



National Bus Trader

The Magazine of Bus Equipment for the United States and Canada

Volume XLV, No. 10

September, 2022

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An attempt to help find solutions for our friends in the transit end of the business by looking back at the history of public transit and what seems to work today.



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Mandating ELDs was intended to increase safety but may have done just the opposite because truckers are driving faster to make up for the time they could steal with paper logs.



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The only approved Marian apparition site in the United States, located in Champion, Wisconsin, is becoming popular with faith-based bus tours.



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Cover Photo

Since we are looking back at transit history in this issue, we felt that a nice historical transit bus should grace our cover. This classic White was saved by Mike Glikin and today can be seen at the bus museum in Hershey. We think that is New York City in the background. ROBERT REDDEN / REDDEN ARCHIVES.

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Equipment News

Georgia Coach Lines Takes Delivery of Its First Prevost H3-45

Georgia Coach Lines, a family-owned and operated business and one of the premier tour and motorcoach operator in Atlanta, recently took delivery of a 2023 H3-45 motorcoach, the first new Prevost in the company's history. The exchange took place at the annual convention for the Georgia, Alabama and South-Central Motorcoach Associations in Peachtree City, Georgia.

"We have admired Prevost coaches for years but had never considered purchasing one because we had a great relationship with another coach provider," said Georgia Coach Lines President and CEO Clarence E Cox III. "We are excited and so far, we have received excellent service and communication during the delivery period."

The coach, dubbed #134, is equipped with Prevost's exclusive Cloud One seating, 360-degree cameras, eMirror technology and a premium, onboard entertainment system offering passengers access to Wi-Fi, the latest movies, TV shows and more. "This coach has so many amenities on it, and we look forward to introducing it to our clients real soon," said Cox.

Decked out in Georgia Coach Lines' signature grey and green, the new unit was on display for the outdoor coach presentations at the GMOA-AMA-SCMA Regional Meeting where operators and motorcoach industry partners in attendance had the privilege of being the first group to take a ride. Cox has #134 scheduled for a special trip before it begins regular service providing group transportation in the Atlanta area. "Our first-over-the-road experience will be filled with friends and family as we visit our neighboring state of Tennessee," he said.

"We are so honored to welcome the entire Georgia Coach Lines team to the Prevost family," said Prevost VP of new coach sales and funding, Brad Wiese. "The strength of the Prevost aftermarket network was a key factor in their purchase, and we are proud to be their partner." The Prevost service network is the largest in the motorcoach industry with coverage from coast to coast in both the U.S. and Canada. Prevost provides end-to-end support through its team of customer support managers, OEM-owned service center locations and mobile service vehicles strategically placed throughout North America.

Georgia Coach Lines has always had a family focus and began operations with

used motorcoaches in February 1985 in Atlanta under the leadership of Cox's father and uncle. Upon his uncle's death in 2017, Fox and his wife, Wendy Hollingsworth-Cox, took over the business and have since expanded the fleet to nine coaches. They also opened a new facility in Fayetteville, Georgia in April 2020 where their operations are headquartered.

Cox plays a very active role in the motorcoach industry as Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association president, United Motorcoach Association sitting board member and African American Motorcoach Council chairman for the American Bus Association. Both Cox and Hollingsworth-Cox believe in giving back to their local community and regularly distribute food and clothing to those in need through a partnership with a local non-profit, Caring for Others. Georgia Coach Lines was also instrumental during the celebration of life for friend and civil rights leader Rep. John Lewis as they transported friends, family and staff across the Southeast civil rights trail in July 2020.

Prevost has provided coach solutions for nearly a century with an uncompromising commitment to quality, a drive for constant innovation and improvement and dedication to safety and sustainability in every business aspect. Today, Prevost is one of North America's largest producers of premium intercity touring coaches and is the world leader in the production of high-end motor home and specialty conversion coaches. Customer support is secured via the largest service network in the motorcoach industry with OEM-owned and operated service centers across North America, a specialized customer support team with more than 260 years of industry experience and 60+ mobile service vans. Prevost manufacturing facilities are located in Sainte-Claire, Quebec, Canada.

Prevost is part of the Volvo Group, one of the world's leading manufacturers of buses, trucks, construction equipment, power solutions for marine and industrial applications, financing and services that increase customer uptime and productivity. For more information visit www.volvogroup.com.

MCI Ghost Bus Hawaii

An MCI J4500 motorcoach has been converted into a "Ghost Bus," the first and only haunted house on wheels in the United States. In 2021, JTB Hawaii, a destination

Georgia Coach Lines recently took delivery of its first Prevost H3-45. Given number 134 in the fleet, the coach is equipped with Cloud One Seating, 360-degree cameras, eMirror technology and a permanent onboard entertainment system. Based in Atlanta, the family-owned company was founded in 1985, operates nine coaches and recently opened a new facility in Fayetteville.



management company providing travel services, event planning and transportation, created a mobile Japanese-style haunted house on wheels, a unique attraction with ghost actors for domestic and international Hawaii visitors.

Created with the assistance of legendary Japanese horror master Michaelty Yamaguchi, Ghost Bus Hawaii is a unique “haunted house” on wheels, built inside a stationary, dark coach that utilizes audiovisual sensory effects and incorporates live actors to provide the authentic Japanese horror experience.

The one-of-a-kind Ghost Bus Hawaii was recently featured on local media and has become a sensation in Honolulu, creating a big buzz among social media influencers.

Flix SE Launches Flix North America Inc.

Flix SE, the global mobility provider that operates FlixBus, FlixTrain, Kâmil Koç and Greyhound Lines, Inc. (Greyhound), has announced the introduction of Flix North America Inc. (Flix North America). This entity, based in Dallas, will oversee operations for both Greyhound and FlixBus across North America.

“The acquisition of Greyhound last year was a major step forward for Flix; the expansion into two brands helped achieve an integral part of our growth strategy to build our global presence,” said André Schwämmlein, founder and chief executive officer of Flix SE. “By increasing synergies of both brands under Flix North America Inc., we can continue to provide consumers an affordable, comfortable, smart and sustainable mobility solution much more efficiently.”

Key to the Dallas-based entity, is a new leadership team, led by newly appointed CEO Kadir “Kai” Boysan, former CEO of Kâmil Koç Buses Inc. Boysan has worked with Flix since the company acquired Kâmil Koç in 2019, bringing valuable experience from leading the brand’s operations in Turkey.

Greyhound Lines Inc. CEO Dave Leach, who has been with the company for more than 30 years, will retire at the end of 2022. Leach will remain with the company as a strategic advisor until his retirement. He will hand over to COO and President Bill Blankenship who is with Greyhound for 25 years. “Dave’s leadership and expertise has been an important influence on how we have been able to create a strong foundation for a path forward,” said Schwämmlein. Leach first joined Greyhound in 1986 as a baggage handler and worked his way up to leading the iconic brand as CEO in 2007.



The latest sensation in Hawaii is the Ghost Bus. Built into an MCI J4500 is a Japanese-style haunted house on wheels with ghost actors for domestic and international visitors. It was created with the assistance of Japanese horror master Michaelty Yamaguchi.

“And for over 30 years I have been proud to be a part of such an incredible team and legendary brand. I have every confidence that Kai and Flix North America will not only protect that legacy but improve upon it with its global approach, smart technology and an environmental-friendly focus. I look forward to seeing the future innovations this new entity will bring both to the intercity bus sector and its ability to better serve communities across the U.S.” Flix acquired Greyhound in the U.S. last year. Both Kâmil Koç and Greyhound are well-established companies and brand which can look back on a century in the travel business.

The new structure in the U.S. also involves a change in the Kâmil Koç business in Turkey. Cagatay Kepek, currently chief commercial and operations officer, becomes the new CEO of Kâmil Koç.

Expanding Buses on Airline Routes

NATIONAL BUS TRADER columnist Ned Einstein has been writing about the advantages of using buses on short airline routes. While there are already several bus lines operating routes like this, some new activity is being seen that is supported by the airlines themselves. In early June, Landline began operating connecting bus service for Ameri-

FlixBus and Greyhound Lines recently announced the introduction of Flix North America Inc. Based in Dallas, this new entity will oversee operations for both Greyhound and FlixBus across North America. Leading the new group is Kadir “Kai” Boysan, former CEO of Kâmil Koç Buses Inc. while Greyhound CEO Dave Leach will retire after 30 years with the company.



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Airlines from Philadelphia to both Atlantic City and Allentown/Bethlehem. What makes the new service innovative is that in addition to being able to purchase a connecting ticket through the airlines, it offers coaches painted in American Airlines colors and pre-boarding security.

Previous routes with the airlines included Landline's connections with Sun Country at Minneapolis-St. Paul to Duluth and Mankato that started in 2019 and connections between United Airlines at Denver with Fort Collins and Breckenridge. In both situations, the bus trips carried airline flight numbers and could be purchased with your airline ticket. In addition, your luggage was checked and moved between the plane and bus. Transferring from airline to bus worked well, you simply got off the plane, walked to another gate and then boarded the bus.

However, the return "flight" was not as convenient. You boarded the bus and rode to the airport. When you arrived at the airport, you still had to go through security. This new connecting service at Philadelphia changes that because you go through security before boarding the bus. When you arrive at the airport, you go directly to the gates, bypassing security. This is possible because the two destination airports already had TSA security services.

American Airlines did not fly from Philadelphia to Atlantic City. Creating this bus extension to Atlantic City opens a new market for the airline and presumably provides new opportunities to reach Atlantic City on American Airlines from distant locations. American does fly to Allentown from Charlotte and Chicago, but the last flight from Allentown to Philadelphia ended in May of 2020. There were no plans to put planes back on this route, particularly considering the current pilot shortage.

Detractors to this service point out that its convenience is essentially limited to passengers making ongoing plane connections. There would be little advantage for passengers merely riding the bus and not continuing on a plane. It was also mentioned that the passenger would end up at the airport and would still have to make arrangements to get to their final destination. Passengers simply going between the two cities, and not connecting onward, might prefer service into town rather than the airport.

MCI: Service You Can Rely On

More than just a service center, MCI delivers a relationship-driven and responsive approach to customer care. When MCI's long-time customer, Champion Coach,



American Airlines has moved ahead with using buses on short routes to connect with their planes. Starting in June, Landline began connecting the Philadelphia airport with Atlantic City and Allentown/Bethlehem. Passengers boarding buses going to Philadelphia will go through security before boarding and will not have to again go through security in Philadelphia.

needed help training a new employee, they came to MCI for on-the-job training.

"MCI is always willing to do whatever it takes to strengthen our partnership," explained Craig Dance, chief executive officer, Champion Coach.

Dedicated to providing reliable service to keep transit operator's fleets running smoothly, New Flyer and MCI's service network is here for your equipment maintenance, repair and service needs.

Spring Fling 2023

Save the date. The Museum of Bus Transportation/AACA Museum Spring Fling 2023 will be held on Friday and Saturday, June 9 and 10, 2023. The Pennsylvania Bus Association's 100th year will be celebrated and the huge contributions that Pennsylvania operators have made to the bus industry and history.

Historically, the Fling is the first weekend in June, but this year for several reasons the museum decided to push it back a week. A

MCI Service Centers offer more than just work on customers' coaches. When long-time MCI customer Champion Coach needed help with training a new employee, they were able to come to MCI for on-the-job training. The New Flyer and MCI Service Network has facilities at many different locations.



Equipment News

number of bus operators had suggested a later date, so they can participate (the first week in June is traditionally very busy for them).

Several other transportation-related shows are held on the first weekend in June, so scheduling Fling a week later offers the opportunity for enthusiasts to attend more than one event.

In addition the museum was offered the opportunity to host a major event on the first June weekend, so 2023 seemed an ideal opportunity to push back a week.

As planning proceeds you can keep up-to-date at www.aacamuseum.org/event/museum-of-bus-transportation-spring-fling/.

ABC Companies “Zero Emissions Tours” in Seattle

ABC Companies, a leading provider of motorcoach, transit and specialty passenger transport equipment in the U.S. and Canada, together with partners MTRWestern and Proterra are recognizing another significant step towards zero emissions travel. As part of the ABC Companies “Zero Emissions Tour,” MTRWestern put into operation an industry leading, 75-passenger, Proterra-powered, battery-electric Van Hool TDX25E double-deck motorcoach. Piloting the use of this



The 2023 Spring Fling at the bus museum in Hershey, Pennsylvania is set for the weekend of June 9 and 10, 2023. In 2023, the event will be pushed back to the second weekend of June to avoid a conflict with other activities. As always, all are invited and participants can drive in with their own bus if desired.

industry-leading motorcoach, which can travel in excess of 260 miles between

charges, MTRWestern is bringing zero emissions travel to many of its clients in the U.S.

