

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF AUTHORITY
County of Lackawanna Transit System
December 20, 2023

The regular meeting of the County of Lackawanna Transit System Authority was held on Wednesday, December 20, 2023 at 4:30 p.m. at the Lackawanna Transit Center.

Present were:	Martha Dougher	Gregg Nieto
	Larry Wynne	Atty. Timothy Hinton
	Atty. Joseph DeNaples	Timothy McGrath
	Jane Farrell	Michael Danchak
	Zain Rabbani	Nicole Ference
	Frank Soto	Keri Savage
	Sarah Cruz	Doris Koloski

Mr. Larry Wynne opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Wynne added that an Executive Session was held prior to the meeting to discuss personnel matters.

Mr. Wynne requested a roll call of the board members. Larry Wynne and Martha Dougher were present. Gregg Nieto participated via phone. Brian Doughton and Michael Dougherty and were excused.

Acceptance of Minutes

Mr. Wynne tabled the acceptance of the minutes from the October 2023 board meeting as he and Gregg Nieto were unable to attend the meeting.

Acceptance of Financial Documents

Mr. Wynne requested a motion to approve the Finance Statements for the month of October 2023. Martha Dougher made a motion to accept the financial reports and Gregg Nieto seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Public Comment/Agenda Items

Mr. Wynne welcomed comments from the public regarding agenda items; there were none.

Executive Director's Report/Department Reports

- A. Mr. McGrath updated the board on the new facility project. At this point, the project is on schedule and the erection of the steel structure has begun. It is good to see the project moving forward. Keri stated that photos will be posted to the website as the project progresses. Mr. McGrath also announced that we have entered into a contract with a company to provide security at the transit center. This is in addition to our 24-hour video and audio surveillance. This is mainly to be proactive and to get ahead of any major incidents also to serve as a deterrent.

- B. Zain Rabbani reviewed the ridership reports for the October and November 2023 for the fixed route department. Zain stated that for the month of October, the ridership is at 75% of the pre-pandemic numbers. The numbers have been increasing gradually. Zain

pointed out the ridership for route #40. He noted that the ridership in 2022 was 1,181 and in 2023 it was 2,263. He also pointed out the ridership for the #32 (Taylor/Walmart Express) was 2,563. Zain attributes the increase to the outreach and orientation programs. Zain stated that we were at 78% pre-covid numbers in November 2023. Jane Farrell noted that the November ridership was not provided to the board so that was just as a matter of information. Zain stated that they have been monitoring the routes to see what improvements could be made. They have been looking at the Carbondale route which is approaching 10,000 and considering adding trips in the morning and possibly afternoon. This would depend on the financial aspects of the plan. Zain also stated that they are looking at routes that are underperforming to possibly make changes to them as well. Those changes could compensate for the changes to the Carbondale route.

- C. Keri Savage addressed the board regarding the human resources department. Keri stated that they have hired two part-time shared ride drivers and one part-time fixed route driver. A full-time mechanic has been hired. Currently we have openings for one full-time service technician and three part-time shared ride drivers. Applications are always being reviewed and scheduling interviews when appropriate. With regard to outreach, we have new passenger instructional videos playing in the lobby of the transit center. They offer passengers instructions regarding service, etiquette and conduct. Keri stated that Stuff the Bus was held December 7th. Last year we raised \$7,000 in cash donations and 1,286 toys. This year the cash donations totaled \$10,211 and we collected 2,066 toys. Keri commended Katie McAndrew for her hard work on the successful event. Keri stated that, going into the holiday months, they have been looking at employee wellness. All employees had the option to view wellness videos that were provided by Benecon. In exchange, employees that participated were entered into the Holiday Pass Contest. Winners in the contest were chosen to gift a 31 Day Pass to their favorite passenger. Also, with the Wellness Grant, employees were entered into a drawing to receive wellness-oriented gifts such as, neck massagers and pedometers. Six gifts were distributed to the employees. Mr. McGrath noted that, last year, they determined that Stuff the Bus would be a signature event for COLTS. Nothing that this event is special to the COLTS employees and the community. Mr. McGrath also noted that the bus pass contest was important event for the drivers as they have such deep concern for their passengers. Keri added that photos from Stuff the Bus would be posted to the website.
- D. Mike Danchak addressed the board regarding the finance department. Mike stated that there hasn't been too much change in the operating numbers. We have received four new CNG buses and there has been a purchase order put in for four more. They are expected to be received around this time next year. Mike noted that the shared ride vans have been traveling more miles so more vans are ordered. Nine vans are due in January and approximately nine more will be ordered for 2025. Mike stated that the facility project has around \$48 million left in costs and \$49 million in grant funds available. The additional funds will protect us if there are any additional change orders. Mike noted that they will begin purchasing garage equipment for the new facility. He is also looking into additional training for the mechanics for CNG and other services.
- E. Frank Soto addressed the board regarding the safety department. Frank stated that they have trained two shared ride associates and one fixed route associate is currently in training. In January they plan to offer refresher training for Defensive Driving. The hope is to lower preventable accidents. We have average four preventable accidents a month, which isn't very bad.

- F. Nicole Ferrence addressed the board about additional items in human resources. Nicole stated that open enrollment has been completed and everything went well with it. She has also been working hard at getting new employees hired.

