

MC I has proudly served the conversion market for decades. Johnny Cash wrote fondly about his big, black MCI band bus in his autobiography. Coach Madden routinely shows off his free-wheeling MCI® E4500 home to millions of football fans.

As early as the 1960s, MCI supplied shells to major coach conversion companies. Virtually all of the MCI models which were popular as seated coaches were also available as conversion shells. This included the MC-7, MC-8, MC-9, 96A3, 102A3, 102C3, the D model and most recently the E model.

Several readers have asked for information and current news on MCI's conversion shell product line. The three most interesting recent developments include the following: MCI veteran Jay Daab has been promoted to vice president of conversion shells and is now responsible for that area of activity. The J4500 model, which recently became the most popular seated coach model in the United States and Canada, will soon be available as a conversion shell. In addition, MCI also offers free Emergency Roadside Assistance.

New J4500 Conversion Shell

After several years of focusing mainly on its E4500 coach for the conversion market, MCI has announced it will begin to offer its best selling J4500 coach as a shell. "Conversions represent about 20 percent of the total market for highway coaches," said Jay Daab. "MCI plans to increase its presence in that business, and we think the J4500 will allow us to accomplish this goal."

MCI already sells its E4500 model to converters but the J4500 – which was introduced in 2001 and has quickly become the top selling coach in the seated market – is expected to give the company some added fire power in a business where dependability and styling are key elements. "The J4500 has a lot of stylistic flair and that makes it a natural for both the entertainer and motor home market," said Daab. "It's very sleek, very lithe and curvy. We think it will do very well."

MCI also has some changes in store for the J4500 designed to make it more attractive to converters. Foremost among them are raising the roof three inches to 89 inches (or just under 7.5 feet above the floor), and replacing the awning-type windows with slide windows. "Three inches may not sound like a lot but where it really makes a difference is in the sleeping arrangements and interior design," said Daab.

MCI expects to build about 30 shells for the conversion market this year and probably half will be J4500s. "We expect the J coach to equal the popularity of the E model fairly quickly because of the added ceiling height,"

MCI to Offer the J4500 as a Conversion Shell



*by Pat Plodzeen
Photos courtesy of MCI*

This demo J4500 with a seated interior was photographed at Mount Tremblant, Quebec, a resort area northwest of Montreal. Originally introduced in 2001, the J4500 has become the most popular coach in the seated coach market. By the end of 2005, MCI will offer a conversion version of the J4500 which will feature a raised roof and have slide windows.

said Daab. "It certainly makes sense that one of our most popular models be available to this growing segment of the market."

Superior Coach to Convert E4500 for the Entertainer Market

Currently, MCI has several E4500 shells available for immediate conversion. The company has hired Superior Coach Interiors of Lebanon, Tennessee, to create a prototype interior for an E4500 Entertainer

coach. "First and foremost, entertainer coaches need to be functional," said Nick Audino, president of Superior Coach. In practice, this means a microwave or an easy-to-use cook top in the galley, positive locks on refrigerators and cabinets and furniture that is firmly bolted in place. An area where coaches have improved dramatically, said Audino, is electronics. "Back in the 1980s, a coach would have 12-volt lights, a refrigerator, a microwave, a television, a VCR and

a car stereo system. It was very barebones by today's standards."

The E4500 prototype, however, will have nine flat screen televisions, a Sony Surround Sound audio system, satellite television and tracking systems as well as video and DVD players and a Sony Xbox for video games. "We put about four miles of wire into a conversion coach today," said Audino.

Audino builds about 20 conversion coaches a year with each one requiring up to 3,000 man-hours of labor. "We've built them in less than four weeks but eight to 10 weeks is more typical," he said.

"As the leader in the seated tour market, MCI is known for coaches of quality and reliability that are sought after by those in the entertainment conversion and motor home market who have taken the time for insightful model comparisons," said Daab.

More on the E4500 Shell

The mainstay of the company's conversion-shell business, the luxurious MCI E4500 has been breaking aesthetic and engineering ground since the Beach Boys serenaded its 1996 unveiling. From its patented spiral entry-way and the biggest storage capacity of any coach in its class, to under-the-hood bells and whistles like full multiplexing, LED lighting, ECAS system, and steerable tag axle, the E4500 is built to handle the road like a pro.

Today, the E4500 is even better, with an improved ride, stronger sway bar, and onboard tire-pressure monitoring system. The E4500 shell has an increased roof height of six inches and features side-docking lights and extras that make it a star in its own right, such as a 42.7-foot turning radius to handle the tight spots.

MCI is always willing to work with converters to find creative solutions and fill unique needs, according to Daab.

Reliability and a Helpful Support Network

More of the coaches out there carry the MCI name than any other. With that comes a service network like no other. MCI's Fleet Support service centers are near Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, and in Dallas, Orlando and Montreal, Quebec.

Additionally, by virtue of being the best-selling name in motorcoaches, MCI coaches are familiar to mechanics across the continent. Of course, as anyone who has ever been on the road knows, not every need for emergency repair (and perhaps not any) happens during normal daylight hours or near a qualified service facility. That is why MCI has offered free Emergency Roadside Assistance to all of its customers – the first motorcoach manufacturer to do so.



This interior view of an MCI motor home conversion shows the front salon area with the galley area to the rear. MCI coaches have also been popular for executive and corporate interiors.

Going Further in Parts

When it comes to parts, MCI offers the industry's largest inventory. More importantly, the company promises it will have a needed part when it is needed. Its Fast or



Jay Daab is the vice president of conversion shells and is responsible for conversion activity at MCI.

Free program guarantees that any one of nearly 500 of the most-popular parts will be shipped the next business day, or it is free.

Finally, MCI has long been committed to serving the conversion and touring

In recent years, the E4500 coach has been MCI's primary conversion shell. It can be converted with any type of interior including a motor home, entertainer interior, bunk bus, corporate coach and even medical and sales vehicles. This new E4500 shell was photographed in Oakbrook, Illinois.



entertainment market. The E4500 may be the company's most lavish conversion shell, but it is not the first. From the days of slicked-back pompadours, MCI has been the ride of choice for those who value rock-

solid performance and state-of-the-art amenities. Said MCI's Daab, "A converted MCI coach makes life on the road look good."

For more information contact Jay Daab at 847-285- 2171 or Jay.Daab@mcicoach.net. □



The new E4500 has an improved ride, a stronger sway bar and an on-board tire pressure monitoring system. MCI's shell version has six inches of additional roof height over the seated coach as well as side docking lights. This E4500 as photographed near Palwaukee Airport, north of Chicago, a harbor for private aircraft.

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