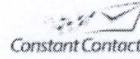


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Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Almost 2,000 'Dump the Pump' with COLTS

By MATT MORGIS, Go Lackawanna intern

SCRANTON - Lackawanna County participated in the sixth annual Dump the Pump Day on June 16 as the County of Lackawanna Transit System offered free rides on all of its routes to help promote the use of public transportation.

As people would get on and off buses on Wyoming Avenue on Thursday, they were presented with flyers and information packets describing the "Dump the Pump" initiative, along with other details about bus rates, schedules, carpooling and more. Patrons also received buttons and entered raffles for free T-shirts.

"There was a calculation we did where we found out 17,000 gallons of gas would be saved if everyone in Lackawanna County would take the bus to and from work for only one day," COLTS Communications Director Gretchen Wintermantel explained.

According to Wintermantel, 1,832 extra people decided to take the bus on Thursday to support the cause. The total people that road the transit bus was 6,280 - up from 4,448 riders last Thursday.

"We are really trying to get more people to ride because of the environment," Wintermantel said. "Even if people are car pooling or walking, it helps and is good for the environment. Plus, they won't have to pay the high gas prices."

COLTS is doing its own part to cut down on those gas prices. The transit system introduced its first four diesel-electric hybrid buses in March, and Wintermantel said another nine have been ordered. The hybrid buses offer 35 percent greater fuel efficiency than more traditional models.

Later this year, riders can expect to see new routes throughout the region as COLTS completes its restructuring effort. That move to eliminate underused routes and increase access to area shopping centers is expected to be completed by October 3.

Nelson Salcedo, a COLTS bus driver of five years, said his favorite part of the job is the people. He believes more people are taking advantage of public transportation, and events like Dump the Pump make residents pay more attention to the effects their cars could have on the environment.

Brandon Hatalski, a frequent bus rider who does not own a car, said he loves riding public transportation.

"It's a great sense of community," Hatalski explained. "I've made friends and I have no problem paying the \$1.10 to get to where I need to be."

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