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Bliss Charters takes delivery of LX luxury coach



When an Ohio tour group arranged for a coach to take them to a dinner theatre in Akron, little did they know that the show would start at the curb. That's when Bliss Charters' brand-new E4500 LX pulled up for its maiden voyage with its piped leather seats, refreshment galley, marbled floor and flat-screen video monitors galore.

"There were a lot of oohs and ahs," says Paul Feasel, president of Bliss Charters in Fostoria, Ohio. "They were expecting a standard 55-passenger coach."

Indeed, the LX is anything but standard. MCI's answer for those operators looking for ultimate luxury without undergoing a full conversion process, the LX can be built on a J4500 or E4500 platform and features a roomy floor plan, an array of custom seating options for a maximum of 42 passengers, a lounge area with four tables, a galley and state-of-the-art entertainment equipment including seatback audio and high-end video monitors. The luxury touches are myriad, and operators can further tweak the plans with Creative Mobile Interiors, Grove City, Ohio, which handles the conversion work. Feasel, for instance, arranged for a custom tailgating package, complete with a 48-inch plasma video monitor that can be mounted just inside the baggage bay for easy viewing outside of the coach, preferably from a sling chair outside a stadium near a bowl game. He expects it to be a hit with high-end clients who want to tailgate in style.

Practicality meets posh



Some of Feasel's choices had a more practical bent as well. Thanks to his wife, Linda, the coach has a mix of halogen and LED interior lighting, offering both the mood lighting passengers like and the bright light needed for cleaning and other tasks. There's XM radio, satellite television and Wifi, but there's also a carefully chosen molding along the floor that makes for easy mopping.

For Bliss, which Feasel describes as a small company with big ideas, the LX was the culmination of a long search. Feasel had been doing his research for a couple of years on what he could do to add luxury service to his fleet, which today stands at seven coaches. He had considered fully converting one of his older vehicles. "I started doing the math, and it looked a little pricy. Plus when I was done, I'd still have an older coach with less curb appeal," says Feasel. "Then we saw the LX package on display for the first time. I told my mechanic, 'That's what we need to do.'"

The voice of choice

As a key member of the MCI LX team, Owen Connaughton, president of Creative Mobile Interiors, worked closely with Bliss to get the details just right. "Every customer adds their own style," says Connaughton. "It's an involved process, and they can take such ownership in the final product."

Connaughton says most LX projects take about eight weeks to complete. During that time, Creative Mobile Interiors sends weekly photo updates both to the customer and to MCI.

The road ahead

Feasel, who credits both Connaughton and MCI sales representative Rich DeYoung with being extraordinarily helpful through the entire process, is now looking to market his new

LX service to his clientele. In our area, there's nothing like this," says Heasel. "We're looking forward to seeing where the LX can take us."

Brent Maitland, vice president of new markets for MCI, says that was the intention of the LX all along. "It's the next level of luxury," says Maitland. "It lets them do different things with their business and set a benchmark of what they can do with a seated coach."

The FYI from MCI editorial staff values your feedback. Please e-mail any suggestions, comments, or ideas for future articles to fyi@mcicoach.com.

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