



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOUR RETIRED BUSES SOLD

Blue Water Area Transit Helps Community Enterprises With Timely Cost-Cutting Opportunity

PORT HURON, MI — With major funding cuts looming, Community Enterprises of St. Clair County has made a very timely purchase of four retired buses from Blue Water Area Transit for one dollar each. All four buses run on compressed natural gas, which is a low-emission American-made alternative fuel that costs less and burns cleaner than either gasoline or diesel fuel.

“Each bus purchase has saved us \$7-8,000, and that’s not including our benefits from using compressed natural gas,” says Jim Fortushniak, CE executive director. “We feel very fortunate to have a transit company so committed to the needs of our community.”

Made by Goshen Coach in Elkhart, Indiana, the buses can transport up to 15 passengers, or fewer when two wheelchairs are included. All four buses have wheelchair lifts, climate control, and upgraded air suspension in order to provide a more comfortable ride.

Meanwhile, St. Clair County Community Mental Health is trimming agency payments in order to correct a \$4.4 million budget deficit. CE provides CMH clients with job assistance.

Established in October 2012, Community Enterprises is a spinoff from the ARC of St. Clair County. Both are private nonprofit organizations that serve adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The ARC focuses on advocacy, while CE provides community interaction and employment.



BWAT sold four of these retired Goshen Coach buses to Community Enterprises. They run on compressed natural gas, a low-emission alternative fuel, and are equipped with wheelchair lifts, climate control, and upgraded air suspension. (photo courtesy BWAT)

“Our first immediate need is transporting our crew that builds handicapped ramps for homes, so we are modifying one of the coaches for this,” Fortushniak explains. CE will use the other buses, which are equipped with wheelchair lifts, for general transportation.

“Our goal is to maintain a fleet that is clean and dependable,” according to Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager. “This involves managing our grant money so that we can replace vehicles when they qualify for retirement.”

Transit buses can retire when they meet criteria set by the Federal Transit Administration. The Goshen coaches that CE has just purchased have reached their required retirement age of seven years or 200,000 miles.

“This is one of the first times we’ve been able to sell a retired bus,” says Dave Frasier, BWAT director of procurement and maintenance. Marketable buses are listed when they retire with Michigan’s online auction site (www.mibid.bidcorp.com). Larger diesel buses that have retired in the past were scrapped.

Local CNG vehicles can fill up at BWAT’s fueling station at 2021 Lapeer Avenue. Certified by the State of Michigan, the station is open Monday - Saturday, 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., and accepts Discover, Master Card, and VISA. The current price is \$2.05 per gasoline gallon equivalent.

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 23 million riders and continues the tradition of innovation by producing its own compressed natural gas alternative fuel since 1996. BWAT is now the largest producer of CNG and runs the largest fleet of alternative fuel buses in Michigan.

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