



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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Blue Water Area Transit Awarded Federal Funding to Refurbish Buses, Replace Bus-Washing System

PORT HURON, MI — Blue Water Area Transit will receive over \$1.4 million under the Federal Transit Administration's "State of Good Repair" program to refurbish eight buses and replace the agency's bus-washing system.

BWAT was awarded funding for two of the 152 projects that the FTA selected nationwide, including six in Michigan.

The State of Good Repair initiative is a new federal program dedicated to improving our nation's rail and bus transit systems with funds authorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act. The program was developed in response to a national study showing that close to \$78 billion was needed to bring the nation's rail and bus transit systems into a state of good repair.

"The millions of people who depend on transit each day to get to work, to school or to the doctor expect a safe and comfortable ride," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood in announcing the awards, which totaled \$776 million.

"We are constantly seeking new ways to increase our efficiency, and these are both projects that will help us do so," explains Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager.

The first BWAT project will replace a drive-thru system that the agency has used to wash buses for the past 25 years. The project will include installing a new water filtration system and high speed air blower.

"The new system will allow us to save more than three million gallons of water per year and shave 80% off of our water bill," says Dave Frasier, BWAT director of maintenance and procurement. "Clean buses last longer and are part of the service we provide."

The new system includes water recycling, ozone odor elimination, a clean water rinse, and undercarriage washing. BWAT washes an average of 80 buses per day and some buses that travel country roads are washed twice a day.

The second BWAT project will “add five years to the life cycle” of eight 26-foot Orion II buses, which make up the bulk of the agency’s fleet, according to Frasier. This project includes a complete overhaul of the engine, transmission, electric system, and air system, as well as the installation of new brakes and compressed natural gas fuel tanks. It also includes interior touchups and exterior bodywork and painting.

No longer made by Orion Bus Industries, these low floor buses ride on an air bag suspension with the ability to kneel the bus to seven inches above the ground for easier passenger boarding. Their capacity is 22 passengers (or 16, with two wheelchairs).

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BWAT 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, BWAT has carried more than 20 million riders and continues the tradition of innovation by producing its own compressed natural gas alternative fuel since 1996.

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