

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

NHTSA says no to adding seatbelts to existing coaches

WASHINGTON — The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has confirmed its 2-year-old decision against requiring existing motorcoaches to be retrofitted with seatbelts.

NHTSA, in a report titled “Retrofit Assessment for Existing Motorcoaches,” concludes that requiring seatbelts on existing coaches would place “a significant burden” on small operators.

The report also notes that because seatbelt use is so low on motorcoaches currently equipped with belts, “retrofitting was unlikely to produce substantial safety benefits.”

The report, released last month, confirms the agency’s 2013 decision to exempt existing buses when it issued a final rule requiring three-point passenger seat restraints on all new over-the-

road buses beginning in November 2016.

The new report came as good news to the motorcoach industry, which has been anticipating a retrofit requirement based on comments made by some regulators in recent months.

“Existing motorcoaches were built in good faith to meet the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards of the day,” said Ken Presley,

vice president and chief operating officer of the United Motorcoach Association.

“We are pleased NHTSA’s conclusions are consistent with their earlier findings. Motorcoach travel is an exceptionally safe mode of travel and industry professionals are consistently working to continue current safety levels with an eye to improvements in the future.”

NHTSA was required to issue the retrofitting report by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). The report focuses on the feasibility, benefits and costs of requiring retrofits.

Contributing to its decision to forgo a retrofit regulation was the cost, estimated at between \$14,650 and \$40,000 per coach.

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Thrasher Brothers Trailways of Alabama purchased four new Mercedes-Benz Setra S 417 luxury coaches from MCI to transport workers for one of the oldest global names in the state’s manufacturing explosion: Mercedes-Benz.

Thrasher drives Mercedes workers in Mercedes style

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — If you are going to ferry around employees of Mercedes-Benz, why not do it in a Mercedes coach?

Or, more specifically, a Setra, Thrasher Brothers Trailways, a luxury transportation provider for Alabama’s fast-growing automotive, aerospace and ocean-bound shipping industries, recently purchased four new Setra S 417 luxury coaches from Motor Coach Industries to serve one of the oldest global names in the state’s manufacturing explosion: Mercedes-Benz.

Setra coaches are a brand of Daimler AG, the parent company of Mercedes.

The purchase follows Thrasher Brothers’ 2013 win of a four-year contract to provide transportation

services to the Daimler’s Brand Immersion Experience, a program that will bring some 26,000 Mercedes employees to the plant in Vance and other Birmingham-area locations by 2017.

The reasoning for the Setra purchase was simple, said Alan Thrasher, co-owner, with his sister, Alyce Davidson, of the 45-year-old family charter and tour company founded by his father and uncle.

“We’re providing an all-Daimler experience for the attendees,” Thrasher said. “Some of these Mercedes dealer employers have never ridden in a coach before, and they’re amazed. We’ve even made sure the upholstery is in Mercedes gray and black.”

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FMCSA chief outlines priorities; insurance not on list

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s list of regulatory priorities for the rest of this year is notable for one item that was left off the list — increasing the insurance minimum required of commercial motor vehicle operators.

In releasing his list of five priorities last month, FMCSA Acting Administrator Scott Darling in-

cluded such proposals as requiring electronic logging devices and reforming the agency’s unpopular Compliance, Safety, Accountability system for measuring crash safety.

However, raising the insurance minimums, which the motorcoach and trucking industries have fought against mightily with the help of some congressional allies,

is nowhere to be seen.

Some industry insiders have speculated that Darling, who is facing Senate confirmation hearings this fall, is trying to downplay any controversial regulatory actions that might rattle lawmakers who are opposed to new regulations.

“Until his confirmation hearing is held, I seriously doubt the agency is going to take action on any of

these (controversial issues),” said Annette Sandberg, a former FMCSA administrator now in a private consulting business.

“I’d be shocked if they did anything or they made any changes until Darling’s confirmation goes through,” Sandberg said during the FTR Transportation Conference last month in Indianapolis. “And there’s a chance that some mem-

bers of the Senate may hold his confirmation on the promise that he not change some of these things if he does get confirmed. We don’t know when the confirmation hearings will be held, but I think that’s clearly in play with some of these regulations and studies.”

The insurance proposal reportedly would at least double the \$5

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UMA Safety Management Seminar

This edition of *Bus & Motorcoach News* includes a four-page pullout section with information and a registration form for the 12th annual UMA Safety Management Seminar, scheduled for Dec. 2 to 3 in Ashburn, Va. The seminar is a must-attend event for individuals responsible for the safety and compliance of bus and motorcoach fleet operations. Register now to reserve your seat as participation is limited to the first 130 registrants.

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Alaska tops list of fiscally healthy states; N.Y. last

ARLINGTON, Va. — Alaska is the nation's most financially healthy state, while New York is the least healthy fiscally, according to new research by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University.

The study, conducted by Senior Research Fellow Eileen Norcross, ranks each U.S. state's financial health based on short- and long-term debt and other key fiscal obligations, including unfunded pensions and health-care benefits. It provides information from the states' audited financial reports in an easily accessible format, presenting an accurate snapshot of each state's fiscal health.

Because the study is based on data from fiscal 2013, the researcher acknowledges that state budgets have improved over the last couple of fiscal years but points out that this is only one indicator of a jurisdiction's condition, especially when viewed over a longer period than a single year.

"With new spending commitments for Medicaid and growing long-term obligations for pensions and health-care benefits, states must be ever vigilant to consider

both the short- and long-term consequences of policy decisions," Norcross writes. "Understanding how each state is performing in regard to a variety of fiscal indicators can help state policymakers as they make these decisions."

Alaska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Florida rank in the top five states.

"While these states are considered fiscally healthy relative to other states because they have significant amounts of cash on hand and relatively low short-term debt

obligations, each state faces substantial long-term challenges concerning its pension and health care benefits systems," Norcross writes.

Illinois, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York rank in the bottom five states, largely owing to low amounts of cash on hand and large debt obligations.

