

November/December 2018

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James River Transportation


90-Year-Old Family Company Where **SYSTEMATIC APPROACH RULES**

By Harrell Kerkhoff
Busline Magazine Editor

Ninety years of creating and building lasting relationships has paid off well for **James River Transportation**, a **Richmond, VA**-based bus/motorcoach operator that provides a wide variety of services along the East Coast.

This includes such well-known metropolitan destinations as Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New York City.

To help service this large region, the company also has a facility in **Norfolk, VA**.



President Stephen Story

Vice President Diane Story Hall

“It’s important to have a businesslike approach to doing things. This includes knowing your company’s financial numbers, setting specific goals and hiring talented people.”

— Stephen Story



The main facility of James River Transportation, located in Richmond, VA, was built in 1998.

A family business throughout its nine-decade history, the **Story family** has run the company for the past 40-plus years, helping to, not only maintain its reputation as a solid transportation provider, but also expand the many services and types of vehicles now being provided by James River Transportation.

Its fleet of approximately 90 vehicles includes full size and smaller motorcoaches, shuttle buses, vans, SUVs and sedans.

Among these vehicles are four Van Hool CX35 38-passenger motorcoaches, purchased from ABC Companies.

“I would estimate that 60 percent of our business today is considered charter work, satisfying the travel needs for a variety of clientele. This includes field trips for schools, transportation to sporting events, corporate outings, ski trips and casino runs,” **James River Transportation President Stephen Story** said. “Approximately 30 percent of our work centers on contract transportation. This includes services for area transit systems, a parking lot feeder service for Amtrak and private commuter work for corporations. Contract work can involve providing the same trips every day. It may be temporary transportation, such as taking commuters daily to certain destinations while a parking lot is being worked on; or it may involve a five-year contract, where we

transport a company’s employees to and from work during that specific period of time.

“We are also the recommended transportation provider for Richmond (VA) Region Tourism, taking passengers to and from the area convention center, hotels and local events. Years ago, some in the bus/motorcoach industry felt it was imperative to put ‘heavy miles’ on their vehicles in order to make money. However, after carefully



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“Years ago, some in the bus/motorcoach industry felt it was imperative to put ‘heavy miles’ on their vehicles in order to make money. However, after carefully looking at our costs, we found that we could make just as much money transporting a lot of people within a small area around Richmond – basically just going in circles.”

looking at our costs, we found that we could make just as much money transporting a lot of people within a small area around Richmond — basically just going in circles.”

The final estimated 10 percent of business at James River Transportation involves the company’s airport service, in both Richmond and Norfolk.

“It’s good to not only diversify a transportation company’s entire service offering, but also within each segment, such as found in charter, contract and airport work.”

“We provide cars, vans and some shuttle bus service at both airports. Most of our airport clientele are corporate business travelers as well as military personnel. There are many military bases in, and around, Richmond and Norfolk. We work closely with the USO, and have transportation contracts in place with most of the area military bases,” Stephen Story said. “We operate a small office and counter at both airports, very similar to a car rental facility.”

Since Richmond is the state capital of Virginia, and located ap-

proximately 95 miles south/southwest of Washington, D.C., it makes sense that James River Transportation has many customers connected with local, state and federal governmental agencies.

Washington, D.C., is also a huge draw for tourism, a fact that is very familiar to Stephen Story and his employees.

“There is definitely a lot to see and do in our nation’s capital. This includes an amazing number of museums, many of which are free for visitors,” he said. “If a person can get beyond traffic and parking issues, the city itself is very beautiful and clean. There is a lot of history and majesty surrounding the area. It’s one of those awesome places that people feel they can’t miss if they are visiting the East Coast.”

Philadelphia, New York City and many other well-known destinations are other common travel stops for James River Transportation, as the company mainly focuses on the Eastern Seaboard.

“In the ‘old days’ we would travel farther west, but it’s been our experience over the past few years that demand for this type of long distance travel by motorcoach has decreased. We have found our passengers just don’t have the time, and it’s too easy for them to fly to longer distances,” Stephen Story said. “Four to seven days is the extent of our overnight trips, and even that makes up just a small percentage of our business. Most of our trips can be made within a day.”



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No matter the distance traveled, seeking a consistent revenue stream, one that feeds from diverse product offerings, remains paramount for officials at James River Transportation. Past experiences have proven to Stephen Story why this is essential.

