

DAVID R. CRAIG
HARFORD COUNTY EXECUTIVE

LORRAINE T. COSTELLO
DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION



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CONTACT: Mary F. Chance, 410-638-3389

HARFORD COUNTY GEARS UP FOR CLEAN COMMUTE MONTH

(Bel Air, MD - April 1, 2008) - -

Harford County is preparing to celebrate the nationally recognized **Clean Commute Month** in May with a variety of activities scheduled throughout the month. What is a clean commute? Walking, bicycling, sharing a ride in a carpool or vanpool, taking public transit and teleworking are all alternatives to driving alone in our cars. These commuting alternatives all help to reduce traffic congestion and tailpipe emissions which have an impact on air quality.

The Maryland Department of the Environment estimates that about 30-40% of the ozone causing pollution in our region comes from motor vehicles; most of those vehicles carry one person to and from work. Clean commuting choices such as carpooling, vanpooling, taking the bus or train, and biking or walking to and from work significantly improve air quality by reducing the number of cars on the road. Clean commuting also decreases nitrogen pollution of the Chesapeake Bay.

Throughout May, residents will be encouraged to try an alternative to commuting to work in a single occupied vehicle (SOV). "When more people decide to choose transit, carpooling or vanpooling instead of driving alone, there are fewer cars creating less pollution," stated County Executive David Craig.

May is the beginning of the "ozone season" because ground level ozone gets worse during warmer months when sunlight is more intense heating the atmosphere. Intense sunlight and higher heat speeds the conversion of NOx and VOCs to ozone.

Harford County's goal in celebrating Clean Commute Month is to raise citizens' awareness that there are alternative transportation options they can use to get to their destinations. Locally, there are transit choices Harford County commuters can make when they travel to their worksite. The Harford County Department of Community Services Commuter Assistance Program offers free ride matching services to help commuters find alternative commuting options such as carpooling and vanpooling. In Harford County there is the Harford Transit Bus System and the MTA Bus service as well as Amtrak and the MARC trains that commuters can use. "One of the biggest hindrances to getting people to try a commute alternative is the lack of knowledge about the options that are available and how to put them to use," said Pat Fielder, Community Resources and Rideshare Coordinator for

Harford County's Commuter Assistance Programs. "Events throughout May are targeted to draw attention to, and provide information about, their commuting choices."

Harford County will kick off the slate of planned activities with a Commuter Appreciation Day, May 7, 2008 at the Edgewood MARC Train Station. Early morning train commuters will receive prizes and a complimentary Café au Lait with selected pastries from *Clarence's Taste of New Orleans*. Clarence's is a well-known, locally-owned eatery next to the Edgewood MARC train station.

County Executive David Craig and Mary Chance, Director of Community Services will be on hand to personally thank those commuters who choose to use the MARC train to reach their work destinations in the Baltimore-Washington corridor. System wide, up to 19,000 commuters use the MARC Train Penn Line (from Perryville to Washington DC) service on a daily basis. More than 500 of these daily riders hail from points in Harford County. "Ridership has definitely increased just in the last year," states Harry Romano with the MTA. "It will only continue to increase with BRAC coming in," he said.

Another special Harford County Clean Commute Month event will offer free bike helmet fittings as part of a Bike Helmet Safety program. For the first time, residents can bring their bike helmets, both adult and child size, to one of the Harford County's Library branches to be fitted properly by trained safety officers and volunteer members of the Harford Velo Club.

This free service begins Monday May 12th with simultaneous helmet fitting sessions in the Bel Air, Edgewood, Abingdon, Fallston, Aberdeen and Joppatowne Libraries. Subsequent sessions will continue each Wednesday throughout the month of May. All sessions will be from 6:00 to 8:00 PM in these libraries. Residents who bring their helmets in can register on-site to win a new bike helmet.

The signature event for Clean Commute Month, Bike to Work Day, May 16th, promises to be bigger and better than ever. In 2007, Harford County had the second highest number of registered cyclists in the Baltimore metropolitan region for Bike To Work Day. The goal this year is to exceed that number and beat our own record. On May 16th, a free rally will be held from 7:00-9:00 am at the Harford County Administration Bldg, 220 South Main St. The bike rally features a bike parade through Bel Air and offers several grand prizes such as a bicycle from Contes Bikes and an electric scooter from X-treme Skooters, rounds of Golf at Mountain Branch Golf Course, Ironbird tickets, restaurant gift certificates plus numerous prizes and giveaways. All registrants will receive an official bike to work day tee shirt while they enjoy light refreshments and entertainment. To register for Bike To Work Day go to www.harfordcountymd.gov or www.theaegis.com.

The rally, emceed by Harford County's 103.7 WXCY, will feature the winners of the Annual Briefcase Challenge competition held among businesses and agencies. This lively competition represents registrants from large, medium, and small companies competing within their company's size category. Winning is based on who registers the most employees biking to work that day. Three winners will be chosen from each company size category.

There will be three scheduled "Cleaner Cars, Cleaner Air" clinics sponsored by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, The Maryland Department of the Environment, and the

Harford County Department of Community Services' Commuter Assistance Program. These clinics will be conducted at Harford County's McFaul, Havre de Grace and Edgewood Senior Activity Centers. Space is limited, so seniors who attend these centers must pre-register to receive a free car inspection conducted by Precision Tune auto technicians.

Harford County is celebrating Clean Commute Month in May with style and something for everyone. Take a train, ride a bike, get a helmet fitting or have your car inspected. All activities support an increasingly popular theme reducing your carbon footprint. A clean commute is a clear choice.