

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF AUTHORITY  
County of Lackawanna Transit System  
October 30, 2024

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The regular meeting of the County of Lackawanna Transit System Authority was held on Wednesday, October 30, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. at the Lackawanna Transit Center.

Present were:	Martha Dougher	Michael Dougherty
	Larry Wynne	Atty. Timothy Hinton
	Atty. Joseph DeNaples	Timothy McGrath
	Michael Danchak	Jane Farrell
	Frank Soto	Kelly Matone
	Nicole Ference	Sara Cruz
	Doris Koloski	Koren Clark
	Angel Ramone	Ethan Emker

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. Michael Dougherty participated via phone. Gregg Neito and Brian Doughton were excused.

Acceptance of Minutes

Mr. Wynne requested a motion to approve the September 26, 2024 meeting minutes. Martha Dougher made a motion to accept the minutes and Michael Dougherty seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Acceptance of Financial Documents

Mr. Wynne requested a motion to approve the Finance Statements for the month of August 2024. Michael Dougherty made a motion to accept the financial reports and Martha Dougher 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. Mike Danchak reviewed the ridership report for the fixed route department for August 2024. Mike stated that we are at 69% of pre-pandemic levels for the month of August. The ridership has increased by 5% from last year. We are temporarily adjusting the route for the Bangor/Viewmont on Election Day to ensure access for all passengers to the designated polling station located at Scranton High School. The average daily ridership was 2,339 in August 2024, which is average to what we have seen the last few months. There has been an increase in pass purchases. Most likely due to the schools returning.

- B. Kelly Matone reviewed the ridership report for the shared ride department for August 2024. Kelly stated that revenue had increase by 17% from last year and the ridership was up by 2%. We were at 90% of the pre-pandemic numbers. Kelly updated that board on the Technical Assistance Program. They are working on a new organizational chart for the department. They also did an exercise in light of feedback from Michael Baker. Last Monday and Tuesday, they didn't move any of the appointments. It did affect service, not in the best way, but they are collecting data and hopefully they will find a happy medium.
- C. Frank Soto addressed the board regarding safety and security. Frank stated that we are trending downward on the number of accidents and the number of reportable accidents from Calendar Year 2023. The next scheduled training will be for Fatigue Awareness. There was one new fixed route operator that recently completed inhouse training. Two out of the five shared ride operators have completed training required to obtain Commercial Driver's License permit with passenger endorsements. They are on track to test in mid-November. Frank stated that the installation for the shelter on Colfax Avenue is on track. We have the shelter and the contractor will be responsible to move it to the site. Frank felt that the shelter should be installed by the end of the year. Doris Koloski asked how long it would take to get the Building Permit. Frank didn't feel that it would take very long to get it. Doris thought it would be installed by October. Frank stated that the shelter was due to be received in October.
- D. Nicole Ference addressed the board regarding the human resources department. Nicole stated that they continue to interview for fixed route drivers. Currently there are two or three candidates in the works. They are also bringing back a part-time retiree to meet the staffing level. Nicole stated that the shared ride department is fully staffed. With regard to the maintenance department, they have one new hire and they have another in the pre-employment phase. They will also be scheduling an interview with another individual within the next week. Nicole stated that they have had two negation session with the ATU since the last board meeting. They have another meeting scheduled in November. Nicole noted that they also had a labor/management meeting with SEIU.
- E. Keri Savage addressed the board with regard to the communications and outreach. Keri stated that COLTS recognized Breast Cancer Awareness Month. All employees were provided with pink ribbons and we accepted donations to support the cause. The funds will be sent to the National Breast Cancer Foundation at the end of the month. We also celebrated the national Week Without Driving campaign. It ran from October 1<sup>st</sup> to October 6<sup>th</sup>. Nicole stated that they participated in the Johnson College job fair for graduating students. Information on our services was also brought to the event. They continue to have meetings for the Stuff the Bus event that will be held on December 5, 2024. There is another meeting scheduled with the committee on November 7, 2024. Members of administration are schedule to attend a meeting with NEPA Moves in November. Keri stated that they have been coordinating with the Area Agency on Aging for election day. We have made adjustments to route #43 to service voters going from downtown Scranton to the polling station at Scranton High. COLTS will also be participating in the Santa Parade on November 23, 2024. We have two schools that are interested in providing travel training for their students. They continue to work on updating policies and working on evaluation processes for all employees.

