



BCA Coaches Now Available from Matthews Buses Inc.

by Larry Plachno
Photos courtesy of Matthews Bus and BCA

BCA coaches are now available from Matthews Buses Inc. BCA coaches are designed and geared for the North American market. Matthews Buses is a well-respected bus dealer with a strong presence on the East Coast. Shown here is a new BCA coach at the Orlando facility of Matthews Buses.

Back in the January, 2014 issue of NATIONAL BUS TRADER we provided an introduction to the Bus and Coach America (BCA) organization and product line. We are able to report that the first of these new coaches are now coming to the United States coach market and are available from Matthews Bus Sales, BCA's exclusive dealer in the Northeastern and Southeastern United States, as well as through BCA.

BCA was originally founded in 2010 to develop, build and sell buses particularly geared for the North American market. Based on bus operator input, their professed goal was to provide a 20-year design vehicle that did not sacrifice content in achieving a price under \$430,000. The U.S.-based designers started with a clean slate and operator input plus some research and development. The result was a 45-foot BCA45 coach as well as a 40-foot BCA40 coach and a forthcoming transit model.

BCA is a licensed manufacturer with their own VIN numbers and eventually plans to

complete buses in the United States. However, to get production rolling quickly, they have partnered with Zhengzhou Yutong Bus Co. Ltd. in Zhengzhou, China, where their buses are built on a special product line.

What is interesting is that because of ongoing operator input, the first production BCA45 coaches have already been improved from the prototype with an upgraded interior and new parcel racks. Some of the first production units are coming with optional 110-volt outlets, USB power port stations, woodgrain flooring and leatherette seat covers. A similar two-axle BCA40 coach using an EPA2013 Cummins ISL / Allison B500R powertrain will be available early in 2015.

BCA has elected to sell their new coaches by partnering with a dealer network. They have several reasons for this but the most important is that an established dealer is customer-focused and can offer excellent local support and service beyond what BCA could hope to do on a national level. Using estab-

lished dealers provides an immediate regional presence for the BCA coach and is far better than what BCA could do by building their own brick and mortar facilities. In most cases, the established dealers are already well regarded in their areas and offer excellent support. It is also noted that existing dealer customers have an interest in obtaining a higher quality bus that can be satisfied by the BCA coach.

BCA coaches will now be available through Matthews Buses Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Matthews Group Inc. The company was originally founded by Bob and Justine Matthews and has been in business for more than 47 years. The Matthews family formerly owned and operated Upstate Tours in Saratoga Springs, New York prior to selling it to Brown Coach. As a result the management has valuable experience and knowledge of commercial coach operations.

Glenn Matthews relates: "When my brother Mark and I learned about the new



A major advantage that Matthews Buses offers is multiple locations in New York State, in Orlando, Florida and even intermediate points such as their Rifled Air Conditioning location in High Point, North Carolina.



Support and service for BCA coaches is available at virtually all locations of Matthews Buses including here in Orlando, Florida. Each location has techs qualified in all aspects of the systems on the new BCA coaches.

Bus and Coach America product, we were immediately interested in becoming a dealer. I know that if we were still a coach operator we would be looking hard at the new BCA motorcoach and its dealer network as a solution to curb the ever-increasing price of motorcoaches in our fleet."

Matthews Buses Inc. has several locations and sells about 1,200 buses annually. School buses represent 75 percent of annual sales. Most of the remaining buses are commercial cutaway type buses of several makes. Manufacturers represented include Goshen Coach, Elkhart Coach, Federal Coach, Startrans Bus, Thomas Built Buses, Braun and BCA. Mark Matthews is currently spearheading the BCA sales efforts in conjunction with the existing sales force. It is expected that dedicated coach sales personnel will be assigned as business activity dictates.

One of the major reasons why Matthews Buses Inc. was selected as a BCA coach dealer is because of their multiple locations.

They have four locations in New York State. Corporate offices are located at 2900 Route 9 in Ballston Spa. In western New York Matthews Buses Inc. is located at 2 Forbes Street in Dansville. There is a location in Downstate New York at 201 Charles Street in Maybrook. The fourth location is in central New York at 7312 Northern Boulevard in East Syracuse. In addition, Matthews Buses Inc. has a location in Florida at 4802 W. Colonial Drive in Orlando.

Also part of the Matthews Group are two intermediate facilities that will also be involved with BCA coaches to some extent. Rifled Air Conditioning is located at 2610 Earlham Place in High Point, North Carolina. This location is primarily involved with manufacturing and installing bus air conditioning equipment. Matthews Specialty Vehicles, a vehicle manufacturing company, is located at 101 South Swing Road in Greensboro, North Carolina and will also be involved with BCA coach support.

