

CONTACT

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acog

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All Aboard: The Mayors of Six Cities Sign an Historic Agreement Forming the Regional Transportation Authority of Central Oklahoma

Del City ★ Edmond ★ Midwest City ★ Moore ★ Norman ★ Oklahoma City



OKLAHOMA CITY, February 20, 2019 – Today, six area mayors will sign a trust agreement and indenture officially forming the Regional Transportation Authority of Central Oklahoma. The historic event will improve connectivity across the region. According to Mark W. Sweeney, AICP, Executive Director, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG), the RTA will improve the quality of life in Central Oklahoma.

"Transportation is fundamental to economic development," Sweeney said. "The RTA will help make our region more competitive, and our communities more vibrant."

★ Details ★

10 a.m., Wednesday, February 20, 2019
Santa Fe Station
100 South E.K. Gaylord Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73102

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★ **Mayors** ★

In Alphabetical Order by City

The Honorable Brian Linley, Sr., Mayor of Del City, Oklahoma
The Honorable Elizabeth Waner, Mayor of Edmond, Oklahoma
The Honorable Matt Dukes, Mayor of Midwest City, Oklahoma
The Honorable Glenn Lewis, Mayor of Moore, Oklahoma
The Honorable Lynne Miller, Mayor of Norman, Oklahoma
The Honorable David Holt, Mayor of Oklahoma City

The RTA will be led by a seven-person board of directors. According to Sweeney, each of the six cities was allotted one representative, except for Oklahoma City, which, based on a combination of population and sales tax revenue, was allotted two.

★ **RTA Board of Directors** ★

In Alphabetical Order by City

Ken Bartlett, Del City
James Boggs, Edmond
Aaron Budd, Midwest City
Steve Eddy, Moore
Marion Hutchison, Norman
Former Governor Brad Henry, Oklahoma City
Mary Mélon. Oklahoma City

ACOG has served as the coordinator of regional transportation efforts for more than 10 years, and will continue to provide critical administrative, legal and technical support during the RTA's inception and development. According to Sweeney, the support could last up to five years or even longer.

"As the region's metropolitan planning organization (MPO), this has truly been a regional effort, and we are excited to have been such a significant part of it," Sweeney said. "I've seen what is possible when a region has a shared vision. Together, we can implement transformational projects that will catapult Central Oklahoma into a brighter transportation future."

The journey toward Wednesday's signing ceremony has included numerous studies, stakeholders, consultants, committees, conversations, formal and informal briefings, public meetings, task force meetings, council meetings, workshops and much, much more. The following are major milestones in the pursuit of the RTA.

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Regional Fixed Guideway Study

The long mission, which in part has been an expedition, began in 2005 with a [Regional Fixed Guideway Study](#). That study identified potential transportation solutions that would improve connections among the greater Oklahoma City metropolitan region's growth centers, enhance economic development opportunities, improve mobility, expand transportation options and improve air quality.

Regional Transit Dialogue

In 2009, ACOG initiated the [Regional Transit Dialogue](#), a visioning process to determine the desire for expanded and enhanced regional public transportation, in cooperation with local partners. The RTD engaged local elected officials, policy stakeholders, transit advocates, private sector leaders, and the general public to articulate how transit can serve the region in the years and decades to come. It built upon the recommendations from the 2030 Systems Plan outlined in the Fixed Guideway Study.

Downtown Streetcar Vote

Also in 2009, Oklahoma City citizens voted in favor of MAPS 3, a sales tax-financed public works program, which included a streetcar system. That system had first been conceived in the Fixed Guideway Study of 2005. More than 10 years later, with 4.9 miles of rail laid, streetcar service commenced in Oklahoma City to [great fanfare](#) in December 2018. According to Sweeney, eventually, the streetcar will serve as an intricate part of a comprehensive, regional transit system and will work in tandem with express buses and commuter rail.

Intermodal Hub Study

In 2010, ACOG partnered with the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority (COTPA), the City of Oklahoma City, and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) on an [Intermodal Transportation Hub Study](#). The study involved a two-tier evaluation process that began with 10 potential hub locations along major rail lines within downtown Oklahoma City. That study, which was completed in 2011, culminated in the selection of the Santa Fe Station as the regional transportation hub.

