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***** For Immediate Release *****

STARK AREA RTA BEGINS FREE TRAVEL TRAINING PROGRAM

One-on-One Instruction Will Show How to Use SARTA Buses

Have you ever wanted to use public transit, but did not know the first thing about it? Have you ever wondered: “How do I put money in the fare box?” Or, “If I get off the bus at this stop, will I ever get back?”

SARTA’s new Travel Training program provides quality personalized one-on-one instruction for any individual who would like to use the public transportation system. Group orientation sessions are also available. As an added bonus, the training is free and an individual will qualify for a free bus pass on successful completion of the training.

“The new Travel Training Program is a proactive extension of our customer service. By directly working with potential transit users, we can show people how easy, safe, and convenient public transportation can be,” said Kirt Conrad, SARTA’s CEO. The training involves a series of steps from initial one-on-one instructor assistance to gradual fading of trainer assistance, which leads to independent travel by the individual. Those who need assistance can receive one or both of the following types of travel training.

Destination Travel Training - This type of training teaches the individual to go to and from a specific destination usually on a daily basis.

General Travel Training - This type of training provides the individual with more complex instructions. The individual is taught to use the bus for general travel, selecting destinations of his/her choice. Included in this training is learning to read bus schedules.

Travel Training instructors are skilled in assisting seniors or persons who are physically or mentally disabled. Instructors assist trainees in overcoming fears and building confidence so they can use the least restrictive mode of public transportation system to the fullest extent possible. Topics include: Route Training, Trip Planning, Street Crossing, Emergency Skills, Appropriate Social Behavior, and Safety Skills.

With this program, SARTA hopes to encourage riders of its Proline Service to use fixed-route service. A Proline trip costs 5 times as much as a fixed route. With the \$2 million budget cut and 12% service reduction in 2009, SARTA is working towards maximize its operations while still maintaining a high level of rider service. According to Conrad, “In 2010, we will concentrate on improving our service, make routing information more accessible, and transit facilities clean and safe. The Travel training program will help us to increase ridership and operate our service at a lower cost per ride.”

READY TO SIGN UP? Appointments or referrals can be made by filling out a SARTA travel training form at www.SARTAonline.com/training or contacting SARTA at 330-47-SARTA (477-2782), ext 557.

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