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### **2008 SmartCommute Challenge Kicks Off As Ozone Begins Its Annual Rise**

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, N.C. (April 9, 2008) With gas prices approaching \$4 a gallon, a press conference on Tuesday, April 15 will urge commuters to "Drive Less" and "Live More." The press conference will be held 8:30 A.M. at the headquarters of The Research Triangle Park at 12 Davis Drive, to kickoff the 2008 SmartCommute Challenge and the 2008 Ozone Awareness Campaign.

The 2008 SmartCommute Challenge is a regional public awareness campaign that works to reduce traffic congestion in the Triangle by using prizes and incentives to promote transportation alternatives. Commuting alternatives include carpooling, vanpooling, biking, walking, telecommuting and riding the bus.

The event's Master of Ceremonies will be Sig Hutchinson, Chair of the Triangle Transit Board of Trustees and Board Member of Triangle Tomorrow and the Triangle Region Air Awareness Coalition.

Other speakers will include seven Triangle commuters who use various forms of commuting alternatives:

- o Pablo Torres and Jim Miller – Bike Commuters
- o June Cowles and Russell Dalton – Carpoolers
- o Maggie Davis-Bausch – Bus Rider
- o Rainer Dammers – Teleworker/Cyclist
- o Sal Biancardi – Vanpooler

The program will also feature a meteorologist from the NC Division of Air Quality who will explain more about air quality and the ozone season. Clair, the Clean Air Explorer and her side-kick, CAM, the Clean Air Maniac and the face of the SmartCommute Challenge, Larry, will also make appearances.

The smart commuters will be available for one-on-one media interviews immediately following the press conference.

(more)

## SmartCommute Challenge – What Is It?

The 7-week SmartCommute Challenge runs April 15-May 30. Participation is free and anyone who drives to work or campus in Durham, Orange or Wake counties can take the pledge online at [www.SmartCommuteChallenge.org](http://www.SmartCommuteChallenge.org).

Participants will be asked to make their pledge and use an alternate commuting method during the campaign period. In exchange, they are entered into a drawing to win prizes including a free vacation for two, commuter bikes, and a laptop computer.

During the 2006 SmartCommute Challenge campaign, over 12,800 Triangle commuters took the Challenge. These commuters saved a total of 2.3 million commuting miles and 110,000 gallons of gas! This year, the goal of the SmartCommute Challenge is to encourage 13,500 commuters to take the pledge to try a smarter commute.

The coordination and planning of this campaign is a unique example of governments, metropolitan planning organizations and businesses working together to tackle the growing problem of congestion and air quality in our region.

The organizers of the 2008 SmartCommute Challenge are SmartCommute@rtp and Triangle Transit.

### Supporting Organizations:

- o Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- o Durham – Chapel Hill - Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization
- o NC Department of Transportation
- o RTP Owners & Tenants Association
- o Triangle Air Awareness Program
- o Triangle Tomorrow

The 2008 SmartCommute Challenge also has the support of:

- o **6 Gold Sponsors:** BASF, CAT, Cisco, IBM, The News & Observer, RTI International
- o **10 Silver Sponsors:** Bayer CropScience, Cherokee Investment Partners, Credit Suisse, Gillig Corporation, GlaxoSmithKline, EMC Corporation, NetApp, Progress Energy, Redwoods Group, US EPA
- o **12 Bronze Sponsors**
- o Over 50 participating Triangle employers, representing over 100,000 area employees

Employers can add their company to this list of participating employers by visiting [www.SmartCommuteChallenge.org](http://www.SmartCommuteChallenge.org).

## **Ozone Season Awareness**

Higher levels of ozone in North Carolina occur from May to the end of September. Air quality officials say two-thirds of North Carolina's air pollution comes from cars and trucks. Triangle residents can reduce their share of these emissions by driving less and more sensibly, carpooling, or taking public transportation – in short, by taking the SmartCommute Challenge.

The Triangle has consistently registered ozone levels above EPA standards in the spring and summer. Ground-level ozone has serious health effects, particularly for the young, elderly and those with respiratory problems.

About SmartCommute@rtp:

SmartCommute@rtp is the transportation management association (TMA) of The Research Triangle Park (RTP). Its purpose is to coordinate the transportation demand management (TDM) efforts of RTP employers to address common transportation concerns, reduce traffic congestion, and improve air quality. SmartCommute currently has 25 member employers, which account for over 80% of the RTP's employees. SmartCommute@rtp is staffed by the Research Triangle Foundation of North Carolina, owner and developer of The Research Triangle Park. For more information, visit **[www.SmartCommute.org](http://www.SmartCommute.org)**.

About Triangle Transit:

Triangle Transit is a regional public transportation provider, offering a wide variety of transit and vanpool services to North Carolina's greater Triangle Region and outlying counties. Bus service is available to Apex, Cary, Chapel Hill, Durham, Garner, Hillsborough, RDU International Airport, Research Triangle Park (RTP) and Raleigh. For more information, visit **[www.triangletransit.org](http://www.triangletransit.org)** or call (919) 485-RIDE.

About Triangle Tomorrow:

Triangle Tomorrow, a program of the Research Triangle Regional Partnership (RTRP), works closely with business and community leaders to improve the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the 13-county Research Triangle Region. For more information, visit **[www.triangletomorrow.org](http://www.triangletomorrow.org)**.

About Triangle Air Awareness Program:

The Triangle Air Awareness Program provides education and outreach on air quality issues to the 13 county region. A partnership of Triangle Tomorrow and the NC Division of Air Quality, it is the only Triangle region public-private air quality initiative. The program, through its free Coalition membership, mobilizes representatives of business, industry, government, academic and individuals to be aware of the air quality forecast, to improve air quality by their actions, and to protect their health on bad air quality days. For more information, visit **[www.triangleairawareness.org](http://www.triangleairawareness.org)**.

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