“Charter work, in particular, is not only seasonal by nature, but if something tragic happens, such as the terrorists events of 9/11, demand for charters can dry up rather quickly,” Stephen Story said. “It became very clear after 9/11 of the importance of having a diverse revenue stream.”

He added it’s good to not only diversify a transportation company’s entire service offering, but also within each segment, such as found in charter, contract and airport work.

“Within our charter service, for example, there is work directed at schools, corporations, athletic programs, community clubs, etc. This all makes for a good mix,” Stephen Story said. “Meanwhile, our contract work is very beneficial if leisure travel demand, through charters, goes down for any reason. The same can be said for our airport service.

“It’s all about keeping our overall company strong when one, or more parts of the travel business, are negatively influenced by outside forces, beyond our control.”



James River Transportation’s main complex is located near downtown Richmond, VA.

90 YEARS OF SERVICE

James River Transportation began in 1928 with one bus and a line run that followed the James River, a major waterway that bisects both Richmond and Virginia. The company had changed hands from its original owner when the late **L. Woodrow “Woody” Story**, father of Stephen Story, was hired in the 1950s to serve as general manager.

Woody Story had gained past experience in the bus industry after serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He had purchased a bus and operated a part-time charter business, with the help of his wife, **Anne Story**. Soon, he became a natural fit for James River

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Transportation. Over the years, his talents and responsibilities grew to the point that, in the 1970s, he purchased the business.

“The company has gone from one family business owner to the next family business owner throughout its 90-year history, which is quite unique,” Stephen Story said. “We have remained friends with members of the family who owned James River Transportation prior to my father’s purchase over 40 years ago.”

As with the case of many family transportation companies, the second generation of Story children “grew up in the business.”

“My sister, **Diane Story Hall**, started working at James River Transportation in the travel department after graduating from high school. Today, her official title is **vice president**. She concentrates on human resources and accounting,” Stephen Story said. “I started working here in 1980 while earning a degree in human resource management from the University of Richmond. Diane and I

have an older brother, **Dr. L. Woodrow Story Jr.**, who is a retired optometrist. He never became involved with the family business on a full-time basis, but is a silent partner.

“Our father, Woody Story, passed away in March 2018. He was

94 and extremely active up until a short time prior to his death. Our mother, Anne Story, died in 2000.”

Being the youngest in the family, Stephen Story said he greatly benefited by learning the transportation business from the ground up from his father.

“My father was in his late 30s when I was born. By the time I was 19, I had become vice president of the company, and five or so years later, was general manager. This al-

lowed my father to retire from day-to-day operations. In 1990, I became company president,” Stephen Story said. “I was very fortunate that my father and I worked very well together as I learned the business. The same is true today with my sister and myself. We make a good team, sharing many of the same ideas and goals about the direction of our business.”

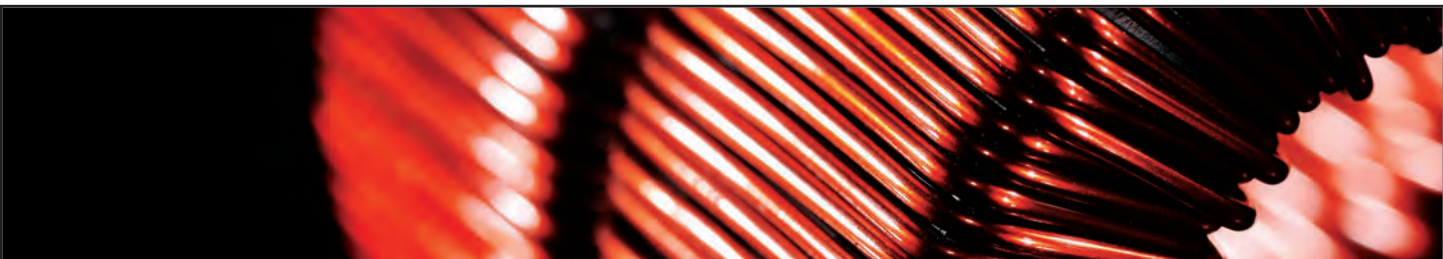
The siblings have seen many service changes take place over the years since becoming involved with James River Transportation.

This included a shift away from a heavy focus on line run work in the 1980s to a more charter-driven organization.

