Hidden Passages

by Jay Lorch
Answer: TRANSIT

Step 1. Solve the cryptic crossword according to the directions. You get the following grid, with the six trapdoor locations highlighted in yellow:

1 B	2 A	3 I	T	4 B	E	5 T	6 R	7 A	Y	8 D	9 C	10 C
E	Y	N	11 G	L	A	R	E	B	12 H	E	I	R
13 E	N	T	I	O	N	O	14 F	E	M	A	L	E
15 F	R	E	E	W	I	L	L	16 T	I	T	A	W
17 W	A	D	E	T	18 S	L	E	I	G	H	T	20 S
21 A	N	22 C	H	O	23 R	S	X	N	24 D	R	E	E
I	D	25 L	P	R	E	S	E	T	S	O	26 F	A
27 S	28 P	E	D	C	V	29 C	30 S	E	N	S	O	R
31 T	R	A	C	H	E	A	L	R	32 G	33 A	L	S
34 B	O	N	35 I	36 C	A	N	A	L	Y	S	I	37 S
38 A	T	T	R	I	L	A	39 F	O	S	S	A	I
40 W	O	R	D	S	41 E	P	O	C	H	E	G	C
L	N	O	42 S	T	R	E	A	K	43 T	R	E	K

Here are explanations for the cryptic clues:

ACROSS
 1 BAIT (switch partner) = I taken in by BAT (vampiric creature)
 4 BETRAY (give up): BET (wager) next to (against) RAY (a bit of sunshine)
11 GLARE (withering look): anagram (strangely) REGAL
12 HEIR (he will inherit): sounds like AIR (the wind)
13 ENTREE (a course): ENTRE ("between" in French) and E (English)
14 FEMALE (able to bear children): FE (iron), MALE (man)
15 FREE WILL (ability to choose): FREE (to release), WILL (Mr. Rogers)
16 TITANIC (really big): TITANIC (DiCaprio movie)
17 WADE (to get feet wet): WE (you and I) get AD (spot)

18 SLEIGHTS (tricks by performer): E (most frequent letter in AUDIENCE) goes inside SLIGHTS (insults)
21 ANCHOR (hold down): AN, CHORE (job) without its last letter
24 DRAW (put on paper): DRAW (tie)
25 PRESETS (factory configurations): PRESENTS (gifts) without N (normal)
27 SPED (moved fast): S (short), PED (pedestrian)
30 SENSOR (device in Star Trek): CENSOR (TV editor) uses S (second) to substitute for C (the speed of light)
31 TRACHEAL (in the throat): TRIAL (attempt) with ACHE (pain) in place of I (me)
32 GALS (ladies): L (foremost letter of LOVE) inside (bathing in) GAS (oil product)
34 BONSAI (twisted tree): sounds like BANZAI (a war cry)
36 ANALYSIS (study): ANAL (of the bottom), Y (third of stylus) next to (by) SIS (sibling)
38 ATTRITION (wear): anagram (rearrange) IT INTO ART
39 FOSSIL (ancient find): SS (Nazis) wrapped in FOIL (thin sheet)
40 WORD (promise): remove head letter from SWORD (medieval killer)
41 EPOCH (period): COPE (deal) backwards, then H (hit)
42 STREAK (run): STEAK (piece of meat) containing R (part of RARE)
43 TREK (travel): TREBEK (man with all the answers) lacks (wants) BE (live)

DOWN
 1 BEEF (steer dinner): BEE (gathering to make things), F (fail)
 2 AYN RAND (objectivist): anagram (confuse) RYAN, AND
 3 INTROS (speeches given initially): IN, then reverse SORT
 4 BLOWTORCH (cutter): BLOW (punch), TO, R (right), CH (part of CHIN)
 5 TROLLS (evil creatures) = R (middle of PARIS) inside TOLLS (rings)
 6 REFLEXES (triggered reactions): REF (judge), L (left), EXES (former wives)
 7 ABET (help): remove the first half of ALPHABET (every letter)
 8 DEATH RATE (fraction of people who succumb): RAT (informant) in THE following DEA (counter-narcotics organization)
 9 CILANTRO (garnish): CREATION anagrammed (in a new way), changing E (EGGPLANT's starting letter) to L (head of LETTUCE)
10 CREW (work party) = RE (about) surrounded by (sports) CW (network launched in 2006)
17 WAIST (middle): WA (Washington), IS, T (second letter in STATE)
19 INTERLOCK (mesh): INTER (put something underground), LOCK (to secure)
20 SEARS (quickly heats up): SEARS (store)
22 CLEANSER (Ajax is one): C (programming language) with LEANS (lists) and ER (a couple letters of ERRORS)
23 REVEALER (guy who won't keep a secret): REVELER (guy at a party) surrounds A
26 FOLIAGE (plants): GAIL reverses and goes inside FOE (enemy)
28 PROTON (elementary particle): PRO (expert), TO, N (name)
29 CANAPE (hors d'oeuvre): CAN (is able to), APE (replicate)
33 ASSIST (aid): ASS (beast of burden), IS, T (first letter of TILLER)
34 BAWL (sob): sounds like BALL (Lucille)
35 CITED (ticketed): DET (police investigator) in reverse after CI (101)

37 SICK (morally corrupt): K (king) under SIC (attack)

Step 2. Now map out the hidden passages. You'll find that for each trapdoor, both answers that enter that trapdoor exit at the same other trapdoor. In fact, the across answer exits from that other trapdoor horizontally and the down answer exits from that other trapdoor vertically.

Thus, each trapdoor is the entrance to exactly one hidden passage. The hidden passages form the loop A ⇢ N ⇢ S ⇢ I ⇢ T ⇢ R ⇢ A ⇢ N ⇢ etc.

Step 3. Following all the hidden passages in order, starting and ending with the T trapdoor, you spell out TRANSIT. No other starting position produces a word. Therefore, the answer is TRANSIT.

This puzzle was inspired by Trapdoors, a puzzle in *The Atlantic Monthly Cryptic Crosswords* by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon.