



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
February 4, 2008

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Bus Tours Target Small Towns

North Carolina's Northeast Commission sponsors travel itineraries for the motorcoach industry

Edenton, NC – Many more visitors are expected to visit the towns of Northeastern North Carolina as a result of a “Hub & Spoke” marketing initiative sponsored by the North Carolina’s Northeast Commission.

Local tourism officials were selected by the North Carolina’s Northeast Commission to represent the 16-county region at recent tourism market places. Russ Haddad, Director of the Elizabeth City Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Lynn Lewis, Director of the Washington Tourism Development Authority, represented the region at the 2008 American Bus Association Marketplace, a six-day international event beginning February 2nd at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. The event is to be attended by 3,300 travel industry executives seeking new and improved destination ideas, and the northeastern North Carolina representatives gave them what they were looking for: newly packaged itineraries perfectly suited to the tour bus visitor with ideas for visiting local towns while staying in the hubs of the larger towns of Washington, Roanoke Rapids, Elizabeth City, and the Outer Banks and Manteo. Haddad and Lewis had seven minutes to sell the tourism events of the region to each travel industry executive, encouraging them to bring busloads of tourists to North Carolina’s Northeast Region. During the event, they are marketing the region to many companies using regional marketing materials and prepared bus trip itineraries.

Motorcoach trips to the region were also marketed by NET at the North Carolina Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting held January 26th-30th in Asheville, NC. Tanya Young, Communications Manager for Roanoke Island Festival Park in Dare County and Sarah Katherine Adams, Director of the Martin County Travel and Tourism Authority, represented the North Carolina’s Northeast Region at this event, sharing marketing materials and distributing bus tour itineraries to motorcoach officials. Young and Adams spoke with all 24 motorcoach operators present during the event and marketed the benefits of “Hub & Spoke” traveling within North Carolina’s Northeast Region. “Most of the tour buses are passing through our area on the way to the Outer Banks, so the operators were grateful to learn about the historical locations we have along the route. The tour operators like the ‘Hub & Spoke’ idea because it helps them organize their tour groups around a geographical area or a specific theme.”

In March, Penny Leary-Smith, Director of the Dismal Swamp Canal Visitor Center in Camden County and Diane Sawyer, Public Information Officer for Currituck Travel and Tourism will represent the Northeast Region at Travel South in Gulfport-Biloxi, MS to continue spreading the idea that Northeastern North Carolina is a “Hub & Spoke” motorcoach destination.

The sample motorcoach itineraries were prepared by NET, the Northeast Tourism group led by Nancy Nicholls, Tourism Development Authority Director for Chowan County. NET prepared the itineraries during a one-day retreat at Hope Plantation in Windsor, NC. Sample itineraries begin at one of the larger towns in the region where 50 people can stay together in hotels and eat together at restaurants, then provide options for visiting two to three smaller towns within an hour drive of each hub. “This ‘Hub & Spoke’ concept allows small towns to reap the

benefits brought by a group of 50 travelers spending the day in the small town. These groups will have the opportunity to visit the local attractions, spend money in the local shops, and what's even better, once they visit the small town, they are more likely to visit again and again," said Nicholls.

North Carolina's Northeast Region relies on tourism to support our local economy, and with the rise in gas prices, more tourists will take shorter day trips or use mass transportation systems, like buses. Bus trips are affordable ways of vacationing, and North Carolina's Northeast is taking advantage of this by providing schedules for motorcoach travelers. "Improving the economy of North Carolina's Northeast Region takes a multi-faceted approach," stated Vann Rogerson, President/CEO of North Carolina's Northeast Commission. "As we work together to diversify our economy and increase the capacity for new jobs, we must include tourism as an important part of economic development."

For additional information about tourism in North Carolina's Northeast Region, visit www.visitncne.com or www.ncnortheast.com.

About North Carolina's Northeast Commission:

North Carolina's Northeast Commission is dedicated to increasing the standard of living for citizens in its sixteen-county region through tourism, industrial, and business development. The 16 counties that comprise the regional Commission are: Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, Hyde, Martin, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell, and Washington. For more information about the North Carolina's Northeast Commission, contact us at www.ncnortheast.com and www.visitncne.com.



Caption: The Northeast Tourism group (NET), led by Nancy Nicholls and sponsored by North Carolina's Northeast Commission, met recently at Hope Plantation to prepare motorcoach itineraries to encourage tourists to travel by bus to the region.

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