



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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June Figures Jump 39%

Bus Ridership Continues Record-Breaking Climb

As Growing Numbers "Ride the Wave"

PORT HURON, MI — Ridership on local buses jumped 39% in June, continuing a record-breaking climb that started in March when the existing local record of 71,559 riders was broken for the first time in 27 years.

The Blue Water Area Transportation Commission (BWATC) reports transporting 83,335 riders this June, compared with 59,925 in June 2007. This follows closely on the heels of a 21.6% jump in May, when ridership increased from 63,333 in May 2007 to 77,026 in May 2008.

"More and more," says BWATC General Manager Jim Wilson. "People in our community are saving money and helping the environment by using public transit."

Ever since gas prices started edging over four dollars a gallon, bus systems throughout the country started experiencing increased ridership. During the first quarter of 2008, Americans took more than 2.6 billion trips on public transportation, representing a 3.4% increase over the first quarter of 2007, according to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

BWATC ridership has also been rising — but at a much faster rate. Quarterly ridership jumped 29% with 237,146 riders during the second quarter of 2008, compared to 183,783 riders during the same quarter in 2007. Ridership jumped 22% when there were 214,878 riders during the first quarter of 2008, compared to 175,454 riders during the first quarter in 2007.

"Rising gas prices are motivating people to look for new options and they are discovering that we have a great local bus system," says Jim Fisher, BWATC Board Vice Chairman and Port Huron City Councilman. "I personally enjoy the convenience of being able to ride my bicycle to work and then ride home on a bus equipped with an easy-to-use bicycle storage rack."

“We are influenced by national factors, such as rising gas pump prices,” says Jim Wilson, BWATC General Manager. “But, there are also important local factors, such as our affordable 75-cent bus fares, easy-to-use bicycle racks, extended hours, new routes, and our fleet of low emission natural gas powered buses.”

BWATC services have been significantly expanded during fiscal year 2008 by three Federal grants designed to eliminate transportation barriers to employment for low-income individuals. These grants have extended local bus hours to 10:00 p.m. during the work week (Monday through Friday), expanded service from Port Huron into Chesterfield Township, connecting to downtown Detroit in partnership with the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), and introduced a voucher system that pays for approved transportation for eligible individuals along routes and during times not covered by existing bus services.

“Whatever the reasons, an increase in the number of people choosing to ride the bus is a good thing for the entire community,” says Mike Latuszek, Transportation Planner, St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission. “A healthy transportation network is essential to our daily way of life.”

About the American Public Transportation Association (APTA)

APTA is a nonprofit international association of more than 1,500 member organizations including public transportation systems; planning, design, construction and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions; and state associations and departments of transportation. APTA members serve the public interest by providing safe, efficient and economical public transportation services and products. APTA members serve more than 90 percent of persons using public transportation in the United States and Canada.

About the Blue Water Area Transportation Commission (BWATC)



BWATC continues a proud tradition of public transit that has served Port Huron for more than a century. Nationally, the Port Huron community has always been an innovator in public transit. Port Huron was one of the first communities in the country to operate an electrified transit system in the 1880s, one of the first to operate motor coaches when they became popular in the 1930s, and recognized this year for producing its own compressed natural gas since 1996. Following an eight-year hiatus, the current bus service began in September 1976. Since then, BWATC has carried more than 19 million riders and continues the tradition of innovation with its fleet of alternative fueled buses.