

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Coach industry ready for seatbelt mandate

WASHINGTON — Motorcoach manufacturers and buyers have adapted far ahead of federal regulations that will require new motorcoaches and large buses to be equipped with lap and shoulder belts for the driver and all passengers.

A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration rule requiring new vehicles to be equipped with three-point seatbelts takes effect on November 28.

“We will deliver our last order of seats without belts in October,” said Tony Cunnane of Kiel North America in Elkhart, Ind. “We are probably supplying 90 to 95 percent of our seats with belts now. The private motorcoach sector has

been buying seatbelts since 2012, at least.”

Donovan Albarran, export sales director for Amaya-Astron Seating in Cuautitlán Izcalli, Mexico, said the company was producing few belted seats for original equipment manufacturers and their customers a decade ago.

“Over the years the volume has grown incrementally,” Albarran said. “Today seats with three-point seatbelts represent over 90 percent of our total production.”

While public transit agencies generally have not adopted belted seats ahead of the federal rule, the motorcoach industry has been on board for several years, Cunnane

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By the time the mandate that all new motorcoaches be equipped with seatbelts takes effect this fall, much of the industry will already have been in compliance for years. Photo courtesy of First Class Tours in Houston.

## Public support for transit good for coach operators

WASHINGTON — Nearly three-quarters of Americans support using tax dollars to create, expand and improve public transportation in their communities and say Congress should increase the level of federal spending on public transportation infrastructure, a recent poll found.

(See related stories on pages 6 and 8.)

The survey, conducted by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in conjunction with the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI), was released at a time when politicians in America are calling for more infrastructure funding.

“Both of the presidential candidates are talking about the need for infrastructure investment to meet a growing demand from the public,” said APTA Chair Valarie J. McCall. “This poll shows that American voters understand that an investment in public transit is a vital part

of our national infrastructure.”

APTA noted that the candidates are focusing on infrastructure investment, including public transportation, because it significantly impacts the middle class both in providing jobs and creating access to jobs.

For instance, every \$1 billion invested in public transit creates more than 50,000 jobs. In addition,

every dollar invested in public transportation generates \$4 in economic returns.

“We appreciate that the candidates have acknowledged the important need for public transit infrastructure investment,” said Richard A. White, APTA acting president and CEO. “Congress and the administration took a good first step last December as they authorized

long-term surface transportation investment that included public transit.

“However, we must address the public transit industry’s \$86 billion backlog of state of good repair needs. In addition, it is essential we continue to expand public transportation because a robust system creates jobs and helps our communities grow.”

Ken Presley, the United Motorcoach Association’s vice president of industry relations and COO, said that based on the poll results, motorcoach operators should position themselves to serve the increasing needs of their communities.”

“As taxpayers continue to invest in public transit, much of that investment will be in rail and bus rapid transit,” Presley said. “Both of these modes require tremendous public capital investments. This likely creates substantial opportunities for private operators to serve suburban communities and outlying communities where the typical motorcoach is more appropriate.”

He added that using “capital cost of contract” formulas, public transit agencies “are able to contract with private providers to furnish service at reduced costs to the taxpayer and only purchase that capital required to meet the public need while greatly expanding the

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## UMA to launch Expo driver competition

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association will introduce the first-ever UMA Annual International Driver Competition for motorcoach drivers at the 2017 UMA Motorcoach Expo in St. Louis.

The competition will take place on February 28.

“Many state and regional associations hold competitions,” said UMA Chairman Dale Krapf of Krapf Coaches in West Chester, Pa.

“These best-of-the-best drivers will have an opportunity to compete nationally and receive the recognition they deserve.”

Eligibility includes membership in the UMA Driver Member program, participation in the UMA Safe Driver Recognition Program, championship in a state or regional competition and/or recommendation from their employer.

Contestants are eligible for complimentary hotel stay and a

free 2017 UMA Motorcoach Expo registration.

The UMA National Champion will receive a cash prize, trophy, framed certificate and recognition at UMA National Headquarters.

“UMA continues to give career drivers the high profile their profession deserves,” Krapf said.

For additional information and to register for the competition, please visit <http://motorcoachexpo.com/uma-driver-competition>.

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# Only you can prevent shop fires caused by fluids, rags

Spontaneous combustion on a pile of oil-soaked rags was blamed for an August fire that heavily damaged a Fraternal Order of Eagles Lodge and forced a two-hour closure of the adjacent Oak Ridge Turnpike in Oak Ridge, Tenn.

The lodge may need to be rebuilt because the fire's heat twisted steel support beams.

The Oak Ridge Fire Department told local media this was the fourth fire there in the past four years caused by the spontaneous combustion of oily rags. A July fire in an Oak Ridge furniture shop also was attributed to oily rags.

While the oils used in the typical motorcoach shop are not likely to combust spontaneously, they are flammable and there are many other fire hazards that often are overlooked, said safety consultant Matt Daecher, president of Daecher Consulting Group in Camp Hill, Pa.

"Most people in transportation companies obviously focus on the safety of transportation and not really on shop or workplace safety because their risks are greater on the transportation side," he said. "A young company or a company that has grown while never having an issue in the shop might not even

be aware of these things.

"Almost all of the fluids used in buses are flammable and have some kind of petroleum content," Daecher said. "Understanding that and keeping them away from heat sources is important."

Some types of oils, such as those used in furniture finishing, are more hazardous, he said. "When that stuff dries it oxidizes and heats up. If you have enough of those rags the heat from the oxidizing can reach the point that they can catch fire without a spark.

"Any rag soaked in flammable liquids is flammable. There is an OSHA (Occupational Safety and

Health Administration) regulation that says all oily rags should be kept in a metal container with a self-closing lid that is kept away from heat sources."

Oxygen and acetylene tanks are leading hazards in maintenance shops.

"Oxygen by itself is not dangerous but when you combine it with a spark or flame and acetylene, it heats to the point it can be used for torching and welding," Daecher said.

Welding carts typically hold a tank of each gas along with lines and a torch.

"I see mistakes when the extra

tanks are stored together. They are supposed to be stored 20 feet away from each other or separated by a fireproof divider," he said. "The extra tanks need to be stored upright and held by a cord so they can't fall over. They have to have the screw-on cap covering the valve system.

"If one of those things is knocked over and there is damage to the cylinder or valve system, there is such pressure that a leak can turn that cylinder into a rocket that can shoot across the shop."

Propane tanks are another risk, he said.

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## Lancer's outlook negative, financial strength excellent

OLDWICK, N.J. — A.M. Best has revised its outlook from stable to negative for Lancer Insurance Co. while at the same time affirming the financial strength rating for the motorcoach industry insurer.

A.M. Best said the revised outlook for Lancer Insurance reflects the declining trend in its underwriting performance over the past several years, particularly in 2015, in large measure attributable to adverse prior year loss reserve devel-

opment in its commercial auto line.

It also is a reflection of the transportation industry, which is under pressure, said Tim Delaney, head of passenger transportation underwriting for the Long Beach, N.Y.-based Lancer.

He said claims are exceeding predictions, which generally requires tighter underwriting and an increase in premiums. Increased medical costs and jury awards also affect specialty insurers.

"Our ratings haven't changed and our ability to pay claims is as strong as it has ever been," Delaney said. "Our financial position is extremely strong."

He was referring to the company's financial strength rating of A- (Excellent) and issuer credit rating of "a-", both unchanged in its most recent A.M. Best ratings.

"Lancer Insurance's ratings reflect its solid market presence in the specialty transportation market; its

adequate, albeit lower, risk-adjusted capitalization; and overall favorable return measures over the most recent five- and 10-year periods," A.M. Best said in a news release.

"The ratings also reflect management's ongoing initiatives to improve underwriting results by maintaining tight underwriting guidelines and rate actions as necessary. Dividend payments to its parent, Lancer Financial Group, Inc., have been suspended since

2013 in order to limit increases in leverage measures."

Other insurance companies that provide policies to the bus and motorcoach industry have experienced similar difficulties and have tightened their underwriting criteria, weeded out riskier customers and raised rates.

Lancer is the oldest continuous standard insurer of bus and motorcoach companies, which make up about 30 percent of its business.

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# THE DOCKET

## Fuel-efficiency standards for heavy vehicles unveiled

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration has finalized new fuel-economy standards for large trucks, buses and other heavy-duty vehicles, the latest in a series of efforts aimed at slashing greenhouse gas emissions and weaning the nation from its dependence on fossil fuels.