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and Canada. The program culminated with a celebration of select stakeholders, environmentally-focused businesses and government officials, highlighting “firsts” for MTRWestern and the ABC Companies Zero Emissions Tour including:

- The first-ever, zero-emissions international revenue service route with cross-border service between Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia
- Zero-emissions travel options for several charter and scheduled service routes carrying up to 75 passengers.

The partners co-sponsored a reception event on July 27 at the Victor Tavern at Denny Triangle, in Seattle where guests had the opportunity to network and learn more about the “tour” and how MTRWestern is utilizing the zero-emissions Van Hool TDX25E in scheduled fleet operations on both sides of the U.S./Canadian border. Special guests included Washington State Senator Christine Rolfes, Washington State Representative Nicole Macri, Howard Wright, chairman of Seattle Hospitality Group (SHG), as well as leaders from regional big tech and energy provider organizations.

Also in attendance, Michael Mann, executive director for Clean & Prosperous Washington, addressed the importance of reducing carbon emissions to improve health and job outcomes and propel a stronger, more competitive economy in Washington State. During the event, guests were invited to enjoy a first-hand experience aboard the TDX25E as part of a vehicle demonstration including a test drive. Earlier in the day, the bus traveled to the Seattle Center for photo ops showcasing iconic Seattle landmarks including the Space Needle, the Amazon Spheres and the Seattle Museum of Pop Culture.

“The gathering allowed key zero emissions advocates to discuss the significant progress and readiness of the unique electric vehicles available today featured in the ABC Zero Emissions Tour, while also bringing attention to the growing challenges presented by limited publicly available charters for commercial passenger vehicles,” said Thom Peebles, VP of marketing, ABC Companies. “These vehicles are available and in market now and not only operate with zero emissions but also remove up to 75 vehicles from the roadways per trip while in operation. The significant impact they can make is what we are trying to raise awareness of within the ABC Zero Emissions Tour. They should be a priority in infrastructure planning.”

“The Zero Emissions Tour provides an unprecedented opportunity to show customers, along with industry and government leaders on both sides of the U.S./Canada



ABC Companies “Zero Emissions Tour” included a special demonstration of a battery-electric Van Hool TDX25E double-deck coach. MTRWestern put the coach on a route between Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia. This represented the first ever zero-emissions international revenue service route with cross-border service between Seattle and Vancouver.

border, our commitment to literally building a bridge to sustainability,” said Jeremy Butzlaff, president MTRWestern. “We are proud and pleased to be the first U.S. operator to connect riders to two of the most beautiful cities in North America in a zero-emissions transport experience.”

The integration of all electric options into MTRWestern services signals the progress and multitude of benefits zero-emissions ground transportation brings to fleets and the communities they serve. MTRWestern and Proterra’s involvement in the ABC Companies Zero Emissions Tour, is key to educating stakeholders and lawmakers about the critical role high-capacity passenger vehicles like the Van Hool TDX25E motorcoach play in reducing greenhouse emissions in the transportation sector. Recent tour stops in the Northeast have already attracted the attention of the media and elected officials who see this as a tangible example of growing infrastructure needs to address vehicles that are in service today.

“We’re excited about the continued tour rollout, and the opportunities it offers operators like MTRWestern to raise awareness about our industry’s significant contribution to environmental sustainability in transforming our local and regional communities, while also having an impact on global carbon reduction,” said Roman Cornell, president and chief commercial officer ABC Companies. “Through the tour and with the growing number of electric vehicles ABC Companies has sold and cur-

rently supports, companies like MTRWestern are pioneering the many benefits of zero emissions transportation in their communities with their customers.”

“MTRWestern is aligned with the goals for the ABC Companies ‘Zero Emissions Tour’. We want our customers and communities to understand that zero emissions travel is a reality now, even as technology and infrastructure are still growing,” said Butzlaff. “As part of our participation in the tour, we are excited to give our passengers a rare opportunity to experience zero-emissions travel firsthand that will lead a transformation that is top of mind with the public and our government.”

“This tour gave stakeholders an opportunity to literally kick the tires of innovation,” explained Mann. “We saw that the technology exists to squeeze the pollution out of our transportation system. Now, we simply need policy makers to get the incentives right to make it happen.”

Through the Zero Emissions Tour initiative, ABC Companies is committed to supporting the net-zero sustainability goals of communities, municipalities and regional operations throughout North America. The company’s diverse portfolio of EV commercial ground transportation vehicles integrate world-class technology, technical expertise and aftermarket support that focus on bringing zero emissions solutions to passenger transportation providers. To learn more about ABC’s Zero Emission Tour visit

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www.abc-companies.com/abc-companies-zero-emissions-tour/.

NFI's ADL Hosts Launch of Scotland's Pathway to Zero Emission Buses

NFI subsidiary Alexander Dennis Limited (ADL) recently hosted the launch of Scotland's Pathway to Zero Emission Buses in Larbert on behalf of the Scottish government.

As a member of the Bus Decarbonization Taskforce, a joint initiative between the industry and the Scottish government, ADL is pursuing an aggressive new product development agenda for zero-emission buses, including new battery-electric and hydrogen fuel cell-electric models. The agenda includes an exciting new product aligning with the pathway's plans to increase the supply of smaller zero-emission buses. The investment in engineering further underpins the company's commitment to domestic manufacturing.

Busworld Southeast Asia is Getting Ready For Its Second Edition

The second edition of Busworld Southeast Asia, organized by Busworld and its Indonesian partner, GEM Indonesia, will be held for three days from October 5-7, 2022 in the Jakarta International Expo in Indonesia.

After a first and successful show in 2019, the bus and coach industry is ready to meet in person again. Like other regions in the world, Southeast Asia's bus and coach busi-



Alexander Dennis, an NFI subsidiary, recently hosted the launch of Scotland's Pathway to Zero Emission buses in Larbert for the Scottish government. Alexander Dennis is providing zero-emission bus models including battery-electric and hydrogen fuel cell. ADL is a member of the Bus Decarbonization Taskforce, a joint initiative between the industry and the Scottish government.

ness was largely impacted by the pandemic. Now that the market is recovering, the time is perfect to relaunch the business at Busworld's event.

Not only the coach business is picking up again, but also the bus industry is at a turning point with bus electrification plans being high on the agenda of the Indonesian government.

According to Askarindo, the association of bodybuilders in Indonesia, the four biggest companies Laksana, New Armada, Adi Putro and Tentrem represent between 85 and 90 percent of the market. They are all more than eager to showcase their latest buses and coaches at the show.

Laksana will launch its brand new coach, which according to them will be an absolute eyecatcher. New Armada will also launch a new coach, the rest remains a secret and will be unveiled on the show floor. Adi Putro will bring the only monocoque bus of Indonesia, and Tentrem invites everyone to come and discover what they will be bringing in their booth.

Golden Dragon, who has an ongoing electric bus test project with TransJakarta, is presenting two electric buses in the booth: a six-meter and a 12-meter version.

The list is still getting longer every day of a diverse range of component and accessory suppliers. From solar film to power the battery of diesel vehicles, over ADA systems, safety cameras, fabrics, doors, to lighting and much more, it will all be available at Busworld Southeast Asia.

During two days, October 5 and 6, Busworld visitors can attend six different seminars. Each seminar is being hosted by an international or local partner, touching a different subject relevant to the Southeast Asian market. All sessions have simultaneous translation English-Bahasa.

The second Busworld Southeast Asia is scheduled for October 5-7, 2022 at the Jakarta International Expo in Indonesia. Several new models are expected to be launched at this event. Shown is a Volvo double-deck coach that was displayed at the previous Busworld Southeast Asia.



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Topics are: an indepth market analysis, post-covid health protocols and everything you have to know regarding zero emission buses and their operation. The seminars are free of charge and take place in a room inside the exhibition hall. It is a perfect opportunity to combine a visit of the show with all its novelties and attend a seminar to update your market and technological knowledge.

The Busworld organization is very grateful to its partners ITDP (Institute for Transportation and Development Policy), Frost and Sullivan, MTI (Indonesia Transportation Society), Instran (Institute of Transport Studies), Askarindo (Association of Carrosserie Manufacturers) and Ipomi (Indonesia Young Bus Entrepreneurs) who actively help develop and promote the trade show and the seminars. The combined knowledge and network will undoubtedly result in a very interesting exhibition.

The Web site is updated on a daily basis with exhibitor and general bus news. Ticket registration has been opened, so visitors can save time at the entrance and register their badge beforehand.

Electric VDL Citeas Travel 200 Million Kilometers

In just one and a half years, the number of kilometers driven by electric VDL Citeas in Europe has doubled. Whereas in February last year the counter stood at 100 million, in August of this year the 200 million electric kilometer mark was passed. "A milestone of which we are very proud," says Paul van Vuuren, CEO and VDL Bus & Coach.

"Over a period of 10 years, in the further development of our VDL Citeas, we have always succeeded in finding solutions for the requirements, needs and wishes of the European market," explains van Vuuren. VDL is demonstrating this again with the introduction of the new generation Citea.

"We have developed a versatile mobility platform that meets the sustainability ambitions of our customers. In this way, we remain at the forefront of the public transport market, where our experience makes us a leader in Europe. The trend in the market for fast-growing electric public transport has continued – even during the coronavirus crisis – which is visible through a decrease in demand for diesel vehicles. We have proven to be a strong, reliable and experienced partner over the past decade, which is why contracting authorities and public transport companies continue to invest in our electric buses. We are very proud of that. We will continue to work on continuous improvements in order to build on this status in the future," he added.

VDL electric Citea buses recently celebrated traveling 200 million kilometers. Since the first Citea SLF-120 electric bus was introduced in 2013, they have been setting records in zero-emission operations. Currently, there are 1,300 electric Citeas on the road that cover more than 240,000 kilometers daily in 11 European countries and 77 cities.



The Netherlands has the most electric VDL vehicles and therefore also covers the most electric kilometers – almost 165 million. Approximately 650 electric buses are operational in 35 cities. As a result, the electric Citeas have become an essential part of the current street scene throughout the Netherlands. They operate in, among others, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Maastricht and Eindhoven. VDL also plays an important role in the electrification of an increasing number of concession areas, with deployment in smaller cities and regional transport.

The Netherlands is a pioneer in the electrification of public transport. This was initiated by the Zero Emission Bus Administrative Agreement, as signed by the joint concessionaires in March 2016. Inspired by the Paris Climate Accord, this administrative agreement stipulates that all new buses entering into public transport in the Netherlands must be emission-free by 2025 at the latest.

When it comes to the number of electric kilometers driven, VDL Bus & Coach is making rapid progress in Germany. In February 2021, 88 buses in six cities together covered 4.5 million electric kilometers. In the summer of 2022, those numbers are set to rise sharply; more than 12 million kilometers will have been covered by 358 electric Citeas operating in 15 cities.

Scandinavia also remains one of the most important markets for VDL Bus & Coach. In Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark, 250 VDL Citeas have covered around 25 million electric kilometers. Alex de Jong, business

manager Public Transport VDL Bus & Coach: "For the future, we are also expressly looking at the large growth markets in Europe. For VDL Bus & Coach, this mainly concerns France and Italy, where we have already booked our first successes in the field of public transport orders. Our goal is to build up a stable market position in these countries."

In 2021, VDL Bus & Coach presented the new generation of electric Citeas. From the VDL vision and based on experience with the current VDL Citea fleet, a bus concept has been developed that is entirely based on an electric drive train, ready for the future and in which zero emission is a given. Batteries in the floor, a one-piece composite side wall, clever energy management, a sophisticated climate control system and an ergonomic driver's environment. With these five important innovations, VDL Bus & Coach introduces the new generation Citea product range, consisting of four length variants and five types. The range of the new generation of Citeas has been considerably improved.

In June, VDL Bus & Coach won the EBUS Award for the new generation Citea. This important German environmental prize for the public transport industry is awarded every two years to companies that make a substantial contribution to the development of electric public transport in Germany. VDL was victorious for the second time in a row, having previously won the prize in 2019. In 2021, the ceremony was cancelled due to coronavirus.

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For the design of the new Citea generation, VDL Bus & Coach already received two important awards this spring: a Red Dot Award and the iF Design Award. The attractive design should convince even more people to choose public transport. The new generation of Citeas has already been sold in several countries and will be deployed in a number of cities and areas starting this year: The Netherlands (Amsterdam and Eindhoven), Finland (Kotka and Lahti), Belgium (all of Flanders), Germany (Oberhausen and Braunschweig) and France (Bordeaux).

