



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

FOR RELEASE MONDAY
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UMTA 23-74
Phone: (202) 426-4043

Secretary of Transportation Claude S. Brinegar today announced an Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) grant of \$630,800 to the Luzerne County Transportation Authority (LCTA), Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, to assist in the acquisition of the privately owned Wilkes-Barre Transit Corporation, ten used buses from the White Transit Company, environmental improvement kits and new fare boxes. The public takeover is the 115th such acquisition under President Nixon's urban mass transportation program.

Following Hurricane Agnes, the Luzerne County Transportation Authority was formed to re-establish bus service in the area. "Wilkes-Barre offers a prime example of private, local and Federal agencies working closely and expeditiously together under dire emergency conditions," Secretary Brinegar said, "to restore transportation in the devastated area."

When Hurricane Agnes struck Wilkes-Barre in June 1972, bus operations ceased for one week after the flood. Attempts by the private companies to restart the bus service failed. In this dramatic situation the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) stepped in and took the unprecedented action of creating an areawide transit system through sponsorship of free-fare bus service. The OEP-sponsored program was followed by a demonstration project to be carried out by the newly created Luzerne County Transportation Authority. The demonstration was sponsored by UMTA, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, City Demonstration Agency, the Economic Development Administration, and the Office of Emergency Preparedness, utilizing the resources of the privately owned operators under short-term purchase-of-service agreements.

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UMTA Administrator Frank C. Herringer observed that this grant will consolidate transit service into one publicly operated system. The elimination of duplicative effort in management and operating functions, and the arrival of 43 new buses funded under a previous UMTA capital grant is expected to reduce significantly the system's overhead and operating costs.

The one-fifth local share of the project cost is being provided by the State of Pennsylvania from flood relief emergency monies allocated to the area as a result of Hurricane Agnes.

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For further information contact the UMTA Office of Public Affairs at (202) 426-4043 or Mr. Robert Leonardi, Chairman, Luzerne County Transportation Authority, Public Square, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. (UMTA Project No. PA-03-0045)

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