

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## FMCSA warns of tire dangers, says to watch weights, ratings

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has issued an emergency warning to motorcoach operators about weight limits on tires.

The warning came barely two weeks after a fatal megabus.com crash in Illinois and other high-speed crashes this summer.

Investigations have pointed to a front-tire failure as the likely cause of the megabus crash that killed one person and injured 47 others.

The FMCSA bulletin urged motorcoach companies to take steps to prevent tire failures by properly loading passengers and cargo, and increasing pressure in tires on the rear axles to the maximum marked on the tires when buses are carrying heavy loads.

In its bulletin, the FMCSA noted that fully loaded double-deck coaches may be susceptible to overloading.

Although it did not name the brand of coach in its bulletin, the FMCSA was clearly referring to Van Hool double-deckers.

According to the agency, “one common” double-deck, three-axle coach has a gross vehicle weight rating of between 53,000 and 61,000 pounds.

“A fully-loaded, double-deck motorcoach at or near the maximum number of passengers, and a maximum luggage load, could exceed this GVWR, one or more gross axle-weight limits, or the tire weight ratings,” said the FMCSA.

It also is widely thought that several models of single-deck, conventional 45-foot motorcoaches also may exceed their gross vehicle weight rating when fully loaded, meaning operators of those coaches also should closely monitor tire ratings, loads and air pressure.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ►

## Look out, diesel fuel prices could zoom higher in Oct.

WALL, N.J. — A leading oil price analyst says diesel prices could go “much, much higher” in early October, while gasoline prices will fall come November.

Tom Kloza, senior oil analyst for the Oil Price Information Service, offered a close-up look at the future of fuel prices in North America during a live webcast last month.

Called “Managing fuel prices in a volatile market,” the webcast was presented by a lending trucking publication, *Fleet Owner*, and sponsored by Zonar Systems.

“Diesel is where I am really worried,” said Kloza.

“In Q4 of 2012 and Q1 of 2013, we could see much higher (diesel) prices — as much as \$50 per barrel above crude, or around \$4 per gallon wholesale. Retail prices could

get close to the 2008 crazy period when they reached \$4.75 or higher. I hate to say it...

“We may be in for a short price break from about Labor Day (Sept. 3) to Columbus Day (Oct. 8),” he noted, “which represents an opportunity. Then there is a real risk the numbers will go much, much higher.

“(I am seeing) just about as compelling a case for a run-up in diesel prices as I have ever seen.”

Kloza outlined a number of reasons why it’s likely diesel prices will rise and gasoline will prices will fall.

Ironically, one of the primary reasons is the amazing boom in oil production in the U.S. and Canada. While domestic oil production will be instrumental in the country’s

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ►



Alberta commercial vehicle enforcement officers inspected motorcoaches last month near the remarkable Columbia Icefield.

## Summer of Inspections

### Fewer buses parked during Roadcheck 2012

GREENBELT, Md. — For the sixth consecutive year, the out-of-service rate declined for buses and motorcoaches checked during the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance annual Roadcheck inspection sweep.

This year, 8.6 percent of the coaches and buses inspected were put out of service during the three-day safety blitz in early June.

That meant this year’s rate was down slightly from the 2011 Roadcheck out-of-service rate of

8.7 percent (see July 15, 2011, *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

In 2010, the rate was 9 percent, in 2009 it was 11.5 percent, in 2008 it was 12.2 percent, and in 2007 it was 12.3 percent.

The lowest Roadcheck out-of-service rate for buses during the past dozen years came in 2001 when it was 7.7 percent.

The out-of-service rate for bus and motorcoach drivers also was modestly lower this year at 2.5 percent. Last year, the rate was 2.6

percent, compared to 3.6 percent in both 2010 and 2009.

The lowest driver out-of-service rate in recent years came in 2003, when it was 1.7 percent.

Still, given that Roadcheck is publicized well in advance (see May 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*) and has been conducted in early June for 25 consecutive years, it remains disconcerting that nearly 9 percent of the coaches checked from June 5-7 may not have been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►

## Feds wind up annual bus ‘strike force’

WASHINGTON — The now annual Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration safety sweep of passenger carriers concluded late last month with thousands of bus inspections conducted nationwide.

The National Passenger Carrier Strike Force, as the “surprise” safety blitz is called, ran this year from Aug. 13-27.

Last year, the two-week sweep was conducted in late September and early October, ending Oct. 7. Three thousand coaches were checked during the 2011 strike

force and the out-of-service rate was 9.6 percent.

As with all such sweeps, most of the inspections took place at destinations, terminals and bus yards, with a few conducted along high-volume routes where passengers could be accommodated.

In Alabama, for example, the Motor Carrier Safety Unit of the state Highway Patrol Division conducted inspections at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, as well as at the Greyhound Bus Station in Montgomery and at Colonial Trailways in Mobile.

In Minnesota, State Patrol and Department of Transportation inspectors checked coaches, limousines, party buses and other passenger-carrying vehicles at Target Field, Mall of America, the Metrodome and area casinos.

Coaches sent to regular-season Minnesota Twins and preseason Minnesota Vikings games reportedly got caught up in the sweep.

In one downtown Minneapolis “saturation” enforcement, personnel from the Minneapolis Police Department, Minnesota State

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►

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



# ABC Companies Featured Pre-Owned Equipment

*Take your pick of pre-owned Prevost coaches:*

## 2007 LeMirage XLII

- VIN #28863
- 55 Passengers
- Detroit Diesel Engine
- ZF Transmission
- ADA Wheelchair Lift
- 5 Video Monitors
- One Owner

**\$279,000**



## 2007 H3-45

- VIN #10941
- 54 Passengers
- Detroit Diesel Engine
- Allison Transmission
- 4 Video Monitors
- One Owner – West Coast

**\$279,000**

Used vehicles sold "As-is." Actual coach may vary from photo. No warranties expressed or implied. Financing and special lease rates available to qualified customers.

**GRAB'nGO**

*Can we grab a minute of your time?*

**Watch and learn at your convenience!**

Visit [www.abc-companies.com](http://www.abc-companies.com) and click on **Grab'n Go! FAST & FREE!**

**NEW WEBCASTS AVAILABLE NOW:**

- **Regeneration Process Overview (GG013)**
- **Charging System on VH Coaches (GG014)**

Contact your ABC Account Representative

ABC California **800.322.2877**

- Jeff Backer, x60724
- Don Jensen, x61004
- Charlie Walser, x60721
- Clint Guth, x60722

1485 Dale Way, Costa Mesa, CA 92626

- Photos and additional information for these pre-owned units available at [www.abc-companies.com/inventory.asp](http://www.abc-companies.com/inventory.asp)
- View hundreds of other pre-owned units at [www.abc-companies.com](http://www.abc-companies.com) & [www.busbuys.com](http://www.busbuys.com)

[www.abc-companies.com](http://www.abc-companies.com)

Find us on     



Exclusive U.S. **vanHool** Distributor

8/27/12

NORTHEAST 800-222-2873    SOUTHEAST 800-222-2871    SOUTHWEST 800-222-2877    WEST 800-322-2877    MIDWEST 800-222-2875    CANADA 800-345-1287

# Michigan operator pioneers 'hearing loop' technology

OWOSSO, Mich. — One of the Midwest's best-known operators, Indian Trails, has become the first coach company in the nation to install a relatively simple technology that helps assure hearing-impaired individuals on its intercity and casino runs don't miss safety messages, driver announcements, or onboard entertainment.

Called "hearing loop" technology, the system has been installed on 17 of the coaches Indian Trails operates on 34 scheduled routes serving communities in northern Michigan and the state's Upper Peninsula.

The technology, which costs

about \$800 per bus, was paid for by the Michigan Department of Transportation, which uses federal and state money to subsidize some of the routes operated by Indian Trails, and pays for the coaches Indian Trails operates as part of the Michigan intercity bus network.

"This is proven technology that represents an enormous improvement in the onboard experience of many of our passengers who are hard of hearing," said Gordon Mackay, president of Indian Trails.

"The cost was relatively low, about \$800 per bus, and very little maintenance is needed. We would

eventually like to see it installed in all of our motorcoaches and in all bus stations."

MDOT also installed hearing loops in two bus stations — in Saginaw and Bay City.

"I'm quite sure this is the first American bus line with hearing loops," said David G. Myers, a professor psychology at Hope College in Holland, Mich., who has hearing loss and is one of the nation's foremost advocates of hearing loops.

"The Indian Trails/MDOT installation...is a model of transportation accessibility for the entire country," said Myers.

Hearing loops are based on a simple technology that enables hearing aids equipped with "telecoils," or "T-coils" as they are commonly known, to amplify a single source of sound (such as a telephone, television, public-address system, or the like) instead of amplifying all sounds as ordinary hearing aids do.

Nearly 70 percent of hearing aids in the U.S. are equipped with telecoils, which are tiny coils of copper wire.

The "hearing loop" is a wire that runs around a space (be it an auditorium, church, living room, bus or airport terminal, or bus in-

terior) and is attached to a specified sound source. The wire can be in the ceiling or along the floor.

## Clear hearing

The hearing loop transmits the source sound to the telecoil in a hearing aid electromagnetically, while surrounding noises are screened out.

They become invaluable because the inside of a bus, train, plane or transportation terminal can be so noisy that passengers with ordinary hearing aids often can't separate important announcements from the sounds of fellow

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►

# Operator-led suit against N.Y. MTA gets favorable ruling

MINEOLA, N.Y. — A state supreme court justice has ruled that a payroll tax that funnels hundreds of millions of dollars annually to the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority violates the state constitution.

The initial lawsuit challenging the tax was filed in December 2009, by colorful Long Island motorcoach operator Bill Schoolman, whose bus operations include Classic Coach, Schoolman Trans-

portation System and Hampton Luxury Liner. (See Jan. 1 and June 15, 2010, issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Government units in communities and counties surrounding New York City eventually filed suits — that were carbon copies of the original filed by Schoolman — challenging the tax adopted by New York legislators to bail MTA out of its financial morass.

The United Motorcoach and

North Carolina Motorcoach associations, and perhaps other motorcoach industry groups, provided financial support to Schoolman as he pursued his suit.

Schoolman was particularly incensed by the tax because it helped finance a competitor — the MTA. In other words, the \$20,000 in additional payroll taxes he paid annually went directly to MTA.

The tax — of up to 34 cents per \$100 of pay — has been levied on

all employees in Orange, Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland, Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk counties, as well as the five boroughs of New York City, for the past three years.

It generates between \$1.3 billion and \$1.5 billion in annual revenue for NYMTA, which has a budget of about \$13 billion.

Businesses and nonprofit organizations in the MTA region were among those who screamed the loudest about the tax after it was

imposed by the legislature. The payroll mobility tax, as the levy is called, is a crucial source of funding for New York MTA subways, buses and regional rail service.

But Justice R. Bruce Cozzens Jr.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►



Bill Schoolman

The cost effective automatic fire suppression solution.

## Simple. Reliable. Firetrace!

Over 10 years of proven experience — Firetrace protects more than 15,000 buses with successful saves each month!

Utilizing the Firetrace linear pneumatic detection tubing system:

- Requires no power for activation — functional 24/7
- Tolerant of dirt, debris, temperature extremes, engine cleaning and eliminates false discharges
- Offers simple installation on current or future vehicle purchases
- Requires minimal maintenance and eliminates expensive replacement parts
- Easily replaces costly, unreliable systems

To learn why Firetrace is the right choice for your fleet please call +1 (480) 607-1218 or visit our website [www.firetrace.com](http://www.firetrace.com)

Visit us at these upcoming events:

Annual BusCon Show in Navy Pier, Chicago  
September 10 – 12, 2012 — Booth 96

FIVE Fires in Vehicles International Conference, Chicago  
September 27 – 28, 2012 — Booth 3

APTA Annual Meeting, Seattle  
September 30 – October 1, 2012

**FIRETRACE**<sup>®</sup>  
AUTOMATIC FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS

Firetrace International, LLC  
15690 N. 83rd Way, Suite B • Scottsdale, AZ 85260 USA  
Tel: +1 (480) 607-1218 • Fax: +1 (480) 315-1316  
E-mail: [firetrace@firetrace.com](mailto:firetrace@firetrace.com) • [www.firetrace.com](http://www.firetrace.com)



# THE DOCKET

## Do onboard recorders cut crashes? Study to tell

WASHINGTON — In what appears to be a classic case of putting the cart before the horse, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has commissioned a year-long study of whether electronic onboard recorders can reduce the risk of fatigue-related crashes even as it pushes ahead with plans to issue an EOBR rule early next year.

