

# METRO<sup>®</sup>

FOR TRANSIT & MOTORCOACH BUSINESS

EXCLUSIVE

## TOP 50 MOTORCOACH SURVEY

**Growing Competition,  
Finding Drivers,  
Key Concerns  
for Operators**



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# 2017 INNOVATIVE MOTORCOACH OPERATORS

## Lamers Bus Lines – Green Bay, Wis.

Dedication to community, employees keeps operation on top

Founded by Lyle and Ellen Lamers, [Lamers Bus Lines](#) got its start in 1944.

“My dad was a farmer and my mom a teacher. They purchased a 1936 Ford school bus from my dad’s uncle to drive students in the old Grant School District, which is now part of the West De Pere School District, and that’s how we got started in this business,” explains Kevin Lamers, corporate secretary for Lamers. “It kept growing from there, and by 1966, we moved the business off the farm and to our corporate office in Green Bay. That’s about the time we started venturing into motorcoaches.”

The first coach the family bought was a used [Greyhound](#) PD 3751. In 1974, they started buying new coaches, and for the next decade, added a new vehicle to its fleet each year. In 1980, Lamers started offering tours throughout the U.S. on a per-person basis, and have now evolved into an operation with 39 locations, including 36 throughout Wisconsin, two in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, and one in Central Florida.

The key to the company’s longevity is its employees, Lamers explains.

“We’re fortunate to have so many dedicated employees who stay with us for years, and decades,” says Lamers. “This is a notoriously high-turnover industry, and we have almost 300 employees who have been with us for 10 years or more.”

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implementing new technology and programs to make travel better for its customers, that ideal is carried over by the work it puts into training drivers, which helps keep those dedicated employees on board for so long. In addition to making tablets standard as part of its move toward electronic logging, the operation is unique in that it has been using a mobile training simulator to help keep its drivers up to speed.

“It is a classroom on wheels,” says Lamers. “Our trainers can help prepare our drivers for any number of driving issues without putting the driver or equipment at risk. While one driver is practicing on the simulator, the other drivers can watch their progress, or mistakes, from the classroom area.”

Lamers adds that his operation is the only company in the Midwest, and one of only a few companies in the U.S., who have invested in a mobile driving simulator. He adds that since Lamers started the program, more than 2,800 drivers have trained on the simulator.

In recognition of the company’s innovative business practices, *METRO Magazine* has named Lamers Bus Lines the 2017 Innovative Motorcoach Operator of the Year. Kevin Lamers accepted the recognition at the [American Bus Association’s](#)

Marketplace in Cleveland in January.

### CHALLENGES, SUCCESS

Like many operators, one of Lamers’ biggest challenges is recruiting, hiring, and retaining drivers. To address the issue, the company has increased its recruitment efforts online, but Lamers feels it’s up to the industry as a whole to work together to solve the problem and others like it.

“In this industry, you can’t operate in a bubble. You need to be a part of the greater community, not only so you can operate at your best, but so you can help others operate at their best,” he says. “With the driver shortage we are just beginning to see, we need to act as a community to show how rewarding careers in group transport can be and draw new people into this field.”

By offering financial support and equipment donations, the company prides itself on how much it gives to customers and the communities they serve, including partnering with several groups to provide transportation from the Greater Green Bay area to Packers football games. The company also has a comprehensive focus on sustainability from the vehicles they buy to their idling practices to their recycling programs at their various locations. — *Alex Roman*

#### AT A GLANCE

- **Motorcoaches:** 117
- **Fleet mix:** MCI, Prevost, Temsa
- **Employees:** 1,640
- **Drivers:** 1,500
- **Year started:** 1944
- **Service areas:** Wisconsin, Michigan, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota
- **Services offered:** Charter, airport, college/university, shuttles, corporate, athletics