

“According to the National Transportation Safety Board, accidents kill 21 bus passengers a year and injure more than 7,900. The most common cause of fatalities is rollovers, the board says, and wearing seat belts reduces the likelihood of death in rollovers by 77 percent.” www.sfgate.com/news/article/California-to-require-passengers-to-buckle-up-12264793.php (2017)

INTERCITY BUS SAFETY SUMMIT FINAL REPORT January 2018

On October 26, 2017, the Intercity Bus Safety Summit was held in room G11 in the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. The purpose of this one-day event was to raise a consciousness within concerned constituencies to increase seatbelt usage on intercity buses and motorcoaches, where restraint systems are in place. Additionally, the goal was to begin to develop a strategic marketing plan to create awareness and engagement to this issue as well as to design strategies and action plans to substantially increase motorcoach passenger safety restraint usage.

Forty-one individuals convened to listen to key speakers, engage in a roundtable discussion and participate in an ideation session to generate actions to meet the goals of increased awareness and ultimately actual seatbelt usage. These individuals represented various constituencies and perspectives and included DOT, NHTSA, UMA, FMCA, American Bus Association, motorcoach operators, advertising agencies, insurance companies, seatbelt manufacturers, and road safety advocates. Keynote speakers were Daphne Jefferson [FMCSA], Heidi King [NHTSA], Senator Edward Markey and a video from Senator Orin Hatch urging attention to the issue. This report includes a summary of the roundtable discussion, a compilation of the ideas generated in the brainstorm session and a structure for a strategic plan.

The Roundtable Discussion

Prior to the roundtable conversation, Keynote Speaker Daphne Jefferson, FMCSA Acting Administrator, offered some encouragement to the mission of the day. Her remarks noted the importance of “having the right messaging out to

passengers, to the industry, to our safety advocates, and continuing to beat the drum for safety and for buckling up.” She noted the importance of partnering with various groups to reach this goal. Administrator Jefferson pointed to the FMCA partnership of NHTSA, the Federal Highway Administration and the National Safety Council on the Road to Zero campaign where the goal is zero fatalities in the next 30 years. She spoke of the importance of reaching children [“wisdom comes out of the mouth of children’] to promote safety and described the DOT’s children’s art work contest as a means of doing this...artwork is displayed in the DOT building. She concluded with “I think the idea of figuring out how we increase seatbelt usage, particularly on motorcoaches, is key.”

The roundtable discussion was moderated by Michael Knodler of the University of Massachusetts Transportation Center and consisted of the following participants: Brandon Buchanan [American Bus Company], Allison Kennedy [Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety], Ken Presley [United Motorcoach Association], Al Smith [Greyhound Bus Lines], Jane Terry [National Safety Council], Jack Van Steenburg [FMCSA], Tyrone Ward [Peter Pan Bus Lines], and Mary Zost [Ad Council].

The following section presents major points, issues and quotes that came from that session.

Al Smith: “So recently, the State of California is the first state to pass legislation that’s going to require everyone on a motorcoach to wear a seatbelt. We applaud California for doing that and certainly think it’s an example for the other states to consider going forward.”

Jack Van Steenburg: He noted that one issue is getting motorcoach drivers to wear seatbelts. In 2010, 47% of drivers wore seatbelts. In 2013 it spiked to 74% but backed down to 65% in 2016.

Jack Van Steenburg: The National Transportation Safety Board has given some recommendations. When asked for some existing “success story” strategies and actions for increasing seatbelt usage, he indicated the National Transportation Safety Board recommends a pre-trip message similar to that on airplanes. This is only voluntary for bus operators, however. And the 75% of all bus operators who

have nine or less vehicles in their fleets must be targeted with the campaign. They need to get the message for seatbelt usage compliance.

Al Smith: He noted that Greyhound is automating its pre-trip messages that include safety announcements. “I think the more that we can use technology to help advance the use of seatbelts...the more we do that, the better the chances that people will start using them.” “...constant reminders can help everyone realize the importance of doing it.”

Tyrone Ward: “We just have to be active and just go on the buses and tell the people to just try the seatbelt on, see how it feels. You might be more comfortable with it.”

Brandon Buchanan: He believes seating manufacturers must play a role in making seats and seatbelts more comfortable to entice usage. He also noted that not all drivers give safety announcements. He believes “it starts with the message.”

Jack Van Steenburg: He believes motorcoaches give a false sense of security. “You’re in a big vehicle, you know, a lot of metal around you. You don’t feel vulnerable.” He also believes that you need to start with children...”make it cool, somehow, make it cool.”

Allison Kennedy: She added that putting a sticker on the back of seats would help to remind passengers to fasten their seatbelts. Later in the day, Al Smith noted that because bus travel can be boring, passengers will pick off decals on seats and even pick off the embroidered “Fasten your Seatbelt” urgings on the back of seats.

Jane Terry: She suggested videos on the back of seats with a safety announcement...”the more you can put something in somebody’s face...the better off you will find compliance.” “Or, maybe, before boarding, having something in the waiting area, as well, about the importance of [seatbelt usage].”

