



# Central Oklahoma *Perspective*

December 2004

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments

## ACOG Given High Marks By Federal Officials

Federal transportation officials recently gave high praise to transportation planning efforts in the Oklahoma City metro area. Federal evaluators deemed that rules regarding transportation planning processes have been substantially followed, and that the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) has been re-certified to serve as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for another three years.

The certification letter is the final component of a program review conducted in April by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Every three years, the federal agencies review regional transportation planning efforts in large metropolitan areas for compliance with federal rules and processes, and to study challenges and experiences that the organizations encounter with implementing the planning process.

The final report commends the joint planning efforts of ACOG, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority (COTPA), various local governments that are members of the Association, and the citizens of

Central Oklahoma.

As the MPO for Central Oklahoma, ACOG is responsible for long and short-range transportation planning from a multi-modal approach, and for communicating and cooperating with local governments to prepare a long range surface transportation plan that addresses highway and transit, airport access, freight movement and bicycle and pedestrian needs.

The review team expressed that the metro area had an “exceptional” planning process that was well organized and adequately documented. Among the 11 notable strengths that the review team recognized with special mention included:

- Partnership and information sharing among all planning partners, including the pursuit of opportunities to improve and expand transit service in the region.
- Effective use of Geographic Information Systems technology with data analysis, related to Environmental Justice policy, and population, employment and land use data. [Environmental Justice refers to a federal policy mandating that low income and minority groups receive equal

access to transportation and other public services.]

- Public involvement and education in the planning process, including the engagement of under-served populations.
- Air quality public education, including partnerships with local media and private, corporate stakeholders.

The review team expressed that the metro area had an “exceptional” planning process that was well organized and adequately documented.

- Intelligent Transportation Systems, which involves utilizing technology to assist with traffic flow and traffic related problems, and freight planning, by involving freight stakeholders in the development of the region’s long-range transportation plan.

The federal review team found no items in the planning process that required corrective action, but did recommend that the MPO continue to encourage...See “High Marks” on page two.

### Inside Perspective:

Legislative Issues for the Region Prioritized for 2005 .....	2
Festive Events Spotlight Holiday Season .....	2
Member in Perspective: Norman .....	3
ACOG Calendar .....	4

## Winter Brings CO Concerns

The onset of winter brings the holidays and cold weather. And cold weather ushers in carbon monoxide (CO) season, which may pose a threat to the region’s air quality status. In the past, carbon monoxide was the region’s primary air pollution concern, but the replacement of older vehicles with newer, cleaner motor vehicles lessened CO’s impact, and more stringent requirements for ozone now makes smog the number one air pollution

priority. Still, Central Oklahomans need to remain aware of the indoor and outdoor impacts of carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless and poisonous gas that can interfere with the delivery of oxygen to the body. Health effects vary based on intensity of exposure, but infants, elderly persons and individuals with respiratory diseases are particularly sensitive.

...See “CO Concerns” on page four.

# Legislative Issues for the Region Prioritized for 2005

Results from a regional survey of ACOG member communities have helped ACOG to develop a prioritized list of federal and state legislative issues and concerns in the region. Many city leaders attended a legislative information-gathering workshop held a few months ago that helped generate the initial list of issues. From there, a survey was developed and analyzed, with members ranking the issues.

ACOG membership that responded to the survey and discussion included: Arcadia, Calumet, Canadian County, Del City, Edmond, El Reno, Guthrie, Harrah, Lexington, Logan County, Midwest City, Mustang, Nichols Hills, Nicoma Park, Noble, Norman, Oklahoma City, Slaughterville, Yukon and Warr Acres.

Following are the top five federal and state issues, ranked in order of importance to ACOG membership:

## Federal Issues:

1. Prohibit unfunded federal mandates. Provide adequate funding to communities to meet policies.
2. Evaluate effects of union controls; oppose preemption of local management decisions.
3. Encourage U.S. Postal Service adaptations to utilize zip codes coterminous with municipal boundaries.
4. Collection of local retail sales taxes on mail order and Internet sales.
5. Continued support to the viability and strengthening of Tinker Air Force Base.

## State Issues

1. Leave local personnel issues to local decision makers (oppose mandatory collective bargaining, binding arbitration and additional pensions).
2. Oppose exemption of sales taxes on groceries.
3. Require State Tax Commission to use zip+four in distributing tax revenues to cities.
4. Support tort reform.
5. Continue to reduce Worker's Compensation expenses.

ACOG is currently drafting policy statements to clarify each issue, and will visit with state and federal leaders to present them. For more information on this effort, contact Jane Sutter, ACOG.



