

Regional Legislative Issues Prioritized for 2007

Results from a regional survey of ACOG member communities have helped the Association to develop a prioritized list of federal and state legislative issues and concerns in the region. The ACOG Board of Directors works together and through its staff to enhance this communication and to develop mutual goals - for the betterment of Central Oklahoma.

Annually, the Board prepares documents describing its legislative and regulatory concerns to present to Oklahoma State Legislators and Oklahoma's Congressional Delegation. A legislative information-gathering workshop held a few months ago 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: Calumet, Choctaw, Del City, Edmond, El Reno, Guthrie, Lexington, Moore, Norman, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Slaughterville and Tuttle.

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

Federal Issues:

1. Continued support to the viability and strengthening of Tinker Air Force Base.
2. *(Tie)* (A) Prohibit unfunded federal mandates. Provide adequate funding to communities to meet regulations and policies. (B) Preserve local authority regarding rights-of-way fees and land use controls.
3. Continuation of federal support for community development programs such as CDBG, local workforce development, Economic Development Administration, fire protection, Enterprise Zones, and others.
4. Avoid local effects of immigration reform, primarily tasking undermanned and under funded local authorities to enforce federal and state rules.
5. *(Tie)* (A) Encourage U.S. Postal Service adaptations to better utilize ZIP codes for local tax attributions. (B) Evaluate effects of union controls over local government efforts that would



preempt local management decision making; including federal imposition of collective bargaining. (C) Continue and expedite Homeland Security local funding.

State Issues

1. Leave local personnel issues to local decision makers (oppose mandatory collective bargaining, binding arbitration and additional pensions).
 2. Require Oklahoma Tax Commission to use ZIP+four in distributing tax revenues to cities. Also, increase Tax Commission enforcement staff and point-of-delivery laws.
3. Oppose exemption of sales taxes on groceries and "tax holidays."
4. Support Tort Reform; continue to reduce Worker's Compensation expenses.
5. *(Tie)* (A) Study ways to reduce health care cost for public and private employers. (B) Ensure pre-paid wireless phone customers and vendors pay
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Clean Air Status Hitting Home

In addition to a comprehensive public education program that includes an annual multi-medium campaign, the ACOG Clean Air Committee also recently completed a survey on air quality opinions in Central Oklahoma. The survey was collected by phone from a sample of 500 Central Oklahoma households in October, with questions focusing on the 2006 ozone season. There was a 95 percent confidence level in the results. Some of the more significant findings include:

- 76 percent of respondents polled were concerned about the health, economic,

and environmental consequences of poor air quality in the Oklahoma City area.

- 74 percent of respondents believe that it is important to know when it is an Ozone Alert Day in the Central Oklahoma area. When asked this question last year, 68 percent said that it was important.
- Over 72 percent of respondents were willing to forego lawn mowing on an Ozone Alert Day, while 68 percent of respondents were willing to gas up
...See "Clean Air" on page four.

Tourism Department Seeks Trail Grant Applications

Hardy Watkins, Director of the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation, announced that the agency is now taking applications for the Recreational Trail Program's 2007 budget year.

"The Recreational Trails Program is a wonderful tool in improving the quality of life in Oklahoma," said Watkins. "It is our privilege to be able to offer these programs to the eligible agencies. The real winners are the people of Oklahoma, who will greatly benefit from increased outdoor recreational opportunities that these grants will bring."

The Recreational Trails Program is a reimbursement-type grant program. The program provides for an 80 percent federal share and 20 percent non-federal share for each project. Additional federal

funds may be used to provide up to 95 percent of the total project amount. Approximately \$1.2 million is available for the 2007 budget year. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2007.

Applications for trail projects will be accepted from local and county governments; state agencies; federal land managers (i.e. U.S. Forest Service, Corps of Engineers); and other 501(c) 3 organi-

zations. Eligible projects include trail maintenance and restoration, land acquisition, construction of new trails – motorized and non-motorized, trail access for persons with disabilities and development of trailhead and trailside facilities, such as rest areas, parking, and signage.

Grant applications may be found online at www.oktourism.gov.

Festive Events Spotlight Holiday Season

A series of events make up a month of family activities in Downtown Oklahoma City Inc.'s fifth annual "Downtown in December" celebration. There are numerous events that are being supplemented and sponsored by regional corporate and community groups. Festivities begin the day after Thanksgiving and run through the New Year. 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 few holiday seasons and now includes a 62 by 150 foot skating surface.
- Devon Energy is sponsoring free cruises on the Bricktown Water Taxis Thursday through Sunday evenings



in December. Board the boats near *The Oklahoman* Christmas tree on Mickey Mantle Drive across from the Bricktown Ballpark.

- Go extreme this winter, when you go AT&T Snow Tubing at the Brick, the nation's largest manmade snow tubing slope. Feel the wind in your face as you cruise down the hills at thrilling speeds. Presented by AT&T, you can't beat the great family fun of snow tubing at the AT&T Bricktown Ballpark.
- Celebrate the New Year at the Arts Council of Oklahoma City's annual Opening Night on New Year's Eve. Visit www.artscouncilokc.com for details. For a complete list of Downtown in December events, activities and maps, visit www.downtownindecember.com.

Central Oklahoma *Perspective* Offering Regional Leaders News and Information

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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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Moore Public Safety Package Passes

Voters in the city of Moore voted "yes" to the city's "vision for a safer tomorrow" package last month. The initiative, which encompassed several public safety needs, was approved by the voters with a 57.7 percent margin.

Funding for the projects will stem from a half-cent sales tax for four years that is projected to collect nearly \$10 million in revenue. The package was developed by city staff, elected officials and public safety personnel.

