



AMERICAN BUS ASSOCIATION

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### Did You Know That...

For 14.4 million rural U.S. residents, motorcoaches are the only available mode of intercity commercial transportation service, going where air and rail do not.

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The Most Accurate News Source For The Motorcoach, Tour And Travel Industry

## Federal Wheelchair Lift Grants Now Available

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has announced its solicitation requirements for grant applications for its Over-the-Road Bus Accessibility Program for fiscal year 2007. The grant program makes available nearly \$7.6 million in federal funding for intercity fixed route operators (\$5.7 million) and other types (local fixed route, charter, tour, commuter and special operations) of bus operators (\$1.9 million).



ABA has prepared sample grant application materials to assist members in completing their grant applications. Grant funds can be utilized to retrofit lifts onto existing fleet vehicles, defray the costs of installing lifts as a component of new vehicles, as well as to provide training sessions for company personnel relating to interactions with special needs passengers, lift maintenance and other operational activities. Operators should note that successful grants typically range between \$25,000 and \$180,000, with the federal funding providing up to 90 percent of the project costs.

Completed applications must be submitted either by mail to your respective FTA regional office or electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by Nov. 13, 2007. Contact information for the FTA regional offices can be found at [http://www.fta.dot.gov/regional\\_offices.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/regional_offices.html). More information is available on the ABA Web site at (<http://www.buses.org/?q=node/639>).

## New Federal Passenger Safety Briefing Guidance Issued

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has issued guidance on pre-trip safety messages motorcoach companies should provide to their passengers. The guidance document has been long anticipated by the industry and was developed to respond to several 1999 National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommendations to the agency and the motorcoach industry.

Shortly after the agency received the recommendations, it convened a working group made up of industry and enforcement experts. ABA, the Bus Industry Safety Council, United Motorcoach Association, the

Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance and others actively participated in creating basic guidance and provided the agency with substantive comments during the development phase.

The specifics of the guidance are threefold. The first part explains what basic safety awareness information operators should provide to passengers prior to departure. The second part deals with the ways information might be provided, from simple pamphlets to detailed video presentations. The third part describes how safety information should be provided for tour and charter services, with a different approach for scheduled service operations. The document can be reviewed and downloaded at [www.buses.org](http://www.buses.org).

### The Insider Q&A: Tom Sorrells, President & CEO, Motor Coach Industries

Tom Sorrells, president and CEO of MCI, believes that motorcoaches are a big part of the answer to the world's pollution and congestion problems, and are superior to hybrid automobiles among other eco-alternatives. He took a few minutes to talk to the *Insider* about his company's "Go Green, Go Motorcoach" campaign.

**ABA: Tell us about the "Go Green, Go Motorcoach" campaign.**

**TS:** We believe that the coach is a great solution to the problems we have from an environmental and congestion standpoint. We don't feel our industry is promoting that we have this great solution with the new, cleaner-burning engines and ultra-low sulfur fuel. The coach itself has been revolutionized as an environmental tool.

**ABA: So what is your campaign focusing on?**

**TS:** We're trying to get in front of the political and corporate people. This is a wonderful solution to take cars off the road to take CO2 emissions out of the air that you may not have thought of in the past.

**ABA: What perceptions need to be changed?**

**TS:** For whatever reason, we don't see ourselves as a solution. When the general public thinks of a bus, they think of something old and blowing black smoke out of the back. We start believing what the world thinks of us. What we found is people have been stunned when we give them the statistic that if 56 cars come off the road and the CO2 emissions drop. The bus is 40 times better than a Toyota Prius fully loaded.

**ABA: Are most people surprised to learn that?**

**TS:** Yes. And it's just from a CO2 standpoint per passenger seat. We

believe we haven't thought of ourselves in this manner and haven't promoted ourselves in this manner. It's been very surprising. People pick up on it very quickly.

