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LINDA MORGAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A woman talks to the driver of a COLTS bus heading to Mount Airy Casino Resort at its stop on Wyoming Avenue in Scranton on Friday. No one boarded the Paradise Twp.-bound bus.

COLTS advised to ax some routes and expand others

Public meetings to address consulting firm's recommendations.

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The County of Lackawanna Transit System would eliminate two bus routes, including its service to the North Pocono area, and expand, restructure or extend the hours of others under the recommendations of a public transit consulting firm that spent more than a year analyzing its route structure.

The agency will hold a pair of public meetings Thursday at the Mall at Steamtown to discuss the results of the study by Pittsburgh-based Clear View Strategies, and hear what riders have to say.

COLTS Executive Director Robert Fiume said the recommendations are not etched in stone, and the agency may decide to accept some, reject others or adopt something in between.

"What we are going to discuss at the public hearing is not necessarily something that is ultimately going to happen," he said.

Under the Clear View recommendations, COLTS would eliminate its twice daily North Pocono/Daleville route due to

Analysis recommendations

- Extend hours of Evening City Circle North route.
- Extend weekday evening service hours on select routes (Old Forge, Drinker, High Works, Valley View/Hilltop and some mall service).
- Extend Saturday morning service hours on select routes.
- Eliminate current routes to Monroe County via Mount Airy and Daleville/North Pocono due to low ridership.
- Eliminate service to McDade Park due; extend select trips on South Main route to service Stauffer Industrial Park. Add Saturday service to South Main route to Taylor Walmart and Price Chopper only.
- Expand Route 6 shuttle service to include Best Buy/Staples/Gander Mountain plaza; adjust times to improve connections with mall service.
- Restructure mall service (including Viewmont/Bangor, Viewmont Mall Express/Dalton/Waverly and Shopper's Special) to eliminate duplication and provide improved connections with Route 6 shuttle.
- Extend current Keyser Valley route to Keyser Oak Shopping Center to link with High Works route.
- Review connections with Luzerne County Transportation Authority on Old Forge, Pittston and Mohegan Sun routes to improve service to Luzerne County.
- Improve service between Wegmans and Gerrity's at Keyser Oak Shopping Center and area senior living centers.
- Establish uniform route numbering and naming conventions.

low ridership. Its two-times-a-day route to Monroe County via Mount Airy Casino Resort, which COLTS launched on a trial basis in July, would be scrapped for the same reason.

Although the recommenda-

tions call for ending bus service to McDade Park, select trips on the agency's newly established South Main route would be extended to service Stauffer

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COLTS: Changes to routes months away

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Industrial Park, and Saturday service to Price Chopper and the new Walmart in Taylor would be added.

"It's a fine line we have to draw," Mr. Fiume said. "We want to provide the best service possible and get people where they need to go, but if there's a route that's not working because no one is riding it, we have to, for financial reasons, look at doing something with it."

It will be months before any changes are implemented, he said. If ridership were suddenly to increase on a route recommended for elimination, COLTS will "take another look."

COLTS hired Clear View in April 2009 for \$77,200 to analyze the system's 26 regular routes and determine which ones are effective and which ones are not. It was the first comprehensive study of the agency's

routes in 15 years, and a route that made sense then may not make less sense now, Mr. Fiume said.

"Times change — demographics, new development, new businesses, more cars on the road," he said.

For example, Clear View is recommending that COLTS expand its Route 6 shuttle service to include the Best Buy/Staples/Gander Mountain plaza on Viewmont Drive, which opened in 2001.

Thursday's public meetings will take place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4 to 6:30 on the first floor of the Mall at Steamtown. COLTS will also accept written comments on the recommended changes until May 11. The comments may be submitted by mail to COLTS Route Analysis, 800 North South Road, Scranton, 18504, or by email to info@coltsbus.com.

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