



# News Advisory

## Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

2021 Lapeer Avenue Port Huron, MI 48060  
810.987.7373 fax 810.987.2431 www.bwbus.com

---

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 28, 2009

CONTACT: Jim Wilson, General Manager: 810.987.7373, ext. 103

### **Bus Ridership Continues to Climb**

### **BWATC Requests Federal Economic Stimulus Funding**

### **For \$1.625 Million Natural Gas Compressor**

PORT HURON, MI — In an effort to sustain and expand their use of compressed natural gas, the Blue Water Area Transportation Commission has requested a \$1.625 million grant from funds that will be dispersed under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill awaiting approval in Washington. The bill is expected to allocate \$9-12 billion for mass transit.

The Commission is requesting funds to purchase a natural gas compressor that will streamline its current refueling process and prepare for the expansion of its growing bus fleet. BWATC has been producing its own compressed natural gas since 1996, and 63 of its 72 buses run on CNG.

Compressed natural gas is an alternative fuel that saves money, promotes a clean environment by reducing carbon emissions, and reduces our nation's dependence on foreign oil. The compressor that BWATC is requesting is made in America and will be installed by local contractors.

"Anything we can do to expand our use of buses fueled by compressed natural gas will benefit our community," says Jim Fisher, BWATC Board vice chairman and Port Huron City Council mayor pro-tem. "CNG is made in America, which is another good reason to support its use."

Local planners agree.

"Facilitating BWATC's capacity to sustain and enhance its network of buses, and specifically its CNG capabilities, is a top priority for both the county and the region," according to Mike Latuszek, transportation planner, St. Clair County Planning Commission. "Given recent trends in transportation, their continued success with CNG is critical to the long-term viability of transportation in St. Clair County and throughout the region."

"This project has been reviewed and included in our region's Local Transportation Improvement Plan and it's ready to go," says BWATC general manager Jim Wilson. "We are counting on help from Candice Miller, Debbie Stabenow, and Carl Levin to make sure St. Clair County gets its fair share of any stimulus funds invested in public transportation."

--- more ---

“This project helps us meet our goal of improving air quality while we continue to coordinate and consolidate non-profit transportation programs in St. Clair County,” BWATC general manager Jim Wilson explains.

The grant request comes at a time when the community continues to ride the bus in record-breaking numbers, despite reduced gas prices. Ridership jumped 16.7% during the fourth quarter of 2008 with 231,836 riders, compared to 198,640 riders in 2007. Month-to-month comparisons also illustrate the trend of increasing ridership. The largest jump of 24.8% happened in October, when there were 83,738 riders compared to 67,073 in October 2007.

“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.”

Our local trend echoes what is happening throughout the country. Americans took 2.8 billion trips on public transportation during the third quarter of 2008, representing an increase of 6.5% over the third quarter of 2007, according to reports from the American Public Transportation Association. This is our nation’s largest quarterly increase in public transportation ridership in 25 years.

+++++

**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.

#####



*news release by Gloria Justice*

[www.BrandMyBus.com](http://www.BrandMyBus.com)

<http://thebusbuzz.blogspot.com>