



# News Advisory

## Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Blue Water Area Transit Bucks National Trend**

### **With Ten Percent Jump and One Million Riders in 2009**

PORT HURON, MI — Blue Water Area Transit reports that a ten percent jump in ridership — from 902,000 in 2008 to 995,000 in 2009 — resulted in nearly one million riders last year. Local ridership in 2008 jumped 23% over 2007 and, in March, beat the 27-year-old monthly record of 71,559. In March of 2009, BWAT set a new monthly ridership record of 94,876.

The ongoing local increase is in sharp contrast to a national 3.8 percent decline in public transit ridership during the first nine months of 2009, reported by the American Public Transportation Association. The decline follows a landmark year when Americans experienced the highest level of ridership in 52 years, according to the APTA.

Local officials point to several factors that have encouraged passengers to use our local bus system. These include low bus fares (75 cents for adults), extended hours that better match work schedules, easy-to-use bicycle racks, and new routes and services.

BWAT recently expanded early morning service to start at 5:15 a.m. "The new hours are expected to be especially helpful for those who work in Port Huron's Industrial Park and along the Macomb County commuter route," according to Jim Fisher, BWATC Board chair and Port Huron City Council member.

"We are, of course, also influenced by national factors, such as gas pump prices, energy conservation, and growing global concerns about the environment," says Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager. "Increased ridership is good for the environment, because fewer cars are on the road and our buses run on compressed natural gas."

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**BWATC 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, BWATC 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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