"High deficits and debt obligations in the forms of unfunded pensions and health care benefits continue to drive each state into fiscal peril," Norcross said. "Each holds tens, if not hundreds, of bil-

ions of dollars in unfunded liabilities — constituting a significant risk to taxpayers in both the short and the long term."

The financial health of each state was analyzed through the states' own audited financial reports. By looking at states' basic financial statistics on revenues, expenditures, cash, assets, liabilities and debt, states were ranked according to how easily they will be able to cover short-term and long-term bills, including pensions.

The rankings of the 50 states

were based on their fiscal solvency in five separate categories:

- Cash solvency. Does a state have enough cash on hand to cover its short-term bills?

- Budget solvency. Can a state cover its fiscal year spending with current revenues? Or does it have a budget shortfall?

- Long-run solvency. Can a state meet its long-term spending commitments? Will there be enough money to cushion it from economic shocks or other long-term fiscal risks?

- Service-level solvency. How much fiscal "slack" does a state have to increase spending should citizens demand more services?

- Trust fund solvency. How much debt does a state have? How large are its unfunded pension and health-care liabilities?

Norcross concludes that most states are nearly back to normal since the Great Recession, but adds that "even states that appear to be fiscally robust...must take stock of their long-term fiscal health before making future public policy decisions."

The study can be found at <http://mercatus.org/statefiscalrankings>.

Amazon eyes buses for package pickups

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Amazon's experiments with all sorts of ways of delivering packages, including using everything from drones to everyday people, have been widely publicized during the past two years.

Its latest idea, which may or may not be more farfetched, hits closer to home.

An Amazon patent application, made public last month, describes a plan for delivering packages via transit — turning buses, trains, subways and other vehi-

cles into roaming pickup locations.

One scenario described in the patent proposal is essentially an Amazon locker on wheels, installed inside or attached to the outside of a bus, train or other form of ground transportation.

Customers who ride a particular route regularly could opt to have a package delivered to their preferred bus, to retrieve while they're riding.

Or, those in a specific area could choose to pick up their

package at a bus stop, receiving a text message when their item was approaching.

The latter option could be especially useful in rural communities and other areas "where carriers for delivering items are rare or prohibitively expensive," the filing says.

It probably should be pointed out that Greyhound Lines has been delivering packages — via its Package Express service — for nearly as long as it has been in business, and that's 101 years.

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THE DOCKET

Deadline looms for operators to file annual ADA reports

WASHINGTON — An annual fall tradition for the motorcoach industry — filing reports mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act — arrives later this month.

The deadline this year is Monday, Oct. 26.

ADA reporting requirements are mandatory for all bus operators, even if they don't have accessible buses and don't provide accessible service.

Failure to comply with the reporting requirement may result in a fine big enough to put some carriers out of business.

Since the Over-the-Road Bus Transportation Accessibility Act of 2007 became law, Federal Motor

Carrier Safety Administration inspectors and their state partners are required to conduct an ADA audit whenever they conduct a compliance review of a bus company.

If an inspector finds a carrier failed to comply with the ADA reporting requirements and related regulations, the violator will be reported to the Justice Department and may be subject to a fine of up to \$10,000.

Under ADA regulations, over-the-road bus companies must submit three types of reports annually by the last Monday of every October.

Each report covers from Oct. 1 of the prior year through Sept. 30 of

the current year. The reports and the types of companies required to submit them are:

1. Annual Summary Report of Individual Accessible/Equivalent Service Requests and Responses/Service Provided, which must be filed by all bus companies. Along with basic information about the company, the report contains the number of requests for accessible and/or equivalent service the company received and number of times that a request for an accessible bus was satisfied or equivalent service was provided.

In essence, the report is a digest of the year's service request forms, the records of all individual re-

quests for accessible service the company receives. Operators are required to maintain these service request forms for at least five years, and to provide individual customers with a copy of a completed form.

2. Fixed Route OTRB Company's Annual Lift Use Summary, which must be filed by large and small fixed-route over-the-road bus companies.

It contains a summary of the number of passengers with disabilities who used the lift to board accessible buses during the reporting period.

3. Annual Report of OTRBs Purchased/Leased and Overall

Fleet Data. All companies must submit this report. It contains basic information about the company, along with the total number of buses in the company fleet, total number of accessible buses, numbers of new and used buses purchased or leased during the previous year, along with numbers of new and used accessible buses leased or purchased.

Detailed information about motorcoach industry ADA reporting and record-keeping requirements can be found at: <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/americans-disabilities-act-reporting-and-other-requirements-over-road-bus-companies>.

14 million U.S. drivers pass school buses illegally

BALTIMORE — American drivers apparently don't pay much attention to stopped school buses, even when their lights are flashing and their stop signs are deployed.

An estimated 14 million U.S. motorists pass school buses illegally during the school year, according to a study by the National Association of State Directors of

Pupil Transportation Services.

The association's fifth annual survey, conducted in one day in 26 states earlier this year, involved more than 102,000 school bus drivers reporting how many times motorists passed their stopped buses illegally.

The drivers reported that 78,518 vehicles passed their buses

illegally on a single day. Throughout a 180-day school year, these sample results point to more than 14 million violations by a portion of America's motoring public.

"We know that students are far safer in school buses, but when they are outside the bus, they are more vulnerable to injury or death," said Leon Langley, presi-

dent of the association.

"There are nearly a half million school buses on the road each day in the United States. This survey captured only a fraction of the violations that bus drivers and traffic officers know all too well are occurring each and every day.

"Any driver who passes a stopped school bus illegally is en-

dangerous children and possibly even his or her own future," Langley added. "Trying to save a few seconds by passing a school bus and hitting a child can be devastating not only for the victims and their families, but also for the motorist who will have to live with the sad consequences."

The national association first coordinated the annual survey in 2011, and the results have been unfortunately consistent. In 2011, 76,685 illegal passes were documented during the one-day survey. In 2012, 88,025 illegal passes were reported. There were 85,279 in 2013 and 75,966 in 2014.

