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Salisbury Transit System to Offer Free Bus Rides on Orange and Red Ozone Action Days for Fourth Consecutive Year

Municipal Agreement with NCDOT to Provide Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funding in Support of Complimentary Fares

Salisbury, NC _April 28, 2010 – The City of Salisbury’s Transit Division will offer free city bus rides on Orange and Red Ozone Action Days, for the fourth consecutive summer. The program begins May 1 and will continue through September 30, 2010. The five-month timeline spans the NC Division of Air Quality’s specified ozone season. A municipal agreement between the City and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) provides funding via the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Project. The grant strives to enhance consumer relations, promote customer service, and market local transit systems as an alternative and available form of transportation. In addition, the program creates health consciousness and improves air quality by encouraging drivers to utilize the public transit system.

Mayor Susan Kluttz, speaking on behalf of the Salisbury City Council shares, “Public transportation is a crucial component in our nation’s efforts to address economic, environmental, and energy-related challenges. Public transportation provides an affordable and convenient alternative to driving that enables citizens to fully participate in all aspects of the local environment. Our residents are able to travel to work, conduct business, reach health-care facilities, and participate in neighborhood events with family and friends.” Kluttz notes that the environmental impact of choosing public transit is significant. “Ground-level ozone and smog can appear when cars and household products generate dangerous emissions. In comparison to private vehicles, public transportation generates 95% less carbon monoxide. The FREE Bus Fare program offers an immediate opportunity for citizens to help improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support our nation’s efforts to become less dependent on foreign oil.” An April 2010 media advisory issued by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in Washington, DC, shares that Americans took close to 10.2 billion rides on public transportation during 2009. According to the APTA, the average American can save over \$9,000 annually, (based upon April 2010 gas prices and parking fees) simply by making the switch to public transportation. Kluttz adds, “As citizens seek ways to curb spending, our public transportation system provides a practical means of conserving finances, protecting our environment, and providing a lasting investment in our planet.” For more information, visit the APTA website at www.publictransportation.org.

City of Salisbury Transit Division Manager Rodney Harrison shares, "We are truly thankful to receive CMAQ funding support again this year. The City of Salisbury is proud to serve as a good steward of our environment and to do our part locally to improve air quality. The free ride program provides an opportunity to uplift the value of our bus service to the community. This program also allows first-time riders to experience our transit system at no cost." The Salisbury Transit system prides itself on customer service and travels to numerous major shopping destinations throughout the city including the Salisbury Mall, Wal-Mart, Innes Street Market, Magic Mart, K-Mart, and the Ketner Center. In addition, the bus system travels to Rowan Cabarrus Community College, Livingstone College and within blocks of Catawba College. The Employment Security Commission, Post Office, Health Department, Rowan Regional Medical Center, V.A. Hospital and the Department of Social Services, are included within the Transit system's normal daily route. Frequent bus stops throughout Downtown Salisbury offer a one-block walking distance from the City Square. In addition, City bus routes include destinations in Spencer and East Spencer.

The current rate for bus riders is 1.00 for regular fares with senior citizens and handicapped riders at 50 cents per person. Transfers and children under the age of five are free. Riders may board and disembark from any designated bus stop throughout the City or at the Salisbury Transfer site on Depot Street, located adjacent to the Amtrak Train Station. City buses arrive and depart daily from the transfer site at 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the hour. Bus service is available Monday through Friday from 6:15 am to 6:45 pm and on Saturday from 8:45 am to 4:15 pm. City buses are non-operational on Sunday.

By 5 pm each day, the Salisbury Transit Division receives the local air quality and ozone level report forecast for the following day. If the local forecast predicts an orange or red ozone action day, the free ride program will be initiated. Probable riders may contact the Transit Hotline at 704-216-7537 after 7 pm to receive an updated ozone status report for the next day. In addition, citizens may visit the City of Salisbury's Transit Division webpage at www.salisburync.gov/transit for an ozone update.

The City of Salisbury continues to promote the "free ride" program with its recognized marketing campaign from previous years. The slogan designed to assist in creating awareness for air quality and the City's complimentary bus fare promotion, encourages citizens to "Help Clear the Air...with FREE Bus Fare!" The motto alludes to safety measures issued with respect to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality Index. Ozone is the main factor in urban smog and can be detrimental to one's health. Even at low levels, ozone can create a number of respiratory effects, particularly in vulnerable individuals such as small children, the elderly, or persons with asthma and breathing difficulties. Ground level ozone concentrations are more likely to exceed safe health levels on very hot days with slight or no wind and temperatures in the 90 degrees and above range. Transit Manager Harrison explains that the majority of high ozone concentrations usually occur between 10 am and 8 pm and that sluggish air masses, occurring in late summer, can lock-in and hold ozone near the surface. Harrison notes, "Posters, flyers, maps, and banners are currently being distributed throughout our city. Citizens may stop by the City Office Building, 132 N. Main Street, or visit any of our Salisbury Parks & Recreation Centers for detailed maps outlining transit destinations and arrival and departure times. We encourage our citizens to benefit from the free bus ride initiative and leave the driving to us. Our drivers strive consistently to make your destination travel both pleasant and prompt."

For more information regarding the City of Salisbury's "Help Clear the Air...with FREE Bus Fare" initiative, please contact Harrison via the Transit Office at 704-638-5253. The City of Salisbury is an equal opportunity employer with over 180 different job classifications and 400 full time positions. For more information regarding the City of Salisbury and its services and departments, please visit us on the web at www.salisburync.gov. To receive updates regarding local initiatives, meetings, programs, and events, please join the City of Salisbury's Facebook users group at www.salisburync.gov/facebook or follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/CitySalisburyNC>.

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