

Flood Recovery Task Force, The Subcommittee on
Transportation, 1972 October: Transit Report

474

Transit Rept.

North St. Span May Open in December

Bus Riders Doubled With 15-cent Fare

Public Vehicles Reduce Congestion

Barring unexpected construction delays, such as the recent need to break a submerged section of the old structure by blasting, the temporary North Street bridge may be ready for travel several weeks before the contract completion date of January 15, alleviating some of the current traffic congestion before Christmas.

This possibility was divulged to directors of Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce Friday by Edward Schechter, a member of the chamber's board of directors who is chairman of the transportation committee of the Flood Recovery Task Force and one of the key figures in the newly formed Luzerne Transportation Authority.

During the noon session chaired by president Roy Morgan at Hotel Sterling, the chamber unit was also briefed by directors Tom Bigler and Edward Boltz on disaster recovery experiences of communities on Mississippi Gulf Coast which were devastated by Hurricane Camille three years ago. Both men were part of the 22-member Wyoming Valley delegation who travelled to the Gulfport-Biloxi area to strengthen this region's recovery from tropical storm Agnes.

In assessing the need of a public transit authority in the county, Schechter noted that the Wilkes-Barre Transit Company had been considering termination of service by early 1973 due to continued drops in passenger boardings and aging equipment for which funds were not available.

He noted that a survey made during the week of October 26, when the 15-cent fare went into effect, showed some 19,000 riders were using the Wilkes-Barre Transit and White Transit buses as compared to an estimated 9,000 riders daily just prior to the flood. In this regard, Schechter stated the County Transportation Authority will be able to maintain its low fare unless boardings decrease substantially, in which case the fare may increase to 20 cents at the end of the first seven months of the 21-month demonstration period.

Schechter said that the authority's consulting firm of Simpson and Curtin in Philadelphia was developing a wide variety of programs to encourage people to use the buses, such as the possibility of an interline transfer system, special industrial routes, restricted bus lanes and a bus-activated signalization system to provide the most efficient service.

At the conclusion of his remarks, the chamber directors adopted a resolution urging all employers and employees affiliated with the civic organization to take advantage of the bus service to reduce traffic congestion and assure continued operation of public mass transit in the region.

Commenting on his impressions during the Biloxi-Gulfport trip, Bigler made note of that area's insurance coverage for wind damage which put the people in a considerably better financial recovery position than local flood victims.

He also noted that although that region has done a "magnificent job" of getting back on its feet, the area is still marked by "gaps" in its reconstruction program.

Boltz spoke of social and economic problems which lingered some time after the Camille disaster as people were forced into different life patterns in their business and family relationships.

Chamber directors approved Paul Magnotta, partner in Magnotta and Sons Construction Company, Scranton, as a new member.

10/16/72 final
draft
OK.

This grant is made with the understanding that the Transportation Authority, the City of Wilkes-Barre, the Wilkes-Barre Parking Authority, and the Luzerne County Board of Commissioners agree to meet immediately upon the granting of this application and as often thereafter as required, and to devise ways of reducing auto congestion in the central business district by any means deemed appropriate, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Adjustment of auto parking rates and fees;
2. Adjustment of parking meter charges;
3. A reduction in permitted on-street parking;
4. Intensified enforcement of parking regulations;
5. TOPICS type intersection improvements;
6. Truck traffic regulations;

it being understood that the public bodies mentioned above agree to adopt a combination of effective measures which will have the effect of reducing auto congestion in the central business district. The measures finally selected will be subject to review and approval under existing Urban Mass Transportation Administration regulations and procedures.



Luzerne

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120

OFFICE OF
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

October 2, 1972

Honorable Edmund C. Wideman, Jr., Chairman
Luzerne County Commissioners
Luzerne County Court House
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania 18711

Dear Commissioner Wideman:

I am pleased to advise you of the Commonwealth's commitment to provide a \$500,000 grant to assist in financing a twenty-one month mass transit demonstration project in the Wilkes-Barre area. It is our understanding that the total cost of this project is approximately \$1,535,000.

