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**Stay Connected on the Bus: Get Ready to Log on to
*TANK's Mobile Wi-Fi – A Project of NKU's College of Informatics***

(June 27, 2007) – The region's first wide-ranging, free mobile Wi-Fi service to extend into three counties will be launched June 30 by the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky in a research project initiated and designed by Northern Kentucky University.

Get ready to log on to *TANK's Mobile Wi-Fi – A Project of NKU's College of Informatics*.

The pilot project will be launched with the mobile, wireless Internet access available free to all riders on 20 TANK buses by June 30. The free service will be available first on select TANK express routes, which attract thousands of daily commuters in Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties.

Combining the technology of wireless Internet routers with the technology of wireless cellular phone signals, *TANK's Mobile Wi-Fi* takes wireless Internet connection to the next level – and on the road. To ensure quality mobile Wi-Fi service, project researchers and designers from NKU's College of Informatics have been testing the service along Northern Kentucky's roadways for the past few weeks.

"I'm proud of the work that NKU's College of Informatics is doing with TANK to promote innovation around mobile computing and transportation technologies," NKU President James Votruba said. "This project is a shining example of how NKU is partnering with its community to nurture, prepare and sustain talent in order to advance regional progress."

TANK's Mobile Wi-Fi was made possible by a \$1.6 million Congressionally Directed Appropriation secured by U.S. Senator Jim Bunning (R-KY) for NKU's College of

Informatics. The project is being administered by the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) over a four-year period and focuses on transportation technology research.

"I am pleased to have helped NKU and TANK with this technology to help riders stay connected to the Internet," said Senator Bunning. "Bringing Wi-Fi to TANK shows NKU's sharp minds at work, and the people of Northern Kentucky will benefit greatly by this partnership."

The research conducted by NKU for the pilot project can be used by the FTA to improve transportation resources in other regions throughout the country. TANK's Mobile Wi-Fi is the first phase of the pilot project and research being conducted by NKU's College of Informatics.

David Hirsch, Program Director for NKU, led a team of faculty and students from NKU's College of Informatics to create the innovative system that provides the mobile Wi-Fi service on the buses.

"NKU came to TANK with this idea, and we believe the success of this partnership will allow Northern Kentucky to leapfrog over many metropolitan regions in the level of technology and quality of public transportation we provide our community," said Andrew Aiello, TANK Deputy General Manager.

The pilot project hits a bullseye in two targets of the Vision 2015 report adopted a year ago as a roadmap for Northern Kentucky's future. Vision 2015 pursues a goal of one electronic platform for the region that is in alignment with colleges in the area. Vision 2015 also embraces a viable regional public transportation system as a must-have for Northern Kentucky's economic growth and vitality. Both a viable e-community and good public transit are considered imperatives for attracting creative talent and sustaining a high quality of life in the region.

NKU's College of Informatics chose TANK as the platform and partner for the Mobile Wi-Fi project. It chose Lily Pad as a partner for the Wi-Fi branding and launch. The Mobile Wi-Fi is one piece of the research project, and more elements and partners will be announced at a later date.

One goal of both TANK and the NKU researchers in this pilot project is to increase bus ridership.

"TANK is very interested in attracting new commuters," said Gina Douthat, director of communications and development for TANK. "We believe there is an untapped market for public transportation, especially among younger commuters who'd like to avoid the hassles and

expense of daily driving and who would like to make better use of their time. TANK's Mobile Wi-Fi provides another big incentive for riding the bus.”

How the technology works:

The wireless connection used in TANK's Mobile Wi-Fi project applies previous research and is the first innovative application of this technology in the region. It is based on cellular technology, and takes advantage of the increased speed and relevance of cellular networks. The faculty and students at NKU worked with wireless vendors to design the architecture of the project. They built and evaluated solutions, then enhanced those – performing back-end software development.

The connection uses cellular technology to communicate with the Internet. The cellular-based data card feeds the digital data to a cellular router, which then sends a Wi-Fi broadcast signal out through a bus-area-network, or BAN. This allows riders to connect to this network in exactly the same way they connect to their home or work Wi-Fi network. Because the technology is cellular-based, the wireless connection remains mobile. Utilizing funding from the federal grant , NKU's College of Informatics is able to provide the Wi-Fi service free to all bus riders on the routes and buses where it has been installed during this pilot program.

When bus riders turn on their Wi-Fi enabled laptops or PDAs and search for a wireless connection, the TANK Mobile Wi-Fi bus-area-network will be listed. Users will simply need to accept the terms of usage and then will be connected to the free wireless service anytime they are riding a TANK bus enabled with the Wi-Fi technology.

TANK riders who use the Mobile Wi-Fi will be invited to comment and provide feedback on the service through a short survey. Feedback from the Mobile Wi-Fi users is an important element in the overall research project. The feedback will be used by the NKU researchers as they test, benchmark and configure the technology going forward, and will be used in their research reports to the FTA.

The first phase of the pilot project will launch June 30 on 20 TANK buses on the following express bus routes traveling interstate highways in Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties:

- Route 1X – Florence Express/Union
- Route 2X – Airport Express
- Route 25X – Alexandria Express
- Route 30X – Independence Express

-More-

- Route 32X – Burlington Express

TANK also will provide free wireless service at the following TANK Park & Ride locations:

- Madison Pike
- Alexandria Pike
- Houston Road

About NKU's College of Informatics:

The College of Informatics unites business, communication and computer technologies to help students understand the changing face of technology in the business world. The College's goal is to graduate students who are savvy about information technology, who are accomplished in communications and who are intellectually agile "renaissance people" for the information age.

Learn more about the College of Informatics at informatics.nku.edu.

About TANK:

The Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky is an integral part of the Northern Kentucky community, providing public transit service to Boone, Campbell, and Kenton Counties as well as downtown Cincinnati for more than 30 years. Close to 4 million passengers each year rely on the more than 100 TANK buses throughout the region to get them where they need to be.

TANK is committed to providing safe, reliable, customer-oriented transportation for the people of our community. TANK's commitment extends to addressing current and future needs of the community. A major component of this commitment involves keeping abreast of advanced technologies and to providing services which will improve traffic flow, protect the environment and assist in the economic development of the Northern Kentucky region.

TANK is on the web at www.tankbus.org.

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