

PA Focus
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Transit Authority commences new study

By SAVANNAH GUZ, Staff writer

The Washington County Transit Study Stakeholder Committee (WCTSSC) met Dec. 19 to discuss changes to transit service in the regions served by the Washington County Transit Authority (WCTA).

WCTA travels throughout the county itself and within a five-mile radius of county boundaries.

McDonald is one of the towns affected by WCTA's studies, which will take place over the next nine months.

While the initial meeting of WCTSSC occurred on the same day that the Pittsburgh Area Transit Authority (PAT) effected major bus reductions for the McDonald area, there is no connection between PAT's current upheaval and the studies undertaken by Washington County.

"We decided to conduct these studies approximately a year ago," said Sheila Gombita, WCTA project manager. "We've been trying to determine unmet needs, and we are seeking the public's input."

WCTA is a specialized bus service that primarily serves the elderly, disabled, and financially needy. It is subsidized by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the Pennsylvania Lottery.

The service operates based on advance reservations: area residents who seek the service must call by 3 p.m. the day prior to the transportation need. WCTA then sends out one of five subcontractors to pick up the resident and convey them to and from their destination. Trips to Pittsburgh, for medical appointment only, also are offered.

The WCTA's services, however, do not replace PAT's services. If a resident does not qualify for this transportation — that is, if they are not elderly, disabled, or a low-income candidate — the transportation service must be paid for and, Sheila Gombita noted, would be cost prohibitive.

Gombita emphasized that WCTA seeks the involvement of organizations and groups that have a stake in Washington County's transportation services. Attendance by the public is welcome.

A series of meetings will be held at South Strabane Volunteer Fire Department, with the next meeting slated in March. To learn more, contact Glenda Murphy at Olszak Management Consulting, WCTA's coordinator at (412) 224-4316.

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