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Foundation work expected to begin Monday on transportation center

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WILKES-BARRE — City officials acquired a \$450,000 piece of land Friday needed for construction to begin on the long-awaited \$18 million downtown transportation center.

The project will create a 752-space parking garage and also allow Luzerne County Transportation Authority buses to serve passengers off Public Square. The transaction with 65 Public Square Associates was based on independent appraisals, said Marie McCormick, deputy city administrator.

The half-acre parcel is used for parking. It is “nestled” behind the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry building, the Wilkes-Barre Center and Provincial Towers, McCormick said.

Crews will begin preparing the site for foundation work Monday. Preliminary work will include grading and locating utilities, Mayor Tom Leighton said Friday. “It’s exciting to see such a viable project moving forward,” he said. “It will change the scope of downtown. It will get the buses off the Square and allow us to add parking on (Public) Square and around South Main Street, which will improve the marketability of the retail stores and restaurants.”

The deed transferring the parcel identifies Jeffrey Pyros as managing partner of 65 Public Square Associates. He could not be reached for comment Friday.

The city still needs to acquire a “few” more parcels to complete the project, said city Solicitor Bill Vinsko, who finalized the 65 Public Square Associates purchase.

“We’re very close to completing agreements for the remaining parcels,” Vinsko said. “Negotiations are ongoing and we hope to have everything wrapped up shortly.”

Of the \$18 million cost, \$11 million is funded by the Federal Transit Administration and \$1 million by the Economic Development Administration. State funding covers \$3 million and the last \$3 million is coming from a loan the city took out for the project.