“Amazing, they are still studying electronic logging at the same time they are working on a mandate,” said a long-time FMCSA observer.

The FMCSA grant to study electronic onboard recorders went to the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute in Blacksburg, Va.

The study will use existing data from the U.S. Department of Transportation to compare safety records and crash rates among EOBR-equipped commercial vehicles and vehicles that don't have onboard recorders.

“For this research project, we will look at crash and vehicle data to determine whether (vehicles) with electronic onboard recorders have a significantly lower crash rate than those without,”

said Jeff Hickman, occupational health and safety expert at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute.

“Our database will also allow us to look at preventable crashes and crashes that have been designated as fatigue related.”

Hickman said the study aims to “evaluate the potential safety benefits of electronic onboard recorders.”

In addition to crash comparisons, Hickman and his team also will study hours-of-service compliance, estimate how many operators and fleets are using EOBRs, how much the devices cost to install and operate, and whether EOBRs provide the benefits some claim.

Hickman says he will report the study findings in late 2013.

### EBOR rule on its way

According to recent postings and pronouncements by the FMCSA, the agency intends to publish a final EOBR rule in March 2013 – well before the results of the Hickman study would be made public.

However, given the depth and complexity of an electronic on-

board recorder rule, some in the ground transportation industry are predicting it will be the middle of 2014 before a final EOBR rule emerges, six months or more after the Virginia Tech study is completed.

If the FMCSA gets a proposed rule out early next year, it will be followed by a comment period, an evaluation of the comments, possible revisions to the proposed rule stemming from the comments, and finally off to the White House for a final review.

“When you add all of those things up,” says one expert, “we’re looking at a final rule in mid-2014.”

The new federal highway and public transportation law orders the FMCSA to carry out an EOBR mandate within the next couple of years.

### Big issue pending

The agency schedule is considered ambitious, especially in view of the fact the FMCSA still has not fully addressed the issue of EOBRs being used as a tool to harass drivers.

In comments to the FMCSA, many professional truck drivers

have said they are routinely contacted by their carriers to keep driving regardless of whether they are tired or in need of a break. As long as drivers had available time on the clock, they were pressured to keep the wheels turning.

Many electronic onboard recorders allow dispatchers and bosses to monitor driver hours of service at all times.

The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association took the issue of driver harassment to court last year. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit sided with OOIDA in the suit, vacated the FMCSA initial rule-making on EOBRs for the industry's so-called bad actors, and sent the agency back to the drawing board to sort out the harassment issue. (See Sept. 15, 2011, *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The OOIDA has been an outspoken critic of EOBRs, contending the gadgets are no more effective than paper logs when it comes to safety and compliance, and asserting the devices will add unnecessary cost to commercial vehicle operations. Privacy rights are also a concern.

## FMCSA refines CSA program

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has announced changes to its Compliance Safety Accountability enforcement program, following a four-month public comment period.

FMCSA Administrator Anne Ferro said the changes were aimed at improving the agency's focus on truck and bus companies — with compliance concerns — that present “the highest potential risk to the public.”

“CSA is raising the bar for truck and bus safety, she said. “Our preliminary data shows that fatalities involving commercial vehicles dropped 4.7 percent last year compared to 2010,” Ferro noted.

“Still, on average, nearly 4,000 people die in large truck and bus crashes each year. That is why we are implementing these important changes to make CSA even more effective.”

Most of the changes apply to over-the-road and hazardous-materials haulers, but a few are aimed at the bus industry.

The FMCSA said the changes will provide the agency with more precise information when assessing a company's over-the-road safety performance. The changes that will be implemented in December include:

- Changing the name of the Fatigued Driving BASIC to the Hours-of-Service (HOS) Compliance BASIC “to more accurately reflect violations in this area,” and weighting HOS paper and electronic logbook violations equally.

According to an FMCSA official, requiring logbooks in the correct form and manner better enables enforcement officers to detect logbook falsifications.

- Clarifying the definition of passenger-carrier companies by:

1. Adding carriers that operate for-hire 9-15 passenger vehicles (large vans) and 16-plus passenger vehicles;

2. Removing carriers operating only 1-8 passenger vehicles, and private carriers operating 1-15 passenger vehicles such as limousines, vans and taxis.

- Removing 1- to 5-mph speeding violations to assure citations are consistent with current speedometer regulations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ►



**WORKS THE BEST - COSTS LESS**  
**FORMULATED RIGHT THE FIRST TIME!!!**



WHILE OTHERS ARE CONTINUALLY CHANGING FORMULAS, SUPER STRENGTH POT SHOT'S QUALITY REMAINS UNSURPASSED. THERE'S SIMPLY NO BETTER ODOR CONTROL PRODUCT FOR THE RESTROOM. PLEASE CALL FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION AND YOUR **FREE** SAMPLE.

POT SHOT IS AVAILABLE IN 2 OZ, 8 OZ, GALLONS, PAILS AND DRUMS

**(800) 879-8648 - (702) 564-6454 - [www.unitchemical.com](http://www.unitchemical.com)**

**60 Years Manufacturing Environmentally Safe Products**

### SUMMER SPECIAL



**66 PORTION CONTROL POT SHOT BOTTLES ONLY \$44.95 DELIVERED IN USA**

## Maine Turnpike tolls rise Nov. 1

PORTLAND, Maine — Tolls are going up on the Maine Turnpike starting Nov. 1.

Last month, the Maine Turnpike Authority board unanimously approved a plan to raise an additional \$21.14 million in toll revenue to continue a 30-year plan to maintain and rehabilitate the turnpike's network of bridges, interchanges and pavement, as well as pay off existing debt.

A full-length cash trip from York to Augusta will increase from \$5 to \$7 for passenger cars, while the most common cash toll for a standard three-axle motorcoach (Class 3) will rise from \$15 to \$21.

Even after the toll adjustment, the Maine Turnpike will remain among the lowest-priced toll roads in the U.S., say turnpike officials.

During the next five years, the turnpike authority plans to spend \$113 million for bridge repairs and rehabilitation, and provide \$82 million for turnpike paving and interchange improvements.

## I-95 toll plan stirs opposition

RICHMOND, Va. — A plan by Virginia to construct an Interstate 95 toll facility in Sussex County, just north of the state line with North Carolina, has generated opposition, including an on-line petition.

Last September, the Federal Highway Administration granted the Virginia Department of Transportation preliminary permission to pursue a pilot program that would allow it to toll existing lanes on I-95.

V-DOT has proposed initial, artificially low toll rates of \$4 for cars, \$7 for three-axle motorcoaches, and \$12 for tractor-trailers at a single tolling plaza to be built on I-95 between mile markers 20 and 24.

The department plans to conduct a series of public meetings on the issue in the fall and develop a tolling agreement later this year.

Governing boards in the Sussex region have passed resolutions against the proposal.

Virginia Congressman J. Randy Forbes has sent letters against tolling to fellow Republican Gov. Bob McDonnell and the Federal Highway Administration. Many communities along I-95 are economically stressed and "unable to shoulder additional economic challenges," Forbes wrote.

The petition against the toll plan is available at [www.virginiatollfree95.com](http://www.virginiatollfree95.com) and [www.facebook.com/virginiatollfree95](http://www.facebook.com/virginiatollfree95).

## Pennsylvania to hike tolls on state turnpike

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission has approved a 10 percent toll increase for vehicles paying cash and a 2 percent increase for those using the E-ZPass system. The new rates become effective Jan. 6.

"Implementing this toll increase generates the needed revenue to sat-

isfy our annual transportation-funding obligation of \$450 million to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, while at the same time helping to boost enrollment in E-ZPass, which has been a longtime commission priority," said Roger E. Nutt, CEO of the commission.

The commission also selected

HNTB Corp. as program manager to lead the potential implementation of a cashless, all-electronic tolling system for the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Electronic tolling systems are touted as providing enhanced safety, a cleaner environment, improved customer convenience and operational efficiencies.

"Because of these and other benefits, (all-electronic tolling) has emerged as much more than a trend in the tolling industry worldwide, and a number of American tolling agencies have gone cashless in recent years," said Nutt.

Conversion to an electronic system is expected to take at least five years.

### "I've never dealt with a better claims team – top to bottom – than Lancer's."



**Joe Scott**  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Easton Coach  
Easton, PA  
Lancer customer since 2005

"Ninety-nine percent of our company's claims come out of our pocket due to our high deductible, so nothing is more important than minimizing the level of our losses. Lancer knows that, and fights hard to get all our claims settled effectively and efficiently. When there's an accident, Lancer gets to injured parties and their families quickly, in an effort to mitigate a problem from the outset.

Every Lancer representative I have dealt with has had a really good understanding of the situation at hand and the nuances of our business. They also have what I think of as the Lancer style – get right on it, get the facts and try to get it settled for as little as possible."

**If you want fair, proactive claims-handling from a passenger transportation specialist, ask your agent for a Lancer quote or call Lancer directly and get assigned to an agent.**

To learn more, call **800-782-8902, x3304** or email [mbayard@lancerinsurance.com](mailto:mbayard@lancerinsurance.com).





*The Difference is Our Attitude.*








370 W. Park Avenue, P.O. Box 9004, Long Beach, NY 11561 [www.lancerinsurance.com](http://www.lancerinsurance.com)

# 'Connected vehicle' crash avoidance technology tested

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — The U.S. Department of Transportation has launched a year-long pilot project to test technology that lets cars, trucks and buses "talk" to each other and to infrastructure.

The idea behind the technology, which uses Wi-Fi-like devices, is to avoid crashes and improve traffic flow.

If the tests and other research go well, it could lead to government mandates sometime in the future.

Nearly 3,000 vehicles are taking part in the project in Ann

Arbor.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood joined elected officials and industry and community leaders on the University of Michigan campus to launch the "Connected Vehicle Safety Pilot," the largest road test of connected vehicle crash avoidance technology.

"Today is a big moment for automotive safety," said LaHood. "This cutting-edge technology offers real promise for improving both the safety and efficiency of our roads."

Conducted by University of

Michigan Transportation Research Institute, the road test, or model deployment as it is known, is a first-of-its-kind test of connected vehicle technology in "the real world."

According to the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute website, "The model deployment will find out how well connected vehicle safety technologies and systems work in a real-life environment, with real drivers and vehicles. It will test performance, usability, and collect data to better understand the safety benefit of a larger scale deployment."

The test cars, commercial trucks and buses, most of which have been supplied by volunteer participants, are equipped with vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) and vehicle-to-infrastructure (V2I) communication devices.

These will gather extensive data about system operability and its effectiveness at reducing crashes.

The technology that enables the vehicle systems to be connected is based on "dedicated short range communications," which is similar to Wi-Fi but is not likely to

be vulnerable to interference, according to the USDOT.

"Using either in-vehicle or aftermarket devices that continuously share important safety and mobility information, vehicles ranging from cars to trucks and buses to trains would be able to 'talk' to each other and to different types of roadway infrastructure" such as traffic signals or toll booths, it says.

For more information about the USDOT connected vehicle research, go to [www.safercar.gov/connectedvehicles](http://www.safercar.gov/connectedvehicles).

# Automotive safety technologies offer muddled picture

ARLINGTON, Va. — Early experience with the latest crop of automotive safety technology that's wending its way to the motorcoach industry is producing mixed results.

Forward-collision avoidance systems, particularly those that can brake autonomously, along with adaptive headlights, which shift direction as the driver steers, are showing the biggest crash reductions when installed on automobiles.

However, lane-departure warning systems, which have been touted by some as a bright pros-

pect for commercial vehicles, appears to reduce safety, rather than help, though it's not clear why.

And other systems, such as blind spot detection, aren't showing clear effects on crash patterns.

The findings are from insurance claims analyses by the Highway Loss Data Institute, a unit of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Forward-collision warning systems, which use a camera or radar to gauge what's ahead of a vehicle, can reduce crashes with other vehicles by as much as 14

percent, and so-called adaptive headlights can cut the risk of a multiple-vehicle crash by as much as 10 percent, the Highway Loss Data Institute study found.

