

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF AUTHORITY
County of Lackawanna Transit System
February 25, 2026

The regular meeting of the County of Lackawanna Transit System Authority was held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 4:40 p.m. at 800 North South Road, Scranton, PA.

Present were:	Michael Dougherty	Larry Wynne
	Brian Doughton	Martha Dougher
	Robert Durkin	Joseph DeNaples
	J. Timothy Hinton	Timothy McGrath
	Jane Farrell	Zain Rabbani
	Nicole Ference	Michael Danchak
	Kelly Matone	William Kuehner
	Frank Galli	

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

Mr. Wynne requested a Roll Call of the Board Members. Robert Durkin, Larry Wynne and Brian Doughton were present; Michael Dougherty and Martha Dougher participated remotely.

Acceptance of Minutes

Board Secretary, Robert Durkin stated that the board minutes had been distributed for review. Mr. Durkin asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes; there were none. Mr. Durkin requested a motion to approve the minutes from the board meetings held on December 17, 2025 and January 28, 2026. Robert Durkin made a motion to accept the minutes from December 2025. Brian Doughton made a motion to accept the minutes from January 2026. Michael Dougherty seconded the motions for both. All were in favor

Acceptance of Financial Documents

Mr. Wynne requested a motion to approve the Income Statements for December 2025. Martha Dougher made a motion to accept the financial documents and Michael Dougherty 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 and Department Reports

- A. Kelly Matone reviewed the shared ride ridership report for December 2025. Kelly stated the average daily ridership was up 4% from last year. The pre-pandemic numbers had an increase of 6%. The overall on-time performance was 89%. Kelly stated that Bill Kuehner, SAFTI, IT and maintenance departments worked together to put the pre-and post-trips on the tablets for the drivers. This is a more efficient way to take care of this and it was a smooth transition. Also, Bill Kuehner facilitated the TAPTCO Drug and Alcohol Awareness Refresher Training last Wednesday and Thursday. This is a

mandatory bi-annual training for all safety sensitive shared ride employees. They are required to attend the training. Operators, dispatch and management participated. Brian Doughton asked Kelly how the contracted services are working on Saturday with Pete's garage. Kelly stated that, in the beginning it was rocky but, she hasn't gotten any complaints at all recently about their service. Kelly stated that they have a monthly meeting with Trisha and she did not recall Zain having any complaints either. Mr. McGrath stated that, when we make changes to the routes such as Geisinger, they have adjusted well to the changes.

- B. Zain Rabbani reviewed the fixed route ridership report for December 2025. Zain stated that the ridership is at 75% of the pre-pandemic numbers. In an effort to increase ridership, on February 9, 2026, we began service to the Geisinger Cancer Center as well as launching service to Keystone College and the Factoryville area. These service additions are expected to support ridership growth and improve access to key regional destinations. Zain stated that he spoke with Trisha at Pete's Garage and so far, the operation is going smoothly. The ridership is low because it has only been two weeks. As more ridership information becomes available, they will update the board. There were some glitches in the system. Such as, peak hours at Geisinger made navigating the parking lot a bit difficult. They are looking at the parking lot to see the best way to maneuver around it. Mr. Durkin stated that he had a meeting today with the President of Keystone College and he had nothing but the highest praise and thanks to COLTS for introducing the service. Mr. McGrath asked Zain if the parking lot is the issue or exiting the facility. Zain stated that the issue is at the front entrance because at times, there could be two or three ambulances in front of the building transporting patients.
- C. Mike Danchak addressed the board with regard to the finance department. Mike stated that he has some high-level items to discuss. Noting that we are in the middle of grant writing season and budget season. As of now, the budget numbers for 2026/2027 Fiscal Year will be around \$20.5 million. This represents an approximate 12% increase from this fiscal year. From the capital standpoint, we are going to be buying four CNG buses. They will replace hybrid buses that we currently have. We will also be purchasing seven or eight vans for the shared ride department. There is a lot of turnovers on the vans because they have so many miles on them. We have the proper grant funding for this and Penn Dot does a very good job shepherding us through that process. We will also be starting our cashless fare program on the fixed route buses. We will be swapping out the fare boxes on the buses. This will be a tap-to-pay system. The hope is to speed up the onboarding process. The cost for this is approximately three quarters of a million for the project. We will get funding from the FTA, Penn Dot and the County for the project. Mr. Doughton asked if another company will come in to do the project. Mike said that a company will come in and do the project in phases. Due to the fact that, we can't take every bus off the road at the same time. Mike explained that it will be done the same way we did it when we installed the driver barriers in the buses. A company came up from Florida and they did a few buses each day. Mike felt we had a pretty good template on how to proceed. Atty. Joseph DeNaples asked if the new fare boxes will still accept cash. Mike stated that they will. The hope is that it will help the efficiency of the service. Mike noted that it will take a while but, it is on the agenda. Mike stated that, to close the budget gap, we will be pulling a significant grant from our 5307 funding. In prior meeting we discussed that this will be a funding strategy. We are looking to get a grant for around \$4.2 million for operating assistance. On top of that, we will be doing a Shared Ride fare increase. There is a Resolution in front of the board to day for the Fare Adjustment Policy. Each year we analyze our

