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COLTS gets second chance

Hub project revived in wake of illegal contract

BY DAVID SINGLETON
STAFF WRITER

The County of Lackawanna Transit System intends to get it right this time.

Six years after COLTS awarded an architectural contract for a downtown intermodal transportation center, and three years after the agency scrapped the plans when the federal government called foul, COLTS is seeking new proposals for design of the long-stalled facility. COLTS issued a request for proposals last week for archi-

tectural/engineering services for the bus station. Proposals are due by Wednesday, Oct. 26. "We're moving forward," Executive Director Robert Fiume said. "We hopefully have everything cleared up now and we can just get this completed."

The COLTS board originally awarded the contract for the center's design in 2005 to Highland Associates, a Clarks Summit architectural and engineering company, without seeking proposals from other firms. In 2008, the

Federal Transit Administration ruled the noncompetitive contract violated federal law and ordered COLTS to repay more than \$907,000.

The Highland contract subsequently became part of the criminal case against former county Commissioners Robert C. Cordaro and A.J. Munchak, who were convicted on federal public corruption charges in June.

Among other crimes, jurors found the former commissioners guilty of bribery concerning programs receiving feder-

al funds in connection with cash payments they received in 2005 from Highland principal Donald Kalina. Mr. Kalina, who received immunity from prosecution, testified that he delivered \$90,000 in cash to the two commissioners to keep his firm's county contracts.

In advertising for new proposals, Mr. Fiume said COLTS is in compliance with the federal Brooks Act, which requires a competitive process for awarding contracts on projects involving federal money.

The intermodal center,

which will serve as a hub for COLTS buses and other transportation services, including commercial buses, will be built in the 100 block of Lackawanna Avenue. The site is now occupied by a parking lot for workers at the nearby State Office Building.

Although cautioning that the timetable could change, Mr. Fiume said he anticipates the center will be ready for occupancy in "roughly two years," or in late 2013.

"It's a great project for COLTS, for our riders, for the county, for the city," he said.

Contact the writer:
dsingleton@timeshamrock.com