



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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45 New Buses Added This Year!

Blue Water Area Transit Adds Second Batch of Buses For Clean, Comfy, Dependable Transportation

Port Huron, Mich. — For the second time this year, Blue Water Area Transit is adding new buses for services provided by the agency and the Council on Aging. BWAT added a total of 45 new multipurpose buses this year to provide dial-a-ride and fixed-route transit service.

BWAT added a batch of 17 new buses this spring (eleven for BWAT and six for COA). The agency is adding a second batch of 28 new buses this summer (22 for BWAT and six for COA). All of the new arrivals are replacing buses that have reached their seven-year life expectancy.

“Investing in these new buses continues our commitment to giving our community clean, comfortable and dependable transportation, while improving air quality,” said Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager.

The new Champion (model LF-Transport) buses can each carry 16 seated riders (or 12 seated riders with two wheelchairs). The new buses feature a “smart” electronically controlled suspension system that maintains a smooth air ride. Drivers are able to lift the entire low-floor bus up to 2.5 inches when needed to clear bumps. Also, a large passenger-side cab window increases the curbside visibility of drivers.

The new buses are powered by compressed natural gas, an economical alternative fuel that results in cleaner air than diesel fuel. The new buses represent a \$2.1 million investment in improving the quality of life throughout the Blue Water Area.

“BWAT supports local air quality by running its entire fleet of buses on earth-friendly compressed natural gas,” explained Anita R. Ashford, Blue Water Area Transportation Commission Board vice chair and Port Huron mayor pro tem. “It’s better for riders and the entire community.”

BWAT is Michigan’s leading producer of compressed natural gas, with the largest fleet of CNG buses in the state. The agency started producing the alternative fuel in 1996 and now operates four public CNG fueling stations.

The federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program provided grant funding to purchase the new buses. The Federal Highway Administration funds 80% of the CMAQ program funds. The Michigan Department of Transportation contributes the other 20% local funding match.

The CMAQ program supports projects that contribute air quality improvements and/or provide traffic congestion relief. The program supports the attainment or maintenance of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone, carbon monoxide and particulate matter.

BWAT awarded Hoekstra Transportation a contract for up to 65 buses during the next five years. Based in Grand Rapids, Hoekstra is a distributor for Champion Bus Inc. in Imlay City.

“We are always happy when a local firm bids competitively and receives the contract,” said Dave Frasier, BWAT director of procurement and capital projects.

Blue Water Area Transit continues a proud tradition of innovation that was started more than a century and a half ago by William Pitt Edison. The older brother of world-renowned inventor Thomas Alva Edison started local service with a horse-pulled trolley. In 1866, he expanded to horse-pulled streetcars guided by rails along several local routes.

Port Huron became one of the nation’s first communities to operate electrified trolleys in 1886 and then motor coaches in 1927. After an eight-year hiatus ended in 1976, BWAT became the area’s first publicly funded bus service. Since then, BWAT buses have carried more than 32 million riders.

BWAT provides ADA compliant, lift-equipped bus service six days a week. Fixed-route service is offered in the City of Port Huron and Fort Gratiot Township. Dial-a-ride service is offered in Marysville and the townships of Burtchville, Port Huron and Fort Gratiot. The agency further provides on-call service for persons with disabilities, commuter service to Macomb County, and shuttle service to major shopping centers on the northern end of the community.

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CUTLINE FOR PHOTOS: Dave Frasier, BWAT director of procurement and capital projects, and Lisa Delong, assistant procurement manager, inspect newly arrived Champion buses. (photos by Rose Norton)

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