



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
August 5, 2003

Contact:: Kala Quintana
703/ 524-3322 ext 103
kala@nvtdc.org

ATTENTION ALL COMMUTERS: NORTHERN VA'S TRANSIT SCHEDULES COMING TO A CELL PHONE, PALM PILOT OR HAND HELD COMPUTER NEAR YOU!

"Information in the palm of your hand, right when you need it the most."

Arlington, VA -- The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) announced today that **all of Northern Virginia's Bus and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) schedules are available to download for FREE to their cell phones, palm pilot and hand held computers.**

Thanks to a generous grant from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT), Northern Virginia's transit providers are expanding a pilot program started by Arlington County over a year ago.

This new service allows commuters to download transit schedules for VRE, Metrobus, ART (Arlington County), Fairfax Connector (Fairfax County), LC Transit (Loudoun County), DASH (city of Alexandria), CUE (city of Fairfax), and GEORGE (Falls Church).

The use of cell phones and handheld devices is rapidly growing. A recent survey commissioned by NVTC in Northern VA to evaluate Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies confirmed the growing popularity of cell phones and handheld devices. The study indicated:

- **75 percent of respondents had cell phones and 13 percent use their cell phones to access the internet;**
- **25 percent owned a pocket computer or Palm Pilot; and 6 percent use that to access the internet.**
- **80 percent of respondents felt that the use of technology in transit was important, and of those another 35 percent felt that there should be a greater emphasis on the use of technology to make transit more accessible.**

MORE ##-

Clearly the ability to access the internet is available; however respondents just didn't have an incentive to use the application—now they do!

A.C. Nielsen confirms the NVTC findings and estimates that there are **20 million PDA users in the U.S. – about 15 percent of all households** – and research firm **International Data Corp.** expects that number to top **33.5 million by 2004.**

It was this realization, in fact, that spurred Arlington County to launch “CommuterPage.com® Mobile Services” last year. The system – which is the same system being expanded to other jurisdictions through this partnership – made Arlington Transit (ART) and select Arlington Metrobus schedules the first systems in the region to have their schedules available. *“But now,”* says Kala Quintana, Director of Public Outreach for NVTC, *“other transit organizations will be able to piggyback on Arlington County’s technology and make public transit that much more convenient.”*

“This technology really puts information in the palm of people’s hands, right when they need it the most,” said **Elaine McConnell**, NVTC’s Chairman for 2003 and member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors from the Springfield District. *“This service will help people make smart decisions about taking public transit. It’s really going to improve the convenience of accessing public transit and make it one step easier ... there’s no waiting, thinking or guessing ... the schedules are right there,”* said Supervisor McConnell.

At a time when the costs of taking transit are rising, this is a value added service that can make using transit easier for residents at no cost to them. Commuters can sign up for this FREE service by logging onto: www.CommuterPage.com/handheld. Schedules can be viewed at www.commuterpage.com/schedules.

In addition, users of the service can get [Commuter News](#) delivered to their mobile device, wherever they are. Arlington and NVTC envision commuters checking bus schedules on their web-enabled cell phone while they're out on the town or keep up with transportation issues on their Palm Pilot or Pocket PC during their commute. *“We’re working together to provide the information you need, when you need it, where you need it,”* said **William D. Euille**, NVTC’s Vice-Chair and Mayor of Alexandria.

MORE ##-

*“One of our goals,” said **Paul Ferguson**, NVTC’s Treasurer and Chairman of the Arlington County Board, “is to use this technology to build awareness about the region’s air quality problems. When people go online to download the schedules, they’ll see the ozone action day’s icon, which will tell them what the air forecast is for that day and what is projected for the following day. We’re hoping it will help them make good decisions about using transit, especially since we’ll lose federal transit funding in this area if we don’t meet clean air quality standards by 2005. We need to make some serious changes, and it’s simple choices like these that help contribute to the overall solution.”*

NVTC representatives are also working closely with area transit providers with the hope to expand the service beyond Northern Virginia’s borders into DC and Maryland.

“We hope that this service will benefit Northern Virginia transit customers and potentially attract even more customers to the area’s transit systems by placing the most up to date bus schedule information literally in the palm of their hand,” said Ms. Quintana, Director of Public Outreach at NVTC.

For more information about NVTC’s upcoming initiatives, visit www.thinkoutsidethecar.org.

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. Its board of directors consists of 19 local and state elected officials from its six member jurisdictions of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church.

NVTC is the leading source of information about public transportation issues in Northern Virginia. For more information contact the commission at 703/ 524-3322 or visit our website at www.thinkoutsidethecar.org.

NVTC