is rumored to oppose the new bridge, is expected to run for governor?

No one who knows the Morouns believed Matthew Moroun's email. Yet they've lost every major legal challenge to the new bridge. Matthew isn't believed to be as intransigent as his father. But his father, now 89, is believed to still be in control.

Then there's everything we don't know, despite claims of transparency. The bridge authority won't even say how many key needed properties have received offers.

We do know the new bridge won't be built by 2020. Do the math. Eighteen months from RFP to construction. Forty-two months for construction. That's closer to 2022.

Recycling saves money, cuts waste

By John W. Bailey

Are you recycling on your motorcoaches?

We all should be recycling in our homes, but what about your business?

Bailey Coach began a recycling program with Penn Waste in York, Pa., to recycle onboard the motorcoaches and, quite frankly, I am shocked with the amount of material we were sending to the incinerator on a weekly basis prior to the start of our recycling program.

I have talked with a few operators about recycling and some have thought about it and some have not. I have found this to be like anything we need to change in

our lives or businesses — YOU MUST WORK AT IT!

In my own business I have found the following in the month since we began our recycling program:

Cardboard — We just pitched it before, now it is being recycled. Do you realize how many cardboard boxes of parts, copy paper, etc. we receive each week? How about you?

Plastic or glass containers — We used to co-mingle everything. Now we place a clear garbage bag on the bus and advise the passengers to place their recyclables in them, and they do.

Office trash — We never really sorted office trash before.

Now all newspaper, copy paper, etc. is recycled along with all plastics and glass. Everyone participates in this effort.

Garbage bill — With recycling, our garbage bill was reduced since our "normal container" is charged by weight when it goes to the incinerator. In addition, there are no tipping fees on recyclable materials, a nice savings for Bailey Coach.

If you wish to begin a recycling program at your company, please contact me by email.

John W. Bailey, president of Bailey Coach in York, Pa., and chair of the Pennsylvania Bus Association, can be emailed at jbailey@baileycoach.com

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Oklahoma City

Tom Ready
Ready Bus Lines
LaCrescent, Minn.

Ray 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
Caseyville, Ill.

Alan Thrasher
Thrasher Brothers Trailways
Birmingham, Ala.

Tim Wayland
ABC Companies
Faribault, Minn.

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

Because of over-regulation, turkeys poop on my car

By Dave Millhouser

It was one of the stranger coach deliveries. A customer had just left our Florida facility with a brand-new bus and took a two-lane shortcut to the highway.

He said he heard a bump, looked in his rearview mirror and saw an 8-foot-long alligator rolling onto the shoulder. Apparently his duals had run over the gator's tail and set it spinning.

Depending on how you feel about alligators, what followed was either good news or bad. Apparently just dazed, it disappeared safely into the grass.

It seems that protecting alligators has worked and there are now tons of them lurking in Florida, many creating mischief and some doing worse.

In my area we have seals, lots of them. Since the federal government started protecting marine mammals in 1972, we have more and more. Like people, they love lobster, and compete with fishermen for them and all sorts of fish.

Gee, sometimes they even cheat and break into traps and nets.

And since sharks love seals (as

entrées), great whites are steadily swimming toward us.

My folks used to say, "Be careful what you wish for, you might get it," which seems to apply to seals and alligators.

Being careful about what you wish for should involve considering the consequences of success. It's not entirely unpredictable that an abundance of alligators might attack pets and (tragically) children. Who could have predicted that protecting seals would produce lots of — seals?

There seem to be two practical applications here.

When business tries new things, the big worry seems to be "What if we fail?" A good point, but you also need to ask if you can handle success.

Occasionally I'd get desperate calls from customers who needed equipment quickly for a contract they just won. They hadn't considered that the equipment they needed might not be readily available.

Or, if you win this bid, can you hire (and train) enough drivers? Get the financing necessary to ramp up?

One wonders if legislators and

regulators have ever considered the consequences of success.

First, you have to define "success."

At one point, a federal bureaucrat defined it as "zero fatalities" in the motorcoach industry, and set out to achieve that goal.

Who can argue with safety? Who can argue with cuddly seals? Both are good, but overdoing it can be counterproductive.

In the case of safety, preventing accidents is good, but some of the methods used may be harmful.

In order to impress you, here's a bit of Latin: *reductio ad absurdum*. We can make buses 100 percent safe by governing them (and every other vehicle that might hit them) at 5 mph. In fact, that works on two levels: accidents would be very gentle and no one would be willing to ride, so zero casualties. Success!

