



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, June 16, 2004

Contacts: Randy Rentschler, MTC 510.464.7858
Linton Johnson, BART 510.464.7139
Terry Lee, Air District 415.749.4900

AGENCIES WRAP UP DEAL FOR 5 FREE BART RIDES ***BART, MTC, Air District Join Forces to "Spare the Air" This Summer***

HAYWARD, Calif., June 16, 2004. . . For the first time ever, a BART train is wearing something other than silver brushed-aluminum with blue trim — venturing out in a playful, multicolor wrap that makes a bold statement: “Spare the Air.” BART, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) unveiled the sporty new look during an afternoon news conference at BART’s Hayward maintenance yard, where officials from the three agencies announced a landmark partnership that, for the first time, will allow travelers to ride BART free during the mornings of the first five weekday *Spare the Air* days this summer.

Beginning June 21, the free morning commutes on BART will start the first five times the Air District declares a weekday *Spare the Air* day. Passengers can take advantage of the free rides between the start of service and 9 a.m. BART will collect fares as usual for rides begun after 9 a.m. The estimated \$2 million cost of the free ride program will be paid by MTC, using federal transportation dollars allocated to the Bay Area.

The point of the pilot program is to protect billions of transportation dollars and reduce Bay Area smog during the summer months when pollution levels are the highest. “Air quality in the Bay Area has improved tremendously over the past 40 years,” said Air District Board Chair, MTC Commissioner and Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty. “MTC, BART and the Air District are committed to keeping it healthy.”

San Leandro Mayor Shelia Young, who serves as both an MTC commissioner and a member of the Air District Board, acknowledged the high stakes in the Bay Area’s efforts to maintain compliance with federal air quality standards. “The federal government could, for air quality reasons, withhold or even cancel billions of highway and transit dollars earmarked for

Continued on next page



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

the Bay Area. That’s money that regional transportation agencies are counting on to fund projects that will improve travelers’ mobility.”

“The Air District declares a *Spare the Air* day when it expects air pollution to reach unhealthy concentrations, which typically occur on hot, windless days,” explained Haggerty. *Spare the Air* advisories are issued the afternoon before a *Spare the Air* day and receive wide notice on television and radio, and in the newspapers on the morning of a *Spare the Air* day. To get advance notice of *Spare the Air* days register for Air Alerts at www.sparetheair.org.

“The average commuter,” said BART Board President James Fang, “can avoid spewing 44 pounds of pollutants into the air each day just by leaving the car at home. Think about it, that’s five tons of pollution over the course of one year.”

Fang went on to encourage commuters to take full advantage of the free rides during morning commute hours, saying, “Don’t keep the good news to yourself. Tell a friend about it, too.”

A total of seven BART cars traveling on the Pittsburg/Bay Point and Dublin/Pleasanton lines will be cloaked in a *Spare the Air* wrap this summer.

MTC is the transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is the regional agency chartered with protecting air quality in the Bay Area. For more information about the Air District visit www.baaqmd.gov.

###