

Transport image management: TMAF makes it personal

Kevin Burch of Trucking Moves America Forward speaks to Megan Lampinen about the movement's successful second year and its aims for 2016

Representatives from the trucking and transport sector were out in force at the Mid-America Trucking Show (MATS) recently (31 March – 2 April), gathering once again for the annual event in Louisville, Kentucky. While the manufacturers themselves were notably absent, many truck brands were represented by their dealers. The show also saw plenty of involvement from the supply side and industry associations.

Putting a face to the industry

Trucking Moves America Forward (TMAF) – a cooperative effort by American Trucking Associations (ATA), the Owner-Operator

Independent Drivers Association, the Truckload Carriers Association and manufacturers of trucking equipment, was celebrating its second successful year as well as kicking off another ambitious education campaign. TMAF officially launched at the 2014 MATS, with the aim of educating the public, the legislators, the policymakers, and the media about the industry. Since then it has steadily met fundraising goals and is now extending its trailer decal wrap programme. The decal wraps, which cost between US\$1,600 and US\$2,100, act as moving billboards and send the message that the trucking industry is more than just big vehicles.



TMAF is promoting trucking's image

“We really want to put a face to the industry,” Kevin Burch, TMAF Co-Chairman, President of Ohio-based Jet Express and a former HDT Truck Fleet Innovator, told *Automotive World*. There are already 100 of these wraps on the roads, and TMAF’s next goal is 200. “The image is so important that we need to educate the government officials at the local level, the state level and the federal level,” he added. “More importantly, we want the motoring public and people to know that we’ve got jobs.”

Industry challenges

Attracting young players has been a challenge for the trucking industry, particularly for jobs in driving. “There’s still a driver shortage. In the next ten years, we don’t need a few hundred



LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY **MATS 2016**
MARCH 31-APRIL 2, 2016

> EXPLORE MATS > EVENTS > ATTENDEE > EXHIBITOR > MEDIA > HOTEL / TRAVEL

**TRUCK
DEALER
SHOWCASE**



WELCOME TO THE

MID-AMERICA TRUCKING SHOW



thousand drivers – we need a million truck drivers,” said Burch. “And mostly because of the fact that we’re an ageing workforce.” The average age in trucking is 57 or 58, compared to mid-50s of most occupations, he explained. “We’ve done a poor job as far as getting younger people involved in our industry.”

Road transport is also facing competition from rail, which is taking over more of the long-distance runs that are not popular with drivers, keeping them away from home for extended periods of time. “Intermodal transport has seen a pretty good increase percentage wise,” observed Burch. “The younger driver isn’t the driver from World War II or the old seasoned driver who doesn’t mind

being away for a few days. We’ve got to realise that we need to give these drivers more home time.” However, the rise of intermodal transport does not completely wipe out the role of the truck driver. “You still need local drivers to take the trailer to the railhead and put it on a flat car to take it to the destination. Then you still need a driver to pick it up,” noted Burch. “There’s a little bit of a working together partnership with the railroads. We definitely need each other.”

A relay approach is another way to tackle particularly long routes, with a 1,000-journey split among two drivers into a 500-mile route each. “We’re working some of that out so it competes with the railroad,” he commented. In some cases this may

entail an empty truck going back, but “in a perfect world, they’d have freight that goes back to the other point.”

Spreading the message

For today, the TMAF movement will remain centred on education but MATS may not be the preferred venue for long. A new truck and transport industry event is on the way, to be launched in autumn 2017 as a biennial event alternating with the IAA in Hanover, Germany. Plans for the new event were outlined at MATS, though details are still scarce. However, it could very well become the next stage for TMAF’s movement. “I’m excited for it because I think it’s probably going to be more opportunities to learn about our industry, and maybe more bang for the buck for the OEMs,” said Burch.