



CENTRAL OKLAHOMA FEDERAL PRIORITIES

COMPILED BY:

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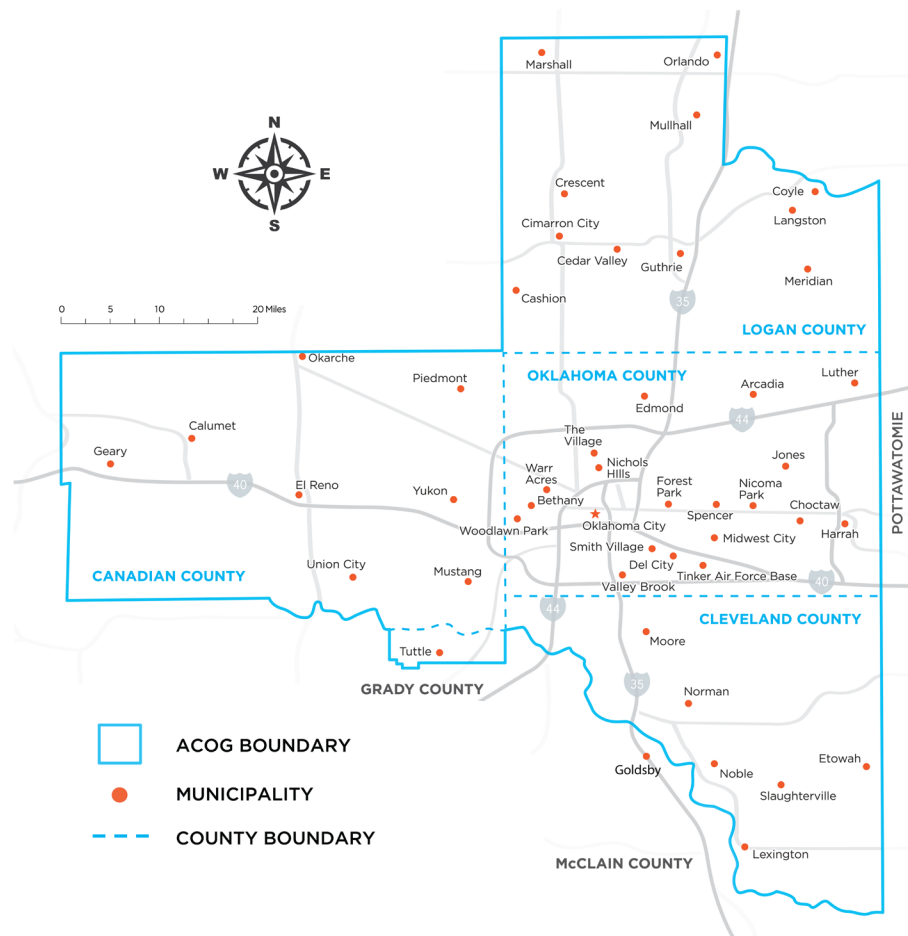
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ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GOVERNMENTS

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ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ADVOCATE FOR THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE US ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA) WITH STRATEGIC CHANGES

- Pursue EDA reauthorization in 2023. The last reauthorization of EDA took place in 2004. Efforts to do so in 2022 were unsuccessful.
- Reassess the 3-year Planning Grant that is provided by EDA to each District for program, staffing, and operational needs. The federal share of this grant is \$210,000 and the Recipient (District) share is \$210,000, with total costs estimated to be \$420,000. This 50 percent match requirement makes a huge dent in available local funding for ACOG and other Districts. As a point of comparison, the vast majority of ACOG's federal funds comes from the U.S. Department of Transportation. Those grants are 80 percent federal and 20 percent local match. It is time to move away from the excessive 50 percent match requirement for the EDA Planning Grants.
- Adjust the federal share of the EDA Planning Grant to \$420,000, which would be combined with the recommended 20 percent local match requirement, for a total of \$525,000 per District. This reasonable funding increase will greatly assist the ability of each District to maintain the expanded staffing and needed services that were funded under the EDA CARES Act, which ended on December 31, 2022.

