

2022-2027 Strategic Plan



County of Lackawanna Transit System



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Summary:

The County of Lackawanna Transit System, or COLTS, endeavors to become the premiere public transportation leader in Lackawanna County while providing professional, affordable, reliable, safe, equitable, and courteous service to its passengers. As such, the COLTS' team embarked on developing a formal Strategic Plan for the organization. The landscape around mobility has been fluid over the past decade, and is expected to remain fluid over the next five years. This Strategic Plan is a roadmap of how COLTS will achieve its goals and continue moving forward.

COLTS developed its strategic goals through an analysis that began in September 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, COLTS was not able to engage in seeking the broad community input that would have occurred in a "normal" year. The outreach was completed virtually, as we were unable to meet in person.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Over several months in 2020 and into 2021, COLTS engaged its stakeholders, its employees, and its Citizens' Advisory Committee to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Specifically, an anonymous short form asked participants what COLTS' SWOT were. Strengths and Weaknesses are considered internal and within COLTS' control, and Opportunities and Threats are considered external and out of COLTS' direct control.

COLTS leadership then met in 2021 to discuss its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Staff members subsequently had frank discussions in 2022 that lead to the development of the organization's six strategic goals, strategies, and action items to achieve them. COLTS will also include a timeline for targeted completion of each task. Our action items and timeline for completion will provide metrics to ensure that we are meeting our goals.

Finally, COLTS' leadership team developed its Mission Statement and Vision Statement. In order to develop these statements, it was important to consider why we do what we do. Our Mission Statement identifies the primary objectives of the organization as well as its direction. It is based on our Strategic Goals. Our Vision Statement defines COLTS' future objectives.

Service Area and Demographics

COLTS is committed to providing quality public transportation service to all the people of Lackawanna County, residents and visitors alike, without regard to their race, ethnic origins, gender, age, or disability. COLTS' primary service area is Lackawanna County and its 215,896 residents. The county's population breakdown is as follows: senior citizen population is 19.9 percent; minorities 9.6 percent(2); veterans 7.3 percent; and persons with disabilities 15.6 percent.

Lackawanna County's median income is \$54,064 with a poverty level of 13.8 percent, higher than Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's average of 12 percent. Lackawanna's unemployment rate is 4.2 percent (1) compared to Pennsylvania's 3.4 percent (3).

The percentage of senior population to total population in Lackawanna County is 19.9 percent, which is slightly higher than Pennsylvania's at 18.3 percent. The median age in Lackawanna County is 42.1 years old, higher than Pennsylvania, which is 40.9 years old.

The minority population is 9.6 percent in Lackawanna County as compared to Pennsylvania at 18.4 percent.(2) The two largest minority groups in Lackawanna County are Hispanic or Latino, which comprises 8.4 percent, and Black or African American, which makes up 4.2 percent of the population.(2) Comparatively, the two largest minority groups in the Common-wealth are Black or African American at 12 percent and Hispanic or Latino at 7.8 percent.(2)

The population of people with disabilities in Lackawanna County is 15.6 percent, which is higher than Pennsylvania's population of people with disabilities is 14 percent.

The veteran population in Lackawanna County is 7.3 percent, just slightly higher than Pennsylvania's 7.2 percent. The median household income for Lackawanna County is \$54,064, which is less than Pennsylvania median household income of \$63,627. The poverty level in Lackawanna County is 13.8% percent, which is higher than Pennsylvania's 12 percent.

COLTS will utilize its Strategic Plan to ensure equitable transportation services to underserved populations. This plan is a working document that is intended to guide COLTS over the next five years and may be subject to changes.

Source for all information unless otherwise noted: 2020 ACS (American Community Survey) Five Year Estimates: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=0500000US42069>

1) American Community Survey Selected Economic Characteristics: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=unemployment%20rate&g=0500000US42069&tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP03>

2) Census Quick Facts: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/PA,lackawannacountypennsylvania,US/POP010220>

3) American Community Survey Selected Economic Characteristics: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=unemployment%20rate&g=0400000US42&tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP03>

Final Update: 04/19/22

Mission Statement:

COLTS' mission is to enhance mobility and economic well-being for the citizens of Lackawanna County through management of public transportation services that are affordable, efficient, equitable, reliable, safe, and environmentally friendly. We will continue to be fiscally responsible and to uphold our commitment to diversity. We will continue to build sustainable partnerships with the community. We seek to achieve the highest degrees of safety, professionalism, and customer service.

Vision Statement:

To drive our community forward with state-of-the art transportation.



COLTS At A Glance:

COLTS provides both Fixed Route and Shared Ride public transportation. Shared Ride encompasses various programs: the 65 and older Lottery Program, ADA complementary paratransit, Rural Transportation for Persons with Disabilities, Medical Assistance Transportation, and Geisinger Health Plan. COLTS provides fixed route and ADA service Monday through Saturday.