The surveys have helped bring attention to the issue, and some states have adopted more stringent safety countermeasures, such as improved motorist education, increased fines and more law enforcement, including increasing use of photo and video evidence from cameras mounted on the sides of school buses.

Reducing illegal passing requires a comprehensive approach involving education of students, motorists and school bus drivers and frequent, visible enforcement.

Complete information and detailed 2015 survey results can be found at www.nasdpts.org/stoparm.

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Richmond-to-Raleigh high-speed rail line clears hurdle

WASHINGTON — A proposed passenger rail line between Richmond, Va., and Raleigh, N.C., that could mean competition for bus companies providing scheduled service in the Southeast is moving closer to reality.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration, the state of North Carolina and the Commonwealth of Virginia have signed off on the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed rail line along the Southeast Corridor.

The completion of the environmental impact statement is one of the final steps necessary before construction of the project can move forward once funding is secured.

"Without a strong passenger rail system, the Southeast's growth will be choked by congestion for a very long time," Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said.

"North Carolina, Virginia and the Department of Transportation have worked together to bring us closer to high-speed rail connecting Richmond and Raleigh, and I urge everyone involved to continue pushing this effort forward," Foxx

said. "High-speed rail in this region is not a luxury but a necessity."

The 162-mile route between the two cities would utilize existing and former rail lines for approximately 60 percent of the route and is planned to be free from at-grade crossings of track and roads. This route is part of a larger multistate planning effort to

provide high-speed passenger service between Washington, D.C., and Atlanta.

In July, Foxx, a North Carolina native, announced that USDOT would invest approximately \$1 million to develop a regional long-term vision for the corridor and engage states and stakeholders to help the region form a governance orga-

nization that can sustain planning efforts and implement the vision.

Supporters of the rail line say it would provide alternatives to highway congestion on I-85 and I-95.

"Today brings us closer to breaking ground on this critical project for one of the fastest growing areas of the country," said Sarah Feinberg, acting administrator of

the Federal Railroad Administration. "The project will improve safety and reliability, reduce the travel time between Richmond and Raleigh, and increase opportunity for jobs and growth in the Southeast."

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory called environmental approval "a significant step toward making high performing rail in the Southeast Corridor a reality. Rail is a critical component of our 25-Year Transportation Vision that will improve connectivity throughout the state and strengthen our economy."

The completion of the environmental impact statement and preliminary design process will put the corridor on a firm footing to apply for federal funding or public-private partnerships, should either become available, and for any matching state funds.

The environmental impact statement is the second of three planning documents that allows the project to move forward for funding. The next steps consist of a Record of Decision, anticipated later in 2015, and a series of public hearings to be held in North Carolina and Virginia in the spring of 2016.

Indiana investigating crumbling roads

INDIANAPOLIS — With roads in Indiana crumbling prematurely, lawmakers are calling for an independent investigation to determine whether the state bought \$71 million in defective asphalt.

The Indiana Department of Transportation is conducting its own investigation of 88 roads that might have been paved with asphalt that crumbles and cracks years earlier than it should, according to a report published by *The Indianapolis Star*.

INDOT is concerned the blacktop might not have been mixed with enough binder, a sticky substance that keeps the

rocks in asphalt together.

Even though the department is looking into the matter, state lawmakers want an independent investigation because INDOT hired contractors for the paving jobs in question.

Sen. Carlin Yoder, R-Middlebury, said the probe should be handled by an investigator "without ties to INDOT or the contractors and with some expertise in chemistry."

Rep. Ed Soliday, R-Valparaiso, told *The Star* that the state owes it to taxpayers to find out who is at fault.

"If people don't have confidence that money we spend on

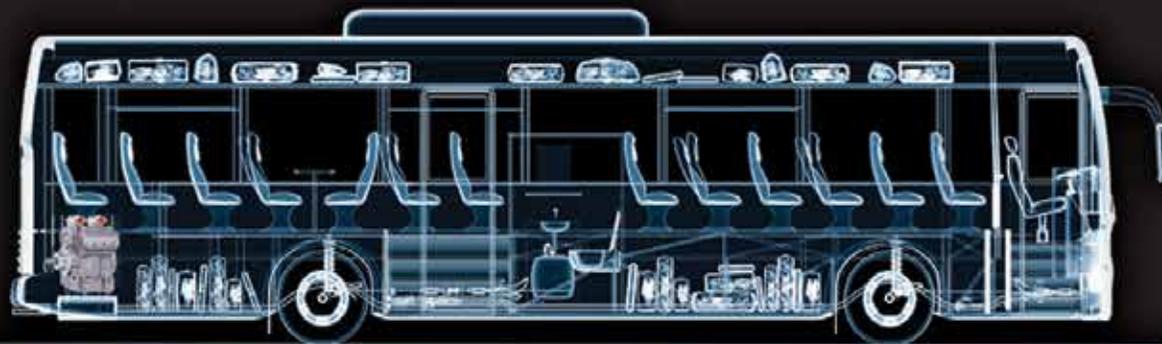
road funding is being spent well, then they won't support additional funding, and I don't blame them," Soliday said. "You keep digging to find out which it is. We are going to need a clear explanation for the public to move forward."

Gov. Mike Pence agreed.

"Hoosiers may be assured that our administration will continue to work with federal highway officials to make sure that taxpayers get what they paid for in road improvements and that those responsible for any deficiencies are held strictly accountable," Pence said. "Hoosier motorists and taxpayers deserve nothing less."

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Don't throw away those quotes, turn them into bookings

By Christian Riddell
Motorcoach Marketing Council

How many quotes will you send out today?

Did you know that whether or not those quotes turn into bookings, they represent a business opportunity that could completely transform your company?

For many businesses, there's a constant flow of quotes coming through the door every day. Many of these quotes never turn into bookings, which means they don't get added to marketing databases or followed up on, and after the quote is sent out, the potential customer is never heard from again.