Some forward-collision systems are coupled with autonomous braking that slows a vehicle, even if the driver doesn't react, when it's approaching something in front of it too quickly.

"Forward-collision technology is reducing claims, particularly for damage to other vehicles, and adaptive headlights are having an even bigger impact than we had antici-

ated," said Matt Moore, vice president of the highway loss institute.

However, the study also found that lane-departure warning systems installed on Mercedes and Buicks, which alert a driver when their vehicle drifts, increased the risk of a crash. The study didn't determine why the risk increased when using those alerts.

The institute found no effect on crashes from blind-spot detection.

There has been speculation that both the lane-departure and blind-spot detection systems may need further refinement because

they set off frequent warnings that drivers eventually tend to ignore.

The new systems are proliferating in cars sold in the U.S., and are being tested and adapted on commercial vehicles.

The insurance group studied damage and injury claims for vehicles from a variety of automakers, Honda, General Motors, Mazda, Daimler and Volvo.

The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has been studying forward-collision warning and autonomous braking systems for more than two years.

## Monitor Retrofit Kits



### Upgrade Your REI CRT Monitors With New LCDs!

- Easy installation
- Upgrade to larger HD monitors
- Lower power consumption saves on energy costs
- Lightweight monitors
- Provide the latest technology and convenience for your customers

## Your Reliable Safety Messaging Solution



### Increase Efficiency and Save Your Driver Time

- Customized audio and video passenger safety message
- Interfaces with existing entertainment systems
- Auto-play, loop or stop-start playing
- Automatically switches between other video sources
- Playback date/time recorder for verifications
- Driver one-touch playback

## Additional Solutions:

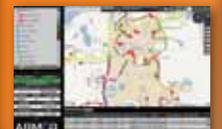
### Media Center



### Camera Observation



### GPS/AVL Tracking



### Mobile Video Surveillance



# REI

Specify REI Today!

Sales: 800.228.9275 | Service: 877.726.4617 | [radioeng.com](http://radioeng.com)

**SETRA**

Expect More



## Hard-working. Reliable. Cost-efficient.

The Setra ComfortClass S 407 adds new features in 2012

There's an all-new Setra motorcoach out there. And it's ready to take on your heavy-duty business applications, from line haul and commuter travel, through to group tours and charters. The new Setra ComfortClass S 407 is equipped with a next-generation Mercedes-Benz OM 471 engine with BlueTec™ for optimized fuel efficiency, and new for 2012 is Setra's ESP (Electronic Stability Program).

Your business will benefit from the great reliability Setra is known for, with more productivity and cost-efficiency than you ever thought possible. You'll capitalize on all the quality, German engineering and European styling you expect from Setra – for a lot less than you'd expect to spend.

For more information, visit [www.setra-coaches.com](http://www.setra-coaches.com)

# Truckers, brokers move forward with legal challenge to CSA

WASHINGTON — A group of small truckers and brokers has asked a federal appeals court to review the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration explanation of its CSA safety enforcement program.

The petition for review filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals for

the District of Columbia Circuit starts the clock on a legal challenge to CSA's Safety Measurement System.

The suit is the work of the Alliance for Safe, Efficient and Competitive Truck Transportation, a group representing small carriers and brokers, as well as individual

companies.

"ASECTT members believe SMS methodology is a work in progress, unapproved for (FMCSA's) own use in making safety fitness determinations," said ASECTT President Tom Sanderson. Sanderson is CEO of Transplace, a third-party logistics provider and broker,

and a plaintiff in the case.

The group's objective is to force the agency to determine which carriers are safe to operate, and to remove Safety Management System data from public view.

"With no concern for the effect of (SMS data) publication...or the false branding of carriers and re-

sulting economic consequences on small businesses, the agency has in effect told the shipping community it cannot rely on the agency to do its statutory job to certify carriers as safe for use," Sanderson said.

Joining the petition were the Air & Expedited Motor Carriers Association, the Expedite Association of North America, the National Association of Small Trucking Companies and the Transportation Loss Prevention and Security Association.

## CSA changes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

- Ensuring all recorded violations accurately reflect the inspection type (i.e., only driver violations will be recorded under driver inspections).

In addition, the FMCSA announced the launch of a CSA subcommittee as part of the agency's Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee.

The subcommittee is comprised of enforcement personnel, drivers, carriers, safety advocates, shippers, representatives of the insurance industry and others.

Ferro said the subcommittee will provide feedback, as well as serve as a sounding board for recommendations that come from stakeholders.

"We are dedicated to strengthening our centerpiece enforcement program, our CSA platform, and ensuring that we are living up to our commitment to provide the transparency and responsiveness that we committed to when this program was under development," she said.

According to Ferro, nearly 1,700 law enforcement personnel and 14,000 carriers took part in the preview of the proposed changes to CSA's online Safety Measure System. From them, the agency received about 150 comments.

For complete details on the CSA changes, go to <http://csa.fmcsa.dot.gov/>.

## Billions approved for roads in Iowa

DES MOINES, Iowa — Iowa has adopted a \$2.6 billion plan to rebuild and upgrade state highways over five years.

The *Des Moines Register* reported that the Iowa Transportation Commission approved the plan for fiscal 2013 through 2017.

It includes reconstruction projects on interstates in Sioux City, Council Bluffs and the Quad Cities, as well as work on dozens of other highways across the state.

The road program is financed by a mix of state and federal money.

## NATIONAL INTERSTATE: SUPERIOR CLAIMS HANDLING — IT'S WHAT WE DO.

As specialists in wheels-based insurance, we aggressively adjust hundreds of millions of dollars in claims each year. And on every claim, we fight tirelessly to keep customer costs low. In fact, a recent study of 90+ years of Workers' Comp and Auto Liability claims for 25 transportation companies, our techniques helped our customers enjoy a 20% savings compared with their previous carriers. But don't just take our word for it, here's the story straight from two of our customers:



MICHAEL, COACH TOURS

"As an alternative risk client of National Interstate, I have found their claims process to be far superior to what I had come to expect after 20 years in the transportation business. Their staff communicates with me frequently about even a minor claim. We have saved a significant amount compared to what I had expected our claims would cost. I get the feeling that **National Interstate is working as hard as they can to keep the costs down.**"



LYNN, RMA CHAUFFEURED TRANSPORTATION

"Accidents can be emotional events. **National Interstate has removed the emotion and substituted it with compassion and solutions.** They've guided us through all our accidents and resolved each one in a timely manner — all while communicating with us at every step. Insurance is a necessity but, with National Interstate, it's also an investment in our business success."

AN INSURANCE EXPERIENCE BUILT AROUND YOU.

3250 Interstate Drive  
Richfield, Ohio 44286  
800-929-1500  
www.natl.com

 NATIONAL INTERSTATE

# Don't expect belted seats to moderate in price soon

While the price of belted seats installed in school buses has dropped during the past five years, motorcoach operators should not expect to see a price break on belted seats anytime soon, say industry seat suppliers.

George Farrell of Amaya-Astron Seating said increased demand in recent years for belted seats on new motorcoaches has not tipped prices.

Nor does he foresee a decline as the safety feature gains more widespread acceptance in the industry.

In fact, he said, seat manufacturers have begun to raise prices.

One factor contributing to higher prices, Farrell explained, is the added cost of upgrades being made to belted seats that are likely to be passed along to buyers.

"I can't see prices going down because (manufacturers are) trying to engineer the seats to withstand higher G-forces," he said.

In contrast, a leading belted-seat supplier recently reported the price of equipping a school bus with three-point-belted seats has

dropped from a range of \$12,000 to \$14,000 five years ago, to \$7,000 to \$9,000 currently.

Another factor contributing to the diverging price patterns between school buses equipped with belted seats and motorcoaches is the relative age of the two markets, according to one seating industry

executive.

He noted that lap-and-shoulder-belted seating has been installed on school buses for more than decade, "so it's a more mature market than the motorcoach market is."

"I think there are a significant number of people (in the motorcoach market) who are buying seats

with no belts on them still because it's not an actual requirement yet, although it soon will be," he said.

Added Ron Miller, general manager of the Motor Coach Industries Service Center in Loudonville, Ohio: "That's interesting about the school bus market.

"We haven't seen a similar

price drop yet in the seats we've been using to retrofit buses. As more vendors start to get in the market, we may see pricing drop.

"I guess the good news for now is there hasn't been a measurable increase in price which should keep belted seats as an attractive option for our customers."

## Riteway in Wis. buys Degnitz Bus

RANDOM LAKE, Wis. — Riteway Bus Service, one of the largest school bus operators in Wisconsin, has purchased a small school bus operator, Degnitz Bus Service, from the Degnitz family.

Merlin W. Degnitz founded the company — nearly 50 years ago — that serves the Random Lake School District.

Random Lake is 38 miles directly north of Milwaukee and about 32 miles northeast of Riteway's headquarters in Richfield, Wis.

Ronald Bast, president of Riteway Bus Service, said he and his family looked forward "to welcoming the employees of Degnitz Bus Service into the Riteway Bus family, and (we) will continue providing the same quality service to the Random Lake School District that Degnitz Bus has been known for."

Riteway purchased the company from Merlin Degnitz' son and daughters: Carl Degnitz, Marycarol Schoemaker and Jane Meyer. Degnitz management and drivers will continue as part of Riteway.

Riteway Bus has been a family owned operator for 55 years. It has 11 locations in southeastern and central Wisconsin, with a fleet of more than 600 school buses and 31 motorcoaches. The Degnitz operation added 16 buses.

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

**monochem**®

# Dyna-Bact

- ✓ ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY
- ✓ Synergistic odor-neutralizing complex
- ✓ Pre-measured and 'ready-to-use'
- ✓ Custom selected beneficial bacterial strains with *macro- and micro-nutrients* and enzymes to liquify waste
- ✓ Cleans toilet parts and tanks with long-term use

**512.267.5190**

**CALL FOR YOUR FREE SAMPLE**  
*Your Satisfaction Is Guaranteed!*

"With over 30 years of experience in the motor coach industry, it is safe to say that we have tried just about every toilet chemical there is . . .

Since we started using **Dyna-Bact** pre-measured self-dissolving packets we have noticed that the coaches smell clean—even if the coach goes more than a day between dumping . . . the solids are broken down and there is less odor . . . **Dyna-Bact** is a product that performs and delivers as advertised and will be used by **Daisy Charters and Shuttles** for a *long* time . . ."

— Daniel Bratcher, V.P. Daisy Charters and Shuttles

**worldwidemonochem.com**

# Must an insurance broker offer the cheapest coverage?

So, who does your insurance broker work for?

If you answered “me,” or “my company,” you may be a little naïve, or actually believe your agent when he or she says they’re on your side.

The question of an insurance broker’s true loyalties was at the heart of a recent court case.

The question decided by the court was whether insurance brokers are required to obtain the “lowest-cost insurance” that meets the insured’s needs.

The Missouri Supreme Court provided the answer in the case of *Emerson Electric Co. vs. Marsh & McLennan Cos.*

The case developed out of Emerson utilizing the brokerage services of Marsh & McLennan to procure liability insurance. During the course of the relationship, Emerson paid Marsh to place particular types of insurance with insurers to meet a variety of Emerson’s insurance needs.

According to Emerson’s allegations, Marsh steered Emerson’s business to a few insurers that agreed to pay Marsh extra commissions contingent upon the amount of business Marsh sent to those insurers.

When Emerson learned of this relationship it sued Marsh, in part, alleging Marsh had breached its duty of loyalty to Emerson by not purchasing the lowest-cost insurance that met Emerson’s needs because Marsh had steered the business to secure the alleged “contingent commissions” from the insurers involved with the ultimate placement.

Under Missouri law, insurance agents have a duty of loyalty to the insured, which is inherent in the na-

ture of the relationship.

According to insurance law expert Steven Pliatt, writing the *Insurance Journal*, the Missouri Supreme Court found that while Marsh owed Emerson a duty of loyalty, the duty of loyalty did not include a duty to obtain the lowest-cost insurance that met the insured’s needs “absent a specific agreement to do so.”

Emerson alleged that Marsh breached its fiduciary duty when it secretly agreed to accept additional contingent commissions from insurers to which it steered business.

According to Emerson, this prejudiced Emerson because it prevented Marsh from obtaining insurance meeting Emerson’s needs at the lowest possible cost.