By tipping the regulatory balance too far, we make it difficult for small companies to survive, and we raise the overhead of larger companies.

Compliance costs money. Make that cost too high and passenger counts drop. We'd have

fewer bus accidents (and fewer buses), but more folks will die in cars.

This argument is not in favor of zero regulation, but for less. It seems regulators are marching towards "success" in all sorts of paperwork perfection, but is that success creating other problems? And how much does it really impact safety? Who suffers if they don't figure on some predictable consequences? (Hint: it's not the bureaucrats.)

Other than sharks, one hazard of diving is a ruptured eardrum. When it occurs underwater, divers get disoriented because cold water enters the inner ear and messes with their mind. When it happens the correct thing to do is nothing. Wait 15 seconds, the water warms and the brain reboots.

Panicking and flailing about only makes things worse.

Lots of problems resolve themselves without government intervention, and "success" can be dangerous. Before we, or the government, get involved in solving problems, it would be wise to give careful consideration to what we hope for and what it would

look like if we got that wish.

You can only hunt wild turkeys in season around here, and as a result we have lots of them. They are intimidating because they're taller than my car and they march down the middle of the road in rowdy gangs.

But, it came as news to me that they can fly and spend the night perched in trees.

Knowing a bit of biology, it didn't come as a complete surprise to me that they pooped, but the volume is staggering, and when they're in a tree above my parking spot...

When wise regulators wished for the turkey population to rebound by limiting hunting, I wish they'd have pictured what success would look like on the roof of my car. Perhaps I should send them a sample.

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



Dave Millhouser



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Coach operator frustrated by emission-equipped engines

RIDGELAND, Miss. — John McCommon wishes motorcoach operators knew more about late-model, emissions-equipped diesel engines so they could maintain them to prevent the kind of problems he and others have experienced.

Failures are too common on engines pushed into service to meet Environmental Protection Agency emissions regulations, said McCommon, president of Cline Tours, which operates about 150 motorcoaches and smaller vehicles from eight locations in Mississippi, Arkansas and Alabama.

When the feared warning light illuminates in one of his motorcoaches, “A half-a-million-dollar asset goes down because of a \$300 part and it is down for a week,” he said.

“When a bus goes down, it ain’t like a truck going down. We are hauling people. If you put people down on the side of the road that is dangerous.”

Cline Tours is one of the biggest buyers of MCI coaches and, in turn, Cummins engines, McCommon said.

“I’m a huge fan of Cummins engines and have been all my life,” he said. “My dad was a truck driver and worked for Cummins in the 1940s. We have about 150 buses that have Cummins engines and they all have the latest stuff. While this technology has gotten a little bit better we are still having problems.

“We are spending a lot of money maintaining and repairing these systems. There does not appear to be a lot of information about preventive maintenance to keep us from having breakdowns. Our whole industry has been a guinea pig in the learning curve for this technology and we are the ones picking up the tab.”

Not Cummins’ fault

McCommon does not blame Cummins for the problems, noting that emissions regulations led Caterpillar to leave the motorcoach engine business and Detroit Diesel briefly stepped away before returning with its 2010 EPA-compliant engines.

Caterpillar announced in 2008 that it would leave the heavy-duty,

on-highway engine business before the 2010 EPA regulations took effect. In June Caterpillar agreed to settle, for \$60 million, a class-action lawsuit claiming defects in C13 and C15 on-highway engine emissions systems built to meet the EPA 2007 standards.

Stringent emissions regulations going back to 2007 have been tough on all manufacturers, McCommon acknowledged.

“There is no question that if they had had a choice they would have gone another direction. I am not mad at Cummins. They didn’t want this, either.”

The Cline Tours staff has had meetings with numerous representatives of Cummins and MCI, McCommon said. “They were gracious in their attempts but it really has not gotten better. There may not be a prevention, but if it is just going to happen they need to say that.”

Sensors on emissions-equipped engines often are the culprit, McCommon said.

“The engine is not broken down if a sensor breaks down, but you can’t use it. Your bus performs

perfectly until the red light comes on, then it only runs 25 miles an hour.

“Can it give me something in advance of that light coming on?” he asked. “If we could learn some preventive maintenance maybe there are things we could do to prevent failures.”

In addition, he said, “Those sensors are hard to get to. Maybe we should learn how to get to them so we could replace them ourselves or know how often to replace them before they break down.”