Mary Zost: She addressed measuring the effectiveness as a way of framing actions. “A first step that we’re talking about here is, how are we getting the message out and how can we ensure that it’s a clear call to action and then, how

can we ensure that people are aware of the issue.” Then “the next step is making sure people are engaged and that you’re, ultimately, having that behavior change.

Allison Kennedy: She believes that airlines have been successful with seatbelt compliance because a regulatory agency requires it. “That gives a lot of backing to folks and gives them the impetus for compliance.” Passengers believe there is some sort of obligation to comply.

Ken Presley: He told a story of how a bus operator had virtually no usage of existing seatbelts. But as a test, when passengers were told it was the law to fasten their belts, they almost fully complied. However, as they got up for various reasons during the trip, fewer rebuckled their seatbelts. And he noted that on tour buses, it is a social event and people routinely get up to socialize which leads to less refastening. He also noted that when seatbelts are buckled on seats before the passenger get on to the bus, there is greater tendency to buckle up. He also suggested decals on and off buses as well as buckle up messages on operator websites.

Jack Van Steenburg: FMCSA has “no intention, right now, to regulate the use of passenger seatbelt compliance in motorcoaches.”

Ken Presley: “Yes, the last thing this industry needs is one more regulation.” He also pointed out that the driver has many pre-trip responsibilities and “we have to avoid putting any onus on the driver” for passenger compliance.

Al Smith: He pointed out that passengers aged 25 or younger seem to buckle up more regularly. It is the older adults that are more of a challenge. “So maybe raising the awareness could go a long way in getting them to wear seatbelts.”

Brandon Buchanan: Notification lights on cars exist to tell drivers when someone in the back seat is not wearing a seatbelt. This technology could be used to have passengers self-police themselves with respect to seatbelt usage.

Jane Terry: She likes the idea of advertising to increase awareness. “Doing some advertising on safety just to educate the public about seatbelt usage could be very beneficial.” And while regulation by laws is not desired, having just “guidance” from the federal government would be helpful.

Brandon Buchanan: The question of retrofitting buses with seatbelt systems was raised. While Al Smith voiced the engineering difficulties in retrofitting, Brandon Buchanan asked insurance company participants in the audience to respond to the liability introduced by a retrofit. Motorcoach operators are responsible for what happens inside their coaches. If the retrofit fails, the manufacturer is liable. This participant's insurance company does not insure motorcoaches that have been 20 years or more on the road.

At this point the roundtable was opened to questions and comments from the audience. One audience member favored having a federal regulation which led to many panel comments. Going the legal route faces many challenges. How do you enforce such regulations? The law(s) must be legally defensible. The climate in Washington does not favor more regulation. Jack Van Steenberg said "So there's a lot to consider right now. And, boy, if we can get the voluntary compliance, the making of a habit of the passengers, that's the ideal way to go right now. Ken Presley added "encouraging people to take that personal responsibility, making them know that that seat belt is there, that it's common sense to put it on..." Al Smith added "It's a matter of changing behavior. You can't force people to do something if they are determined not to do it. But you encourage them to do the right thing."

Actionable Executions from Ideation Session

Safety Summit participants broke into groups that were cross-functional in that most in a group were from different constituencies. In that way, multiple perspectives were presented in each group. The groups were tasked with developing a list of actions they thought were viable in creating greater awareness and usage of seatbelts. Ideas were put onto posterboards and in the end, all participants with the use of stickers voted on the ideas they thought were the best. These ideas are shown below with the number of votes shown in parentheses.

Driver Messaging. Over the short term of now to 2 years, at the urging of FMCSA, ABA and UMA drivers of motorcoaches should tell passengers to fasten their seatbelts where seatbelts are provided. The message should be consistent among

operators. And the message could be put on operators' websites for consistency and there could be a public service announcement in terminals. **[14 votes]**

In another breakout group, a short driver message was suggested and a fasten restraint message be put on the ticket itself. If the ticket is purchased online, buyer/passengers could "Click Here" to agree to wear a seatbelt. **[10 votes]**

Social Media Campaign. Within one year, a social media campaign should be instituted to motivate seatbelt usage. This action would come after various market segments [individuals, trip planners, schools and the like] are identified since they may have different motivations and need customized messaging.

Further, social media needs to be better understood in that various venues are more appropriate for different audiences...YouTube versus Instagram and so on.

[14 votes] In another group, a social media campaign should be instituted over the next 2 years to promote greater seatbelt usage. We should make it "Cool" to use a seatbelt. **[5 votes]**

Task Force. In next six months, a Task Force should move the ball forward. Buy-in is needed from key stakeholders...AARP, NSC NHTSA CVSA, ABA, UMA, NTA, IMG, Trailways, State Associations, SYTA...NS also motorcoach operators.

