



NEWS

www.baaqmd.gov

For Immediate Release
October 24, 2006

Contact: Jack M. Colbourn
415 749 4900

Summer Smog Season Ends

More Bay Area Residents Spared the Air than Ever

San Francisco, CA . . .The 2006 *Spare the Air* program was the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's (Air District) most successful campaign to date. Surveys showed the highest level of participation in *Spare the Air* activities since polling began in 1998, and statistics linked this increase in public participation directly to the free transit campaign. The number of people who reduced their driving on *Spare the Air* days reached 10 percent—a new record high and an increase from 3 percent in 2003, before the free transit element was introduced.

In 2006, for the first time, the Air District, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and 26 transit operators offered free rides all day long on six *Spare the Air* weekdays. MTC reported a 15 percent regional increase in transit ridership—about 225,000 additional riders—on each of these free transit days.

Two heat waves in June and July brought early challenges to this year's smog season, since high temperatures create ideal conditions for ground level ozone to form. Over the course of the summer, Air District monitoring stations recorded twelve days in which federal ozone standards were exceeded. But that number might have climbed even higher, had it not been for the Air District's stationary source controls and the *Spare the Air* efforts of individual Bay Area residents.

"We'd like to thank the Bay Area community for helping to *Spare the Air* this smog season," said Air District Executive Officer Jack P. Broadbent. "This year, nearly 10 percent of Bay Area drivers made simple clean air choices to preserve air quality and prevent the generation of approximately 32 tons of pollution." Survey results estimate that during the 11 *Spare the Air* days Bay Area commuters drove 3.5 million fewer miles—by taking public transportation, linking and combining trips, carpooling, or foregoing driving altogether.

The *Spare the Air* program was established in 1991 to educate the public about air pollution and to promote long-term individual behavior changes that improve air quality. "We were pleased to see that, even after the *Spare the Air* free transit promotion ended, transit operators such as BART continued to report record ridership numbers this season," said Broadbent. "Hot summer days will always present serious challenges to Bay Area air quality, but these are challenges we can meet if we all work together."

-# # #-