“As we worked years ago to move away from some of our line runs, it became apparent that the charter business was extremely



“I have often been asked, ‘If you only focus on numbers, what about customer service?’ I respond, ‘I use the numbers to measure and correct performance. That is how to give great customer service.’”



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seasonal, especially in our area, due to winter weather. This, of course, influenced revenue,” Stephen Story said. “My goal was to fix that problem. Back in those days, some bus operators seemed to be OK with the idea of making small profit margins. The attitude was, ‘That is just how the industry operates.’ However, it seemed crazy to me to do all that work, with all the related risks, for a small profit margin.

“Therefore, my two goals at James River Transportation were to increase margins and smooth out the ‘bumps in demand’ from our charter customer base. We started to look for ways to accomplish those goals.”

One way was to partner with various area corporations, allowing the company to provide more contract transportation work, starting in the 1980s. This often involved private shuttle services.

“I think we were also one of the first transportation companies to partner with Amtrak. This allowed us to provide feeder transportation bus service to and from some of the train stations in Virginia,” Stephen Story said. “We focused on being a very numbers and performance-based operation — knowing precisely what our costs were and how much to charge for every single trip that we provided.”

He added that some companies make it a practice to wait until the end of the year to see if they have been financially successful or not. Officials at James River Transportation, however, monitor each trip and every contract throughout the year. This allows them to better understand, on a continual basis, what revenue is coming in and what costs are going out — eliminating any surprises.

To help him better understand pricing and costs, Stephen Story

was an early participant of a 20 Group through his involvement with the International Motorcoach Group (IMG). A 20 Group is comprised of representatives from non-competing companies, working in the same industry, who share financial information and successful practices. A main goal is for members of the group to receive ideas and strategies, from similar businesses, for future success.

“It’s important to realize that no company is great at everything. I found the 20 Group experience helped me identify our weaknesses and strong points as a company,” Stephen Story said. “Participation in a 20 Group forces you, as a company leader, to look at your financial numbers, set goals and make adjustments when your business is not meeting those goals.

“To be successful, I believe it’s important to have a very businesslike-systematic approach to running a company. A lot of people in small business show plenty of desire and effort, but there has to be more than that to truly be successful in today’s environment. It’s important to have a businesslike approach to doing things. This includes knowing your company’s financial numbers, setting specific goals and hiring talented people.

“I have often been asked, ‘If you only focus on numbers, what about customer service?’ I respond, ‘I use the numbers to measure and correct performance. That is how to give great customer service.’ If I didn’t do this, I would always be using my gut feelings, and I can prove, through past company mistakes, that gut feelings don’t always work. It’s important to have real data to back up your key decisions.”

He noted that every person who has owned James River Trans-

“It’s important to have real data to back up your key decisions.”



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portation over the past 90 years has wanted the company to become its very best. This has been achieved by focusing on being a high-end transportation provider — one that is not afraid to charge a fair price for a quality service.

“We are often more expensive than other companies, but we feel like James River Transportation is worth that extra expense. To get the business, we tell people why we are different, why we are worth the extra money,” Stephen Story said. “We offer far more than the bare minimum, which is on-time performance and well-maintained vehicles. Everybody should provide those things. Our company highlights the other great services that we offer customers — beyond just showing up on time with a clean vehicle.”

A CAN'T MISS LOCATION

It's hard to not notice the headquarters of James River Transportation. It's that rather large facility and grounds, surrounded by company vehicles, near the heart of downtown Richmond.

“This entire area covers around 12 acres. We had our main facility built here in 1998 when there was not much else going on in this part of town. Economic development has since followed us in this area. It's where we do most of our heavy vehicle maintenance work. Our corporate office is also located here as well as the training staff,” Stephen Story said. “Across to street from our main fa-

cility is a large parking lot. It serves as a place to not only board passengers, but is the location of our obstacle course where we conduct CDL training and defensive-driving courses.

“Our headquarters is located about one-half mile from downtown Richmond. It's a great location for our company, helping us save money when picking up groups within the Richmond area. If we were located on the edge of the city, it would cost us more, both in time and money, to reach many of our customers. It helps, as well, that our headquarters is one mile from the Greater Richmond Convention Center and many downtown hotels.

