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****For Immediate Release****

AS AMERICANS AGE, SARTA PROVIDES RELIABLE TRAVEL ALTERNATIVES

America's aging population is growing at a faster rate than any other U.S. population group. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that by 2030, there will be 9.6 million people age 85 and older — an increase of 73 percent from today. As American's age, they face challenges with mobility and the continued ability to drive safely.

In support of aging Americans and increased mobility options and opportunities, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) are endorsing and participating in Older Driver Safety Awareness Week which is being sponsored by the American Occupational Therapy Association.

The goal of Older Driver Safety Awareness Week — December 6-12, 2009 — is to increase safety by informing the public that the aging driver has travel options, and to promote understanding of the importance of mobility and transportation to ensure older adults remain active in the community.

On Friday, December 11, the focus is on older Americans who no longer drive. As Americans age, isolation becomes a growing problem, and access and mobility become increasingly critical needs. Lack of transportation severely affects their ability to take care of basic needs and function as contributing members of society.

In Stark County and across the U.S., public transportation is able to meet the most basic needs of America's older individuals requiring enhanced mobility option when driving is no longer possible. Public transportation provides aging individuals with the ability to live independently, access to medical and social services, contact with the outside world, and the feeling of belonging to the community.

In fact, 83 percent of older Americans say that public transit provides easy access to the things they need in everyday life. Public transit is also a vital link for the more than 51 million Americans with disabilities.

Public transportation for older Americans in Stark County include: SARTA's Community Coach that regularly travels to senior apartment complexes, then to various shopping opportunities; the Proline service for those with disability, which travels to any Stark County address; and SARTA's Fixed-route buses that run on a regular schedule to many cities and areas in the county.

For many older Americans, it is a difficult transition from having the independence of driving to relying on other means of transportation to get around their community. When older Americans need to limit or stop driving, public transportation is a reliable option. It will allow older individuals to remain connected to their community and the activities important to them. And it is important for these individuals to know that SARTA is ready and available to meet their transportation needs.

To find out more about your public transportation options in areas outside of Stark County—even before you need them—go to www.publictransportation.org. Under "Transit Systems," you can locate public transportation systems in your area and find out which airports have mass transit connections. You can also visit SARTA's website at www.SARTAonline.com.

Additional endorsing organizations include: AAA, AARP, American Association of Motor Vehicles Administrators, Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists, Easter Seals Project ACTION, INTAmerica, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, National Center on Senior Transportation, and the Hartford Financial Services Group.

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