The court did not address that issue, however, because it found that the Missouri legislature had specifically authorized brokers to obtain commissions from insurers

‘The broker still has a fiduciary duty to use reasonable care, skill and diligence in procuring insurance.’

with which the broker placed insurance.

Emerson argued that even if Missouri statute permitted a broker to earn contingent commissions, the broker’s duty of loyalty required it to inform the insured that it was receiving such contingent commissions. The court rejected that argument as well.

Although the Missouri Supreme Court refused to conclude that the duty of loyalty required the procurement of the lowest-cost insurance for the insured, the court went on to explain that its holding

did not mean that brokers were free to obtain insurance that did not meet the insured’s needs or insurance that was unreasonably costly or imprudent.

The broker still has a fiduciary duty to use reasonable care, skill and diligence in procuring insurance. Failure of that fiduciary duty would be legally actionable, not because it represented a breach of the duty of loyalty but because it would constitute a failure to exercise the degree of care required in procuring a policy for the insured generally.

A duty to obtain the lowest possible cost insurance can be assumed, however, by brokers.

A broker by contract or course of conduct can assume obligations beyond the normal duties of all insurance brokers to use reasonable care, skill and diligence in procuring insurance on behalf of insureds.

Wrote Pliatt: “The takeaway

from the Emerson case is that insurance brokers should be cautious in advertising their abilities to obtain the lowest cost insurance for their insureds because to do so would expand the insurance broker’s obligations by that type of course of conduct.

“Oftentimes brokers will advise their clients that the broker has shopped their insurance rates with the insurance companies that the broker represents and has selected the lowest cost insurance for the client which is then recommended in a proposal.”

The problem with this approach, says Pliatt, is that there are many parts to a standard insurance transaction in terms of coverages that are being procured, i.e., auto liability, UM/UIM, collision, comp, towing, medical payments, etc. The premium for the policy is a composite of the subpremium charges for each of the component coverages.

The better approach, according to Pliatt, is for the broker to identify within the proposal the gross premiums charged for the amount of coverage represented by an insurance company with a disclaimer indicating the proposal only compares the gross premium charge and not the pricing of sub-components subsumed within the gross premium.

A better approach, he said, is to explain to the customer that the insurance policy being offered is “competitive,” focusing then upon the quality of the insurer and why the agent has selected that particular insurer for the agent’s inclusion within the proposal.

Representations that the agent got the “best price” for the coverage may give rise to an expanded duty, he added.

## Refinancing loan program to expire

WASHINGTON — Time is running out for small businesses, which includes 97 percent of the motorcoach industry, to apply for a special U.S. Small Business Administration loan refinancing program.

The temporary program allows small businesses to refinance eligible fixed assets with a 504/Certified Development Company loan.

The program expires Sept. 27. “If you feel your business could use a shot in the arm, now’s the time to consider the 504 refinancing option,” says the SBA.

The 504 program offers below-market pricing and long-term, fully-amortizing fixed rates. Borrow-

ers can borrow up to 90 percent of the current appraised value of the assets being refinanced.

One of the “most appealing features” of the program is that borrowers may be able to obtain “cash-out” proceeds from the refinancing to pay for eligible business expenses such as payroll, inventory and accounts payable, among others.

Among the reasons for creating the special 504 program was to assist small businesses in refinancing loans and restructuring debt. Additionally, the program is aimed at helping provide access to working capital, which is currently the biggest credit gap in the marketplace.

The program is structured like

the SBA’s traditional 504 loan program: borrowers will work with third-party lending institutions and SBA-approved certified development companies, typically private, nonprofit organizations to obtain the financing.

To learn more, go to <http://www.sba.gov/content/504-loan-refinancing-program>.

There’s another SBA program, called Small Loan Advantage 2.0, that offers a simplified application process for an SBA 7(a) loan of up to \$350,000.

To learn more about this program, go to <http://www.sba.gov/community/blogs/priming-lending-pump-small-business-sla-20>.

### How to contact us

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

E-mail: [bsankey@busandmotorcoachnews.com](mailto:bsankey@busandmotorcoachnews.com)  
 Fax: (405) 942-6201  
 Mail: 3108 NW 54th Street  
 Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
 Call: (866) 930-8421

To subscribe or inquire about your subscription:

E-mail: [ebalm@busandmotorcoachnews.com](mailto:ebalm@busandmotorcoachnews.com)  
 Fax: (405) 942-6201  
 Mail: 3108 NW 54th Street  
 Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
 Call: (866) 930-8421

To advertise or to mail advertising-related materials:

Call: Johnny Steger at (866) 930-8426  
 E-mail: [jsteger@busandmotorcoachnews.com](mailto:jsteger@busandmotorcoachnews.com)  
 Mail: 2200 N. Yarbrough, Suite B  
 Box No. 336  
 El Paso, TX 79925

To send advertisements or photographs via the Internet:

E-mail: [BMNews@jezac.com](mailto:BMNews@jezac.com)

To contact the United Motorcoach Association:

Call: (800) 424-8262  
 Online: [www.uma.org](http://www.uma.org)

## Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 223

### Staff

Editor & Publisher: Victor Parra  
 Senior Editor: Bruce Sankey  
 Sales Director: Johnny Steger  
 Industry Editor: Ken Presley  
 Associate Editor: Ellen Balm  
 Art Director: Mary E. McCarty  
 Editorial Assistant: Michele Nosko  
 Editorial Assistant: Maggie Masterson  
 Editorial Assistant: Greg Lange  
 Accountant: Ted Williford

### Advisory Board

William Allen  
 Amador Trailways  
 Sacramento, Calif.

Brian Annett  
 Annett Bus Lines  
 Sebring, Fla.

David Brown  
 Holiday Tours  
 Randleman, N.C.

James Brown Sr.  
 Magic Carpet Tours  
 Richmond, Va.

Steve Brown  
 Brown Coach  
 Amsterdam, N.Y.

Thomas Foley  
 Transportation Insurance Brokers  
 North Oaks, Minn.

Gladys Gillis  
 Starline Luxury Coaches  
 Seattle

Callen Hotard  
 Calco Travel  
 Geismar, La.

Larry Hundt  
 Great Canadian Trailways  
 Kitchner, Ontario

Dale Krapf  
 Krapf Coaches  
 West Chester, Pa.

Godfrey Lebron  
 Paradise Trailways  
 Hicksville, N.Y.

Joan Libby  
 Cavalier Coach Trailways  
 Boston, Mass.

Marcia Milton  
 First Priority Trailways  
 District Heights, Md.

Michael Neustadt  
 Coach Tours  
 Brookfield, Conn.

Jeff Polzien  
 Red Carpet Charters  
 Oklahoma City

Tom Ready  
 Ready Bus Lines  
 LaCrescent, Minn.

Brian Scott  
 Escot Bus Lines  
 Largo, Fla.

Dan Shoup  
 Cardinal Buses  
 Middlebury, Ind.

Dennis Strief  
 Vandalia Bus Lines  
 Caseyville, Ill.

Tim Wayland  
 ABC Companies  
 Faribault, Minn.

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

# Charter rule challenge in Charlotte may be problematic

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — For the second time in less than two years, the motorcoach industry stands a chance of ending up with a large helping of egg on its face over its protest of alleged violations of the federal charter service rule in connection with a high-profile event.

It happened last year in the aftermath of Super Bowl XLV in Arlington, Texas, when the Federal Transit Administration rejected an industry complaint the charter rule had been violated on game day by the Fort Worth Transportation Authority.

And it could happen again in connection with the Democratic National Convention here this month.

The American Bus Association has filed a complaint with the FTA, opposing a request by the Charlotte Area Transit System, known locally as CATS, for an exemption from the charter bus regulation.

The regulation typically prohibits public transit agencies from doing work normally provided by private bus and motorcoach operators.

In its complaint to the FTA, the ABA contends Charlotte officials have not exhausted all efforts to find privately operated motorcoaches to provide charter service for the Democrats' convention early this month.

The charter service rule provides exemptions and exceptions to the preference for private operators to perform charter work, and it specifies the exemptions are to be granted only rarely and only after the public transit agency has met its burden of proof.

The ABA complaint cites at least four alleged rule violations by CATS in seeking an exemption to run charters during the Democrats' convention.

## What the Dems want

At issue is whether CATS can supply 40 40-foot, low-floor transit buses and 12 30-foot, lift-equipped trolley replicas to transport delegates between Charlotte-area hotels and various convention-related activities.

The Transportation Management Team of the Democratic National Convention Committee, the customer in this situation, asked CATS to supply the accessible buses.

And while it appears likely the transit agency did technically violate aspects of the charter rule in responding to the request by the Democrats, the violations do not appear to be sufficiently egregious to sustain a charter rule complaint.

The devil, as they say, is in the details.

And it was such details that ba-

sically undid the industry complaint against the Fort Worth Transportation Authority last year.

In that situation, the transit agency was asked to provide 40 buses to transport about 8,000 people from a commuter train station in Fort Worth to and from the football game.

In its handling of the request, according to a complaint filed by the United Motorcoach Association on behalf of 18 members of the South Central Motorcoach Association, the transit authority violated several provisions of the charter rule.

## What the FTA decided

In deciding the case, however, the FTA determined the rule had not been violated because — and this is important — none of the private operators that sought the work could meet the specific requirements set by the customer.

In the Super Bowl case, the customer wanted 40 buses that all looked alike. It set the requirement because there would be as many as 800 coaches and school buses around the stadium where the Super Bowl was played and it wanted to avoid confusion among its customers as to which buses they were to board.

While private operators could supply some of the buses, none could supply 40 look-alike buses.

The situation appears similar in Charlotte.

The Democrats have specifically requested wheelchair-accessible buses — from CATS, as well as from private operators. That's because at least 300 delegates to the convention, staying in 55-plus Charlotte-area hotels, have major mobility issues.

## What CATS must do

While CATS says it has signed up as many wheelchair-accessible buses owned by private operators as it can find (a claim that is being challenged by the ABA), under the federal charter rule it is not legally obligated to pursue such action.

In other words, there is no provision in the law that requires a public transit agency to act as a bus broker or transportation coordinator.

Its only legal obligation is to notify private operators of a charter opportunity. It is then up to the private operators to contact the customer, in this case the Transportation Management Team of the Democratic National Convention Committee, and negotiate the service and meet its requirements.

There have been reports that some operators have been excluded by the Democrats because they

only had older buses. Customers in these situations can set a specification for newer buses, as well as other requirements.

Under the rule, a charter operator is considered "non-responsive" if it cannot furnish the entire service requested by the customer. The transit agency is under no obligation to use a couple of buses here and one bus there.

## What you must do

Additionally, the FTA is a stickler about one other aspect of

the rule.

To bring a valid complaint, an operator must be registered on the FTA charter-rule website. Those that aren't registered do not have standing with the agency.

Currently, there are only 183 private charter operators, out of roughly 3,400 nationwide, registered on the FTA website.

One operator who has contracted to do work during the convention says that any private bus company that wanted to participate in the convention — "with any kind

of buses" — could have found work. "The opportunity has been there all summer," he said.

This operator doesn't believe the requirement for lift-equipped buses was "trumped up" in a bid to exclude private operators.

"With over 300 guests who use wheelchairs or have mobility issues, our greatest need is for lift-equipped motorcoaches or accessible transit-style buses," Andrew Ballard, director of transportation for the Democratic National Com-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ►



# Coach Manager

Software rental  
from only \$137.50  
a month



## Charter and Contract Booking System



Coach Manager is a start to finish solution for the management of charter and contract work specially designed for coach, school bus, minibus and limousine operators. The software offers secure handling



of bookings, easy and efficient allocation of vehicles and drivers, client confirmations, driver work tickets, invoicing and a built-in AR with extensive financial reporting facilities.

---



# Tour Booking System



## Tour and Day Trip Reservations



Our Tour Booking System is a complete management solution for individual passenger reservations on extended tours, day trips and express services. In addition to being a powerful back office



system, TBS incorporates a fully automated data driven website for handling online reservations from travel agents and direct clients, with real-time payment processing and automatic emailing of invoices.