Commonwealth financial participation in this project is conditioned upon the availability of the necessary Federal funds, with minimum financial contributions shown below:

OEP	\$ 285,000
UMTA	300,000
Model Cities	450,000
	<u>\$1,035,000</u>

Recognizing the urgent need to develop and finalize sound plans for the demonstration project as soon as possible, the effective date of the State's financial participation will be September 20, 1972 in order to assist in covering the costs already incurred by the consulting firm (Simpson & Curtin) which has been selected for this project.

We view this demonstration project as a necessary step to avoid the serious effects of the private operators' likely resumption of transit service comparable to that provided in Wilkes-Barre before the flood and to prevent any interruption of service following the cessation of free transit service presently being provided through funds from the Office of Emergency Preparedness. This project will also provide an important transition from greatly expanded emergency transit service to the establishment of efficient and effective transit service designed to meet the public transportation needs of the people of Wilkes-Barre at a cost which can be supported by local and State agencies.

The Shapp Administration is happy to provide these funds in support of this important transit project.

Sincerely yours,

Jacob G. Kassab
Secretary of Transportation

cc: Mr. James Scheiner ✓

Minutes of the Meeting of Luzerne County Transit Authority,
October 3, 1972.

Present: Mc Geehan, Conahan, O'Karma, Lackie, Leonardi, Schechter,
Transit Authority members.

Absent: Miscavage, Heiselberg.

Also County Commissioner Wideman; James Scheiner, consultant
present: to the authority from Simpson and Curtin; the Wilkes-Barre
Transit and White Transit companies.

1. Commissioner Wideman discussed the responsibilities of the authority, its reasons for formation and his hopes that new mass transit facilities operated by the authority would have a significant effect upon the revitalization of the Wilkes-Barre downtown business district and the recovery of the area from Hurricane Agnes.
2. Schechter reviewed the negotiations which have taken place since the determination to proceed with public transportation was made by the county commissioners on August 15th. He discussed the capital improvements grant and the project development grant, totaling \$3,800,000 which have received verbal approval from participating Federal and State agencies.
3. Scheiner presented a draft, "Application for Demonstration Grant for Emergency Transit Service, Wilkes-Barre Area", dated October 1972, and discussed the application in detail with the members of the authority.
4. Holt and his associates from Wilkes-Barre Transit indicated their interest in providing the marketing program for transit development. After discussion, it was agreed that the marketing function is the responsibility of Simpson and Curtin, the consultant, and that the consultant will prepare the marketing program, utilize sub-contractor consultants, (National Analysts), for certain phases of the work, and a local advertising agent for art work, public relations, advertising preparation and placement, etc. Scheiner indicated it was extremely important to get started with this work immediately.
5. Commissioner Wideman stated that on the advice of the county's counsel, the Authority could take no legal action until its formation was officially confirmed in Harrisburg. It was expected that this would be received by October 10th. The members of the Authority, in anticipation of eventual confirmation, agreed to take the following actions which would subsequently be formally ratified at their next meeting:

- a) Joseph O'Karma was unanimously elected as temporary chairman of the Authority.
 - b) It was moved by Leonardi, seconded by Schechter, and unanimously passed that Simpson and Curtin be retained as consultants to the Authority.
 - c) It was unanimously agreed that Simpson and Curtin could act on behalf of the Authority in negotiating purchase of service agreements with White and Wilkes-Barre Transit companies.
 - d) It was moved by Leonardi, seconded by Lackie, and unanimously passed, that Joseph Quinn be appointed as counsel to the Authority.
 - e) It was suggested by Schechter that Greenspon Advertising Agency be considered by the Authority as its advertising representative to work with the consultant in the marketing program. O'Karma and Schechter were authorized to engage Greenspon Advertising Agency for this purpose, if Simpson and Curtin agreed after they had an opportunity to discuss the project with Greenspon.
6. The next meeting of the Authority will be on Wednesday, October 11th, at 7:30 P. M., at the County Commissioners meeting room, Luzerne County Court House.

