

Behold the Year of the Motorcoach

Benjamin Franklin once quipped, “When you’re finished changing, you’re finished.” Of course, we know none of the Founding Fathers ever had the opportunity to ride on a modern motorcoach. But Franklin’s advice offers timeless wisdom to everyone in the bus, tour and travel industry. For it’s the changing world in which the bus business finds itself today that proves Franklin prescient.

Any business must always evolve to adapt to changing market conditions—or they’re finished. And the bus business has changed, which is why the dramatically different world in which we operate today offers opportunities in ways many might have never thought possible.

Recent headlines from major national newspapers are telling: “Buses are back.” “Taking the bus is cool again.” “Buses are hip.” “The deal’s on the bus.” Can we be far off from the headline, “Buses are sexy?”

It’s a whole new business world for us when motorcoaches are becoming the public’s first choice for transportation. Whatever we felt about this business for the past five, 10 or 20 years is no longer true. We are now in a very different business. Transportation has changed. And consumers are changing to buses.

The old paradigm was the car was the consumer’s first choice—to commute, to go on a road trip, to sightsee. In those days, the reaction to not taking the car was, “Ugh! We have to take the bus?” The new paradigm is the motorcoach is the first choice for travel. Now it’s, “Ugh! We have to take the car!?”



In business, we seek opportunity. We spend tremendous resources, time and money to create that opportunity. Isn’t it gratifying to be part of the new world of motorcoach opportunity? Those that have defined us as second choice now must concede that taking any other mode is the second choice. We are now the first.

We get customers there on time, in luxurious comfort, and as the greenest way to travel. And we’re still the safest, most convenient, most affordable, and most cost-effective way to move people from point A to point B. Coupled with concern about climate change, airline hassles, high gas prices and nasty gridlock, we’ve created the ideal business opportunity for growth.

And it cuts across all service segments.

Scheduled intercity service is seeing a huge resurgence of demand in highly trafficked coastal corridors. Commuter service is offering the antidote to white-knuckled congestion for motorists who now take the coach instead of driving.

Charter and tour services have the opportunity to take advantage of more Americans vacationing closer to home. Instead of taking the trip to Paris, they can take the motorcoach to Quebec City and get the same authentic French experience. And with a weak dollar overseas, we have a huge influx of international visitors who come from cultures where the bus is already viewed as a top choice for travel.

Part of the reason for the 13 percent jump in ridership since 2006 is that a new generation of people in their 20s is not wedded to personal autos. They view “traveling green” on the bus as the coolest thing they can do to earn praise among their peers. Of course, wi-fi, flat-screen DVDs, reclining upholstered seats, personal climate control and iPod® hook-ups all help, but reducing their carbon footprint is the key selling point for young professionals.

And we can leverage all of this on Capitol Hill, using our great story to work on issues ranging from maintaining the partial federal fuel tax exemption to everything else expected with the 2009 Highway Reauthorization bill.

We are part of the transportation solution. We mitigate congestion by taking cars off the roads. We reduce energy consumption and slash carbon dioxide emissions. We offer mobility to 14.4 million rural Americans who would otherwise be without access to transportation services because they live far from rail hubs and airports.



On all these issues and more, the American Bus Association (ABA) is using the bus revival among the public to help shape policy and protect your bottom line to ensure we are rightfully seen as integral parts of America’s 21st-century transportation solution.

So welcome to the new world of opportunity for your business to grow as it never has before.

Motorcoaches are the most fuel-efficient transportation mode in North America when measured in terms of passenger miles per gallon of fuel. Motorcoaches currently provide 184 passenger miles per gallon (MPG), more than double the second most fuel-efficient sector, commuter rail at 86 passengers MPG. Transit buses achieve 32 passengers MPG, domestic air carriers achieve 42 passengers MPG, and

single-passenger automobiles achieve 28 passengers MPG.

For 14,400,000 rural U.S. residents, motorcoaches are the only available mode of intercity commercial transportation service, going where air and rail do not.

By Eron Shosteck

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