**ABA: What's been most encouraging?**

**TS:** Probably the corporate side. We're seeing more corporations looking for ways to cut CO2 emissions. They're partnering with some of our customers to create Park & Rides and alternative transportation. In the past, the environmental aspect was never really thought of — it was more of an employee perk or congestion easement. Now, in many cases the environmental aspect is the first thing people want to talk about. It's very strong on the West Coast where more of the tech companies are.

**ABA: How are you conducting the campaign?**

**TS:** It's in magazines in the industry publications. Really, we find we're trying to give our customers a tool so they can go to their customers and pitch it.

**ABA: Have you thought about going into the mainstream media?**

**TS:** We have. But we've found our industry has a tough time getting interest in the mainstream media. We're small and fragmented. So it's better to go through the political side of the arena and then get the mainstream coverage. We've talked to probably 50 House members and 10 to 15 senators in the last six months. We sponsored a Udall tour, and that gave us an avenue to speak to a lot of people as we went through their districts and just educate them on what our product does and how it's different from their perception of the product.

**ABA: Is there anything else you think is really important to get out there?**

**TS:** New York City's looking at a congestion plan: Buses are the solution to the congestion plan. When they close off the roads and put high taxes

"The coach itself  
has been  
revolutionized  
as an environmental  
tool."



Go Green.  
Go Coach.  
Go MCI.™



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on cars, coaches will be the solution to carrying that plan through. There are lots of good things happening on the periphery of the industry that we can take advantage of.

### **ABA: What's the best thing about the motorcoach solution?**

**TS:** It solves two issues. It gets 56 cars off the road — and takes the CO2 out of the air. You know, 56,000 Toyota Priuses versus 1,000 buses — I'd much rather be in the 1,000-bus lane than the 56,000 Prius lane. That solves one of the problems; we solve two — yet Toyota gets all the publicity for coming up with the Prius. We're a better product, a better solution.

### **FMCSA To Review Motorcoach ADA Compliance**

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is going to be reviewing the American Disability Act and how it applies to accessibility of over-the-road buses to ensure that people with disabilities have access to motorcoaches.

Every year, OTRBs are required to submit three types of reports: summaries of access service requests and how they were responded to, the number of passengers who used a lift to board an accessible over-the-road bus, and summaries of the fleet composition including how many OTRBs are purchased, leased and accessible.

It is very important that operators comply with these reporting requirements. If you have any questions regarding your responsibilities, you may contact FMCSA's Commercial Passenger Carrier Safety Division by e-mail at [mc-ecp@dot.gov](mailto:mc-ecp@dot.gov).

### **Gridlocked Roads Are Costing America Billions, New Study Reports**

A new study shows that traffic jams cost \$78 billion in lost hours and wasted fuel in 2005. Vehicles just sitting in traffic, alternately idling and

inching along, burned nearly 3 billion gallons of gasoline, according to the 2007 Urban Mobility Report of the Texas Transportation Institute.

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar (D-Minn.) — also ABA's legislator of the year — said the report "makes clear that there are no simple solutions; instead, the solutions must be tailored to fit local circumstances."

Oberstar said some of the solutions are low-cost, such as rapid removal from busy highways of vehicles involved in accidents and synchronizing traffic lights to improve traffic flow. On a larger scale, Oberstar said solutions include widening freeways, rebuilding interchanges and investing in large-scale rail transit systems. And, most important, more people riding motorcoaches gets auto drivers off the road.

### **Highway Trust Fund Short, OMB Reports**

The highway trust fund is running so low that the current surface transportation reauthorization, supposed to last until Sept. 20, 2009, is going to be facing funding shortfalls before then, the Office of Management and Budget announced.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and ranking member Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) are expected to offer an amendment to the FAA funding measure that would ensure Highway Trust Fund solvency through the life of the reauthorization.

