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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

New Bus Service to Link Ulster County and Poughkeepsie Train Station

Ulster County residents who want to catch a train at Poughkeepsie soon will be able to take a bus to the station rather than drive over the Mid-Hudson Bridge, pay the toll and hunt for parking.

MTA Metro-North Railroad, the New York State Department of Transportation and Ulster and Dutchess counties have teamed up to create the Ulster-Poughkeepsie LINK, a shuttle service that will operate seven days a week, meeting 25 trains each weekday and 10 trains each weekend day.

"Access to Metro-North's excellent train service should not be limited by lack of a car or a lack of a parking space," said Metro-North President Howard Permut. "This new feeder bus service will increase access to our trains and help alleviate a severely constrained parking situation at the Poughkeepsie Station."

"The Ulster County Legislature has recognized the increasing significance of public transportation in Ulster County," said David Donaldson, the Chairman of the Ulster County Legislature. "With gas prices rising, we have a responsibility to assure that all modes of transportation are accessible to the residents of Ulster County and we will continue to look for cost effective and innovative ways to facilitate it."

"This service will reduce single occupancy vehicle travel within Ulster and Dutchess Counties, resulting in less fuel consumption, less traffic congestion, and reduced emissions to improve air quality in our region," Donaldson said. "It also will increase access to Metro-North trains for commuters, students at SUNY New Paltz, senior citizens and people with disabilities who can not drive. Ulster County appreciates the support of Dutchess County, the New York State Department of Transportation Region 8 Office and Metro-North in seeing this project through."

The service is expected to start in mid-September and will be supported by strategically located Park&Ride lots in Rosendale, New Paltz and Highland.

Poughkeepsie Station, which is the terminus of the Hudson Line 74 miles north of Grand Central Terminal, serves about 1,800 people every day of the week. On weekends, it is one of the Metro-North's busiest stations, used by 1,800 on Saturday and 1,600 people on Sundays. Fully 25% of these people come from Ulster County. On weekends, the percentage from Ulster is even higher.

Despite the presence of 1,035 parking spaces at the station, including 538 in the garage that opened in 2002 there are 400 people on the waiting list for a parking permit.

Ridership growth at Poughkeepsie has been steady and considerable, up 63% since 1992 on weekdays and .85% on weekends during the same period. In the first six months of the year, ridership is up 7% compared to the same period last year.

This bus service, which also will serve the SUNY New Paltz campus on weekends, will be operated by Ulster County Area Transit, UCAT, under contract to NYSDOT. The service will use one new, full size, 35-seat transit bus and two 16-passenger mini-buses for off-peak periods.

The lot in Highland, which is a 15-minute ride from the station, is already in operation and has capacity for 80 or more cars. The lot in New Paltz, which is a 30-minute ride from Poughkeepsie, is under construction. The Rosendale lot, which is 45-minutes from Poughkeepsie, is being expanded. All lots will be paved, lighted and well-signed. Parking will be free with no permit required.

The one-way bus fare will be \$1.25 from Highland, \$1.75 from New Paltz and \$2.00 from Rosendale, where the service will originate (about 10 minutes south of Kingston). For monthly customers who buy a combined bus/rail Uniticket, the bus fare will be \$40, plus the applicable rail fare. (The monthly fare from Poughkeepsie to Grand Central Terminal is \$367.)

Customers will be covered by the Railroad's Guaranteed Ride Home Program, which covers the price of a cab ride from Poughkeepsie back to the Park&Ride lot for all Uniticket customers during periods when the Ulster-Poughkeepsie LINK is not operating. This makes the shuttle bus more attractive for people who occasionally may need to get home for emergencies.

The shuttle operation is funded by a \$1 million federal Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality grant. The buses were purchased by Ulster County using a combination of federal, state and local money.