---



# Vehicle Maintenance System



## Maintenance Planning and Workshop Management



Our Vehicle Maintenance System is a workshop management package designed for coach, bus and truck operators. The software handles defect reporting, inspection planning, scheduled and



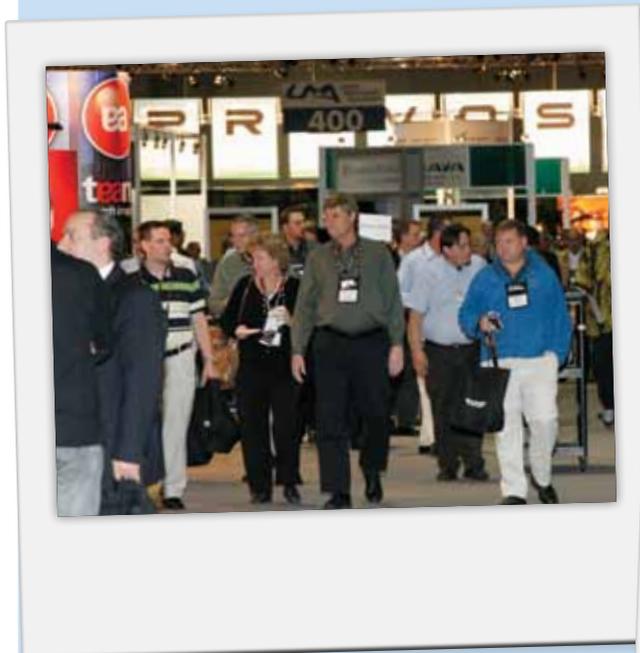
unscheduled maintenance activities, job card printing and history recording. VMS streamlines the whole process and will help ensure records always meet the required standard.

Visit our website for more information  
[www.distinctive-systems.com/solutions](http://www.distinctive-systems.com/solutions)

Telephone: (646) 448-9981  
 Distinctive Systems Inc. 131½ S Washington Street, Binghamton, NY 13903



# If you like UMA Motorcoach EXPO...



# You'll LOVE!

## UMA MOTORCOACH EXPO 2013 at **travel** **exchange**

January 20-24, 2013 • Orlando, Florida

UMA Motorcoach EXPO at Travel Exchange is everything you like about EXPO *plus more!*

**THE event to attend in 2013!**  
**Register TODAY –**  
early-bird registration discount ends  
**October 5th**



More Education!



More Networking!



More Fun!



More Opportunities than Ever Before!

UMA Motorcoach EXPO + NTA Convention = Travel Exchange

**Two Shows. One Price.  
A World of Opportunity.**

[motorcoachexpo.com](http://motorcoachexpo.com)

# Escot Bus Lines of Florida is named top IMG operator

MINNEAPOLIS — Escot Bus Lines of Largo, Fla., which started nearly 30 years ago with two mini-buses shuttling tourists between attractions in the Tampa Bay area, has been named International Motor Coach Group Operator of the Year.

The award was presented here last month at the 15th annual IMG Strategic Alliance meeting.

The award is based on criteria ranging from operational excellence, to safety record, to best practices, to community and industry involvement, to engagement within IMG.

Accepting the award was Escot Bus' President Brian Scott, and his sister, company Vice President Pamela Scott-Calixto. They were joined on stage by their father, Lewis Scott, who started the company in 1983 with his late wife, Diane. In accepting the award, Brian Scott praised the commitment of his staff, and the dedication they have shown throughout the years to customer service and safety.

"We have built a family company that we are all very proud of, and Escot is delighted to receive this honor from our fellow IMG companies," he said.

Brian Scott served as IMG chairman in 2008-2010. He also has served on the organization's board and is its representative on the board of the Global Passenger Network, an organization founded by IMG.

Scott also is a former chairman of the United Motorcoach Association and is currently a member of the UMA board.

IMG shareholders, suppliers and staff heralded the Operator of the Year announcement with the entry of a new Prevost H3-45 coach.

Escot's owners and staff were expecting delivery of four new Prevosts but had no idea one of them had been re-routed to Minnesota and that it had been wrapped in scenes from Tampa/St. Petersburg.

Escot, which is known for its signature all-white coaches bearing the company name and a string of international flags along the side, now has a coach sporting photos of Tampa-area landmarks...and the international flags.

From its simple beginnings, Escot has grown into a diversified operation with 45 late-model motorcoaches and 16 transit-style buses.



Joining Brian Scott and Pamela Scott-Calixto of Escot Bus Lines (third and fourth from the left), are (from far left) Hank Garbee, past IMG chairman; Bronwyn

Wilson, IMG president, and Geoff Lunch, IMG chairman. The coach was especially wrapped to recognize the award.

The company specializes in charters, multi-day tours, game-day express service to regional sporting events, regular runs to Seminole Hard Rock Casino, and contract services.

It also provides cruise ship connections to the ports of Miami

and Everglades. Operating three such routes, it makes pick-up and drop-off stops at 40 locations.

Escot also is the official long-distance ground carrier in Florida for Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, Celebrity Cruises, Princess Cruises, Holland America Line, and

Mediterranean Shipping Cruises.

It maintains locations in Largo, Orlando and Sarasota.

Since 2001, Escot has been a member of IMG, which is comprised for more than 50 family-owned, premium motorcoach companies across North America.

9th Annual

Coming Soon!

## UMA Safety Management Seminar

Dec. 4 - 5, 2012

NTSB Training Center in Ashburn, VA

Here's what past attendees have to say:

"This seminar is a must for anyone who manages risk associated with motorcoach fleets!" "The information was great and it is something that we all need to know." "Well organized, informative and helpful!"



Presented by:



# UMA announces 'Maintenance Pavilion' for 2013 Expo

ORLANDO, Fla. — Efficiently maintaining buses to operate at peak performance, plus strict adherence to safety rules, is paramount to every successful motorcoach operation.

With that as a foundation, the United Motorcoach Association is carving out a special "maintenance shop" niche on the show floor of UMA Motorcoach Expo 2013 here in January.

"Ninety-six percent of UMA Expo attendees are directly involved in the purchasing decisions for their maintenance shops," notes UMA Meetings and Operations Coordinator Amanda Zimmerman.

The Expo 2013 "Maintenance Shop Pavilion" will consist of booths, displays and demonstrations of products and services that will enable the hundreds of motorcoach company owners, managers, maintenance supervisors and mechanics attending the show to find solutions for improving their shop operations.

Maintenance personnel, as well as motorcoach company owners and managers with a strong interest in shop operations, always have been integral to Expo through their attendance at the annual Expo Maintenance Interchange or participation in the Expo Maintenance Competition.

In addition, hundreds of shop supervisors and mechanics have attended Expo to learn the latest trends and best practices through specific education tracks and networking opportunities.

Now, they'll be able to see specific maintenance products and services at the Maintenance Shop Pavilion.

"As director of general operations, one of my primary responsibilities is keeping my coaches running. I am very eager to visit the Maintenance Shop Pavilion at this coming UMA Expo to see all the products and services I need in my shop," said Edward N. Mason Jr. of First Priority Trailways in District Heights, Md.

And, in a comment directed to potential Expo exhibitors, Mason added: "If you have products or services to keep my coaches running smoothly, safely and cleanly — I want to see you there."

Next year's Expo again will feature motorcoach safety inspection demonstrations conducted on the Expo show floor by state enforcement personnel.

UMA Motorcoach Expo 2013 at Travel Exchange will be Jan. 20-24.

The event will mark the first collocation of UMA Expo with the Annual Meeting of the NTA (formerly the National Tour Association).

With the show roughly five months away, UMA reports motorcoach operator registration "is tracking well ahead of last year.

"We're already at nearly 50 percent of our total operator attendance goal," said UMA Meetings and Operations Manager Maggie Masterson. "Exhibit space is going fast, as well."

UMA says it's not too early for Expo exhibitors to start promoting their participation in the show.

To assist exhibiting companies make the most of their participation, UMA and its trade show partners have compiled a variety of marketing and promotional tools available to exhibitors (many at no cost).

The "Exhibitor Marketing Kit"

can be found at [www.motorcoachexpo.com](http://www.motorcoachexpo.com). The kit includes information on marketing opportunities, promotional and hospitality opportunities, editorial and advertising opportunities, and sponsorship opportunities, as well as who to contact to take advantage of the possibilities.

"You've confirmed your exhibit space, now it's time to take

advantage of these opportunities to help your company stand out, increase your brand recognition and drive traffic to your booth at UMA Motorcoach Expo at Travel Exchange," said Masterson.

For information on exhibiting at Expo, contact Scott Groves at (866) 287-3976, or email [uma@naylor.com](mailto:uma@naylor.com).

## The most cost-effective insurance program in the USA.



Willis | programs

## Next Stop: Maryland/Delaware!

High quality service is an important factor for success as you cater to a diverse group of travelers. Your customers expect a high level of comfort and service that differentiates your business from other modes of transportation. The Hartford and Smith Insurance are equally committed to providing high-quality insurance solutions through our insurance program designed specifically for charter operators.

We are currently in 46 states and have just recently been approved in Maryland and Delaware effective June 1st. Our depth of knowledge within your industry is underscored by our centralized underwriting for this special business. Depend on us to protect your business.



Contact the agent for The Hartford's  
Charter Operators Insurance Program  
**Fred J. Caffarelli**  
Senior Producer, Vice President  
800-962-0459 • [fcaffarelli@smithins.com](mailto:fcaffarelli@smithins.com)



# Krystal files for bankruptcy (again), vows to remain in business

BREA, Calif. — Krystal, which has held a leading position in U.S. limousine and cutaway bus production for years, has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection for the second time in two years.

Krystal Infiniti, a holding company set up by a Hong Kong-based lithium-ion battery maker in late 2010 to buy Krystal Koach out of bankruptcy, itself filed for Chapter 11 reorganization last month. In recent years, Krystal has operated under the name Krystal Enterprises.

In a statement, Krystal Founder and CEO Ed Grech said the company plans to stay in business developing, building and selling vehicles.

*Dow Jones Daily Bankruptcy Review* reported Krystal “doesn’t have the cash to purchase parts to continue manufacturing vehicles, but it does own 51 (vehicles) at various stages of completion.

“If it were to complete the production of those 51 and sell them, along with the real estate it owns, it would be able to pay secured creditors in full and provide a substantial distribution to unsecured creditors,” Dow Jones reported.



A Krystal Enterprises' International 3200 cutaway was on the show floor of UMA Motorcoach Expo 2011 in Tampa.

“So while the debtor does not know at this time whether an ultimate reorganization or going-concern sale of its business will be possible, there is no question whatsoever that the debtor’s creditors and its estate are substantially better off from the debtor’s continued business operations and completion

and sale of the debtor’s existing vehicles than they would be if the debtor ceased its operations and closed down at this time, which is the only other available option,” Krystal said in court documents.

“The company’s primary secured creditor is East West Bank, which is owed about \$6.5 million.

Comercia Bank has a secured loan valued at \$1.4 million, and unsecured creditors are owed \$2.9 million,” according to court documents.