The new requirements affect a class of vehicles that includes motorcoaches, school buses, large pickup trucks, delivery and passenger vans, garbage trucks and long-haul tractor-trailers. These heavy- and medium-duty vehicles represent only about 5 percent of total highway traffic but account for 20 percent of transportation-related fuel consumption and carbon emissions.

Administration officials said they expect that when the new standards are fully implemented in the

coming years, they will cut more than 1 billion tons of carbon pollution from the atmosphere, save nearly \$170 billion in fuel costs and reduce oil consumption by an estimated 84 billion gallons.

“The standards promote a new generation of cleaner, more fuel-efficient trucks by encouraging the development and employment of new and advanced cost-effective technologies through model year 2027,” said Gina McCarthy, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, which developed the new rules in conjunction with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

“These standards are ambitious and achievable, and they will help ensure the American trucking industry continues to drive our economy — and at the same time protect our planet.”

The White House previously has undertaken efforts to curb pollution from cars and light trucks, aircraft, power plants and air conditioning and refrigeration units in an effort to meet pledges to reduce overall emissions in the United States by at least 26 percent by the year 2030, compared with 2005 levels.

During his first term, President Obama also put in place the first national policy to increase the fuel economy of medium- and heavy-duty trucks with model years between 2014 and 2018. The new regulations build on those early measures.

Unlike some past regulations, the new fuel-efficiency rules for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles have largely been embraced by the commercial motor vehicle industry as a way to cut fuel costs and

bolster bottom lines.

“It’s a place where you really have interests aligned. It’s good for business, it’s good for the environment, it’s good for our economy overall,” said Brian Mormino, executive director of environmental strategy and compliance at Cummins Inc., the world’s largest manufacturer of engines for heavy-duty vehicles.

He said fuel costs are a top expense for many companies, and they welcome any opportunity to become more efficient. “Regardless of whether oil prices are down, that focus on fuel savings is still important.”

The new demands for fuel efficiency are likely to lead to more expensive vehicles — as much as \$14,000 more for a large truck, according to the agency — but lower fuel costs could offset the higher

sticker costs in a couple of years, officials said. The measure also requires manufacturers to use lighter-weight materials and more aerodynamic designs to improve the fuel economy of trailers.

Administration officials also suggested that the new regulations might eventually help the pocket-books of ordinary Americans.

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said the rule will reduce fuel costs by \$170 billion by 2027 and cut oil demand by up to 2 billion barrels.

“This is going to be a net savings to operators of these heavy duty and medium-size (vehicles),” Foxx said. “They are going to be able to get places using less fuel. So I think this is a very strong economic rule, from the standpoint of job creation and from the standpoint of reducing burden on consumers.”




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# FMCSA encouraging safe driving around trucks, buses

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has launched a new safety-focused campaign, “Our Roads, Our Responsibility,” to raise public awareness about how to operate safely around commercial motor vehicles, particularly large trucks and buses.

“Trucks and buses move people and goods around the country, contributing to our economic well-being and our way of life,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. “These commercial vehicles also carry additional safety risks, so it’s critical that all road users understand how to safely share the road.”

Nearly 12 million CMVs are registered to operate in the United States, and in 2014, drivers logged around 300 billion miles on the nation’s roads.

Large trucks and buses have significant size and weight differences, large blind spots, longer stopping distances and limited maneuverability, which present serious safety challenges for bicyclists, pedestrians and drivers of passenger vehicles.

## Pilot program for under-21 drivers

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration plans to conduct a three-year pilot project to allow individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 with military heavy-vehicle driving experience to operate commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce.

However, young drivers participating in the pilot wouldn’t be allowed to transport passengers.

If the pilot project proves successful and the federal ban on commercial drivers younger than 21 is lifted, it could eventually apply to bus drivers.

The pilot, which was mandated by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act passed by Congress in December, would compare the safety record of the younger drivers with a control group of drivers 21 and older to determine whether age is a critical safety factor.

FMCSA also has proposed the creation of a working group to consult with the agency in conducting, monitoring and evaluating the pilot program.

Federal regulations currently do not permit drivers under the age of 21 to drive in interstate commerce.

The trucking industry has said the pilot could help address the shortage of CMV drivers.

“Our Roads, Our Responsibility supports our agency’s core mission of reducing crashes, injuries and fatalities involving commercial motor vehicles on our roadways,” said FMCSA Administrator Scott Darling.

“Roadway safety is a shared responsibility, and this initiative en-

courages everyone who uses our roads to be champions for safety. We look forward to working with all our partners to raise awareness around this issue.”

Under the Our Roads, Our Responsibility campaign, FMCSA suggests the following tips while sharing the road with CMVs:

- Stay out of the “no zones” or blind spots around the front, back and sides of the vehicle.
- Pass safely and make sure you can see the driver in the mirror before passing.
- Don’t cut it close while merging in front of a CMV.
- Anticipate wide turns and

consider larger vehicles may require extra turning room.

- Stay focused on the road around you and avoid distraction.
- Be patient driving around large trucks and buses.

Visit [www.ShareTheRoadSafely.gov](http://www.ShareTheRoadSafely.gov) for additional information, including safety tips and statistics.

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# Transit agencies look to subsidize Uber, Lyft rides

PINELLAS PARK, Fla. — This suburb of Tampa has launched an experiment that could change the future of public transit.

The agency responsible for Pinellas Park's public transportation recently stopped running two bus lines and started paying for a portion of people's Uber rides instead.

And the Florida city isn't the only one turning to ride-hailing companies to either supplement or replace their transit services.

Centennial, Colo., has entered into a partnership to subsidize rides on Lyft, Uber's main U.S. competitor.

Lyft also has helped a dozen transit agencies apply for federal grants that would pay for a portion of its fares in situations where its drivers would effectively become part of the public transportation system. (See related stories on pages 1 and 8.)

Each of these projects is tiny, but they could eventually be combined into something big, said Emily Castor, director of transportation policy at Lyft.

"This is an area that has the potential to be a very significant part

of Lyft's work in the future," she said. "How quickly will it progress from small pilots to being institutionalized in transit agencies? I think that's harder to predict."

Over the past several years, ride-hailing companies and local government officials have often had hostile relationships over regulation. The public transportation deals with Uber and Lyft could change that, partly because they are too small to seem threatening, according to Kyle Shelton, a program manager at the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University.

"It may affect some routes; it may affect service overall; but it's not going to replace the main lines that carry thousands of riders per day," he said.

## Several questions raised

Such deals also raise a lot of questions, such as: What happens to people without smartphones? How do Uber and Lyft serve disabled riders? What happens if the cities come to rely on the apps, only to have the private companies decide the partnerships are no longer a sensible business venture for

them? And do public governments want to encourage the replacement of public sector jobs with the contract work that defines the sharing economy?

As officials grapple with those questions, it's hard to ignore the real savings for governments. In 2014, Americans spent \$15 billion in fares on public transportation at the 850 public transit agencies that share data with the Federal Transit Administration.

The operating expenses at those agencies was \$42 billion, with much of the cost of running the systems coming from public subsidies.

Suburban areas with less density and lower ridership are particularly expensive to run, making ride hailing an attractive alternative, said Adie Tomer, a fellow at Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program.

"If they can provide better outcomes for your population and do it at either the same cost if not lower, that's a win-win for society," he said. "This could start spiraling very fast."

The Pinellas Park deal with

Uber stems from the rejection by voters of a referendum to increase taxes to fund more bus lines and a light rail system. That forced the local transit agency to consider cutting the least popular of its four-dozen bus lines.

When residents of the areas served by those lines complained that they would be stranded without bus service, the transit agency decided to share the cost of Uber rides for anyone traveling those two routes.

## Helping riders connect

Earlier this year it started a pilot program where people received a 50 percent discount for rides, with a maximum subsidy per ride of \$3, to help riders connect to the transit system.

It turned out that in areas with few riders, paying for part of a private ride was cheaper than running a bus. The program will cost \$40,000 a year, or about a quarter the cost of the two bus lines it replaced, the agency said.

Last month the agency began offering subsidies for all rides in the county that end at about 20

designated transit stops.

"It's not supposed to be something you'd take instead of the bus; it's supposed to be something you'd take to the bus," said Ashlie Handy, a spokeswoman for the agency.

On the same day it expanded the initial program, the transit agency began giving free Uber rides to low-income residents traveling after 9 p.m., when buses don't run.

Molly Spaeth, a spokeswoman for Uber, said the company was pleased with the response to the project and would continue to look for ways to work with transit agencies.

