



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 1, 2016

Community Invited to Ride Buses Free on November 10: Blue Water Area Transit Celebrates 40 Years of Service Plus 150 Years of Local Public Transportation

PORT HURON, Mich. — Blue Water Area Transit invites you to ride buses free of charge on Thursday, November 10, to celebrate 40 years of service and the sesquicentennial of local public transportation. The agency will give riders souvenir buttons that day, while supplies last.

One hundred and fifty years ago, in 1866, Port Huron became one of the nation's first communities with an operating transit system. BWAT was started in 1976.

To commemorate these historic milestones on November 10, BWAT will not collect its usual fares (80 cents for adults, 65 cents for 6-17 youth and 40 cents for 60+ seniors and riders with disabilities).

"We are inviting the community to ride any of our buses, even our commuter service that goes all the way to Macomb County," said Linda Bruckner, Blue Water Area Transportation Commission Board chair and Fort Gratiot Township trustee. "It's a great day to take a ride for the first time!"

BWAT buses travel in 45-minute intervals along seven fixed routes in Port Huron and Fort Gratiot. Also, BWAT operates commuter service along an I-94 express route and an M-29 local route with stops in Marysville, St. Clair, Marine City, Algonac, Anchorville, and Clay and Ira Townships. BWAT also provides dial-a-ride service in the city of Marysville and Burtchville, Port Huron, and Fort Gratiot townships.

"Young Tom Edison is known for selling fruit and newspapers aboard local trains, but most people don't realize that his older brother William also operated a local transit business serving those same train passengers," explained Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager.

The first local transit system served people arriving in town from Detroit aboard Grand Trunk Railroad trains. From meagre beginnings with a horse-drawn bus, William Pitt Edison established the Port Huron and Gratiot Street Railway Company in 1866 to provide horse-drawn streetcar service along several rail routes.

The Blue Water Area soon became one of the nation's first communities to operate electrified trolleys in the 1880s and then motor coaches in the 1920s. Trolley service was provided by the Port Huron Electric Railway, which was built by the Van Depeole Manufacturing Company of Chicago. After restructuring and expansion, the system became City Electric Railway and provided continuous service until 1930.

Privately operated 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 29 million riders.

Following in the steps of earlier leaders in innovation, BWAT started producing its own compressed natural gas in 1996 and now ranks as Michigan's largest producer of the alternative fuel. The transit agency runs the state's largest fleet of natural gas fueled buses and operates four public CNG fueling stations.

BWAT Celebrates Veterans Day November 11: Veterans, Active Military and Their Families Ride FREE

PORT HURON, Mich — Blue Water Area Transit invites veterans, active military, and the immediate families of active military to ride the bus for free on Veterans Day (Friday, November 11).

"We deeply appreciate those who serve our country," said Jim Wilson, general manager, BWAT. "We salute their sacrifice."

The United States originally celebrated Veterans Day as Armistice Day in 1919 to commemorate the end of World War I. Congress later changed the national holiday to Veterans Day in 1954 and President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed it "a day to honor all veterans."

BWAT provides fixed-route transit service throughout Port Huron and Fort Gratiot, as well as all the way to Macomb County. The agency also provides dial-a-ride service in Marysville and three local townships.

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