Sky Staff Shuttles Go Electric With BYD ADL Partnership, Dawsongroup and Cobra

NFI's Alexander Dennis (ADL) and BYD UK recently jointly announced that their electric vehicle partnership, the UK's leading electric bus producer, is working with Dawsongroup bus and coach (DGBC) and Cobra Corporate Services Limited (Cobra) to provide zero-emission transportation services for broadcasting and telecommunications group Sky.

The all-electric, zero-emission buses will replace conventional vehicles currently used for the shuttle bus service and will assist Sky in reducing its carbon footprint and achieving its goal of becoming net-zero by 2030.

The BYD ADL Enviro200EV is equipped with world-class BYD iron-phosphate battery technology, providing a longer driving range, optimized battery life and ultra-safe performance. This will enable Cobra to run a full day's shuttle bus service on one charge, help improve the air quality while providing a comfortable and sustainable journey for passengers.

Alexander Dennis and BYD jointly announced that they are providing electric buses to the broadcasting and telecommunications group Sky. These all-electric buses will replace conventional vehicles currently used for the shuttle bus service. The Enviro200EV model has an iron phosphate battery and can run a full day of shuttle service on one charge.



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Ebusco Receives the First Order for the Spanish Market

Ebusco (Euronext: EBUS), a pioneer and frontrunner in the development of electric buses and charging systems, has signed a contract with Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB) in Spain for 21 Ebusco 2.2 12-meter buses and related chargers, to be delivered in the second quarter of 2023. With this contract, Ebusco for the first time gets a foothold in the Southern European market and thus the number of countries where Ebusco operates will be increased to nine.

AMB is the public administration of the metropolitan area of Barcelona, a large urban conurbation made up of 36 municipalities. AMB plans and operates bus and subway networks and other sustainable transport services. The 21 new Ebusco 2.2 buses will be used in metropolitan bus services.

Peter Bijvelds, CEO of Ebusco, comments: "We are very excited to expand our geographical presence with this very first order in Spain. Spain is one of the target markets in our international expansion strategy as the electric bus market in Spain is expected to grow considerably in the coming years. We are looking forward to support AMB in their transition to sustainable transport."

Keolis to Operate the Multimodal Transport Network in and Around Valenciennes

On July 11, 2022, the Valenciennois Association of Communes for Urban Organization and Mobility (SIMOUV) awarded Keolis the operation and maintenance of its entire public transport network, Transville, which includes bus and coach networks, trams, city center shuttle services and a fleet of bicycles. The contract is valid for seven years and will start on January 1, 2023. It is expected to generate cumulative revenues of more than €400 million.

In compliance with the SIMOUV's wishes, Keolis' main tasks will be to:

- Strengthen the transport offer, in particular by creating two key lines and redesigning the on-demand transport service, which will serve twice as many municipalities;
- Modernize the service offer, by launching a new Web site and mobile app and introducing an "open payment" validation service based on contactless bank cards;
- Support the SIMOUV's energy transition strategy, with a focus on BioNGV for the buses and electric for downtown shuttles;
- Improve the safety of transport modes, employees and passengers.

Ebusco recently received an order for 21 Ebusco 2.2 buses to operate in Barcelona. The 12-meter (39-foot) buses will be used in metropolitan bus services. This is Ebusco's first order for the Spanish market.





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From January 1, 2023, Keolis will operate and maintain the transport network serving the conurbations of Valenciennes Métropole and Porte du Hainaut in France, meeting the needs of 350,000 people living in 82 municipalities.

Currently consisting of 42 lines, including two tram routes, the network has a fleet of 152 vehicles and 30 trams and provide services to the Valenciennes hospital, the Hainaut stadium, the thermal baths and the casino of Saint-Amand-les-Eaux. It also covers the major zones of economic activity such as the sites of Stellantis in Hordain, of Toyota in Onnaing, of GSK in Saint-Amand-les-Eaux and of Bombardier and Alstom in Crespin and Petite Fôret.

In 2023, the transport offer will be strengthened for suburban municipalities, with the introduction of a dynamic on-demand transport service almost in real time (reservations up to 30 minutes before departure) and Transvilles Pro, an on-demand transport service dedicated to covering the zones of activity.

In 2024, the transport offer will also significantly be expanded with the launch of a new network, that will in particular represent the addition of two key routes. It will ensure buses at 10-minute intervals at peak times all year round and at 15-minute intervals at other times of the day.

With the aim of providing a more digitalized transport service, the SIMOUV and Keolis will carry out major developments over the course of the contract to make Transvilles one of the most modern networks in France. To achieve this aim, an open payment system will be rolled out from September to December 2023. This will enable passengers to pay and validate on board, using the validators, with their contactless bank card. The M ticket payment solution, which works on smartphones, will be extended to the entire Transvilles fare range. In addition, a Web site and mobile app will be launched by summer 2023.

Supporting the SIMOUV's intentions to promote more sustainable mobility, Keolis will contribute to the introduction of vehicles that run on alternative energy, with a focus on BioNGV for the buses and electric for the downtown shuttles. The renewal of part of the fleet (about 30 buses and 10 shuttles) will begin in 2023 and will be carried out gradually throughout the contract.

To address the shortage of drivers and support the local economy, Keolis intends to recruit 44 drivers by 2023 for a total of 427



Starting in January of 2023, Keolis will begin operating the transport network serving Valenciennes Métropole and Porte du Haunaut in Northeast France. The operation includes 42 lines including two tram routes. Involved are 152 vehicles and 30 trams.

employees including 246 drivers to ensure operation and maintenance of the network.

These recruitments will complement the launch of a "Keolis Mobility Campus" class in autumn 2024. Created in February 2021, this apprenticeship training center (CFA) is open to candidates between 20 and 29 who have held a B driving license for two years and wish to become a driver in one of the transport networks operated by Keolis in France.

Strategic Realignment in the Bus Sector at QUANTRON

In the course of the strategic realignment as a manufacturer of own complete buses as OEM, Quantron AG will no longer distribute KARSAN products by the end of the year. However, QUANTRON will continue to provide technical support to its customers for their KARSAN products in the after-sales department.

The future QUANTRON complete buses, including the all-electric QUANTRON CIZARIS 12 EV low-floor bus, are customized according to the strict Quantron AG quality standards. In the after-sales division, QUANTRON also focuses on full customer support for service and spare parts provided within the company as part of the 360 degree QaaS service offering, which also includes customer advisory service for infrastructure and solutions.

Sales in the bus sector will be expanded and further developed in the international

markets by Alexander Stucke as head of Sales Bus.

Quantron AG is a system provider of sustainable battery-electric and hydrogen-powered e-mobility for commercial vehicles such as trucks, buses and vans. The wide range of services is based on the two business units Q-Retrofit (electrification of used and existing vehicles from diesel to zero-emission electric drive) and Q-Mobility (OEM for own zero-emission QUANTRON vehicles). With the Quantron-as-a-Service Ecosystem (QaaS), Quantron AG also offers an overall concept for zero-emission mobility. This includes the creation of individual overall concepts including the tailored charging solutions, hydrogen refueling infrastructure as well as rental, financing and leasing offers and training courses and workshops at the QUANTRON Academy. The e-mobility pioneers also sell batteries and integrated customized electrification concepts to manufacturers of commercial vehicles, machinery and intralogistics vehicles. The German company from Augsburg in Bavaria has a network of 700 service partners and the extensive knowledge of qualified experts in the fields of power electronics and battery technology. As a high-tech spinoff of the renowned Haller KG, it combines more than 140 years of commercial vehicle experience with state-of-the-art e-mobility know-how.

QUANTRON stands for the core values Reliable, Energetic, Brave. The team of experts at the innovation driver for e-mobility

Equipment News

is making a significant contribution to sustainable, environmentally-friendly passenger

and freight transport. You can find more information at www.quantron.net. □

Quantron recently announced a strategic realignment in its bus sector. Quantron will no longer distribute KARSAN products but will be providing its own line of buses. Shown is the Quantron Cizaris 12 EV model.



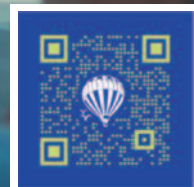
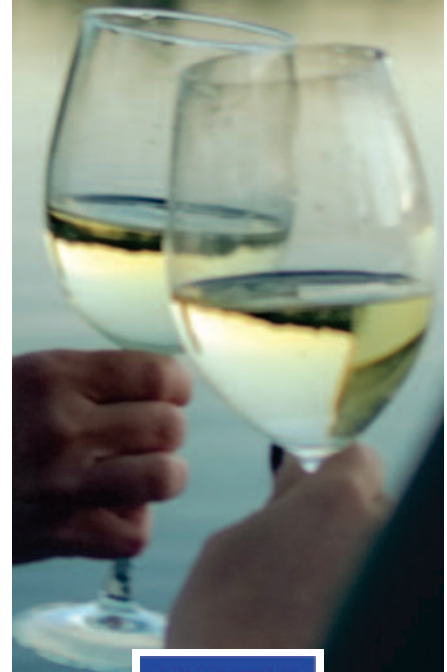
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MCI (Motor Coach Industries)

Motor Coach Industries (MCI), North America's public and private market motor-coach leader with

fabrication, manufacturing and service centers in the United States and Canada, and a subsidiary of NFI Group Inc. (NFI), a leading independent bus and coach manufacturer and a leader in electric mass mobility solutions, on August 12 announced that



Scotty Kessler

Scotty Kessler joined the MCI Sales Team as the regional vice president for Canadian New and Pre-Owned Coach Sales.

Based in Montreal, Canada, **Kessler** brings 15 years of sales experience to the MCI team and will be responsible for new and pre-owned coach sales to private operators in Canada. His career also spans 14 years of experience as a professional auctioneer, which coupled with his hard work and dedication, earned **Kessler** two Champions Club awards at his previous position for top-performing sales in Canada, both in 2018 and 2021.

"**Scotty** brings a wealth of sales experience to MCI, and we are glad to welcome him to our team. **Scotty's** record of professional accomplishments, illustrates his unwavering commitment to building strong customer relationships and loyalty," said Patricia Ziska, vice president, Private Market Sales, MCI. "Leveraging his expertise in sales, auctioning, customer relationship building and business training, **Scotty** will lead our Canadian sales, helping our customers to expand their fleets with MCI's industry-leading products."

Fluent in English and French, **Kessler** brings a customer-focused approach to transportation sales. After graduating from The Missouri Auction School, where he gained a high-energy selling style and understanding of new and pre-owned vehicle sales, **Kessler** started his career as a professional auctioneer before transitioning to a sales position with his prior employer Leeds Transit Inc. During his career, **Kessler** established professional relationships with customers who purchased both

motorcoaches and school buses, making a smooth transition into his new role at MCI.

Lynn Marzullo

American Bus Association's Women in Buses (WIB) has recently featured **Lynn Marzullo**, marketing manager, MCI, in its WIB Member Spotlight.

Marzullo, with a background in corporate marketing, joined MCI in July 2006, focusing initially on regional event planning and expanding her knowledge of the company and the motorcoach industry through a variety of positions before accepting her current marketing role in 2020.

"As a sponsor of ABA's Women in Buses for many years, MCI places a high priority on the work the council is doing," said **Marzullo**. "Personally, I've become a more active member of the council because I believe in the WIB leadership's passion for helping others navigate the transportation and tourism market through its mentoring and educational programs."



Lynn Marzullo

NFI

NFI's **Jennifer McNeill**, vice president of Public Sector Sales and Marketing, has been elected chair of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Urban Transit Research and Innovation Consortium (CUTRIC), a non-profit organization spearheading and launching technology and commercialization projects that advance next-generation zero-carbon mobility solutions across Canada. Since its inception, CUTRIC's board has helped to build Canada's low-carbon smart mobility and zero-emission transit industry, and will continue assisting CUTRIC in industry championship, supportive diplomacy and intelligent and transparent governance.

McNeill has been with NFI since 2012 and joined CUTRIC's board in 2017. She is a recognized leader who advocates for zero-emission bus adoption and has contributed to the development of sustainable mobility solutions in North America for nearly a decade. In 2021, **McNeill** was distinguished as a Canada Climate champion at the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties. In 2020,

she was named an Honoree of Canada's Clean50 list, recognizing Canada's leaders advancing sustainability and clean capitalism, and was also named to the Clean16 for outstanding contribution to the clean energy economy in the manufacturing and transportation sector.



Jennifer McNeill

McNeill also serves on the boards of the American Public Transit Association (APTA) and the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA). She holds a Mechanical Engineering degree and a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Manitoba and is an accredited Professional Engineer.

NFI congratulates **McNeill** on her election as chair of the CUTRIC Board of Directors, as she continues to lead the new mobility era toward a more sustainable future. □

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Is Transit in Trouble?



by Larry Plachno

Showing what was undoubtedly a milestone for the transit industry, AC Transit in the Esat Bay began operating hydrogen fuel cell buses in 2003. They acquired three Van Hool transit buses and equipped them with hydrogen fuel cell equipment to operate in regular service. The program helped make this type of power more popular in both the United States and Europe. AC TRANSIT.