Below is a snapshot of our ridership dating back to Fiscal Year 2018-2019, prior to COVID, to present a better idea of where we normally are.

Fixed Route Ridership:

2020-2021 Fiscal Year*: 418,574 2019-2020 Fiscal Year*: 803,881
2018-2019 Fiscal Year : 1,013,542 * denotes the Fiscal Years during
COVID –19

Shared Ride Ridership:

2020-2021 Fiscal Year*: 73,142

2019-2020 Fiscal Year*: 95,308

2018-2019 Fiscal Year : 116,516

* denotes the Fiscal Years during COVID-19

COLTS Annual Budget:

2021-2022: \$17,070,054 2020-2021: \$18,633,528

2019-2020: \$14,626,288

Number of Fixed Route Buses: 35

Number of Shared Ride Vans: 33

History:

The County of Lackawanna County Transit System (COLTS) is the operator of public transportation in Lackawanna County with its headquarters in the county seat of Scranton.

COLTS was formed in October 1972 through the Municipal Authorities Act of 1945, and was officially certified by the state as an authority on Nov. 14, 1972. COLTS replaced the Scranton Transit Company, which had provided electric trolley service and bus service to Lackawanna County since 1934. The last electric trolley cars were replaced by buses in 1954.

The region has a rich transportation history, with transportation having been supplied by the Scranton Railway Company from 1896 to 1934, when it was reorganized as the Scranton Transit Company. The first electric streetcar system operated entirely by electric power in America had its first run on Nov. 30, 1886 – thus establishing Scranton as “The Electric City.”

COLTS assumed operations of Shared Ride in 2013. The van service was previously operated by Lackawanna County and was not part of the Authority. In 2017, the Shared Ride Department implemented Ecolane, a scheduling software that streamlined passenger trips and increased overall efficiency.

Also in 2017, COLTS unveiled the free GPS-based mySTOP® app that provides real-time information to allow fixed route passengers to track their buses. In 2022, COLTS began offering free Wi-Fi on its fixed route buses. These technology upgrades are just a few ways COLTS is enhancing the rider experience.

COLTS is overseen by a five-member Board of Directors appointed by the Lackawanna County Commissioners. COLTS’ daily operations are managed by its Executive Director. COLTS will celebrate 50 years as a Municipal Authority in 2022.

Governance:

Board of Directors Chairman: Larry Wynne Board Members: Martha Dougher, Brian Doughton, Michael Dougherty, Gregg Nieto

Executive Director: Timothy B. McGrath

Agency Overview:

COLTS provides fixed route transportation for most of Lackawanna County and part of Luzerne County. COLTS has 21 bus routes that cover Archbald/Peckville, Blakely, Carbondale, Carbondale Township, Dickson City, Dunmore, Jermyn, Jessup, Mayfield/Childs, Moosic Old Forge, Olyphant, Scranton, and Throop.

COLTS also covers the following Luzerne County areas, including Avoca, Dupont, Duryea, Hughestown, Laflin, Pittston, Plains Township, Wilkes-Barre Township, and Yatesville.

COLTS' individual fixed route bus hours are 5:15 a.m. to 12:55 a.m. Monday through Friday and 7:45 a.m. to 12:55 a.m. on Saturday. Not all COLTS' fixed routes operate during this time; ADA service is provided for the fixed routes operating in that time as well.

A one-way ride on a COLTS bus is \$1.75; day passes, 10-ride passes, and monthly passes are also available. Seniors 65 and older may ride at no cost with a senior pass, available through COLTS and funded by the Pennsylvania Lottery. COLTS offers a Reduced Fare card for persons with disabilities; applications for this program are available through COLTS.

COLTS offers four programs under the umbrella of Shared Ride — also called Coordinated Transportation or the van service.

COLTS provides ADA complementary paratransit service to individuals who have disabilities that prevent them from using the fixed route bus system. To qualify for COLTS' ADA paratransit service, called Special Efforts Accessibility Transportation System, or SEATS, a person must qualify for service under the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, and his/her origin and destination must be within three-quarters (3/4) of a mile from a regular COLTS' fixed bus route. SEATS' service hours and areas match the COLTS' individual fixed route hours and areas of service.

COLTS also provides a Rural Transportation Program for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) for people who qualify under the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, and live three-quarters (3/4) of a mile beyond a COLTS bus route.

COLTS offers Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) for people who are on Medical Assistance to travel to go to medical appointments.

Finally, COLTS offers a Senior Shared Ride Program to seniors 65 and older. The Senior Shared Ride Program is funded through the Pennsylvania Lottery and allows seniors to ride at no cost to the client.

