

Senator renews drive for bus hub

Casey seeks almost \$3M from
feds for transportation center

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With federal officials still deciding on reinstating an almost \$3 million grant for a downtown transportation center, U.S. Sen. Bob Casey has renewed his push to convince them to do that.

In a letter to Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, Mr. Casey asks the secretary to reinstate the money because a proposed alternative would reduce public safety, limit the ability to connect to a passenger railroad someday and harm economic development.

The County of Lackawanna Transit System is proposing to build the estimated \$12 million center on Lackawanna Avenue next to the State Office Building. It would house local and long-distance buses and someday serve as a terminal for a proposed passenger train to New York City — if the train is ever a reality.

In July, the Department of Transportation told COLTS a \$2.9 million grant earmarked between 1998 and 2000 would no longer be available for the project because the money was never spent after all these years.

COLTS officials, frustrated by years of delays that

included circumstances over which they had little control, hired an engineer last year with plans to begin the project next spring. They asked the Federal Transit Administration, the Department of Transportation arm in charge of the grant, to reconsider the decision at a meeting last month in Philadelphia.

“As you know, this project is unique in nature and has overcome many obstacles, and is widely supported on the state and local level,” Mr. Casey wrote in his latest letter. “I urge



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you to reinstate funding that is needed for this important project to continue.”

COLTS executive director Bob Fiume said he has not heard anything since that Aug. 24 meeting with officials from Mr. LaHood's office and FTA officials, who suggested moving the center across Lackawanna Avenue to the land where the current downtown bus terminal is located.

Mr. Fiume said COLTS officials don't want to do that because the project would have to be scaled back and would not be as close to railroad tracks.

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