

Press Release

HARFORD COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Department of Community Services



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QUALITY LIVING
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Important to Harford
County Citizens"

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HARFORD COUNTY CELEBRATES MAY AS CLEAN COMMUTE MONTH

A clean commute is a clear choice.

(Bel Air, MD) - - Each May, Harford County Government celebrates the nationally acclaimed Clean Commute Month. County activities and events are planned throughout the month that highlight how we each can make a difference by choosing to use alternative transportation options by clean commuting.

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 options help reduce traffic congestion and tailpipe emissions which have a negative impact on air quality.

The Maryland Department of the Environment estimates 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 a clean commute alternative for at least one day. When more people decide to choose bicycling, transit, carpooling or vanpooling instead of driving alone to work, there are fewer cars creating less pollution. May is designated Clean Commute Month because it is the beginning of the "ozone season." Ground level ozone becomes worse during warmer months when sunlight is more intense.

Harford County's goal in celebrating Clean Commute Month is to raise citizens' awareness that there are local alternative transportation options they can use to get to their destinations. 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. Harford County residents have access to the Harford Transit Bus System and the MTA Bus service as well as Amtrak and the MARC trains.

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"One of the biggest hindrances to getting people to try a commute alternative is lack of knowledge about available options and how to take advantage of those options," 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, everyone's commuting choices.

Harford County is fortunate to have many community partners who are supporting the various scheduled events. By partnering with the Harford County Sheriff's Office, the Bel Air, Aberdeen and Havre de Grace Police Departments, the Harford County Public Library, and the Harford County Public Schools, the entire community will become aware of bicycling, carpooling, and other transportation alternatives. These successful partnerships will serve most age groups and are unique to Harford County.

Also unique to Harford County's Clean Commute month is a "**Green Pedal**" **Essay Contest**. The theme for the essay is "How does riding a bicycle help us keep the air cleaner?" Through a partnership with Harford County Public Schools and Harford County Public Libraries' Rolling Reader Program, elementary-age students who attend Harford County Schools can win a child's TREK®MT20 mountain bike courtesy of Chesapeake Cycle and Sport of Havre de Grace. This contest is open and free to all eligible students. Deadline for submitting an essay is May 7, 2009. Call 410-638-3389 for more information.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

May 8 Harford County will kick-off the planned activities with a **Bicycle Rodeo** at the Abingdon Library on May 8 from 5:00 to 7:30 pm. Sheriff Jesse Bane will be on hand to support the registered participants as they go through safety training and test their skills on an obstacle course. Designed to teach kids about safety practices while riding a bicycle, this program focuses on the 8-12 year-old age group.

May 11 Another special Harford County Clean Commute Month event brought back by popular demand will be free **bike helmet fittings** at various Harford County Public libraries. As part of a Bike Helmet Safety program, 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 11. There will be simultaneous helmet fitting sessions in the Bel Air, Edgewood, Abingdon, Havre de Grace, Aberdeen and Joppa 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 same libraries. Residents who bring their helmets to the libraries can participate in a drawing for free bike helmets.

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May 15 **Bike to Work Day**, the signature event for Clean Commute Month. There will be a free rally the morning of May 15 from 7 to 9:00 am at the Harford County Government Administration parking lot. “This is a great celebration and we are so excited to be hosting the event once again this year,” said Pat Fielder. “In Harford County there are a dedicated group of folks representing a wide range of companies and agencies who do commute by bicycle most days of the year. If we can encourage others to try it for just one day, then participants may choose to continue commuting to work by bicycle.”

The rally, emceed by Harford County's own WXCY 103.7, will feature the winners of the Annual Briefcase Challenge competition held among Harford County 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. Last year APG took the trophy in the large company category, Upper Chesapeake Hospital was a close second. SAIC regained their title in the mid-size category with Battelle a close second. In the small company category, a division of LMI consulting won with Frederick Ward Associates a close second.

The Bike to Work Day rally features County Executive David R. Craig, a bike parade with bicycle rickshaws through Bel Air, and for the very first time, two grand prizes – free bicycles courtesy of Contes Bikes and Chesapeake Cycle and Sport. Other prizes include gift certificates for area restaurants and golf at Mountain Branch Golf Course, Ironbird tickets, plus numerous prizes and giveaways. All registrants will receive an official Bike to Work Day T-shirt while they enjoy light refreshments and entertainment.

To register for Bike to Work Day go to <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov>

Bike to Work Day continues to grow each year and promises to be bigger and better than ever. For the second consecutive year, Harford County has had the second highest number of registrants in the Baltimore Metropolitan area. “We’d like to exceed our numbers from last year, but more importantly we want people to consider commuting by using one of the cleanest forms of transportation – the bicycle, even if they only ride on Bike to Work Day,” says Fielder.

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May 19 County Executive David Craig and Mary Chance, Director of Community Services, will be on hand at the Aberdeen MARC Train station 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 service (from Perryville to Washington DC) 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.

May 28 & June 4

There will be two 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 Activities Center and Edgewood Senior Activity Center May 28 and June 4, respectively. Space is limited, so seniors who attend these centers must pre-register to receive a free car inspection conducted by registered auto technicians.

For more information on Clean Commute Month events, call the Harford County Department of Community Services at 410-638-3389 or visit www.harfordcountymd.gov/services

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

A clean commute is a clear choice.