“As a company, James River Transportation is very visible in Richmond. Everyone who drives downtown has probably seen our facility and buses. We encompass an entire block. It's good that our company is viewed as an important part of the community. We are also very active in the Greater Richmond Chamber Of Commerce, the Retail Merchants Association in Richmond and other local organizations.”

James River Transportation has a second facility in Norfolk, located on the east coast of Virginia, near the Atlantic Ocean. This facility, which includes a maintenance garage, caters to charter customers, contract transportation work and operates an Amtrak bus feeder service.

“There are very large military bases in the Norfolk area. We pro-

“We measure job performance for just about every position... This includes a detailed calculation on how each person performs on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis. Almost every position offers incentives and bonuses as part of its compensation package.”

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vide transportation for not only the military, but also contractors who work for the military,” Stephen Story said.

As mentioned, James River Transportation also has a presence at Norfolk International Airport.

HIRING ON TALENT, NOT EXPERIENCE

Having focused on human resource management in college, Stephen Story feels that certain hiring practices put into place at James River Transportation over the years have proven to be beneficial.

“When we hire people, we rarely hire those who have past experience in a particular field. Once exception would be employees involved in accounting. We would rather teach a person completely

new tasks, than to have that person with past experience bring in a lot of bad habits,” he said. “I feel it’s more important to hire a good person, with a good personality, who we feel will buy into our corporate values — integrity being among the top of these values. We will then properly train the person according to what he/she has been hired to do at our company.

“We focus a lot on training. This involves all positions — from drivers to customer service personnel.”

There are approximately 150 people who work at James River Transportation.

“We always say that our company looks big, because we take up a lot of space with our vehicles and our property, but we really are a small company,” Stephen Story said. “Of our 150 or so employees, 13 are in leadership or office positions, approximately 10 are in maintenance and cleaning, and the rest are drivers.

“We measure job performance for just about every position that is offered at James River Transportation. This includes a detailed calculation on how each person performs on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis. Almost every position offers incentives and bonuses as part of its compensation package. This includes drivers as well as members of our leadership and sales teams. We believe in helping our employees make good money. After all, they are the ones helping our company generate income. If they succeed, we succeed as a business.”

He added that when a company is able to attract and hire quality candidates, the “domino effect” often follows.

“Great employees attract other great employees. When word gets around that you are a good company to work for, that also improves employee retention,” Stephen Story said. “Employee recognition is key. Many people don’t leave a company because of the pay. They leave because they do not feel valued.”

To help improve its level of employee recognition, James River Transportation offers monthly “WOW” awards.

“We receive nominations for these awards in different ways, such as from customers,” Stephen Story said. “It’s important to recognize and celebrate employees who go above and beyond the call of duty.”

The company has been presenting its “WOW” awards for nearly 10 years, and has seen an overall improvement in customer service.

“The funny thing is, what could have won an employee a ‘WOW’ award 10 years ago is now often considered normal behavior. Our employees have raised the bar as to what a ‘WOW’ award is today,” Stephen Story said.

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“WOW” pin for their clothing at work, as well as a gift card.

“Last year, we had over 400 ‘WOW’ nominations and 60-plus winners,” he said. “We receive 20 or so nominations every month. Winners are determined during our monthly managers’ meeting.”

THE BENEFITS OF TRAINING

To further improve customer service, James River Transportation instituted a corporate trainer position approximately 12 years ago to teach a variety of skill sets, including what Stephen Story refers to as “soft/personal” skills. For examples, drivers are taught dinner table etiquette and other social skills, as many find themselves eating with customers. Proper telephone etiquette is also discussed.

“Numerous group sessions also take place at our company throughout the year, to discuss customer service ‘best practices.’ This type of activity helps to generate and share ideas. Obviously, one of the problems when hiring inexperienced people is their lack of experience in their new field. This is where our more seasoned employees can help during these group sessions, sharing what they have learned while driving a bus, selling a charter trip, etc.,” Stephen Story said. “Our corporate trainer is also constantly identifying needs that we have, and adapting training programs.”

Of course, special training is a necessity when hiring people to drive large vehicles full of passengers.

“When it comes to driver candidates, we look for good personalities and communication skills. Approximately 90 percent of the drivers we hire are taught from scratch. They have no professional driving experience. We have been running our own driving school since 1996,” Stephen Story said. “We will hire some experienced drivers if they have moved from another area, but if they are already in our area, there is probably a reason why they are looking for another driving job — and it’s usually not a good reason. We have not been very successful in hiring experienced drivers. We started recognizing that fact decades ago, and decided to hire more people with no experience and then train, train, train.”