One of the more interesting developments to come from the pandemic has been increased attention to various bus operations and statistics to find opportunities to increased sales and help bring the industry back to normal. However, what has interested several researchers is a decline in transit usage in recent years. Some of those who go back to 2014 suggest ride sharing companies as the cause while others who go back a century come up with a different answer.

Historically, our friends on the transit side of the bus business have put in a heroic effort promoting public transit over the past century in spite of the fact that their biggest competitor has been the private automobile. It has been an uphill battle for them dealing with American's love for their cars while trying to reduce traffic and pollution by getting people on buses and trains. Current numbers suggest that the cars are winning and transit may have to either coax people away from their automobiles or rethink current operations. If you will bear with me, I will try to explain

some of the history, what happened when the pandemic arrived and look at possible alternatives for the future.

Looking Back in History

Most public transportation originated with horsecars for no other reason than the technology and power were readily available. Moving to something better required new technology. The most successful early replacement for horsecars was the cable car, developed in 1873 by Andrew Hallidie to climb the hills of San Francisco. Eventually, cable car lines were built in many American cities, but they were expensive to build and not much faster than the horsecars.

The solution came in 1888 when Frank Sprague, a former naval officer, developed a reliable electric motor and means of current collection for a new street railway in Richmond, Virginia. Acceptance was quick and complete; within three years 200 streetcar systems were built or ordered. By 1902 some 97 percent of street railway mileage was electrically operated. Records from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Federal Highway Adminis-

tration indicate that in 1902, about 80 percent of all city transportation was handled by streetcars. The other alternatives included walking, bicycle, motorcycle and horses.

What some researchers have called "The Great Vehicle Motor Transportation Transformation" took place in the next two decades. By 1922, these same sources say that passenger cars took over more than 90 percent of transit trips while streetcar usage dwindled to less than 10 percent. Buses eventually took over from the streetcars as the predominant transit vehicle, but their victory was brief and ephemeral. By 1930, 98.7 percent of all vehicular motorized transportation was from automobiles. This figure continued to rise over time and reached the even higher proportion of 99.86 percent by 1980. This brings up three interesting points that come to mind.

- Anyone who has read the history of transportation during this 1902-1922 period is well aware of the animosities between railroads, interurbans, streetcars and buses. Many railroads refused to allow the interur-

bans to cross their tracks and the bus operators called the streetcars “old fashioned.” This is interesting because electric power is looked upon favorably today. What has become obvious over time is that while each of these modes of public transportation were fighting one or more of the others, the real enemy of all of them was the private automobile.

- I and other transportation historians might question the year 1922 as being very early for the dominance of the private automobile since paved roads outside of cities were still rare at this time. While the Ford Model T introduced reasonably-priced cars to Americans in 1908, how did they achieve such popularity in so few years? Since most of us do not remember back to 1922, I would suggest a book titled *American Road* by Pete Davies. It tells the story of an army convoy, known as the First Continental Motor Train, that set off from the White House in 1917 for San Francisco. Their mission was to look at and evaluate existing roads in the United States. Included in the staff was a young officer named Dwight Eisenhower. The trip took two months and involved primarily dirt and unimproved roads with a lot of digging vehicles out of the mud. Hence, America’s love affair with their private autos got started even before we had paved highways between cities.

- What these figures show is that in a span of about 20 years, most Americans moved from depending on public transportation to depending on their private automobile. As a result, transit usage fell to as little as one or two percent of all motorized passenger trips. These figures tend to show that essentially all of the passengers that



In many cities trolley buses replaced the streetcars. They required two overhead wires but continued to use the same power as the streetcars. Although uncommented at that time, they operated with zero emissions. This Brill trolley bus operated in Vancouver, British Columbia. ANGUS MCINTYRE.

stopped using public transportation moved to using private automobiles.

Reasons for Switching Modes

The obvious question is what prompts people to switch transportation modes? Expectedly there have been numerous lists of reasons and many of them are very similar. Let me suggest what was put forward by Boris Pushkarev and Jeffrey Zupan in their 1977 book *Public Transportation and Land Use Policy* since it has become somewhat of a classic.

Pushkarev and Zupan suggest that the individuals involved make their decision based on four “price” factors. These include: 1. Price in Money. 2. Price in Travel Time. 3. Price in Access Time and Effort. And, 4. Price in Discomfort and Disamenity. It should be noted that not every individual puts the same value on each of these four items. Some individuals are willing to spend more money to save time while others may be willing to spend more time to save money.

What is noteworthy is that the first item, price in money, could favor public transportation. But the other three criteria probably do not. One of the more obvious questions would be what do you need to do and how much do you need to spend to attract people back to public transportation from their private automobiles? There are numerous trade-offs, and each may affect people differently. For example, both interurbans and bus companies tried to save money by reducing frequency of service. As service declined, so did the number of riders. Hence you get into a situation where you have to weigh various options by their cost and positive impact. We will talk more about this later.

Recent Ridership Reductions

The researchers who only looked at recent numbers point out that if things were not already bad enough, transit ridership began to seriously decline in 2014. While the annual percentage of decline has been relatively small (figures from the American Public Transportation Association suggest 1.4, 1.9 and 2.9 percent fewer riders annually), the overall decline is substantial in numbers. From 2014 to 2017 it looks like U.S. transit ridership declined by 650 million passen-

In the early days, streetcars carried the bulk of transit riders. However, Americans fell in love with their new automobiles and they soon took over as the most popular means of local transportation. Shown here are a pair of streetcars crossing the Franklin Bridge in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Note that a second overhead wire is already in place for replacement trolley buses. NBT ARCHIVES.



gers. That is more than enough people to fill a huge number of buses.

Reports covering the declining passengers were interesting. Every city, regardless of size, showed a drop in ridership. As a result, the highest decline in numbers was noted in the larger urban areas. What was equally noteworthy is that approximately 90 percent of the declining passengers were from bus operations but less than ten percent from rail transit.

Some of the researchers suggested that at least a part of this decline could be attributable to taxis, Uber, Lyft and other ride sharing operations. It was noted that ride sharing operations and taxis in New York City already account for 15 percent of local trips. However, others noted that it would be difficult for ride sharing to have this kind of impact in smaller cities.

Those concerned with emissions and pollution make an interesting observation. The primary concern with transit vehicles is not reducing their own pollution since they represent such a tiny percentage of vehicles on the road. Rather, the concern should be directed to getting individuals to park their automobiles and ride the bus or train instead. Reducing the number of private autos on the road will make a much bigger impact on emissions and pollution than efforts to clean up transit buses.

Pandemic Problems

As we all know, the pandemic caused major ridership declines for public transportation. In 2014, public agencies reported 10.7 billion unlinked passenger trips. By 2019 the number of unlinked passenger trips dropped to 9.9 billion. After the pandemic hit, the National Transit Database figure of unlinked passenger trips for 2020 was only 4.7 billion.

Even prior to the pandemic, transit operations had been heavily subsidized. Revenues from the fare boxes in many cases covered less than one-third of the cost of operation. Some cities have already given up collecting fares, and others say that it costs more to collect the fares than what they bring in. Many systems were able to continue to run almost-empty buses because of the \$69.5 billion in federal funds provided to transit agencies in three relief packages. Some people have observed that it was unfortunate that PPP money to help companies retain staff who could ride the buses was discontinued.

The current situation is that the actual funding for transit has gotten way out of step given the actual number of riders. At one point transit was getting a third of combined federal highway and transit funding but only providing 2.5 percent of person trips nationwide. The big question is whether our economy can afford these huge subsidies for tran-



Several of the researchers suggest that a measurable number of transit riders have switched to taxis, Uber, Lyft as well as other TNCs. Statistics support this since something like 15 percent of local trips in New York City use taxis and TNCs. One has to ask whether the TNCs have an advantage because they come to the passengers instead of asking the passengers to come to the buses. VICTOR LAZLO.

sit? Can we find a way to get more people to park their automobiles and get back on the buses? Or, should we be looking at ways to redesign transit to reduce costs or make it more appealing to passengers?

Where Did the Riders Go?

One of the more obvious possible solutions for transit is to find ways to get people to park their automobiles and get back on buses. In order to do this we need to figure out why the passengers left and see if we can reverse their thinking and their actions. Here

is a list of some of the more likely causes that may be worth exploring.

Some people suggest that part of the decline in transit riders is because more people are now working from home. While this may be partially true, the researchers behind the statistics suggest that this is a relatively tiny part of the ridership decline.

Others suggest that the higher price of fuel should result in increased transit ridership. Again the people working with the numbers

The General Motors modular RTS (Rapid Transit Series) model was originally planned as a short-term replacement between the "New Look" models and the proposed new TransBus. Since the TransBus never went into production, the RTS lingered on for many years as one of the most popular high-floor transit buses before the industry started going to low-floor models. After General Motors sold, MCI acquired this line and moved production to Roswell, New Mexico. This example was photographed in Brooklyn, New York on January 1, 2000. J.C. REBIS JR.



shake their head. Any positive transit ridership change based on increased fuel costs has been minimal. However, this fact might suggest that costs may be a lesser important factor in transportation mode changes.

My own suspicion is that a major factor in transportation mode changes is whether the buses go where the passenger wants to go. Historically, if we go back 100 years we will find that a substantial number of passenger trips were similar with trains, rapid transit and streetcars bringing people to downtown to work or shop. As families and businesses moved to the suburbs, the trips got to be more and more scattered with almost infinite differences between starting and ending points. Hence, it became very difficult for fixed route buses to serve this multiplicity of transportation needs and people had no choice but to depend on their private automobile.

One variation on this is the increasing concern over what is known as “first mile, last mile” trips. In order to get people on commuter trains or commuter buses you need to get them from home to the train station or bus stop. Then, you need to get them from the downtown terminal to their place of employment. This could explain some of the increased use of Uber, Lyft and taxis to provide this first and last mile.

Let me take this one step further. Years ago I was involved in creating shuttle bus service to railroad stations in Chicago’s southwest suburbs. Meeting with the commuters, I learned that many were unhappy to change from bus to train to bus to get to work. As a result, we started a new company called Executive Commuter Coach



The roofline gives this away as a CNG-powered bus, another move to alternative fuels. It is a 2001 Orion 07 operated by MTA New York City Transit and was photographed on Bedford Park Boulevard in Bronx, New York on January 29, 2002. J.C. REBIS JR.

to operate motorcoaches from suburban corners to downtown Chicago and north on Michigan Avenue. Passengers gave up the advantage of the train but in turn got a one-seat ride to work as well as a restroom, reclining seats and reading lights. It worked well. Hence, I would suggest that for many commuters, a one-seat ride is more important than cost. There are some companies in Silicon Valley that do this same thing for their staff. They are picked up near their homes and get a one-seat coach ride to work.

Another factor to consider is that a substantial decline in ridership was caused by the pandemic. Some people retired early while others simply left the work force. I am also aware of several people who either changed jobs, became self-

employed or devoted their time to family members. You might be able to get some of these people back on the buses if the programs were in place to help companies retain current staff and increase staff to pre-pandemic levels.

It is interesting that some passengers simply do not want to ride with others. Some of this may be social distancing, but others fear unsavory passengers including the unemployed. In this case the cities may be their own worst enemy. Recently, there was a mass exodus of people moving out of larger cities. Statistically, it is the larger cities that have the most violence and murders. Solving this problem might be more the responsibility of the cities and not the transit operators. An interesting statistic would be to determine how many bus drivers in your city ride the bus to work and how many drive their car to work.

Re-Thinking Transit

What can we do to help the transit industry? With increasing costs and declining riders it may well be time to step back and look at options and alternatives. A good place to start would be to set aside past traditions and look at what the passengers really want or other innovations that have some merit.

While some passengers are concerned with cost, others place a higher priority elsewhere. My own experience is that some passengers prefer a one-seat ride over cost. This is undoubtedly why Uber, Lyft and taxis have become more popular. What can the transit industry do to provide a more personalized service?

Going back more than 100 years to the streetcar era, public transit has involved larger vehicles on fixed routes. Streetcars had to follow fixed routes because they need tracks and an overhead trolley wire. Buses require neither. Would smaller buses on more personalized routes help increase ridership?

To their credit, the transit industry quickly moved to alternative fuels when they become available. Shown here is a 1999 Orion equipped with hybrid power. It was photographed at Orchard Beach in Bronx, New York on May 20, 2001. J.R. REBIS JR.



The state-of-the-art in transit operations today is the battery-electric transit bus. New Flyer offers several variations in its popular Xcelsior CHARGE line as well as other zero-emission power choices. This Xcelsior CHARGE articulated bus was photographed while recharging from an overhead charge station. NEW FLYER.