Is this crazy? Yes. But, for many companies, it's the status quo. I hate to admit it, but in my own travels and after interactions with hundreds of other companies, I've seen that this type of thing is not limited to a small percentage of companies out there.

The sad reality is that it's rampant in our industry. If this is all hitting a bit too close to home don't worry, you're not alone.

Old MacDonald

Imagine for a moment that you are a farmer. You work hard to raise a cow. You feed it, house it, and take care of it when it's sick. That's right, you're a regular Old MacDonald.

Now imagine that when it comes time to turn your cow into meat, you just take the few best steaks and throw the rest away.

Sounds ludicrous and wasteful, right? Well, that's no different than what goes on every day in motorcoach companies around North America.

The good news is that there are

some simple things you can do to fix it.

One of the things that many businesses track is lead acquisition cost. This is closely tied to customer acquisition cost and both are designed to shine a light on the actual cost of generating new business. Although the process of tracking these can be complicated, there's a shortcut that can help you get a handle on it.

Take your total number of new potential customers in a given period. These are not quotes because many of the quotes will be to the same customer, which doesn't count. It also doesn't include existing customers, as they are in a completely different category.

Once you have that, look at the marketing expenses over that same period of time. This includes everything you do that is designed to support sales, generate demand for your product, or in any way support your growth.

Don't leave out discounts you give to FAM trips, website expenses, business cards, salary or anything else. Capture it all.

Now, divide those dollars by the number of potential customers you landed in that period.

And voila! There you have it, a very basic lead acquisition cost.

What you will find is that, regardless of your budget size, this is a real number and these dollars are being spent every day to support the future of your company.

However, just like Old MacDonald, we need to make sure that even if we follow up on the quotes and land some of them (get the steak), we don't throw the rest of the cow away. As a friend of mine likes to say, "There is still a lot of meat left on that bone."

Marketing Minute

GoMotorcoach

It's the Smart Move

Every person who reaches out to you to get a quote has a few things in common that are important to keep in mind. First and foremost, they know enough about motorcoach travel that they wanted a quote.

Now, having been a salesperson, I know there is a certain percentage of these people who are truly just "price shopping" and that can be frustrating. However, don't forget that they were at least interested enough in a charter to make the phone call.

They know you

The next thing to keep in mind is that these people knew to call you. This means that somehow — be it from ads, word of mouth, or from seeing your bus — they know about your company. This is critically important to your marketing strategy. (You are not educating them about you or your service.)

If I was to pick up the phone and ask any company, in any industry, if they would like to buy a list of people who knew about them, were interested in their product and would likely use it again in the future, I could retire a rich man.

This is what most companies call low-hanging fruit, and they're the easiest people to market to.

So, how do you turn these leads into steak? Good question.

This is truly a good, better, best conversation. While I would love to focus my attention strictly on

the best, I know that most companies need to get to good before they jump to best.

The first step in this process is to use email marketing. Not Gmail, not Outlook, but a fully functioning email marketing system. There are lots of them out there. Mail Chimp, Constant Contact, and Campaign Monitor are just a few examples, but they all do basically the same thing.

Once you have chosen a program, it's time to start putting people in the database. But, before you download the list of all of your customers since 1996 and import them into the system, here are two things to keep in mind.

First, a list is only as good as the segments that you break it into. While having a list of current clients and a companion list of potential leads can feel like a win, it's actually not a great strategy. Instead, capitalize on sorting fields, such as the types of business they are interested in, group size, departure dates, equipment preferences or other things that will help you be more specific in your marketing efforts.

Even if you don't think you have the time or ability to use all that data right now, putting it in from the beginning can be a major advantage when you really start to use the system.

Ditch old addresses

Second, according to Mail Chimp, most email addresses are only valuable to your business for eight months from the time you originally get them. What does this mean?

Don't input everything from the past 10 years. Instead, just go back 10 months and get started

there.

After inputting that information, the next step is to send emails. They can be short emails that talk about your company's values and philosophies, staff and drivers, safety record, equipment — basically whatever you feel highlights your company in the eyes of a consumer.

Show them why

Remember that these people are the lowest hanging fruit in the marketing world. They know your company, the product you provide, and are, in most cases, going to book a coach at some point. So, your job is to show them why they should book with you.

Price shoppers are still shoppers, and like I've said before, if they're trying to compare you to a discount operator and want you to match the price, give them a reason why they should pay more and book with you. Some will and some won't, but the effort is important.

While there are lots of other things you can do with this data (put it in a CRM, do phone follow-ups, send snail mail, etc.), there is nothing you can do that is as simple as email.

The takeaway? Don't be like Old MacDonald.

Your leads cost real money — money that you work hard to earn. Don't throw away those leads that don't book. Instead, put them to work for you.

It's time to turn that investment into piles of delicious, juicy, grilled-to-perfection bookings.

For more information about the Motorcoach Marketing Council and its programs, go to www.motorcoachmarketing.org.

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Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 294

