



A useful guide for hiring a motorcoach operator to help you choose a safe, quality transportation provider for your next school event.

Trust Your Travel to ABA Members



AMERICAN BUS ASSOCIATION

Representing the motorcoach, tour and travel industry

www.buses.org

Motorcoaches go everywhere.

Whatever your reason for hiring a motorcoach — school field trips, athletic events, educational



tours, or school fundraising events — motorcoaches are a safe, affordable option to move student groups.

Remember, safety, quality and compliance with federal regulations are three very important factors to consider when you choose a carrier. So trust your student travel to ABA members.

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THE **ABA LOGO!**



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Choosing a Quality Motorcoach Operator

When you are making a decision about your event transportation, it's important to consider all the factors. A Quality Motorcoach Operator is one that is reliable, professional, offers outstanding customer service, meets all your needs and is affordable. It is easy to select the cheapest option, however this is not necessarily the best option. Ensure an operator meets all of your criteria before making your selection.

Here are some tips on how to select **quality** carriers:

- ABA members operate under our **Code of Ethics**, which was adopted to promote and maintain the highest standard of bus service among its members.
- Through an alliance with **CoachQuote**, you can obtain quotes from operators on charter services. You can also obtain listings of ABA members companies in your area.
- **Know what your needs are.** If you are not sure, the motorcoach companies will help you determine just what you need. For example, do you need:
 - Special services for VIPs
 - Wheelchair accessible coaches
 - Bilingual drivers
 - Signage on the coaches
 - Local permits
 - On-site dispatchers and/or coordinators

- **Research** the company. For example:
 - Average age, type, seating capacity and maximum height clearance for their motorcoaches
 - Frequency of cleaning
 - Bus driver uniform policy
 - Policy in cases of breakdowns
 - Most cost-effective option for your specific situation
 - Cost of additional services such as videos, music and coach amenities
- Get **several quotes** from various carriers and ensure they meet **ALL** your requirements before signing any contracts.
- **Reliability** is very important in a transportation provider. Look for companies that conduct themselves in a professional manner over the phone and that promptly follow up on your inquiry.
- Always understand the company's **policies on payment and cancellation** before you charter a coach or book an escorted tour. Many operators offer modestly priced trip insurance that can protect your deposit in the event that you or your group must cancel. Ask about this type of protection at the time of booking.
- For more information, go to www.buses.org/tips.cfm.

Choosing a Safe Motorcoach Operator

- Motorcoach companies must have **federal operating authority** if they cross state or provincial lines, and should be able to offer you proof of that authority, which is issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) or Transport Canada. Additionally, many states and provinces require that a carrier obtain operating authority for intrastate operations.
- Ask for proof of a **valid, current insurance** certificate that provides a U.S. minimum of \$5 million in liability insurance coverage.
- Ask for the carrier's U.S. DOT number. Carriers are required to have a U.S. DOT number clearly displayed, and should be either 5 or 6 digits long. By using that number you can view the carrier's safety information online at www.safersys.org.
- All U.S. based motorcoaches must be inspected annually. You can call the individual motorcoach company to inquire about inspection, bus maintenance and repair. Alternatively, you can look for a decal issued by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA).
- All U.S. drivers are required to have a valid, current **Commercial Driver's License (CDL)**, with a "passenger" endorsement printed on the license itself. CDL's are only issued after drivers have demonstrated their abilities, through skills and a knowledge test.
- Long or quick turn-around trips may require an **extra driver** to adhere to federal safety requirements
- For more information, go to www.buses.org/safety and refer to our Safety Guide for Passengers.

Compliance: Use of Private Operators vs. Transit Operators

- **It is a violation of U.S. Federal Law for transit agencies to perform charter work** if a private operator is willing and able to do the work. This prevents public intrusion into private markets. It is important for you to consider this when selecting an operator for your event.
- Transit agencies (Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority, Bay Area Regional Transit Authority, etc.) are publicly subsidized transportation providers that primarily provide fixed-route service on a localized basis.
- Private operators are not publicly subsidized and specialize in providing charter, tour, commuter, shuttle and sightseeing service, in addition to scheduled service.
- The U.S. Federal Transit Law (49 USC 5323(d)) prohibits recipients of federal financial assistance from providing charter service, except under certain circumstances. To comply with the Act, transit agencies must agree that they will not provide charter service (using subsidized equipment or facilities) unless there are no private charter operators able to provide the service.
- For more information about the charter rules, visit the U.S. Federal Transit Administration Website at www.fta.dot.gov/library/legal/cbs.html



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