There are a lot of funding options the finance committee is examining — one is reimbursing the trust fund — because it lost money as a result of local governments being exempted from the gas tax. Lawmakers are also looking at recapturing the interest on the trust fund's unspent cash balances since 1998. The trust fund is short about \$4 billion, and \$16 billion will be cut between fiscal year 2008 and 2009.



“Traffic jams cost \$78 billion in lost hours and wasted fuel in 2005.”



“This is doing more harm than good — not only to bus operators — but also to Atlantic City.”

More money needs to be poured into the nation's bridges, concurs Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), the chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. After the tragic Minnesota bridge collapse, Boxer told lawmakers that \$65.2 billion is needed to fix existing bridge problems.

About 72,000 bridges are considered structurally deficient and 81,000 are considered functionally obsolete, Boxer said. Of those bridges that are classified as structurally deficient, about 6,000 are on the National Highway System. The highway authorization bill includes \$21.6 billion for the Highway Bridge Program.

“We need to look at the entire picture before we make decisions on how to spend additional scarce resources,” says Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.). “When we examine the state of our infrastructure in its entirety, we will find that it is not just bridges but everything that needs attention.”

### First Lady Leading “Preserve America” Heritage Tourism Award Program

First Lady Laura Bush is Honorary Chair of the administration's “Preserve America” 2008 Presidential Awards program, which is designed to “celebrate and preserve our national heritage” through “a greater shared knowledge about the nation's past, strengthened regional identities and local pride, increased participation in preserving the country's cultural and natural heritage assets, and supporting the economic vitality of our communities.” Awards will be selected based on, among other criteria, efforts for sustainable use and “model heritage tourism.” Heritage tourism attracts and accommodates visitors to a site based on the unique attributes of the locale's history, landscape and culture. More information is available at [www.preserveamerica.gov](http://www.preserveamerica.gov).

### IN THE STATES

#### Regulators Want New Jersey Barriers To Buses Bearing Bettors Bound For A.C.

The South Jersey Transit Authority has proposed cutting off routes U.S. 30 and 40 to buses heading to Atlantic City, forcing motorcoaches to take the A.C. Expressway toll road.

ABA's Clyde Hart testified at a recent hearing that that's a bad idea. “This is doing more harm than good — not only to bus operators — but also to Atlantic City,” says Hart, ABA's senior vice president for governmental affairs.

Atlantic City is a great travel and tourism destination with more than just casinos — there are golf vacation packages, new restaurants with celebrity chefs, luxury spas, great shopping and the aquarium.

Still, Hart argues that Atlantic City's tourism has been dropping. Partly, he says, because the city no longer dominates gambling on the East Coast. Now there are the Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods casinos in Connecticut, and Philadelphia recently approved city-slot machines, joining Delaware.

If motorcoaches are forced to take the toll road, the cost will be passed to the public. “And the traveling public will say, ‘Is there some place cheaper I can go?’ And we will say, ‘Yes. There are several,’” Hart says. “I don't think that's what Atlantic City had in mind.”

Nearly every seat was taken at the hearing. And nearly everyone who testified said the same thing: This proposed change is a mistake. “There was no dissent,” Hart says.

Why did the authorities want to make the change? “I'm not sure I ever got a real good answer as to why. It doesn't make sense from a congestion management point of view that you would take three routes and turn it into one. It becomes the world's largest parking lot,” Hart says.

Maybe the state just wants to get more money by forcing people to take

#### Did You Know That...

Your ABA Membership includes exclusive networking opportunities, such as the American Bus Marketplace, the leading group travel business event in North America, next scheduled for Feb. 2-7, 2008, in Virginia Beach, Va.

the toll road. "You might get more money, but you'll get a lot fewer people," Hart says. "If the Atlantic City Expressway is bumper to bumper, travelers will avoid the road and stop going to the city. I'd go there if you told me I could take a helicopter."

## Massachusetts Might Gamble On State Casinos

Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick supports developing three casinos, with revenues to help lower property taxes for more than 1 million homeowners. The casinos will create jobs and generate more than \$400 million in new tax revenues.

