



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **For more information, contact:**

Julie Hauser  
The Hauser Group  
314/436-9090 (office)  
314/629-3887 (cell)

### **METRO, RIDEFINDERS, PARAQUAD AND THE TMA JOIN FORCES TO ASSIST METRO RIDERS IMPACTED BY IMPENDING SERVICE CUTS**

**ST. LOUIS, MO., February 9, 2009 ...** With the final details in place regarding which bus routes and rail services will be affected by Metro's impending service cuts, the organization is working to lessen the impact on commuters by teaming up with RideFinders, Paraquad and the Transportation Management Association (TMA). The four organizations are joining forces for a combined outreach initiative designed to educate transit riders and impacted employers regarding the service cuts and transportation alternatives that can help to keep displaced riders moving despite the service reduction.

Representatives from the participating organizations outlined their plans for the joint initiative this afternoon at a news conference at the Ballas MetroBus Center, which will be the end of the line for many commuters at the end of March. Beginning today and continuing into March, the organizations will hold a series of informational events at targeted community locations and worksites across the metro area to provide commuters with information on the specific routes being impacted. Commuters will be able to learn more about alternate transit routes they may be able to take; carpool or vanpool options they can utilize through RideFinders, even if they don't have a personal vehicle, and additional curb-to-curb transportation options that are available for everyday commuters as well as those with disabilities through the TMA, an association of independent transportation providers. Paraquad and Metro will also be working jointly to help impacted riders with disabilities understand their options in the wake of the cuts.

"We realize that many commuters across the St. Louis area rely on Metro to get to work, school and other destinations and they are anxious about how the impending service cuts will affect their daily routines," notes Ray Friem, Metro's chief operating officer, transit. "Through this outreach initiative, we're hoping to educate customers about the routes that will be affected, introduce commuters to some new transportation options they may be able to utilize to get to their destinations, and also introduce them to the many benefits that carpooling and vanpooling can offer for their daily commutes."

To reach the individual riders who will be most impacted by the pending service changes, in the coming weeks the participating organizations will have representatives and literature about their services available at more than a dozen transit centers across the region and at several Park-Ride lots serving the impacted routes. Brochures with specific details about the service changes will be widely distributed. In addition, RideFinders and Metro are scheduling dozens of meetings at different employer locations where significant percentages of the workforce are transit dependent.

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## Joint initiative launched to help displaced Metro riders

### First Add

"We have received a number of calls from nursing homes and other employers outside of the I-270 loop who are concerned about how their employees will get to work," notes Joe Wright, director of RideFinders. "We already have informational events scheduled at 10 different nursing homes between now and mid-March so we can work with the impacted employees to see if there are existing carpools or vanpools they can join or if we can help match various individuals up to form new pools." Wright adds, "We are also reaching out to all express transit riders so they can share the ride and continue to have an affordable commute to work in downtown St. Louis."

Additional events will be added to the schedule over the coming weeks and employers who are concerned about how the service cuts will impact their workforce are encouraged to contact RideFinders or Metro . Representatives from RideFinders and Metro are available to come out to their worksites and meet in person to discuss their specific commuting challenges and potential solutions.

The service cuts also will impact Metro's Call-A-Ride service for people with disabilities, and Metro, the TMA and Paraquad are working together to plan some specific outreach initiatives to help those individuals. The first informational meeting will be held at Paraquad's offices on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

The news conference also provided a preview of what riders will see as the service changes go into effect. Metro displayed a sample of the vinyl signage that will be posted at approximately 2300 of its 9000 bus stops and bus shelters between now and March 30<sup>th</sup>.

"We can't have people waiting for a bus that won't be coming," noted Bob Baer, President and CEO of Metro. "And, because we hope to restore service as soon as possible, we can't go to the considerable expense of removing and later replacing these signs. That would add unneeded cost to service restoration, and the bus shelters, because of cost, would not likely return."

For more information on the joint initiative or for specifics on the impending transit service cuts visit [www.metrostlouis.org](http://www.metrostlouis.org) or call 314-231-2345 from Missouri or 618-271-2345 from Illinois. For more information on ridesharing with RideFinders, visit [www.ridefinders.org](http://www.ridefinders.org) or call (800) VIP-RIDE (800-847-7433).

**Metro** is the operator of the Metro public transportation system for the St. Louis region, which includes the 87-vehicle, 46-mile MetroLink light rail system; 408 MetroBus vehicle fleet that currently operates on 75 MetroBus routes; and Metro Call-A-Ride, a paratransit fleet of 123 vans. Over 54 million passengers boarded on the Metro System in Fiscal Year 2007. Metro also oversees the operations of the St. Louis Downtown Airport and surrounding industrial business park, the Gateway Arch Revenue Collections Center, the Gateway Arch Transportation System, the Gateway Arch Riverboats, and the Gateway Arch Parking Facility. For more information, visit [www.metrostlouis.org](http://www.metrostlouis.org).

**RideFinders** was created by Madison County Transit (MCT) in 1994 to improve the quality of life and work in the St. Louis region by providing a free ridematching service to help over 9,000 commuters carpool or vanpool to work. RideFinders also partners with over 1,400 employers to provide free ridesharing information and incentives to their employees at work. RideFinders is operated by MCT as a free public service for the region through Federal grant funding from the United States Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. RideFinders serves commuters working in St. Louis City and St. Louis County, St. Charles, Jefferson and Franklin Counties in Missouri; and Madison, St. Clair and Monroe Counties in Illinois. For more information, contact RideFinders at (800) VIP-RIDE (800-847-7433) or visit [www.ridefinders.org](http://www.ridefinders.org).

**Joint initiative launched to help displaced Metro riders  
Second and Final Add**

***The Transportation Management Association (TMA)** is an association of independent transportation providers who have joined together to create a comprehensive and coordinated transportation network. The TMA provides curb-to-curb van service in St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and St. Charles County. The TMA also provides large-group transportation for special events. The TMA has a large diverse vehicle fleet including fully accessible vehicles with wheelchair-lifts for customers requiring this equipment. Transportation can be arranged for a single trip or a recurring standing reservation. Agencies and corporations can arrange contractual purchase-of-service arrangements to simplify the payment process. Trip cost is based on mileage, the number of people traveling and any special equipment that may be required to provide the service. Consumers can access this coordinated network with one phone call for service or information on transportation services that are available. The number is 314-652-2600 for individual or agencies and corporations can call the business office at 314-982-1505.*

***Paraquad, Inc.** is a private, not-for-profit community-based Center for Independent Living. Paraquad was founded in 1970 and is a St. Louis organization where professional independent living services are provided by staff members with disabilities. The fact that directors as well as staff members have disabilities enables us to establish keen insight into the ever-changing needs of individuals with all types of disabilities and to develop programs that respond to those needs. Paraquad's programs are created by staff, based on input from participants and have evolved and expanded along with the needs of the disability community. Paraquad exists for the sole purpose of offering services that assist people with disabilities to live independently in society. The organization's work with the community seeks to effect real positive change by removing not only physical barriers, but the intangible barriers as well. Open entry to services, education, employment, housing and health care means that people with disabilities can lead independent lives through choice and opportunity.*

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