Strategic Goals:

Goal 1: Efficient, effective, equitable, and reliable transportation

COLTS is committed to enhancing our bus system to provide the most equitable service possible. This includes taking steps to ensure that we are best serving the community. To achieve this goal, COLTS will undertake the following strategies:

Goal 1 Strategies:

Goal 1 Action Items:

Public Information

- Provide clear, concise information to the public about COLTS' services and programs

Lackawanna Transit Center

- Set and meet goals for optimum staffing and hours of operation
- Enforce all aspects of lease with tenant, including ensuring tenant keeps building aesthetically pleasing, comfortable, and clean—both internally and externally
- Investigate third party security for the LTC, and possibly cell phone charging options for customers

Vehicle Amenities

- Monitor cleanliness of buses and shelters to create a rider-friendly experience
- Ongoing review of technology

Analyze Service

- Evaluate current routes for efficiencies and expansion
- Re-run and re-time its routes to make sure that time points are correct and that bus stops and signs are in correct locations
- Increase customer surveys

Goal 1 Strategies:

Goal 1 Action Items:

Outreach and Customer Service

- Increase community outreach
- Increase number of Citizens Advisory Committee members
- More frequent customer satisfaction surveys

Explore and Evaluate Opportunities

- Potential Park and Rides
- Transfer Station
- Service to new market areas

Goal 2: Highly trained, professional workforce

COLTS staff members are professional and trained employees who work as a team and strive for an environment that encourages open and respectful communication across all departments and partners and organizations. To continue to achieve this goal, COLTS will undertake the following strategies:

Goal 1 Strategies:

Goal 1 Action Items:

Provide Regular Employee Training

- Customer service training for all employees
- Produce training videos for drivers that focus on COLTS' expectations of drivers
- Maintain better records of training

Goal 2 Strategies:

Goal 2 Action Items:

Increase Community Outreach

- Increase number of public meetings, including meetings at other venues besides the LTC
- Increase number of in-person meetings
- Vary meeting times

Team-building Initiatives

- Employee involvement in community
- Cross-functional training (cross training among departments)
- Have “pizza day” or “donut and coffee day” for operators and management employees

Enhance Employee Communication

- Utilize “Week at a Glance” schedule, vacation calendar, and other planning tools

Goal 3: Fiscal stewardship and sustainability

COLTS will enhance transparency and continue to be good stewards of taxpayers dollars. To achieve this goal, COLTS will undertake the following strategies:

Goal 3 Strategies:

Goal 3 Action Items:

Ensure strict compliance of regulatory bodies, including PennDOT and FTA

- Increase Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) initiatives
- Evaluate hiring a compliance officer
- Centralize procurement policies

Increase Advertising Revenue

- Investigate digital advertising inside buses, at LTC, and on COLTS’ Web site

Goal 4: Diverse and Inclusive Workforce

It is critical that COLTS' employees treat one another with respect by listening to different viewpoints, opinions, thoughts, and ideas, and embracing a culture of inclusion. COLTS will continue to build and leverage a diverse, qualified, inclusive workforce starting with leadership and spreading throughout the organization. To achieve this goal, COLTS will undertake the following strategies:

Goal 4 Strategies:

Goal 4 Action Items:

Increase Staff Training

- Increase all staff training to all employees
- Provide training that address issues and concerns about diversity and inclusion
- Raise awareness of this goal throughout company

Increase Diversity in Workforce

- Recruitment through minority organizations, businesses, and schools



Goal 5: Energy Efficient and Environmentally Friendly Operations

COLTS is committed to energy efficiency and environmentally friendly practices and purchases. To achieve this goal, COLTS will undertake the following strategies:

Goal 5 Strategies:

Goal 5 Action Items:

Engage Community

- Provide details about the benefits of public transportation toward the reduction of carbon emissions and congestion

Increase Environmentally Friendly Practices and Purchases

- Investigate digitizing paper records, applications, and brochures
- Make Shared Ride applications available electronically
- Trainings can potentially be uploaded to COLTS' Web site
- Provide email accounts for all employees

Maximize facility and vehicle energy efficiency and environmentally friendly practices

- Ensure new administration building is energy efficient
- Evaluate vehicle purchases
- Investigate and evaluate energy efficient initiatives

Ensure COLTS is up to date on the most energy efficient practices

- Continue adhering to PennDOT and APTA annual meetings about latest technology

Goal 6: Comprehensive Policies and Procedures

COLTS is committed to developing and updating policies to keep the entire organization aware of its current procedures, guidelines, practices, and rules. To achieve this goal, COLTS will undertake the following strategies:

Goal 6 Strategies:

Goal 6 Action Items:

Review and evaluate current policies

- Re-do COLTS' employee handbook and provide it electronically
- Update current policies
- Develop a master procedure book for scenarios, incidents, and events

Research and investigate new policies and procedures when necessary

- Develop and implement comprehensive cybersecurity policies and procedures

Routinely identify, evaluate, and update departmental policies

- Department heads will conduct best practices research and obtain peer agencies' policies to enable them to comprehensively update their departmental policies and procedures

