

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF AUTHORITY
County of Lackawanna Transit System
September 24, 2025

The regular meeting of the County of Lackawanna Transit System Authority was held on Wednesday, September 24, 2025 at 4:30 p.m. at COLTS main office, 800 North South Road, Scranton PA.

Present were:	Brian Doughton	Martha Dougher
	Robert Durkin	Atty. Timothy Hinton
	Atty. Joseph DeNaples	Timothy McGrath
	Jane Farrell	Michael Danchak
	Keri Savage	Zain Rabbani
	Frank Soto	Nicole Ference

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

Mr. Doughton requested a roll call of the board members. Brian Doughton, Martha Dougher and Robert Durkin were present. Gregg Nieto and Michael Dougherty were excused.

Acceptance of Minutes

Mr. Doughton requested a motion to approve the minutes from the board meeting held on August 27, 2025. Robert Durkin made a motion to accept the minutes. Brian Doughton seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Acceptance of Financial Documents

Mr. Doughton requested a motion to approve the Finance Statements for the month of July 2025. Brian Doughton made a motion to accept the financial reports and Robert Durkin 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 Report/Department Reports

- A. Keri Savage addressed the board regarding communications. With regard to outreach, Keri announced that they had their Stuff the Bus kickoff meeting on August 28, 2025. She contacted the representative from the Marine's that will be our event coordinator. They discussed upcoming meetings that he will be attending and we applied to be an official drop off location. Keri stated that the ATU is deeply involved in the event. She discussed with Steve Matassa about scheduling the next meeting on October 1, 2025. Most of the CAC members also attended the kickoff meeting. Keri stated that they did a Touch a Truck event at Johnson College on September 14, 2025. Members of the staff attended the joint Senior Expo at the Steamtown Mall on September 19, 2025. She felt that they had gotten approximately 20 new riders at the event. This weekend, we will be at the Junior League of Scranton's Touch a Truck event at Nay Aug Park. This is the

14th year the event has been held and COLTS has been a part of the event every year. With regard to administration, they have been working on filling the maintenance positions. They are also in the process of completing the requirements of re-classification of the maintenance department per the terms and conditions of the CBA. Keri stated that the Title VI draft is ready for review. She will send it out for review prior to the next board meeting. The three segments for PA Live aired this month and she will send the links to the board members for them to view.

- B. Nicole Ference addressed the board regarding the human resources department. Nicole stated that have onboarded several new employees during the month. In the fixed route department, they have 40 full time operators. In the past month, we have onboarded 3 full time and 1 part time operators. We are still looking for more full time but, we are at our max capacity for part time. With regard to the shared ride department, we onboarded 2 part time drivers. They have 1 part time and 1 full time individuals in the pre-employment process. That will bring the department to full staff. Nicole stated that they will begin interviews for grounds technicians and custodians in the maintenance department next week. They have received a lot of applications for the open positions. Zain noted that, this is the first time since March 2023 that the fixed route department is fully staffed and it has changed the whole dynamic of the operation. Also, the individuals that were hired are quality personnel and they did not compromise on integrity with the hires. Keri noted that, at the SAFTI conference, they are pushing for a personality test. She is working on getting a standardized SAFTI personality test that other transit agencies are using. Mr. McGrath agreed that we have had good candidates. He reminded Zain that we have to bring them back to debrief them. One thing we recognized is that, when the drivers are hired and trained, we have limited contact with them unless there is an issue. Mr. McGrath commended everyone for their great work with the hiring and training process. At this time, the focus is on the maintenance and custodian positions.
- C. Mike Danchak addressed the board regarding the finance department. Mike stated that the surplus has been doing well but, many expenses are coming soon. He felt that we will have a better sense of where the budget stands closer to December. For the past five years, we had the mentality in the finance department, that there have been three phases on how to get COLTS on a better fiscal path. Mike stated that phase one was aggressive budgeting on the expense side. The hope was that we could get into a more aggressive stand on going out to get more formula funding as we entered phase two. Now that we are in the new building, it will require more staffing. Because of that, we have to get more grant funding and we also have to see more efficiencies. We still have to find a way to increase our surplus for a rainy day. The surplus helps with capital if there is an issue with the local match or unexpected expenses. Mike noted that we have a \$4 million deficit in the ATU Pension Plan. The performance of the plan has been doing well but, we will have to contribute more to the plan. Year to date, the plan is up approximately 10% in the performance. Even though we are a public transit agency, profit and loss are still important. Phase three will be discussed at another time as we look for other revenue streams and ways to make this more sustainable. Not only for the next five years, but for then next twenty. The state budget is murky as to where the funding sources will come from in the future. Mike stated that one of the resolutions to be approved today is for an engine replacement in a bus from 2012. Typically, we would have replaced this bus but, we are fixing it because the funds that would be used for capital funding, will be rerouted for operations. Because of that, we have to stretch our assets beyond what the useful life usually is. The 12-year assets will now be 16-year

