

LCTA Public Transit Ridership Forum Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the February 20, 2018 Ridership Committee Meeting held at 2 PM at the LCTA HQ in Kingston PA.

Present: Frank Knorek (LCTA), Norm Gavlick (ED), Janine Hennigan (LCTA), Patrick Kerman (Times Leader), Kathleen Wright (Public/Rider), and Joe Fedak (Public)

- Review of meeting minutes from the 2/8/2018 ridership committee re-organization meeting.
- The ED stated: "The focus for the 2018 ridership committee meetings is to engage rider demographic groups that currently are not using the fixed route bus service. These groups include: millennials, young professionals, college students, those working in regional industrial parks, and the general public. The goal is to get feedback on what is working, what can be improved upon, and why or why not people choose to ride the bus. There will also be two ridership meetings held at both the Pittston and Nanticoke senior centers to garner user feedback from those using the LCTA Shared Ride service."
- The ED stated: "In April we anticipate the introduction of night service to assist employees working 2nd and 3rd shifts with their transportation needs. There will be a north and south loops that will originate at the W-B Intermodal Center. One loop will service the Hanover Industrial Park and the second loop will service the CenterPoint Industrial Park. The loops will service most major municipalities and major employment centers. Currently, there are final tweaks being made to the schedules, and then a formal announcement will be made when the system goes live."
- The ED stated: "To kick off night service, during the first 30 days, all riders will be able to ride for free after 7 PM, pending Board approval."
- The ED stated: "With night service, there is also the potential to service sporting and community events."
- The ED stated: "The # 13 route has increased in ridership due to Chewy.com moving into the Hanover Industrial Park. Many times the bus is standing room only. It is estimated that 25% of the 1400 Chewy employees take the bus to work."
- The ED stated: "There is a balance between system coverage and service frequency, and the constraints imposed by funding limitations. The performance standard, set by PennDOT, is 16 passengers per revenue hour for each run. We took the underperforming routes, and shifted those resources to create the night service routes."
- The ED stated: "LCTA was recently awarded a \$240K grant to replace all fixed route bus stop signage. The estimated completion date of the project is early Fall 2018. The signs will allow for easier system navigation/use. There is also integration for use with the bus tracker system, where each stop will have a corresponding location code. The rider would then use the tracker or call an automated Bus Time line to see/hear the real time bus location."
- The ED stated: "Two new CNG buses are due to be delivered late summer 2018. This will increase the bus fleet size from 38 to 40."
- The ED stated: "As PennDOT standardizes/updates the bus farebox initiative for all of PA, there is the potential and capability in the near future to offer more convenient electronic farebox payment methods, and an integrated bus tracker mobile app."

- The ED stated: "It was brought up in a recent MPO meeting for a new idea to remove the rail lines between the Murray Complex and the COLTS Intermodal, and replace them with a paved road and walking/bike trails. This would create a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, where a trip between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre would only take 20 minutes. A BRT system would be less costly than rail, scalable, and we already have many components of the required infrastructure. The next step is for the MPO to commission a feasibility study."

- A member of the Public asked: "Who would pay to make the BRT project a reality?"

The ED stated: "There is a process that the MPO uses to fund projects. The majority of the funding would come from the state and federal government."

- A member of the Public asked: "Are there any updates on the Dallas Park and Ride project?"

The ED stated: "The project was placed on the MPO agenda for consideration. There are no further updates at this time. However, the bus shelter in front of Fino's Pharmacy will be moved up the street to a new location due to construction of the roundabout."

- A member of the Public asked: "Can the timing of the bus transfers be re-worked, I have to wait two hours to get from my job at the mall because a bus to get home leaves 5-10 minutes before I get to the intermodal."

The ED stated: "If the times are close, you can always ask the driver to radio dispatch to have your connecting bus wait a few minutes. This is standard procedure in many cases. There many complex factors that goes into making a bus schedule. Bad weather, accidents and construction can cause delays. We never want a bus to leave early. However, we want to stay on time as much as possible, and PennDOT requires us to track bus on-time performance."

- A member of the Public stated: "I have been riding the bus for 50 years. Within the last six months, the bus is dirty on the outside and the inside, the seats are smelly and urine soaked, riders throw garbage and spill drinks on the bus seats, and riders use vulgar language in front of children and seniors. Many riders and even the drivers will not say anything to address the issue out of fear of being attacked. Also, who enforces the no smoking ban at the intermodal? There is constantly the smell of smoke and cigarette butts are thrown everywhere."

The ED stated: "This is the first this issue is being brought to my attention. Each bus interior and exterior is cleaned every night. We just had a bus cleaner quit recently...I will speak with the Maintenance Director and the Operations Director to follow up. The City of Wilkes-Barre is responsible for the Intermodal. It is the Wilkes-Barre Police who enforce the smoking ban. If you see any issues on the bus, please contact our customer service hotline immediately. We cannot address an issue if it is not documented properly or even brought to our attention. We have a customer complaint system, where each manager follows up on every complaint sent in. For issues at the Intermodal, you will need to directly contact the City of Wilkes-Barre."

- A member of the public asked: "Instead of calling the customer complaint line, can we text complaints in?"

The ED stated: "That is a good idea, but right now we do not have that capability. I will pass it along to our IT Director. However, the purpose of the customer complaint line is to formally document all complaints and follow up with the customer. We cannot always do that via text."

- The next LCTA Public Transit Ridership Forum meeting will be held on 3/20/2018, from 2-3 PM at the LCCC main campus is Nanticoke, PA. This meeting format will consist of distribution of a focus group questionnaire.