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THIS MORNING

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COLTS states case with feds

Officials hopeful of retaining \$2.9M for transit center

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County of Lackawanna Transit System officials hoping to retain a critical federal allocation for the downtown Scranton intermodal center made their pitch Friday to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

A contingent led by COLTS Executive Director Robert Fiume met with federal representatives in Philadelphia for 90 minutes to state their

case for keeping \$2.9 million that is in danger of being pulled from the long-stalled project.

"We hammered away at how we obviously need the \$2.9 million to complete this project the right way," Mr. Fiume said.

The Department of Transportation informed COLTS in late July that money earmarked for the intermodal center by Congress between 1998 and 2000 would no longer

be dedicated to the project because it had not been spent.

The decision caught COLTS by surprise as the \$12 million project was finally making progress after years of frustrating delays. In November, the agency selected Sowinski Sullivan Architects, Sparta, N.J., to do the architectural and engineering design, and COLTS started drawing down money from the federal earmark several weeks ago.

Architect Rich Sullivan joined Mr. Fiume at the meeting, as did COLTS finance director Jenn Hontick and solicitors Tim Hinton and Joseph DeNaples. U.S. Sen. Bob Casey and the state Department of Transportation also sent representatives.

"I think we did a good job with the presentation, on our justification for getting the money back," Mr. Fiume said.

Department of Transportation officials did not indicate when a final decision will be made, he said.

The intermodal center, which will be built next to the State Office Building on Lackawanna Avenue, will serve as a hub for COLTS and commercial buses. It would also accommodate train riders if passenger rail service to metropolitan New York is ever restored.

COLTS officials have said they hope to start construction in the spring.

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