

9/29/12

Big day for going places

Cash vowed for Scranton transit hub

BY MICHAEL IORFINO
STAFF WRITER

PITTSTON TWP. — Nearly \$3 million in federal funds originally earmarked for a downtown transit hub has been recommitted to other projects, but U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood has assured officials the long-stalled project will be completed.

A contingent led by County of Lackawanna Transit System Executive Director Robert Fiume met with Mr. LaHood and representatives from U.S. Sen. Bob Casey's office Friday at Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport to discuss the status of \$2.9 million in federal funding that had been allocated to build the intermodal center.

During the 30-minute, closed-door meeting, Mr. LaHood notified COLTS officials the federal funds previously allocated to the project had been redistributed to projects that are already in "full swing," said Mr. Fiume. However, after hearing details of the proposed project, Mr. LaHood agreed to work with officials to "get this project over the goal line."

"This will be a team effort," Mr. LaHood told The Times-Tribune. He said he

Please see **TRANSIT**, Page A7

TRANSIT: Casey says COLTS vital to region

FROM PAGE A3

spoke with Mr. Casey on Thursday regarding the matter. "We are going to work with their staff to find the resources for funding the project.

"This project is going to happen. This will get done."

In late July, the Department of Transportation informed COLTS 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, which came after years of limited progress and frustrating delays, caught COLTS by surprise as the \$12 million project appeared as if it was finally moving forward.

Since the decision, COLTS officials and Mr. Casey have voiced the importance of the proposed downtown transit hub, urging federal representatives to support the project.

Though he wasn't in attendance for Friday's meeting, Mr. Casey said he is "gratified that Secretary LaHood met with officials from COLTS ... and fully committed to getting this project done."

"COLTS is a key part of Lackawanna County's transportation system," Mr. Casey said in a statement to The

Times-Tribune. "An intermodal transportation center in downtown Scranton will create jobs, bolster the region's infrastructure and ensure residents have access to a reliable and efficient bus system."

For now, Mr. LaHood said his staff will meet with COLTS to determine how much money is needed. From there, the Department of Transportation will help COLTS identify where that money will come from, he said.

"This project is very important for several reasons, including the economic boost it will provide to the region," Mr. Fiume said. "It will be a true intermodal center because it will connect several modes of transportation, including COLTS, city buses, taxis and, potentially, rails."

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.

Despite the insufficient funding, COLTS officials have said they hope to start construction in the spring.

Contact the writer:
miorfino@timeshamrock.com,
@miorfinoTT on Twitter

Sept. 29, 2012
Times-Tribune
page A3