MAINTAIN STATUS QUO ON EPA OZONE LEVELS

- The OKC Metro area is on the edge of going into Ozone nonattainment. We request that the EPA not make the current standard more stringent (i.e., going from 70 ppb to 65 ppb).
- ACOG's recently completed Cost of Nonattainment Study shows that if our region is designated as nonattainment under the current ozone standard, the potential economic impact would be \$9.6-\$15.2 billion over a 20-30-year period.
- Along with ozone, the OKC Metro area is experiencing an increasing problem with the Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM 2.5). This may become worse if the PM 2.5 standard is made more stringent.

CONTEST GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS RULE

- While we are focused on improving regional air quality, we are opposed to federal regulatory efforts seeking to create a new state level Greenhouse Gas (GHG) performance management measure on the National Highway System (NHS). Additionally, we oppose requiring ODOT to set their own declining targets from on-road GHG emissions occurring on the NHS. ACOG, along with the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, will work with ODOT and the Oklahoma Congressional Delegation to advocate against these burdensome requirements that would present severe compliance challenges resulting in potential loss of federal transportation funding.

OPPOSE ARPA FUNDING RESCISSION

- Retain the current federal grant programs that have allocated funding to cities and counties through ARPA. There is discussion in D.C. about possible rescissions in funding to state and local governments (i.e.: pulling back the funding that has been allocated). Returning these ARPA funds would hinder the completion of projects already started and planned for communities throughout Oklahoma.

SUSTAIN OPERATIONS AND INVESTMENT IN TINKER AFB

- Continue to support Tinker's expansion plans and the KC-46A air refueling tanker mission. We appreciate the support and award of the INFRA grant for interchange improvements at Douglas Blvd. and I-40.

SUPPORT THE MIKE MONRONEY CENTER (FAA)/ASSOCIATED FEDERAL AGENCIES

- Maintain the continued viability of the Mike Monroney Aeronautic Center (over 6,300 employees) as a strategically important national asset for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and further support the continuation of its other essential federal government activities in the state. (The facility trains approximately 76,000 students each year.)

SUSTAIN THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF WILL ROGERS WORLD AIRPORT

- One of our major regional economic assets is Will Rogers World Airport. We appreciate our congressional delegation's ongoing support for Oklahoma City's airport infrastructure projects. Will Rogers, like most major airports, is experiencing the impact of a nation-wide airline pilot shortage. Your assistance in addressing this important issue both from a travel safety and efficiency perspective would be greatly appreciated.

CLOSE ONLINE SALES TAX LOOPHOLE

- Many studies and projections demonstrate that e-commerce Internet sales and other types of remote purchases (e.g., booking online travel services which impact transient occupancy taxes, rental car taxes, and business gross receipt taxes) are accelerating at a rapid pace. Thus, uncollected or under-collected taxes could comprise a major share of all tax collections, rendering sales and use taxes ineffective.
- ACOG supports passage of e-fairness legislation like the Marketplace Fairness Act (MFA, previously introduced as Senate Bill 976) and/or the Remote Transactions Parity Act (previously introduced as House of Representatives Bill 2193) that will bring our sales tax system into the 21st Century and prevent continued tax revenue losses and remove the competitive advantage now enjoyed by remote sellers. This is a high priority issue for cities in Oklahoma as they do not receive ad valorem tax revenue, unlike municipalities in all other states, and are primarily dependent on sales tax revenue for funding operational services.

PROTECT MUNICIPAL BONDS

- ACOG opposes any attempt to eliminate or limit the traditional tax exemption for municipal bonds, whether as a part of a deficit reduction plan, a push for comprehensive tax reform, or as an offset for new spending.
- Tax-exempt bonds are the primary financing mechanism for state and local infrastructure projects – they have been used for more than 100 years and provide essential funding for states, counties, and localities. Three-quarters of all public infrastructure projects in the U.S. are built by states and localities, and tax-exempt bonds are the primary financing tool utilized to satisfy these infrastructure needs. If the tax exemption is eliminated or reduced, states and localities will pay more to finance projects, leading to fewer projects and fewer jobs.

