



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:  
Clean Air NY: Amanda Moss  
202-862-1226  
[amoss@cleanairny.org](mailto:amoss@cleanairny.org)

American Lung Association in New York:  
Amy Henes  
212-889-3370 x 24  
[ahenes@alany.org](mailto:ahenes@alany.org)

## **New York State Department of Transportation and American Lung Association in New York Announce “Commit to Cleaner Air” Week**

*Citizens Encouraged to Take Action by Pledging to Improve Downstate NY's Air Quality*



ALBANY, NY, June 15, 2009 – New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Acting Commissioner Stan Gee, in partnership with the American Lung Association in New York, today declared the week of June 15<sup>th</sup> “Commit to Cleaner Air” Week. Through its Clean Air NY initiative, NYSDOT, in collaboration with local businesses, individuals and community partners, seeks to motivate New York metro area residents to make simple changes to everyday travel choices to improve air quality. New Yorkers are encouraged to take action and “pledge” online at [www.cleanairny.org/commit](http://www.cleanairny.org/commit).

“Air quality is a huge problem for the New York metro area. This week, we’re trying to not only educate residents about the problem, but encourage them to become part of the solution,” Commissioner Gee said.

Air pollution from vehicles not only contributes to climate change - it can also cause health issues. On April 17<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that greenhouse gas pollution poses a threat to human health. Recent studies have shown that poor air quality can cause respiratory and heart disease, restrict fetal growth and even cause premature death. “Commit to Cleaner Air” Week kicks off in conjunction with the start of the summer—when the air quality in the region is more likely to be unhealthy.

“According to the American Lung Association’s tenth annual State of the Air report, over 12.5 million New Yorkers - a stunning 65 percent of the state’s residents - live in counties where air pollution levels endanger lives. For the millions of New Yorkers struggling with lung health issues, breathing is always on their minds. Taking appropriate actions, such as carpooling or using mass transit, helps limit emissions and the negative

effects to public health from releasing thousands of tons of pollution into the air,” said Michael Seilback, Vice President, Public Policy & Communications for the American Lung Association in New York.

Throughout the week:

- The Clean Air NY cloud mascot will travel around the New York City metro area on public transit passing out educational items, which coincides with the launch of Clean Air NY’s public outreach campaign on TV, radio, transit, online and at special events.
- New Yorkers can visit the Clean Air NY Facebook page to learn about the Spot the Mascot and Name the Mascot contests for a chance to win free transit passes.
- The cloud mascot will visit Clean Air Champions New York Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn and Northern Westchester Hospital in Mount Kisco to educate employees and visit with sick children to call attention to the health risks associated with poor air quality.
- Nassau County, as a Clean Air Champion, will shine a blue light over its courthouse each night, to represent the hope for clean, clear skies in the region.
- A concluding event will be held Friday in Long Island, where Nassau County will be honored as a Clean Air Champion and Executive Thomas Suozzi, alongside the American Lung Association, Clean Air NY and the Girl Scouts of Long Island, will speak to the importance of cleaner air. The Girl Scouts will present artwork they created – 123 green footsteps to represent the number of Nassau County employees who are reducing their carbon footprint by switching to a compressed work week.

If just 10 percent of commuters in the New York metropolitan area carpooled, worked from home or used public transit once a week, emissions of ozone precursors would be reduced by about 5,100 tons each week – the weight equivalent of 2,600 SUVs.

### **About Clean Air NY**

Clean Air NY is an initiative sponsored by the New York State Department of Transportation in support of regional air quality efforts. Clean Air NY’s network of individuals and businesses believes that every person has the power to help make New York’s air healthier and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Clean Air NY educates the public on simple everyday changes that reduce driving and provides real-time updates on Air Quality Action Days via text messaging, e-mail and media notifications. To learn more, visit [CleanAirNY.org](http://CleanAirNY.org).

### **About American Lung Association in New York**

Now in its second century, the American Lung Association in New York is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. With your generous support, the American Lung Association is “Fighting for Air” through research, education and advocacy. For more information about the American Lung Association, or to support our work, call 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872) or visit [www.alany.org](http://www.alany.org).

###