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COLTS goes green, blue and silver

County debuts hybrid buses, new colors.

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The first thing the riding public will notice about the County of Lackawanna Transit System's four hybrid buses is the snazzy new fleet color scheme: dark blue and lime green on a silver base.

The next is how quietly the diesel-electric hybrids run compared to the current all-diesel buses.

What won't be apparent to passengers — but something that will cause COLTS officials to smile — is the savings the agency expects to receive. The cost to operate each new bus will be 30 to 35 percent cheaper than the vehicle it replaces.

COLTS rolled out the new hybrids during a ceremony Friday at the agency's headquarters on North South Road, the vanguard of a fuel-efficient, environmentally friendly fleet that is expected to grow to 13 vehicles next year.

"This is a day for celebration because we are showing here in Lackawanna County and here in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania that we understand what it takes to invent the future," said U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, one of several government officials on hand for the event.

"Part of that is making sure we are focused on using good, old-fashioned American ingenuity and know-how and manufacturing capability to produce vehicles for the future — hybrid vehicles that are made



LINDA MORGAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

COLTS introduced its hybrid buses during a ceremony Friday.



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Matthew Hill, 4, of Scranton, takes a ride on a COLTS hybrid bus during a ceremony Friday.

in America that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil, which will give us new options in our energy strategy and which will create jobs."

COLTS purchased the buses with \$2.2 million in federal stimulus funds received in 2009 through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Executive Director Robert Fiume noted the purchase of the four buses allowed the

manufacturer, California-based Gillig Corp., to retain the equivalent of two full-time jobs.

The new buses, each accommodating 32 seated and 38 standing passengers, are expected to go into service in the next week or so, he said.

Lackawanna County Commissioner Corey O'Brien said he and fellow Commis-

sioner Mike Washo made a commitment when they became the majority commissioners to reduce the county's carbon footprint. The acquisition of the hybrid buses is a step in fulfilling that promise, he said.

"Going greener is not just a phrase," Mr. O'Brien said before the commissioners joined about 20 other people for a short spin to McDade Park and back aboard one of the new buses.

Mr. Fiume said COLTS has nine more hybrid buses on order that are expected to arrive in mid-2012.

Their purchase is being funded in part by a \$2.5 million clean fuels grant the agency received through the Federal Transit Administration. Mr. Fiume said COLTS was the only public transit agency in Pennsylvania, and just one of 36 nationwide, to get one of the grants.

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