‘Integrated solution’

Cummins’ sales literature describes four components of its diesel exhaust “aftertreatment system” — a particulate filter, diesel exhaust fluid dosing valve, decomposition reactor and selective catalytic reduction catalyst.

The company says its system removes more than 90 percent of particulate matter from exhaust gases. Nitrogen oxide (NOx) is reduced “to near-zero levels by converting it into harmless nitrogen gas and water vapor.”

“Cummins engines and after-

treatment systems are an integrated solution,” states a brochure. “Designing and building the system in-house allows Cummins to calibrate the engine and aftertreatment system for optimum fuel economy, performance and near-zero emissions.”

Particulate matter trapped in the filter is oxidized by high temperatures.

“There is a valve that feeds fuel into the ceramic burn element so they burn all that soot off,” McCommon said. “These things get to 1,200 or 1,300 degrees. It is a fairly complicated deal and it has to be right because it has to continually meet EPA requirements.”

Cummins has continually improved the aftertreatment technology to meet more demanding EPA standards and improve reliability, said Mario Sanchez-Lara, director of technical sales support for the company.

“The technology has evolved and at Cummins we have enhanced the systems integration,” he said. “The result is engine systems with higher reliability, more efficiency and better driver experience.”

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John Oakman winding down nearly 50-year motorcoach career

ELIZABETH, N.J. — John R. Oakman, senior vice president of fleet and maintenance at Coach USA, has accepted a part-time post, signaling that a nearly 50-year career in the motorcoach industry may be winding down.

In recent years, Oakman has been responsible for equipment purchases and maintenance at Coach USA and its megabus.com operation. In his new role as part-time vehicle procurement manager, he will continue to work with manufacturers to improve specifications and complete coach deliveries.

He will also be trading, selling and disposing of assets.

One of Oakman's most visible accomplishments was spearheading the adaptation of Van Hool's TD925 double-decker bus for the U.S. market. First, as a regional vice president at ABC Companies, Van Hool's distributor, then as senior vice president at Coach USA, he was instrumental in identifying and implementing necessary engineering changes and gaining regulatory approval for the coach.

Currently there are several hundred of the double-deckers op-

erating in North America for megabus.com and a variety of other companies.

Oakman's involvement in motorcoaches began in high school, when the bus he was riding to a youth camp broke down and he figured out how to repair it literally using a paper clip. His high school sweetheart and future wife Cindy was on that trip.

Following college in 1970, he (along with Cindy) moved to Colorado to work full time for Young Life. A non-denominational Christian youth outreach organization, Young Life operated a fleet of coaches supporting its camping program, and Oakman ran the maintenance department and drove as many as 50,000 miles a year.

Oakman was hired by Hausman Bus Sales (eventually purchased by Motor Coach Industries) as a used-coach salesman and later helped establish MCI's facility in New Jersey.

His success there caused management to take a look at other Young Life Transportation alumni, and as a result Hausman and other firms ended up tapping a talent

pool that included Noel Patterson, Sandy Baker, John White, Dick Baxter, Skip Neff, Bob Dethloff and Dave Millhouser.

One Hausman executive joked that Young Life had "polluted the industry."

Oakman was subsequently hired by American Coach Sales, Eagle's marketing organization, to launch and run its nationwide used-coach sales operation.

After three successful years, he went to work for the Wilkes Barre, Pa.-based Martz group, where he ran the Fredericksburg, Va., operation, which included a used-coach sales division, a motorcoach company and a commercial-coach repair service. He also established its central Florida division.

In 2000 Coach USA, which was struggling at the time, approached Oakman about managing, and rationalizing, its fleet. He was a key player in the restructuring that led to Coach USA's cur-



John Oakman

rent success.

Soon after completing that task, Oakman was asked by ABC Companies to run its Winter Garden, Fla., facility, with responsibility for regional sales of new Van Hools and used coaches, the commercial-coach repair shop, and eventually the adaptation of the European T925 double-deck coach for the U.S. market.

A Coach USA executive joked at the time that the company "may have let John get away too quickly," and the jest became reality as Oakman returned to Coach USA as senior vice president.

Oakman currently lives in Windermere, Fla., with Cindy, his

wife of 45 years. In addition to his part-time responsibilities with Coach USA, he serves on the board of directors of the Museum of Bus Transportation in Hershey, Pa., and as an adviser to Young Life on transportation safety.

He retains an active interest in the industry's history, and in 2010 drove a 55-year-old Scenicruiser loaned by ABC Companies from Winter Park to Adrian, Texas, and back for the "Hounds of the Mother Road" gathering of antique coaches.