“Again, along with all of our employees, we set goals for drivers, measure and monitor their performance, coach them, and modify their training when necessary.”

Officials at James River Transportation also work with a company that specializes in background checks prior to hiring an employee, such as a driver. The idea is to fill in any areas that may have been missed by traditional FBI checks.

“The company we work with has developed its own database, searching and monitoring records at the county courthouse level. This company seeks a 10-year history of a candidate to see if there is any past criminal record,” Stephen Story said. “Having these ex-



Technicians Chris Wells, left, and Leon Fisher are shown next to one of James River Transportation's Van Hool motorcoaches.

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tensive background checks conducted is very important to our clients, especially when transporting school children, professional athletes and corporate personnel.”

“I tell our employees, we are a ‘performance-based organization.’ Everything we do must make sense, and we have to justify why we do it based on set goals.”

James River Transportation also has its own driving simulator to better train and retrain drivers. This simulator is in a trailer and can be transported to different locations.

“We can teach a driver how to properly react to different situations that can happen on the road. This includes what to do if a tire blows or a child walks in front of a vehicle,” Stephen Story said. “Having our own driving simulator is a huge investment, but it’s an important part of our training process.

“Every current driver also goes through a twice-a-year assessment. This involves not only our simulator but actual on-the-road driving with a trainer. This helps the trainer identify any bad driving habits that have developed. These habits are then corrected.

“I tell our employees, we are a ‘performance-based organization.’ Everything we do must make sense, and we have to justify why we do it based on set goals. Therefore, it’s important to make proper adjustments when needed.”

DIFFERENT VEHICLES FOR DIFFERENT NEEDS

When it comes to transporting various customer groups, one size and type of vehicle doesn’t fit all. Simply put, different groups have different demands and transportation needs. Therefore, the 90-vehicle fleet of James River Transportation includes full- and medium-size motorcoaches, buses, vans, SUVs and sedans.

On the motorcoach side, the company has experienced an industry trend felt by many North American operators that involves group sizes becoming smaller. To better accommodate these groups, James River Transportation recently put into service four new 38-passenger Van Hool CX35 motorcoaches, from ABC Companies.

These vehicles include 38 seats with extra legroom, three-point seat belts, power outlets at each seat, Wi-Fi capabilities, luggage bay, restroom, DVD players and monitors, satellite tracking and cameras.

“We heavily focus on preventative maintenance. A mechanic taught me years ago the ‘three-foot rule’ when conducting an inspection. The rule states that you not only properly inspect the specific item in question on a vehicle, you also inspect three feet around that item to see if anything else needs attention.”

“These motorcoaches have been a hit with customers who are looking for a smaller vehicle that comes with big-coach features,” Stephen Story said. “In the past, we have taken seats out of our



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larger motorcoaches in hopes of meeting the needs of these smaller groups, but they are still large vehicles. When I heard that ABC Companies was offering a 38-passenger Van Hool vehicle, based on the existing Van Hool C-model, it was an easy decision for me to buy those coaches.

“My relationship with ABC Companies goes back many years, and the CX35 motorcoach opens up future opportunities with passenger groups. This helps us provide a more efficient operation.

“I was also impressed by how representatives of ABC Companies set up conference calls every two weeks with our company after we had taken delivery of the Van Hool vehicles. They wanted to make sure those vehicles were doing well, and to see if we had any questions or problems. This is very similar to the type of customer service that we try to provide for our own clients.”

Like many of today’s bus/motorcoach operators, James River Transportation provides a wide variety of vehicle amenities for its passengers. This includes Wi-Fi, electrical seating outlets, satellite



James River Transportation employees showcase a wedding services award. They are, left to right, travel consultants Lynn Brockwell, Kizzy Taliaferro (holding the award), and Sheila Alexander, along with administrative assistant Bonnie Miles.

TVs, in-vehicle camera systems and GPS tracking.

These amenities not only make the passenger experience more enjoyable, comfortable and safer, they also help James River Transportation’s drivers.

For example, two years ago, company officials introduced newly government-mandated electronic logging device (ELD) technology for its drivers. However, instead of purchasing ELDs as just another piece of equipment to be installed in vehicles, the company was able to connect ELD technology to each driver’s smartphone through the company’s transportation app, which is available to all of its employees.

