



BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
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DISTRICT



METROPOLITAN
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COMMISSION

**For Immediate Release
May 30, 2007**

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FREE RIDES FOR COMMUTERS ON FIRST FOUR *SPARE THE AIR* DAYS

Air District, MTC and 29 Transit Partners Offer a Clean Air Commute This Summer

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) announced today at a press conference at Justin Herman Plaza that they will be offering the Free Transit Incentive Program as part of the 2007 summertime *Spare the Air* campaign. This year's free transit program includes **29 transit systems** from all nine Bay Area counties.

Beginning June 1, free rides will be offered the first four times the Air District issues a *Spare the Air* advisory on a non-holiday weekday. **New this year - free transit will be available on BART, CalTrain, ACE Train and Bay Area ferries until 1:00 p.m., and all day on Bay Area bus systems.** The free morning commutes until one p.m. on BART, CalTrain, ACE Train and Bay Area ferries are provided as an incentive to reduce cold engine starts in the morning as well as to alleviate overcrowding. Vehicle emissions that occur in the morning are especially troublesome for air quality because these gases are more likely to recombine into ground-level ozone. An \$8.5 million dollar undertaking, the free transit incentive program is the largest of its kind in the nation.

"One of the most effective ways residents can help protect public health, the climate, and air quality in the Bay Area is to make everyday clean air choices like choosing public transit and driving less," said Jack Broadbent, Air District Executive Officer. "The *Spare the Air Free Transit* incentive provides the public an opportunity to try transit and decrease their dependence on cars—the Bay Area's number one source of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions."

During the 2006 *Spare the Air* campaign, nearly 10 percent of Bay Area drivers reduced at least one automobile trip on *Spare the Air* days, up from 7 percent in 2005.

"This is a major accomplishment, given that not driving for just one day eliminates almost one pound of smog-forming pollution and 30 pounds of greenhouse gases," said MTC Executive Director Steve Heminger. "As the largest free transit program in the country, the *Spare the Air/Free Transit* initiative is leading the way in mobilizing residents to protect the climate."

The Air District declares a *Spare the Air* day when it forecasts ground-level ozone concentrations to reach unhealthy levels. This situation occurs in summer months when



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temperatures soar and oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds (typically emitted by cars and other mobile sources) recombine through a complex chemical reaction to form ozone. Ozone, a colorless, odorless gas, is very irritating to the respiratory system and can cause lung damage with repeated exposure.

Spare the Air advisories are issued the afternoon before a *Spare the Air* day and are well-publicized through media outlets, employers and the AirAlerts network. The public can learn more about air quality and receive advance notification of *Spare the Air* days by registering for AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org. To plan your trip on transit, visit www.511.org.

The following Bay Area transit partners are participating in the 2007 *Spare the Air/Free Transit* incentive:

- AC Transit
- ACE
- Alameda-Harbor Bay Ferry
- Alameda-Oakland Ferry
- American Canyon Shuttle
- Air BART
- BART
- Benicia Breeze
- CalTrain
- Cloverdale Transit
- County Connection (CCCTA)
- Dumbarton Express
- Fairfield/Suisun Transit
- Golden Gate Ferry and Bus (GGBHTD)
- Healdsburg Transit
- Wheels
- Marin County Transit
- MUNI
- Napa VINE
- Petaluma Transit
- Rio Vista Delta Breeze
- SamTrans
- Santa Rosa City Bus
- Sonoma County Transit
- St. Helena Shuttle
- Tri Delta Transit
- Union City Transit
- Vacaville City Coach
- City of Vallejo Ferry
- Vallejo Transit
- VTA
- WestCat
- Yountville Shuttle

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (www.baaqmd.gov) is the regional agency chartered with protecting air quality in the Bay Area.

MTC (www.mtc.ca.gov) is the transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

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