

COLTS trying to revive city transit center

BY DAVID SINGLETON
STAFF WRITER

The County of Lackawanna Transit System is bumping up against an old nemesis as it tries to get the long-stalled downtown transportation center back on track.

The agency needs legislative authorization for the property swap that will allow it to happen.

"We just have to get the land deal settled," COLTS executive director Robert Fiume said Tuesday. "Once it is settled, we are ready to move forward with the rest."

COLTS plans to build the "intermodal" facility — largely a terminal for local and regional buses — on the south side of the 100 block of Lackawanna Avenue on the site of the parking lot used by workers at the State Office Building. The parking would shift across the street to the property now occupied by the Martz Trailways bus terminal.

The original bill that would have authorized the transfer of the state-owned parking lot to COLTS bogged down in the

Legislature in 2006. New legislation was introduced and passed in 2007, but by that time the construction contracts for the center had to be rebid.

The project was further delayed when the Federal Transit Administration in 2008 ordered COLTS to repay \$907,000 for violating federal law by failing to advertise for the design work for the station.

Although COLTS has resolved its issues with the FTA and is paying back the money in installments, the property legislation lapsed in the interim, Mr. Fiume said.

"Because of everything, time ran out and we have to get it redone," he said, adding COLTS is working with state officials to get a new authorization through the Legislature.

The agency has scrapped the original architectural plans for the project and will seek a new design for a \$12 million to \$14 million center that will be more environmentally friendly and energy-efficient, Mr. Fiume said.

Contact the writer:
dsingleton@timeshamrock.com

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