“We didn’t just want to install another piece of equipment in our vehicles that would eventually become

outdated and would need replaced. That seemed silly. Therefore, we gave our employees incentives to purchase smartphones, if they did not have them already, so that we could incorporate current ELD technology. We also installed driver-vehicle inspection report (DVIR) technology on these phones for our drivers’ pre-trip inspec-

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tions,” Stephen Story said. “Our company transportation app is for internal purposes only, and was not designed for passenger or client use. It includes a system to help employees complete, during their free time, any required company training program. Drivers can do this on their smartphone while waiting for a group to arrive, etc.”

The company’s transportation app also features various operating manuals, emergency check lists and an internal newsletter that includes special announcements.

“We also send monthly quizzes to many of our employees through this app, as part of our continual training program. The employees have to type in their answers for these quizzes for better retention,” Stephen Story said.

Another focus point for James River Transportation, over the years, is making sure every vehicle in its fleet has seat belts. A process of retrofitting older vehicles with seat belts started five years ago for the company.

“Obviously, when we purchase new buses, they now come with seat belts. Many of our older vehicles, however, did not have them, which is why they have been retrofitted,” Stephen Story said. “There is no way we are going to keep a small number of vehicles in our fleet without seat belts, and then send those vehicles out as part of a larger group of equip-



James River Transportation Director of Sales & Marketing Craig Treanor tests his driving skills while using the company's bus simulator.

ment, many of which do have seat belts. How would you decide who, among a large group of passengers, would be in the vehicles with seat belts and who would be in the vehicles without seat belts?

“That is an example of our company being extremely proactive.

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"We measure everything we do as it pertains to vehicle maintenance. This includes recording every breakdown, whether it's electrical in nature or related to problems with a tire, air conditioning, etc."

We spend a huge amount of money on training, safety and technology. It does not make business and safety sense, therefore, to have some vehicles in our fleet without seat belts. Today, we advertise that all of our vehicles have seat belts. It's become a big deal for many of our clients, and it reinforces our safety culture."

Keeping all vehicles well maintained and clean is another important factor when it comes

to superior safety and customer service. This comes naturally for Stephen Story, as his professional background includes vehicle maintenance.

"I'm a state inspector as well as a certified mechanic and technician," he said. "As with other parts of our business, we measure everything we do as it pertains to vehicle maintenance. This includes recording every breakdown, whether it's electrical in nature or related to problems with a tire, air conditioning, etc."

"We heavily focus on preventative maintenance. A mechanic taught me years ago the 'three-foot rule' when conducting an inspection. The rule states that you not only properly inspect the specific item in question on a vehicle, you also inspect three feet around that item to see if anything else needs attention. For instance, a person might find that a nearby hose is loose or a small

leak that needs attention. It's all part of proper preventative maintenance."

Stephen Story is also the first to admit that properly cleaning a vehicle, in a timely manner, is not an easy task, and holds the people who do the cleaning at James River Transportation in very high regard.

"It's very hard to clean a vehicle overnight, getting it looking and smelling fresh. Again, we monitor and measure how much cleaning is done, and the end result," he said. "We also spotcheck every vehicle before each trip. This involves several people, including the driver, a maintenance staff member and our safety director. If something needs improved upon within the cleaning process, then we will retrain — just like every other part of our business."

BECOMING INVOLVED IS KEY

Endorsing the philosophy that, "What you put in this life is what you get out of it," Stephen

Story has long been an advocate of industry participation and community involvement. It started early for him. For example, he is a longtime member of the Virginia Motorcoach Association. Ironically, it was a competitor who encouraged him to join the group when he was just 19 years of age.

"We also spotcheck every vehicle before each trip. This involves several people, including the driver, a maintenance staff member and our safety director."

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"I would go to the meetings back then, and other members would say, 'Here comes the new guy. We can get him on the board and he can volunteer for things. He has more energy,'" Stephen Story said, with a laugh. "It was a great early experience for me in the industry, and taught me that although the bus industry is full of competitors, many of these competitors can also be friends and allies. I feel it's always good to create good relationships within the entire industry."

these government agencies can gain a better understanding of what type of company James River Transportation is, and learn more about its strict training and maintenance policies.