fares to see where we are in comparison to other transit agencies but, also inflation costs over the last few years. This determines if we need a fare increase. With regard to the fixed routed department, we will not have a fare increase in the next fiscal year. This is due to the fact that ridership is going up but, it isn't going up in the manner that we would like. So, raising fares may not be the best thing to do to increase ridership. Our costs on the shared ride side are approximately \$48 to \$50 per trip. Penn Dot reimburses us \$30 per trip. That creates an \$18 gap. This equates to an approximate \$1.8 million shortfall for the shared ride service. We do not like to increase the shared ride fare, but we are being forced to. To do this, we have to send a grant application to Penn Dot, give them a budget and a plan on how we mitigate cost increases in the next couple of years. Then we explain how we can meet Penn Dot half way. They will give us a fare increase and then they give us a bigger reimbursement. But we have to meet them in the middle. We know the staff would like to see more full-time drivers, unfortunately to make a better argument with Penn Dot, it will show that we are trying to mitigate costs by having more part-time drivers. Mr. McGrath noted that we don't arbitrarily increase the fare and it isn't something we like to do. The expectation from Penn Dot is that we should be keeping pace with the cost of living. He also felt that the constituents may feel the increase is due to the new building but, it has nothing to do with that. Mr. Doughton suggested that we explain this to the press. Mr. Durkin asked if there is national data that suggests what the percentage of payee costs could be in this market. He thought there was recently a transportation study completed. Mike stated that we will be participating in that. They will be doing a Transit Development Plan in the upcoming fiscal year. Atty. DeNaples asked Mike if he could get a calculation what it would cost per rider without government subsidies. Mike stated that the cost would be \$16 per trip for the fixed route department. Mr. Durkin felt that we should provide that information to the public for both departments. Mr. McGrath felt that it was virtually impossible to get a comparison with other agencies. Mike stated that, across the state, there is data about how much it should cost per trip in the shared ride area. Typically, across the state, it is approximately \$45 to \$55 per trip. He felt that we would fall in the middle of these figures. The issue with shared ride is that it is becoming harder for Penn Dot to fund that mode of transportation. This is why we get pushback from Penn Dot about the fare increase. It is actually recommended that we do a fare increase every five years. Our last fare increase was in 2022 so we are now in that window. The idea is, that we are going to see an increase in the cost per trip. This is due to increases in gas, wages and insurance. We need to have the reimbursement from Penn Dot to fall in line with that. Consequently, when we get a grant, there needs to be a match. That is the whole part of the process. We have to sit down with Area Agency on Aging to discuss their match. With the People with Disabilities program, the client funds the co-pay which funds the match. This is how Penn Dot thought they would curtail demand. Penn Dot knows that these things are chronically underfunded. Mr. Durkin asked if Penn Dots contributions are uniform across all systems. Mike stated that it varies but, the state average reimbursement is around \$33 per trip. In the next round, after the increase, we hope that our reimbursement will be \$33. Mr. McGrath felt that the formula for the funding is skewed and they are working to adjust that. Mike noted that the fixed route department is essentially funding the shared ride department. Mr. McGrath stated that one of our big struggles is that we are doing individual trips with further distances. We have been trying to figure out what has changed and it goes back to the Rendell administration. Before that, for shared ride, you had to go to the closest facility and they controlled the distance. The changes allowed people to go where ever they wanted but they didn't change the funding with it.

- D. Nicole Ference addressed the board regarding human resources and communications. Nicole stated that Keri has been working on the St. Patrick's Day Parade and Driver Appreciation Day. Nicole stated that they are working on getting the ACA filed for tax purposes. Nicole stated that last week, they interviewed seven shared ride applicants. They are still working on drafting the MOU to have additional part-time drivers. Hopefully there are some good applicants in that bunch. They have one more interview to conduct on Friday. Next week she will join Zain and Frank to conduct interviews with seven fixed route applicants. They are in the process of onboarding one part-time fixed route driver and one part-time custodian.
- E. Timothy McGrath stated that the work is ongoing for the CNG fueling station. They have been opening the trenches and putting in the sub-ground. Even though the weather hasn't been cooperative, we are still on target for completion by May 31st. Mr. McGrath wanted to touch on the unfortunate events that occurred at the Lehigh Valley Hospital a few weeks ago. Mr. McGrath and the board wanted to take the time to recognize some of the efforts that went into that from the team at COLTS. He stated that he received a text message stating that someone was looking to get in touch with him regarding a fire. As he waited for someone to contact him, he contacted the department heads to start the emergency protocols. When he received the call from EMS, they stated that there were people standing in the streets. Mr. McGrath contacted the evening service manager to see if anyone was available to assist. Although they are not drivers, they have their CDL license. All four of the service employees were willing to help. The director of maintenance went directly to the location of the fire to start staging. The fixed route manager came to our facility along with three drivers. Initially they thought that they needed eight buses so there was a scramble. Mr. McGrath commended the staff for their assistance with the event. He recognized Jim Locker, Rick Watson, Jeff Howells and Ed Backus from the service department. Joe Matassa and Lee Glover from the ATU were recognized. Because of the outpouring of assistance at the scene, they were only in need of four buses. They did not need us to provide transportation but to be used as shelter for employees that were displaced. Mr. McGrath also recognized Frank Soto, Zain Rabbani, Dave Sklareski, Frank Sandy and Keri Savage for their assistance. Mr. McGrath also thanked the Chairman for assistance with clearing up an issue with the local match. When it was brought to his attention, he immediately facilitated a call to present the issue to the commissioner. We will be having some subsequent meetings to follow with that. Mr. McGrath also recognized the City of Scranton for their cooperation during the recent snow storm. They reached out to us when we had problems with the roads being unpassable. The city asked us where we were having issues. They designated people and equipment to clear the roads. Mr. McGrath felt this would become a normal situation because they reached out to us prior to another impending storm. We are very grateful and appreciative of the assistance.