Krystal was started by Grech nearly 30 years ago in a small Southern California auto body shop he operated. He grew the company

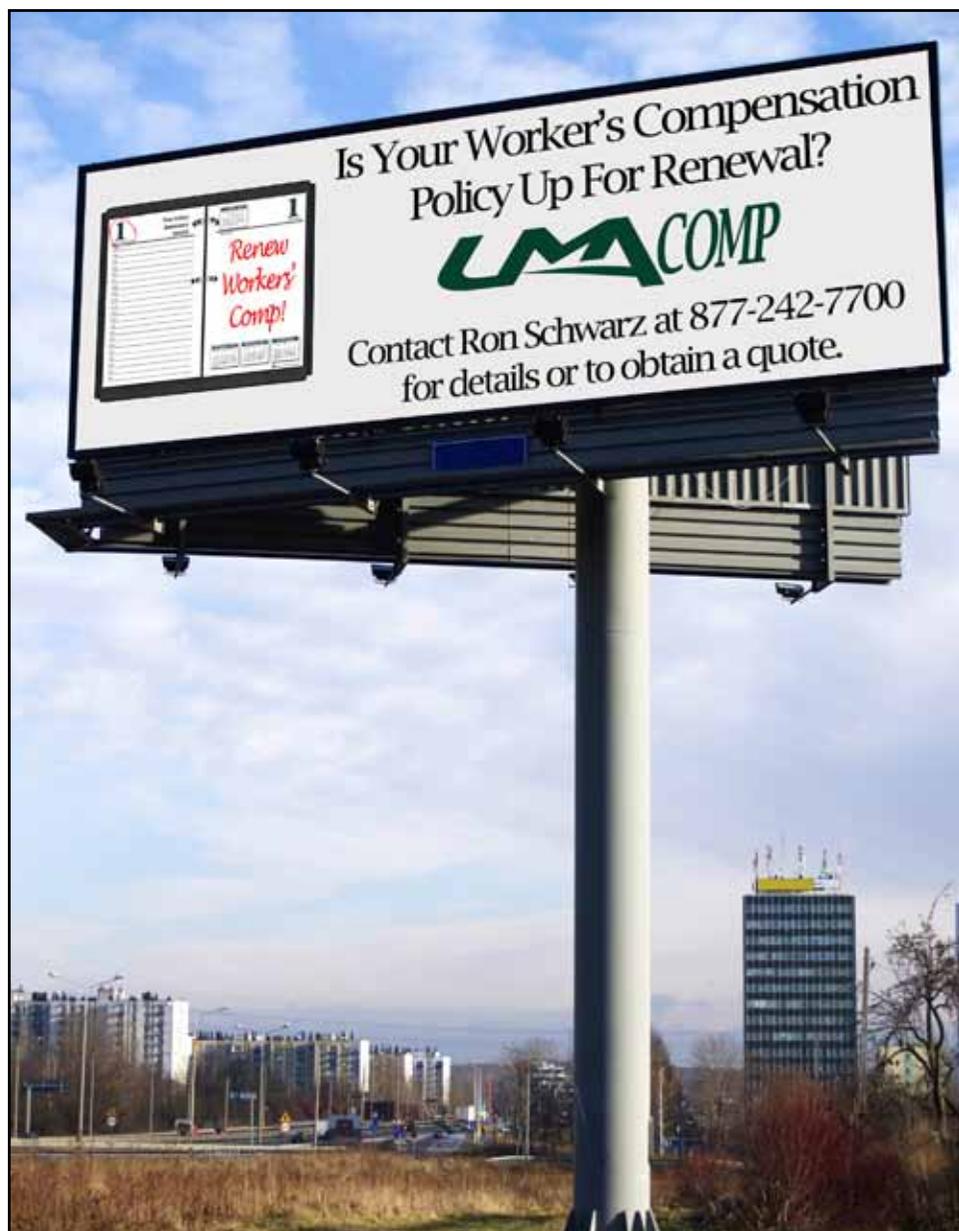
into the nation’s largest limousine converter, as well as a cutaway bus producer, hearse manufacturer, and passenger van converter.

“As our economy and industry have contracted, we, too, have faced many of the same difficult decisions and have had to adjust to the harsh realities — and continue to do so,” said Grech in his statement.

“We recently reached a point where we (were) forced to restructure. In order to continue to provide the best products to the industry, and to ensure the long-term success of Krystal’s valued employees, dealers and suppliers, we will be streamlining our operations to meet the level of demand.”

In addition to pointing to the economy and industry factors as contributing to the company’s financial collapse, Grech also indicated Krystal had stretched itself thin by focusing on selling conversion vans in China, and it overspent on developing the next generation of limousines based on the Lincoln MKT.

He asserted, however, that he and Krystal were committed to restoring viability to the business and “the long haul.”



## Mark Your Calendar Now!

Bus & Motorcoach Academy fall semester begins October 11<sup>th</sup>



### FEATURED COURSES

Business & Marketing I  
Business & Marketing II  
Human Resources

Driver Qualifications  
Passenger Issues  
Vehicle Maintenance

For more information or to register today, visit  
[www.uma.org/academy](http://www.uma.org/academy)



# Congress has opened a door for private bus operators

By Dave Millhouser

“Wild Bill,” despite his moniker, was one of our better drivers.

That is, until he got bored.

The boss made a mistake in giving him a whole day off on the far side of the country, and Bill decided to make the worst of it.

Cruising city streets in his ancient 4104, he found a little old lady at a bus stop. He picked her up, told her that since she'd been such a good customer of the Transit Authority for so many years... he was going to take her all the way to her front door for free.

Things would have worked out fine if she hadn't written a “thank you” note, whereupon the transit folks took offense that Bill's service was better than theirs.

Private-sector service is usually better because our customers have choices.

A wizened bus executive recently told me: “The new federal highway and public transportation law includes a section mandating increased private participation in public transportation, kicking doors wide open.

“However, the real concern

now is getting operators to walk through that door.”

His point is that, as an industry, we are often dependant on business finding us, and it may be time to start looking a bit harder. Like, at your local transit agency.

The same guy (I only know one “wizened executive”) said: “In 2011, transit riders took 10.2 billion trips on taxpayer-subsidized transportation. The last numbers we have for the motorcoach industry is 723 million passenger trips.”

Since the door is open, we ought to go after some of that business because we can do it better — and cheaper.

Transit authorities carry people but they're also involved in social engineering. For political reasons they pay better than their private counterparts. That wouldn't matter except for the fact they sometimes choose to compete with us, and try to disguise those numbers and other overhead.

In these troubled times we can help them, and make money, by taking some work off their hands.

I can think of two ways to get started. You'll think of more. One is to query trade associations like

‘As an industry, we are often dependant on business finding us. It may be time to start looking a bit harder.’

UMA and ABA. They know what's happening.

The other is to build a relationship with your local transit authority or authorities. If you're willing to do some of their routes, for less money, it helps them in several ways. Any cash you save them is available to do other things (hopefully the ones they do best).

In addition, at a time when they need to rationalize employee compensation, your presence provides some bargaining chips. If we don't act now, when the economy revives, the chance may be gone forever.

As the wizened executive says: “Things we are already good at work in any transportation enterprise...hiring, training and dispatching drivers, acquiring and maintaining appropriate equipment, and implementing sound

safety programs. If you do these things well, you can basically operate any transportation enterprise.”

You're probably wondering who this guy is...but I'm not gonna tell you because you wouldn't need me anymore.

In the early 1980s the old wood commuter rail bridge over Massachusetts' Danvers River burned, stranding trains in Salem, with no way to finish the final 20 miles to Rockport.

The only way to get people the rest of the way home was to bus them from Salem to the North Shore communities where they lived.

The bus company pressed into service belonged to some close friends and because the need was unexpected they were desperate for drivers...so desperate, in fact, they used me.

Since “Wild Bill” was a pal, and I'm a slow learner, I, too, took some folks directly to their doors, or dropped them somewhere more convenient than the assigned stop.

Within hours the bus company was informed that such behavior could not continue. We were



Dave Millhouser

trumping the normal service level of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

The bus company made good money providing superior service for more than a year, until the old wood rail bridge was replaced by a modern concrete structure.

Years later, when the bus company had fallen on hard times, and was eager to find new business, one of the owners came to me and asked “do you know how to make concrete burn?”

I still don't know how to make concrete burn, but I'm convinced there are other ways to find good paying work serving public transportation authorities.

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



## DRIVEN BY SAFETY

Protective Insurance Company's loss prevention team members are specialists in the transportation industry. Understanding that not all companies are the same, we follow a collaborative and customized approach to partner with our insureds, addressing their specific safety and risk management needs. Backed by an A+ rating from A.M. Best and more than 80 years in the industry, we're committed to helping you keep your drivers safe.

CONTACT STACY RENZ: (800) 644-5501  
[protectiveinsurance.com](http://protectiveinsurance.com)

 **Protective**  
Insurance Company

# Inspections at Grand Canyon nail operators

GRAND CANYON, Ariz. — The motorcoach inspection blitz conducted annually at Grand Canyon National Park resulted in a noticeably higher bus out-of-service rate this year, but the percentage of drivers ordered off the road dropped.

This year's safety inspections were conducted over a two-day period, versus three days last year, but nearly as many buses were checked by officers from the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the National Park Service and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

A total of 207 coaches were inspected with 28, or 13.5 percent,

put out of service for mechanical violations. The most significant violations noted by Arizona Highway Patrol inspectors were brakes, tires, exhaust leaks, stop lamps/turn signals, and battery corrosion.

Corrosion on batteries and battery cable ends continues to be a controversial topic during bus inspections because keeping batteries totally corrosion free can be challenging.

But, as has become painfully obvious in recent years, any coach maintenance personnel who aren't regularly checking coach battery compartments for corrosion — and getting rid of it — are inviting out-of-service orders.

Seven drivers, or 4 percent, were placed out of service during the Grand Canyon checks, with the most significant violations being hours-of-service infractions, false records of duty status, suspended driver's license and not wearing corrective lenses as required.

One driver was arrested on a Grand Canyon National Park warrant for an unpaid violation from two years ago. Twenty-eight drivers were cited by the National Park Service for permit violations.

FMCSA inspectors, apparently checking agency databases, found one coach that did not have operating authority.

This year's inspections were

conducted Aug. 14-15. Last year, the inspections took place Sept. 26-28.

A total of 218 motorcoaches were inspected last September, with a vehicle out-of-service rate of 9 percent (20 coaches). The driver out-of-service rate last year was 10 percent (22 drivers).

The Grand Canyon is not necessarily a wonderful spot to be placed out of service.

Although some maintenance services are nearby, the nearest city, Flagstaff, Ariz. (population 66,000), is roughly 90 miles away. Phoenix is nearly four hours away and Las Vegas is four and one-half hours away.

## Roadcheck 2012

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

able to proceed back to their origination points as scheduled and promised.

Many fewer motorcoaches — 652 — were inspected during Roadcheck this year. A total of 1,217 buses were checked last year during the CVSA sweep, compared to 1,097 in 2010 and 932 in 2009.

There was speculation the drop in bus inspections this year resulted from a pair of factors.

Last year, bus safety was a front-burner issue for enforcement officials across the U.S. after a string of high-profile fatal motorcoach crashes during the spring.

Second, tight budgets may have forced many commercial bus safety

enforcement agencies and units to choose between participating in the CVSA-sponsored Roadcheck and the Federal Motorcoach Safety Administration-sponsored National Passenger Carrier Strike Force that concluded in late August. (See related story on Page XX.)

Roughly 10.5 percent of the buses inspected during Roadcheck this year were checked by safety officials in one state — Texas. A total of 69 motorcoaches were inspected at destination stops across the Lone Star state.

The out-of-service rate for the Texas coaches was an embarrassing 26 percent, more than triple the national rate. And the out-of-service rate for Texas motorcoach drivers was 5 percent, double the national rate. (See Aug. 1 *Bus &*

*Motorcoach News*.)

Overall, buses accounted for less than 1 percent of all commercial vehicles inspected during Roadcheck 2012.

A total of 74,072 trucks and buses were inspected this year by an estimated 9,500 CVSA- and FMCSA-certified inspectors at roughly 2,500 locations across North America.

The overall out-of-service rate for all vehicles inspected this year was 20.9 percent and 4.6 percent for drivers. Both numbers were higher than last year's 19.3 percent for vehicles and 4.2 percent for drivers.

The number of trucks inspected this year increased to 73,420 from 69,495 in 2011 and 65,327 in 2010, which likely reflects more big rigs being on the road, and the

increased number of inspectors this year. Only 8,000 inspectors participated last year.

"Once again Roadcheck effectively identifies and removes from the road truck and bus companies that cut corners at the expense of safety," said FMCSA Administrator Anne S. Ferro. "FMCSA embraces Roadcheck 100 percent and for good reason — it enforces high safety standards and improves roadway safety for everyone."

Roadcheck organizer and sponsor, CVSA, is a nonprofit organization comprised of local, state, provincial, territorial and federal motor carrier safety enforcement officials and industry representatives from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. For more information, go to [www.cvsa.org](http://www.cvsa.org).

## 'Hearing loop' pioneer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

passengers, a crying baby, background music, or nearby conversations.

There are an estimated 1.4 million Michigan residents who have hearing loss, a number that's expected to double during the next 10 years. About 11 percent of the general population has significant hearing loss, as well as one-third of people 65 and older.

An executive with Contacta

Inc. of Holland, Mich., which helped engineer the system for the first two Indian Trails' coaches, said the response from passengers "was unbelievable."

Since so many Indian Trails' riders are older adults, the percentage wearing hearing aids was unusually high and those individuals were thrilled they could now hear announcements, as well as A/V-system programming.

After examining the Indian Trails' coaches, Contacta quickly determined that a ceiling installa-

tion was the quickest and easiest, and provided exceptional sound quality.

A second Holland-based company, Hearing Loop Systems, assisted with the custom design and engineering.

