



## 10 Things To Consider When Selecting Ministry Transportation

### 1. Experience

Transportation Committee members who have experience in the industry are the most likely to anticipate issues. This experience can range from Metro Transit, Automotive/Truck sales to Federal, State or local purchasing experience. Purchasing a bus is frequently a lengthy process. Interview several bus dealers to determine which have a heart and mind for ministry transportation. Ask for, and check with, references. Look for a dealer that asks what ministries (youth, seniors or others...) will be using the vehicle, what is the driver complement like, is a wheel chair lift needed. What are the seating implications with wheelchair lifts?

### 2. Finances

Church transportation is a large capital expenditure. Will it be financed locally or handled through a major company? Does the dealer have resources to assist in finding financing? Depreciation is an issue. Does the dealer have a formal way of estimating vehicle values over time? Does the dealer offer a way to try the vehicle for a period of time without purchasing?

### 3. Warranty

The bus industry differs from the automotive industry because it does not have a single all-encompassing warranty plan. The chassis, coach, alternator, rear air conditioner, video and tires all have separate warranties. The dealer should be able to handle or direct you

to reputable local service providers. Additionally, each warranty varies in length and mileage. Be sure to get a detailed explanation of each warranty.

### 4. Presentation

Today, more and more churches are sensitive to presenting the best possible image to their community. Bus manufacturers offer a wide range of products. Fit, finish and amenities speak volumes. Seating ranges from vinyl to leather with fabrics offered in six levels. Fabrics are offered in denominational pattern, non-denominational patterns and commercial patterns. "Side sliders" (an option that allows the aisle seat to move 2 inches toward the center) create additional hip and shoulder room. Footrests and overhead storage are frequently requested. Lap trays, book or magazine storage and beverage holders are beginning to be offered as well. Rear luggage compartments and under floor storage compartments are becoming popular options. Ministries are concerned about passenger comfort. New advances in ride improvement are a regular part of ministry vehicles regardless of size.

### 5. Safety

Fifteen-passenger vans are unsafe. Insurance companies and legislators are implementing requirements to phase them out over the next several years. Fifteen passenger buses are the safe alternative. Buses are built to safely carry passengers to their destinations. They are designed with a lower "center of gravity" to

reduce the possibility of rollover. Dual rear wheels add comfort, safety and security to the bus. Buses are much easier to enter and move through, a low first step, grab rails and wide aisles add to the traveler's convenience.

### **6. Legislation**

While commercial buses are acceptable for most ministry applications, ministry schools may have to meet different requirements (Type "A" school buses). Dealers should be able to advise as to requirements and solutions.

### **7. Vehicle Life**

Average ministry vehicle life is eight to ten years. Ministry vehicles are reputed to be the least serviced vehicles in the nation. Confirming and maintaining an ongoing commitment to maintaining regular safety and service checks is a critical part of ministry transportation. Where will the vehicle be parked? An oversize garage, barn or shed can improve appearance and trade-in value in years to come. Tire condition and maintenance are critical to dependability and safety.

### **8. Popular Sizes**

Over the last several years, two sizes have dominated the ministry transportation market.

The 15 and 26 passenger size buses have been the leaders accounting for 60 percent of sales. During the last three years, churches have increasingly chosen 30+ passenger vehicles. Diesel engines account for less than 5 percent of total sales. Buses that carry 16 passengers (15 passenger + driver) require a Commercial driver's license (CDL). In California and Pennsylvania this requirement begins with 11-passenger vehicles.

### **9. Investment**

What can you expect to invest in purchasing "new" ministry transportation? Prices range from \$45,000 for a basic 15-passenger bus up to \$ 400,000 for a 50+ passenger deluxe touring coach. From a practical standpoint, a quality 45- passenger bus in the \$125,000 range is available. Include in the estimated costs: insurance, fuel, maintenance, repair, storage and driver training.

### **10. What's New**

Insurance companies are willing to share costs with customers who install Driver Cameras. Installing a Global Position Locator makes tracking the progress of your vehicle easy and improves overall safety.