

# Transit Operators & Riders Facing Possible Changes in Service

## Route Analysis

The Luzerne County Transportation Authority (LCTA) and the County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS) have recently undergone route analysis studies done by Clearview Strategies, a consulting firm based in Pittsburgh, that specializes in transit-oriented plans.

The studies were done in an effort to determine if there are existing routes that are no longer needed or need adjusting, and whether there are areas that are not being serviced, but need to be. In addition to route changes, the consultant also gathered input from a variety of sources, including transit users, as to any improvements that should be made regarding trip times, frequencies, and spans of service. According to Stan Strelish, Executive Director of the LCTA, the current LCTA bus routes are based on the areas served by the trolleys that operated in the early 20th century.

Robert Fiume, Executive Director of COLTS explained that the route analysis study was completed in early July, but he has not received the results yet. Stan Strelish, Executive Director of the LCTA, said that a new system-wide route analysis and evaluation is near completion with service adjustments expected to be made.

Hazleton Public Transit (HPT) had a route analysis done in 2007. According to Renee Craig, Director of HPT, as a result of that study the following changes were made:

Two lower-ridership routes were combined into one. By doing this, both routes were still served, but fewer trips were made per day. It also meant that one less vehicle in the fleet was needed;

Saturday coverage of three service areas with lower ridership was consolidated into one;

One of HPT's four busiest routes was streamlined (Rte. 80) and another route

(Rte. 10) was directed to cover the smaller areas previously serviced;



Passengers await their buses at the new Wilkes-Barre Intermodal Center.

Transfer times for connections were improved;

Zoned fares were removed and one base fare established, including a 50-cent transfer.

HPT realized an annual savings of \$200,000 by implementing these changes.

## Intermodal Facilities

The recently-opened Wilkes-Barre Intermodal Center is benefitting riders in several ways, the primary one being that riders are now out of the weather when waiting for buses. Buses have designated spaces to load and unload passengers eliminating the need to vie for parking areas on Public Square. According to Stan Strelish, "Projects like the Transit Center are key to ensuring the mobility of the region, offering commuters a place to park their vehicles and use public transportation to reach their destination. With the completion of the Transit Center in Hazleton and future [construction] of an intermodal facility in Scranton, we can tie the three centers together with both public and private transit services."



Walkway to Public Square from the Intermodal Center.

In the fall, the LCTA will install a Dynamic Bus Departure System in the Transit Center. This system will provide information at specified locations throughout the intermodal facility regarding the route and destination of the next buses departing. It will also

provide information about operational delays of buses at selected signs, display both LCTA and Martz Trailways system information, and post emergency messages at selected signs. To meet ADA compliance, a Campbell Beacon System will guide the user to press a button to convert the sign text into spoken word to announce route and departure times. The official opening of the Intermodal Center is scheduled for Friday, August 20, 2010 at 5:00 PM.

The Hazleton Intermodal Center has been operational since November 16th of 2009. According to Renee Craig, the facility has had many beneficial impacts on both riders and HPT staff. "We have received a lot of positive feedback from our riders. All our buses are now centralized, passengers have a climate-controlled indoor waiting area, as well as a canopied outdoor waiting area that are available 7 days a week. They also have access to vending machines, restrooms and office staff for ticket sales and schedule information."

## Regionalization

Another potential change coming for the three transit operators is the regionalization of the transit system. PENNDOT is currently studying the three transit operations to see if it would be beneficial to combine the three systems into one regional transit system.

Renee Craig, HPT Director commented on the potential benefits of a regionalized transit system. "It will improve service in that the three operators will be able to share staff, and it will provide access to more vehicles which can act as spares to cover when vehicles break down, and allow for preventative maintenance to be done. It will also give riders an opportunity to access more service areas, including service between the major cities in the 2-county region via a Bus Rapid Transit system."

The only drawback to the regionalization efforts Craig sees is the start-up costs of the new marketing and branding which would need to be done.