



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: April 19, 2018

\$2.1 Million Investment in Clean Air:

Blue Water Area Transit Purchases Eleven New Buses

Powered by Compressed Natural Gas

Port Huron, Mich. — Blue Water Area Transit placed a \$2.1 million order to purchase eleven new Champion buses from Hoekstra Transportation. The new buses are powered by compressed natural gas, an economical alternative fuel that results in cleaner air than diesel fuel.

The federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program provided grant funding to purchase the new buses. The CMAQ program is funded (80%) by the Federal Highway Administration. The Michigan Department of Transportation contributed a 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.

“We support local air quality by running our entire fleet of buses on compressed natural gas,” said Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager. “It’s better for our 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.

“Our commitment to using and producing earth-friendly fuel benefits everyone in our community, even those who never ride the bus,” explained Anita R. Ashford, Blue Water Area Transportation Commission Board vice chair and Port Huron mayor pro tem. “Compressed natural gas contributes to cleaner air that we all can enjoy.”

BWAT will use the eleven new buses to continue providing riders with dependable and comfortable shuttle service. Expected to arrive this fall, the new buses will replace buses that have reached their seven-year life expectancy.

The new Champion (model LF-Transport) buses can each carry 16 seated riders (or 12 seated riders with two wheelchairs). BWAT will provide both dial-a-ride and fixed-route service with the new multi-purpose buses. Features of the new buses that benefit passengers include:

- A “smart” electronically controlled suspension system maintains a smooth air ride for passengers.

- The driver is able to lift the entire low-floor bus up to 2.5 inches when needed to clear bumps.
- A large passenger-side cab window increases the driver's curbside visibility.

BWAT offers dial-a-ride service to passengers in the townships of Burtchville, Port Huron and Fort Gratiot, as well as the city of Marysville. With accessible buses, BWAT also provides on-call service for persons with disabilities. BWAT's Shopper Shuttle serves major shopping centers on the northern end of the community.

Following a competitive bidding process, Hoekstra Transportation was awarded a contract allowing BWAT to purchase 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.

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 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.

#####



New Champion Buses (model LF-Transport)



Media Strategies for a Social Generation

Smith Justice Group 3560 Pine Grove Avenue, #350, Port Huron MI, 48060, USA
gj@glojusticeconnects.com 810.357.6817. fax. 888.654.7118