Maybe there are alternatives to big vehicles. People movers can provide more of a personalized service that would most likely be more acceptable to passengers. The disadvantage is that people movers are expensive to build and would probably be unworkable on a large scale.

Would non-standard operating schemes help? I know that Seattle had articulated buses bringing in commuters in the morning and back home at night. Many were driven by commuters who made this one round trip each day.

Finally, would it help to ask the commuters and passengers what they want?

Instead of defining transit by the needs of streetcars, maybe we should define transit by the needs of the passengers. My own experience suggests that a one-seat ride or at least fewer vehicle changes would be at the top of the list. This most likely is not going to work with big buses on fixed routes. What other alternatives can we come up with? □



One of the more successful and interesting developments in transit has been contracted service in Silicon Valley to transport employees to work at leading companies from the San Francisco area. Shown here is a Tamsa TS 30 coach used in this service by Loop Transportation. Note the area for parking employee bicycles to the rear. The company transports more than 10,000 commuters daily who take advantage of this one-seat ride. LOOP TRANSPORTATION.



National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Cincinnati, Ohio – Photo by Mark Bealer



Northern Kentucky Skyline with Roebling Suspension Bridge – Photo by Liz Dufour



The Beast Roller Coaster at Kings Island, Mason, Ohio – Photo by Kings Island



Ark Encounter, Williamstown, Kentucky – Photo by Ark Encounter



Newport Aquarium, Newport, Kentucky – Photo by Newport Aquarium



Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, Cincinnati, Ohio – Photo by Robert Webber



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Are Government Regulations Decreasing Safety?

by Larry Plachno

There has been concern that electronic logging devices (ELDs) introduced to enforce hours-of-service and prevent fatigue, were encouraging some truck drivers to increase their speed. The increased speed would make up for the time lost by complying with the ELDs. Shown here is the cockpit area of the prototype Temsa TS 45E all-electric coach. NBT.

Our initial plan for this article was to review information on truck accidents increasing following the move to electronic logging devices (ELDs). The statistics caught our attention because one of the major reasons for moving to ELDs was to keep drivers in line with hours-of-service laws and reduce driver fatigue. The accident numbers were particularly interesting considering the fact that they should have declined because of reduced travel during the pandemic.

In getting into the research, we ran across additional information that seemed to go well beyond just ELDs. In addition, talking to several people in the bus industry they brought up several other topics and concerns. Hence, we elected to try to roll all of this into one article.

While some of this material pertains to trucks, a great deal of it spills over into the bus industry. It is suggested that you take this information into consideration for bus driver training and knowledge. We will include training suggestions at the end. Much of this material does pertain to bus operations and the remainder may be of interest from a safety standpoint. Bear in mind that truck drivers may be able to get

away with more things than bus drivers because they have no passengers watching them.

Numbers and Notes

The electronic logging devices became mandatory on December 18, 2017. Hence, they replaced the traditional paper logs that many of us grew up with. Much of the reasoning behind the ELDs was to improve compliance with hours-of-service laws and reduce driver fatigue. There were strong assumptions that commercial drivers were taking liberties with filling in their paper logs so that they could drive more hours. The new ELDs made it more difficult to change the numbers. Expectations were that this increased compliance with the hours-of-service rules would reduce fatigue and therefore reduce accidents.

However, when the statistics were reported the following year, the numbers were terrible. Deaths from large truck crashes had reached their highest point in 29 years. Large truck fatalities increased nine percent to 4,761, an increase of 392 lives lost from the previous year. About 1,300 of these deaths were truckers. The other 72 percent of the deaths came from the other vehicles involved in the collision. In comparison, the

statistics also showed that overall there was a two percent decline in motor vehicle crashes. Numbers for trucks continued to rise the following year.

Even more statistics became available. The Federal Highway Administration indicated that there have been an increasing number of truck accidents in work zones. They had reached a point where trucks were involved in one-third of all fatal work zone crashes. In 2019, 842 people died in highway work zone crashes, a substantial increase from 757 the year before. This 11.2 percent increase was the largest percentage of increase of fatalities in high work zones so far this century.

Wednesday, April 28 was designated as a national "Go Orange" Day to show support for highway workers.

A poll of truckers were asked their top 10 challenges. Number one on the list was dealing with the new hours-of-service laws and regulations. Several people have suggested that what the truckers have done is to increase their speed in order to deal with the lack of flexibility in the hours-of-service regulations. This results in more accidents on the highway and in work zones.

Deregulation and Priorities

One of the big complaints is that the government is working at cross purposes. On the one hand they deregulated the industry in order to increase competition and reduce costs to consumers. This also reduced driver wages. Now they are expecting more from drivers in order to increase safety. It does not work well to reduce income while trying to increase safety. It has been suggested that the Feds should decide on whether reduced

consumer pricing or safety are more important.

Some people among motor carriers feel that the bureaucrats that make the rules do not understand the business. The bureaucrats get paid the same regardless of whether they work or not. This is not true with the motor carriers. They need to drive miles and transport goods (or people in the cases of buses) in order to make money. Anything that slows them down or reduces their hours

is seen as a negative from the standpoint of earning money.

Some people note that Deregulation in 1982 did not help the situation. It opened the door to competition which brought prices down to consumers. However, when prices went down because of competition, so did driver salaries. Then, those same bureaucrats began squeezing from the other end. There were more and more driver requirements including alcohol and drug testing, a national data base and now the ELDs.

While these regulations were intended to increase the quality of drivers, they may have done just the opposite. These increased requirements, combined with limited driver salaries because of deregulation, made driving less and less attractive to those looking for careers. The result is that we have had a driver shortage for years. Instead of improving the quality of drivers, it has limited the pool of drivers. It is difficult to pick the best apples from your basket when the basket is nearly empty.

One federal official complained that the average age of bus drivers keeps going up. It is getting increasingly difficult to get younger people and women to pick bus driving as a career. Some people in the industry point to the fact that transit bus drivers, where there is no competition with other companies, tend to be paid more than coach drivers. Several people question how much additional safety would come from less competition and being able to pay drivers more.

One has to bear in mind that most truck drivers make their money based on mileage or trips. The drivers can easily be caught between management's push for a fast delivery on the one hand and the hours-of-service laws and speed limits on the other hand. Management may not be all that guilty because they in turn have to deal with competition fostered by Deregulation. The result is that drivers are often guilty of courting fatigue or speeding in order to make a living.

Fatigue

Multiple studies of commercial drivers cite fatigue and lack of sleep as danger signs in maintaining safety. One study showed that most crashes involving sleepy or fatigued drivers took place at least 20 minutes from the nearest rest area or truck stop. Several people in the industry feel that a significant portion of driver fatigue is caused by the lack of accessible and safe parking. That truck driver poll by the American Transportation Research Institute asking for their top 10 challenges showed that the second most important item cited by drivers was safe rest areas and truck stops.

As a result, many in the industry are pushing for more full-service truck stops and rest areas. It was noted that rest areas in

ZF has been busy developing autonomous systems to increase safety on trucks and buses. This photo shows a ZF autonomous truck automatically braking because of cars ahead. It was taken on a test track in Aachen, Germany. ZF.



Some people in the bus industry are concerned because Deregulation fostered competition and lower driver's wages in the industry while the increasing safety guidelines are expecting more from drivers and companies. It has been suggested that the Feds should decide between lower consumer prices or increased safety. Shown here is a pre-Deregulation PD4104 from Capitol Trailways that is now in the bus museum in Hershey, Pennsylvania. ROBERT REDDEN, REDDEN ARCHIVES.



some states have been closed because of a lack of money. This is not helping driver fatigue and accident statistics. Barry Pottle, the chairman of the American Trucking Associations, said that five rest areas in his home state of Maine have closed recently because of the lack of money to operate them. It seems strange that the politicians express concern over driver fatigue while failing to keep rest areas open.

An interesting side note is that this is one area where the truck and bus operators differ. With truckers, speeding is rapidly becoming more of a problem than fatigue. However, past experience and statistics show that fatigue is a major factor in bus fatal accidents. The worst bus fatalities typically come from single-vehicle accidents where the bus driver falls asleep causing the bus to leave the roadway and roll over.

Speeding

Speeding is replacing fatigue as a major cause of truck accidents. In fact, the FMCSA rates speeding as the number one cause of fatal crashes. Some people suggest that the increase in speeding is caused by reduced options with the ELDs. With paper logs, the drivers could do some creative logging to give themselves a little extra time. This extra time allowed them to drive slower and to exercise more care in work zones. With the ELDs, the extra time disappeared, prompting more speeding and less care in work zones.

Jim Mullen, chief council for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, was quoted as saying: "We hear a lot of drivers saying because of a lack of flexibility, we're



It has been noted that bus drivers are less likely to speed than truck drivers because freight cannot watch while passengers can. As a result, speeding has become an increasing concern with trucks as have truck accidents in work zones. However, with buses, driver fatigue is still a very important concern. MCI.

speeding." He says that he hopes they are not putting themselves and the motoring public at risk just to get their freight from Point A to Point B because of the regulations.

While the truckers are allowed to drive 11 hours, they are supposed to take a 30-minute break after eight hours of driving. Many drivers say that this increases their fatigue instead of decreasing it. They would prefer to drive straight through and then quit at the designated time.

Accidents

Statistics show that each year one in five truck drivers is in an accident. The average cost of each accident is around \$24,000. Most truck accidents do not involve fatalities. The most typical accidents, and often the most preventable, involve backing into parked vehicles or fixed objects. Much of this could be eliminated with backup cameras and extra care.

Chris Spear, the chief executive of the American Trucking Associations, has said that most accidents involving trucks are caused by automobiles. Some recent statistics suggest that automobiles are responsible for 70 percent to 90 percent of truck accidents. One reason is distracted driving. In many cases, the automobile drivers do not understand that heavy vehicles do not maneuver quickly and need more time to stop.

Technology

There are a wide range of opinions on whether new technology is improving safety. Cruise control may lead to more accidents. There are increasing reports on truck drivers who put their trucks on cruise control and then put both feet on the dash. Jim Mullen from the FMCSA has suggested that driver assist features could be causing some truck drivers to pay less attention. Some industry leaders are worried that truckers may expect that the new technology will reduce their need to be alert and follow safety regulations because the computer will do it for them.

On the other hand, there are people who say that it is good that commercial fleets are using more safety technology. Even some-

ZF has been developing driver assist systems for both trucks and buses to increase safety. These new systems can detect automobiles or other obstacles and take action by stopping or avoiding the hazard. Shown here is their Innovation Truck being put through its paces. ZF.



thing as simple and inexpensive as audible backup alarms and backup cameras will reduce accidents. Lane deviation, adaptive cruise control and other driver assist systems can all help improve safety.

There is increasing interest in driver analytics and telematics. In addition to monitoring the vehicles, you can also watch the drivers. New technologies can monitor driver actions including seat belt use, hard braking and speeding. You can actually rate drivers based on their driving habits and you can retain the best of them provided you have enough driver applicants.

Driver Shortage

As we write this in mid-May, we are finding that the shortage of drivers is a major negative factor in going back to normal following the pandemic. People have been vaccinated and want to travel again. Tour planners are planning tours. Some of the National Parks have invited bus groups for summer 2021, and the new CERTS funding will allow bus operators to catch up financially.

However, virtually all bus operators are reporting difficulty in finding driver applicants. Some past drivers have gone into trucking, others have gone into other careers. Many past drivers have retired and some are on unemployment. Bus operators have had to turn down business because of a lack of drivers. This problem is not limited to bus companies or to the United States. The same situation prevails in other industries and in many other countries. This is nothing new and has been a problem for the bus industry for many years. The combination of low



Universally, the experts recommend increased driver training. This should include traditional training and exposure to new safety systems in both classrooms as well as behind-the-wheel schooling. The ultimate goal is to promote culture and safety mindset in your organization. MAN.

wages because of competition and increasing requirements has made it more and more difficult to find qualified people who would like to make a career out of bus driving.

Training

In addition to embracing new technology, the experts recommend more driver training to increase safety. Here are some of the suggestions.

- More and more companies are increasing safety awareness to reduce acci-

dents. In addition to regular training sessions and increased use of telematics consider the use of predictive models, real time monitoring and enhanced collision avoidance technology.

- Provide more behind-the-wheel training. Classrooms are good but can be boring. Behind-the-wheel training takes learning to a more practical level.
- Embrace new technology and safety systems. They should be accompanied with professional new driver training and ongoing safety training for all current staff.
- Use driver analytics and telematics to find out who are your best and worst drivers. This allows you either replace drivers, if you can, or schedule them for additional training.
- Promote a professional safety culture and safety mindset within your organization. It does not need to be limited to only drivers. □

An increasing concern has been a lack of driver applicants that seems to have worsened because of the pandemic. This problem is not limited to the United States and Canada but is also seen in Europe and elsewhere. Shown here is your editor driving the J4500 electric prototype. PAT PLODZEEN.



