

Intermodal center has momentum

COLTS aims at spring to break ground

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The County of Lackawanna Transit System is back on track to start construction of a downtown Scranton transportation hub in 2013.

With a commitment from the U.S. Department of Transportation to restore up to \$2.9 million in funding for the intermodal center, COLTS is working with federal transit officials to keep the long-delayed project moving, said Executive Director Robert Fiume.

"They said continue on with the project, so that is what we are doing," Mr. Fiume said.

The Department of Transportation stunned COLTS in July with the news it was redistributing \$2.9 million committed to the intermodal center from 1998 to 2000 because the money had not been spent, putting the \$12 million-plus project in jeopardy.

However, during a Sept. 28 meeting with Mr. Fiume and representatives of U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood gave his personal assurance that the funding would be replaced and the project completed.

Last week, Mr. Fiume had a follow-up conversation with Federal Transit Administration Executive Director Matthew Welbes while both were

attending the American Public Transit Association annual meeting in Seattle. Mr. Welbes reiterated the federal commitment to the project and discussed options, Mr. Fiume said.

"They wanted us to get a more specific, narrowed-down cost of the intermodal center — what it's going to cost us to build," he said.

After reviewing the numbers, COLTS now anticipates the project will cost \$12.6 million, he said. That is the figure COLTS will present to the FTA, which will use it to determine how much the agency still needs for the intermodal center and what funding sources are available.

Whether COLTS will have to make a formal application for the funding "depends on where the money comes from," Mr. Fiume said.

In the meantime, with the balance of the other federal, state and local funding that will pay for the intermodal center unaffected by the Department of Transportation's decision, COLTS is still aiming for a spring ground-breaking for the project, he said.

Originally proposed in the 1990s, the intermodal center will serve as a hub for COLTS buses, commercial buses and taxis. It will also serve train riders if passenger rail service is restored in the region.

The center will be built in the 100 block of Lackawanna Avenue on property now occupied by the parking lot for the State Office Building.

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