



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March Sets New Record in Bus Ridership,

Continues Growth of Mass Transit Use

PORT HURON, MI — The Blue Water Area Transportation Commission set a new record in ridership last month when 94,876 passengers rode local buses, continuing a trend toward greater use of mass transit. The new milestone represents a 24% jump since March 2008 (76,713 riders) and a 47% jump since March 2007 (64,430 riders).

BWATC's current climb in ridership started as early as March 2008, when figures broke the 27-year milestone that had been in place since March 1981.

Officials point to several factors that have encouraged passengers to try using our local bus system. These include low bus fares (75 cents for adults) in a faltering economy, extended hours that better match work schedules, easy-to-use bicycle racks, and new routes and services.

"We are, of course, also influenced by national factors, such as gas pump prices, growing global concerns about the environment, and energy conservation," explains BWATC general manager Jim Wilson.

"No matter what the reasons may be, an increase in the number of people choosing to ride the bus is a good thing for our entire community," adds Mike Latuszek, transportation planner for the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission.

BWATC operates fixed route and dial-a-ride services in the Port Huron area, as well as a seasonal historic trolley tour and commuter service to Macomb County.

Quarterly comparisons also confirm the trend of rising ridership. When 256,778 passengers rode local buses during the first quarter of 2009, it represented a 19% jump over the 214,878 passengers riding during the first quarter of 2008.

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“I think people are probably surprised by how easy, comfortable, and economical it can be to ride the bus,” says Jim Fisher, BWATC Board vice chairman and Port Huron City Council mayor pro-tem. “This is probably one of the biggest reasons why our ridership has continued to climb, even though gas prices have gone down.”

Throughout the country, an increasing number of Americans are using public transportation, according to reports from the American Public Transportation Association. With Americans taking 10.7 billion trips on public transportation in 2008, this translates into the highest level of ridership in 52 years and a modern ridership record.

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BWATC continues a proud tradition of innovation in public transit that has served Port Huron for more than a century. Port Huron was one of the nation’s first communities to operate an electrified transit system in the 1880s and one of the first to operate motor coaches when they became popular in the 1930s. 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 by producing its own compressed natural gas alternative fuel since 1996.

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