21 East Main, Suite 100  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73104-2405  
(405) 234-2264/FAX: (405) 234-2200  
TDD: (405) 234-2217/[www.acogok.org](http://www.acogok.org)  
E-mail address: [acog@acogok.org](mailto:acog@acogok.org)

## Association of Central Oklahoma Governments

*"Providing Regional Leadership in Central Oklahoma Since 1966"*

Established in 1966, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) is a voluntary association of cities, towns and counties. ACOG helps member governments plan for common needs, cooperate for mutual benefit and coordinate for sound regional development.

### Chairman:

Mayor Ron Bledsoe, *Slaughterville*

### Vice Chairman:

Councilmember Willa Johnson, *Oklahoma City*

### Secretary-Treasurer:

Mayor Eddie Reed, *Midwest City*

### Executive Director:

Zach Taylor

### Editor: Jerry Church

Layout: Ken Brown

Central Oklahoma Perspective, printed by TNT Printing, is authorized by the ACOG Board of Directors. Financing is partly provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Transportation and local dues. 1,850 copies were prepared and distributed at a cost of \$944. Copies have been deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

## Festive Events Spotlight Holiday Season

A series of events make up a month of family activities in the third annual "Downtown in December" celebration. There are numerous events that are being supplemented and sponsored by regional corporate and community groups, such as U.S. Cellular and Downtown Oklahoma City Inc. Some of the more notable events include:

- The return of the Braum's outdoor Ice Rink will be at Civic Center Park. The rink has been one of the more popular attractions in the past two holiday seasons and now includes a 62 by 150 foot skating surface.
- Outdoor lights at the Myriad Gardens and Crystal Bridge will beckon visitors for a walking tour of the park. Crews have spent weeks stringing the lights for the massive display.
- A Christmas Village with an International flair greets visitors at the SBC Bricktown Ballpark. The Children's village includes dozens of holiday trees decorated by local cultural groups representing various countries, cultures and customs.
- Metro Transit will have a Holiday Spirit bus trolley line. Adult fares are only 25 cents for rides in downtown at a variety of event stops. For complete

seasonal details, visit Metro Transit's new Web site at [www.gometro.org](http://www.gometro.org).

- There's also the New Year to celebrate at the Arts Council of Oklahoma City's annual Opening Night celebration on New Year's Eve. The family event has become a holiday tradition in recent years. Visit [www.artscouncilokc.com](http://www.artscouncilokc.com) for details.

For a complete list of Downtown in December events, activities and maps, visit [www.downtownindecember.com](http://www.downtownindecember.com), or call the event hotline at 236-3640.

## "High Marks"

*...Continued from page one.* age inclusive and representative public participation and to increase amenities to improve transit service delivery.

ACOG coordinates regional transportation planning efforts within the Oklahoma City Area Regional Transportation Study (OCARTS) area, which includes all of Oklahoma and Cleveland counties, and portions of Canadian, Logan, Grady and McClain counties. The Association is currently developing the 2030 OCARTS plan.

A copy of the certification report is available by calling Linda Koenig, ACOG, at 234-2264.



## ACOG MEMBER IN PERSPECTIVE:

# Norman

By Jerry Church

David Hopper grew tired of the daily commute from Norman to Oklahoma City every day. After 17 years in the legal division of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC), he retired to take a job closer to home, and make his commute to work a tad more leisurely. The result? He's busier now than he's ever been.

Hopper is a councilmember for the city of Norman, representing Ward 6. He's an Air Force Veteran who grew up in Ardmore, and arrived in Norman in 1973 to attend law school at the University of Oklahoma College of Law. He practiced law for a few years then went to work for OESC. This summer, he became a development officer for OU's College of Education, and he couldn't be happier.



David Hopper

Currently serving his second term as councilmember, he finds himself on a council that is leading the city into new realms of growth potential and long term visioning. The city is busy laying the groundwork for new initiatives that will propel the community forward for the next few decades.

Hopper always had an interest in politics and public service. While state employees can't run for partisan offices, they are eligible for non-partisan positions, which opened the door for Hopper to run for city council in 2002.

"I had lived in Norman for 29 years. My wife is a native of Norman; two of my daughters were raised in Norman schools, so I maintained that if I wanted to get involved with my community, this was the way to do it," said Hopper.

### The New Norman

With Mayor Harold Haralson in his first term, the council has a new look, and is currently being assisted by interim city manager Brad Gambill. Gambill retired from the city in 2003 as the director of utilities after a lengthy career in public adminis-

tration but was asked to come back to help the city out in the meantime.

Hopper said that Gambill really has the council in hyper drive as new issues develop. "Anytime a new idea comes up, we have study sessions, and we give feedback," he said. "A lot of us are very pleased with Brad Gambill. He's an experienced city employee, he knows how to run a ship and he's doing a great job."

