

# Dump pump

Gasoline prices are about \$1 a gallon higher than they were at this time last year. Amid stagnant wages and climbing prices for everything, the cost of getting to work is a substantial economic issue.

Thursday offers an opportunity for commuters to explore the possibilities of vastly reducing their commuting costs while enhancing their safety and improving the environment. And it's available at the lowest possible price — free.

As part of the national "Dump the Pump Day," sponsored by the American Public Transit Association, the County of Lackawanna Transit System will offer free rides on all of its routes. COLTS hopes to introduce transit to folks who are committed to their cars for commuting.

Nationally, according to the APTA, the average commuter who drives to work could save about \$840 a month — more than \$10,000 a year — by using public transportation. The figure is based on average fuel prices and average downtown parking rates. The figures for Lackawanna County and Scranton are somewhat less than the national averages due to shorter average commutes and downtown Scranton parking rates that are lower than in big cities, where the average monthly rate is \$161. According to COLTS, though, local savings still would exceed \$9,000 a year for most individual drivers.

There are other benefits, as well. According to the National Safety Council, riding in a public transit bus is about 170 times safer than riding in or driving a car. And in some cases, not driving to work can produce lower insurance rates.

Since more than 70 percent of oil imported to the United States each year is used for transportation, using public transit would have a direct impact on reducing that dependence, which has national security, as well as economic and environmental implications.

Environmentally, there is no question that broader use of public transit would be a game-changer. An APTA study, for example, found that a person who switches from driving to work to public transit reduces his daily carbon emissions by about 4,800 pounds a year. At current ridership levels, public transit saves the equivalent of 900,000 car fill-ups every day, or about 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline every year.

COLTS' comprehensive route schedule is at [www.coltsbus.com](http://www.coltsbus.com). COLTS personnel will be on hand Thursday to provide riders with route and fare information.

"Dump the Pump" is an opportunity to do something about gas prices other than complain. Imagine waving at gas stations from the bus, as your car, consuming and costing nothing, sits safely in your driveway. It's possible.

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