



PRESS RELEASE

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**FIRST WEEK-DAY FORECAST CODE ORANGE
BAD AIR DAY OF THE SUMMER MEANS FREE RIDES
ON ALL NORTHERN VIRGINIA BUS ROUTES
TOMORROW - MAY 31, 2007!**

*NVTC ASKS WEATHER FORECASTERS AND MEDIA TO REMIND VIEWERS,
LISTENERS AND READERS ABOUT THE FREE RIDE PROGRAM*

Arlington, VA — Here we go again! The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments has forecast a Code Orange Bad Air Day for Thursday May 31, 2007 <http://www.mwcog.org/environment/air/forecast/>, which means FREE Bus Rides on all Northern Virginia bus systems throughout the day on Thursday.

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) is asking all media to remind their viewers, listeners and readers about the Free Ride Northern Virginia program throughout the day and during this evening's and tomorrow morning's broadcasts.

The free ride program is designed to address the regions critical air quality needs. Earlier this month, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) launched a new outreach effort:

**“Ride Free Northern Virginia
Be Part of the Solution, Reduce Ozone Pollution”**



Now through September 15th, 2007, on forecast Code Orange and Code Red days, Northern Virginia bus systems will provide free rides to commuters to lure people out of their cars and onto mass transit.

Poor air quality affects everyone and Air Quality Action Days require that Northern Virginians make small adjustments to their normal routines in order to minimize impacts on the environment.

How to 'Ride Free'

During the summer months, area residents should tune into their local radio or television stations to hear the air quality forecast for the following day. If the next day is forecast as a Code Orange or Red day, they RIDE FREE on Northern Virginia's buses. There is no other action required by commuters to participate.

Residents can also check NVTC's special website: www.ridefreenova.org for easy updates.

Participating Systems

Specific route information can be obtained by calling these transportation providers:

Alexandria DASH	(703) 370-DASH (3274)
Arlington Transit (ART)	(703) 228-RIDE (7433)
City of Fairfax CUE	(703) 385-7859
City of Falls Church GEORGE	(202) 637-7000
Fairfax Connector	(703) 339-7200
Loudoun County Transit	(703) 771-5665/Metro (703) 478-8433
Metrobus	(202) 637-7000
OmniRide/OmniLink	(703) 730-OMNI (6664)
Virginia Regional Transit	(540) 338-1610

What is a 'Bad Air Day' and how does it affect the health of people and the environment?

A forecast Code Orange or Red Air Quality Action Day or "Bad Air" Day means that ozone levels are predicted to be extremely high and the air quality very poor. By getting more commuters to take the bus, instead of driving their cars, the NVTC hopes to limit the levels of Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) and other toxic emissions and to meet the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) air quality standards.

According to the American Lung Association, ozone acts as a powerful respiratory irritant at the levels frequently found here during summer months. Ozone exposure may lead to:

- shortness of breath;
- chest pain when inhaling deeply; and
- wheezing and coughing.

Long-term, repeated exposure to high levels of ozone may lead to reductions in lung function, inflammation of the lung lining and increased respiratory discomfort. The EPA estimates that 5 to 20 percent of the total U.S. population is especially susceptible to the harmful effects of ozone air pollution.

In addition to health risks, the cars we drive emit carbon dioxide, the gas which is primarily responsible for global warming. The emissions from burning fossil fuels can remain in the atmosphere for decades or even centuries -- creating what scientists call global warming. Global warming heats the surface of the earth and leads to increased health risks as well as increasingly severe weather -- like hurricanes and tropical storms.

The 'Ride Free NoVA' Outreach Campaign & On-Board Survey

In an effort to reach as many area commuters as possible, NVTC has created a special web site, partnered with 2,000 employers, mailed over 10,000 brochures, distributed 500 posters and will advertise on the exterior of 50 buses in Northern Virginia.

The web site and brochure provide area residents with tips on how they can reduce air pollution, explain how to plan a trip and take the bus, and give a brief overview of regional air quality.

In addition to the outreach campaign, NVTC will measure awareness of the program and survey passengers on various bus routes to determine whether the 'Ride Free NoVA' program is effective.

For more information, contact the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission by going to www.thinkoutsidethecar.org.

NVTC is the leading source of information about public transportation issues in Northern Virginia.

NVTC is a regional agency with the mission of managing traffic congestion, restoring clean air, boosting the economy and improving the quality of life for all of Northern Virginia's citizens through effective public transit and ridesharing networks. NVTC includes the counties of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church covering over 1,000 square miles with a population of 1.6 million. The agency manages over \$120 million of state and federal grant funds each year for public transit and serves as a forum for its board of 20 state and local elected officials to resolve issues involving public transit and ridesharing. For information about NVTC, please visit www.thinkoutsidethecar.org or call 703-524-3322.

NVTC