

Bus business set for a good year

By Bob Weiss

Characters from the Six Flags Park celebrate the new look of Peter Pan buses at the American Bus Association Marketplace in Washington last month. Peter Pan will be starting service from South Station to the Agawam Six Flags Park this spring. It also provides Logan Airport service from Providence, Fall River and Newport.

(02-01-2010) WASHINGTON – The American Bus Association (ABA) held its annual convention and marketplace at the Gaylord National Hotel here last month and the organization is poised for an upswing this year.

The industry is made up of 3,400 businesses, with nearly 80 percent operating fewer than 10 vehicles. The total industry fleet is comprised of almost 33,500 vehicles and employs about 800,000 individuals.

The Northeast is especially important to the bus business because of the growing inter-city travel between major markets like Boston and New York where there was double-digit growth last year. That growth came primarily from BoltBus and Megabus.

Peter Pan, a co-operator of Bolt, along with its own routes and charter services, officially debuted its new Motor Coach Industries exterior and interior design. Peter Pan will take delivery of 30 new 50-seat coaches in the next 90 days. Twenty-five other buses in its 250-bus fleet will be modernized.

The new buses have three-point seat belts for passengers, flat screen TV's and free Wi-Fi.

New England is a popular destination for bus tours, especially in September and October to view the leaves as fall colors ring the region.

One motorcoach spending one night in a destination can generate as much as \$11,600 for the local economy in meals, lodging and other spending.

The location of the South Station Bus Terminal is especially important to the region. Boston is the only city in the country where bus connections are adjacent to Amtrak and commuter routes and where the terminal is located five minutes away from its major airport and a cruise terminal. Bus routes from the Boston area to the two Connecticut gaming casinos run daily.

With the growing importance of the bus business, Rhode Island was the only New England state to have a booth at the ABA Marketplace.

Chairman of the ABA is Jim Jalbert, president of C & J Trailways in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Chris Anzuoni, of Plymouth & Brockton Bus company, is also on the board of directors.

On the Sunday night of the convention, over 3,000 guests were transported by bus, of course, to the new home of the Newseum, near the Capitol. This attraction is a must for media and history buffs in Washington. Plan on half-a-day for the visit.

The Marketplace moves to Philadelphia next year and to Grapevine, Texas in 2012.