

Raven 1
The Beginning of a Conversion –
by Mark Lovegreen

Ten or so years ago, I had the opportunity to purchase a highly modified 1976 MC-8 to use as a tour and charter bus in Alaska. I'd driven tour buses for others for over 20 years and was ready to create my own itineraries and run operations to my standards. While the venture wasn't profitable, it sure was fun for six or seven years. We named the bus *Raven 1* and we refer to "her" when talking about the bus.

The previous owner told me that the bus was essentially half MC-8 and half MC-9. The original owner had her cut in half and shortened her by 5 feet. I'm told that this was because the bus was used in part for New Orleans city tours. Business owners in the French Quarter felt that 40' motor coaches didn't fit with the character of the Quarter and so they put in place a regulation that limited bus length to 35' on French Quarter streets.

The reduction in weight when 5' of body length was eliminated allowed the removal of the tag axles. This seems to have set up a series of additional changes. It turns out, the tag carries a lot of the weight of the engine and transmission. Without the tag the rear axle becomes a fulcrum and as gravity pulls the power train down the front end of the bus is lifted. Even with a full complement of passengers and packed luggage bays, the steering remained phenomenally light.



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While the front axle is rated for 18,000 lbs., the 40' version of the MC-8 Raven 1 currently has only 7,000 on it. Perhaps to try to counter the light steering the original steering box and all that goes with it was replaced with a newer system. The literature I've

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