



MOTOR BUS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

FALL, 2006

Election

The ballot for the election of Officers and Trustees for terms starting on January 1, 2007 is enclosed. All currently paid-up MBS members are eligible to vote in this election. All ballots must be received by the Elections Official by January 31, 2007. Successful candidates will be notified by February 10, 2007, and they will take office retroactively to January 1, 2007.

The only contested office is that of President. The candidates for this office are Bill Vallow and Din Mandros. Their qualifications and experience statements are included in the elections material.

Candidates for President, Executive Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer will serve terms of two years from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2008. Candidates for the two open positions for Member of the Board of Trustees will serve terms of six years, running from January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2012.

Conventions



Motor Bus Society Fall 2006 Convention in front of MCI articulated Classic bus 9225 at the Réseau de Transport de la Capitale garage in Quebec City, QU on October 8, 2006

Quebec City: The Fall 2006 MBS Convention was held in Quebec City, Quebec, and was attended by over 40 members and guests. Almost one-third of the attendees were Canadian members who do not usually appear at the U.S. conventions. Quebec City member **Jacques Matte** was instrumental in making the various garage and manufacturer visits. Friday was *builders'* day, with stops at Dupont Industries (highway coach rebuilding and replica trolley construction), Capital Bus Parts (transit bus rebuilders) and Prevost Car (new Motor Coach builders). On Saturday, the tour ventured west to Trois Rivières (Three Rivers) and Drummondville; on Sunday the group visited the Quebec City and Levis (across the river) transit operations. The Nova LFS (Low Floor Series) buses were predominant in Quebec City, and were making inroads in Trois Rivières, but none at all were to be seen in Levis or Drummondville. Drummondville, a small five bus operation, had only Orion I's and V's (plus a GM TDH-3302N that was for sale). The Trois Rivières, Quebec City and Levis all ran Classics—of GMD, MCI and Nova manufacture). No New Look GM's were in service at any of the properties visited. Quebec City did have two unusual MCI Classic articulated buses.

North Carolina: Planning for the Spring 2007 Convention in North Carolina progresses: Headquarters for the three day affair will be in Raleigh and will take place on Friday through Sunday, April 27-29. The

tentative itinerary includes Burlington, Greensboro, Hi-Point and Winston-Salem on Friday, then Salisbury, Concord and Charlotte on Saturday, and Raleigh, Durham (including Duke University) and Chapel Hill on Sunday. We are looking at locating a headquarters hotel in downtown Raleigh.

Publications

The publication of the Society's periodic magazine *Motor Coach Age* remains behind the issue publication dates for a number of reasons that are discussed herein.

Current Issues: The last issue that was published was the Summer (July-Sept.) 2005 issue on Des Moines, IA. The Fall (Oct.-Dec.) 2005 number will cover Passaic and South Passaic County of New Jersey, and is authored by Murray Kramer. As of the end of November, this issue was complete, except for a map and final text approval by the author. It should be ready to go to the printers by the middle of December and will be processed, printed and mailed by the middle of January, 2007.

2006 Issues: The Winter and Spring 2006 issues were also in preparation during the latter part of this year. We expect both of these issues to be printed and mailed by the end of March 2007. A large number of stories are also in process. Many of them are long-term projects, but several should progress to the point that they could be published in 2007.

Your Money's Worth? At the 2006 MBS Annual Meeting in Quebec in October, several complaints were voiced about the tardiness of *Motor Coach Age*. Several members felt that they were not getting enough for the dues money they had paid. It is granted that the time between issues has been greater than in the past, but part of the reason for the delay was computer-related problems that took over a year to resolve! This was related to the

change in editors that took place at the end of 2003. The first of the issues that were completely edited by Al Meier, the Fall 2003 issue, appeared late in 2004. Since that time, a total of nine issues of MCA have been produced, as follows:

Motor Coach Age Production Since Fall, 2003			
Year	Quarter	Subject	Pages
2003	Oct-Dec	SEMTA/Pontiac	32
2004	Jan-Mar	Eastside/Trombly	24
2004	Apr-Jun	Long Beach	56
2004	Jul-Sep	Racine	28
2004	Oct-Dec	Sunbury/B&W	32
2005	Jan-Mar	Orange/Baltimore	20
2005	Apr-Jun	Oshkosh	24
2005	Jul-Sep	Des Moines	52
2005	Oct-Dec	Passaic	40
Total pages			308
Average per issue			34.2
Total issues @ 20 pgs.			180
Issues at 20 each			15.4

Note: inclusion of the Passaic issue is based on an estimated page count.

Many of the transportation enthusiast oriented organizations that produce a publication typically include less than 20 pages per issue. But many of them have regular contributors, and do not depend upon a single person to generate and process material. If MCA had more contributors, it would have more pages. As the above table indicates, the MBS has published 308 pages of MCA since the fall of 2003, or 34.2 pages per issue. If we had maintained an issue size of 20 pages (as we had in the past), then we would have released over 15 different issues, and that would have put us at the Winter (Jan-Mar) 2007 issue, or right on schedule!

