

THE MOTORCOACH INDUSTRY POSITION ON IDLING REGULATIONS

Issue

Stringent state and local enforcement of excessively restrictive idling rules are resulting in significant fines for motorcoach operators and forcing them out of cities that rely on motorcoach passengers for tourism revenue. Practical safety considerations, inadequate parking facilities, and the unique positive impact motorcoaches have on the economy and on the environment have been overlooked by destinations imposing these rules.

BACKGROUND

ABA believes that aggressive ticketing for motorcoach idling is short sighted and detrimental to the safety and well being of passengers and pedestrians alike and fails to recognize the positive impact motorcoaches have on the economy and on the environment.

Motorcoaches have a positive impact on the environment, taking cars off the road and mitigating congestion. Motorcoaches are fuel-efficient, delivering more than 146 passenger miles per gallon of fuel, yielding more people-moving efficiency per Btu than any other mode. And since 1998, new Environmental Protection Agency standards applying to particulates and NO_x levels have resulted in reduced emissions of 90% over 1998 levels.

- Idling is a necessary and, in fact, critical step in preparing a motorcoach for operation.
- 49 USC 14101 (a) requires that motor carriers of passengers licensed to operate in interstate commerce must provide “safe and adequate service, equipment, and facilities.” To meet this service standard, it is necessary for a motorcoach to idle in order to:
 - Pump up the motorcoach air pressure systems to ensure brake performance as required by 49 CFR 393.52;
 - Utilize Americans with Disabilities Act mandated wheelchair lifts; and
 - Operate the heating or air conditioning system to warm up or cool down the interior of the motorcoach.

As mentioned above, Federal regulations require that brakes must be able to exert appropriate force in order to effectively stop the vehicle (49 C.F.R. 393.52). For the air braking system in motorcoaches, idling time is necessary to build up sufficient air pressure to meet the standard laid out in 49 C.F.R. 393.52. Drivers should not be compelled to leave the curb before proper brake-system air pressure is achieved, endangering pedestrians and passengers. Further, it is sometimes necessary to idle a bus in order to assess vehicle systems, and perform mechanical repairs. Even this critical effort can run afoul of local idling regulations.

Additionally, as the Americans with Disabilities Act is implemented, operators will require sufficient idling time to power up and insure the proper operation of the wheelchair lift for passengers with disabilities using the lift. A three or five minute idling restriction is simply not sufficient to ensure the safe and efficient transportation of our passengers.

For reasons of safety, health and comfort, drivers need sufficient idling time to properly heat or cool the motorcoach to an appropriate temperature before boarding can begin. This is a particular challenge with groups of senior citizens traveling in times of extreme hot or cold temperatures. The Federal regulations state, with regard to regular route carriers that, “a carrier shall maintain a reasonable temperature on each bus” (49 C.F.R. 374.313). In extreme temperatures, it can take a significant amount of time to bring the coach to ambient temperature. A coach takes as long as 45

minutes for the engine to fully cycle resulting in a heating or cooling effect of 15 degrees. Temperature in a parked coach can reach as high as 130 degrees in the southwest or as low as freezing in parts of the northeast. Given a change of 15 degrees per 45 minutes of engine cycling time, the necessary heating or cooling time required in these cases could easily take more than one hour.

In an effort to quantify the congestion mitigating and environmental solutions that motorcoaches present, ABA has partnered with the Department of Energy, Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency to conduct a study evaluating the true effects of motorcoach idling. This study, published in June of 2006, has shown that when forced to circulate or creep through traffic at low speed, a motorcoach expends twice as much fuel and produces forty percent more emissions as compared to stationary idling. This data has also provided a measuring stick for the unintended consequences induced by the stringent regulations limiting stationary idling in lieu of long-term parking solutions. Given the federal guidelines for safe operations, motorcoach operators are at times placed in an untenable position because of these regulations, either choosing to avoid a city or locality all together, or being forced to circulate in "creep" mode, which has been shown to have an even more adverse environmental and fuel consumption effect than stationary idling.

ABA POSITION

All local and state ordinances should be modified to allow a motorcoach operator the latitude to idle a bus to comply with federal statutes and regulations and to ensure the safety, health and comfort of its passengers. Therefore ABA proposes that new statutory language is necessary along with modifications to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations to allow a motorcoach operator sufficient time to idle to ready vehicle systems. ABA believes that, rather than establishing a specific time limit, an operator should be allowed a reasonable and prudent idling time to allow for safety systems to be in operating condition that provides for the safety of their passengers. Furthermore, motorcoach operators should have access to parking facilities to ensure that drivers are not forced to circulate and that idle times are kept to a minimum.

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