Minutes by E. Schechter

Fr. Hughes -

Mike Bergman

Gary Spier

Minutes by E. Schachter



OFFICE OF
THE ADMINISTRATOR

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

RECEIVED

SEP 23 1972

SEP 26 1972

Mr. Edward Schechter
Chairman, Lucerne County
Transportation Committee
P. O. Box 190
Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania 18703

RE: PA-06-0028

Dear Mr. Schechter:

We have reviewed the preliminary application for the proposed demonstration in Wilkes Barre. In preparing the final application we request the following revisions:

1. Submission of the application by the Lucerne County Transportation Authority.
2. Project duration not to exceed 18 months.
3. Total UMTA share not to exceed \$300,000.
4. Project budget should include a full time employee (authority-county) to serve as project manager.
5. Maximum retention of the emergency-generated riders as the primary objective of the demonstration and preparation of a Transit Operations Manual for Civil Emergencies as the secondary objective.
6. Experience indicates that service improvements alone are not adequate to retain riders in the face of increased fares. It is essential that the project commit itself at this time to low cost (non-capital) institutional innovations that will improve the general climate for transit and increase the "cost" of the auto to the user. Examples of such innovations are; the establishment of park and ride areas at the external termini of bus routes, the designation of exclusive lanes for the use of buses; preferential traffic lights for

buses; greatly increased in-town parking fees; the designation of auto free zones within the Central Business District; the imposition of staggered work hours; and so forth.

7. Specification of the marketing and information activities to be undertaken in the demonstration.

Please don't hesitate to call us if there are any questions concerning the above comments. I understand that Mr. Jim Young will be in Elkes Barre this week to provide assistance if necessary.

Sincerely,

William J. Allen
for C. C. Villarreal
Administrator

TO TRANSIT PATRONS: We need to learn about your travel habits to plan improved transit service. Will you please answer the following questions about the trip you are now making. Thanks for your help.

1. I got on this bus at _____
(NEAREST STREET CORNER) (CITY)
2. The place I have come from is: _____ HOME: ☐ Yes ☐ No
(ADDRESS OR STREET INTERSECTION) (CITY)
3. I am getting off this bus at _____
(NEAREST STREET CORNER) (CITY)
4. The place I am going to is _____ HOME: ☐ Yes ☐ No
(ADDRESS OR STREET INTERSECTION) (CITY)
5. The purpose of my trip is:
☐ work ☐ shopping ☐ personal business ☐ Social recreational ☐ school ☐ other
6. Will you have to use a second bus (transfer) to complete your trip? ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. On the average, how frequently do you ride the bus?
☐ 4 or more days a week ☐ 2 or 3 days a week ☐ less than 2 days a week
8. On the average, how frequently did you ride the bus prior to the flood?
☐ 4 or more days a week ☐ 2 or 3 days a week ☐ less than 2 days a week ☐ not at all
9. Are you ☐ Male ☐ Female What is your age: _____
10. Check the number of cars in your household: ☐ None ☐ 1 Car ☐ 2 Cars ☐ More than 2 cars
11. Was one of these cars available to you for this trip? Yes No
12. My annual family income is: ☐ \$0-\$3,000 ☐ \$3,000-\$6,000 ☐ \$6,000-\$10,000 ☐ \$10,000 or more

We may wish to contact you to ask your opinions as this transit project continues. May we please have your name and address:

Name _____ Phone No. _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip Code _____

Is this address temporary due to flood relocation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If temporary, describe your living quarters: ☐ Mobile home ☐ relatives or friends
☐ Public Housing ☐ other

After filling this card out, return it to the surveyor or drop it in any mail box — postage free.

LUZERNE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

As a result of Hurricane Agnes, the flood-affected area of Luzerne County has literally been divided in two. Before the flood, the two parts of Wyoming Valley were joined by several bridges. Most of these were destroyed or damaged during the storm, and, as a result, the entire Wyoming Valley was left with just one four-lane bridge to serve a population in excess of 200,000. Adding to the problem was severe damage to approximately 25,000 dwelling units, the entire downtown business area of Wilkes-Barre (east side of the Susquehanna River), Kingston (west side), numerous businesses in the periphery, industries, and public and semi-public buildings. Thousands of people were dislocated, many into mobile homes or travel trailers located a substantial distance from their homes, jobs, and shopping areas. Utilities were also severely damaged, and the net result was a traffic and transportation problem of staggering proportions.