"When we do make a mistake, and every company makes mistakes, representatives from these agencies will know that something we did wrong was not intentional, and that we were not trying to hide something," Stephen Story said. "Due to these relationships, I have been invited, on occasion, to speak at government events. I have even brought our bus simulator to some of these events, emphasizing the different types of training conducted at James River Transportation.

"The end result is, when an official from one of these state agencies sees our vehicle going down the road, he/she knows that the vehicle has been inspected and is in good condition. Overall, the many relationships that we have built over the years with the local community, the state regulatory and enforcement agencies and our competitors have helped James River Transportation to become a much better company."

"A lot of people are willing to pay good rates for good service. I continue to feel that many people are starved for better customer service."

Today, James River Transportation continues to participate with other local operators when transporting large groups of people, especially during special events.

"This can only be done if you continue to maintain good relationships with your competitors," Stephen Story said. "Such cooperation allows for complicated transportation projects to succeed. The end result is helping our own company's revenue stream grow."

Other solid partnerships that James River Transportation has developed over the years is with the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia State Police.

"Because we are such a visible organization in our area, it was decided a long time ago to build a positive relationship with the DOT and state police. The same is true with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles," Stephen Story said.

He added that by building such relationships, officials from

LOOKING AHEAD WITH ENTHUSIASM

Organic growth is very high in importance for officials at James River Transportation. This growth will come through new markets and services, according to Stephen Story. For example, the company is getting ready to test an electric downtown shuttle for a client.

"I am also excited about the possibilities of autonomous vehicles. We are looking to partner with a particular software company to test such a vehicle," Stephen Story said. "As a company, I feel James River Transportation is the right size to be such a

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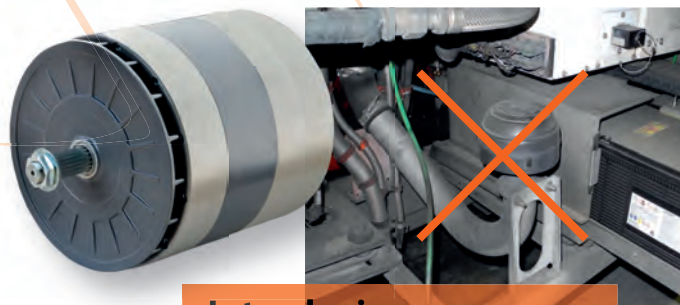
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The first bus James River Transportation owned was this 1924 Studebaker.

partner for this type of project. We can be very flexible.”

He added that autonomous vehicles could be beneficial when providing smaller shuttle services.

“It would have to be a vehicle designed for low speed/low risk applications,” Stephen Story added. “We are always on the look-out for new transportation services and modifications. We have

only with you but 10 other people.”

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Website: www.jamesrivertrans.com.

experimented, over the years, with just about every type of transportation service. Some were successful and some were not. That is OK. It’s how you learn.”

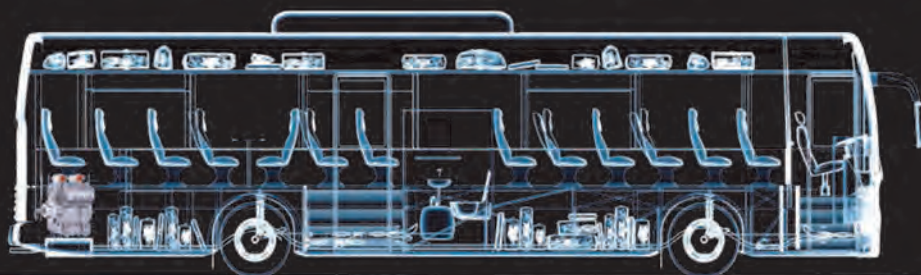
Having spent most of his life in the bus/motorcoach industry, Stephen Story said this type of business does have its rewards.

“As an owner, I have become involved with all aspects of this line of work. It’s definitely not been mundane. There is also good money to be earned. A lot of people are willing to pay good rates for good service. I continue to feel that many people are starved for better customer service. This has helped James River Transportation stand out,” he said. “It’s all about finding what type of customer service a client wants, and then how that service can best be delivered. Again, it’s much more than simply showing up on time and with a nice vehicle. That is the bare minimum.

“You know that great customer service has been provided when a client comes back from a trip and has an amazing story to share — not

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