Public Comment/Other Business

- A. Atty Timothy Hinton stated that, during the January Re-Organizational Meeting, they nominated and elected separate positions for Vice-Secretary and Vice-Treasurer. After a review by the Solicitors, it was determined that this could only be one position based on the Articles of Incorporation. This position has been consistent since 1972. The Solicitors advised the board members of the situation. The directors holding the positions, Martha Dougher as Vice-Secretary and Brian Doughton as Vice-Treasurer, have agreed to withdraw from those positions. This will allow the board to ask for

nominations for one position of Vice-Secretary/Vice-Treasurer. Larry Wynne made a motion to nominate Brian Doughton for the position of Vice-Secretary/Vice-Treasurer. Martha Dougher seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- B. Mr. Wynne requested a motion for the Resolution to Approve Free Rides for the Scranton Saint Patrick's Day Parade. Brian Doughton made the motion and Michael Dougherty seconded the motion. All were in favor.
- C. Mr. Wynne requested a motion for the Resolution to the Amendment to the COLTS Fare Adjustment Policy. Martha Dougher made the motion and Larry Wynne seconded the motion. All were in favor.
- D. Mr. Wynne welcomed comments from the public regarding other business; Martha Dougher commented on the Safety and Security Report. She noted that the report shows that there were 17 Incidents and 10 Accidents in January 2026. Mr. McGrath stated that Frank Soto was not available to attend the meeting. He will ask him for specific information regarding the report and he will get back to her about them. Mr. McGrath also explained that these incidents could just be slip and falls which would be consistent with the weather. He also believes, if they were major problems, it would have been brought to his attention. With regard to the accidents, there were no major accidents or injuries. Zain noted, on the fixed route side, they just had minor accidents. Mr. McGrath felt that the inclement weather could have been a factor but, he will get more information from Frank Soto. Mrs. Dougher asked if there were any more issues with the ice falling from the roof at the main office. Mr. McGrath stated that there are no current problems but, it will be a project they have to undertake when the weather breaks. He feels that it is not something that we can prevent. Recently, when the ice formed the weather became warmer and the ice melted without causing any issues. The situation was monitored twice daily for safety and there was no need to caution it off. Mrs. Dougher just wanted to make sure people were walking under it if there was an issue. Mr. McGrath stated that, at this time, there is nothing on the roof.
- E. Frank Galli, a shared ride driver, addressed the board. Frank stated that he has been a driver for over six years and this is the first meeting he has attended. He felt that the service we provide is phenomenal. On a daily basis, the drivers are thanked for their service. He felt the need to address the board regarding the pressures that the drivers are facing. When they have passengers that have doctor appointments and they are buried, making them late to see a specialist, it puts added pressure on the driver. Frank noted that he was listening to the discussion earlier about finance. He came to encourage hiring full-time drivers. He is a part-time driver but it seems like he is full-time. He noted that the ridership has been increasing and he felt it was important to get full-time workers. He worried that we are having issues now, and he felt it would be worse in June or July when the numbers will be higher. Mr. McGrath stated that they have been in discussion with the union for some time now. One of the challenges we have is, the way the contract was negotiated, it was based on percentages. With that, we are only allowed so many drivers. And, with some of the part-time drivers, they aren't working as many hours as we need. Many of them are great drivers but, they are constrained by their other jobs. We are looking to discuss with the union, if people are going to be part-time, they should be available to work when needed. Also, this is why we want to expand the numbers we can hire. Mr. McGrath stated that they know that there is pressure. He also noted that he never hears a bad word about the shared ride department or the drivers. We know, and the state knows, it is a valuable service. But,

the funding for this is very antiquated. The lottery will possibly be holding back funds. He feels that, unfortunately, this is the way that all transportation will be headed. The expectations of the general public will be door to door service. Mr. McGrath stated that they will be getting more help for the department. He noted that the driver is retired and he has to watch how much he works so he isn't penalized for working too many hours. Mr. McGrath noted that this is the kind of dedication we are getting from workers like Frank.

Martha Dougher made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:25 p.m. Larry Wynne seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Submitted by:
Jane Farrell, Accounting Assistant