

The approval that wasn't: The Penn revitalization plan gets a very strange thumbs-up

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The oversight state Public Authorities Control Board didn't heed Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, who issued a damning letter that the Cuomo-concocted, Hochul-continued hollow scheme to fix Penn Station using imaginary money from imaginary new office towers "may make the state responsible for funding billions of dollars" because the "fiscal risks of such a project are significant." While DiNapoli urged a deferral because he is "unable to discern the full extent of the state's financing responsibilities and sufficiency of funding sources," the board went ahead anyway.



DiNapoli is right that the Penn plan is a big question mark. (Seth Wenig/AP)

Or did it?

In casting a "yes" vote on the three-member board, Sen. Leroy Comrie said his approval was limited to a very narrow aspect of the plan and that other votes were still needed and he would insist on funding from Washington and New Jersey. So for now, there's no land grab, no enriching a favored developer, no evictions and no abuse of eminent domain.

If the PACB took no action of real import, what was the point? Other senators, who oppose this nonsense, said the vote was needed to try to win federal funds, which are supposed to pay half the projected \$22 billion cost, with New Jersey matching New York's 25% share.

Except, oops, there may not be any federal dollars to try to win, as the \$24 billion pot eyed for Penn is being sliced up by Federal Railroad Administration bureaucrats under the sway of Amtrak to zero out Penn. Says who? Says the united New York congressional delegation, including rival Reps. Jerry Nadler and Carolyn Maloney, who are enraged that the FRA has put Penn in the bottom rung of its three levels of priority. Monday, they wrote, "We are particularly concerned that FRA's approach would result in low or no federal funding for the reconstruction of Penn Station."

And just like that, Hochul's hollow plan got even hollower. Hochul, who is running for election — and was at a Manhattan campaign rally with DiNapoli even as the PACB was meeting in Albany — can claim a "yes" vote means she is creating jobs. No, it's a snow job.