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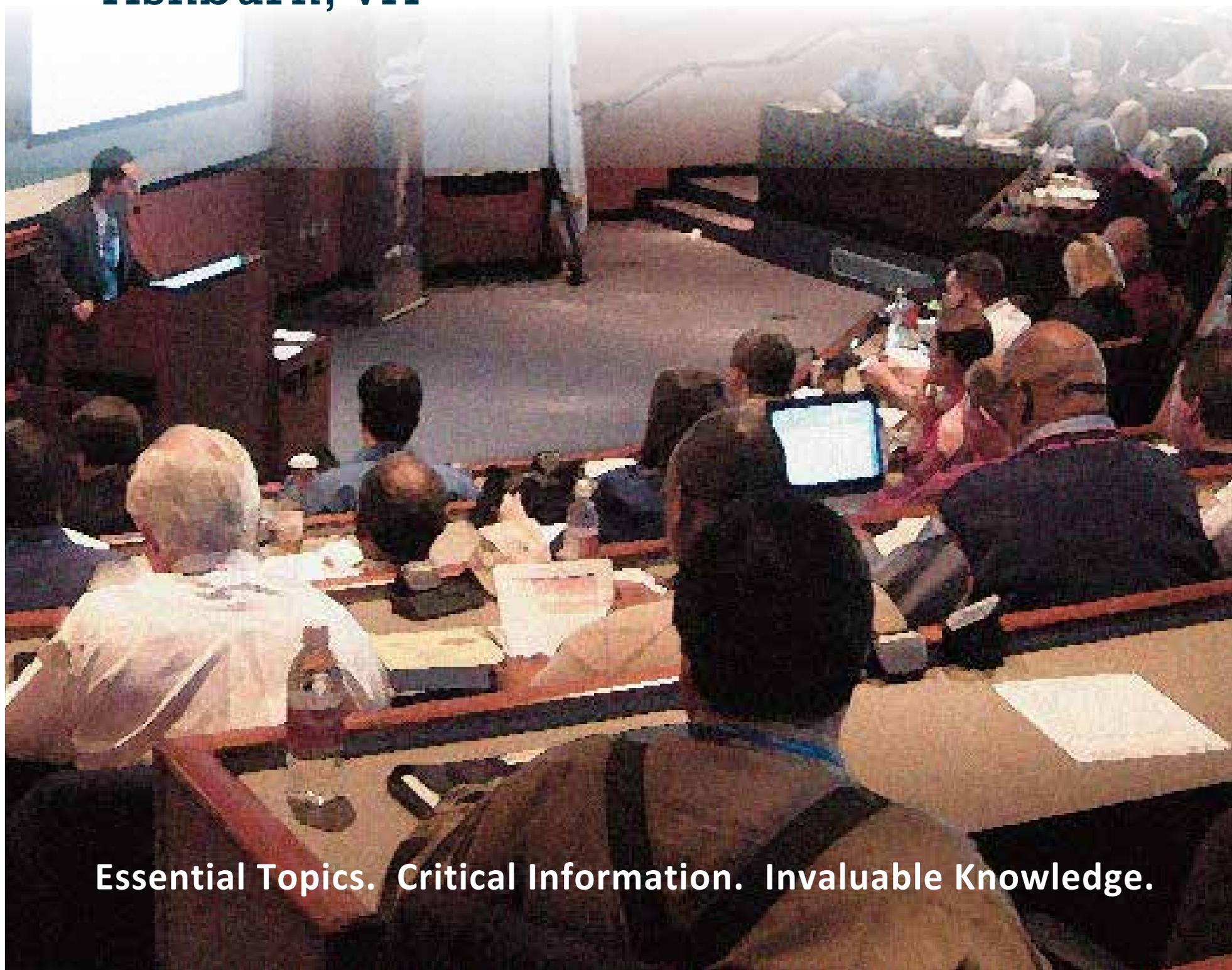
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12th Annual

UMA Safety Management Seminar

December 2-3, 2015

NTSB Training Center
Ashburn, VA



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Space is limited to 130 attendees—please register early!

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Wednesday, December 2, 2015

	Breakfast on Your Own	
8:00 _{AM}	Shuttle Departs Hotel for NTSB	<i>Shuttles provided by: First Priority Trailways</i>
8:15 _{AM} – 8:30 _{AM}	Registration & Coffee	
8:30 _{AM} – 9:00 _{AM}	Welcome & Introductions	
9:00 _{AM} – 10:00 _{AM}	Proactive Approaches to Loss Prevention	
10:00 _{AM} -10:15 _{AM}	Networking Break	<i>Break sponsored by:</i> Protective Insurance Company
10:15 _{AM} – 11:15 _{AM}	FMCSA Update	
11:15 _{AM} – 12:00 _{PM}	Back to Basics: OSHA Recordkeeping	
12:00 _{PM} – 1:00 _{PM}	Lunch	<i>Lunch sponsored by:</i> ABC Insurance Company
1:00 _{PM} – 1:45 _{PM}	Drivers Wanted: How to Get Them Coming to YOU	
1:45 _{PM} – 2:45 _{PM}	Breakout Group Discussions	
2:45 _{PM} – 3:20 _{PM}	Knowledge and Solution Sharing	
3:20 _{PM} – 3:30 _{PM}	Networking Break	
3:30 _{PM} – 4:30 _{PM}	The Politics of Safety	
3:30 _{PM} - 4:30 _{PM}	TWA Flight 800 Presentation (Optional)	
4:45 _{PM}	Shuttle Departs NTSB for Hotel	
6:00 _{PM} - 7:00 _{PM}	Hotel Reception - Hampton Inn Lobby	
	Dinner on Your Own	

Thursday, December 3, 2015

	Breakfast on Your Own	
7:30 _{AM}	Shuttle Departs Hotel for NTSB	
8:15 _{AM} – 8:45 _{AM}	TSA Update	
8:45 _{AM} – 9:45	Test Your Knowledge: Legal & Regulatory Issues in Transportation	
9:45 _{AM} – 10:00 _{AM}	Networking Break	
10:00 _{AM} – 10:45 _{AM}	ELD Panel: What The Salesman Didn't Tell Us	<i>Break sponsored by:</i> Transportation Insurance Brokers
10:45 _{AM} – 11:45 _{AM}	NTSB Update	
11:45 _{AM} – 12:15 _{PM}	Box Lunch Served	
12:15 _{PM}	Shuttle Departs for Dulles International Airport & Hotel	

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE, visit www.uma.org for program updates.

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Registration Fees: UMA Member Price - **\$285.00**
Per person Non-UMA Members - \$435.00 (*Not a member? Visit www.uma.org to join and start saving today!*)

Cancellation Policy: There is a \$50 processing fee for all cancellations. This fee is assessed on a per person basis.

There is no refund after November 20, 2015. All refund requests are at the discretion of UMA management.

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You can also register online at www.uma.org!

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Shuttle service to and from the NTSB Training Center will be provided each day. Transportation to Dulles International Airport will be provided on Thursday afternoon.

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The Top 10 (or so) things that make bus life blissful

By Dave Millhouser

Bill was ticked. He'd just taken delivery of a new coach, and the factory had refused his request to set the governor at 77 mph.