FOR A PEEK AT MAINE • THE WAY LIFE USED TO BE

RAILWAY VILLAGE MUSEUM
BOOTHBAY EST. 1964
RAILWAYVILLAGE.ORG

If you are looking for a good location for a faith-based tour or charter, you might want to consider The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion, Wisconsin. Located just east of Green Bay and near popular Door County, it is the only approved Marian apparition site in the United States and is increasingly bus friendly as more and more visitors and pilgrims arrive by motorcoach.

Marian apparition sites are among the most popular locations for faith-based travel. The best known sites are Guadalupe, Mexico; Lourdes, France and Fatima, Portugal. These locations normally attract as many as four to five million visitors and pilgrims annually. The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help is easily accessible by motorcoach and is increasingly becoming more popular with charters and tours.

The story behind the shrine starts with Adele Brise who was born in Belgium and had plans to enter a convent but came with her parents to the United States in 1855. They settled in what was then Robinsville, Wisconsin, a rural area northeast of Green Bay. In 1859, one year after the 1858 apparitions of the Blessed Virgin to Saint Bernadette at Lourdes, Adele three times saw a lady dressed in white. When asked who she was, the beautiful lady said: "I am the Queen of Heaven, who prays for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to do the same." She then gave Adele the mission of teaching the local children.

Adele's father built a small chapel on the site, but it proved inadequate for the visiting pilgrims. In 1861, Adele's father built a larger church on an expanded five-acre site that had been donated.

Adele originally traveled the countryside while teaching children but eventually formed a community of sisters under the Third Order of Franciscans. A convent and school were built in 1885, and the current chapel was built in 1941. Virtually from the start, the chapel and property became popular with pilgrims and is known for cures and other healing events. Sister Adele Brise and Sister Maggie, as well as some school children, were buried on the site.

In common with other apparition sites, the shrine has had its share of miracles. The most noteworthy was the famous Peshtigo Fire of 1871 that took place in early October at the same time as the Great Chicago Fire and numerous other fires in Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin. Known as the worst fire in the history of the United States, it started north of Green Bay near Peshtigo, Wisconsin. Fanned by high winds, the flames grew to 200 feet in height and traveled through the forests at high speeds. The fire not only moved northeast along the bay into Michigan, but jumped over the water of Green Bay itself and burned major sections of Door

The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help

An Approved Marian Apparition Site in Champion, Wisconsin

by Larry Plachno
Photos courtesy of the Shrine



The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help is the only approved Marian apparition site in the United States. There are only 11 approved Marian apparition sites in the world and some of them have become popular tour attractions. This photo was taken in the Oratory on the lower level near the original apparition site.

County, Wisconsin located south and east of the bay.

The Peshtigo Fire burned around 1,875 square miles of forest, approximately twice the size of Rhode Island, and took the lives of about 800 people. When the raging fire approached the chapel, local residents brought their families and animals to the chapel property for protection. Miraculously, the flames jumped over and spared the chapel property and those taking shelter there. In more recent years there have been reports of healings and similar events. Several people have left crutches, canes and other items behind near the Oratory after visiting the shrine.

The shrine is easily reached from Green Bay by coach. Take exit 185 from Interstate 43 and follow Highway 57 northeast. Turn right on Highway K and follow it east to the shrine. A second large parking lot has been built further back on the property, and it

includes designated bus parking spaces. You will also find restrooms suitable for groups.

Outside activities at the shrine include a rosary / meditation walk, stations of the cross, several prayer sites and a number of statues as well as the gravesites. The statue grouping depicting the Fatima apparitions is particularly popular with visitors. The shrine is open year-round and there are other activities if the weather precludes going outside. Most of the areas are handicap-accessible and heated ramps are provided in the winter. Mass is celebrated in the upper chapel at 11 a.m. Some pilgrim groups come for Mass and stay for lunch.

The lower Oratory (prayer place) at the apparition site is accessible by stairs from the church or from the outside. Adjacent to the chapel is a very nice gift shop that carries items not easily found elsewhere. Food is available in the Schoolhouse Cafe,



Statues and benches are located around the site to facilitate prayer and meditation. This grouping depicts the apparition in Fatima, Portugal with the three shepherd children.



Towards the rear of the property, you can see the stations of the cross in the center and the rosary/meditation walk around the outside that also offers several prayer areas.

but groups can make special arrangements for lunch.

Two things are offered that have become very popular with groups. With sufficient prior notice, the shrine staff may be able to provide guided tours. They typically break larger bus groups into two smaller groups of about 25. This offers an opportunity to see and hear about the history of the shrine as well as many of the statues and areas around the property. You can also arrange lunch in advance for your group and meeting rooms are available for groups. Food can be ordered from the Schoolhouse Cafe or provided from elsewhere.

For more information on The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, visit www.championshrine.org or phone (920) 866-2571.

If you are looking for additional stops for your tour or charter, there are several options nearby. The National Shrine of St. Joseph has moved back to the Campus of St. Norbert College in De Peere, Wisconsin and is located in the old St. Joseph Church. Another popular stop is the St. Francis Xavier Cathedral and Green Bay Diocese Museum in downtown Green Bay. Group tours of both the church and museum will also include some of the history of the area and can be arranged by phoning (920) 432-4348. Groups can also visit the Cath-

edral Book and Gift Store located behind the Cathedral.

About two hours south of the shrine and a little northwest of Milwaukee is Holy Hill. Also known as the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, it is located in Hubertus, Wisconsin. Incorporated in its 435 acres are several faith-based sites and activities.

To the east from the shrine is Door County, a traditional popular stopping place for bus groups. Known for its long shoreline and many parks, Door County offers numerous places of interest for groups including lighthouses, chapels, boats and several dining options. □

This aerial view shows much of the shrine property. Because of the need to accommodate an increasing number of visitors, a second parking lot was recently completed at the upper right. Designated bus parking in this new lot is located near the chapel.



Editor's Note: This was originally written a few years back when the spectre of mandated seat belts was on the horizon. Fortunately, the situation with older coaches turned out to be less of a problem than expected. With the current number of used coaches on the market today, we might again want to revisit these suggestions and either smile or groan.

It was brutally cold in Breckenridge as we loaded skiers for the trip home. The 4104 barely started, and would not rev – it became clear that the throttle cable was frozen.

The only way to get home was over Hoosier Pass, and you actually needed some throttle to climb it. We sent a kid to Sears to get 50 feet of clothesline. Tying one end to the yoke on the governor, we ran it up the left side of the bus and pulled the end through the driver's ticket window. Voila – a hand throttle. Off we went over the mountain.

Nothing is more fun than using things in ways different than their designers intended.

When NHTSA recently announced that, starting in 2016, all new motorcoaches needed to have seat belts, no one was surprised. Many operators had been buying belts as an option for several years. It is uncertain how dramatically the new rule is going to impact the value of older coaches purchased without belts, but it is not likely to be pretty. Retrofitting is possible, but only makes sense on some buses.

The market has already spoken, and many groups can not (or will not) charter a non-belted bus. Looming over the landscape like a vulture is the specter of accidents involving older coaches. The fact that a coach was built before belts were even available is not reliable protection for an operator from catastrophic lawsuits (even if their customer knowingly rented the beltless bus). Manufacturers offer virtually nothing for them as trades, because they will not assume the liability of re-selling them.

What do we do with our older buses? We can sell some to churches and schools, and turn a bunch into motor homes, but over the years you have come to expect more from this column so here is a list of 10 possible uses for beltless buses.

Please understand, I am not that bright. Every one of these things has actually been done . . . I am stealing other people's ideas.

Here are my **bottom** 10 second careers for motorcoaches.

1. Transport Hogs to Market. Years ago a Nebraska farmer bought a surplus Scenicruiser, removed the seats and carried pigs in comfort. If you have ever been stuck in traffic behind a regular hog truck, you will understand he did the pigs and the public a favor.

Top 10 Uses for Coaches Without Seat Belts

by Dave Millhouser



New Motorcoaches built after November of 2016 were required to have three-point seat belts installed. Several bus operators had been ordering them on new coaches for quite some time. While there was some concern about what to do with older coaches without seat belts, problems were much less than anticipated. Shown here are some Amaya seats equipped with seat belts. AMAYA.

2. "Spiro Agnew Mobile Headquarters." When our old Aerocoach's motor croaked, my boss sold it to Agnew's campaign. They towed it around to different locales, using it as an office. We older folks know how that sorted out. Surely you know some politicians . . .

3. Bomb Shelter. Shortly after 9/11 an enterprising Long Island operator rented a number of coaches to a Manhattan bank. They were positioned as barriers to prevent the approach of potential car bombs. Nice work if you can get it – burns no fuel. It is uncertain how his insurance company felt about the idea (or if they knew).



Buses have been used as mobile blimp docks over the years. They help a great deal when docking blimps at places with no regular facilities. Shown here is an early Flexible bus used by Goodyear as a blimp dock. NBT ARCHIVES.



In later years, Goodyear moved to using newer models of buses as mobile blimp docks. Shown here is an MC-8 used for this purpose. The buses also helped blimp operations by carrying supplies and spare parts. NBT ARCHIVES.

4. Interior Decorating. A long time “bus guy” took apart a Scenicruiser and re-assembled the instrument panel in his living room. This may not work for married men.

5. Artificial Reef. If they can dump old MTA subway cars in the Atlantic off New Jersey, why not motorcoaches? Instead of shipping them overseas, ship them under-seas.

6. Beerliner. 1400miles.com / the-beerliner / A 45 foot coach could carry a lot more beverage. Enough said.

7. Blimp Dock. For years Goodyear used Flexibles (with anchor masts) in their blimp program. For the record, the Hindenburg was a dirigible, not a blimp.

8. Windbreak at a Salvage Yard. We gave a bunch of old Mack transits to a junkyard, on the condition that we could come back and take off any parts we needed. Worked out pretty well until I was under one, pulling used bellows off and kicked the jack over.

9. Forget About Them. I was at a Great Big Bus Line garage years ago when the yard manager did his required daily count. There were supposed to be 73 coaches, so he peeked out the window and said “looks like 73 to me.” Just pretend the old ones do not exist (and hope the finance company is okay with it).

10. Deathmobile. Leave it to the creative Communist Chinese to come up with the bottom of the vehicular barrel. In an

effort to provide quality service to outlying communities that can not afford their own executioner, the ChiComs have developed traveling execution vans. A coach would provide superior quality in an application where seat belts are not necessary, and there are few complaints.

I hope this helps, and would really love to hear your ideas.

Remember, there may be danger in improvising. Back in the days when antifreeze was alcohol based, my buddy Bob was checking the coolant level in his bus. He could not see it, and did not have a flashlight, so he used his lighter. In a flash, his eyebrows were burned off, and for years afterward he was known as “Sparky.” □



For those who do not know or have forgotten, here is what a General Motors PD4104 looks like that was mentioned in the text. More than 5,000 were built between 1953 and 1960, making it one of the most popular 35-foot coaches. This one was operated by Capital Trailways in Pennsylvania. NBT ARCHIVES.

Survival and Prosperity_{by}

Ned Einstein



Part 6: The Beginning of Death

Just when the opportunity to slaughter the commercial airline industry and explode into prominence, the same old do-nothings in the motorcoach industry continue to do what they do: Nothing. The term “impotence” would be understated and misleading, since that term would suggest, at least, that some sort of challenge failed. Five previous articles about this opportunity in NATIONAL BUS TRADER obviously accomplished nothing – unless they triggered a misguided response by the airline industry, which at least recognizes the opportunity (see discussion below). The TNCs, already exploding into the school bus and transit industries, cannot be far behind – if they’re not already way ahead.

An expansion into the ever-growing opportunities for motorcoach travel

A recent article (July 27, 2022) titled, “The Democratization of Airport Lounges” (see <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/27/travel/airport-lounges.html>) provided the inspiration for this installment. Much of what follows is a summary of that article’s contents, and an expansion into the ever-growing opportunities for motorcoach travel that stems from it. Following it are some other responses – again, none with the term “motorcoach” in them.

In a nutshell, commercial airline travel is changing, noticeably. The quality of service has turned into squalor, while the bandits in charge are growing ever richer. No other mode has begun to intelligibly adjust to these changes, or profit from the opportunities they present. (If American Airlines can con the Transportation Security Administration into action, as it apparently has, the opportunity for other modes could snap shut like a rat trap.)