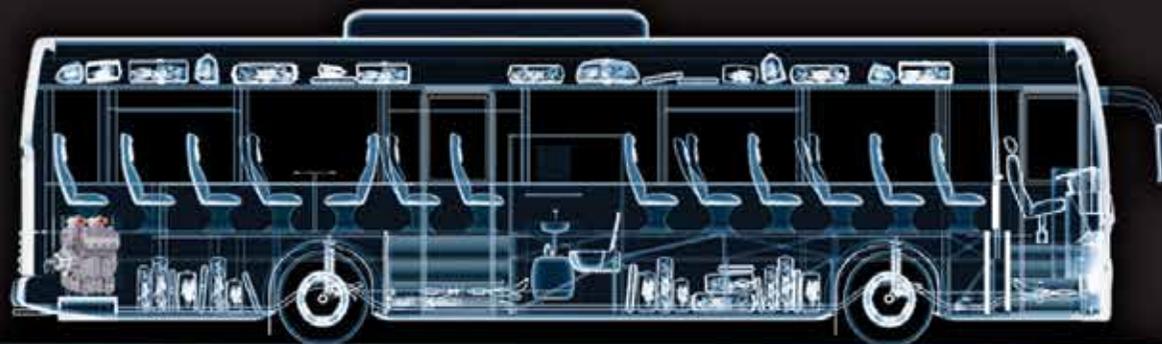
Officials in Centennial, a suburb of Denver, launched a similar partnership with Lyft, marking the first time a government is paying for Lyft rides using public funds. Centennial is paying for Lyft rides to and from a regional rail stop from an area that has previously only been covered by a shuttle bus.

The shuttle service cost about \$20 per ride, far more than what it will have to pay for Lyft rides, city

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Uber, Lyft

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

officials said. The city projects it will handle 280 rides per day, or about six times as many rides as through the bus service.

Around the same time that Pinellas Park launched its pilot, nearby Altamonte Springs, a suburb of Orlando, began paying for 20 percent of any Uber ride within city limits. For rides that ended at regional rail stations, the rate was 25 percent.

City officials said Uber keeps them from sharing ridership numbers but that the program has grown quickly. They're working to expand to several neighboring towns soon.

In July, Miami-Dade County, Florida, applied for a \$3.5 million federal grant to improve public transportation, \$575,000 of which it plans to use to subsidize Uber and Lyft rides to two train stations, hoping that doing so will increase ridership at those stations by 5 percent.

"Ride-sharing companies will mature in the Miami-Dade market but are unlikely to serve low-ridership and low-income neighborhoods without public subsidy," the county said in its application. It is also working to incorporate ride hailing into its own mobile ticketing application.

Miami-Dade's cooperation with ride-hailing companies coincided with the end of a years-long fight with them over whether to allow Uber and Lyft to operate. Until a few months ago, Uber and Lyft were against the law, and the city handed out violations to drivers as they picked up fares.

**Working together**

Carlos Cruz-Casas, assistant director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works, said it was odd to plan the area's future around ride hailing while also debating whether ride hailing should be legal at all.

"It was a friendly relationship," he said. "They were being fined, but at the same time, we'd say, 'Let's work together.'"

If ride hailing does drive down car ownership, as both Uber and Lyft expect it will, that could increase demand for subsidized rides, leaving governments with the tab for new forms of semi-public transit.

Meanwhile Bridj, a startup that runs private bus service in some cities, is proposing a model that would leave more control with the governments. It has no set sched-

ules or lines and instead responds to requests made on its app.

Earlier this year, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority agreed to buy 10 vehicles from Bridj, staff them with drivers, and set and collect fares. Unlike the ride-hailing partnerships, which are largely designed to get people to another form of transit, the Bridj program aims to drop people off where they're actually trying to go.

Instead of sharing in fares, Bridj takes a service fee for the use of the technology that accepts ride requests and directs the vehicles on ever-changing routes.

The Kansas City government gets to keep more control, and Matthew George, Bridj's chief executive officer, said about three-dozen cities have inquired about partnerships since the Kansas City pilot started. The company plans

to announce at least four partnerships before the end of the year.

George thinks private, on-demand bus lines will prove to be more cost-effective than ride-hailing services that use smaller vehicles because they can move more people at once.

George also criticizes Lyft's and Uber's spotty track records of cooperation with local governments, and points out that unlike at

those companies, Bridj's drivers in Kansas City are all union members hired by the transit authority.

"On the one end of the spectrum you have the very traditional mode that we've done for 100 years, and on the other one, you have this Ayn Randian free market free-for-all that doesn't have basic protections in place for the people who are most vulnerable," he said. "We've shown that there's some-

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# Selling snack boxes on coach trips can boost profits

By Jim Luff  
Limousine, Charter & Tour

Riding on a bus once meant you got a single seat for the ticket you bought.

Somewhere along the way, builders added restrooms. Next came reclining seats, followed by video displays and eventually Wi-Fi.

Passengers expect more comfort. When chartering a vehicle from a luxury ground transportation business, the wants rise even higher. That's why adding snacks to the menu of amenities can add to your net profit.

## Airlines do it

Almost all airlines sell several versions of snack boxes to passengers. If you have ever bought one

of these boxes, you know they are about \$10 and contain about \$5 worth of product. Either way, it's far better than a free cup of soda and a small bag of peanuts. They generally come in several varieties. The passengers on a long trip are captive, so if you offer snacks, they will likely buy them.

## Pre-order

I recommend you ask clients while taking the reservation if they would like to add on a snack or a sandwich box. You should consider advertising them on your website and refer your clients to the menu, which should display items and prices.

Accepting pre-orders will cut down on spoilage and keep your product fresh. If you don't want to go all out with a sandwich box,

you might consider something as simple as a small can of Pringles chips. United Airlines sells them for \$4. In a pack of 12, they cost about 65 cents each. This means you net about \$40 per case of 12.

## Selling the day of the trip

While you can sell snack boxes on the day of the trip, storage can be a problem. It is hard to determine if they would be bought, and carrying six boxes in a limo "just in case" might not always work out.

If you carry four boxes, someone might feel left out. If the client has too much luggage, you might be forced to throw them away for the space and that's an immediate loss.

Consider providing smaller items such as cheese and crackers,

small bags of fruit snacks or similar items that don't take as much room to store.

If you are in a bus, the snack boxes can easily be held in a storage container in the cargo hold and introduced during a rest stop.

## Where do you get them?

Amazon has tons of snack packs in bulk at about \$20 each. Amazon's pre-made snack boxes are filled with product that can be broken down to make up several smaller boxes.

You might also find box lunches offered by a local gourmet sandwich shop. A typical lunch box averages about \$10 and includes a sandwich, chips, cookie and a beverage. You can easily mark these up to \$15.

If you have a bus with 40 pas-

sengers on a long trip, that adds up to an extra \$200 net profit.

## Inventory control

Of course having such products could tempt your chauffeurs and drivers to help themselves to a snack. You must set up a system to control supplies. Have drivers verify the contents of a plastic storage container when they check them out.

Create a checklist with the selling price of each item in the box. When the box is turned in, you should do an inventory, add up the cost of any missing products, and bill your driver.

There is a pitfall here. If a product is missing and your driver can't explain why, you cannot charge the driver under federal labor laws.

# Uber and Lyft could end up benefitting public transit

It's easy to think of ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft as being in competition with public transportation. But they could actually end up causing more people to use it.

That's according to an analyst report published by Morgan Stanley that plots out how public transit might transform in the coming decades as autonomous cars become a reality.

In the best-case scenario, policymakers would incorporate self-driving car technology into their plans, rather than competing with it for market share. If that happens, the study authors predict that ride-hailing services could decrease the cost of public transit while increasing the number of people who use it.

"A future dominated by shared, driverless cars linked via ride-hail-

ing apps may sound like a world without traditional forms of mass transit," the authors write. "But we don't believe it will be."

The report lays out three main arguments for why on-demand ride hailing will complement — rather than compete with — existing forms of public transit (See related stories on pages 1 and 6):

## 1. Increased access to and from rail stations

Many people don't use public transit because there aren't any stations within walking distance of where they live or where they need to go. On-demand driverless cars can solve this so-called "first-mile/last-mile" problem, the report argues, by offering a cheap, convenient way to get to and from stations.

## 2. More riders per station, fewer stations overall

By increasing the number of people served by each station (as demonstrated in the point above), public planners would be able to decrease the number of stations per line, the report argues. This would hopefully have two effects. First, trips made via public transit would be faster as trains would need to make fewer stops. Second, as the time to make each trip decreases, the trains themselves would run more frequently, making the entire system much more efficient and usable.