The Oakmans have a daughter and two sons, with both sons holding management positions — in the motorcoach industry.

Calendar

September 2016

11-14 American Public Transportation Assoc. Annual Meeting, JW Marriott Los Angeles L.A. Live, Los Angeles, Calif. Info: www.apta.com.

18-22 CVSA Annual Conference & Exhibition, Little Rock,

Ark. Info: www.cvsa.org.

19-21 BusCon, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, Ind. Info: www.busconexpo.com.

October 2016

10-13 Northwest Motorcoach Association Annual Bus ROADEO and Conference, Red Lion Hotel, Olympia, Wash. Info: www.nwmotorcoach.com.

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Coach operator says small companies are on the way out

TULSA, Okla. — Michael Kraft predicts that within five to seven years, there won't be any little, family-owned bus companies left in America.

"They used to be the backbone of the industry," Kraft said. "Now there is such a tremendous disconnect between regulation on the one hand and reality on the other, the two sides can't even see each other over the horizon."

His family's history in the bus industry began in 1915 when his grandfather began building passenger bodies for truck chassis and running bus lines in New Jersey. His parents started their motorcoach business in Oklahoma nearly 60 years ago.

However, Kraft allowed the operating authority and state corporate registration for KrafTours to expire last year, at least partly due to his frustrations with federal regulators. He continues to fight a six-year-old fine, originally \$1,810, from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The incident stemmed from a 2010 traffic ticket a KrafTours' driver received for running a red light in his private vehicle. The driver paid the fine then was assessed a \$50 license reinstatement fee but, Kraft asserted, without the driver's knowledge. When that fee went unpaid the state suspended the driver's license.

The license suspension came to light following a compliance review conducted by an Oklahoma state trooper who searched a license database that is available to state authorities but not motorcoach operators.

The following day, the trooper returned to KrafTours' office and cited the carrier for "knowingly" allowing the driver to operate a coach without a proper license.

Kraft, a lawyer, wrote FMCSA a request for dismissal of the fine, arguing that he did not "knowingly" allow the driver to operate without a license and that the administration's procedures automatically presume carriers' guilt.

"For 30 years I could hardly wait to get up each morning and go to work because we were doing such amazing things and taking good care of our customers and inventing new ideas for the business," Kraft said. "Then everything started to become more difficult. When I had a 35-year-old DOT examiner come here and explain to me all the things I'm doing wrong, when I was doing this before he was born, I decided I was done."

His insurance company recently told him he needed driver and safety managers and directors of information technology, maintenance and risk.

"Are you kidding me? How in the world are two buses traveling 45,000 miles a year going to sup-

port that management team, which doesn't include drivers?" he said.

"The DOT doesn't differentiate between Greyhound and KrafTours and they implement rules that only Greyhound can satisfy."

He asked why anyone would want to become a motorcoach

company operator.

"I can't imagine people sitting around and thinking about something to do and deciding, 'Let's start a bus company!' There are so many alphabet-soup agencies that are going to be shining a light up their butts they are never going to

see the end of it," he said.

"I don't have any children and there is nobody who is dying to take over my business. I no longer spend sleepless nights wondering if my phone is going to ring when I have buses going across the country."

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N.C. transit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

emailed the company, saying, "There has been a lot of pressure from different sides on if/how we are going to proceed. As soon as I find out, I'll let you know. I suspect that this may go to the board of county commissioners."

Shortly thereafter, Helms read in the newspaper that the county had partnered with CATS to operate the shuttle at a cost of about \$1,700 per weekend, about the same as Sunway's quote.

UMA, in its complaint to the FTA, said that under federal law,

charter service is defined as transportation that is not a part of the transit provider's regularly scheduled service and that is provided at the request of a third party for the exclusive use of a bus or van for a negotiated price.

It also is defined as transportation provided to the public for events or functions that occur on an irregular basis or for a limited duration.

Under those definitions, CATS was providing charter service for a third party (the county), outside its regularly scheduled service, to transport members of the public for a limited duration (June

through Labor Day).

UMA also noted that when approached by the county about providing the service, CATS was required to provide notice to private charter operators so they could compete for the service absent competing with the transit authority.

"Complainant finds no evidence the recipient filed notice with registered charter providers," UMA said in the complaint.

UMA also said Sunway Charters "incurred financial and irreparable harm" by not being allowed to further compete for the "valuable, high-profile contract."

