1.) Proposed Federal Drug and Alcohol Testing Clearinghouse;

We felt that this topic is loaded with potential issues such as costs which may be an undue burden on companies, and there is no line of communication in place for police agencies to send information about OUI/DUI convictions. We need much further dialog with FMCSA about how this might work, and ideas for the process as well as the end result should start here at the BISC meetings, and be driven upward through the ABA administrators to the FMCSA officials.

2.) Proposed Minimum Training Requirements for Entry Level Drivers;

Before this becomes law, we should be seeking to separate this rule and how it would apply to three different industries: Trucking, School Busing, and Motor Coach, as each would be affected in a different way. FMCSA wants a certification process with college training involved, but the expenses involved would crush small private school bus companies who often train their own school bus drivers in house, and then eventually do additional training so that these same drivers can operate motor coaches. The pay and hour scale for most part-time, seasonal school bus drivers would not lend itself to an individual driver having to pay to be trained to do a job where they would never make that money back for several years. Trucking already offers a multitude of training schools, more affordable when compared to possible income levels after completion, and motor coach industry is somewhere in the middle, depending on the size of the company. Clyde Hart is seeking to gain more input into the planning process for us. More questions to be answered such as could grants become available to help companies and drivers to afford this higher level of training? From whom? And could companies become successful at partnering with training schools? More work is needed in planning!

3.) Medical / Recreational Marijuana use in the workplace;

A page detailing the federal DOT prohibition on Marijuana use of any kind was handed out during our meeting for companies to hand out, or use as a template for their policies.

4.) CDL / Medical Card merger;

The issue of all states needing to be in compliance with the communication of medical card information to state DMV license-records departments has been spotty at best. Not all states are currently in compliance, which requires drivers to still carry a hard copy of the medical card while on the road. Make sure that your medical provider’s name is on the new National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners! Check to be sure that new medical card expiration date data is shown on driver MVRs soon after exams occur. If a driver medical qualification is delayed past the expiration date of the card because more documentation of an existing medical condition is needed by your provider, and your provider is “out of town” or on vacation, you are still allowed to see a different provider for medical qualification as long as that different provider is on the National Registry. It is currently unknown how much longer it will be before all states come into compliance through implementation of an effective chain of communication to achieve this goal, or if FMCSA can get the government to withhold
federal fund

5.) Newly-revised J.J. Keller Motorcoach Driver’s Handbook;

As of the meeting date, the content of the revised “Passenger Carrying Handbook” was finished, and was due to be released in Feb. 2015. It has over 60 topics. A new “Motorcoach Driver’s Handbook” was also set to be released in Feb., and you should now be able to go online to the Keller website to learn more about these publications.

6.) New topic suggestions, and other concerns;

Many suggestions were given for things that we should be concerned about; one of the first things mentioned had to do with driver fatigue issues, such as driving through the night, and sleep apnea. One suggestion was for companies to adopt standards on allowable fatigue levels. This could be done by implementing policies where “overnight trips” could always be shared by two different drivers, with increased costs borne by the customer. Another idea was to require any driver who drove through the night to be off duty for the next 12 hours. One member mentioned that a good place to start is to download the “North American Fatigue Management Program” which is available online.

Sleep Apnea has been a hot-button issue for the past several years. Initially FMCSA created guidelines for medical providers to use in the diagnosis and treatment of Sleep Apnea in advance of a rulemaking, but industry outcry forced them to back down from addressing the issue head-on by making the guidelines into law. The guidelines were, however, left in place on the “web” and many medical examiners were starting to use the guidelines to disqualify drivers at examination times. Recently, FMCSA sent out letters to CME’s advising them that Congress has vacated the rule on Sleep Apnea Detection and Treatment, and that these guidelines should no longer be used to disqualify drivers, and the guidelines were removed from the web. Since Sleep Apnea is still a real problem, the industry needs to come up with ideas of how the issue should be dealt with.

Another member suggested that perhaps we should seek to address some “non-driver” issues at our next meeting, and several members expressed interest in discussing Workplace Wellness topics.

Lastly, more and better ABA/BISC member communication was promised for the future, beginning immediately with conference calls and webinars being scheduled on a regular basis for committee members.

Rick Vaillancourt
Cyr Bus Line