## 3. Ride hailing competes with car ownership, which helps public transit

Some people simply use ride hailing in place of mass transit — for example, grabbing a Lyft instead of taking the train. But the Morgan Stanley report cites research from the University of Cal-

ifornia, Berkeley, saying that many of those trips — taken when public transit is prohibitively inconvenient — would have otherwise been made in privately owned cars.

And if a significant number of car owners turn to ride hailing full-time, people will be more inclined to take public transit, the report predicts.

"It has the potential to dissuade users from relying on single-occupancy car trips," the authors write, "which in turn is consistent with greater reliance on transit."

In particular, the authors point to a study by the on-demand car-sharing service Zipcar, which found that car-sharing users report "a 46 percent increase in public transit trips, a 10 percent increase in bicycling trips and a 26 percent

increase in walking trips."

Morgan Stanley analysts cautioned that all of the above predictions are far from certain, as public planners and policymakers could take "meaningful detours" in their various approaches to ride-hailing services. Perhaps most significantly, policymakers could decide to view such services as a public detriment, rather than as an opportunity for collaboration.

Ultimately, however, driverless cars, coupled with public transit, could be the key to achieving the holy grail of transit.

"Shared mobility — driven by autonomous technology — may do what no transit planner has succeeded in doing," the report argues. "It may finally persuade a greater percentage of Americans to stop driving their own cars to work every day."

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# Without my glasses I can barely see the speedometer

By Dave Millhouser

"Any reason you're driving so fast?" asked the police officer.

"Because that's just as fast as it will go," I responded.

Actually, I used this excuse three times over the years, and twice was rewarded for unvarnished honesty with a verbal warning.

In 1970, a Georgia sheriff turned me loose because "no judge would believe a VW bug would do 84 mph." (It could if you fiddled with a few things.)

A few years later I was driving an MC8 commuter coach governed at 64 mph on Interstate 80 in the middle of the Colorado prairie. The speed limit was 55 and the trooper, apparently constipated, gave me a ticket.

Perhaps these were good moments as a humorist, but not my finest as a responsible citizen. I should mention that all three instances were late at night on deserted roads (an excuse?).

When I was in school, a teacher pointed out to my parents that, "David would get better grades if he spent as much time on school-work as he does on creating excus-

es for avoiding it."

Benjamin Franklin famously said, "He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else."

I've tried not to take that personally.

Excuses are fun, and I betcha you've heard a ton of funny ones over the years.

Here are some shamelessly lifted from [www.you-can-be-funny.com](http://www.you-can-be-funny.com):

"Occifer, I swear to drunk I'm not God!"

"I'm sorry for speeding, but without my glasses I can hardly see the speedometer."

"The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him."

"I've used up all of my sick days so I'm calling in dead."

Everyone reading this probably has heard (or created) some doozies.

Sometimes excuses are valid, like the time a coach was stopped in traffic near a blasting zone. Explosives launched a 100-pound rock vertically, and like a mortar round it dropped cleanly through the bus's roof and landed between the feet of a young passenger.

The bus driver's explanation was pretty readily accepted (less so the blasting contractor's).

Excuses can be amusing, even useful, but when we succumb to (paraphrasing a favorite customer) "believing our own bovine organic fertilizer," they become a problem.

Business is partially art, but it isn't "paint by the numbers." If it was that formulaic, no one would fail.

Success is generally a mix of proven methods and vision. There are things like cash flow coupled with a visceral understanding of what customers and the market want.

In order to strike that balance, we need to be brutally honest with ourselves, and that means discounting excuses. If something isn't working, expending resources thinking up really good explanations isn't going to help.

Sometimes we have really bad ideas, hire the wrong people or make poop decisions. Excuses, no matter how creative and entertaining, only delay the inevitable.

It's like driving an overheating coach, tapping the temperature gauge and imagining it dropping

JUST a bit. Imagining won't save the engine.

It's OK to be gentle on the outside, but if a concept, person or piece of equipment is failing, that needs to be recognized and dealt with. Warm and fuzzy excuses can be like a shock absorber, cushioning impact, but if you are sagging, you are sagging.

A bad choice doesn't really care why it's a bad choice.

As a rule of thumb, the more involved you are in thinking up an explanation, the less valid it is. The driver of the bus hit by the boulder didn't have to think a lot. Shortly after thinking, "What the heck was that?" his excuse was fully formed.

Sometimes adjustments can alter the trajectory of an iffy decision. A bit of reflection and tinkering may be in order, but take care to recognize the line between giving something, or somebody, a fair shot and creating excuses for failure.

Beware the danger of letting either ego or emotion overpower your intellect in both making decisions and correcting errors.

Early summer is a fun time to monitor marine radio. Lots of

folks have forgotten how to drive their boats over the winter.

One gentleman's vessel was slowly sinking off Gloucester, Mass., and he was communicating with the Coast Guard via radio. Actually, he was yelling, and the ever polite Coast Guardsman repeatedly asked, "Captain, where are you? Captain, are there any landmarks nearby?" in an effort to know where to send help.

After half a dozen exchanges, the sinking boater broadcast, "I am not a captain, I'm from New Jersey!"

Being from New Jersey isn't a good excuse for not knowing where you are.

Take a tip from someone who has embarrassed himself at sea. Call for help on the cellphone. That way everyone within 50 miles isn't laughing at you.

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



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**GREAT CANADIAN**  
HOLIDAYS & COACHES

# Real Boissonneault named IMG Operator of the Year

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — International Motorcoach Group has named Real Boissonneault, president of Autocar Excellence in Quebec, as its 2016 Operator of the Year.

IMG presented the award to Boissonneault on the final night of its annual Strategic Alliance Meeting last month in Norfolk, Va.

Each year, IMG shareholders recognize one of their own for the honor, based on operational excellence, safety performance, best practices, community and motorcoach industry involvement, and

engagement within IMG.

“It is a great honor to receive this prestigious award and a very special feeling to be recognized by my peers,” Boissonneault said. “Autocar Excellence’s entire team deserves this award as they are the people who make it happen.”

Boissonneault established Autocar Excellence in 1986 to focus on the charter bus industry. With a simple vision of quality customer service and uncompromised safety as core values, he surrounds himself with partners who share the same vision.

Starting with three motor coaches, the fleet has grown to more than 80 vehicles and the company now services a territory that includes Quebec City, Montreal, Trois-Rivières, Bas St-Laurent and New Brunswick.

Key to Autocar Excellence’s success has been working with customers and providing continued excellence.

“Autocar Excellence is a wonderful company that reflects IMG values through and through,” IMG President Bronwyn Wilson said. “We are delighted to bestow this

honor on the Autocar Excellence team.”

During the awards ceremony, the Operator of the Year motorcoach was unveiled. It was designed and painted by Turbo Images and features Autocar Excellence’s logo along with a background collage of its areas of operations in Canada.

IMG also presented its 2016 Partner of the Year award to Kristy Merritt of the Mansion Theater in Branson, Mo.

IMG also installed its new leadership for 2017. They are:

- Real Boissonneault, Autocar Excellence, chairman

- Gary Krapf, Krapf’s Coaches, vice chairman

- John Adams, Southern Coaches, secretary and treasurer

- Dennis Streif, Vandalia Bus Lines, past chairman.

IMG, which was established 17 years ago, is a North American network of independent bus companies “with a shared commitment to excellence throughout their operations.” It has 56 member companies, operating more than 7,000 vehicles.

# Mercedes to build Sprinter van plant in South Carolina

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. — Mercedes-Benz Vans is planning to build a \$500-million plant in North Charleston to manufacture Sprinter vans.

The company, a division of Daimler AG, said the plant would create as many as 1,300 jobs.

Mercedes-Benz Vans already has a 409,000-square-foot assembly plant in North Charleston and plans to add the new 1.1 million-square-foot manufacturing facility “by the end of this decade,” Volker

Mornhinweg, head of Mercedes-Benz Vans, said at a groundbreaking ceremony for the plant.

“The key to our success is a strong global presence,” Mornhinweg said, adding that the U.S. market has become a much more critical part of that success in recent years.

He said the U.S. is one of the fastest growing van markets in the world and is now the second-largest market for the Sprinter in terms of unit sales after Germany. In

2015, Mercedes-Benz Vans delivered about 28,600 units to U.S. customers, 11 percent more than in 2014.

According to Bernie Glaser, vice president and managing director of Mercedes-Benz USA Vans, 2016 Sprinter sales through June were up another 16.5 percent.

Since 2006, Sprinter vans for the North American market have been built in Germany. However, because of import tariffs of nearly

25 percent, the company partially dismantles the Sprinters, packages their bodies and engines in separate containers and ships them to the U.S. for reassembly.

The time-consuming process results in a significant competitive disadvantage, the company said.

