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Save Green By Going Green With the SmartCommute Challenge

Average Commuter Saves Thousands of Dollars Annually From Using Alternative Transportation

Research Triangle Park, N.C. - May 18, 2009 - Using a smarter commute alternative, such as riding the bus, carpooling or cycling, saves money and is environmentally sustainable. The SmartCommute Challenge is one way to save money while reducing unhealthy air pollution and greenhouse gases at a time when many Triangle residents are looking for ways to trim expenses.

The 2009 SmartCommute Challenge is an annual non-profit public service campaign aimed at reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality in the Triangle. It encourages commuters and college students who work or attend classes in Durham, Orange or Wake Counties to make a promise to ride the bus, carpool, vanpool, telework, bike or walk at least once between now and May 30.

"While gas prices are considerably lower than they were one year ago, many commuters are still affected by the economy," said David King, general manager of Triangle Transit, a GoTriangle partner and presenting sponsor of the SmartCommute Challenge. "Through campaigns like the SmartCommute Challenge, we are giving Triangle commuters options that are environmentally-friendly and ultimately, save them money on gas, car insurance, repairs and maintenance."

According to AAA, today's national average price for one gallon of regular gas is \$2.31, up approximately 26 cents from one month ago when the SmartCommute Challenge began on April 15. Gas prices have risen 9 cents in the last week.

William Geringer lives in Mebane and works in Raleigh. "I take an express bus from a park-and-ride lot in Chapel Hill to downtown Raleigh," he said. "Daily driving would cost me approximately \$55 round trip." By taking the bus instead of driving, William saves, on average, \$35.50 per trip. To make riding the bus an even more attractive option, his employer picks up the cost of the bus pass.

For carpool commuters, the shared expense of driving with others has numerous benefits.

"Last year, I started a carpool with someone after signing up for the SmartCommute Challenge," said Cindy Riippa. "It worked out great because the company my new carpool partner worked at was located across the street from my job. It's been almost a year and we've added three people to our carpool. I drive one week then ride four weeks. By not driving every day, I save money I'd spend on two tanks of gas each week."

According to study released this month by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), individuals who use public transportation can save up to \$8,600 annually or \$720 each month, based on average gas prices and the monthly parking rate for unreserved spaces. Using alternative transportation also saves the approximately one pound of carbon produced by every one mile a person drives. The goal of this year's SmartCommute Challenge is to reduce 2.2 million pounds of carbon during the six-week campaign.

For more information about the SmartCommute Challenge, additional events or to pledge to participate in the Challenge, visit www.SmartCommuteChallenge.org.

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About SmartCommute@rtp

SmartCommute@rtp is the transportation management association (TMA) of The Research Triangle Park. 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@rtp currently has 27 member employers, which account for over 80% of RTP employees. SmartCommute@rtp is staffed by the Research Triangle Foundation of North Carolina, developer and manager of The Research Triangle Park. For more information, visit www.SmartCommute.org.

About Triangle Transit

Triangle Transit is a regional public transportation provider, offering a wide variety of transit, paratransit, 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 or call (919) 485-RIDE.

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