

New Transit Center Opens with Great Fanfare

A clean, well-lighted place. Add to that a sense of security and belonging, and transit riders finally have a place of their own. For the past few years, transit riders of Metro Transit had been relocated and have had to endure a long wait to find a new home in downtown Oklahoma City. Last month, Metro Transit's new downtown center made its debut with great fanfare with metro leaders and stakeholders in attendance.

Congressman Ernest Istook said that the opening of the center was a great step towards advancing the region's public transportation system, and even shared his own experience with the former transit station. Istook told a story of spending a night at the old center, humbling him as he waited in line to buy N'Sync tickets for his daughter.

The center's journey began in 1996, when Metro Transit learned that its transfer station, then located south of Reno Avenue from the Cox Business Services Convention Center, was to be the future location of the downtown arena (Ford Center), as part of the city's first MAPS capital improvement plan. The transit center was demolished three years later, as the Ford Center began construction,



Congressman Ernest Istook addresses the crowd at the grand opening of Metro Transit's Downtown Transit Center. The Center opened after several years of planning and effort.

and the transit center was relegated to a parking lot near the Civic Center Music Hall.

For years, Metro Transit wrestled with two issues: Finding a prime spot in downtown, and finding space that would be large enough to accommodate the flow of bus and passenger traffic. The space also had to accommodate a centrally located center that would be spacious enough to shelter waiting transit riders,

and secure and clean enough to make it comfortable.

In March 2002, 1.7 acres were located at Hudson Avenue and N.W. 5th and the existing buildings were cleared to make room for the new center.

The construction of the Downtown Transit Center fulfills a goal outlined in Metro Transit's long-range transit plan, which established long-term objectives ...See "Transit Center" on page four.

Inside Perspective:

Central Oklahomans Asked to Participate in Survey	2
Life-Saving Heart Devices Distributed to Communities	2
What's New Around the Region	3
ACOG Calendar	4

Wireless 9-1-1 Parties Reach Accord

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission recently accepted a settlement agreement between SBC Corporation and several local government intervenors on a tariff proposal that had been submitted by SBC to recuperate its costs associated with improving the processing of 9-1-1 calls from wireless telephones in the state.

The proposed tariff establishes rates to be charged to public safety agencies

that receive 9-1-1 calls from wireless telephone users. In order to improve the processing of such calls (have them route to the correct answering site and deliver more information such as call-back number and location), improvements must be made by the primary 9-1-1 service provider, which for most of Oklahoma is SBC.

On behalf of local public safety ...See "Wireless Tariff" on page three.

Central Oklahomans Asked to Participate in Survey

The region's long-range transportation plan, known as the Oklahoma City Area Regional Transportation Study (OCARTS) Plan for 2030 has been in the development stage for months with data and technical work. Now, the public involvement component of the plan is asking citizens to participate in a survey that will study the area's future transportation needs. ACOG is distributing the survey to help develop long-range transportation goals.

As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), ACOG coordinates regional transportation planning efforts within the metropolitan region. Known as the Oklahoma City Area Regional Transportation Study (OCARTS) area, the region encompasses all of Okla-

homa County and portions of Canadian, Cleveland, Grady, Logan and McClain counties.

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Input from the survey is primarily intended for the 2030 OCARTS plan, which will identify strategies to improve auto, bus, pedestrian, truck, rail and bicycle travel for the next two decades. Results from the survey will determine the most acceptable means of financing transportation improvements as well as gauge the

level of interest in improving alternative transportation modes.

The survey will provide planners with insight into public wants and needs, and gauge responses to important plan issues such as travel habits, employment travel, intermodal elements and other facets in transportation planning.

The survey is available in this issue of *Central Oklahoma Perspective*, and can also be taken online, or downloaded at ACOG's Web site at www.acogok.org.

It will be distributed the first week of September to ACOG's database of citizens and public leaders, and will also be provided to local media, neighborhood groups and interested parties. Survey results can be faxed, mailed, emailed, or taken online through November 5.

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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.

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Life-Saving Heart Devices Distributed To Communities

Several communities in the Central Oklahoma region received automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in August, to be used for emergencies involving cardiac arrest. The devices were granted through a program designed to save lives in rural areas of the state, which ranks second in the nation in cardiovascular deaths.

ACOG served as a regional administrator for the program, accepting applications from local communities earlier this summer. The devices were funded directly by a \$240,000 federal grant from the Health Resources Services Administration. The Oklahoma State Department of Health and the American Heart Association have purchased over 200 AEDs to be distributed statewide through the 11 councils of government of the Oklahoma Association of Regional Councils.

Based on federal grant criteria, only certain zip codes within Logan and Canadian counties were eligible to receive the donated devices.

Entities receiving the units in Central Oklahoma included the **Richland Rural Fire Protection District, Mulhall Fire**

Department, Union City Police Department, Piedmont Police Department, Calumet Volunteer Fire Department, Crescent Ambulance, Woodcrest Fire Department and Sooner Volunteer Fire Department.

The devices are designed to be utilized by non-medical personnel, such as police officers and firefighters. If placed in 24-hour radio-dispatched mobile units, the AEDs are particularly effective in responding to medical emergencies by simply being readily available. The devices previously averaged in price at about \$2,000, which prevented many small rural communities from purchasing them. Under a statewide negotiated agreement, this year's price is about \$1,000.