“The new plant, with Sprinters ‘made in the USA,’ will enable the company to more economically meet the growing demand and to considerably reduce delivery time to this market,” said Michael

Balke, incoming CEO of Mercedes-Benz Vans and director of production.

Mornhinweg added that establishing local Sprinter production in the United States was “only logical. With this new plant we take a big leap into the future production of Mercedes-Benz Vans. This factory will be one of the most advanced automotive plants in North America and will allow us to continue to meet our customers’ changing needs.”

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# Arizona inspector named Grand Champion in competition

INDIANAPOLIS — Daniel Voelker of the Arizona Department of Public Safety was named Grand Champion of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's 24th annual North American Inspectors Championship (NAIC).

Voelker won the award based on his combined performances in six competition elements.

Forty-eight roadside inspectors representing jurisdictions across North America participated last month in the competition, the only event dedicated to testing, recognizing and awarding commercial motor vehicle inspector excellence.

A special award, the John Youngblood Award of Excellence, went to Nicholas Wright of the Kansas Highway Patrol. The award is an honor NAIC contestants bestow upon a fellow inspector who exemplifies the high standards and an unwavering dedication to the profession.

All of the inspection categories in the competition are timed events and the compilation of scores for these categories result in a Grand Champion.

Awards are given for first, second and third place for selected inspection events. The winners:

**North American Standard Level I Inspection:**

- First Place — Daniel Voelker, Arizona Department of Public Safety
- Second place — James Hamrick, Arkansas Highway Police
- Third Place — Jeremy Usener, Texas Department of Public Safety

**North American Standard Hazardous Materials/Transportation of Dangerous Goods and Cargo Tank/Bulk Packagings Inspection:**

- First Place — Benjamin Schropfer, Nebraska State Patrol
- Second Place — Daniel Voelker, Arizona Department of Public Safety
- Third Place — Nicholas Wright, Kansas Highway Patrol

**North American Standard Level V Passenger Vehicle (Motorcoach) Inspection:**

- First Place — John Werner, California Highway Patrol
- Second Place — Trevor Todd, British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
- Third Place — Jeremy Usener, Texas Department of Public

Safety

**Team Award — Red Team:**

- Trevor Todd, British Columbia
- John Werner, California
- Travis Randolph, Colorado
- Nicholas Wright, Kansas

- Daniel Krueger, North Dakota

- Thomas Winton, Oklahoma
- Charles Shaver, Tennessee
- Team leader: Brent Alspash, Indiana State Police

Also, an award was given to each inspector who scored the

most points representing Canada, the United States and Mexico.

**High Points Awards:**

- United States — Daniel Voelker, Arizona Department of Public Safety
- Canada — Trevor Todd, Brit-

ish Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

- Mexico — Antonio López Nava, Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT)

“The best inspectors throughout North America aspire to compete at

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# If you want to make a sale, you have to ask for it

By Christian Riddell  
Motorcoach Marketing Council

There are very few ways to make a group of salespeople more uncomfortable than to start a sales meeting with these words: "Today, we are going to discuss your sales process."

I know this because for years I found myself on the receiving end of that equation. For most salespeople, talking about sales process is tantamount to talking to a guy hanging from the side of a cliff by his fingernails about his choice of hiking boots.

For the past 10 years, one aspect of my work I have thoroughly enjoyed is the engineering of robust sales processes: leads, capture-to-drip conditioning systems, systemic follow-up programs and after-close lead referral systems. Building these types of programs is exciting.

The motorcoach business, however, is a bit of another story.

This year I had the opportunity to be on the other end of a motorcoach operator's sales process as I found myself becoming the consumer.

My daughter was preparing to

attend a church camp this summer, and my wife was talking to the leaders about the logistics. They were lamenting over an issue they didn't know how to fix. They had 1,000 girls who needed to get from one place to another over the course of a week, and at varying times.

They talked about using vans and even discussed having parents commute to the venue to carpool girls around.

Obviously, we had a solution. GoMotorcoach! We talked to them about the benefits of choosing a coach and they were excited. We said we'd make some calls and get some prices, which we did.

We called a local provider and gave all the details we had. Three days later, we received an email that outlined the expected itineraries. And, in the bottom right corner, there was a price.

We hit forward, and sent it on.

Three days ago, we dropped our daughter off at camp. The truth is, I have no idea how they solved their transportation problem. The whole experience got me thinking about the sales process in the motorcoach industry and how we can, as a group, raise the bar just a little.

## Marketing Minute GoMotorcoach It's the Smart Move

Now, I am not going to say here that you need to invest in a CRM today and engineer a 30-step sales conditioning program, although that would be great. I want to talk about two foundational steps that are missing from most operations in North America, steps that were certainly missing in the experience we had.

### Number 1: Follow Up

One of the traps of being a salesperson in this business is focusing on the quote as the end product. This is easy to do when you spend all day answering phone calls, gathering details and trying to formulate an estimate for each job.

Is it miles or hours? What is traffic going to do at that time? Do I have the right equipment that day? Do I have available drivers?

The list of things that have to be dealt with before we can even

generate a quote makes it feel like, once it's finished and out the door to the potential customer, we have crossed the finish line.

A quick summary of the process looks like this: figure out quote details, come up with a price, put the information in an email and send — done, boom. For many operators, this is the sales process. But, when you really think about it, this isn't the sales process at all; it's actually the pricing process.

Imagine going to buy a new car and walking onto a lot. You like a particular car and start to look around for someone to help you. Just then, a salesman runs up and says, "How can I help?"

You indicate that you are interested in that car right there, and he says, "\$19,650," then turns and runs away to the next customer.

Now some of you may be saying, "Super! I'll take it. I never go to a car lot without knowing exactly what I want and I would know, with just a price, if it's a good deal or not."

And yes, the motorcoach industry does have educated consumers who know what a good price is.

But while this is true, it's also true that there would be those who would simply turn around and walk away, confused and frustrated at the lack of care the salesperson demonstrated. Were they interested in the car? Yes. Did they want to buy the car? Maybe. Will the salesperson ever know? No.

Follow up is the cornerstone of a well-executed sales team, and it does not matter if you are primarily taking inbound orders, generating leads or generating referral relationships.

While it does not have to be anything technologically magical, it should, at the very least, be a quick phone call to confirm that they received the quote, clarify any questions they have and establish what their next steps are.

### Number 2: Ask for the sale

And that leads us to the next and perhaps most important step: Ask for the sale.

This is one of the most difficult things to get salespeople to do. Many salespeople feel like this is something dirty and that doing it makes them sleazy or slimy.

I have had people accuse me of

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## Marketing Minute

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

trying to turn them into a “used-car salesman,” but the truth is, I try to teach this principle even to high-performing sales teams.

The issue always comes back to having a relationship with potential buyers, treating them with respect, doing our job well and then trusting that they’ll tell us when they’re ready to buy. There is a fiber of truth here, and while we never want to be seen as the “sleazy salesperson,” we do want to appropriately ask for a sale.

I started my sales career selling used cars, a job I feel should be a prerequisite for any sales position. It is a remarkable experience to have everyone you meet already believe that you are somehow trying to take advantage of them.

In that job, I worked very hard to be good at what I was doing. I learned how to get people to go from looking to a test drive, how to estimate payments with people and how to help them get over sticker shock.

But for almost a year, I struggled with asking for the sale. I had more test drives than any of my colleagues and I could turn a casual looker into a four-hour appointment, but my sales numbers didn’t reflect that.

Then one day I was listening to a sales book on tape and learned about the importance of asking for the sale.

So I did. The next day, I was doing what I always did. I was out doing a test drive, and as we pulled

into the lot and the person shut off the car, I swallowed and said, “I know you love the car; are you ready to take it home?”

I will never forget the next few seconds of silence. I was just about to say, “Why don’t you just think about it?” But instead, he surprised me when he responded with, “Yeah, why not?”

I sold more cars that week than I had in the previous three months.

For motorcoach operators, asking for the sale is really easy. “Can I get this booked for you today?” is simple and straightforward, and doesn’t feel sleazy at all. The truth is, it sounds responsible.

My daughter is at camp right now, and I don’t know how she will get to all the activities she is attending. It could be vans, school buses or carpools. I do know that it is not on a motorcoach from the company that gave us a quote.

Was it because it was too expensive? No. Was it because we changed our minds? No. Was it because we felt like we didn’t need a motorcoach? No.

Rather, it was because we forwarded an email containing a few words and a price that was uninspiring to the recipient. It was because there was no follow-up to remind us to do something else and because no one asked for a sale.

