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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Commuters saved \$25,000 while diverting over 72,000 pounds of pollutants during Central Ohio's Commuter Challenge

(COLUMBUS – July 8, 2016) The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), car2go and CoGo announce the final environmental and cost savings impact of the inaugural month-long Commuter Challenge. During the month of June, Central Ohio commuters replaced driving alone with more sustainable modes of transportation reducing vehicular congestion and improving air quality throughout the region.

In total, 560 commuters logged 5,219 trips using sustainable modes, covering 93,531 miles. Commuters diverted 72,580 pounds of greenhouse gases and pocketed \$25,253 in cost savings by avoiding driving alone.

Eligible modes of transportation for the Challenge included transit, carpooling, vanpooling, walking, and biking to work, social events and other locations in an effort to reduce congestion and improve air quality. The campaign targeted Central Ohio, with an emphasis on downtown employees and residents, young professionals, and new transit users. Commuters who logged trips were eligible for daily prizes and grand prizes, including a \$500 VISA gift card, a \$200 VISA gift card, and one free entrée per week from Chipotle for a year.

“The Commuter Challenge was a pilot program and we didn't know what to expect from Central Ohio commuters,” states William Murdock, MORPC Executive Director. “But with over 500 participants, the strong interest surprised us and demonstrated that using a more sustainable mode of transportation is very doable. With all of the options in our region, it showed you don't always have to drive alone to work or to run errands. I'm so proud of the results - together the participants of the Commuter Challenge created a big impact on congestion and air quality.”

The results of the Commuter Challenge were celebrated at an event at Columbus Commons on Wednesday, July 6. MORPC Executive Director William Murdock, COTA President & CEO Curtis Stitt, and CD102.5 President Randy Malloy addressed commuters and awarded grand prizes at the lunchtime event which promised free scoops of Jeni's ice cream to the first 100 guests.

Emissions from motor vehicles are the largest contributor to ozone pollution in Central Ohio. Reducing the number of single-occupant vehicles by shifting to more sustainable modes of transportation can improve regional air quality and decrease traffic congestion.