"Subsequent to ignoring their

obligation to provide notice to registered charter providers, (CATS) entered into a contact with Mecklenburg County and began providing service in clear violation of their charter service agreement and federal law," UMA concluded.

Ken Presley, UMA's vice president of industry relations and COO, said the association is "always disappointed when a transit authority, using taxpayer dollars, takes business from the employees and owners of companies that pay the very taxes that fund the transit authority to begin with."

"In times when families are tightening their belts you have to

ask yourself if a beach shuttle is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds," he said. "Of course, that is for the taxpayers of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to decide."

Presley, who filed the Sunway complaint, said it is similar to one filed a few years ago by UMA in support of the North Carolina Motorcoach Association accusing the city of Winston-Salem of paying the transit authority to operate a county fair shuttle.

"The FTA determined that the service was charter and North Carolina operators prevailed," he said. "Of course, we are hoping for a similar finding in Charlotte."

National Interstate

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

In addition, National Interstate will pay a special dividend of 50 cents per common share upon the closing of the merger.

The \$32.50 total represents a premium of roughly 43.7 percent above National Interstate's closing stock price on March 4, the last trading day before American Financial Group announced Great American was proposing to acquire all of the outstanding shares of National Interstate it didn't already own.

National Interstate said it expects the deal to close in the fourth

quarter, subject to approval by shareholders and regulatory authorities, as well as satisfaction or waiver of customary closing conditions.

National Interstate is the corporate parent of National Interstate Insurance, a leading motorcoach industry insurer, and a holding company for a property/casualty insurance group that operates in niche markets. Besides National Interstate Insurance, the company also owns Vanliner Insurance Co. and Triumpher Casualty Co.

Great American is a property/casualty insurance company, focusing on specialty commercial products for businesses, and the sale of annuities.

National Interstate Corp. was founded in 1989 by Alan Spachman as an auto liability insurer for the motorcoach industry.

While Great American owns just over 51 percent of National Interstate's outstanding shares, another 31 percent is held by just four stockholders: Alan Spachman and his son, Michael, and the giant investment firms of T. Rowe Price Associates and Fidelity Management & Research Co.

Alan Spachman was CEO of National Interstate from 1989 to 2007 and chairman from 2004 to 2013. He continues to sit on the company board, as does Michael Spachman.

The Spachmans each own 1,937,230 shares, or 9.69 percent of the outstanding stock. Their payday when the deal closes will amount to close to \$62.96 million each.

T. Rowe Price owns 1.33 million shares, or 6.67 percent, and Fidelity owns 919,095 shares, or 4.6 percent.

Great American and American Financial Group attempted to buy all of National Interstate in early 2014. At the time, they offered \$28 per share, but Alan Spachman and other shareholders opposed the deal, contending the price was too low, with Spachman filing suit to block the deal.

Eventually, after losing early

court skirmishing, Great American withdrew its offer, reappearing in March of this year with a new offer of \$30.75. After initially being rebuffed, Great American came back with the \$32 offer, plus the 50-cent special dividend, which has been embraced by the Spachmans.

"We have come to know (American Financial Group) and Great American well over the years and value our deep relationship with them," said Anthony J. Mercurio, National Interstate president and CEO. "Given that longstanding relationship, we are excited about National Interstate's future as a wholly-owned subsidiary within AFG's family of companies."

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DATTCO Inc. takes delivery of its 100th Van Hool coach

NORFOLK, Va. — DATTCO Inc. took delivery of its 100th Van Hool motorcoach from ABC Companies last month during the International Motorcoach Group's summer meeting here.

The new TX45 is configured with two passenger doors, a style rarely seen in North America, and seating for only 52 passengers, offering superior leg room. The second door speeds up loading and unloading of the coach.

The configuration, with the lavatory at the rear door below passenger eye level, coupled with Van Hool's unique rear window, gives a panoramic view for all the riders.

The new TX45 is heavy on creature comforts and safety options. The Grande Lux passenger seats have leather inserts and trim, and the coach is equipped with WiFi, 110-volt and USB outlets, an REI Elite Entertainment system with cordless microphone and five video monitors, wood-grain flooring and magazine nets.

Safety features including three-point seatbelts, backup camera, lane departure warning, antilock brakes, Smartwave Tire Pressure Monitoring, Kidde Fire Suppression Systems, automatic stability control, daytime running lights, curbside lighting and adaptive static aiming lights.

