About Station Wagon Service, Inc.
Founded almost 50 years ago to provide airport transportation, Station Wagon Service, Inc. (SWS) today is a bus company that focuses on transporting students to and from schools in northern New Jersey. The family-owned business, headquartered in Totowa, operates a fleet of 70 sixteen-passenger buses.

Situation
The majority of passengers who ride the SWS buses are children, some with special needs. The safety of this precious cargo is of key concern to the company and to caregivers alike. If a bus is late by even a few minutes, concerned parents often call to find out where their children are. SWS wanted to be able to track its buses so it could better inform parents. The company also looked to enhance the management of its mobile workforce, provide more efficient routing and eliminate the occasional unauthorized use of buses by drivers during non-working hours.

Solution
SWS installed the TeleNav Asset Tracker™ solution from AT&T in about half of its fleet. The small device provides an effective and inexpensive way for the company to locate and track its buses with a password-protected website that displays the real-time GPS location of every vehicle. The solution increases the level of safety and security that the company can provide for passengers.

Keeping the Buses Rolling
Station Wagon Service is a family-owned business that has grown from a few airport shuttle cars into a school and charter transportation corporation with over 100 employees and a modern fleet of buses that provide safe and reliable school transportation for children. Owner Ceil Kurek and her son Rob Reinhardt are hands-on executives.

Today Reinhardt is vice president of SWS, but when he started with the company as a youngster he swept out buses, pulled weeds and learned the business from the ground up. Even now on any given day he may find himself cleaning floors. “In a small business you’re not the vice president that barks out orders,” he said. “Everybody in the company has a mix of jobs and everybody gets to take turns doing each job.”

As with most businesses, however, there are distinct operational challenges, including stiff competition. “It’s a very cutthroat industry these days; people buy a bus and call themselves a bus company without following all the rules,” he said. “Anything that we can do to enhance our ability to protect the children becomes a selling point in our favor.”

Answers for Parents
SWS provides charter transportation for summer camps, special events and senior citizen excursions, but the bulk of its business comes from contracts with public school districts and private schools. Some of the students who SWS transports have special needs. “Many of them can’t make it to a bus stop or they can’t be left to wait there,” Reinhardt said. “We have to pick them up at their front door.”

Because of its young passengers, it is important for SWS to stay in touch with its drivers. “Every day we probably get 50 calls from parents...
wanting to find out where the bus is,” Reinhardt said. SWS used two-way radios, but found them occasionally unreliable. The company needed a better way to connect with drivers to keep parents informed.

At the suggestion of AT&T, SWS installed the TeleNav Asset Tracker solution, a web-based fleet management application that continuously reports the precise location of each bus and runs on the AT&T mobile broadband network. The solution lets SWS show parents a report of the time the bus arrived at each home and how long it waited. “Now, thanks to Asset Tracker we can take the printouts to the school districts and show proof that we were there,” he said.

“When you have a five-year-old child you want real answers quickly. You don’t want somebody just guessing where your child is.”

– Rob Reinhardt, Vice President, Station Wagon Service, Inc.

The frequency of parent calls increases dramatically during inclement weather. With the TeleNav Asset Tracker, SWS can see in an instant where the buses are. “Instead of contacting the driver, we can go to the TeleNav web portal and tell parents, they’re taking it slow; I can see that they’re doing 30 miles an hour.” When you have a five-year-old child you want real answers quickly. You don’t want somebody just guessing where your child is,” Reinhardt said. “That helps us immensely.”

### Reduced Operational Costs

Station Wagon Service has been successful in a competitive industry in part because of its employees, many of whom have been with the company for years. “We pretty much treat everybody like family here,” Reinhardt said.

The company even trusts many employees to take buses home with them during the work week. “It helps us because we don’t have the room to store 70 buses, and it makes their lives easier because they don’t have to come in to work before beginning their route in the mornings,” he said. The system worked well for most, but there were a few who took advantage. “To get paid for an extra hour of work, a few of them might say they left home at 5:30 when they really didn’t leave until 6:30,” he said.

In addition, some drivers were tempted to use the buses at night or on weekends. “We have no problem if the driver says, ‘I’m on my way home and I have to make a stop,’” Reinhardt said. “That’s absolutely fine, but we don’t want people driving the buses all weekend to transport their family and friends to the mall!” The TeleNav Asset Tracker solution helps SWS track unauthorized use of its buses, sending an alert if they are used on evenings or weekends or if buses are driven faster than 60 miles per hour.

The solution has trimmed SWS payroll costs. “Most of our employees are honest, but there were some that would add an extra 15 or 20 minutes every day to their time card;” Reinhardt said. “If 20 people are putting an extra half an hour a day, that’s going to add up to a lot of money at the end of the year.”

Using TeleNav Asset Tracker lets SWS know exactly how much time drivers spend doing their routes. “We’re not trying to skim every nickel and dime out of our employees – we give them what they deserve, but they also have to be fair to us,” Reinhardt said. SWS drivers are generally happy with the tracking solution, he noted. “Most of them are glad we know where they are.”

### A Big Differentiator

The solution also helps reduce mileage, prevent unnecessary wear and tear on the buses and cut fuel costs. “There are a million ways to go anywhere,” Reinhardt said. “Once we can see the route each driver is taking we can often find a more efficient route that saves time and avoids congestion, allowing us to get the students to school and home on time.”

Reinhart calls the savings substantial, at least 10 percent a year, and believes the system will pay for itself within 12 months. However, he says the biggest benefit of his tracking solution is knowing the exact location of each bus. “It’s a lot easier to manage our vehicles; just knowing where they are at any given time makes a world of a difference,” Reinhardt said. “It’s a safety factor, and it gives you peace of mind.”

The solution has proven valuable in assisting drivers when a bus has a mechanical problem. Because it’s sometimes hard to understand drivers over the two-way radio, tow-truck drivers often had to drive around until they found the disabled bus. “With TeleNav Asset Tracker we can always give a precise location;” said Reinhardt.

Station Wagon Service plans to add the solution to the remainder of its buses. “It’s a big differentiator in our industry to have this device,” he said. Reinhardt has also recommended it to colleagues. “I know that the system works, and I believe that eventually, some kind of tracking system will be mandated in all buses.

“Transporting students to school is a vital service,” he said. “The more technology advances, the better it is for the industry. We are always going to be needed, but we have to stay with the times and that includes using GPS technology.”

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