Public Comment/Other Business

- A. Mr. Wynne requested a motion authorize the purchase of parts from Allegiance Trucks in the amount of \$30,090.09 to replace the motor in bus 312. Martha Dougher made the motion and Larry Wynne seconded the motion. All others were in favor.
- B. Mr. Wynne requested a motion for the resolution amending the Lackawanna Transit System Authority Money Purchase Plan for employees of the SEIU AFL-CIO, Local 668 to increase the matching allocation formula to an amount equal to 100% of employee's contributions up to 5% compensation. Gregg Nieto made the motion to for the resolution and Martha Dougher seconded the motion. All others were in favor.
- C. Mr. Wynne requested a motion for the resolution amending the Lackawanna Transit System Authority Money Purchase Plan for employees of the SEIU AFL-CIO, Local 668 to amend the plan to allow eligible employees to participate in the plan immediately as of the date they meet the age and service requirements. Martha Dougher made the motion for the resolution and Gregg Nieto seconded the motion. All others were in favor.
- D. Mr. Wynne requested a motion to approve the 2024 Board Meeting Schedule. Gregg Nieto made the motion approve the schedule and Martha Dougher seconded the motion. All others were in favor. Atty. Joseph DeNaples noted that the schedule has to be published in the newspaper prior to January 1, 2024.
- E. Mr. Wynne requested a motion to approve the Updated Substance Abuse Policy. Martha Dougher made the motion and Gregg Nieto seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Mr. Wynne welcomed comments from the public regarding other business; Doris Koloski addressed the board regarding an issue she is having with the bus stop at the corner of Colfax and Mulberry at Geisinger CMC Hospital. She stated that she lives in the 400 block of Colfax Avenue in Scranton and she can see that the people leaving the hospital, have no where to sit while they wait for the bus. Ms. Koloski stated that she has approached city council around a year ago about the problem. They were supposed to find out who was responsible for this. They weren't sure if it was the responsibility of the hospital, transit company or the city. Ms. Koloski stated that she posted a picture on Facebook of a woman struggling waiting for the bus. She stated that she had gotten several comments on the post offering to pay for a solution. She had gotten a call from someone stating that the transit company was looking into the issue. One day she noticed Frank Soto from COLTS assessing the situation and he told her that COLTS has to get approval from Penn Dot for a shelter. He felt the process would be approximately three months. She has been waiting and hasn't heard anything. She continues to give people money for a taxi so they don't have to wait in the cold. Ms. Koloski also has photos and videos of individuals waiting. May of them have issues just standing and they have to wait a long time for the bus. She stated that she does not ride the bus but, she feels sorry for those that have to wait. She thought it was important for the passengers to have a bench or a shelter. Ms. Koloski spoke with Frank on her way in and he explained that rules and regulations have to be followed but, this has been going on for a very long time and she would like it taken care of because the people waiting there are suffering. She

stated that Frank has been very helpful but, she wanted to see if there is someone at Penn Dot, she can contact to get this moving along. Mr. McGrath stated that the Americans with Disabilities Act regulation have gotten more stringent. He stated that COLTS would love to put up the shelter but we have to follow the regulations. Mr. McGrath assured her that they will continue to work on getting it taken care of. Ms. Kosloski stated that she had several offers from people to pay for a bench. She asked if she could just see about having one put there if the hospital approves. Mr. McGrath stated that he could not stop her from doing that but, he would not encourage her to do that. Zain stated that he and Bill Kuehner had been working on this prior to Frank starting at COLTS. They felt a shelter would be much better so they did not want to spend the time to get the approval for just the bench. They have been going through the procurement process for the shelter but then some of the regulations changed. Now, we have to get engineers in to look at the site before the shelter can be put in. Keri explained that the engineer has to approve the fact that it is ADA acceptable. Ms. Koloski asked what they plan to do with the shelter in front of the old Globe store and if they have to take it down. Mr. McGrath explained that any shelters that are already in place, are grandfathered in so they don't have to meet the regulations. Keri noted that all of our shelters are being inspected. Mr. McGrath stated that he shares her frustration with the situation but with things like this, our hands are tied. There are many factors that come in to play such as, the height of the bench, the thickness of the concrete, who owns the property, etc. that has to be dealt with. Ms. Koloski suggested having the bus go back on Arthur Avenue and put a bench in the park. She also felt that Colfax Avenue is very congested and dangerous. Zain stated that they spoke with the management at the hospital and they do not want the bus to block access for the ambulance so they asked us to turn on Colfax. Ms. Koloski also suggested picking up and dropping off on the opposite side of the street. She stated that she does not blame COLTS she just would like something to be done.

Sarah Cruz addressed the board. She stated that she has been a COLTS passenger for approximately 30 years. She understands the challenges of riding the bus specifically for individuals that have to go to Geisinger CMC. She stated that her elderly mother has appointments there regularly. Many times, she has to stand on the corner and wait for the bus when there is inclement weather. She understands the policies and procedures that COLTS has to follow but, she also can understand the points that Ms. Koloski is making. Ms. Cruz thanked everyone for listening and trying to work through the red tape with this situation. Mr. McGrath thanked Ms. Cruz for her comments and he suggested that she may want to join our CAC Committee.

Martha Dougher made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:11 p.m. and Larry Wynne seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Submitted by:
Jane Farrell, Executive Assistant