DATTCO also took delivery of its first Van Hool CX35, which expands the company's



DATTCO Inc. took delivery of its 100th Van Hool coach last month from ABC Companies. On hand for the delivery were, left to right, Janos Bokor of ABC, Colin Johnson of DATTCO, Don DeVivo of DATTCO, Dennis Lyons of DATTCO, Mike Laffan of ABC and Paul Mayer, of DATTCO.

midsize offerings for smaller groups that want Van Hool luxury and amenities.

The company's fleet also includes Van Hool TD925 Double Deck coaches, CX45s and TX45s.

New Britain, Conn.-based DATTCO, established in 1924, now has the second and third generations of the DeVivo family involved in management and is one of the Northeast's largest and most respected passenger transportation companies.

Serving three New England states with more than 2,200 employees out of 27 locations, the company operates comprehensive nationwide motorcoach charters and tours and also serves the region with line run, transit, commuter and school bus service.

"DATTCO's customers are used to really nice coaches, but when they see this one they're going to be amazed," Janos Bokor, account manager for ABC Companies, said of the new TX45. "All of us at ABC are grateful to be partners in DATTCO's continued growth and success, as evidenced by the 14 coaches they purchased from us this year."

DATTCO CEO Don DeVivo said, "There's a real connection between us and ABC. Part of it is the fact that we're both third-generation, family-owned companies, but it goes deeper than that. They share our family values, and they understand the importance of customer service and long-term relationships."

ADA, adopted in 1990, turns 26

WASHINGTON — Twenty-six years ago this summer, President George H.W. Bush signed into the law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

This landmark civil rights legislation prohibits discrimination and guarantees equal access to opportunity for persons with disabilities.

As U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said, "The heart of the Ameri-

cans with Disabilities Act is access to transportation."

Foxx said the DOT is committed to building a 21st century transportation system that is accessible for all Americans.

Today, nearly 100 percent of transit buses and key transit stations across the country are ADA-compliant. Over the past year, accessibility at the nation's airports also has been improved.

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13th annual Safety Management Seminar set for December

ASHBURN, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association's 13th annual Safety Management Seminar will be held Dec. 7-8 at the National Transportation Safety Board Training Center here.

The program will be from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 7, and from 8 a.m. to noon Thurs-

day, Dec 8.

A hotel will be available for attendees near the seminar site and Washington Dulles International Airport. A shuttle bus will be available between the hotel and the seminar site.

The seminar features how-to applications of risk management to

educate participants on eliminating as much risk from motorcoach and bus operations as possible.

The seminar is for anyone who manages safety and compliance for motorcoach fleet operations and is limited to the first 130 registrants.

The day-and-a-half program typically features sessions on such

topics as driver performance and motivation, vehicle-based safety technologies, compliance reviews, new perspectives on fatigue, CSA and regulatory jeopardy, crash investigations, ADA compliance, safety beyond ratings, and regulatory agency updates.

The seminar also includes up-

dates from agencies such as the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the Transportation Security Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board.

Information and registration details can be found at www.uma.org.

Expo tours

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

more than 83,000 square feet of hand-laid mosaics, 250 relics and the papal chair and kneeler used by Pope John Paul II.

The highlight of the tour will be the Missouri Botanical Garden, home to the world's first Climatron, a geodesic dome greenhouse. Lunch will be at Sassafras Café.

A Little Taste of St. Louis — Nosh, nibble, devour! This tour includes the most delectable spots in St. Louis.

Enjoy a taste of The Loop neighborhood at Fitz's Root Beer, followed by a bite of the Arch from Chocolate Chocolate Chocolate Company, a family-owned hand-crafted premium chocolate com-

pany. In The Hill neighborhood, a charming Italian community, enjoy a stop at Missouri Baking Company to purchase authentic baked goods.

The tour then heads to Ted Drewes Frozen Custard for a specialty "concrete" shake that is so thick you can turn it upside down. Other included stops are Gus' Pretzels to enjoy an oven-baked pretzel and a taste of St. Louis' gooey butter cake.

Black History Tour — This tour explores St. Louis' African-American history covering 257 years. It includes a guided private tour of the Griot Museum of Black History, which links the past, present and future of African-American history through life-size figures, historical documents,

artifacts and special exhibits.

The final stop for the day is the Old Courthouse to learn the history of the Dred Scott Freedom Trial and participate in a reenactment of the trial.

The courthouse is the setting for cases involving slavery, the fur trade and equal rights.

Construction Zone: Hard Hat Not Required — The driving part of this tour includes an overview of St. Louis City, passing by Busch Stadium and Citygarden, a unique urban art oasis.