Many past installments of this series focused on the multiple layers of corruption, wasted time, inconvenience, unpredictability and other travesties of commercial airline travel. Most important has been this sector’s impunity and complete lack of accountability.

(Once again, I exclude Southwest Airlines from as much of this collapse as it can mitigate.) This installment will focus first on a single, minor element of this collapse: The airport terminal experience, and the extents to which one must go (and pay) to tolerate it.

Democracy and Escape of the Elite

A recent article about the airport experience was actually titled “The Democratization of Airport Lounges” (by Gary Leff, of the airline blog View From The Wing.) The lead-in sentence read, “No longer just for the flying elite, these havens from chaos are easier to get into now, with the crowds to prove it.”

The big con, of course, is that one must be an uber-frequent flyer to enter these lounges. Or one can pay a “day fee,” or purchase a hefty annual pass (sometimes called a Priority Pass) or premium credit card. A priority pass was cited as costing \$299/year. Other premium credit cards can cost up to \$699/year (with a few lesser “credits” for specific hotels and similar travel-related services). Banks and airline companies must be frantically hawking credit cards and similar escape-from-the-masses scams to well-heeled suckers. Capitol One Bank recently opened a lounge in Dallas/Ft. Worth Airport. With its Venture X card and \$399/year, one can even ride a stationary bicycle, take a shower and sip a free cocktail. Given the frequencies and magnitude of flight delays, there is no need to gulp.

Of, course, isolating one from the crowd of proletariats does not get one much – free snacks. Access to a bar (while bars in the concourse are rarely crowded, whereas dining in overpriced restaurants risk one missing his or her flights). Airlines with such lounges also boast of clean bathrooms – although most regular airport restrooms are relatively clean and plentiful. Otherwise, enjoy the snack. These lounges do not even offer overpriced meals.

Of course these lounges fail to address every serious problem and inconvenience of airport travel (see several previous articles about these problems, and the obviously solution to them, in NATIONAL BUS TRADER: <https://transalt.com/article/drivers-v-robots-part-2-the-nature-of-modern-travel/>; <https://transalt.com/article/expanding-the-mode-split-dividing-line-part-1-exponential-airline-industry-corruption/>; [\[prosperity-part-1-magic-corridors/\]\(https://transalt.com/article/survival-and-prosperity-part-1-magic-corridors/\); <https://transalt.com/article/survival-and-prosperity-part-2-the-magic-coach/>; <https://transalt.com/article/survival-and-prosperity-part-3-the-gains-of-winning-the-cost-of-failure/>; <https://transalt.com/article/survival-and-prosperity-part-4-service-concepts/>.\) Like:](https://transalt.com/article/survival-and-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

- Travel time and cost to and from the airport
- Airline delays and other corruption (including overnight stranding)
- Airport parking fees (and finding one’s vehicle once one returns – much less often landing at a different airport altogether, which airlines often re-route one’s return trip to)
- “Consolidating” one’s trip to a different flight – often an out-of-the-way connecting flight with a long layover – and notifying the traveler of the change the morning of the originally-scheduled flight
- Those late morning meetings you will now miss on those planned same-day, out-and-back flights you booked
- Hours of flight delays in the airport, at the boarding gate and on the tarmac
- Unavailable reservations by phone (for \$25 if one is lucky to even reach one), broken Web sites and often next-day call-backs
- Finding and staying in a hotel on those days you are stranded, or cannot get onto a stand-by flight – and hoping to not spend the night on the airport floor. (Our clever airport planners did not install handles on every otherwise-bench seat for no reason. At least you will not have to sleep head-to-head with some homeless victim, saving lots of money otherwise spent by police officers poking them awake with night sticks.)
- Elbow-to-elbow flights on planes on which leg room has decreased markedly over the past three decades – although you need not worry about masking (no air traveler uses one anymore). Social distancing has obviously been defined out of existence.
- Boarding and alighting 200 to 300 people at a single door (whereas any school bus driver can evacuate his or her entire full-size vehicle in 90 seconds).
- Video systems where pilots jam the most-wanted stations (try watching an NBA play-off game on a basic channel) so that they can charge you \$39.99 for a Wi-Fi connection that you hope will allow you to stream the game or show on your phone
- Seat-reservation scams (like paying extra for a choice of seats which you do not

Survival and Prosperity

get once you are on board – first class seats excepted).

- Change fees, cancellation fees and baggage fees (again, Southwest Airlines excepted)

The airlines' motto should be, "Send us your flying elite, yearning to be snookered and have your wallet fattened by still more credit cards." Adding the need to scrutinize your credit card statements even more carefully, and experience even more pop-ups, would make the slogan too long.

Exploring America's National Parks

Beyond commercial airlines, U.S. banks cannot resist scamming attendees of major venues like national parks, which draw hundreds of millions of travelers a year. JPMorgan Chase will soon open its Chase Sapphire Lounge by the Club – for those with a Chase Sapphire Reserve credit card costing \$550/year, which offers benefits including \$300 in credits on travel purchases and Prior Pass membership (which also costs more money). Never mind that the credit cards glop off a sizeable chunk of the gross one spends on anything purchased with his or her card. Of course, a less-frequent flyer need not make such an investment. A PPL Pass Americas (such as Plaza Premium Group) costs only \$59 – and entitles its user to two free visits to their lounge every year – although at the moment, there are currently only six of them in the continental United States. This is not much help if you fly on airlines like Air France, which (like other far-better airlines from abroad) are not permitted to provide domestic flights within the United States.

One suspects that many of these upper-crusters fly first class. I have been arguing that motorcoaches should offer such seating for at least two decades now (including several pleas for this in NATIONAL BUS TRADER articles). To no avail, of course. The Paris subway has had these since at least the mid-1980s.

Trivial Adjustments and Subterfuge

Ironically acknowledging the shortcoming of the costly and elitist lounge sanctuaries (might they morph to include a first-class section), our domestic airlines have now begun to falsely address their shortcomings by replacing mid-distance flights with mid-distance motorcoach service. Of course, with imaginations the size of fleas, airline planners have these coaches originate and terminate at airports. Plus one must even go through security to board them. Needless to say, no modifications have been made to the vehicles. One brilliant American Airline's spin-off – Landline – took advantage of a recent TSA ruling (see discussion below) to seemingly establish a new mode of transportation, as though buses and motorcoaches do not exist, and never did.

One suspects that many of these upper-crusters fly first class. I have been arguing that motorcoaches should offer such seating for at least two decades now.

Mirroring (not likely copying) my idea for setting up service in poorly-served airline corridors, the first two Landline lines for American (launched this past June 3, 2022) run from Philadelphia to either Atlantic City or to Allentown/Bethlehem. So short is this "innovation" and so underserved is this corridor that only Spirit Airlines flies from Philadelphia to Atlantic City – a 62-mile journey that cannot possibly cost much more by taxi (or Uber or Lyft if one does not mind his or her personal information being mined, sold and resold) than by air – much less door-to-door service without any hassles, and often without any fellow passengers. JetBlue, poised to acquire Spirit, cannot seriously be drooling over this particular opportunity. It is likely drooling over the opportunity this model represents if widely replicated. Insofar as the motorcoach industry, given its clout and imagination, perhaps I was too critical about the brain size of airline decision-makers.

If one can fight through the disjointed dots, perhaps one can discern American Airline's goal: "Now with this service, American can add more value and try to gain better loyalty in the local community." I cannot help questioning the loyalty to American Airlines as its Landline customers must absorb much of the "airline experience" to now take a motorcoach, which they could otherwise have ridden from city center to city center instead of from airport terminal to airport terminal. This is only my pedestrian opinion. In exchange, however, Landline (ahem, Sun Coach) offers the benefit of refunding the fare when your coach arrives late. It is anyone's guess what "late" will mean once Sun Coach begins "consolidating" coach trips to ensure that every seat is filled. Will the delayed departure time of the next full coach count if the travel time is the same? Will traffic jams become the new turbulence? Yet the passenger's ticket will have a flight number on it. Sun Country considers this a "good step forward."

United Airlines recently began a similar experiment with "flights" on buses to Fort Collins and Breckenridge, Colorado. Except that the bus trip is merely the two-hour connecting "flight" to or from Denver. Your real

aircraft lands in Denver, and passengers then transfer to a different gate to board their airplane-on-wheels. "Seamless," as the transit industry bureaucrats have referred to fixed route transit, subway and light rail transfers for decades now.

American Airlines (excuse me, Landline, I mean Sun Country) has a better idea. Travelers from Philadelphia to Atlantic City or Allentown will first travel to the airport, check their bags, pass through security and then be taken "airside" (whatever that means) in Philadelphia, where they will get off at a gate and walk to their connecting flight as if they had walked off a regional jet. (A regional jet and an unmodified motorcoach: Some comparison, eh?). We can thank the Transportation Security Administration for this travel streamlining.

In days gone by, such services were referred to as "feeder service," a mode that still exists throughout the country, albeit without the initial trip to the airport, the ticketing procedures, the concourse (upgraded now with those swell lounges) and the security check-throughs, where lucky passengers can get their genitalia rubbed for free (without even having to take off any of your clothes other than your belt and shoes).

This first step is the biggest, because it establishes that functional partnership with TSA.

According to _____ (the source of much of the information above), "the opportunities are endless, though it requires the TSA's willingness and funding." According to _____, "this first step is the biggest, because it establishes that functional partnership with TSA. It is hopefully going to open up all kinds of opportunity." I hope so; I would pay big bucks to squeeze some TSA guard's genitals, and I would get my money's worth.

Gnat in the Net

It is not hard to follow how these swell lifestyle improvements came about. As part of ongoing airline consumer protection efforts, USDOT recently announced new rule-making that would strengthen protections for consumers seeking refunds of airline tickets (see <https://www.transportation.gov/air-consumer>). One suspects this pinprick to the airline industry was triggered when, earlier this summer, ignoring this gnat, some airline left USDOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg off the "Do Not F--- With" list, and canceled his

flight, delaying his trip by hours. Perhaps refunding the fares of disrupted ticketholders whose trips were ruined and their flights cancelled, by the delay, is the spanking that the airlines need. I doubt that Secretary Buttigieg's public statement of outrage put the fear of God into this giant, monopoly. "When Americans buy an airline ticket they should get to their destination safely, reliably, and affordably . . . This new proposed rule would protect the rights of travelers and help ensure they get the timely refunds they deserve from the airlines."

Nearly half of all direct flights are return trips.

Ooh! It must be Halloween.

This proposal actually did nothing but outlaw non-refundable flights – flights for which the airline industry formally charged more. (I suspect the airlines found their way around this prohibition in less time than a flight from Brooklyn to Staten Island.) Perhaps the worldwide cancellation of half of all flights in 2021, and Secretary Buttigieg getting caught in the net, triggered this spanking – as if its costs could remotely offset the extraordinary savings that the airline industry obtains from its impunity to re-book any and every traveler to some flight of the airline's choice. Far more likely, of course, most of these travelers simply accepted the re-scheduled flights, hardships and all. Keep in mind that nearly half of all direct flights are return trips; cancelling them to obtain one's precious refund hardly seems like a choice.

As it turns out, USDOT actually possessed the statutory authority to prohibit unfair airline practices like these for years. However, the concept of 'cancellation' "had not previously been defined" – which resulted in inconsistency among carriers regarding refunds. (Keep in mind throughout this discussion that Southwest Airlines does not engage in corrupt cancellations, has open seating (i.e., no first-class or business-class seats), boards according to first come/first served, does not charge late fees (if you are late, they simply put you on the next flight), does not charge change fees (unless the new flight costs more) and does not charge baggage fees.) Even the newly-proposed rule-making barely make a dent in this tiny footnote of airline corruption. To qualify:

- The domestic flight must be changed or delayed by more than three hours (or six hours for international flights – for those travelers stupid enough to fly internationally on America's airline carriers).

- The departure or arrival airport would have to change. (Imagine having to travel to a new departure airline worth the refund.)

- The number of connections would have to increase – not much disincentive for airlines with choices. They could avoid the refund burden by switching one's connecting return flight to a direct flight to the same airport – as noted, so long as the leg with the extra connection does not take off more than three hours late.

- The type of aircraft changes substantially such that it downgrades the "air travel experience." One suspects this might apply to a plane with a propeller. The fact that travel speeds decrease considerably in "puddle jumpers" seems to be missed by this particular regulation. So too is the downgrading of amenities, since even coast-to-coast flights rarely provide "meals," and they are even more needed on longer flights created by traveling at much slower speeds, in more-crowded lower flight paths, on smaller planes. The TSA is certainly right about the fact that air travel in the United States is an "experience."