### How it happened

Indian Trails became interested in the technology largely by happenstance.

A company employee, whose mother is deaf, heard about hearing loops on National Public Radio

Justice Cozzens's ruling — unlike the four previous dismissals of suits seeking to block the tax — found the state legislature and then-Gov. David Paterson had run afoul of the home-rule provisions in the state constitution when enacting the tax in 2009.

That constitutional clause bars the state from passing "special" laws that affect individual municipalities if local legislative bodies have not approved them.

The state will continue to collect revenue through the payroll tax as the MTA pursues its appeal, officials said.

and mentioned it to his supervisor. The supervisor brought the idea up during meetings with MDOT officials, who liked the idea of testing the concept.

MDOT agreed to pay for the system, while Indian Trails offered to install it in its coaches once it was engineered. An Indian Trails technician quickly was able to master installing the system in two or three coaches in a single day.

"MDOT was excited about this opportunity to provide state funds to Indian Trails to allow Indian Trails to make hearing loops available on a portion of its fleet and two intercity bus stations," said Sharon Edgar, administrator of the MDOT Office of Passenger Transportation.

"MDOT and Indian Trails share a commitment to increasing the accessibility of our transportation system."

### Haven't heard of hearing loops?

If hearing loops are a new concept to you, there's a reason why.

"Because hearing aids work far better when a hearing loop is available, and because hearing loops are common in Great Britain, Scandi-

## National strike force

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Patrol Commercial Vehicle Section and the MnDOT Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicles, inspected 52 buses and limousines.

A total of 11 citations were issued and 74 warnings were given for various driver and vehicle violations.

Three drivers were ordered off the road and 16 buses were placed out of service for equipment violations. In total, 25 out-of-service violations were discovered between drivers, buses and limousines — a remarkably high, combined out-of-service rate of 48 percent.

In addition, the Minnesota strike force conducted evening and late-night inspections at major concert and convention venues around the state.

In Kentucky, State Police, working with FMCSA inspectors and local law enforcement agencies, conducted sweeps across the commonwealth, including checks at casinos, theme parks, historical sites, border crossings and carrier facilities.

One detail, in Simpson County, along the Tennessee-Kentucky border, inspected 10 coaches, with two of the drivers put out of service.

"When you can take an unsafe driver who is operating a vehicle with 40 to 60 passengers off the road, it makes you feel good and lets you know that these details can and do work and produce results," said Sgt. Kelly Anderson of the Kentucky State Police.

navia, Australia, and New Zealand, I'm often asked why more of them haven't been installed in the U.S.," said Prof. Myers.

"The answer is that our federal disability laws require most public facilities with 50 or more seats to provide unspecified assistive listening devices, which they tend to do by letting visitors borrow earphones and pocket-size receivers that tune into FM broadcast signals or infrared waves."

However, most people won't bother with earphones, notes Myers.

But if a hearing loop is available, it's easy to flip a switch on a hearing aid to get sound from the telecoil. Hearing aids can customize the output of hearing loop sound to suit one's particular hearing needs, he explained.

Michigan and Wisconsin are among states that have more hearing loop installations than elsewhere.

Hundreds of west Michigan facilities, for example, are now "looped," including churches, auditoriums, libraries and community centers, as well as DeVos Convention Center.

## NYMTA lawsuit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

wrote in his seven-page decision last month that the tax was unconstitutionally passed by the legislature.

"The MTA payroll tax is a special law, which does not serve a substantial state interest," Cozzens wrote. "This law should have been, according to the state constitution, passed with either a home rule message or by message of necessity with two-thirds vote in each house. This did not occur, therefore, this law was passed unconstitutionally."

The New York MTA immedi-

ately pushed back against the ruling, saying it would appeal. The MTA also noted that four previous court rulings upheld the tax and its passage.

Last year, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed an overhaul that rolled back the direct proceeds from the tax by more than \$300 million annually, but required the state to make up that amount through other revenue sources.

Oponents of the tax argue it unfairly burdens businesses outside the city to pay for transportation services that mainly serve city residents and certain suburbs.

# From Alberta To Alabama

The Columbia Icefield, at right, between Banff and Jasper national parks in Alberta served as a backdrop for inspections. In Alabama, below left, Highway Patrol Cpl. Donald Shepard reviews a logbook during last month's National Passenger Carrier Strike Force, while Trooper Andra Williams, at right, checks an engine compartment. A television crew recorded the event.



**AMAYA**

THE BEST TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR SAFETY AND COMFORT

**ASTRON**

- AMAYA-ASTRON SEATING MEXICO  
Phone: +52 (55) 5881 2007  
email: donovan@amaya-astron.com.mx
- SALES REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE U.S. AND CANADA  
*George Farrell*  
Phone: (864) 895 4127  
email: gfarr007@aol.com
- Darrell Niswander*  
Phone: (419) 892 2377  
email: darnis1@aol.com
- TRANSIT SALES  
Phone: (610) 265 3610  
email: info@4one.com

 Grupo Amaya-Astron  
 @amayaastron

[www.amaya-astron.com.mx](http://www.amaya-astron.com.mx)



**Torino G Plus**



**A-2TEN**



# 'Border Crisis' bus tour wins operator global award

TUCSON, Ariz. — A Tucson-based motorcoach operator that offers one of the most unusual bus tours anywhere has won this year's Gray Line Worldwide "most creative tour" award.

The tour, operated by Citizen Auto Stages/Gray Line Tours of Tucson, is called "Border Crisis: Fact and Fiction."

The tour, which Citizen Auto Stages/Gray Line of Tucson began offering last year, takes passengers on a three- to four-hour trip from Tucson to the U.S.-Mexico border

area where illegal immigrants cross into Arizona.

More individuals are believed to have illegally crossed into the United States from Mexico — through the desert of southern Arizona — in the past 20 years than anywhere else in the U.S.

Tour takers hear from ranchers, federal law enforcement officials, humanitarian workers, border business people and others.

They also get a lunch catered north of the border by the famous La Roca restaurant in Nogales,

Sonora, Mexico.

The tour, however, doesn't cross the border into Mexico.

The man behind the tour is Thomas "TJ" Morgan, CEO of Gray Line Tucson.

Morgan was in Paris, France, late last month to accept the award at the Gray Line Worldwide 2012 Annual General Meeting and Marketing Conference.

When Morgan, a native of Nogales, Ariz., learned his tour had been nominated for the award he put together a presentation for the

Gray Line convention. He used video segments from television coverage the tour has generated in his presentation.

Gray Line Tucson runs one or two of the tours each month, depending on demand.

There have been as few as 8 people, to as many as 55 passengers on the tours, tour guide Bob Feinman told an Arizona newspaper.

The price is \$75 to \$89 per person, depending on discounts and other factors.

The most common passenger

reaction to the trip has been one of moderation and increasing nuance in their views about the border, Feinman told the Arizona *Daily Star*.

"We don't try to convince people to be Republicans or Democrats, liberals or conservatives. We just want the border to speak to them so they can make their minds up."



T. J. Morgan

# Subsidies for convention centers are in spotlight

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Democratic National Convention here this month has focused new attention on the price cities are paying to capture convention business.

There is no question that having the Democrats here is the most prestigious event ever hosted by the city, bringing tens of thousands of visitors and worldwide exposure.

Local boosters see it as the crowning achievement of the city's two-decade drive to become a world-class convention destination.

What's less known are the tens of millions of dollars in taxpayer money spent to compete in the convention industry, and the oftentimes wildly inflated projections of economic impact used to justify the Charlotte Convention Center's construction and expansions, the *Charlotte Observer* reported last month.

The newspaper said that neither the city of Charlotte nor the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority have scrutinized how the convention center has performed.

"Elected officials who oversee it do not understand it," said the paper.

Yet, officials have continued to pour taxpayer money into the convention business, even in the face of a national glut of meeting space and Charlotte's inability to fill its building.

The Charlotte Convention Center has cost taxpayers as much as \$30

million in a single year for construction debt, operating losses and incentives worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to win business.

The promised payback from the investment hasn't materialized, the newspaper asserted.

## Taxpayers on the hook

Meanwhile, Charlotte residents pick up much of the tab. Most convention center funding comes from a countywide 1 percent tax on restaurant and bar bills — a majority of which is paid by Mecklenburg County residents who dine out.

Since its 1995 opening, the center has fallen dramatically short of projections. When the center was being planned, it was forecast to produce 528,800 hotel-room nights a year to fulfill its mission of putting "heads in beds."

That would have been about 20 percent of all rooms sold in the county. It has never come close to that projection.

In fiscal 2011, it produced 142,000 room nights — 2.7 percent of all rooms sold in Mecklenburg, according to an *Observer* analysis of hospitality industry data.

It would take hosting five Democratic conventions a year, every year, to meet the original projections.

The Charlotte Convention Center is empty most of the time, with its exhibition halls used 35 percent of the time last year. The

average for similar-sized convention centers is 57 percent.

Charlotte struggles to fill its center in part because there is so much competition with other cities, which have made large investments in convention centers even as the meetings industry has been in a slump.

The result is too much meeting space and too little demand.

## Giving away the store

Charlotte has joined a common practice among second-tier tourism cities in offering deep discounts to groups to win their business.

According to the newspaper, to land the American Bus Association Marketplace in 2009, for instance, the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority paid the group's rent at the convention center, worth \$136,000; it paid the ABA more than \$200,000 to help sponsor Marketplace conventions in 2007 and 2008; it spent \$100,000 on a party for the group at the Charlotte Motor Speedway, and it offered \$125,000 on other expenses, including \$8,000 in limo rides for convention VIPs.

The ABA is back in Charlotte in January for Marketplace 2012.

The American Legion, coming to Charlotte in 2014, is penciled in for \$440,000 of discounts, including \$360,000 in free rent.

But, reported the *Observer*, even opening the checkbook doesn't mean Charlotte gets the

best conventions.

A majority of the city's high-profile events — which have required large subsidies — are part of an industry category called SMERF, which stands for social, military, educational, religious and fraternal.

Unlike a major convention or trade show, most SMERF attendees pay their own way. And most are on tight budgets.

## Padding estimates

In estimating what convention attendees spend, the CRVA has routinely made erroneous claims, sometimes contradicting itself.

When Charlotte landed the 2010 National Rifle Association convention — one of the city's — biggest-ever meetings — the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority estimated gun enthusiasts would spend \$10.3 million.

After the NRA left, the CRVA inexplicably increased that total by 600 percent, adding tens of millions of dollars of spending that was trumpeted to the public.

In other events, the visitors authority said some conventions were attended by thousands more people than actually showed. For a recent Shriners convention, the tourism authority overestimated attendance by 40,000 people.

The Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, which manages the center, and the city, which owns the building, argues that the center's

economic benefits remain crucial for the growth of Charlotte.

Cities across the country, including Charlotte, believe convention centers are must-haves, like stadiums or museums. They argue that conventions give their cities nationwide exposure, making it easier to attract businesses.

In a bid to capture more and bigger conventions, a new convention hotel was built in 2003 and an edition, called the Crown Ballroom, added 40,000 square feet of space three years later.

The city got a bump but no lasting increase.

## Lots of competition

One problem: As Charlotte was expanding its convention center other cities were doing the same thing.

The amount of exhibit space nationwide increased from 52 million square feet in 2000, to 70 million in 2010, a jump of 35 percent, according to data compiled by a professor at the University of Texas-San Antonio.

Raleigh, N.C., for instance, opened a \$225 million convention center five years ago. Nashville is building a nearly \$600 million center. Indianapolis, another Charlotte competitor, finished a \$275 million expansion in 2010.

While Charlotte and other cities expanded, the value of hosting meetings and conventions didn't grow as it did in the 1990s.

The industry slumped after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. That dip deepened after the 2008 financial crisis.

On paper, the Charlotte Convention Center's decline hasn't been as bad as the drop in other cities.

But that's because the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority counts a basketball tournament as a convention center event because it hosts a fan fest. The tournament produces 41,000 hotel-room nights. That's more than 25 percent of the center's hotel business.

## Charter rule challenge

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

mittee, wrote in emails sent to operators and organizations inquiring about providing buses for the convention.

"Should you or your membership have those types of vehicles, please contact me at your earliest convenience," Ballard added.

UMA, which filed the Super Bowl complaint last year, has not lodged a complaint in connection with the Democrats convention

and the possible charter service being provided by CATS. It says it's "monitoring the developments closely."