Bill ran a single bus, offering luxury tours, and felt he needed the extra speed to get a "run" at the hills on one route. The bus he traded in had an 8V92 with 400 horsepower (and was governed at 77 mph), while the new one was equipped with a 400 horsepower Series 60. It would "only" do 71 mph.

After his first trip, he called, laughing.

"The new bus got us there an hour sooner. It didn't go as fast down hill, but climbed every grade at the speed limit."

This was the mid 1990s and Bill (like most of us) had just discovered that new four-stroke engines had tons of torque and were lots stronger than two strokes.

Grumbling is fun, but lot's of things are better these days. And despite the fact that none of you have asked, it might be fun to do a countdown of the Top 10 technolo-

gies that have improved bus life.

Number 10 — alternators. In ye olden days we had generators that didn't put out a ton of juice, particularly at idle. Not only that, bus builders, for quaint (and fallacious) reasons, made many coaches positive ground. Jump-starting offered numerous opportunities for mischief.

Modern alternators push tons of electrons, and part of the design criteria for coaches is that they work pretty well at low rpms. Generators took a month or so to fully charge a battery. Alternators get 'er done much faster.

Number 9 — air driers. You probably don't remember life before air driers. In fact, the darn things are so good you probably don't give them the affection they deserve.

Back in the day you rolled under a bus at least once a day to drain condensation from the air tanks. Sometimes the bus spit on you, and in the winter, those jewels froze.

One crafty solution was an alcohol system that injected a bit of nasty stuff into the system to pre-

vent curdling. It worked almost half the time. When it didn't, moisture tended to freeze the delicate valves that controlled things like the suspension and brakes.

Nothing was more bracing than rolling under a bus on a winter morning, with torch in hand, and thawing the air system one part at a time. Every time the doodad you were heating began hissing, you could move on to the next.

If you neglected to drain the tanks, they filled with water. When a tank is three-quarters full of water, there isn't much room for compressed air. You'd step on the brakes and the air-pressure gauge dropped faster than the speedometer.

Modern air driers (and automatic tank drains) have another endearing trait. They occasionally discharge over a puddle as recalcitrant passengers are passing nearby. When that happens I must fight off the urge to hug the air drier.

Number 8 — lavatories. It was tempting to call them number 1 or 2. Aside from the entertainment they sometimes provide, they do speed things up. Bus builders

now install big fuel tanks to boost range. Before lavatories, range was determined by bladder size. Drivers had to stop every few hours and part of their job was to make sure everyone used the facilities.

Number 7 — entertainment systems. These started with drivers shouting announcements over the din of the engine and evolved into PA systems. Passengers brought their own entertainment (books).

Attempts at providing radio broadcasts failed because the buses kept (predictably) moving out of the station's range. In the 1970s some of my compatriots found a way to hook an eight-track to the PA, but it wasn't until the 1980s that monitors playing videotapes found their way into coaches, along with music from cassettes.

Very quickly it became impossible to use a bus in charter service if it lacked a video system.

Some modern coaches sport monitors as large as 22 inches, but the trend is going backwards. Folks are again bringing their own entertainment and need only Wi-Fi

and a bit of 110-volt current to be happy. What's next? Books?

Number 6 — brakes. I'm talking about brakes that can actually stop a coach in less than a city block. Early drum brakes merely suggested to the coach that stopping would be nice. Later drum brakes were more insistent — you no longer needed a lookout to spot obstructions hundreds of yards ahead.

Now we have REAL brakes. They can stop a 50,000-pound bus faster than some SUV's and, in the hands of a skilled driver, launch a passenger exiting the lavatory down the aisle and plumb out the front door.

Despite the fact that nobody asked for a column like this, we're going to continue it next issue.

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



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University, bus company settlements end hazing suits

ORLANDO, Fla. — Florida A&M University has reached a \$1.1 million settlement with the family of a school drum major who died after being hazed by fellow band members on a charter bus.

The settlement comes one year after the parents of drum major Robert Champion settled a wrongful-death lawsuit against Fabulous Coach Lines, the company that owned the bus on which their son was beaten during a band hazing in Orlando before he was pronounced dead.

Terms of the bus company settlement remain confidential.

Under the settlement reached with Florida A&M, Champion's parents agreed to drop the negligence lawsuit against the Tallahassee school in return for \$1.1 million. An insurance company is paying \$800,000 and the state is paying the rest.

The university also agreed to name the marching band's anti-hazing program after Robert Champion and to place a memorial plaque dedicated to Champion on campus, according to settlement documents.

A trial had been scheduled to start this month.

Champion died after band members pummeled him with fists and mallets aboard a bus parked outside an Orlando hotel in November 2011. The hazing ritual, known as "Crossing Bus C," was carried out after FAMU band members had performed at an annual football game with a rival.

Fifteen former band members were charged with Champion's death. All but a handful received sentences of probation and community service. The band was suspended after Champion's death, and FAMU's long-serving band director and then-university president were ousted from their jobs.

The university should have taken stronger measures to crack down on hazing by band members, Champion's parents had argued in their lawsuit.

Voluntary participation

But FAMU argued that the 26-year-old Champion voluntarily participated in the hazing and that university officials didn't know it was going on.

Champion's parents also sued Fabulous Coach Lines, which at the time was owned by Ray Land,

and one of its drivers, Wendy Millette, accusing both of negligence that led to the student's death.

The lawsuit claimed the Branford, Florida-based bus company and its driver not only allowed the hazing to take place, but had longstanding knowledge of hazing incidents taking place aboard company buses.

Providing safe transport

After the suit was filed, Land told CNN that his company "did transport our passengers safely from point A to point B as contracted."

When employees were notified of an emergency on board one of the buses in the convoy, "we responded just as quickly and effectively as we could."

The CNN article also quoted Land as saying the bus company had "never seen this kind of behavior" from the band previously.