Massachusetts' property taxes have more than doubled in the past six years. Half of the state's revenue from the casinos would give direct property relief to individual owners. The rest of the money would go to repairing and restoring the state's roads and bridges.

Will Bay Staters make a big dig into their pockets to play at the new venues? Interestingly, Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) is a leader in the fight in Congress to repeal the ban on Internet gaming.

## TRAVEL TRACKS

### Niagara Falls For New Canadian Convention Center

The Canadian government has committed \$35 million to the construction of a new Niagara Convention and Civic Center, reports [travelmole.com](http://travelmole.com).

"This project, along with other federal infrastructure investments in Ontario, such as wastewater treatment improvements in Hamilton Harbor, and improvements to the York, Brampton and Mississauga transit systems, contributes to sustainable communities," said Rob Nicholson, attorney general of Canada.

The proposed Niagara Convention and Civic Center project involves a

facility with 100,000 square feet of exhibition space and 30,000 square feet of meeting space.

The goal is to attract approximately 500,000 visitors per year to the Niagara region, officials say. Once completed, the project is expected to be a model for environmental sustainability and will seek Energy and Environmental Design certifications. Details and a timetable are spending, officials say, but the federal funding commitment is viewed as vital to the project's success.

## MEMBER SERVICES

### ABA Starts Office Depot Partnership

ABA is proud to announce a new business-to-business partnership to provide exclusive benefits from Office Depot, including an ABA "members only" discount on office supplies to anyone in the motorcoach, tour and travel industry. This enhanced benefit covers everything from printer paper to computer equipment. By entering Office Depot's online retail store through the ABA "Privileged Portal" linked on the Member Services page of the ABA Web site, you will be able to enjoy certain discounts exclusively offered to ABA members, and you can shop in a brick-and-mortar Office Depot using an ABA Office Depot "Travel Tier" membership account.

### New Video Shows How ABA Serves Members

A new ABA Membership Video depicting how the organization represents the motorcoach and group travel industry in North America is now available for viewing. This new video is an innovative tool for educating potential members, reminding current members of the value ABA provides, and for defining the mission of ABA to other interested parties. Pass on the [link](#) to your friends in the industry and encourage them to become a part of the ABA family.



"The goal is to attract approximately 500,000 visitors per year to the Niagara region."

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## Charter Notices

**The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)**, servicing Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties and the City of Philadelphia. Submissions due by Oct. 12, 2007.

**Clallam Transit System**, Port Angeles, WA. Submissions due by Oct. 12, 2007.

**Corvallis Transit System**, Corvallis, OR. Submissions due by Nov. 2, 2007.

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## ABAInsider

### PENDING MOTORCOACH AND TOUR MEMBERS

The following companies submitted applications for membership between Sept. 11 – Sept. 21, 2007.

#### M&M Cole Inc. dba Elite Coaches

Michael Cole, Co-Owner  
North Platte, NE (DOT 777056 MC 347848)

#### Flying Arrow Corp. Treasure Valley Tours

John Nesbit, Operations Manager  
Meridian, ID (DOT 1634300 MC 602563)  
[www.treasurevalleytours.com](http://www.treasurevalleytours.com)

#### Niagara Scenic Tours

Keith Fischer, President  
Hamburg, NY (DOT 1435666 MC 542390)  
[www.niagarascenictours.net](http://www.niagarascenictours.net)

Should members have comments regarding these applications, please contact [abamembership@buses.org](mailto:abamembership@buses.org).

### NEW MEMBERS

Following are new members who joined ABA between September 11 – September 21, 2007.