The projects include the addition of a fire station to serve the southwest part of the city. Two existing fire stations will

also be repositioned. All stations will be outfitted with new equipment. New police equipment will also be added to the Police Department, and the current station will be remodeled.

The funding will also provide for construction of a new Emergency Management Facility that will house the city's Emergency Operations center and 9-1-1 dispatch staff. New radios for the entire city's emergency communications staff will be funded through the measure.

The tax will go into effect on April 1, 2007, and moves the city's previous 7.5 percent sales tax to 8 percent.

All-Star Band to Lead Rose Parade

As Oklahoma prepares to celebrate 100 years of statehood, 150 talented high school musicians have been selected to participate in Oklahoma's All Star Centennial Band. Oklahoma's All Star Centennial Band is produced by native Oklahoman Charles Jones II, former conductor of the Walt Disney World Orchestra and founder of the State Fair of Oklahoma High School Honor Band.

"We are pleased to have Charles Jones and director Charles Senge leading these talented high school students



as they make their national debut at the Tournament of Roses Parade," said Lee Allan Smith, Chairman of Centennial Projects and Events.

Oklahoma will shine as the All Star Centennial Band makes a once-in-a-lifetime performance on Jan. 1, 2007, as the lead band in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif. before a worldwide television audience.

Oklahoma's All Star Centennial Band was created by the Oklahoma Centennial Commission to provide aspiring young high school musicians with an opportunity to not only serve as musical ambassadors for the State of Oklahoma, as it celebrates its Centennial in 2007, but to also experience a musical educational experience of the highest standard.

Oklahoma's centennial celebration began in earnest this year and will continue through Statehood Day, Nov. 16, 2007, with premier events planned for Oklahoma City, Guthrie and communities throughout the state.

For a complete list of the Oklahoma All Star Centennial Band members, visit the education section of the Oklahoma Centennial site at www.oklahoma-centennial.com.



Around the Region

- The **Greater Oklahoma City Chamber** is sponsoring a "Breaking Through" luncheon on December 6 that will focus on the **Regional Fixed Guideway** system. The study was conducted last year by **COTPA**. **Tom Shelton**, planner for **Carter and Burgess**, which produced the study, will detail its findings and recommendations. The luncheon will take place at The Petroleum Club. Call 290-7076 to register.

- **Oklahoma City** is one of 100 cities across the country to join the **National League of Cities Inclusive Communities Partnership**. The initiative encourages cities and towns to commit to building more inclusive communities by increasing citizen participation and engagement, while promoting equity and fairness. The effort will help regional leaders work together to support racial justice, increase affordable housing, share insights among diverse populations, and promote acceptance of diverse races, religions and cultures. For more information, visit www.nlc.org.

- The **Mustang Fire Department** received a \$310,500 **U.S. Homeland Security** grant last month that will enable the city to hire three new firefighters for the next five years. **Fire Chief Carl Hickman** said that the city was the only recipient in the state for the grant, which was designed to help communities reach adequate staffing levels and increase fire response times. Hickman said that the city's growth and a season of grass fires helped to secure the grant.

- Construction of the **Eastern Oklahoma County Turnpike Gate** was approved at a meeting of the Board of **Oklahoma County Commissioners** in October. Commissioner **Stan**

Inman said that the gate would provide long-needed access to the eastern part of **Oklahoma County** from the Turner Turnpike. Estimated at \$7.2 million, the project will be funded by Oklahoma County, the **Oklahoma Turnpike Authority** and Oklahoma City. It is anticipated to be completed in 2008.

- The new Captain of the **Bricktown Station** in **Oklahoma City** is **Patrick Steward**. He has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and has served the OKCPD in a variety of duties, including patrol officer, emergency response team and domestic violence.

- **Alicia Kongyan Nicely** has joined the **ACOG** Transportation Planning and Data Services staff as an Associate Planner. Nicely earned a master's degree in environmental studies from Baylor University, and has extensive GIS experience, and computer applications in data and geoprocessing. She will be working primarily with land use data, building permits and growth allocation model development, which encompasses socioeconomic data into the regional long range transportation plan.



Alicia Kongyan Nicely, ACOG Associate Planner

“2007 Issues”

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the voter-approved 50 cent monthly 9-1-1 service fee. (C) Fund highway right-of-way maintenance within city limits. (D) Support additional appropriations to Oklahoma Water Resources Board water fund to address municipal water needs.

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

“Clean Air”

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their vehicles in the evening on an Alert Day. These were two of the highest responses ever, in the four years of administering this survey.

Advertising recall about air quality in the Central Oklahoma region increased significantly over last year, likely due to the impact of 11 Clean Air Alert Days and the topical nature of air quality and its impact and effects on the region.

In addition, there were new questions that were asked to ascertain general attitudes and beliefs on emerging global climate issues, and the region's future air quality status. When asked if they were concerned about the potential of the re-

gion getting closer to violating federal clean air standards, over half (51 percent) of respondents said that they were “somewhat concerned,” and 38 percent said that they were “extremely concerned.”

Over 63 percent of respondents reported that they were “extremely concerned” about the possibilities of higher gasoline prices.

For more, contact Jerry Church, ACOG.

ACOG Calendar

December 2006

- 8th Garber-Wellington Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 12th 9-1-1 Technical Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- 14th Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 21st 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.
- 25th ACOG Offices Closed for Christmas

January 2007

- 1st ACOG Offices Closed for New Years Day
- 11th Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 12th Garber-Wellington Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 15th ACOG Offices Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 16th Operation FireSAFE, 10 a.m.
- 25th 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.

Central Oklahoma *Perspective*

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