Operators attending annual meetings can be targeted to get their buy in. **[15 votes]**

AARP. Reach out to [perhaps partner with] AARP to gain access to its audience of those aged 55+ who are less likely to buckle up and who are large motorcoach passengers. Use an older celebrity endorsement in this promotion. AARP could be a source of external funding. **[12 votes]**

International "Fasten Seatbelt" Symbol. Within 2 years, all motorcoaches with existing seatbelts would display an "international Buckle Up" symbol as a reminder. Emojis could be used in the symbolism. **[9 votes]**

State Laws. At the urging of NHTSA and FMCSA, state motorcoach seatbelt laws [as in California] should be highlighted. Getting "guidance" from government entities promotes compliance. Before and after data should be collected to influence other states to follow with their own laws. **[2]** In another idea generation group, over the short term the California state "Buckle Up" law should be shared with other states. **[5]**

Videos on Monitors. Over the next 3-5 years, monitors should be on all buses with seatbelts installed which provide an airline-like video message to buckle up. [6]

Trip Planners. Trip planners at colleges, school districts and the like should insist on using only seatbelted motorcoaches, put this in the contract with the operator and ensure through monitoring that the belts are buckled. [5]

Charters. Charter trips would get a discount if group managers ensure active seatbelt use during the entire trip. [5]

App. Bus operators provide an “app” to provide entertainment [for example, play games] while riding the motorcoach. This app would be downloaded at the entrance to the bus and contain a “Buckle Up” message. They could also have some form of reward for fastening the seatbelt. [5]

Seatbelt Comfort. Manufacturers should improve seatbelt comfort. Often the lap/shoulder belts do not sit well on the body. They should avoid binding. A better fit may improve seatbelt use. [4]

Data Driven. Over the next 2 years, NCSA in NHTSA should collect seatbelt usage in motorcoaches, similar to NOPUS. This point was emphasized by Heidi King in her remarks, believing that understanding the motivations to not use existing seatbelts needs to be understood. This seemed to be a priority of NHTSA under her leadership. [4]

Pre-Trip Internet Access. Provide a message before the bus leaves that the internet access will not be available without buckling the seatbelt. [4]

Belt Reminder Systems. Because of the difficulty of regulatory processes and the expense, a five year and more time horizon should be used to get Seatbelt Reminder Systems in place in buses. Some form of technology to remind the passenger to fasten the seatbelt. [2]

A Structure for the Marketing Plan

To move thinking forward, the following provides a starting framework for a strategic marketing plan. It includes areas for discussion and further

development by the Task Force. These plan elements are intended for thought and then guidance in designing a motivational campaign to increase seatbelt usage.

Mission Statement: The mission is to first save lives and reduce injuries to passengers on intercity motorcoaches. Secondly, this initiative seeks to enhance the quality of life of those directly and indirectly associated with any motorcoach crash.

Goals: The overriding goal is to increase seatbelt usage from 10-15% to 40% on motorcoaches already equipped with safety restraint systems.

Objectives: The following are suggested, viable objectives:

- To learn about why bus passengers use and do not use safety restraints.
- To generate awareness among motorcoach constituencies regarding the benefits of seatbelt usage.
- To understand motorcoach constituencies perceptions of benefits and costs of seatbelt usage.
- To understand motorcoach crash data.
- To collaborate with state DOTs and transportation legislative committees to promote the use of seat belts on motor coaches equipped with seatbelts.
- To develop metrics to measure the effectiveness of the persuasion campaign. The Ad Council measures message exposure, awareness, engagement and impact for its campaigns.

Targeted Constituency Segments: Those relevant to and benefitting from increased seatbelt usage come from a wide range of constituencies. There are first the passengers on intercity motorcoaches themselves. These passengers consist predominantly from younger and older adults, each of whom have many different criteria in choosing bus transportation and seatbelt usage. Event planners as well as elementary and secondary school administrators/athletic directors engaging motorcoach transportation for event-goers and students have a stake in motorcoach safety. Tour guides and trip planners, bus drivers and bus operating companies comprise segments. Colleges and universities, casinos, churches, sporting venues [even the NCAA] all have a stake in safe transportation

to and from their events. Seatbelt usage impacts seat and motorcoach manufacturers, installers and refurbishers. And advocacy groups also represent a separate segment warranting awareness and persuasion campaigns. Each of these groups has at least some differences in the intensity of concern for safety restraint usage as well as the benefits/costs associated with increased usage. While some enhanced usage broadcast promotion campaign executions would affect more than one of these constituencies, some unique actions would be warranted for different segments.

Tasks and Actions: Armed with an understanding of the various segments, tactical actions would be executed to reach overall objectives as well as segment-specific actions. These would be created and administered by the Task Force and would be fluid over the campaign's time horizon. Based on ideas generated in the brainstorm, some such tactics might include:

- A social media campaign directed at riders and non-riders
- A television and print media campaign designed and implemented by the Ad Council
- Identifying influencers of behavior change for different segments and engaging them in the social media campaign
- A video promoting seatbelt usage to be shown on motorcoaches before departing
- Safety cards put on seats before departure that urge seatbelt usage
- Development of an international slogan and logo depicting the benefits of seatbelt usage
- Assistance to state DOT's divisions of public transit in developing tools using social media and TV/radio to make motor coach riders and other motor coach constituents aware of the availability of seat belts on motor coaches and the benefits of seat belt usage.
- Meet with key state legislators and state DOT public transit officials to review benefits of wearing seat belts on motor coaches and to consider alternative legislative actions to promote motor coach seat belt usage.

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