

THE HILL

July 27, 2007

Your story “Big Bus Fuss” (Hillscape section, July 25) regarding the U.S. Capitol Police decision to ban tour and charter motorcoaches from the streets surrounding the legislative branch neglected to include a critical element of the story — the faulty reasoning inherent in the idea that banishing motorcoaches from the Hill would make the area more secure.

Motorcoach operators strongly agree that they shouldn't be driving through historic Capitol Hill neighborhoods. And if the Hill police had looked more carefully at this issue, they would have determined that relegating tourist motorcoaches to residential streets isn't enhancing our national security.

Motorcoaches bringing visitors to the Capitol are made up of group tours and charters where passengers know each other as members of the same student group, veterans organization or similar civic-minded folks who want to learn more about the epicenter of free government. They are far more likely to recognize a suspicious outsider than anonymous riders of a city transit bus.

Indeed, it makes little sense to single out motorcoach tourist groups for banishment as a security threat when all other buses are still allowed (even those government-run buses indistinguishable in appearance from tour and charter coaches), and the nature of their service makes them arguably more likely to be the source of any potential security risk.

Motorcoaches appear to be the victims of vehicle profiling, when the irony is their profile makes them least likely to pose a risk.

- From Peter J. Pantuso, president & CEO, American Bus Association, Washington