Some "minor" provisions "require" airlines and ticket agents to provide passengers with flight credits or vouchers that are valid indefinitely when passengers cannot fly for pandemic-related reasons. Somehow this provision misses the fact that if airlines were required to have "spares," and if they were penalized for cancellations, there would be plenty of flights available where one could social distance. Otherwise this provision would not seem to apply to a passenger who cancelled if he or she had COVID. Just to an airline, with a quick shrug.

These are not regulations without teeth. They are regulations without gums. The big joke about these regulations must be that not a penny of any oligarch's money was likely spent lobbying against them. Otherwise, with such faux-thorny constraints, America's airlines need merely to return to their former practice of transferring their otherwise-delayed or stranded passengers to flights on fellow-airlines. In days of yore, one would have to race down the concourse to catch the newly-assigned flight before the door at its boarding gate closed.

Another quandary is the notion of measuring delay. Does the time a plane is stranded on the tarmac count as part of the delay? It would seem that air traffic control problems could just as easily be blamed for this as would be the bunching up of flights from the cancellation of others. With the right scenario, an airline could annihilate this provision in a lawsuit which 9,999 of every 10,000 travel victims would bow out of (or perhaps settle out for a discounted airport lounge pass).

Another quandary is the notion of measuring delay.

Finally, on August 1, 2022, USDOT's Office of Aviation and Consumer Protection submitted to the Office of Management and Budget a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the "Transparency of Airline Ancillary Fees." Frankly, the existence of ancillary fees is the one thing about domestic airlines that is overtly transparent. With the exception of the one airline noted, every single competitor charges for change fees (occasionally waived) and baggage fees. (I recall once paying more than \$1,000 to change a direct flight to a connecting flight a day later.) In fairness, on those flights delayed by several hours, flight attendants often distribute terrific free earbuds made in China. Otherwise, if USDOT had any remote interest in the passengers, it would intervene in the efforts of fellow airlines to keep Southwest Airlines out of most East Coast airports. (Two Southwest flights actually leave LaGuardia; otherwise, to fly Southwest from any airport on Long Island – dominated by JFK and LaGuardia – one must travel to the eastern end of the island and fly out of Islip (not terribly far from Block Island, a carless steppingstone from Rhode Island and a fisherman's haven).

Otherwise, as if USDOT (or certain journalists) have no memory, one announcement containing this information attributed it to the start of the Pandemic. (I suspect that the batseller who created COVID was also on the grassy knoll.) Regardless, the new regulations portend to codify the notions of refunds and cancellations, and will eliminate an "unfair practice." In truth the unfair practice is prohibiting all those fabulous foreign airline carriers – Air France, Lufthansa, Swiss Air, Philippine Airlines, El Al Airlines (to name a few) – from providing domestic flights. Along with Southwest, these carriers would turn our other domestic carriers into dust.

History and Memories

For those readers still awake, you may recall that this article began with the subject of motorcoaches. Obviously, the events described above skipped right over them by focusing on one of the frontrunners only too stupid, at the present time, to realize the opportunities explored in the last five installments of NATIONAL BUS TRADER. A savvy, experienced public transportation professional should really place his or her bets on TNCs, whose disruption of more and more

Survival and Prosperity

modes is not only growing, but welcomed. So too were things like Thalidomide and helium dirigibles.

To those in the motorcoach industry, I have to admit that it seems comforting (not from experience) to sit on one's buttocks. Unfortunately, there is little future in it. If our casinos or bookies would take them, it would be wise to place one's bets against the U.S. motorcoach industry. Writing about this dying industry is becoming little more than history lessons written in advance. One wonders if U.S. transportation history, in the future, will even bother to include it.

The opinions expressed in this article are that of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of NATIONAL BUS TRADER, Inc. or its staff and management. □

Ned Einstein is the president of Transportation Alternatives (www.transalt.com [1]), a public transportation witness firm. Einstein (einstein@transit.com) specializes in catastrophic motorcoach accidents.

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At right: Stagecoach South is running two Alexander Dennis double-deck buses with unique exterior designs in southern England. They have special graphics commemorating the Platinum anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. This is a very unique event since records do not show any previous British reigning monarch who stayed on the throne for 70 years. We hope to put together a short article on this.

Below: Just a reminder that the bus museum's Spring Fling is scheduled a week later in 2023. It will take place on the second weekend in June – Friday, June 9 and Saturday, June 10. The back row in this photo includes a group of buses from New Jersey that traditionally drive to the Spring Fling every year.

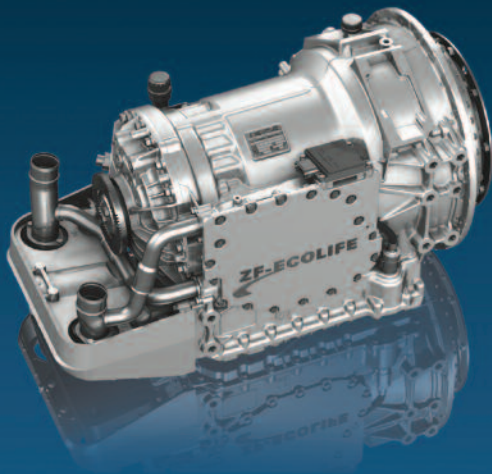


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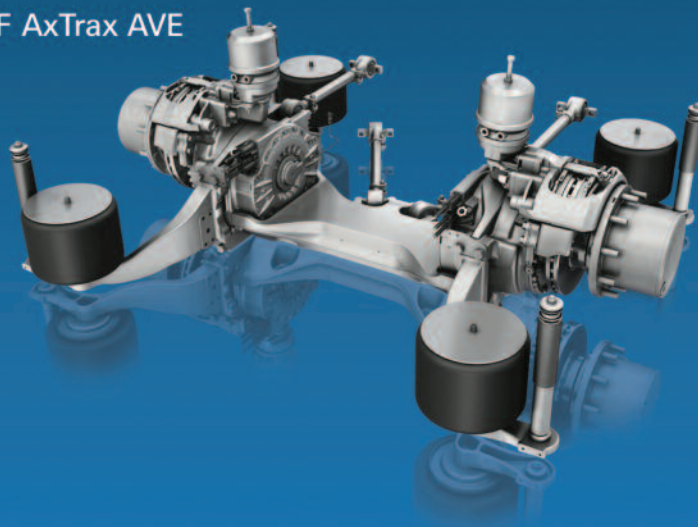
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see. think. act.





The Curious Coachowner

Number 286 of a Series

"The Curious Coachowner" is a question and answer column that provides simple answers to simple questions that are too short to warrant a full article or inclusion in one of our regular columns. We will accept reasonably simple technical or historical questions on commercial coaches or converted coach shells by letter, fax, e-mail or phone. If our staff is unable to answer them, we will call upon our panel of experts. Names and addresses should be submitted with your questions, but we will withhold names from publication on request. We reserve the right to modify questions to make them more useful to our readers.

Q. Are you aware that American Airlines is now running bus "flights" on routes out of Philadelphia?

— Reader in Pennsylvania

A. Yes. We already new about their routes from Philadelphia to Atlantic City and to Allentown/Bethlehem that started in June. These should be mentioned in this month's news section. We just received word that American has added a third bus route out of the Philadelphia airport to Lancaster.

This expansion is interesting since NATIONAL BUS TRADER columnist Ned Einstein has been discussing using buses on shorter aviation routes between city pairs.

What makes this new service of American Airlines different is that it is essentially an extension of its existing flight network and is geared primarily to passengers who plan to get off the bus at Philadelphia and board a continuing plane. The bus service has flight numbers, it can be purchased in conjunction with the airline ticket, and your luggage is automatically transferred.

What Ned Einstein proposed was a downtown to downtown bus service not necessarily connected with the airlines although it could stop at airports. This service would be geared primarily for travel between the two cities. It would not require you to drive or take a bus to the airport and would not require that you arrive early to go through security. Moreover, if the bus had Wi-Fi, passengers could profitably use their travel time while on board.

It will be interesting to see how American Airlines does with this new service and

whether existing bus operators look at starting service between other city pairs not connected with the airlines.

Q. Is it possible to come up with residual values on buses as you did in the past?

— Bus Appraiser

A. We are still somewhat reluctant to try to come up with values on used coaches. Reduced operations with a substantial number of used coaches available tends to make it difficult to come up with accurate numbers. In addition, the manufacturers continue to make ongoing improvements and updates on the new coaches that tend to set them apart even more from the older models.

Q. Are there any updates on how the bus industry is coming back after the pandemic?

— Several Readers

A. The situation is different for different segments of the industry. Most school bus service has come back. There has been a federal push for electric school buses which should work out well for almost all school bus routes because of their limited mileage. The bus tour end of the business is also coming back nicely although some of the suppliers have limited budgets or are slow in inviting the bus tours to come.

While transit ridership is down, new transit bus sales are moving ahead with the help of federal money. Many if not most of the new transit buses being ordered are battery-electric although it appears that hydrogen fuel cell buses are becoming more popular.

The coach people received some CERTS money to help with pandemic problems. However, ridership is still behind pre-pandemic levels and the government still wants to tax the CERTS money, which seems somewhat contradictory. In addition many, if not most, operators are still saying that the charter business is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels.

In numbers, our estimate is that more than 500 coaches were sold in the first half of 2022 although some of these were public sector sales. There are orders so there is a chance we might duplicate this number in the second half of the year and hence end up with 1,000 coaches or slightly more for the year.

Where does this leave us? The answer is that it depends who you talk to. While new coach sales have reached more than 3,000 annual units in very good years, it has also dropped to not much more than 1,000 coaches in poor years such as 1991 and 2010. Since this is not a very good year and there still are a number of good used coaches on the market, I would suggest that the sales numbers are showing that we can probably count on some continued improvement so long as no other problems appear and the industry continues its improvement.

Q. Did you know that George Herwig is celebrating his 100th Birthday?

— Leonard J. Zimmerman

A. George Herwig, who has spent most of his life in the Pittsburgh area, is well known to many people in the bus industry because of his experience with buses, as a Trailways driver and later a popular tour guide.

He served in the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II, initially driving buses for military personnel and then was assigned to a small freighter that delivered ammunition and food for three years in the Atlantic and Pacific areas.

After returning from the war, Herwig became a driver for Pittsburgh Motor Coach. He later ended up driving buses in other cities. Eventually he returned to Pittsburgh and began to drive for Trailways. In those years most of the highways were only two lanes. He is credited with 4½ million safe driving miles.

After retiring from Trailways at the age of 64, Herwig started a new career as a local tour guide. He became well known because of his encyclopedia knowledge of the city's history as well as his outgoing personality and sense of humor. He received the Pittsburgh Tour Director of the Year award.

Herwig is also known for his huge model bus collection that was recently sold although he still retains a few.

Born in 1922, Herwig celebrates his 100th birthday on November 9. He credits his longevity to his wife, Delores. They have been married for 53 years. Both had previously lost spouses.

Answers not credited to other individuals are provided by Larry Plachno. □

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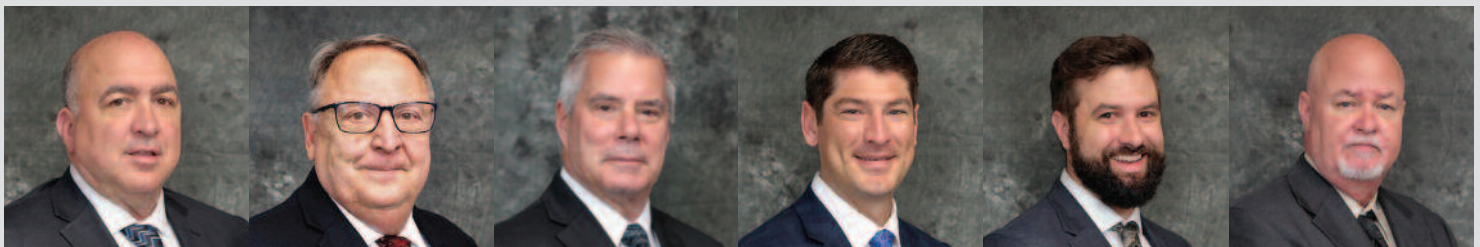
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Down The Road

Coming events of interest to readers of NATIONAL BUS TRADER. Submissions for the department should be directed to the editor. Unless otherwise indicated, events are not open to the general public.

November 13-16, 2022. NTA Travel Exchange. Reno Tahoe, Nevada.

January 12-16, 2023. UMA Motorcoach Expo 2023. Orlando, Florida. For more information view motorcoach-expo.com.

February 2-8, 2023. American Bus Association Marketplace 2023. Detroit, Michigan.

March 15-18, 2023. FMCA's 106th International Convention and RV Expo. Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter, Perry, Georgia.

March 28, 2023. Pennsylvania Bus Association Marketplace. Holiday Inn, Morgantown, Pennsylvania.



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