- F. Mr. McGrath updated the board on a few items. Mr. McGrath, on behalf of COLTS and its Directors, extended sincerest condolence to the family of James Finan. Mr. Finan was the Executive Director of COLTS from 1990 to 2000. Mr. McGrath thanked him for his dedicated service to the employees, passengers and the community. Mr. McGrath stated that some of the board members and solicitors were able to take a tour of the new facility. They have moved back the completion date for the facility to February 2025. They had discussed the possibility of it being complete in November 2024 but, the actual original completion date was set for June 2025. So, this change is not unexpected. Mr. McGrath complemented and commended the entire operations team for their service during this active political season. We have experienced a high level of visits and they come with a great deal of logistical issues. He thanked everyone from operations for coming together to properly service the community.

#### Public Comment/Other Business

Larry Wynne requested a motion for the Resolution to Offer Free Rides on Veterans Day 2024 to Current Military Members and Veterans. Martha Dougher made the motion for the approval of the resolution and Michael Dougherty second the motion. All were in favor.

Mr. Wynne welcomed comments from the public regarding other business. Angel Ramone addressed the board regarding the news of the train receiving funding to come to the area. Although it will take some time to get things organized, he felt it was important to begin preparation. He has spoken to several people, in Scranton and in the outer areas, and he felt they have obstacles with riding the buses. The people stated that they don't know how to pay to ride the bus, they don't have a method of payment that is convenient for them and they expect a frequency that will not delay their schedules. Angel suggested offering Tap to Pay to board passengers faster. He has used the system offered by SEPTA and he believes it makes a difference in boarding time. Angel also suggested expanding the frequency of trips and running later into the night. He understands that funding can be an issue but there are things that are important to the public. Angel feels that these are things that we should focus on improving, in anticipation of the train coming. Noting that we will have tourists and new jobs in the area. Many of the people coming from bigger cities, do not own cars and they will need to get around the area relying on COLTS. Angel hopes that we will be prepared when the time comes. Mr. McGrath thanked Angel for his thoughtful and insightful comments. He noted that we are aware of some of the challenges but, he focused on areas of opportunities that we are working on. Things like, when will the last train arrive and how will we move the passengers after they arrive.

Atty. Timothy Hinton asked if we will have Tap to Pay on the new buses. Mr. McGrath stated that they do not come with the fare boxes. We are looking at different vendors and systems to be installed. Mr. McGrath noted that they were working with PPTA to advance an RFP on a universal system that would be shared by all agencies. But then, they stopped the process. Greg has been working to find different vendors that we are considering for the future. The pluses and minuses of each system has to be weighed. Mr. McGrath also announced that we will be going through a transit study in 2025. This will be a look at the operations from top to bottom. Karen Clark, from Scranton Area Foundation, asked if in the system that SEPTA or Allegheny County is using would be the best option. She also wanted to know if the PPTA dropped out completely or if it should be looked at on the State level. Mr. McGrath stated that he believes it was just sidelined. There were two agencies that were spearheading it for PPTA but then it was abandoned. Mr. McGrath stated that they are looking at multiple vendors. Keri noted that the many of the systems have limitations that have to be modified per the population. She also stated

that passes can be purchased online for easy access. Doris Koloski stated that she was recently traveling and she had a card that was like a gift card that you can load funds to and tap it when you used it. She asked if this is what was being discussed. Mr. McGrath stated that it is the type of system we are looking for but there are many vendors that offer it. Mike Danchak noted that we can change the system but, due to civil rights, we still have to offer the option to use cash. The new system will require a new vault and it will also track ridership so there are many things that come into play with this. Mike felt that the transition will take about two years because of the complex issues.

Sarah Cruze addressed the board. She stated that she learned that two long time fixed route drivers would be leaving COLTS. She felt that they were always gracious and efficient at their jobs. She felt they were a benefit to COLTS and the community. Sarah wished them well in their future. Mr. McGrath thanked her for her kind comments.

Martha Dougher made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:05 p.m. and Larry Wynne seconded the motion. All were in favor.

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Submitted by:  
Jane Farrell, Executive Assistant