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NEWS RELEASE

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AREA SCHOOLS GET ON BOARD WITH RIDEFINDERS *SCHOOLPOOL* PROGRAM

Several schools in St. Louis region are participating in this FREE program that helps parents form carpools to solve school bus service cuts and other transportation issues

GRANITE CITY, ILL., August 10, 2011 . . . Reductions in state transportation funding have forced many schools in the region to cut bus service for the upcoming school year, raising concerns about how students will get to and from school. But thanks to the *School Pool* program, a free, online ridematching initiative developed by RideFinders, schools throughout the region are finding a safe, affordable and efficient way to transport students. School districts in Illinois such as Edwardsville and O’Fallon, as well as private schools such as Marquette Catholic High School in Alton, the Christian Academy of Greater St. Louis and the South Side Preparatory Academy in Missouri have already enrolled in RideFinders *School Pool* program. RideFinders is encouraging additional schools region-wide to enroll in this unique initiative, which provides a free ridematching service to help parents form carpools to transport their children to and from school.

“We initially launched this program as a way to offset the cutbacks in school bus service as the result of state transportation funding issues,” said Joe Wright, director of RideFinders. “While *School Pool* helps to bridge this gap by providing a safe, reliable transportation option to get students to and from school, it also helps remove vehicles at schools, which results in less traffic congestion and better air quality for everyone.”

Enrollment in RideFinders *School Pool* program is free and open to public and private K-12 schools in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis, Jefferson, Franklin and St. Charles Counties in Missouri; and Madison, St. Clair, Monroe and Jersey Counties in Illinois. To enroll, school administrators first contact RideFinders at (800) 847-7433 or ridefinders@mct.org to schedule a brief meeting at the school to review the program. After the meeting, the school voluntarily joins *School Pool* and creates a unique school passcode that they provide to parents along with information on how to register with the program.

Parents then register with the free *School Pool* ridematching service at www.ridefinders.org by creating a username and password, parent profile and student profile using their school passcode. Next, parents select “match” to see if there are parents from their child’s school who are interested in carpooling. If there are matches, they contact the parents listed to form a *School Pool*, which they register at www.ridefinders.org to receive free benefits. If there are no matches or parents are unable to form a School Pool with their initial matches, parents edit their parent and/or student profiles or log-in at a later date to run new “matches.”

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AREA SCHOOLS NOW ON BOARD WITH RIDEFINDERS SCHOOL POOL PROGRAM FIRST AND FINAL ADD

Ryan Keller, Transportation Director for O'Fallon District 90, first learned about the *School Pool* program this summer and saw it as a great way to reduce district transportation costs. School board members in the district agreed, and the program will officially be made available to parents this fall. "We are excited to get the program up and running," said Keller. "We've already been distributing information about the program to parents, but I think word-of-mouth will really help drive its success. Our hope is that parents will not only utilize the programs for trips to and from school, but also for trips to and from after-school sporting events and other extracurricular activities."

In a time of high fuel costs and tight family budgets, Keller says parents who use *School Pool* will benefit in several ways. "Because *School Pool* will allow parents to make fewer car trips to and from school, the program has the potential to be a significant money and time saver. But, it also has the potential to help build friendships and a sense of community among our students and parents, as they form their carpools and get to know one another."

At the Christian Academy of Greater St. Louis in north St. Louis County, a private school that attracts students from families living in communities across the St. Louis metro area, the program will meet an already existing demand. "Even before we were introduced to the *School Pool* program, we had many families contacting us to request the names and numbers of other families at our school that they could share rides with," said Kathy Wisor, administrative assistant for the Christian Academy of Greater St. Louis. "*School Pool* will make it easy for us to connect these families, and it really seems like a great solution for private school transportation."

School administrators can still enroll in the *School Pool* program for the upcoming school year by contacting RideFinders at (800) 847-7433 or ridefinders@mct.org. Parents interested in having their schools participate in the program may also contact RideFinders for assistance. For more information on RideFinders and its *School Pool* program, please visit www.ridefinders.org.

Created and operated by Madison County Transit (MCT) since 1994, RideFinders improves the quality of life and work in the St. Louis region by providing a free ridematching service to help over 10,000 commuters carpool or vanpool to work, and by partnering with almost 1,000 employers to provide free ridesharing information and incentives to commuters at work. RideFinders is operated as a free public service by MCT for commuters who work in St. Louis City and St. Louis, St. Charles, Jefferson and Franklin Counties in Missouri; and Madison, St. Clair, Jersey and Monroe Counties in Illinois through funding from the United States Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. For more information, visit www.ridefinders.org or call (800) 847-7433.

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