



# News Advisory

## Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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Celebrating the Sesquicentennial of the Blue Water Area Public Transportation, as well as BWAT's Start in 1976

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Over One Million Riders Use BWAT Bus Service During Extended Hours

Port Huron, Mich. — During the past ten years, more than one million Blue Water Area Transit riders took advantage of extended travel hours to access and maintain employment in St. Clair County and beyond.

Riders made 11,716 trips during early and late extended hours in December 2016, bringing the total to 1,007,177 trips since the start of expanded hours for commuters in 2007 until the end of December 2016.

Blue Water Area residents benefit from expanded hours that provide the opportunity to pursue jobs with early or late shifts. Some bus routes start as early as 5:15 a.m. and run as late as 11 p.m. on weekdays and 3 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.

“A lot of jobs are available in the early morning and late evening hours. Offering bus service during those hours has filled an important gap,” said Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager. “People can also now ride the bus to enjoy movies and dining and other services provided during those hours.”

BWAT also offers two routes to Macomb County (23 Mile Road and Gratiot Avenue). Commuters can ride an express bus along I-94 or a local bus along M-29 with stops in Marysville, St. Clair, Algonac, Clay Township, Pearl Beach, Ira Township, Anchorville and New Baltimore.

The Job Access and Reverse Commute program launched BWAT's improved services in 2007. Since then, the transit agency has received more than eight million dollars (\$8,502,493) from JARC.

State and federal funding completely supported BWAT's new services, without any local matching funds. The Federal Transportation Administration and the Michigan Department of Transportation each provided half of the funding until Fiscal Year 2015, when MDOT started providing all of the agency's JARC funding.

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The cost to ride the long-distance commuter buses to Macomb County is the same fee (80 cents for adults) as riding any BWAT fixed-route or dial-a-ride service. At no additional charge, commuters can also connect with the regional SMART transit system to reach Downtown Detroit, Wayne State University and suburban sites as far away as Dearborn.

A person who takes public transit instead of making a daily commute by car will experience an annual savings of \$9,712, according to the American Public Transportation Association. These savings are based on the cost of commuting by public transportation compared to the cost of owning and driving a vehicle.

BWAT purchased its first 40-foot coach in 2010 to transport up to 38 passengers on commuter routes. The Orion V bus runs on compressed natural gas and is designed for comfort with high-back, reclining, upholstered seating and air suspension.

“Our goal is to make the ride as comfortable as possible,” said Anita R. Ashford, Blue Water Area Transportation Commission Board vice chair and Port Huron mayor pro tem.

Blue Water Area Transit just finished celebrating the sesquicentennial of public transportation service throughout the Blue Water Area, as well as its own start 40 years ago.

William Pitt Edison (the older brother of the celebrated inventor Tom) started the local tradition of innovation 150 years ago. He started operating horse-drawn trolleys on several routes as the Port Huron & Gratiot Street Railway in 1866.

The Blue Water Area became one of the nation’s first communities to operate electrified trolleys in the 1880s and then motor coaches in the late 1920s. Bus service started in 1927 and continued until an eight-year hiatus from 1968 to 1976. Since BWAT started publicly funded bus service in September 1976, the transit agency has carried more than 29 million riders.

BWAT has produced CNG since 1996. It is Michigan’s largest producer of compressed natural gas, with the largest fleet of CNG fuel buses in the state. The agency operates four public CNG fueling stations. The station located at its headquarters at 2021 Lapeer Avenue in Port Huron is open Monday-Saturday, 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Three additional stations are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week: 516 S. Parker in Marine City, 15041 Downey Road in Capac, and 1529 Hancock Street in Port Huron.

All four of BWAT’s public fueling stations are certified by the State of Michigan. The agency accepts Discover, Master Card and VISA.

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