"We have been in touch with operators and the Transportation Management Team, and the situation appears fluid as the DNCC finalizes its plans," said UMA Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Ken Presley.

"We're seeing requests for additional vehicles and a few cancellations as the DNCC firms up its plans.

"It is always better when non-publicly funded bus and motorcoach companies work closely with the chartering parties and public officials to maximize the use of privately-funded resources, while all the while prioritizing the public's needs," he said.

"Third-party transportation management companies have their own priorities and they are not always consistent with that of private operators," Presley noted.

"UMA has a reputation for insisting on strong adherence to the



**Secure from Anywhere**

**GoChart2000**

Charter Management System

**GoTour Online**

Tour Management System



**GoChart2000:** Features include customer and contract management, vehicle inventory, scheduling and dispatch, accounts receivable, and numerous accounting and operations reports. Additional modules include: Prophesy Mileage and Routing, GoMile3000 (IFTA reporting), Driver Duty (payroll and time management), Email, Advanced Accounting and Advance Dispatch management and reporting; and more!

**Introducing! Web Manager Module:** Provides secure data transfer via the internet and browser access to GoChart2000 data over the web or in the office. Features include: Credit Card Processing, Quote Requests, Faster Downloads, and special requests for GoChart2000 Data Access via the web, including web access to Driver's Schedules.

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

**GoTour Online (GTO):** Our browser based tour reservations and itinerary management system designed for the Motorcoach and Tour Industry. Manages reservations, itineraries, payables, receivables; produces management reports and customer documents for group and retail tours. Available online credit card authorization. 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.

Call us today at 800-448-7001 or visit our website at [www.rbs2000.com](http://www.rbs2000.com) to request an evaluation copy of GoChart2000 or visit [www.gotouronline.com](http://www.gotouronline.com) to request a user name and password to access our GoTour Online demo site.

# Making hiring less of a guessing game



- Domestic & Foreign Criminal Checks
- Previous Employment & Education Checks
- Drug Screening
- Social Media Searches

AMERISEARCH  
**BACKGROUND**  
ALLIANCE

[www.amerisearchbga.com](http://www.amerisearchbga.com)  
1-800-569-6133



**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](http://www.CoachGlass.com)

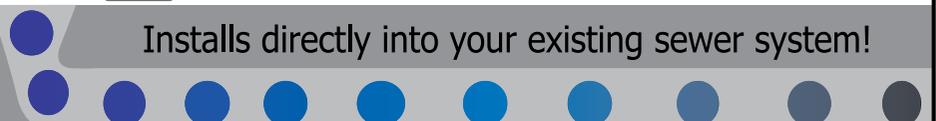
**(541) 684-7868**  
[Bus@CoachGlass.com](mailto:Bus@CoachGlass.com)

# LAVATORY HOPPER

**Dispose of bus lavatory waste legally, cleanly, and easily. Visit [www.lavdump.com](http://www.lavdump.com)**

**HUDSON RIVER CORPORATION**  
1-866-528-3867 fax 1-201-420.3322  
[lavdump@yahoo.com](mailto:lavdump@yahoo.com) [www.lavdump.com](http://www.lavdump.com)

Installs directly into your existing sewer system!



## Calendar

### SEPTEMBER 2012

**10-12** 17th annual BusCon, Navy Pier, Chicago. Info: [www.BusConExpo.com](http://www.BusConExpo.com).

**12-14** 2012 International Fuel Tax Association/International Registration Plan Managers and Law Enforcement Workshop, Hilton Phoenix East, Mesa, Ariz. Info: [www.iftach.org](http://www.iftach.org).

**13-16** 2012 North Carolina Motorcoach Association/Virginia Motorcoach Association Joint Annual Meeting & Marketplace, Benton Convention Center and Marriott Winston-Salem, Winston-Salem, N.C. Info: [www.ncmotorcoach.org](http://www.ncmotorcoach.org) or [www.vamotorcoach.com](http://www.vamotorcoach.com).

**23-27** Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Annual Conference & Exposition, Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland, Maine. Info: [www.cvsaa.org](http://www.cvsaa.org).

### OCTOBER 2012

**2-4** Northwest Motorcoach Association 13th Annual Convention and Roadeo, Pasco/Tri-Cities, Wash. Info: Email [nwmotorcoach@aol.com](mailto:nwmotorcoach@aol.com).

**17** Museum of Bus Transportation Annual Meeting, Hershey, Pa. Info: (717) 566-7100 ext. 119, or [www.buseum.org](http://www.buseum.org).

**21-23** Bus Association of New York State Annual Meeting and Marketplace, Info at: [www.BANYbus.org](http://www.BANYbus.org).

**27-30** California Bus Association Annual Convention & Trade Show, Fess Parker Doubletree Resort, Santa Barbara. Info: [www.cbabus.com](http://www.cbabus.com).

### NOVEMBER 2012

**29-Dec. 1** Motor Coach Canada Connections West, Grande Rockies Resort, Canmore, Alberta. Info: [www.motorcoachcanada.com](http://www.motorcoachcanada.com) or email [laura@motorcoachcanada.com](mailto:laura@motorcoachcanada.com).

## A cautionary tale about charters

WASHINGTON — This is one of those stories that'll make you feel good you don't operate an airline.

But don't gloat tooooooo much. It's not hard to imagine regulators or legislators casting their eyes in the direction of the motorcoach industry over the same issue.

Here's the story.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has fined World Atlantic Airlines \$180,000 for violating federal rules protecting air travelers when their charter flight is suddenly canceled.

World Atlantic was one of several carriers operating flights for Direct Air, a charter operator also known as Myrtle Beach Direct Air & Tours, which ceased operating in March.

Direct Air arranged charters from a number of cities in the Midwest and Northeast to Myrtle Beach, S.C., and cities in Florida.

"Our public charter rules are designed to protect consumers from sudden cancellations and being stranded away from home with no return flight," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

"We will continue to hold airlines and charter operators accountable when they fail to respect the rights of charter passengers."

World Atlantic stopped flying charters for Direct Air on March 13, following a week in which Direct Air failed to pay the carrier all the money it was owed for operating the flights.

A number of payments prior to that were late.

A slew of passengers did not receive the service they paid Direct Air for when World Atlantic canceled the flights it was scheduled to operate for Direct Air.

In issuing its fine against World Atlantic, the Justice Department's Aviation Enforcement Office said the carrier violated rules requiring it be paid prior to operating a public charter flight and prohibiting the cancellation of such flights less than 10 days before their scheduled departure.

In addition, the carrier providing the transportation is required to assure return flights for all U.S.-originating round-trip passengers who have flown the outbound leg of their trip.

Carriers also are required to

make a reasonable effort to ensure the charter operator for which they are providing flights is complying with the public charter rules.

The Justice Department Enforcement Office noted that the late payments should have prompted World Atlantic to look into whether Direct Air was following the rules. The department is continuing to investigate Direct Air's shutdown.

There is anecdotal evidence that sudden cancellation of charters is a continuing issue in the motorcoach industry, along with charter groups left stranded when the coach they've arranged simply doesn't show up.

The problem appears to be complicated or exacerbated by bus brokers that misrepresent themselves as bus operators, and customer perception that a broker is an operator.

However, brokers are not the only offenders, with examples aplenty of operators leaving customers abandoned.

It may only be a matter of time before there's an egregious incident and consumer complaints catch the attention of regulators and/or legislators.

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING



### 3 TO CHOOSE FROM!

Over 500 K miles. All have Series 60 Detroit, B500 Allison Transmissions. Seating capacity is 57. Currently in service with VERY COLD Therma King A/C systems! All have 5 month old paint jobs. **Asking \$33,000 each.**

**Please call for info at 757-494-1480 or email us at jimmy@venturebustours.com**

### 2003 E4500 ~ Low Mile ~ One Owner ~ 58 Seats Lift Equipped Coach • 8 Tie Down Stations

**Bus converts seats in less than 1 minute with Flip Seats**

Approx. 240,000 original miles  
Detroit Diesel Series 60 Engine  
Allison B500R transmission (hydraulic retarder)  
Michelin Tires (not retreads)  
Enhanced sound system w/ AM/FM/CD/DVD/PA system  
Cordless mic & 6 monitors



**Asking \$199,000 OBO**  
**Marc: 808.832.6261**  
or [sales@RoyalStarHawaii.com](mailto:sales@RoyalStarHawaii.com)

## Diesel fuel prices

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

long-term efforts to achieve energy independence, the crude coming from oil shale in North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Texas and elsewhere is better suited to making gasoline than diesel fuel.

### Crude oil mismatch

"Most of our crude is super light and super sweet," Kloza explained. "Our refineries were not really built to process it. (The upshot is that) refineries running it will make more gasoline than diesel. Some estimates are that they will produce 10-percent-to-as-much-as-17-percent-less diesel."

Right now, Kloza noted, the United States exports diesel, primarily to Central and South America. If domestic production swings toward gasoline, the U.S. may have to import diesel while exporting

gasoline, for which there is less demand worldwide.

Meanwhile, demand for diesel fuel — both in the U.S. and around the world — is expanding. Just one domestic example: Demand for diesel is brisk in the new oil and natural gas fields being developed in the U.S., which utilize huge numbers of trucks and other diesel-powered equipment in fracking operations.

Diesel fuel also may replace more fuel oil in the northeast this winter because of fuel oil market conditions and new rules requiring cleaner fuel.

It all adds up to higher diesel prices.

### Then again...

There are, of course, caveats in Kloza's forecast that could cancel a rise in prices or even create a drop.

"Diesel is THE international bellwether product," he explained.

## Tire warning

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The FMCSA said its "Motorcoach Safety Advisory Bulletin" is meant to raise awareness of the issue within the bus industry, and it urged companies to take action to prevent potential safety risks.

"Travelers have a right to expect that their bus will be safe and well-maintained, and bus companies have a responsibility to make

sure it is," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

The bulletin says "safe motorcoach operators" should have policies and procedures in place to monitor the loading of their vehicles, and take appropriate action — "such as reducing passenger/cargo loads, distributing passengers throughout the bus, or increasing tire pressure — to ensure they remain within the allowable tire weight rating and state vehicle

weight limits."

The FMCSA said it's working with state officials to increase enforcement of tire safety provisions of federal and state laws.

According to the agency, a tire on a motorcoach loaded beyond its weight rating, operated at highway speeds for a significant period of time, is more likely to overheat and fail, potentially placing the safety of passengers and other motorists at risk.

## 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"



# THE EXCEPTIONAL EFFICIENCY OF AN INTEGRATED POWERTRAIN



The Volvo 9700 consistently delivers a profitable combination of performance, efficiency and passenger-pleasing comfort. With its dependable Volvo D13 SCR engine, you get a proven platform that saves fuel and minimizes maintenance. The integrated I-Shift transmission takes fuel economy to the next level by keeping engine speed in the sweet spot. Advanced safety features add bumper-to-bumper protection. And wherever you go, you're backed by our extensive network of Prevest professional service providers. The Volvo 9700 is known around the globe for its high productivity and low operating cost. Here in North America, it's the best way to accelerate your bottom line. Learn more at [www.prevestcar.com](http://www.prevestcar.com).



35 Gagnon Blvd., Ste-Claire QC, G0R 2V0, Canada | USA 1-877-773-8678 | Canada 418-883-3391





“Are your tour groups getting smaller?”

**A TEMSA IS THE SOLUTION FOR YOU.**

**SAVE on:**

- ✓ Equipment cost
- ✓ Fuel
- ✓ Insurance
- ✓ Tolls
- ✓ Cost to operate

**QUALITY:**

- ✓ Cummins Allison driveline
- ✓ Independent front suspension
- ✓ Superb European quality and craftsmanship

**DURABILITY:**

The only integral designed 30 and 35 foot vehicles in the U.S.

**COMFORT:**

Has all the amenities of a 45 foot coach - ride, handling, quiet travel.



**CH BUS SALES**

Exclusive Distributor  
[www.chbussales.com](http://www.chbussales.com)

Tony Mongiovi  
Eastern Region  
856-325-0094

Tim Vaught  
Southern Region  
817-994-8692

Tim Guldin  
Southeast Region  
407-625-9207

Randy Kolesar  
Western Region  
310-503-8892

Randy Angell  
Midwest Region  
507-331-7911