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UMaine Recognized for Improving Air Quality and Reducing Traffic

August 10, 2007

Contact: Joe Carr at (207) 581-3571

ORONO -- A joint program of two federal government agencies has designated the University of Maine as one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters™.

The Best Workplaces for Commuters™ program recognizes employers that provide environmentally friendly commuter benefits to employees. The designation identifies UMaine as an organization that is committed to reducing pollution, commuting costs and traffic congestion. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Dept. of Transportation administer the program.

UMaine is the first Maine employer to be recognized through the program.

"We are delighted to receive this designation, which affirms UMaine's commitment to environmentally friendly policies," says UMaine President Robert Kennedy. "It also demonstrates our faculty and staff members' willingness to participate in programs that provide the opportunity to make individual choices that have a broad impact. Our programs are successful only because of UMaine's employees."

In selecting UMaine for this designation, the Best Workplaces for Commuters™ program noted several UMaine initiatives:

- An arrangement with the Bangor Area Transportation bus service, through which UMaine pays a blanket fee that allows all faculty members, staff members and students to ride anywhere on the system by simply displaying their UMaine identification card
- The Green Bike Program, where green-painted bikes are left in various spots around campus for use by anyone who wishes to use two-wheeled transportation to get to another campus destination
- An ambitious carpooling program, set to begin Sept. 1, through which employees who carpool will receive free parking permits and preferred parking spaces

The carpooling program includes an emergency ride home provision, sponsored by "Go Maine," a statewide commuting solutions initiative sponsored by the Maine Dept. of Transportation and the Maine Turnpike Authority.

UMaine has approximately 2,500 employees and 12,000 students.

This is the second time in six months that a government entity has recognized UMaine for conservation and environmentally conscious policies. In February, Maine's Public Utilities Commission's Efficiency Maine program gave UMaine \$50,000 as an incentive payment in recognition of UMaine's work to save energy through more efficient lighting systems and similar programs. Additionally, a new grant from the Johnson Controls Educational Giving Program will allow UMaine's student-run Green Campus Initiative program to dramatically increase recycling activities.

Best Workplaces for Commuters™ (www.bwc.gov) is a public-private partnership

developed by the EPA and DOT. EPA and DOT have established a voluntary "National Standard of Excellence" for employer-provided commuter benefits. The program challenges employers across the country to voluntarily meet that standard.