“We were pleased to take part in administering this program that will help save lives in critical situations,” said ACOG Executive Director Zach D. Taylor. “We believe that the AEDs will help fortify first responder emergency medical service to rural communities in our region,” he added.

For more information, please contact Stephen Willougby. ACOG.

“Wireless Tariff”

...Continued from page one.

agencies throughout the state, 9-1-1 ACOG, the City of Oklahoma City, City of Tulsa, and the Oklahoma Municipal League (OML) joined together to intervene in the original SBC tariff filing in the fall of 2002, because the original filing was unacceptable from the local governments' perspective. The Intervenor estimate that Oklahoma taxpayers will save approximately \$2.5 million over the next five years due to the changes made to the proposed tariff.

The primary concern over the original proposal was related to how charges would be incurred. In the original filing, public safety agencies would have been charged 23 cents for each call to 9-1-1 made from a wireless phone. The settlement agreement instead sets up rates for the availability of the service at a fixed amount that can be budgeted by local governments and is not dependent upon call volume.

In addition, SBC agreed to un-bundle charges for the two standard phases of enhanced 9-1-1 wireless services, so that local agencies will not be paying for advancements that are not yet utilized. The company also pulled some cost items out of the tariff that the Intervenor determined to be not directly related to wireless 9-1-1 improvements.

“This settlement agreement represents nearly two years of study and negotiations,” according to 9-1-1 ACOG Executive Director Zach Taylor. “We believe the result will be a more equitable representation of the costs incurred by the company, and provide a more reasonable framework for local governments to begin improving emergency telephone service to wireless customers.”

Area officials are now working with SBC, the wireless service providers and equipment vendors to determine actions needed to go forward to enhance wireless emergency calls. Although calls from wireless phones are responsible for nearly 40 percent of local calls made to 9-1-1, in most of the state costs for current 9-1-1 services are borne solely by landline telephone customers. Citizens likely will be asked in the near future to vote on a 9-1-1 service fee on their wireless bills similar to what they have paid on landline in Central Oklahoma since 1989.



Around the Region

- The **Oklahoma Department of Commerce Business Solutions Division** is now offering the e-Synchronist Business Information System® to help community economic development planners by providing comprehensive insights into their local economy. The system gathers, organizes and analyzes current information directly from company executives to quickly identify growth opportunities. Four organizations will be awarded a demonstration project. ODOC is currently soliciting applications from organizations interested in participating. Proposal criteria is available at the Commerce Web site, www.odoc.state.ok.us.

- **OGE Electric Services**, along with **Black and Decker** and six radio stations in the **Citadel Radio Group** recently gave away six electric lawnmowers to local winners through the committee's annual summer promotion. The program is part of the **ACOG Clean Air Committee's** public education campaign to promote clean air in the region. To win the mower, contestants had to make a commitment to clean air and enter through the Committee's Web site at www.lets cleartheair.org. Winners included **Aaron Beasley**, Yukon, for **WKY-AM**; **Jill Burgess**, Norman, for **WWLS-FM**; **Jake Tullius**, Norman, for **KQOB-FM**; **Rebecca Barlow**, Edmond, for **KYIS-FM**; **Melanie Kirkes**, Del City, for **KKWD-FM**, and **Tyson Morris**, Oklahoma City for **KATT-FM**.

- The **Moore Fire Department** recently received a \$65,000 grant from the **Assistance to Firefighters Grant** program, which provides one-year grants to local fire departments. The grant will allow the department to expand its operations, supplement

its health and safety programs and purchase new equipment.

- The **Oklahoma Department of Commerce** and the **Oklahoma Department of Libraries** are hosting a set of Census workshops starting this month and running through October. The workshops last a few hours and will provide attendees computer training on retrieving data from the Census bureau Web site, at www.census.gov. Two workshops are scheduled for the Central Oklahoma region, on September 28 at the Norman Public Library, and October 28-29 in Oklahoma City. Sessions are scheduled from 9 a.m. to noon, or 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Seats to these sessions will fill up quickly. To register, visit ODOC's Web site at www.odoc.state.ok.us.

- The new \$24 million **Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library** opened last month, with a ceremonial human chain book passing that enlisted the assistance of 3,000 participants. The volunteers formed a line from the old library to the new library, located at 300 Park Avenue. The new library is the last of the original MAPS projects to be completed, and finalizes construction of projects that comprised the voter-financed renewal program passed 10 years ago.



The new downtown library is the last of the original MAPS projects.

“Transit Center”

...Continued from page one.

for fortifying the public transportation system in the region.

The terminal cost \$6.2 million with the bulk of the funding coming from federal grants. The new center provides a full-time security guard, customer service representative, comfortable climate controlled waiting rooms and restrooms. Covered boarding areas with windscreens on the exterior wings of the center will provide weather protection for riders.



Recently opened transit center in downtown OKC.

ACOG Calendar

September

- 6th ACOG Offices Closed for Labor Day
- 9th Areawide Planning and Technical Advisory Committee, 9 a.m.
Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 14th 9-1-1 Technical Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- 21st Operation FireSAFE, 10 a.m.
Clean Cities Stakeholder, 1 p.m.
- 30th 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.

October

- 14th Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 28th 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.
- 30th Trick or Treat Night in Central Oklahoma

Central Oklahoma

Perspective

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