

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF AUTHORITY  
County of Lackawanna Transit System  
January 29, 2025

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The regular meeting of the County of Lackawanna Transit System Authority was held on Wednesday, January 29, 2025 at 4:43 p.m. at the Lackawanna Transit Center.

Present were:	Michael Dougherty	Robert Durkin
	Brian Doughton	Martha Dougher
	Gregg Nieto	J. Timothy Hinton
	Joseph DeNaples	Timothy McGrath
	Jane Farrell	William Kuehner
	Zain Rabbani	Nicole Ference
	Kelly Matone	Frank Soto
	Keri Savage	Sarah Cruz

Attorney Atty. J. Timothy Hinton opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Attorney Hinton called the meeting to order.

Atty. J. Timothy Hinton to swear Robert Durkin in as the newest member of the County of Lackawanna Transit Systems Board of Directors for a five-year term.

Attorney Hinton, as Solicitor for COLTS, requested a motion for the appointment of the Chairman of the Board of Directors. Michael Dougherty made a motion to appoint Brian Doughton as the Chairman. Martha Dougher seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Brian Doughton welcomed Robert Durkin to the board and stated that an Executive Session was held prior to the meeting to discuss personnel matters.

Reorganization

Mr. Doughton requested a motion to nominate the Vice-Chairman. Martha Dougher made a motion to appoint Michael Dougherty as Vice-Chairman. Gregg Nieto seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Brian Doughton made a motion for Robert Durkin to hold the office of Secretary. Martha Dougher seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Brian Doughton made a motion for Martha Dougher to hold the office of Treasurer. Michael Dougherty seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Martha Dougher made a motion for Gregg Nieto to hold the office of Vice Secretary/Vice Treasurer. Brian Doughton seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Brian Doughton made a motion to appoint Martha Dougher and Michael Dougherty to the ATU Pension Committee. Gregg Nieto seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Brian Doughton made a motion to appoint Gregg Nieto and Rober Durkin to the SEIU Pension Committee. Michael Dougherty seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Brian Doughton made a motion to appoint himself and Martha Dougher to the Personnel Committee. Michael Dougherty seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Brian Doughton made a motion to reappoint Timothy Hinton and Joseph DeNaples as Solicitors to COLTS. Martha Dougher seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Martha Dougher made a motion to appoint Keri Savage as the Right to Know Officer. Brian Doughton seconded the motion. All were in favor.

As a notation, those who were elected to each position have abstained from voting for themselves.

Brian Doughton requested a Roll Call of the Board Members. Martha Dougher, Robert Durkin and Brian Doughton were present; Gregg Nieto and Michael Dougherty participated via zoom.

#### Acceptance of Minutes

Mr. Doughton requested a motion to accept the December 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. Doughton requested a motion to approve the Income Statements for November 2024. Martha Dougher made a motion to accept the financial documents and Brian Doughton seconded the motion. All were in favor.

#### Public Comment/Agenda Items

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

#### Executive Director's and Department Reports

- A. Kelly Matone reviewed the shared ride ridership report for November 2024. Kelly stated that the revenue had increased by 14% from last year. The ridership is at approximately 94% pre-pandemic numbers. The On Time Performance ran at 92% for the month of November with approximately 8,500 trips. Kelly noted that the Technical Assistance Program is moving ahead. In the beginning of December, Kelly and Mr. McGrath hosted meetings with the shared ride department to go over their concerns and questions. A handful of employees came in to discuss office staff, scheduling and assigning runs. She felt there was a good turnout for the meetings. In the middle of January, Kelly introduced two new documents, per the assessment. A Two-Way Radio Guide was issued to address unnecessary conversation, proper etiquette and other issues. They have also introduced five new codes to be used over the radios to streamline some things. As an example, 1052 would indicate that the driver needs an ambulance at the scene. This would eliminate alerting everyone to an issue. The second document encompasses items such as daily staff report processes, reminders for Ecolane, office etiquette and procedures. Kelly stated that when we get into the new

building, the department will be on separate floors. Because of this, she is trying to get the office staff more accustomed to using the phones and email to communicate. Mr. McGrath explained to Mr. Durkin that COLTS was fortunate enough to receive a grant to study the structure of our shared ride department. When the study was done, there were approximately 147 findings and recommendations. We were not in violation of any issues but, we should be more compliant. The recommendations will improve how we provide service. Michael Baker is a consultant that has assisted throughout the transportation industry and they are performing the analysis for the project. The problems have been identified and we are working with them to implement some changes. They will also provide us with technical assistance and training to complete the process.

