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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

Bus Service From Ulster County to the Poughkeepsie Train Station Begins Monday The Ulster-Poughkeepsie LINK To Provide Convenient Seven-Day Access

Start up of a new bus service linking four Ulster County communities with Metro-North Railroad service at Poughkeepsie Station begins Monday, state and local transportation officials announced today.

To encourage people to try the LINK, the bus will be free from Monday September 22 through September 30.

With free Park & Ride lots in Rosendale, New Paltz and Highland, the new seven-day service that meets 25 express trains each weekday and 10 express trains each weekend day, is expected to ease the parking crunch at the Poughkeepsie Station.

"The Ulster-Poughkeepsie LINK is the latest attempt to accommodate growing demand for the excellent service Metro-North provides," said Metro-North Railroad President Howard Permut. "Working with our partners, the New York State Department of Transportation and both Ulster and Dutchess counties, we have come up with a solution to encourage the use of public transportation and reduce congestion and pollution."

"Hop on the bus," said Stan Gee, NYSDOT Executive Deputy Commissioner. "That's what hundreds of Ulster County commuters now can do to catch Metro-North at Poughkeepsie, saving gas, and avoiding the search for parking. Following Governor David A. Paterson's direction, the State Department of Transportation is proud to partner in an initiative that will save energy, reduce congestion and reduce greenhouse gases."

"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."

Dutchess County Executive William R. Steinhaus and Chair of the Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council said, "The new Ulster-Poughkeepsie LINK bus service is an excellent example of inter-county cooperation. Dutchess County is proud to support this new service as part of our "Dutchess Goes Green" agenda - by encouraging people to get out of their cars, we can improve air quality, save energy and have a positive effect on our environment."

"With rising gas prices we've seen a dramatic increase in inquiries about ridesharing and transit services," said John Lyons, president and CEO of MetroPool, Inc. a not-for-profit company under contract to NYS DOT to promote ridesharing and transit use throughout the Hudson Valley. "This new bus service and the increased availability of parking spaces will make commuting easier for people in the lower Hudson Valley."

The service will allow Ulster County residents to avoid the drive over the Mid-Hudson Bridge, avoid the toll and forget the hunt for parking.

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 Metro-North's busiest stations, used by 1,800 on Saturday and 1,600 people on Sundays. Approximately 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 Poughkeepsie 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, at the intersection of Routes 299 and 9W, is a 15-minute ride from the station. It has capacity for 80 or more cars. The lot in New Paltz, at the Agway on Route 32, is a 30-minute ride from Poughkeepsie. There are two lots in Rosendale, one across from the Community Center on Route 32 and an overflow lot at the Community Center in the designated area. Rosendale is 45-minutes from Poughkeepsie Station. All lots are 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 a 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.

For Ulster County Area Transit (UCAT) information, visit www.co.ulster.ny.us/ucat or call 888-827-UCAT (888-827-8228).

For train information, visit www.mta.info or call 800-METRO-INFO (800-638-7646).