SUSTAIN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDING

- The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is critical to state and local networks in providing funding for public improvements, public services, economic development, and affordable housing. The CDBG Program provides state and local governments and their partners with the flexibility needed to develop essential programs and projects to assist low- and moderate-income families and improve their quality of life.
 - There are several specific statutory items that affect the CDBG Program that need to be addressed in addition to increased funding.
 - Designate fair housing as a stand-alone program activity. Currently, fair housing activities can only be funded through CDBG admin or public services.
 - Support increased funding for the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program (currently funded at \$300 million).
 - Raise the Davis-Bacon threshold for non-residential construction from \$2,000 to at least \$100,000 and increase the CDBG threshold to 12 CDBG assisted units to coincide with the HOME Program.
 - The HOME Investment Partnerships Program helps communities create and preserve safe, decent, affordable housing for low-income households. Like CDBG, it is a federal block grant that provides communities with an annual allocation of funds. The current funding is \$1.35 billion. There are three items, in addition to increased funding, that should be addressed.
 - Increase the allowable program administration from 10 percent to 15 percent
 - Eliminate the 24-month commitment requirement.
 - Eliminate or make optional the 15 percent Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) requirement.
 - Oklahoma communities are experiencing increased homeless camps and the difficulties associated with this problem. In addition, support increased funding for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants: Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and the Continuum of Care (CoC).
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CLEAN CITIES/ALTERNATIVE FUELS

AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) CLEAN CITIES PROGRAM

- The Clean Cities Program has been one of the nation's most effective tools in promoting the use of domestic fuel sources, improving local air quality, and deploying advanced vehicle technologies. Congress should reintroduce and pass legislation that would institutionalize the program and enable it to be even more effective in leveraging public-private partnerships to advance domestic clean transportation.

ENSURE ADEQUATE FY 2024 FEDERAL FUNDING FOR KEY ALTERNATIVE FUELS PROGRAMS

- For 27 years, the ACOG Clean Cities Program, designated by the Department of Energy (DOE), has contributed to the State of Oklahoma's status as an alternative fuel leader. ACOG supports maintaining DOE Clean Cities funding at their current levels to help meet

ACOG air quality and transportation goals. ACOG also supports continued funding for EPA Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) Clean Diesel Grants which are utilized by Central Oklahoma school districts and other entities through the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ).

PRESERVE THE RENEWABLE FUELS STANDARD (RFS)

- The RFS supports renewable natural gas (RNG) production and market use in Oklahoma (including by Central Oklahoma companies and fleets). RNG is produced from biogas from landfills, wastewater, agriculture, and food production, which is converted into pipeline natural gas and monetized through the RFS. Preservation of the RFS supports energy security and air quality goals for the ACOG region.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

SUPPORT FEDERAL PROGRAM FUNDING WITH STRATEGIC CHANGES

- The apportionment of funds dedicated in the Federal Transportation Bill for surface transportation improvements in the Central Oklahoma area is not keeping up with the higher costs and the number of projects being pursued by local communities. An increase in the funds set aside for the Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG), including the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), is necessary to deliver high priority projects in a timely manner. The Oklahoma City region receives approximately \$27 million per year, yet the demand exceeds \$100 million for surface transportation improvements. Millions of dollars' worth of critical projects goes unfunded each year.
- Currently, most of the Federal STBG and TAP funding is 80/20 federal/local match. This works for the larger communities, but smaller communities have a difficult time finding the 20 percent match. A 90/10 federal/local match would be more helpful, especially for smaller communities.

INVESTMENT IN I-35 CORRIDOR PROJECTS

- Replace existing and aging I-35 bridges with iconic bridges for the purpose of showcasing Oklahoma City at the confluence of two major interstate highways and the Oklahoma River; and, facilitating increased sporting events and tourist activity, as the current bridge design is a barrier to rowing competitions being extended past the current bridges. This would help support the success of the Olympic Training Facility on the Oklahoma River.

We will be seeking a Congressional letter of support as ODOT competes for a portion of the \$12.5 billion in "Bridge Improvement Grant" funding from USDOT.

- The Oklahoma Department of Transportation and the Cities of Moore and Norman are currently funding a corridor study along I-35, between Main Street in Norman and 4th Street in Moore. The study is anticipated to recommend significant improvements at locations that need interchanges or where the existing interchanges are functionally obsolete and in need of replacement. Specific improvements could include modifications to the Robinson Street and Tecumseh Road interchanges, a new interchange at Rock Creek Road, and the reconstruction and reconfiguration of the Indian Hills Road interchange in Norman, as well as a new interchange at 34th Street and the modification of the 19th Street interchange in Moore. The improvements will reduce traffic congestion and greatly enhance access to one of the fastest growing commercial development areas

in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan area. The estimated cost to design and construct the interchanges in Norman is \$120 million.