There is a figure that exists in every charter operation that most companies don’t like to look at. It’s the difference between the total number of quotes that go out compared with the total number of actual bookings.

When you discuss that figure

economic growth and development.

- Sixty-seven percent of those surveyed stated that public transportation creates a cleaner environment and reduces carbon emissions.

“As a nation, we have neglected our public transportation infrastructure for decades and many public transit systems are playing catch up,” White said. “The time has come for strong decisive action. We must address the industry’s tremendous maintenance backlog. There is a need to invest \$43 billion a year as opposed to the \$17 billion we currently receive to expand, improve and upkeep our public transit infrastructure.”

“This strong investment will be crucial as we address the projected explosion of population growth in our cities and suburbs. We look forward to working with the administration, Congress and local elected leaders to tackle the chronic underfunding of investment in our nation’s crumbling transportation infrastructure.”

MTI conducted 1,503 telephone interviews with individuals across the United States. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 2.53 percentage points.

with most companies, they will almost inevitably say, “Those are people who were shopping and picked a lower price.”

The truth is, a large percentage of them may not have been shopping price at all. They might just have been waiting for someone, anyone, to follow up, answer their questions, show them that they care and ask the most important question in a motorcoach operator’s sales department: “Can I book this for you today?”

For more information about the Motorcoach Marketing Council and its programs, go to [www.motorcoachmarketing.org](http://www.motorcoachmarketing.org).

## Arizona inspector

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

NAIC,” said CVSA President Maj. Jay Thompson with the Arkansas Highway Police. “Many of the competitors here this week are winners of their jurisdiction’s inspector’s championship or were selected to compete at NAIC as esteemed representatives from their agency.

“However, it’s important to note that NAIC is much more than a competition. It’s an opportunity for training, education and professional growth, and it fosters camaraderie and cooperation

among inspectors, jurisdictions and countries.”

## Saving Lives

Roadside inspectors are highly trained professionals who save lives every day by removing unsafe commercial motor vehicles and drivers from the road.

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## Public support

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

utilization of the equipment of private operators. It’s a win-win.”

APTA leaders say the strong public support of transit could also bode well when Americans go to the polls on November 8 and have the opportunity to vote to boost public transit funding through 27 state and local ballot initiatives across the country. This could result in nearly \$200 billion in new investment for public transportation.

The MTI and APTA survey also highlights the public’s support for the value public transportation adds to communities across the country. Poll highlights include:

- Nearly 82 percent of the respondents agreed that public transportation provides an affordable way for people to get around.

- Eighty-four percent said public transportation provides people with vital connections to important resources like jobs, schools and medical facilities.

- Roughly 80 percent said that public transportation connects people to jobs and thus helps to fuel

# Thawing Alaska highway permafrost hasn't hurt tourism

DAWSON CREEK, B.C. — Tourist officials in Northeast British Columbia are keeping an eye on the thawing permafrost on the Alaska Highway but say they aren't worried yet about its impact on tourism.

Transportation departments in the Yukon and Alaska say the loss of year-round frost beneath the historic highway's roadbed is creating fissures, bumps and cracks on the surface, according to an article in the *Guardian* newspaper.

The article quoted travellers on the 1,387-mile highway, as well as engineers in the Yukon and Alaska — one of whom called the loss of permafrost beneath the roadbed “the biggest geotechnical problem we have” in the state.

Permafrost, a mix of soil and sediment frozen at least two years in a row, anchors the roadbed of much of the Alaska Highway. The loss of permafrost as the climate warms is affecting roads, mines, industrial sites and other infrastructure across northern Canada.

The wartime highway was built in the 1940s by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to link Alaska to the rest of the United States. It also served as a supply line for air-

bases built to ferry lend-lease aircraft to the Soviet Union.

As the most direct land route to Alaska, the highway is now popular with recreational vehicle owners. Around 18,800 travellers passed through the Dawson Creek Visitor Center last year.

While headlines about a melting highway are eye-catching, Tourism Dawson Creek's Austin Weaver said he hasn't seen any evidence of rough roads lessening the highway's appeal for tourists.

“There's an occasional pothole, which is expected on any highway, and the occasional construction site,” Weaver said after a recent drive on the highway. “I wasn't seeing a large number of frost heaves or anything like that. No one's coming down and saying, ‘I jumped my 40-foot mobile home.’”

So far, the section of the highway in British Columbia appears to be faring better than the portions in Alaska and Yukon described in the *Guardian* report.

Those jurisdictions are trying to figure out how to slow the thaw. Potential solutions include inserting spray foam insulation and cooling “tubes” into the roadbed, using lighter building materials



Officials in Yukon and Alaska say the loss of year-round frost beneath the historic Alaska Highway's roadbed is creating fissures, bumps and cracks on the surface, but tourism officials say they haven't seen any evidence of rough roads lessening the highway's appeal for tourists.

that absorb less light, and building porous roadbeds to allow cool air to circulate.

In an email, a Public Works Canada spokesperson said no permafrost-related issues have been reported on the section of highway it manages between Pink Moun-

tain and Watson Lake.

But keeping the highway in working order is costly.

The Canadian government spends approximately \$35 million a year on maintenance and capital projects on its portion of highway.

April Moi of the Northern B.C.

Tourism association said that overall, the highway is in good condition. Some tourists, she said, are pleasantly surprised to learn the highway is paved all the way to Fairbanks.

“Their big concern is it's paved. Most people still don't understand it's two-lane and paved all the way.”



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# Selfie drivers posing risks while posting to Instagram

ALBANY, N.Y. — We all know that the increased use of cell-phones has resulted in a significant rise in accidents caused by distracted drivers using their phones to text and make calls.

But it seems a growing number of drivers also are snapping selfies while on the road.

A recent report by the Auto Insurance Center revealed a disturbing trend: a growing number of drivers are taking photos with their phones and uploading them to social media such as Instagram.

That has prompted transportation officials in New York State — among the top 10 states for selfie-taking drivers — to warn motorists to avoid the dangerous practice.

“Smartphones can provide nearly limitless entertainment, but activities like taking selfies while driving are just irresponsible,” said Terri Egan, executive deputy commissioner of the New York Department of Motor Vehicles.

“A quick search of social media or local news reports across the country show that taking selfies and even live streaming are things motorists actually do behind the wheel, with some doing so on a re-

peat basis. Whether it’s answering a short text, making a quick phone call, taking a photo, or catching Pokémon, it’s never a good idea to be distracted while driving. Keep your eyes on the road and put the phone down — it can wait.”

As part of the report, the Auto Insurance Center reviewed 70,000 Instagram posts with driving-related hashtags to determine where selfie-taking drivers took their photos and when they posted them.

Four states hold the dubious distinction of averaging more than two posts for every 100,000 residents: California, Nevada, Florida and Hawaii.

What do these four states have in common? Thanks to slot machines in Vegas and the sunny beaches of California, Florida and Hawaii, all four are popular vacation destinations. It appears fun-filled road trips may fuel some drivers’ desires to share duck face snaps with their Instagram followers.

Rounding out the top 10 states for selfie-taking drivers are Vermont, Washington, New Jersey, New York, South Dakota and Arizona.



A report by the Auto Insurance Center revealed that a growing number of drivers are taking photos with their phones and uploading them to social media such as Instagram.

The report also said that nearly four in 10 drivers who use smartphones are checking social media apps while driving.

While texting and talking on the phone while driving are dangerous, there is evidence to suggest that taking photos is even more dangerous, especially when the photo includes the driver.

AAA reports that a driver’s

eyes may leave the road for at least two seconds to snap a selfie, during which time a car can travel 176 feet, or nearly the length of two basketball courts, at 60 miles per hour.

Recording a video can distract drivers for much longer, compounding the dangers of driving while distracted. With new technologies such as Facebook Live,

Periscope and other live streaming apps, users — including motorists behind the wheel — are finding new ways to drive while looking into a smartphone, which puts them, other motorists and pedestrians in danger.

Despite ranking eighth for selfie-taking drivers, New York is one of only 14 states (plus Washington, D.C.) to prohibit all drivers from using handheld cellphones while driving, according to research by the Auto Insurance Center.

Motorists caught texting and driving face up to a \$250 fine for a first offense and five points on their license.

“Play it safe on the road by vowing to keep your eyes off your phone,” the report concludes. “If you’re tempted to text, tweet, or snap a selfie, stash your phone out of reach while you drive (the back-seat is a good spot), and pull over if you need to use it.

“You can also download apps that lock phones while you’re driving. Your life — and the life of others — is so much more important than posting a photo on social media.”