There also will be a guided walking tour of the Old Courthouse and Gateway Arch grounds, featuring the latest exhibits and programming offered at both facilities as well as the construction that has taken place.

Participants will also stroll down the grand staircase to the Gateway Arch Riverboat Cruises to board an authentic paddle wheeler for a one-hour sightseeing cruise along the Mississippi River with stunning views of the St. Louis skyline.

Shop Till You Drop — Experience two of the areas newest outlet malls, Taubman Prestige Outlet and St. Louis Premium Outlet, and enjoy special discounts given to groups. There also will be a scavenger hunt in the St. Louis Premium Outlet Mall.

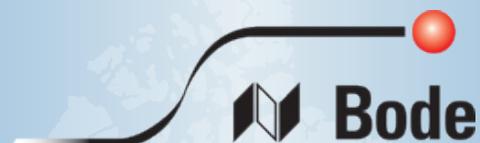
The tour includes drive time to and from the malls, which is approximately 30 minutes one way.

Get Your Kicks on Route 66 — Enjoy a docent-led tour at the Missouri History Museum through

Route 66: Main Street Through St. Louis. Known as the "Mother Road" and the "Main Street of America," Route 66 plays an important role in American history, but the famous road also has a story to tell about the St. Louis area and how it has changed.

Participants will see a number of artifacts ranging from gas pumps to roadside signs and will even get a chance to drive the road themselves. The final stop is the Museum of Transportation, which features 50 years of transportation history, including historical one-of-a-kind locomotives, cars and cabooses.

Car buffs will appreciate a visit to the Earl C. Lindburg building, which houses a rotating automobile exhibit.



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Citizen Auto Stage

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

events in Arizona, and transports freight from Mexican maquila factories to Tucson and Phoenix and sometimes to Los Angeles or Texas.

Citizen Auto Stage began diversifying in the 1940s when it added the freight business, then expanded again in the early 1960s when it added the Gray Line Tours brand.

“We’re not a franchise,” T.J. Morgan said. “We are one of the few companies actually incorporated as Gray Line.”



T.J. Morgan

The company has been offering school transportation services in Nogales since the 1970s.

Morgan’s father, also Thomas Morgan, took over the company from his father in his early 20s, despite having contracted polio when he was 18.

“Dad got braces for his legs and he learned to drive buses without using the clutch, just using timing,” Morgan said. He was blunt to the point of being obnoxious.”

T.J. Morgan said he has worked

in the business on and off since he was 11, unloading trailers in Nogales, washing buses and working in the shop, “even though I was a lousy mechanic.”

He left to go to college and performed as a musician for 10 or 15 years (and still performs sometimes).

Morgan started running the company full-time in 1993 and oversaw a 15-year period of growth. In 1998, he sold the Nogales-Tucson-Phoenix route to Greyhound, which already was running buses from Mexico to Los Angeles through Tucson and Phoenix.

The company then focused more on its charter and tour services and continued to grow until the Great Recession hit the motorcoach industry hard in 2008.

Morgan reduced the company’s motorcoach fleet and sold its Gray Line Phoenix operation. However, the company that purchased it no longer operates, “so I consider Phoenix my territory now,” he said.

These days the company’s Gray Line division focuses on charters and tours in the Southwest and has carved out a niche in Mexico, running tours to San Carlos, Puerto Penasco and Copper Canyon.

Morgan said he has been talking with Mexican tour operators about forming a partnership under



In the early years, Citizen Auto Stage Co. ran a regular route from Nogales, Ariz., to Tucson and Phoenix using buses that looked like crosses between trucks and elongated cars.

which he would help attract U.S. passengers for tours with Mexican companies.

One of the company’s most popular Arizona tours is the Border Crisis: Fact and Fiction tour, which takes passengers to the U.S.-Mexico boarder to meet with customs agents and ranchers and learn about the issues affecting the area.

The tours are designed to educate people, not to take sides on contentious border and immigra-

tion issues, Morgan said.

Another popular tour is a Tucson culinary sightseeing trip called Best of the Barrio, which features visits to a Mexican bakery, a tamale factory and various restaurants.

“It’s a guaranteed good time,” Morgan said.

He said he expects the company to grow over the next couple years with a focus on attracting “as much contract business as we can get our hands on” with such busi-

nesses as construction companies and mines.

“We’ve figured out that the money is in contract work,” Morgan said. “It only took us 100 years to figure that out.

