

Pa. inks natural gas stations deal

COLTS station will allow public to purchase fuel.

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The public bus services in Lackawanna and Luzerne counties are scheduled to get compressed natural gas stations next year to fuel buses.

Citizens will also be able to buy natural gas for their

vehicles at the County of Lackawanna Transit System's station at its headquarters off Keyser Avenue in Scranton, but not at the Luzerne County Transportation Authority's station at its Northampton Street headquarters in Kingston.

State Department of Transportation Secretary Leslie S. Richards announced Monday the state chose to sign an \$84.5 million, 20-year deal with Chicago-based Trillium CNG to

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COLTS has no natural-gas-powered buses now, but plans to buy 12 to 15, Executive Director Robert Fiume said.



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design, build, finance and operate compressed natural gas fueling stations at 29 public transit agencies across the state. COLTS is one of seven that will allow the public to fuel up, but others could be added later.

PennDOT chose the sites with public sales in areas that could benefit from increased access to natural gas, department spokeswoman Erin Waters-Trasatt said.

PennDOT will earn a 15 percent royalty on each gallon of gas sold to the public with Trillium guaranteeing at least \$2.1 million in royalties over the deal's life. Based on current gas, diesel, gasoline prices and fuel usage, PennDOT estimates the transit agencies will save \$10 million a year, meaning the project will pay for itself within a decade, the department says.

PennDOT's interest in the project also centers on promoting expanded use of natural gas in a state where the

gas is increasingly abundant.

"We're taking advantage of what we have here," Ms. Waters-Trasatt said.

COLTS Executive Director Robert Fiume said the agency plans to buy 12 to 15 natural gas-powered buses as it replaces its fleet over the next several years, but has none now.

Because delivery of new buses could take up to 14 months, COLTS will have to properly time the bus purchases and the rollout of the natural gas station, he said. COLTS' 30 shared-ride vans could be retrofitted for natural gas.

He has no information on when next year Trillium will build COLTS' station.

"I'm sure we'll be getting more information on it shortly," Mr. Fiume said. "I'm excited about it. I think it's a good thing, and I'm sure it'll help us."

Efforts to reach officials of the Luzerne County Transportation Authority and Trillium CNG were unsuccessful Monday.

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