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*** For Immediate Release ***

Energy education program rolls into Columbus in May Benefits include hydrogen fuel cell bus, unique middle school curriculum

When the first of the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority's (SARTA) growing fleet of futuristic hydrogen fuel cell-powered buses drove through the transit authority's gate in 2016, CEO Kirt Conrad immediately thought "rolling classroom." That thought will soon become a reality when SARTA brings its new "Fueling Our Future" energy education program to a number of Columbus-area schools this month.

Fueling Our Future was developed in conjunction with the Renewable Hydrogen Fuel Cell Collaborative (RHFCC) and the Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE). Its curriculum is designed to introduce seventh graders to alternative fuels and the environmental impact of clean technologies. It will also help them explore career opportunities expected in the emerging renewable energy industry. Funding for the program is provided by the Federal Transportation Administration and the Ohio Environmental Educational Fund grants.

While a visit from one of SARTA's hydrogen fuel cell buses is the centerpiece of the program, the accompanying curriculum offers students additional hands-on learning experiences such as building a wind turbine and batteries and assembling a fuel cell-powered model car.

According to Dr. Andrew Thomas, Director of the RHFCC, "The program's lesson plans and kits are aligned with state Content Standards for seventh graders." With only slight modifications it may be used in eighth grade and high school. All materials needed for the curriculum and the three-hour professional development course for science teachers are available free of charge from SARTA and the RHFCC.

SARTA's Conrad said he is particularly pleased that the curriculum includes materials related to career opportunities in renewable energy-related fields. "Ohio is already a leading center for hydrogen fuel cell R&D and manufacturing," he noted. "A recent study concluded that HFCs have the potential to create 65,000 jobs in our state. Letting young students know those jobs will be out there and what type of training and education they'll need to secure them gives them a leg up on dominating a field that will drive the American economy for decades to come."

The schedule for the Columbus Fueling Our Future sessions, including the fuel cell bus, will be at these Columbus locations. To arrange a media avail at the schools please contact Tara Sheffer at (614)287-5903.

Monday, May 6, 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., Columbus Gifted Academy, 100 West Fourth Ave.

Monday, May 6, 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Arts Impact Middle School, 680 Jack Gibbs Blvd.

Wednesday, May 7, 9:00 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. Dominion Middle School, 330 E. Dominion Blvd.

Wednesday, May 7, 2:45 - 3:30 p.m., Harambee Christian School, 1000 Bonham Ave.

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The Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) was established in 1997 to meet the public transportation needs of Stark County, Ohio residents. SARTA provides more than 2.5 million rides annually to commuters, seniors, individuals with disabilities, students, and veterans through the system's fixed routes, Proline, MedLine, veterans, and campus bus services.

Along with providing safe, reliable, affordable transportation to destinations in Stark and beyond, SARTA is a nationally-recognized leader in the use of transit technology. Receiving numerous awards for its clean energy initiatives which include the acquisition and deployment of one of the world's largest fleets of hydrogen fuel powered-buses. To learn more please visit sartaonline.com or contact Kristie Petty-Cox by phone at 330-477-2782 or via email at kcox@sartaonline.com.