assets to get as much as we can out of the assets. This is why we are fixing the bus. Other than the engine, everything else is good with the it. This way, we don't have to spend \$700,000 to replace it. Some of these things may not make sense when you look at it from a higher level but, when you look deeper, it makes sense. Atty. Joseph DeNaples asked if these are just issues for our agency or is it an issue state wide. Mike stated that this is an issue across the state. He noted that SEPTA petitioned the state to use money that was allotted for capital to use in the operating budget. There was a newspaper report regarding SEPTA saying that they have to stretch certain assets out and capital projects have to wait longer. With that, Mike felt that we are no exception to what is going on. Mr. McGrath felt that it would be a good idea to schedule a budget session with the board to go over some items. He felt we should not only look at the challenges but the opportunities that are out there. Atty. Timothy Hinton asked if an Actuarial Study is due this year. Jane Farrell stated that it is and she is expecting to receive it by next week.

- D. Frank Soto addressed the board regarding safety and security. Frank stated that we are doing well as far as accidents go. This can be attributed to the ongoing refresher training that we provide to the operators, mainly for fixed route. Since we moved to the new building, we haven't had any mirror incidents. We also have a system that will assign buses to operators making it easier to get in and get out. The new building is spacious and better overall. Towards the end of this year and the beginning of 2026 will be busy with training. Some of the training has to be completed every three years, as required by SAFTI. Frank is working to schedule Sexual Harassment and Drug and Alcohol training. At this point, we have one shared ride driver doing in-class training and should be out doing driving training soon. With regard to the maintenance department, they will have Forklift/Utility vehicle training.
- E. Zain Rabbani reviewed the ridership report for the shared ride and fixed route departments for July 2025. Zain stated that the shared ride departments average daily riders was up 6% from July 2024. The pre-pandemic ridership was at 97%. The on-time performance was at 91%. The annual ridership is currently trending 16% higher than our pre-pandemic annual ridership. With regard to the Technical Assistance Grant, the department has been working on some much-needed recommendations. The data cleanup has made the department run smoother and information is updated properly in Ecolane. Shared ride has implemented a soft launch of expanding service hours to alleviate congestion during peak hours for efficiency. If a client calls before noon the day prior to service, regardless of the funding, they will accommodate the request. So far it has been a smooth transition. Mr. McGrath noted that this was something that Penn Dot has been pushing for years. We were the only system in the state that required two days' notice to make a reservation for shared ride. We haven't promoted it widely because we wanted to see how we react to the change. Zain noted that Kelly Matone said they haven't had any issues with the change. With regard to fixe route operations, the ridership is at 76% if the pre-pandemic numbers. In the month of July, we reached out to Scranton school district to address the need for any route changes for the upcoming school year. During orientation, they provided passenger training and address any concerns that the students or parents have. Zain stated that the fixed route department hired two new part-time dispatchers. They are being trained on several different things for the department. The more hours they put in, they become more efficient. It usually takes six to eight weeks to be fully trained in the position. So far, they are doing good and he has gotten positive feedback on their work. Mr. McGrath noted that, during the SAFTI meeting, they felt there was more training needed for

dispatchers in the shared ride department. Mr. Durkin asked if we have an idea of the percentage of people that do not ride the bus, because they don't know the procedures to ride. Zain stated that he isn't sure how to gauge that metrics but, they are working on a survey to collect this type of information. Keri thought that we could contact NEPA Moves and they may have some statistics on what that number might be. Mr. Durkin felt that starting the survey with, what are your transportation needs and then go into more specific questions. Mr. McGrath felt that going into the high schools to do the training is a good way to start things off. But we need to go into some high-rises and community centers. The need is to find the people and educate them on our services. Keri felt it was good to get the younger people when they are in high school so when they go into the work force, they are already comfortable using the bus system. Zain stated that they have information packets prepared that can be distributed to any group that would be interested.

- F. Timothy McGrath addressed the board. Mr. McGrath stated that we are at phase two of the construction project and things are going well. Any type of inconsistencies that we find underground could create issues. As of now, we are looking at October 20, 2025 goal for paving of the north side and then it will flip to the south. Mr. McGrath stated that some staff members will be attending the PPTA conference in Penn State next week.

Public Comment/Other Business

- A. Mr. Doughton requested a motion for the Resolution to authorize the payment to Hunter Truck to replace the engine in bus 314. Martha Dougher made the motion and Robert Durkin seconded the motion. All were in favor.
- B. Mr. Doughton welcomed comments from the public regarding other business; there were none

Brain Doughton made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:05 p.m. and Robert Durkin seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Submitted by:
Jane Farrell, Executive Assistant