“We’re well-connected and ensconced in Tucson, and we have a good reputation,” he said. “I think we are doing well.”

Morgan said the company is planning a 100th-anniversary celebration on Oct. 14.

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NYC the top destination for U.S. travelers; D.C. gains

The latest quarterly issue of *Sojern's Global Travel Insights* contains few surprises for those who market and promote U.S. destinations — New York City remains a global favorite, for example.

But one city that is not a familiar one on lists of U.S. favorites — Washington, D.C. — makes an appearance on the report's Top 10 Destinations for North American Travelers in September 2016.

Here are the top 10 destinations listed by North American travelers for this month:

- New York City
- Chicago

- Los Angeles
- Miami
- London
- Dallas
- San Francisco
- Paris
- Washington, D.C.
- Boston

Chinese travel tidbits

The fifth annual edition of the Chinese International Travel Monitor shows that the United States is still a popular destination for Chinese travelers.

The U.S. was the most popular country for Chinese travelers in

2015, and three U.S. cities — Las Vegas, New York and Los Angeles — made the list of the 10 most popular cities among Chinese tourists. They ranked sixth, seventh and ninth, respectively.

The survey found that Chinese travelers and their hosts also face some real challenges.

The two biggest challenges facing those providing accommodation to Chinese travelers are a lack of Mandarin-speaking staff and of China UnionPay card facilities.

These are not only the most important services demanded by

Chinese travelers, according to the survey, but are seen as areas in pressing need of improvement.

Other highlights from the CITM include the following:

- The top spenders from China are more sophisticated than average, valuing experience (comfort, star rating, facilities and hotel services) above price.

- Most Chinese travel with friends and family, with nearly half taking their children. Only a small proportion of travelers have a backpacking experience.

- Short-haul countries were most popular with Chinese travel-

ers in the past 12 months, with South Korea ranking first, followed by Japan, Hong Kong/Macau, Taiwan and Thailand.

- But the future seems set for a mixture of short- and long-haul destinations, with Australia number one in the travelers' wish lists, followed by Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and the Maldives.

- When planning their next trip, Chinese travelers are particularly taking into account safety, sightseeing, dining and ease of visa applications, with the currency of the intended country not generally a factor.

63 MCI coaches recalled for window problem

WASHINGTON — The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has issued a recall on certain 2015-2016 Motor Coach Industries vehicles because the mounting hardware of the non-

egress windows may have been installed improperly.

The MCI coaches in question were manufactured between April 14, 2015, and Feb. 22, 2016.

Glassbytes.com reported that

the 63 vehicles affected by the recall could have sash-mounting brackets with bolts that were not tightened sufficiently during assembly.

The loose bolts could cause the non-egress single-pane passenger

window to open unexpectedly at the bottom, which could result in passengers being ejected through the window in the incident of a crash or contact with the window, NHTSA said.

People

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — **Complete Coach Works** has announced the appointment of *James F. Paul* as Northwest regional sales manager, *Michael Klein* as Southwest regional sales manager and *Aaron Timlick* as general manager of the company's Alameda, Calif., facility.

Paul, who held previous senior management positions and brings more than 25 years of leadership and automotive expertise to his role, said he was "proud to be part of the growing CCW family and excited about the new opportunities. I look forward to visiting Northwest transit agencies and offering them affordable fleet equipment options that they may not be aware were available to them."

Klein has 15-plus years of experience in the transit industry.

"As a previous CCW client I experienced the quality of work and professionalism they offer," he said. "I am excited to be part of this team. My position allows me to help with honest solutions and guidance to the folks sitting where I once sat."

With five years as a production supervisor at CCW under his belt and more than 10 years in the transit industry, Timlick said he looked forward to moving from the company's Riverside facility to Alameda.

"I am thankful to CCW for the opportunities they have provided me with and will be taking on this new role with the upmost dedication and enthusiasm," he said.

Richard Sullivan, CCW's vice president of sales and marketing, praised the three men for their commitment to the company and its customers.

"I look forward to supporting and assisting them in the growth of business with our current and future customers," he said.

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Vanhool T2145s: (2) 2004 – (2) 2005

57 pax, Carrier HVAC, restroom, Cummins and DDC S60 w/Jake available, Allison B500 trans, REI 6-monitor video, excellent interiors, paint & body, aluminum wheels, mileage 600K to 800K. **Priced to sell:** 2004s: \$134,900 non-lift, \$139,900 lift – 2005s: \$154,900.

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