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## App-based bus service launched in Texas cities

AUSTIN, Texas — With more people turning to bus travel to make their way between major Texas cities, a new app-based service called Shofur has been rolled out across the state.

Using the company's smartphone app, riders can instantly purchase tickets, select a seat, track their bus in real time and rate their experience. The app also tracks drivers' hours to ensure they don't exceed federal safety rules.

Shofur founder Amir Harris said the technology-first approach is changing the experience of traveling by bus.

"We provide a premium service at the price of a service like Megabus," Harris said. "We've made the

bus model a lot more efficient, a lot more transparent and a lot safer."

The company launched in 2013 and partners with more than 400 local bus companies who provide services across the U.S.

Shofur started running 55-seat coaches last month between Austin, Waco, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio using the app-based system. Each bus is equipped with WiFi, charging stations at each seat and seatbelts. An average ticket costs about \$30.

Shofur COO Merrick Levy said the short bus trips appeal to both business people and college students.

"It's a little too far to drive but a little too close to fly," he said.



**Darling's first trade talk.** Scott Darling (in yellow tie), making his first appearance before a trade association since being confirmed as administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, told members of the National Association of Motorcoach Operators about a round-trip coach ride he took from Boston to New York when he was 10. He said he "got there and back because of the great job the (bus) industry does every day." Speaking about the continuing improved numbers regarding crashes, Darling said, "You guys are doing something right. Thank you for your professionalism and attention to safety. Safe buses move our loved ones."

## People

HOUSTON — Kim Bratton-Tubbs has joined TBL Group, Inc., owner of AFC|ECHO Transportation brands, as vice president of business development.

With more than 30 years in the ground transportation industry, Tubbs brings a wealth of industry

knowledge and experience to her new role with the Texas-based ground transportation leaders.

She will direct and coordinate all company sales and marketing efforts, including oversight and management of public relations and marketing-related activities, as well as business development activities such as market research, strategic planning and strategic ac-

count development.

In her leadership position, Tubbs will identify and develop strategic relationships with partners and potential customers. She will develop a pipeline of new customers and projects in key strategic accounts through customer contact and negotiations, working with marketing, sales and product development teams to implement

business development initiatives.

"I am tremendously excited to join TBL Group, Inc.," Tubbs said. "This is a wonderful opportunity to join a remarkable team with great vision and unlimited growth potential."

Her experience in the group travel and ground transportation industry includes positions with Coach America as director of sales and marketing, vice president

of business development at US Coachways, and general manager for Laidlaw, Inc. (Greyhound Travel Services).

"(Kim's) cross-disciplines and knowledge span the full spectrum of operations and will greatly enhance our efforts to mine new market opportunities that align with TBL's overall business strategy," TBL Group CEO John Ferrari said.



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# UMA MOTORCOACH EXPO 2017

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# Obituary: Raymond Beebe of Crown Coach Charters & Tours



Raymond Beebe

ARLINGTON, Tenn. — Hershel “Raymond” Beebe Jr., owner and founder of Crown Coach Charters & Tours in Memphis, passed away on August 16. He was 75.

Beebe, of Arlington, got his start in the bus industry nearly 40 years ago with Greyhound, following in the footsteps of his father,

who spent 41 years at Greyhound.

After 17 years with the bus company, Beebe switched to trucking before eventually circling back to buses.

“I spent 21 years in trucking, and I always wanted to get back into the bus business,” he once said.

He got his chance in 1995, when he and his wife, Margaret, founded Crown Coach Charters & Tours.

The company has since prospered with its old-fashioned style of business, stressing dependability and cleanliness and making customers feel at home.

Beebe is survived by his wife of 38 years, Margaret; children Hershel R. Beebe III (Valerie), Lori Beebe Womack (Walter), Amy Beebe Baine (Rod), John William Wilson (Jamie) and Mark Allen Wilson; 12 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his

parents, Hershel R. Beebe Sr. and Mildred Bartholomew Beebe, and a sister, Sally Ann Hulsey.

## Shop fires

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

“Most propane cylinders are used to operate forklifts. Extra cylinders are supposed to be stored outside. Something we see a lot in bus garages are gas grills that might be used to cook lunch for the staff every now and then.

“Those aren’t designed to be in that environment and should be stored outside in case the tank leaks or somebody leaves the gas valve open.”

“Flammable liquids that are not in immediate use should be stored in cabinets that are designed to protect those contents for 10 minutes,” Daecher said.

“In case there is a fire, that gives people time to evacuate before that stuff becomes suscepti-

ble to heat and flame. Flammables cabinets are an OSHA requirement.

“I see some shops that have no good process for cleaning,” Daecher said.

“They allow stuff to build up over time and you have (oil-absorbent material) that is soaked with oil lying around on the floor.

“While the oil is soaked up, that absorbent material is now flammable. Trips and falls also are a huge issue with leaving oil on the floor.”

### Cleanup time

He suggests that cleanup times be scheduled. “For 15 minutes at the end of each shift or for the last hour on Friday, let’s do a really good cleanup. Then power-wash the floors every six months. From

an employee aspect, I think the nicer you keep your shop the better opportunity you have of attracting mechanics and keeping them happy.”

The cleaning plan should extend into the dungeons of the cleaning pits, too.

“The pits can get oily and dirty and can be a real pain to clean out. You see a congregation of oily or flammable gunk,” Daecher said. “If you don’t have a pump-out system you have to get down there and clean it out.”

OSHA requires shops containing flammables to have fire prevention plans, he said. “That plan is supposed to identify where flammable products are stored and identify those areas so employees know them. The plan also must come up with ways to minimize

and manage the risks of a fire starting.

“Part of that is housekeeping and minimizing the storage of flammable materials, even things like cardboard.”

Daecher often sees cardboard scattered about shops, causing fire and tripping risks. “They are getting parts in every day and have big piles of cardboard, which are not good to have in a shop. Cardboard needs to be stored in a safe area or outside.”

He added, “There are also standards for how many fire extinguishers are in a workplace and for training employees on how to use them.”

### Perfect storms

Shop fires are rare but can be devastating, he said. “Perfect

storms happen so you have to prevent them.”

The Oak Ridge Fire Department said the Eagle Lodge fire apparently was caused by oily rags that had been laundered. Washing and drying oil-soaked rags will not prevent spontaneous combustion, it said, warning that “Many times the towels will catch fire while in the dryer.”

### Storing rags

Rags used to refinish furniture or to clean wood products or cooking oils should always be kept in a covered metal container or laid flat to dry before they are discarded, fire department officials advised.

OSHA offers an online tool for fire prevention and evacuation planning at <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/fire.html>.

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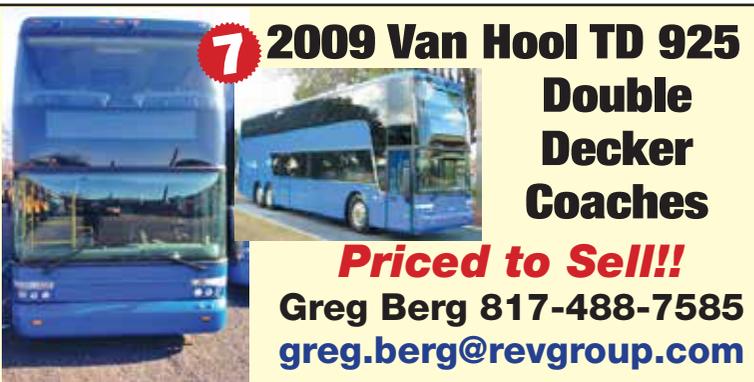


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## Seatbelts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

said.

"It's a safety selling point, obviously," he said. "If you have a Boy Scout troop going on a field trip, wouldn't you want them to have seatbelts and know they are in the safest possible vehicle? I know I would. I don't want to be in a bus without a seatbelt."

The federal rule amends Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for newly manufactured over-the-road buses with gross vehicle weight ratings over 26,000 pounds. Transit and school buses are exempt, as are motorcoaches manufactured before the mandate takes effect.

The seatbelt rule was born in NHTSA's 2007 Motorcoach Safety Plan, developed in response to National Transportation Safety Board recommendations. The plan prompted research and crash testing that was completed in 2009. A notice of proposed rulemaking was published in 2010.

Research, the proposal stated, "shows that the installation of lap/shoulder belts on motorcoaches is practicable and effective. We believe that the seatbelt assemblies that would be installed on motorcoach passenger seats pursuant to this rulemaking would reduce the risk of fatal injuries in rollover crashes by 77 percent, primarily by preventing occupant ejection in a crash."