- B. Zain Rabbani reviewed the fixed route ridership report for November 2024. Zain stated that the ridership is at 75% of the pre-pandemic numbers. The merging of route 55 is now running on Saturdays as a pilot program. Time points are being tested to make sure they are accurate. They have been getting mostly positive feedback on the adjustment. In April, they plan to change the schedule from Saturday, to all service days for the route. Mr. McGrath explained to Mr. Durkin, that the 75% pre-pandemic figure is above average for smaller transit systems. Factors such as, people working from home and others not going out as much could contribute to the numbers. Zain noted that the ridership for November 2024 was 61,634 compared to November 2023, which was 64,476. That is a reduction of 3,000 trips but, we are still above the state average. Mr. McGrath noted that days of service and weather issues can contribute to the reduction in numbers. Zain stated that we had two storms in November that created issues with ridership. Mr. Durkin asked if we look at the ridership information with Luzerne County Transportation to see if there is any commonality with their numbers. Zain stated that it is something that they had planned on doing but, they haven't yet. Atty. Hinton stated that LCTA is approximately 40% larger than COLTS so the numbers may not compare. Mr. Durkin asked about the pre-pandemic numbers.
- C. Keri Savage addressed the board regarding the communications and outreach. Keri stated that they have concluded the negotiations with the ATU on the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The CBA will be voted on at the board meeting today. The next CAC meeting has been scheduled for February 19, 2025 and information will be posted on the website. They continue to work on the Title VI response and it should be submitted by the end of this week. In the next few months, we have travel training scheduled and they are meeting with the RailRiders to discuss the Game Day Express. They are also looking to see if there is any room for expansion with the RailRiders to provide a wider range of services to the community. Keri stated that the 2024 Wellness Grant was used to offer employees 15-minute sessions with a massage therapist before Christmas. They have also reached out the Benecon to see if the amount could be increased. Keri stated that she has also been looking into purchasing walking pads for the employees so they can get some exercise on campus. She would also like to offer the massage therapy more frequently because there was a good response to it. Keri stated that they had a meeting with dialysis today and they are hoping to have one of their team members join the CAC committee. She felt it was a good meeting and it opened the doors to communication with them about issues we were having. Keri offered the 2025 COLTS calendars to the board members. She feels it is a good resource for the passengers and 3<sup>rd</sup> party partners. Keri noted that there is also an electronic version on our website. Mr. McGrath stated that the calendar highlights information on ridership and frequently asked questions about our service.

- D. Frank Soto addressed the board regarding safety and security. Frank introduced himself to Mr. Durkin and explained his position with COLTS. Frank stated that the report he has been providing will look a bit different next month to make it easier to understand.
- E. Nicole Ference addressed the board regarding human resources. Nicole stated that they have hired a full-time customer service representative for the transit center. They are also considering hiring a part-time person to fill in the gaps to possibly extend the hours at the transit center. They are still in need of two or three drivers for the fixed route department. There are currently two going through the pre-employment process. One driver was hired last week. The shared ride department is fully staffed. Since the last meeting, we hired one full-time mechanic so we are almost fully staffed in that department. There is one operator that is being transferred to the service department in anticipation of the additional work at the new facility.
- F. Timothy McGrath stated that Mike Danchak was not feeling well and could not attend the meeting. Mr. McGrath stated that our finances are going well but the last 28 hours there have been issues. Yesterday morning we were asked to take some drastic measures with regard to our funding with the FTA. They conducted several meetings to address the issues but, as the day went on, the memo from the federal government had been rescinded and things are at a stand still for now. At the time, they were considering getting all of the funds from our grants into our hands just to be safe. But the only grant that we addressed was the ARPA funding. Mr. McGrath stated that he had a discussion with Mike, and he feels comfortable saying that the finances on hand would sustain us for approximately one year without any additional financial assistance. Mr. McGrath also welcomed Mr. Durkin to the board of directors and he looks forward to working with him. He also acknowledged and thanked Larry Wynne for his dedicated service to COLTS. Mr. McGrath stated the Mr. Wynne was a tremendous advocate for COLTS and the community. Mr. McGrath stated that the new facility project has been recognized by Penn Dot and others on how well the project is going. But recently we have been notified that the schedule has been pushed back a couple of months due to some contracting issues. One issue that they have been having is, doing duct work in the high areas of the garage and moving the lifts around to get the work done. There had been no sense of urgency to get the work done because we are still up and running at the current facility but, now Penn Dot has joined us in pushing to have the project complete. The most recent completion date is May 5, 2025. Mr. McGrath noted that this is considered phase two of the project. Once the building is complete, phase three is the demolition of the current facility. The fourth phase is to have Trillium come in next year. Mr. McGrath stated that we signed a letter of support, which will be distributed to the board, to support Scranton Area Community Foundations application for grant funding to do a feasibility study with NEPA Moves for Micro-Transit through Lackawanna County. We have also approved our MPO Agreement to support the MPO transit study efforts. We hope to announce later that we will be entering into a larger study to review the entire routing system for COLTS.

Public Comment/Other Business

- A. Mr. Doughton requested a motion to approve the ATU Collective Bargaining Agreement. Mr. Durkin abstained from voting as he did not review the document. Martha Dougher made the motion and Michael Dougherty seconded the motion. All were in favor. Atty. Hinton requested a notation that both sides are in agreement with

the major components of CBA but, there were some language changes made to the document. They are waiting on the final draft of the document to come back from the ATU. Because the union has already voted their approval of the agreement, we do not want to wait another month to have to board vote on it. They are asking that the vote be modified for the board to approve the CBA pending final review by the solicitors and management of COLTS.

- B. Mr. Doughton requested a motion to approve the Resolution to Approve the 2024-2025 Technical Study Grant Contract with Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission. Michael Dougherty made the motion and Martha Dougher seconded the motion. All were in favor.
- C. Mr. Doughton welcomed comments from the public regarding other business; Sarah Cruz addressed the board. She wanted to express her appreciation for the bus shelter that was constructed on Colfax Avenue. She is very happy with it and she knows that Ms. Koloski also appreciates it. Sarah also thanked Mr. McGrath for addressing the recent funding issues.

Martha Dougher made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:17 p.m. Michael Dougherty seconded the motion and all were in favor.

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Submitted by:  
Jane Farrell, Transit Center Manager