- A successful RAISE grant application was submitted by ODOT for the SE 4th St./Railway Underpass in Moore. We appreciate the letters of support from the Oklahoma Congressional delegation.
- Edmond is working with ODOT to acquire more funding for improvements along I-35 in Edmond's city limits. Increased traffic warrants one-way upgrades on all access roads. Secondly, increased traffic on I-35 warrants expansion to six lanes for I-35 from Edmond Road to Waterloo Road.

INCREASE BRIDGE MAINTENANCE FUNDING FOR MUNICIPALITIES

- Many municipalities and counties are currently faced with aging bridges that will not be functional in the near future. These bridges are inspected every two years through the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT). The inspection reports show the degradation of this infrastructure.
- The Bridge Formula Program Funding part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provides 100 percent funding for bridges. This more flexible funding provides money for bridges that are not on the federal system, but are too expensive for many communities to afford. ODOT has supplemented this fund to allow more bridges to be upgraded for needed safety improvements.

EXTEND AMTRAK HEARTLAND FLYER TO NEWTON, KS

- Passenger rail service is a key component of the continued viability of the Oklahoma City intermodal hub and the future development of commuter rail throughout the Central Oklahoma region. ACOG, along with our partners at the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, opposes efforts to reduce or eliminate state or federal funding received by Oklahoma to operate the Heartland Flyer Amtrak service to Fort Worth, Texas. We support continued dialogue on extending the Heartland Flyer Amtrak service to Newton, Kansas, which would connect Oklahoma City to Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago, and other locations on the Amtrak system. Furthermore, we support the designation of the Oklahoma City-Newton, KS line as a national Amtrak route. We appreciate the work of the Northern Flyer Alliance in supporting this campaign. This would strategically address a significant gap in the national Amtrak rail system map and assist with federal/state burden/cost-sharing to help ensure the viability of passenger rail service. An application for this connection was submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Corridor ID Program.

It is recommended that our Congressional Delegation work jointly with the Kansas Delegation, specifically Congressman Ron Estes (represents Newton and Wichita), to support this effort just as ODOT/KDOT are working in partnership.

- [Reference Material: Amtrak Heartland Flyer Extension Letter](#)

SUPPORT REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY (RTA) OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

- As highways and streets become more congested, the need for public transit is more evident. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) of Central Oklahoma was formally created in February 2019. Studies are currently underway, and options include commuter rail and expanded bus service in the area. Both proposals will require future funding to reach their full potential. The existing bus routes in Central Oklahoma are largely

subsidized through the member communities. Adding bus services would require additional funding from local communities with limited resources. The cost for a commuter rail service is significant and will be funded through the RTA member communities. This will require local sales tax increases along with federal resources. Any future infrastructure stimulus proposals should consider funding for expansion of public transit in the OKC area.

WATER & STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Request for funding to offset some of the unfunded federal mandates that impact our municipalities.

WATER LINE REPLACEMENTS

- A majority of ACOG communities have a water distribution system with miles of water lines, with most of these lines made of metal. Unfortunately, the clay soils in Central Oklahoma are extremely corrosive to these metal lines. The average cost to replace a mile of line is \$750,000. Replacement of these deteriorated water lines is a major cost burden on municipalities.

STORMWATER IMPROVEMENTS

- Central Oklahoma communities will continue to face rising costs of maintenance, replacement of aging existing infrastructure, as well as the installation. Most ACOG communities do not have a stormwater utility, therefore, they must search for outside funding sources for stormwater infrastructure. Additional federal funding support is needed.

DROUGHT MITIGATION

- With the continuing drought in Oklahoma, it is necessary to educate the public about proactive measures to conserve our water resources. In addition, funding will be needed to upgrade the existing water infrastructure system and to build new water storage facilities.
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911 OKLAHOMA

REAUTHORIZE THE NATIONAL 911 PROGRAM

- The program is within the Department of Transportation and needs funding. The cost estimate for implementing Next Generation 911 (NG911) for Oklahoma is \$8 million per year with statewide operations for the current 911 system costing \$110 million per year. At this time, 911 fees fund 36 percent of existing operation expenses with the remaining costs paid from local revenue sources. NG911 will require state-to-state interoperability that will need a federal resource to help guide the standard.

For more information about ACOG and its member governments, please visit:
www.acogok.org.