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Ground broken in downtown

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More than a decade ago, the County of Lackawanna Transit System erected a billboard along Lackawanna Avenue touting its proposed intermodal transportation center with the promise, "Coming soon."

"Soon" moved a big step closer Friday.

With a pair of COLTS buses serving as the backdrop, city, state and federal officials joined COLTS representatives at the State Office Building parking lot for a ceremonial groundbreaking for the oft-postponed \$12.4 million down-



MICHAEL J. MULLEN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

County of Lackawanna Transit System Executive Director Bob Fiume speaks during the groundbreaking for a \$12.6 million intermodal center to be built in downtown Scranton. At left are board members Kenneth Propst and Carmen Libassi.

town transportation center. "This project has been in works for at least 18 years," COLTS Executive Director Robert Fiume said. "Suffice it to say, it is a project that has moved along in fits and

starts, but it managed to overcome obstacles and here we stand today, shovels in hand." When completed late next year, the center will become a hub for COLTS buses, commercial buses, taxis and

the hope is, eventually — restored passenger train service to the New York metropolitan area.

The facility will be constructed on the south side of Lackawanna Avenue between Cliff Street and the west entrance to the Mall at Steamtown parking garage. The site is now used as parking for State Office Building employees.

In their brief remarks, county Commissioners Jim Wansacz, Corey O'Brien and Patrick O'Walley all cited the intermodal center's potential as an economic development catalyst for the city, county and region.

"These type of projects connect the dots," Mr. O'Brien said. "They connect the dots for individuals who

are here already, for companies that are thinking about doing business here and for companies that are here that are growing."

Twice during the ceremony, a train carrying Steamtown National Historic Site visitors rumbled past, a pointed reminder of what the intermodal center could become with the restoration of passenger rail service.

Mayor Bill Courtright said city financial consultant Henry Amoroso has repeatedly said one of the things Scranton is missing is rail service to New Jersey and New York.

"We definitely need that," the mayor said.

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