



County of Lackawanna Transit System

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COLTS funding in jeopardy

Governor addresses Legislature in special session

Scranton, Pa. – As Governor Ed Rendell addressed the General Assembly in a special session to address the state’s public transportation funding crisis, the County of Lackawanna Transit System joined transit agencies statewide to call on legislators for a resolution. The failure to implement the tolling measure on Interstate 80 will have a direct effect on both capital funds and operating programs for COLTS. The statewide implications could include an immediate \$484 million capital shortfall and an operating fund freeze.

Not only are COLTS’ capital projects — such as bus replacement and the planned intermodal center — in jeopardy, but the current level of service provided to communities would be unsustainable.

“COLTS is in the midst of a route analysis that we expect will improve and enhance our entire bus system. Unfortunately, any recommended changes would likely have to be placed on the backburner because the funding won’t be there,” said COLTS Executive Director Bob Fiume. “I am hopeful our legislators will reach a swift and responsible solution to this devastating funding crisis.”

In 2009, COLTS carried more than 1.9 million riders to work, school, doctor’s appointments, shopping, social services and other life-sustaining activities.

Single mom Kaneda Gethers is one of many local riders who depends on COLTS to get her to work each day. She also takes her son to school on the bus, and she uses it for all other errands necessary to making life run smoothly. “Public transportation is essential for everyday life for people such as myself who are not fortunate enough to own cars,” she said.

Public transit provides mobility and independence to senior citizens, who comprise COLTS’ largest ridership. Carbondale senior Mary Barnhart relies on the bus to get her everywhere — from grocery shopping to doctor’s appointments. “The bus is so important to the seniors and the elderly,” she said. “Without it, we’re going to be stranded. It’s my only means of transportation.”

The tolling of Interstate 80 was expected to fund the Commonwealth’s transportation needs for five decades. Without it, the promises of Pennsylvania’s 2007 transportation funding law (Act 44) will not be fulfilled, leaving not only public transit in flux, but also creating significant challenges to the maintenance and safety of the state’s highways and bridges.