

Submitting Conventional and Digital Photos

by Larry Plachno

Your editor, complete with heavy jacket and furry hat, ventured out into the snow to photograph this new MCI coach at Des Plaines, Illinois. Getting good bus photos necessitates going where the buses are. This photo was taken by John Merkle, a commercial photographer working for MCI. JOHN MERKLE.

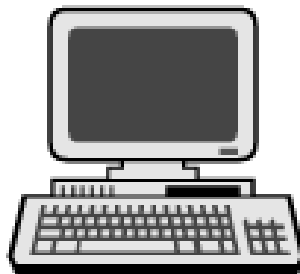


Like so many of our articles, this one came about because of questions from our readers regarding submitting bus photos for publication in NATIONAL BUS TRADER. While we do not profess to be professional photographers ourselves, nor are we necessarily computer experts, we will try our best to answer several questions which have come from readers in recent months.

While most of the submissions for our "Photographs" page come from individuals and companies selling buses, anyone may submit one or more photos. If you have purchased a new bus, if you took an attractive photo while on a trip or tour, or if you happened to see and photograph an interesting bus, please feel free to send it in. Include a paragraph of two of information so we know the story behind the bus and photo so we can write a caption.

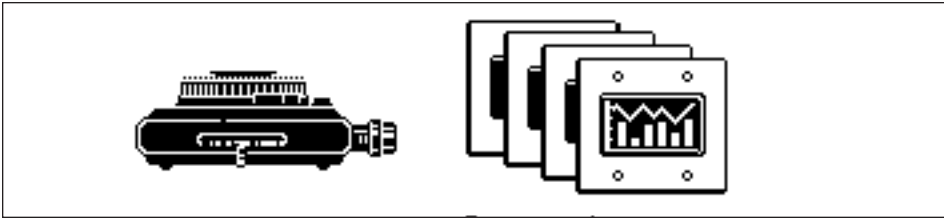
Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that a submitted photo will be printed. A great deal depends on how much space is available and the quality of the photo. However, if space is limited we often hold on to good photos and use them in a future issue.

We can use either prints or color slides. Please try to avoid cropping off the ends of the bus and try to get a good background.



Traditionally, we prefer color slides (transparencies) because they tend to provide the highest quality. Like many photographers, we still do most of our shooting with color slide film. Kodachrome is great but it must be sent out for processing since only a limited number of locations have the specialized equipment which adds the pigments during the processing. Ektachrome (now Elitechrome) comes with the pigments and hence can be processed locally – sometimes while you wait.

If you would like to submit prints, we can use either color prints or black and white prints which come from your local film processor. In all cases, we need the print and not the negative. When necessary, we can use Polaroid photos but prefer conventional prints because of their higher quality. Photos printed from a computer printer are already screened and hence may not scan and print properly.



Vertical photos and slides, particularly if they have seasonal backgrounds, are very much sought after for our annual calendar which hopefully will reappear in the future. We are always looking for current model coaches with seasonal backgrounds including snow, changing fall colors, flowers and Christmas lighting.

Submitting digital photos is much more complex. A slide is always a slide and is either good or bad. However, digital photos can vary in at least four ways – quality, size, mode and format.

The quality factor in digital photos is usually expressed as “resolution” or “DPI” which technically means “dots per inch” but is a misnomer. A resolution of 72 is traditionally used on the Internet while, like many publishers, we use a resolution of 300 for our magazine work. People working with computer printers sometimes use numbers less than 300, and some professional graphics people use a resolution higher than 300 for various reasons. Size is simply the length and width of your scanned photo.

There are some computer programs, such as Adobe Photoshop, which allow you to trade resolution for size and size for resolution. A digital photo which is 25 inches wide at a resolution of 72 can usually be converted to about six inches wide at a resolution of 300. This is why some digital cameras and scanners work in pixels instead of in resolution and inches. Width or length in pixels divided by your resolution gives you the width or length in inches. Or, resolution times width or length in inches gives you the number of pixels along that side. Hence, digital cameras which take photos with more

pixels will give you larger or higher quality photos.

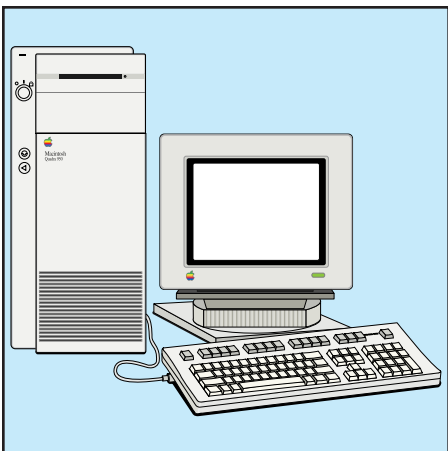
Our standard two-column photo is about five inches by four inches at a resolution of 300 which means that a digital camera capable of taking a photo of 1,500 pixels by 1,200 pixels will work. However, to take a full page photo (8.5 x 11 inches) you need a camera capable of taking at least 3,300 pixels by 2,550 pixels.

Digital photos can be stored in two modes – RGB and CMYK. Computers, TV monitors and the Internet use the RGB (red, green, blue) mode while computer printers and printing presses use the CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) mode. No need to panic over this since your computer probably translates one mode to the other as needed. We intentionally translate our scans to CMYK because that is what we must work with.

The fourth variable is called format, which is simply the scheme used to file and store the digital image. Undoubtedly the most popular format is JPEG, which stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group. JPEG scans (.jpg) travel well over the Internet, can be attached to e-mail, and are used for photos on Web sites. Since a JPEG is usually a condensed file, it is popular on computers and on the Internet where lack of storage space can be a problem. However, many graphic arts people prefer not to use them because a JPEG file loses quality as it is condensed.

A Graphics Interchange Format file (.gif) is usually used on the Internet, particularly for smaller pieces of artwork. The TIFF (Tagged Image File Format - .tif) files are often preferred by graphic arts professionals because they are easily modified. Like many publishers, we use EPS (Encapsulated Post Script - .eps) files because much of publishing is built around Post Script. Our preferred formats for digital submissions are TIFF or EPS.

When dealing with size you should note that scanned photos increase geometrically by size. A scan that is one inch by one inch is only one square inch. However, a scan that is two inches by two inches is four square inches. Hence, file size increases substantially as a scan gets larger. Our magazine covers are usually at least 40 MB (megabytes) in size and can easily get larger.



While you can usually send smaller JPEG files across the Internet, larger TIFF and EPS images are usually sent on CD ROM or Zip disk to avoid condensing the files. We certainly prefer CD ROM or Zip disk so that we have an original copy to work from. If you do submit digital photos, please avoid condensing them in any way.

For the experts in our readership, we admit that the above is an over-simplification. However, it hopefully will give readers a good start on digital photo basics and determining what to submit to see your bus in print. □

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