#### Bentonville Convention & Visitors Bureau

Blair Cromwell, Director of Sales  
116 S. Main St.  
Bentonville, AR 72712  
PH 1-479-271-9153, FAX 1-479-464-4298  
[blair@bentonvilleusa.org](mailto:blair@bentonvilleusa.org)  
[www.bentonvilleusa.org](http://www.bentonvilleusa.org)

#### Best Western Commerce Inn

Charlie Patel, General Manager  
157 Eisenhower Drive  
Commerce, GA 30529  
PH 1-706-255-0931, FAX 1-705-335-6470  
[11198@hotel.bestwestern.com](mailto:11198@hotel.bestwestern.com)  
[www.bestwestern.com](http://www.bestwestern.com)

#### Caiman Management

Roger Young, Marketing  
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Rincon, GA 31326  
United States  
PH 1-912-728-5681, FAX 1-480-247-4725  
[roger@planbhospitality.com](mailto:roger@planbhospitality.com)

#### Courtyard by Marriott Atlantic City

Joanne Kirvin, Director of Sales & Marketing  
1212 Pacific Ave.  
Atlantic City, NJ 08401  
PH 1-609-345-7070, FAX 1-609-345-5207  
[atlanticcitydos@ih-corp.com](mailto:atlanticcitydos@ih-corp.com)  
[www.courtyardatlanticcityhotel.com](http://www.courtyardatlanticcityhotel.com)

#### Currituck County Travel & Tourism Department

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[vbrown@visitcurrituck.com](mailto:vbrown@visitcurrituck.com)  
[www.cometourbeach.com](http://www.cometourbeach.com)

#### Dubois Hospitality Group

Joseph Dubois, President  
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Canada  
PH 1-778-328-7434, FAX 1-250-494-0971  
[joseph@duboishospitality.com](mailto:joseph@duboishospitality.com)  
[www.duboishospitality.com](http://www.duboishospitality.com)

#### Franklin Tourism Development Committee

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[www.visitfranklinnc.com](http://www.visitfranklinnc.com)

#### Holiday Inn SunSpree Virginia Beach

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3900 Atlantic Ave.  
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PH 1-757-428-1711, FAX 1-757-425-7872  
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[www.vboceanfrontnorth.com](http://www.vboceanfrontnorth.com)

#### Michie Tavern ca.1784

Cynthia Conte, Curator/Marketing Dir.  
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PH 1-434-977-1234, FAX 1-434-296-7203  
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[www.mtrushmorebookstore.com](http://www.mtrushmorebookstore.com)

#### Orange Peel Transportation

Kerina George, Director of Operations  
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Virginia Beach, VA 23452  
PH 1-757-463-7500  
[transport@orangepeeltransportation.com](mailto:transport@orangepeeltransportation.com)  
[www.orangepeeltransportation.com](http://www.orangepeeltransportation.com)

#### Ozark Mountain Inn

P.O. Box 2323  
Branson, MO 65615-2323  
PH 1-417-334-8300, FAX 1-417-337-5749  
[www.ozarkmountaininn.com](http://www.ozarkmountaininn.com)

#### Sikeston-Miner Convention & Visitors Bureau

Linda Lowes, Marketing Director  
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Sikeston, MO 63801  
PH 1-573-471-6362, FAX 1-573-471-2499  
[llowes@sikeston.org](mailto:llowes@sikeston.org)  
[www.visitsikeston-miner.com](http://www.visitsikeston-miner.com)

#### Splash Water Parks & Resorts and Auburn Inn

Candi Kinsler  
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Valparaiso, IN 46385  
PH 1-219-464-4600, FAX 1-219-465-0156  
[ckinsler@focushotels.com](mailto:ckinsler@focushotels.com)  
[www.focushotels.com](http://www.focushotels.com)

#### Tennessee Performing Arts Center

Amy Starnes, Senior Group Sales Manager  
505 Deaderick St. Third Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243  
PH 1-615-782-4060, FAX 1-615-782-4001  
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[www.tpac.org/groups](http://www.tpac.org/groups)

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#### Village of Salado

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Salado, TX 76571  
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