A total of \$28.4 million was spent to restore and renovate the art deco structure and transform it into a transit hub to serve passenger trains, the new streetcar system, city buses, taxis and bicycle and ride-sharing services. The Federal Highway Administration awarded a \$13.6 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant to Oklahoma City for the project. Oklahoma City provided \$11.3 million in funding. ACOG, through the MPO, provided \$2 million in funding and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation provided another \$1.5 million.

Commuter Corridors Study

In February 2013, ACOG initiated the [Commuter Corridors Study](#) to evaluate the three commuter corridors: the north corridor between Oklahoma City and Edmond; the east corridor, between Oklahoma City and Midwest City (Tinker Air Force Base), and the south corridor between Oklahoma City and Norman.

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The 18-month study was completed in 2014, and approved by ACOG's Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee that same year. The study provided in-depth analysis of potential alignments, technologies, ridership forecasts and estimated costs. It culminated in the selection of a locally-preferred alternative for each corridor.

Passage of HB 2480

In 2014, another major milestone toward regional transportation was met with the passage of Oklahoma HB 2480. The legislation ensured that a regional transportation authority had the flexibility to draw tax boundaries by precinct, city and county. According to Sweeney, this provides the RTA more options. Thanks to HB 2480, through a ballot question, citizens can vote to create a dedicated sales tax for an RTA. Thus, taxpayers will eventually need to vote to raise revenue through taxation to fund regional transportation.

Memorandum of Understanding

In 2015, six local mayors and ACOG signed an historic memorandum of understanding memorializing the creation of a [Regional Transit Authority Task Force for Central Oklahoma](#). That task force was charged with developing the RTA for the region.

Trust Agreement and Indenture

In the years following the signing of the MOU, 2016-2018, the task force worked on RTA development including governance models, board representation and structure; voting protocols; district boundaries and much more. In late 2018, ACOG worked diligently with six city councils to ensure approval of the trust agreement and indenture creating the RTA. All six cities approved the historic documents, and in January 2019, selected directors to serve on the RTA.

ACOG: Administrative Coordinator

Since 2005, ACOG has provided consistent leadership leading to the creation of the RTA. Acting as administrative coordinator, the agency has been in charge of the project and actually guided its inception and formal development. Over the years, there were loads of paperwork, proverbial forest fires, slow-going trains and memorable stops along the way.

"It was not always easy keeping the project on the rails," said John M. Sharp, Deputy Director, ACOG, who has been on the project since the beginning. "With such a long horizon, you worry that something will derail the effort, but thankfully, that has not been the case.

"The region has benefitted from the collaboration and dedication of numerous private partners, transit advocates and public officials, both elected and appointed. Without them, the RTA would not be possible."

According to Sweeney, ACOG will continue to provide critical administrative, legal and technical support to the RTA. "At times, we've had 50 cars behind us while going around challenging curves at great speed," Sweeney said. "But, it's exciting. We're transportation planners by profession, and we know how to keep this project on track.

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"We're keenly aware of what it means for Central Oklahoma, which is expected to increase in population by about 500,000 by 2030. It's more transportation options to help citizens get to work or school or the doctor or the store. It will mitigate traffic congestion and spur economic development and creative placemaking for the six communities.

"It will also improve air quality, and perhaps best of all, it will support neighborhoods and enhance quality of life. Knowing this, we look forward to our work over the next several years in guiding the RTA toward total independence."

★ **Ceremonial Signing Program** ★

10 a.m., Wednesday, February 20, 2019

Santa Fe Station

100 South E.K. Gaylord Boulevard

Oklahoma City, OK 73102

Celebratory Cupcakes and Punch Reception

Welcome and Introductions

Mark W. Sweeney, AICP, Executive Director, ACOG

Keynote Speaker

Marion Hutchison, Local Rail Advocate

Norman RTA Representative

Comments from Mayors

Mayor Brian Linley, Del City

Mayor Elizabeth Waner, Edmond

Mayor Matt Dukes, Midwest City

Mayor Glenn Lewis, Moore

Mayor Lynne Miller, Norman

Mayor David Holt, Oklahoma City

Ceremonial Signing

Del City, Edmond, Midwest City,

Moore, Norman and Oklahoma City

Closing Remarks

Mark W. Sweeney, AICP, Executive Director, ACOG

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