## Crash-test results

The research included "full-scale" crash and test sled impacts, in several impact configurations, with instrumented test dummies. Evaluations were made of passengers without belts, passengers wearing lap belts and passengers strapped into lap and shoulder belts.

"The results showed that lap/shoulder belts prevented critical head and neck injury values in almost all configurations," NHTSA stated. "Dummies in lap-only belts measured head injury and neck injury values surpassing critical thresholds.

"Over the 10-year period between 1999 and 2008 there were

54 fatal motorcoach crashes resulting in 186 fatalities," the proposal noted. "On average, 16 fatalities have occurred annually to occupants of motorcoaches in crash and rollover events, with about two of these fatalities being drivers and 14 being passengers.

"While motorcoach transportation overall is safe, given the high occupancy of motorcoaches, when serious accidents do occur on this vehicle type, they can cause a significant number of fatal or serious injuries during a single event, particularly when occupants are ejected," it continued.

"Ejections account for 78 percent of the fatalities in motorcoach rollover crashes and 28 percent of the fatalities in non-rollover crashes. Seatbelts are estimated to be 77 percent effective in preventing fatal injuries in rollover crashes, primarily by preventing ejection."

In 2010 NHTSA estimated the costs of belts and structural reinforcements at \$12,900 per coach. Additional vehicle weight was estimated at 161 to 269 pounds, increasing fuel usage by 3 to 7 percent over the life of the coach.

## Reduced fatalities

When NHTSA announced the final rule in 2013, it predicted that seatbelts and shoulder restraints could reduce fatalities by up to 44 percent and reduce moderate to severe injuries by up to 45 percent.

Kiel's parent company in Europe has been building belted motorcoach seats since 1996, Cunnane said, but considerable effort was needed nonetheless to modify seats and the motorcoach structures that support them.

"The federal criteria require a 20-G (20 times the force of gravity) pull test on the seat. The seat is quite a bit more robust to pass that stringent test. Some people would say it is too much, but too much is better than too little," he said. "You can have a seat that looks the same on the outside but inside the frame has to be strengthened."

Amaya-Astron was the first manufacturer to introduce seats equipped with three-point seatbelts in 2007 for the North American motorcoach market, Albarran said. "We based this development

on the European standards."

He noted that the European standards required a 10-G test. "With our experience during these years we adapted our seat production by working hand-in-hand with the standards as they were updated by the regulatory agencies.

"We have invested hundreds of hours with our engineering team. Many static and dynamic tests were made in a certified laboratory in the United States using different seat configurations. We always received great support from the OEMs in order to adapt our seats to their vehicles," Albarran said. "Our goal since the beginning was and is to offer the safest seat available to our customers."

## Seat costs higher

A typical belted motorcoach seat costs about 50 percent more than previous unbelted seats, he said.

Cunnane placed the increased cost of seats for buyers at around \$5,000 per motorcoach. "The bus manufacturer also has to reinforce the floor as well as the wall that the seat is bolted to."

A two-seat motorcoach unit strengthened for belts would weigh about 50 pounds more than previous seat sets, Cunnane said.

"That weight adds to fuel consumption. Kiel is constantly researching ways to make the seats lighter and has made tremendous progress. Kiel has the lightest seat on the market — we have gotten the difference down to about 20 pounds on a double seat."

The thickness of the reinforced seatbacks also challenges hip-to-knee-room dimensions, he said. "We also provide the seats with the most hip-to-knee room."

Dennis Streif of Vandalia Bus Lines in Caseyville, Ill., said that anticipating the mandate, the company started purchasing seats with seatbelts in 2010.

"I personally think the federal mandate is an overkill because most often there is no one to police the use of seatbelts even when they are requested," Streif said.

"Of the 14,000-plus charters we do each year, I bet there are less than 100 trips that request seatbelts."

## Calendar

## September 2016

**18-22 CVSA Annual Conference & Exhibition**, Little Rock, Ark. Info: [www.cvsa.org](http://www.cvsa.org).

**19-21 BusCon**, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, Ind. Info: [www.busconexpo.com](http://www.busconexpo.com).

**25-30 Grayline Convention**, Hilton Reykjavik Nordica, Reykjavik, Iceland. More info: [www.graylineconvention.com](http://www.graylineconvention.com).

## October 2016

**10-13 Northwest Motorcoach Association Annual Bus ROAD-EO and Conference**, Red Lion Hotel, Olympia, Wash. Info: [www.nwmotorcoach.com](http://www.nwmotorcoach.com).

**16-18 California Bus Association 43rd Annual Convention & Trade Show**, Westin Mission Hills Resort Golf & Spa, Rancho Mirage, Calif. [www.cbabus.com](http://www.cbabus.com).

**23-25 Bus Association of New York Annual Meeting and Marketplace**, Otesaga Resort, Cooperstown, N.Y. More information: [www.banybus.org](http://www.banybus.org).

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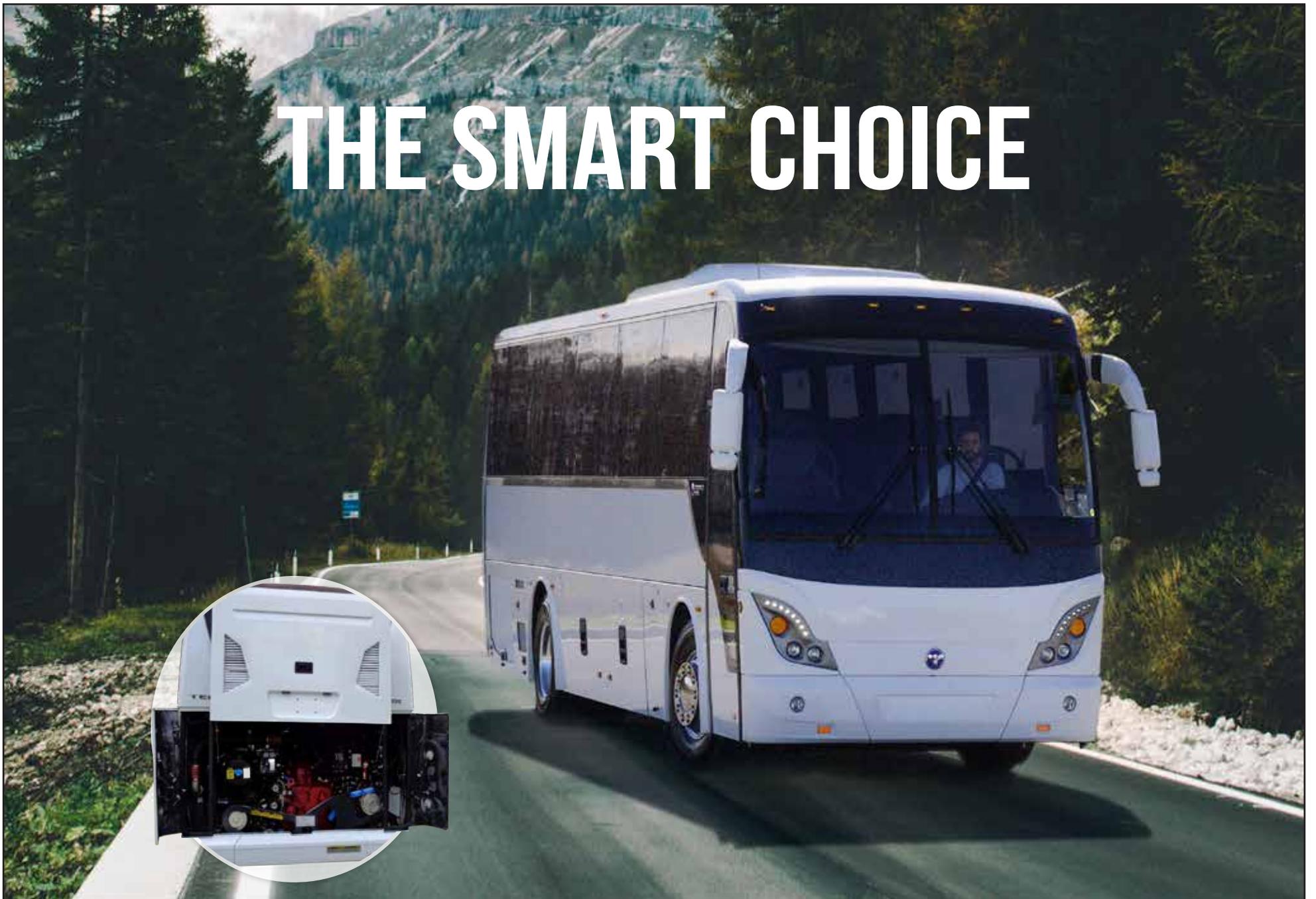
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