

VIBRANT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

It's smooth traveling for those without a vehicle in area downtowns.

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On an unseasonably sunny warm February day in downtown Scranton, the Lackawanna County Transit Center buzzed with activity.

County of Lackawanna Transit System buses flowed in and out of the hub along Lackawanna Avenue. A Pullington Trailways bus sat parked in one of the covered bays outside. Visible across the road, a pedestrian on the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail made his way along the path as a cyclist glided past him.

The scene provides a quick glimpse of some of the transportation modes — public and otherwise — available throughout the region. The intermodal building recently celebrated its first anniversary. The building opened in January 2016 and serves as a center for both COLTS passengers, who use those buses to travel to points around the county, and customers of Martz Trailways, which delivers passengers to and from other cities.

"It's been running pretty smoothly," COLTS Executive Director Robert Fiume said, adding that ridership has slightly increased in the year the new facility has been open. "It appears that both our riders and Martz riders seem to like it."

COLTS currently has a fleet of 35 buses and another 30 vans, which offer shared ride services to seniors and



BUTCH CONEIGVS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Lackawanna County Transit Center puts buses in a centralized location.

others, Fiume said. Daily, the buses provide about 3,400 trips to riders and the vans an additional 400, he said.

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The transit center also provides a connection to Luzerne County. A Luzerne County Transit Authority bus makes the trip from the James F. Conahan Intermodal Transportation Center in Wilkes-Barre to the Lackawanna County center and back several times a day. Those trips will soon add stops at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport, LCTA Executive Director Norm Gavlick said.

The LCTA fleet includes 38 buses running fixed routes throughout

the county, with two more buses ordered, plus an additional 49 vans that offer shared ride services. Annually, 1.2 million people travel on county buses there; the vans run 800 to 1,000 trips daily, Gavlick said.

A combined bus pass for riders who might have to use buses in both Lackawanna and Luzerne counties was recently offered to make trips more affordable and convenient for passengers, Fiume and Gavlick said.

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Another connection could make the Scranton center more accessible to people using the trail. A plan for a safer, more convenient connec-

tion from the LHV trail on Seventh Avenue to Lackawanna Avenue, Executive Director Natalie Gelb said. Currently, trail users who want to get from the trail to the avenue must use the sidewalk along Seventh Avenue. It bottlenecks under a bridge between the trail and Lackawanna Avenue, which creates a safety hazard, Gelb said.

The trail offers great potential for not only recreation but also for non-motorized transportation between areas throughout the county, which is especially important because about 8,900 households in Lackawanna County do not have a vehicle, Gelb said. By the time all segments of the trail are connected, it will stretch 40 miles, from Old Forge and

Getting there

For information on COLTS, LCTA routes, schedules, fares and more: www.coltsbus.com; www.lctabus.com

For the bike-sharing program: www.bikescranton.com

Uber: www.uber.com/cities/wilkes-barre-scranton

Lyft: www.lyft.com/cities/scranton-pa

Taylor in the Downvalley to the Carbondale area.

"The trail is obviously used by a large amount of runners and walkers and bicyclists, but what we really want is to push to use it as alternative transportation," Gelb said.

For those who might want to take a car, several taxi companies offer rides. Ride sharing has also taken hold in the area. Uber has been offering service to the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area since February 2015. Though he declined to disclose how many Uber drivers were available in the market, there had been about 17,000 active Uber riders in the last three months of 2016, company spokesman Craig Ewer said in an email. Late last year, competitor Lyft also started operations in the local area.

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