The Reputation of Motor Coach Age: The reputation of MCA and its respect in the bus/transit industry is not based on printing 20 pages an issue of photos and fluff! It is based on a history or producing in-depth historical articles that are based on facts that are found through hours of relentless research. The City of Fresno, CA, for example is so happy with the historic article that we did on their operation that they use it as a training tool for new planning and other employees.

MCA Editor, Al Meier feels strongly that we should continue to devote our efforts to doing stories that are based on hard historic research and documentation. His experience in the publishing business has developed in him the knowledge of what is required to weed out the facts from the fiction and to know what is needed for a good historic piece. His talents would be wasted on doing a *picture book*. But Al is not unmindful of deadlines, and the need to get back to the traditional four issues a year. The problem is that there are not enough people who are capable of or willing to do the hard research that is needed to get the stories done.

What Can Readers Do?: It is recognized that many, if not most members are interested *only* in reading what appears in MCA, and have no time, talent or inclination to make any contribution. Frankly this is all we can expect from them. But there are others who would like to make some kind of contribution, and it is these people that we would like to encourage

The Different Levels of Contribution: The MBS Archives are extensive, but since the death of MBS Founder John Hoschek, they have become largely out of date. There was a time when we could go to the old MBS Library and there find enough material to write complete stories—this is no longer possible. We must now look to other sources. One important source of material is our members. We are constantly receiving bits and pieces and even whole collections of needed material, such as route maps, schedules and photographs. We encourage our members to continue to contribute whatever materials they might run across and do not need for their personal collections. We also encourage our older members to consider donating their bus and coach materials to the MBS in their wills. The Society has received several major collections in this manner in recent years.

Other Sources: One would probably believe that the best source of historic transit/coach historic information and data would be the operators themselves. Unfortunately, with a few exceptions, this is not the case. In the past, it was not uncommon for the private operators to maintain files of operating materials, as this information was frequently required for regulator applications and reports. Operators tended to keep *everything* (as long as they had the space) since they never knew when they might need some facts to prove a point. But as the private operators were acquired by national chains or public agencies, the new managements tended to “clean house,” and frequently the historic information was summarily thrown out. There are also cases of historic data having been lost to fire, flood and other natural disasters.

We do depend upon the operators for details on equipment acquisition and disposal, and in fact they are the prime source for this material. Secondary sources are builders’ construction data and regulatory

commission records. A third source is rosters and lists that have been collected by individual members from the above sources or personal observation and field inspection.

Two other prime sources of operational material are the regulating commissions and industry trade publications. *Bus Transportation* magazine is an excellent source of information for the 1920-1950 period. *Mass Transportation* and its more recent incarnations are also sources of news items and feature articles. The main drawback of these sources—particularly for the news items—is that they include only those facts that the individual operators chose to report. The same is true for APTA’s weekly newspaper, *Passenger Transport*. The applications to and decisions of the regulators are very valuable and useful in constructing historic timelines. But there are two problems with them: (1) the decision date is not the implementation date, and (2) some authorized routes or services were never implemented.

All of this material, which is often disjointed, must then be weaved into a coherent story, and this is the job of the editor. Sometimes it takes a knowledgeable researcher to recognize when he or she has found a valuable piece of information—in a way, compiling an historic piece is like a big puzzle. Not only does one have to know where the pieces fit, but he or she must also know where to look for the pieces!

Not all of us are cut out to do the kind of work that is needed for our in-depth research, an undertaking that requires untold patience and knowledge of what to look for. But each one of us can be of help by contributing whatever materials he or she may have in their collections—either for stories that are in preparation or to the archives to be banked for future articles.

What About News, Updates and Spotlights? Not everything in MCA *must* be a lengthy in-depth feature article. The magazine has a history of including news briefs and updates on cities that have already been done as feature stories. There have also been “Spotlights” or short stories focusing on present day operations in some location. We have also done articles on vehicle and component developments. We would like to improve the variety of material in MCA by including these types of articles in the future. In a future issue of this *Newsletter*, we will include a discussion of what is needed for Spotlight, equipment and component articles and the major historic articles that are now under development.

The Freedom of Information Act: Some public agencies are reluctant to release information on their operations, apparently believing (or at least asserting) that its confidentiality is crucial to their operations. The reluctance to share information may also be a way of ignoring a request and the need to spend their valuable time responding to what they consider to be frivolous requests. The Freedom of Information Act declares information about government agencies to be public and generally available unless it has been “Classified.” *The* Freedom of Information Act (*per se*) is a Federal regulation, and applies only to Federal agencies, but the states all have similar legislation. Technically, requests under the FOIA must be made in a specific manner and must specify exactly what documents or information is requested. There may be some validity to the claim of confidentiality in the private sector, where a competitive advantage might be obtained. But no such advantage accrues in the public sector, where no competition is faced.