### A City Bonded

Hopper and the council have been working around the clock to establish a list of capital improvement proposals for the citizens to vote on in the spring. Public safety, street maintenance and civic infrastructure projects are filling the "wish list."

"There are about 28 trains a day that come through Norman," said Hopper. "When I ran in 2002, I said that I would work hard to get a grade separation for the tracks on Robinson Street. I think that we have a plan in place to address this issue again."

Hopper also said that the city is in dire need of a comprehensive street maintenance program. Currently, there is not enough in the city's budget to address this issue and a bond issue could remedy the situation.

"Hopefully, we'll have a vote of the people in March and find some resolution."

Currently, the city of Norman has zero bond indebtedness. City leaders maintain that the community has a strong case for diversifying its sources of income.

### Beyond 2025

Norman leaders are now aggressively recruiting retail development. The city is looking at developing proposals to make the community more attractive to potential retail clients.

"Our retail has actually not grown as much as people think," said Hopper. "We are just beginning to look into that, and

we're now looking to see what we can do as a community to make ourselves more attractive."

City leaders recently heard a presentation from a consulting firm that specializes in retail recruitment. A prospective project currently in discussion offers enormous promise for growth.

Future growth and land-use would follow the city's 2025 plan. Hopper believes that the prospects for the bond proposal, along with steady city leadership will further enhance the personality of the city.

"Norman is a unique place. I always find it interesting to meet other city leaders at ACOG meetings, because you get a better glimpse of what goes on in their communities," Hopper said.

"I'm always struck by the unique aspects of Norman. This is a university town. We have a lot of opinions, and a lot of educated people who love to express them. Dealing with diversity is what makes serving on the council so rewarding."

## Coming

## Regional

## Events

### Opening of the Oklahoma River

•Dec. 11, parade begins 6 p.m.

Byers Avenue Bridge

Join regional leaders in a holiday parade on water as a festival, river parade and fireworks display officially reopens the Oklahoma River. The nighttime parade will feature boats with holiday lights and a Grande finale. For more information, visit [www.okcevents.com](http://www.okcevents.com).

# “CO Concerns”

...Continued from page one.

Motor vehicles and two-cycle gaso- line power engines cause a large per- centage of carbon monoxide pollution as a result of incomplete fuel combustion in cold weather. Higher CO levels generally occur between November and February on clear, low-wind days when air tempera- ture is between 35 and 40 degrees. The evening rush hours are sometimes prob- lematic, due to the high concentration of motor vehicles in areas such as shopping centers and major intersections.

Carbon monoxide emissions increase in cold weather because motor vehicles need more fuel to start in cold tempera- tures, and because some emission con- trol devices, such as oxygen sensors and catalytic converters, operate less effi- ciently when they are cold.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes the regulations for carbon monoxide levels. For the region to meet the CO standard, it cannot have more than one episode per year where the eight-hour CO value exceeds the thresh- old. Since the Clean Air Act Amendments in 1990, the Central Oklahoma region has exceeded the federal standards only once, in 1994.

Although there hasn't been a Carbon Monoxide Alert Day issued since 1996, there are still some recommended ac- tions that Central Oklahomans can do to keep CO levels low:

- Driving slowly as the car warms up, instead of idling.

## December

- 2nd 2030 OCARTS Plan Trails Component Meeting, 2-4 p.m.
- 9th Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 13th Citizens Advisory Committee, 3 p.m.
- 14th 9-1-1 Technical Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- 16th 9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m.  
Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m.  
ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m.  
Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.
- 24th ACOG Offices Closed for Christmas
- 31st ACOG Offices Closed for New Years Day

## January

- 10th (Special) Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 9 a.m.
- 13th Areawide Planning and Technical Advisory Committe, 9 a.m.  
Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 14th Garber-Wellington Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 17th ACOG Offices Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 18th Citizens Advisory Committee, 3 p.m.
- 27th 9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m.  
Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m.  
ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m.  
Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.

- Decreasing rush-hour traffic by ei- ther working at home or arriving and leaving work a little earlier or later.
  - Turning off engines while stopped for a train or during other waiting periods.
  - Avoiding drive-through windows at restaurants, banks, cleaners, etc.
  - Avoiding the use of wood-burning fireplaces and stoves.
  - Checking home heating systems for operating efficiency.
- For more information contact Jerry Church, ACOG.

## Central Oklahoma *Perspective*

### Association of Central Oklahoma Governments

21 East Main • Suite 100  
Oklahoma City, OK 73104-2405  
**(405) 234-2264** • FAX 234-2200  
TDD 234-2217 • [www.acogok.org](http://www.acogok.org)

### Return Service Requested

PRSR STD  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Oklahoma City,  
Oklahoma  
Permit #193

“Providing Regional Leadership in Central Oklahoma Since 1966”