



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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Million-Dollar Funding Renewed for Fourth Year

Transit Agency Reaches Out with Services

Designed To Help Residents Find and Keep Jobs

PORT HURON, MI — The State of Michigan has renewed over one million dollars in funding for expanded Blue Water Area Transit services. The renewed funding will pay for a voucher program, commuter routes to Macomb County, and evening and late-night bus service during Fiscal Year 2011.

The funding comes from the Federal Job Access and Reverse Commute program, which is part of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. This is the fourth year that BWAT has received JARC funding, which is paid with 50% Federal dollars and 50% State dollars.

“It is surprising to see such a large investment in our community without any required local matching funds,” says Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager. “It is really helping out a lot of people.”

With the expanded service hours under JARC, buses now start as early as 5:15 a.m. on Monday through Friday. Evening service now runs until 11:00 p.m. during the week (Monday through Thursday) and until 3:00 a.m. on weekends (Friday and Saturday).

“These new services help people get to work and they also help customers get to businesses,” says Jim Fisher, Blue Water Area Transportation Commission Board chair and Port Huron City Council member. “For instance, people are using the new evening and late-night service to enjoy local dining or entertainment.”

The renewed funding also pays for commuter routes between Port Huron and Macomb County, Monday through Friday. These routes provide express service along I-94 and local service along M-29 (with stops in Marysville, St. Clair, Algonac, Clay Township, Pearl Beach, Ira Township, Anchorville, and New Baltimore).

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A third JARC-funded program reimburses eligible low-income residents for mileage from job-related trips that can not be taken on existing public transportation without additional accommodation. Vouchers can subsidize travel to and from work and other work-related travel, such as child care, job interviews, employment physicals, and shopping for clothing and supplies.

To qualify for the voucher system, individuals must be permanent residents of St. Clair County and have incomes at or below 150% of national poverty levels or be currently receiving some form of public assistance.

Nine contracted agencies provide 30-day referrals to BWAT brokers: The Arc of St. Clair County, Inc., Blue Water Center for Independent Living, Community Action Agency, Goodwill Industries, Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative, Michigan Works, Michigan Department of Human Services, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and St. Clair County Community Mental Health Authority.

During the last three years, the voucher program has helped 721 residents with more than \$602,000 in subsidies.

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BWAT 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, BWAT has carried more than 20 million riders and continues the tradition of innovation by producing its own compressed natural gas alternative fuel since 1996.

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