



For Immediate Release ABA's Women in Buses Celebrates 10-year Anniversary of Council Being Part of Industry Evolution It's hard to believe, but the American Bus Association's Women in Buses Council is turning 10! The Women in Buses Council, a leadership group within ABA, is proud to announce and celebrate the 10-year anniversary in January 2021. Women in Buses was established in 2011 as a resource to recognize the significant role of women in the motorcoach and tour/travel industry through networking, education and mentoring programs.

Since the conception, the leadership, structure and activities of the council have been developed to meet ongoing growth and goals of women in the industry. Women in Buses has become an educational resource for ABA members and the entire industry. WIB continues to expand its mission and presence based on industry and member requests. "WIB was created to help women in the industry connect with one another. Today it continues to provide networking opportunities but has grown into serving as a strong voice of women in the industry that supports ABA's legislative agenda and brings top tier education to Council members and the industry at large," said Peter Pantuso, ABA's president & CEO.

The motorcoach industry consists of several strong, female leaders who support the industry through leadership roles in their own companies. Many organizations consist of females where a spouse, partner or multigenerational family member was no longer able to run the business. Women in Buses was designed as a way for these key female representatives to connect offering networking opportunities. The transportation and motorcoach industry has always been a predominantly male-dominated, especially for motorcoach owners. With the assistance of the ABA, Women in Buses was created showcasing the variety of brilliant female leadership. According to founding WIB Chairwoman, Cam Morris "In the beginning, our focus was two-fold: 1.) making our voices heard – helping us realize that even though our thoughts and voices may have been stated differently, they were still noteworthy and very similar to what men in the industry thought and 2.) to serve as a mentoring opportunity for women in the industry!"

At the start of 2020, the Women in Buses leadership council had momentum and energy from industry supporters and members to take on new challenges, grow and create a forward-looking direction. Then the pandemic hit, wreaking havoc on so many motorcoach and tourism organizations. Just as Women in Buses prepared to launch a new campaign, the breaks were hit and WIB did not know what was next. After a couple weeks watching our industry and lives be decimated by a COVID-19, WIB leaders put their heads together to determine how they could be a better resource for other individuals in the industry. "When the worst we could imagine happened to our businesses, the Women in Buses leadership team realized that by rallying around each other, we had created a group of strong individuals," says Elizabeth Hall, Current Women in Buses Chair. "We wondered how we could do the same for the other members of WIB, along with the entire industry. How could we become a positive resource among everything that was going?"

As a result of sheer desire, support and positivity, Women in Buses launched several projects to lift up industry members, give representatives a place to share the current status of businesses and create an opportunity to lean on each other for strength and insight on rebuilding. Social media presence skyrocketed, along with a weekly Wednesday roundtable providing a variety of topics across the entire travel/tourism industry. All activities portrayed that WIB members were not in this situation alone,



despite how it felt in an office. WIB partnered with BusRIDE magazine to create an eBook focusing on the pandemic impacts specifically to females in the industry, interviewing a variety of positions including hotel/attraction representatives, tour operators, motorcoach owners, drivers, mechanics; all showcasing the vast stories of decimation of the motorcoach, travel and tourism industry. Quarterly webinar series also continued and the WIB Leadership re-established the foundation of Women in Buses to ensure growth, opportunities and resources continue long after pandemic recovery. Women in Buses continues to be a strong voice in the industry, serving as a key representative for many individuals and a variety of organizations.

As Women in Buses continues to evolve, the council aims to provide additional positive resources to grow the success of the industry, women's leadership and provide educational opportunities for rebuilding/growth of the industry. According to WIB Leadership member Erin Ducharme of Bloom Bus "Our council is a diverse group of strong women who empower each other. The women before me have set the tone of who we are as council and built a solid foundation. Going forward, our focus is to continue our growth and presence." WIB is in the early stages of designing a driver recruitment program, aimed at gaining additional qualified and safe motorcoach drivers. Women in Buses continues to advocate for the WIB members but also plans an expansion to incorporation drivers, mechanics and other representatives through onsite opportunities during industry events like ABA's Marketplace. WIB is hopeful this program will create additional opportunities to encourage college and high school students to look at tourism-based careers in next steps of life.

Women in Buses has been supported and amplified its footprint by having title sponsors including North Dakota and most recently MCI, Motor Coach Industries. "MCI has long supported Women in Buses because we see so many talented leaders in the motorcoach industry," said Brent Maitland, vice president, Private Sector Sales and Marketing for New Flyer/MCI. "MCI currently has women in leadership positions that are engaged with WIB, so the linkage is fitting." MCI feels this group has elevated what a dedicated committee can do and has certainly demonstrated industry leadership excellence through the COVID crisis."

As the interest in following and participation opportunities continues to grow for Women in Buses members, sponsorship opportunities have been created allowing for corporation participation. Women in Buses will also be hosting their first ever Women in Buses Day at ABA's Marketplace 2021 in Baltimore, and looks forward to everyone's participation.

Further details can be found at www.Buses.org/WIB or by visiting social media pages through @ABAWIB on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

For questions, please contact the following:

Women in Buses Members

Elizabeth Hall – Current WIB Chair

Erin Ducharme – Current WIB Membership Committee Chair

Vicki Bowman, CMP, CED, CSEP - Marketing Vice Chair

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