The Office of Emergency Preparedness immediately recognized that the chaotic condition created by the lack of adequate public transportation was an insurmountable obstacle to the social and economic recovery of the flood-affected areas. Seeing that traffic congestion would prevent them from operating profitably, many businesses and industrial firms delayed re-opening. Schools and social service agencies could not fulfill their designated public roles, and the difficulties involved in meeting friends and relatives had an adverse effect on the morale and mental health of the residents of the entire region. Accordingly, the Office of Emergency Preparedness contracted with the Wilkes-Barre and White Transit Companies to furnish free bus service for a limited period. This service is scheduled to end on October 18, 1972, and unless immediate action is taken to maintain public transportation, the economic and social recovery of Wyoming Valley will again be placed in jeopardy.

To insure continued recovery of the region, the Luzerne County Commissioners have adopted a resolution establishing the Luzerne County Transportation Authority. The Authority will apply for a DEMONSTRATION GRANT and a CAPITAL FACILITIES GRANT in order to utilize the facilities of the Wilkes-Barre and White Transit Companies for twenty-one months. The authority proposes to continue service at the end of this period, probably under a purchase of service agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Luzerne County.

Several federal and state agencies have already acknowledged that it is vital to maintain public transportation in the flood-stricken area and have committed themselves to provide \$3,856,885 to the two phases of this project. In the Capital Facilities Grant application, the Urban Mass Transit Administration of the United States Department of Transportation will provide \$1,546,375; the Appalachian Regional Commission \$311,144; the Wilkes-Barre City Demonstration Agency \$76,622; and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation \$387,755; a total of \$2,321,885. In the Demonstration Grant application, the United States Department of Transportation is committed to \$300,000; Office of Emergency Preparedness \$285,000; the Wilkes-Barre City Demonstration Agency (Department of Housing and Urban Development) \$450,000; Pennsylvania Department of Transportation \$500,000; a total of \$1,535,000.

The Economic Development Administration is being requested to furnish \$107,675 to pay for a project director and staff, materials and supplies, and consultant to develop a public information program for maximum utilization of the transportation system.

As previously indicated, it is essential that traffic be kept at manageable levels if the Wyoming Valley area, which is the center of population concentration in the county, is to once again become an economically viable region. At the present time public bodies and citizen groups are working on traffic pattern improvement, replacement of the North Street bridge and other county bridges, and improvements to streets and highways. Every program in this direction points to the need for adequate bus service, if we are to succeed. Every effort has been made to obtain funds from governmental and private sources. The Economic Development Administration grant requested herein is essential to our success.

Johnson. -

1.

D&H - OK. -

EL. Will abandon track into WB. - Problem now w/ T.E. Thum.
Problem w/ a bandament of line.
ES. - check w/ Ed L. Company. -

ES Report on TA -
need for traffic count.

Leo Corbett - -

Report - TOPICS. funded. -
West Side ? - next week report -
Nesbitt Park - 900 cars. -

Jack Holt - Bus stopping -
in middle of street. -
Warren on 5:10

X ES. - Check w/ Penn DOT on River Street -
Dick Goldberg. -

X Cliff B. - withhold Fed. Fund for Hwy 2 stopped. -

X N. St. - Sec. 1 - 1052 still not decided. -
M/R OK

ES still not out of Dummorie
1052 - 4f & ES still not out of " - -

- ✓ LLTS - Transit Dev. Study -
- ✓ Leo Carbett - 900 cars needed Parks -
- ✓ Penn DOT re Traffic Cam -

Jack Seneuman
 Joel Coppleman

- ✓ Committee - Capital Improvements
 Bureau -

✓ Design of Miller 28
 Planning criteria for Capital Grant
 Allison said we can't receive it.

Effort to meet w/ Hancock
 and ~~DEP~~ Wilkins -

Yaksonville
 Public Inv. from Hartwick

11/2

1052-2(1) Funding of fill on
E or N approach to Bridge still
not decided. — it presently
a problem of J. Karas. — \$3m~~±~~