"It's completely out of the blue," he said of the lawsuit. "It wasn't an auto accident. It wasn't a crash. If two passengers get in a fight, and one gets injured, I don't know how that's the motorcoach company's liability."

According to the complaint, the hazing took place aboard one of 11 Fabulous Coach Lines' buses chartered to transport the Florida A&M band. That bus was parked separately and at a distance from the other company buses in a hotel parking lot after the other buses had discharged band members.

It was aboard this bus, known as "Bus C" in the complaint, that about 20 band members engaged in a hazing ritual, subjecting victims to repeated beatings and depriving them of oxygen by placing pillow cases or other objects over their heads, the lawsuit claimed.

The bus was running, with air conditioning activated and interior lights partially on, it continued.

Driver 'stood guard'

While the hazing was taking place, Millette, Bus C's driver, was present and "stood guard" over the activities aboard the bus, even going as far as to "force" Champion back onto the bus after he had stepped off to vomit, telling him he would be all right, the suit alleged.

When another bus driver saw movement aboard the bus and inquired about it, Millette told the

driver "to ignore the activity and move on," according to the complaint.

Frequent rituals

Furthermore, the complaint alleged that Millette was regularly assigned to Bus C on past Florida A&M band trips, frequently allowed hazing rituals to take place aboard her bus, and that company management knew about these activities; other drivers who were aware of the hazing and complained about it were told to ignore it.

The complaint alleged that both Fabulous Coach Lines and Millette, acting as a company driver, knew or should have known that illegal hazing was taking place on board its company buses, and that neither the company nor its employees intervened or provided supervision that would have prevented the hazing that ultimately killed Champion.

The Champions have refused to divulge financial terms with Fabulous Coach Lines.

Land sold the bus company in January 2013 to Gainesville charter bus company A Candies Coachworks.

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Former NTA legislative counsel James Santini dies at 78

ROCKVILLE, Md. — James D. Santini, a former congressman who served as the National Tour Association's legislative counsel in Washington, D.C., from 1983 to 2007, has died.

Santini's daughter, Lori Egbers, told The Associated Press that her father died last month at a hospice center in Rockville after being diagnosed with advanced-stage esophageal cancer. He was 78.

Santini led the NTA's legislative battle against unfair competition, monitored the patchwork of state seller-of-travel laws and negotiated a relationship between NTA and the National Park Service that continues to benefit the association's tour operators.

"Jim was a much-admired leader and friend to so many NTA members," said NTA President Pam Inman. "His dedication to the people and policies of tourism left a powerful legacy, and we are a stron-

ger association because of him."

Santini served his native Nevada as member of the U.S. House of Representatives for four terms, from 1975 to 1983. He was a founding member of the House Travel and Tourism Caucus and served as its chairman.

NTA presented Santini with its Travel Leader of the Year award in 1980 and the Bob Everidge Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005. In 2010, the association initiated the James D. Santini Award, given each year to individuals who make significant contributions to NTA's

legislative advocacy efforts.

"NTA and the entire travel industry have lost a giant in Jim Santini," said Jim Host, NTA's executive vice president from 1974 to 1997. "His incredible efforts as NTA's legislative representative made NTA more than a significant

player in the national arena. He and I became very close over the years, and I will miss him as I would a brother."



James D. Santini

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Seatbelts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Retrofitting would produce a significant burden on the small entities which would be responsible for accomplishing it," the report says.

The report also notes that fewer than 10 percent of coach passengers use seatbelts, compared with usage in passenger cars and light trucks of up to 90 percent.

"Given low belt use rates, retrofitting was unlikely to produce substantial safety benefits," the report states.

Another factor contributing to the decision was the installation of electronic stability control (ESC) on later-model motorcoaches, making them safer. The seatbelt requirement for new coaches was based on data from 2008 and 2009, when ESC on buses was virtually unknown.

"However, the agency has subsequently estimated that 80 percent of new motorcoaches in 2012 had ESC as standard equipment," the report says. "ESC is highly effective (40-56 percent) in preventing rollovers and run-off-the-road crashes."

NHTSA says that in analyzing developments since issuing its 2013 seatbelt requirement, it determined that retrofitting motorcoaches was impractical.

"There is still a low likelihood that a retrofit requirement would be technically practicable at a reasonable cost, the cost impacts are still likely to be significant for small businesses, and the benefits that would accrue from a retrofit requirement are likely to be low," the report concludes.



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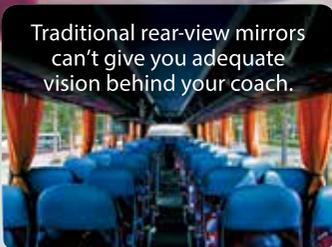
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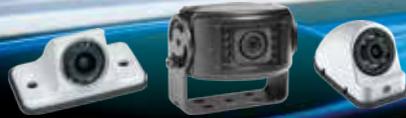
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Destinations should appeal to bus groups

Popular destinations in San Francisco, Nashville and Jacksonville, Fla., have added features that should interest the demographic that most often takes motorcoach tours, including those who enjoy a bit of adventure.

New at the Golden Gate Bridge is something old, the **Round House Café**.

The building on the northern viewpoint has been out of service as a restaurant for years, but now visitors can try a variety of "high-quality American classics," such as apple pie from Christine's Upper Crust Pies, hot dogs from Fork in the Road, Boudin chowder-filled sourdough bread bowls, cookies by City Baking Company, and Peerless Coffee.

For information, go to www.parksconservancy.org.

Nashville's **Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum** has rolled out an exhibit that's predicted to become one of its most popular.

Set in the expanded museum's east gallery, "Flyin' Saucers Rock & Roll: The Cosmic Genius of Sam Phillips" showcases the recording studio owner who introduced the world to Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley, Charlie Rich, Ike Turner and others.

The founder of Memphis-based Sun Records, Phillips also broke down racial barriers of the segregated music industry during the Civil Rights era.

Admission is \$24.95 for adults (ages 13+); \$14.95 youth (6-12); children 5 and under, free. Pack-

ages that include audio and guided tours are also available. Go to www.countrymusichalloffame.org.

