



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

2021 Lapeer Avenue Port Huron, MI 48060 **phone** 810.987.7373
fax 810.987.2431 **website** bwbus.com **blog** bwwave.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Renews \$1.1 Million Grant For Another Year: Blue Water Area Transit Continues Commuter Services

Port Huron, Mich. — The State of Michigan has awarded Blue Water Area Transit a \$1.1 million grant to provide commuters with improved services for another year. The agency will continue bus service along local and express commuter routes to Macomb County, as well as extended hours designed to help commuters get to and from work.

BWAT will receive \$1,114,060 in grant funding from the Job Access and Reverse Commute program for Fiscal Year 2018 (Oct. 1 – Sept. 30).

Since JARC started in Fiscal Year 2008, the program has awarded BWAT more than ten million dollars (\$10,730,613). JARC does not require any local contributions and the Michigan Department of Transportation will provide all of the Fiscal Year 2018 funding.

"These State funds are helping hundreds of low-income people get to their jobs," said Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager.

The number of riders who use JARC services (approximately 198,300) has more than tripled during the past nine years.

"The growing popularity of these services tells us we're doing something right for our community," says Linda Bruckner, Blue Water Area Transportation Commission Board chair and Fort Gratiot Township trustee. "Greater access to jobs gives more people the freedom to live and raise their families here."

JARC funding supports a commuter route to Macomb County (23 Mile Road and Gratiot Avenue) for the usual fare of 80 cents (40 cents for seniors who are at least 60 years old).

Commuters can travel via an I-94 express route or an M-29 local route that stops in Marysville, St. Clair, Algonac, Clay Township, Pearl Beach, Ira Township, Anchorville and New Baltimore. At no additional charge, commuters can connect with the regional SMART transit system to reach Downtown Detroit, Wayne State University, or suburban cities as far away as Dearborn.

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.

JARC funding also supports extended local service hours. Some bus routes start as early as 5:15 a.m. and run as late as 11:00 p.m. during the week and 3:00 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. These longer hours are designed to help local residents reach local jobs with early morning or late evening shifts.

Blue Water Area Transit has just finished celebrating its 40th anniversary, as well as the sesquicentennial of public transportation service in the Blue Water Area.

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

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 1976, the transit agency has carried more than 30 million riders.

BWAT is Michigan's leading producer of Compressed Natural Gas, with the largest fleet of CNG fuel buses in the state. The agency started producing the alternative fuel in 1996 and now 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 more stations are open 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week: in Marine City (516 S. Parker), in Capac (15041 Downey Road) and in Port Huron (1529 Hancock Street). The agency accepts Discover, Master Card and VISA at all four stations, which are certified by the State of Michigan.

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