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ECO Pass program provides 5-millionth free bus ride

'Milestone in longstanding public-private partnership,' program chief says

by Jeb Bing

The ECO Pass program, which offers those who live or work in Hacienda free rides on Wheels buses, has just provided its five-millionth ride since it was started in 1989.

Representatives of Hacienda and the Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA), which operates the bus service, said the program "marks a milestone in a longstanding, unprecedented public-private partnership."

Funded by Hacienda, the ECO Pass program offers a convenient way for people who either live or work in Hacienda to use transit to get to work, school, and local businesses by providing free unlimited bus rides.

"We are pleased to celebrate the five millionth Hacienda Wheels bus rider," said Don Biddle, LAVTA's chairman and a Dublin City Councilman. "LAVTA's partnership with Hacienda is a model to deliver a convenient and affordable commute alternative that improves air quality and reduces traffic congestion."

Michael Tree, LAVTA's executive director, agreed.

"Since 1989 with the ECO Pass program, these five million trips on transit instead of a 17.5 mile daily average trip in a single-occupant vehicle saved over 18 billion pounds of carbon dioxide emissions and over 85 million vehicle miles traveled," he said.

James Paxson, Hacienda's general manager, added:

"The ECO Pass program demonstrates Hacienda's commitment to both environmental stewardship and providing the best possible working and living environment. Hacienda and LAVTA's longstanding success also represents a model relationship and a public-private partnership of remarkable longevity."

ECO Pass holders benefit in a number of ways through their participation in the program.

Riders cut their commute costs at the pump and reduce the cost of automobile maintenance, both important factors in maintaining a household budget.

In addition, Hacienda employers have the opportunity to include the ECO Pass as a no-cost perk to their employee benefits programs, saving their employees literally thousands of dollars each year on the cost of getting to work.

Also, by making the pass available to employees, Hacienda companies comply with the requirements of the Bay Area Commuter Benefits Program.

The ECO Pass also allows all of Hacienda's employees and residents to ride the local Wheels buses for free seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Wheels buses connect to locations throughout Hacienda, and also meet incoming ACE and BART trains during peak commute hours to shuttle Hacienda employees to their businesses and residents to their respective stations.

During off-peak commute hours Wheels shuttles passengers to and from the BART station as well as other destinations in the Wheels service area seven days a week. This includes the Wheels I-680 Express bus service, which provides a direct link to Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek.

For more information about the ECO Pass program, contact the Hacienda Owners Association at www.hacienda.org or by calling (925) 463-9040. For more information about Wheels bus service, contact Wheels customer service at www.wheelsbus.com/