One of northeast Florida's most popular destinations, the **Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens**, has added RiverQuest: Airboat and Kayak Eco-tours.

The tours are designed to give eco-minded visitors an opportunity to explore the Trout River and view its native wildlife, including dolphins, manatees, eagles, ospreys and other birds.

Airboat rides, which wander through the river and connecting canals, are 30 minutes long. There also are self-guided kayak tours, allowing visitors to explore at their own pace (rentals are for up to two hours). Go to: www.jacksonvillezoo.org.

Mercedes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The coaches offer the signature luxury for which Setra is known, offering features such as power outlets at every seat, along with wood-grain flooring and other high-end aesthetic touches.

Setra joined the Daimler family of brands in 1995. MCI acquired

Setra's North American distribution rights in July 2012 and supports Setra coaches with a parts and service network featuring house-managed tech support and trained Setra technicians.

Mercedes-Benz, founded in 1926 in Stuttgart, Germany, located its first U.S. manufacturing plant in Tuscaloosa County, Ala., in the early 1990s, where the com-

pany's M-Class, R-Class, GL-Class, C-Class and the new GLE Coupe are built in for the North American market.

The move set the stage for an array of global manufacturers and suppliers to open assembly lines throughout Alabama, drawn by quality labor and an active global port in Mobile.

"We have the only Daimler-

People

PHOENIX — **Tour West America** has promoted **Graham Inns** to the position of general manager.

Inns began his motorcoach career in 1976 in his native New Zealand. He immigrated to the United States in 1983 and continued his career as a coach driver.

Inns chose Phoenix as his home in 1993 and joined Tour West America as a coach driver in Octo-

ber 2003. During the 12 years he made Tour West his home he added dispatch, sales and safety to his company resumé.

He most recently served as dispatch supervisor for the company, which has a fleet of 22 coaches. **BJ Brooks** and **Peter Shelbo** recently celebrated their 29th year as owner/operators of Tour West America.



Graham Inns

Calendar

October 2015

16-21 Busworld Kortrijk, Kortrijk, Belgium. Info: <http://kortrijk.busworld.org>.

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

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

27-28 Florida Motorcoach Association Board of Directors and Operators Meeting, Sheraton Lake Buena Vista Resort, Orlando, Fla. Info: <http://floridamotorcoach.org/>.

28 Hispanic Motorcoach Council Regional Meeting, Sheraton Lake Buena Vista Resort, Orlando, Fla. Info: www.buses.org/HMC/HMC-Events-3.

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

owned plant in the United States that was built from the ground up,

and we're very proud of that," Thrasher said.



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FMCSA list

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

million minimum insurance coverage required of motorcoach operators — and possibly raise it to as much as \$20 million to \$30 million per incident or claim.

Following a huge backlash from industry on the proposal, FMCSA did an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that gave it the opportunity to collect some real data to determine whether the increase was warranted or not.

“Since the agency announced

the (proposed rulemaking) in February of this year, the rule has just been sitting there,” Sandberg said. “If you look at the regulatory agenda, they don’t have any dates for this particular rule, which probably means they are still analyzing the data.

“On top of that,” she added, “if you look at all the other regulations they have in play right now, I think other rules have moved to the top of the priority list and this one has fallen to the bottom.”

That doesn’t mean the insurance increase is dead. In fact,

UMA is supporting the passage of a bill that would block FMCSA from implementing an increase and also is lobbying members of Congress to add such a ban to a highway funding bill being considered in the House.

The following is a list of FMCSA priorities for the remainder of 2015, as presented by Darling in a message to industry stakeholders:

Safety Fitness Determination. “FMCSA is in the final stages of publishing a Proposed Rule that would increase the use of inspection data in making Safety Fitness Determinations for motor carriers,” Darling wrote.

“This rule would propose important changes to the Agency’s process for assessing the safety performance of truck and bus companies, focusing on incorporating current on-road safety performance data (i.e., roadside inspection and crash data) and evaluating carriers based on their own performance. We will be seeking public input on the Proposed Rule and look forward to hearing your views as we develop a Final Rule.”

Inspection Modernization. “FMCSA launched a new version of our inspection software program — Aspen 3.0. It features a new look

and feel and enhanced capabilities. Many of the functions needed at roadside are now integrated into the Aspen system without requiring external software. Law enforcement personnel are also able to obtain direct access to out-of-service notices. We launched a series of training webinars this month that go into great detail on the many improvements.”

Unified Registration System. “FMCSA will implement a new, revamped system designed to improve the accuracy and timeliness of the information in our database of registered motor carriers based on our 2013 Final Rule. URS will streamline manual processes and combine several forms that regulated entities are required to submit into one unified registration — the electronic “smart form.”

“It is important that we get this right. As such, we will move forward with a new phased implementation that will ensure a successful launch. A *Federal Register* Notice will be published in October that will provide details on the updated implementation timeline.”

Compliance, Safety, Accountability Phase III. “In preparation for a successful launch of the final two CSA interventions — offsite investigations and cooperative safety plans — we are lining up the necessary training for Federal

and State investigators and outreach to the industry. Two important things to note:

- The Agency is also moving forward on a new type of investigation — the crash BASIC investigation — that focuses on identifying trends in carrier crash behaviors.

- FMCSA will be fine-tuning the SMS algorithm to better identify carriers for investigation so that we can intervene more quickly with those found to be at greatest risk. A second *Federal Register* notice announcing the preview of the changes will be published in the coming months.”

Electronic Logging Devices. “A Final Rule on ELDs is being reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget and is scheduled to be out later this year. Although we cannot discuss the provisions of a Final Rule before it is made public, I can say that the rule is designed to benefit everyone by:

- Improving hours of service (HOS) compliance, which we estimate will prevent about 20 fatalities and over 400 injuries each year;
- Helping businesses cut paperwork and save money;
- Protecting drivers from harassment; and
- Making it easier for law enforcement and safety inspectors to review driver HOS records.”

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