Glenn Matthews provides reasons why Matthews Buses has become a BCA dealer. "Since purchasing our first BCA 45-foot motorcoach and showing it to operators around the country, we have seen a lot of interest in the product. The idea of being able to put three motorcoaches in a fleet for the price of two seems to be very appealing to customers. Cost is not the only reason by buy a BCA coach. Unique design features include the enormous luggage space, numerous service access doors, stainless steel structure and true motorcoach design make this coach a serious threat to other coach manufacturers."

Generally, BCA builds to order. Depending on time of year and lead times, from order to completed unit is 120-150 days. However, it can be as little as 30-60 days if a unit nearing completion meets the customer's specifications. Mark Matthews comments: "As we progress, Matthews Buses Inc. will be stocking BCA coaches. Right now we are learning what customers are demanding and are reacting with option



Management from Matthews Buses Inc. poses with a new 45-foot BCA coach. The Matthews family has a strong background in bus operations having once owned Upstate Tours in Saratoga Springs, New York. The BCA coach is regarded by many as well-engineered with many innovations and safety features.



Parts for BCA coaches are not a problem. BCA maintains their own parts facility in California while Matthews has BCA parts available in Ballston Spa, New York and Orlando, Florida.



Matthews Buses dispatches 20 service trucks that are available for BCA coach warranty work as well as scheduled maintenance work at customer locations in the Matthews service area.

packages for that. I believe that the next group of buses coming in will more accurately reflect what we have been learning. Options such as 110-volt outlets, USB port charging stations, enclosed parcel racks, woodgrain flooring, leatherette seats as well as ceiling coverings will be available."

110-volt outlets, USB port power stations, GPS and Wi-Fi options are available. Salespeople are also prepared to quote fire suppression, collision avoidance, tire pressure monitoring systems and other items and systems that are not supplied as standard equipment.

Operators who do not have their own financing in place will find a wide range of options available to them through BCA and Daimler. BCA offers industry-standard leasing and financing programs including TRAC leasing with multiple lenders. The biggest factor is the creditworthiness of an applicant. There are so many options available that the staff from Matthews Buses, Inc. should be able to find one to fit a customer's needs.

Matthews Buses Inc. is a member of the Daimler family by virtue of its representation of the Thomas line. Daimler Financial has a variety of lease and purchase options available for those seeking financing. Mark Matthews explains: "I think that the most important thing here is the flexibility that Daimler has shown so far. Quotations for lease to own, closed end leases, balloon TRAC leases, straight financing, balloons on straight financing and other options are available."

BCA coach operators will have several service options both nationally and locally through Matthews Buses Inc. BCA provides a 24/7 emergency hotline for breakdowns and service problems that support each BCA coach delivered. Matthews will respond to service issues called in to BCA.

Locally, Matthews offers service at all of their sales locations. Each location has techs

qualified in all areas and is equipped to put vehicles in the air and effect repairs. BCA coach owners can also take advantage of more than 20 service trucks that Matthews has in operation throughout the Northeast and Southeastern states. These service trucks are in the field every day tending to warranty issues as well as providing maintenance services at customer locations. BCA coach owners can be included in the road service schedule.

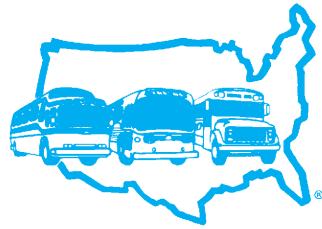
BCA coach parts are available nationally through BCA or locally through Matthews Buses Inc. Parts can be ordered through the Internet or by phone from the BCA parts warehouse in California for overnight delivery. Special attention is given to unique parts, things like fiberglass panels and aluminum baggage doors. BCA has also partnered with a U.S. manufacturer for replacement glass

that will ship from the manufacturing plant. Matthews Buses, Inc. has two main parts locations. In the north, parts will be shipped from Ballston Spa, New York while the southern parts location is in Orlando.

Support and training is available from both BCA and Matthews Buses. BCA has a national support and training program. Matthews Buses provides a full-time, in-house trainer who comes from Freightliner and is well qualified and certified on all systems in the BCA coaches from the Cummins ISX engine through electronics and air conditioning. Training takes place at Matthews' facilities as well as at customer locations. The type of training and customer preference dictates which location is best. It really depends on which is more practical and convenient for the customer. □

Both BCA and Matthews Buses provide training sessions for BCA coach technicians and service personnel. This session took place at one of the Matthews Buses Inc. locations. Training sessions can also be scheduled at customer locations.





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