

**OKC 2023 FEDERAL
LEGISLATIVE
PROGRAM**



Priorities

1 Continued engagement in current federal grant programs and fiscal support for the community

Oklahoma City was awarded direct funding under the CARES Act in 2020 to support the municipal response to the pandemic and support the community in the wake of the fiscal crisis that followed. Oklahoma City allocated the \$114.3 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) to pandemic response, limiting the spread of the disease with testing and tracing, and community support. Without this funding, the health and economic impact on our community would have been much worse.

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the City received an allocation of \$122.5 million from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. The purpose of these funds was to assist government entities in recovering from the ongoing and lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing the purpose and temporary nature of this funding, the City developed a plan and is investing in improvements that will benefit the community and economy over the long term.

As Oklahoma City continues to utilize these grant program funds as they were intended, additional flexibility and the amount of time allowed to complete projects may be needed. In addition, any future rescission of grant funds would adversely impact plans and contracts that are in place.

2 Pursue prioritization for government operations when supply chain challenges limit access to critical supplies

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the frailty of certain domestic manufacturing sectors, including that of small arms ammunition manufacturing. The surge in private ammunition orders in 2020 has created a massive backlog and delayed the filling of law enforcement orders required for state-mandated qualification courses, recruit training, in-service training, and remedial training.

Mayor & Council

David Holt, Mayor
Craig Freeman, City Manager
Bradley Carter, Ward 1
James Cooper, Ward 2
Barbara Young, Ward 3
Todd Stone, Ward 4
David Greenwell, Ward 5
JoBeth Hamon, Ward 6
Nikki Nice, Ward 7
Mark Stonecipher, Ward 8

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There is no simple work-around for local law enforcement agencies, who have been forced to ration ammunition and turn away officers trying to reinforce their skills. Some orders have taken as long as 18 months to fill, impacting the availability of ammunition for training, practice, and on-duty carry. This ammunition shortage poses a safety threat the nation's communities.

The City would favor a requirement for private small arms ammunition manufacturers to set aside a certain percentage of ammunition they manufacture so that it is on hand and available to fill orders from law enforcement agencies.

3 Complement and enhance the City's investment in transportation and transit

The City continues to apply for grants under the competitive programs that were funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) as a complement to the public transportation investments the City has made. As the City competes for these funds, support from the delegation for these applications is important appreciated.

Additional programs that provide opportunities for funding include the long-established Federal Transit Administration's CIG program that provides competitive grants for New Starts (transit projects with \$100 million or more in federal funds), Small Starts (transit projects with less than \$100 million in federal funds and Core Capacity (funding for existing at-capacity fixed guideways).

The CIG program refers to the New Starts, Small Starts and Core Capacity projects funded through the FTA grant program. Projects that qualify for such funding under these programs are significant transit projects that are often not possible without the assistance of federal funds.

As Oklahoma City looks to the future of transit, Small Starts and other competitive grant funds will be beneficial in the financing of potential streetcar extensions, additional BRT routes and commuter rail.

4 Sustain and enhance airport transportation infrastructure in OKC

Will Rogers World Airport (WRWA) is a vital resource to Oklahoma City and the region. It is one of the largest small-hub commercial hub airports in the nation.

During a normal year, the airport serves over 4.2 million passengers annually and averages 74 daily departures to 28 non-stop destinations. The airport has nearly 70 businesses that employ more than 12,000 workers. Air travel is recovering to pre-pandemic levels and the recent expansion has positioned WRWA to handle the recovery. Commercial airports require significant on-going capital investment to maintain and update facility needs for passengers and airline operations.

It is important for the City to emphasize the necessity of continued funding for federal grants that support the airports' infrastructure and funding to support air traffic control towers. Also critical to Oklahoma City are the FAA operations at the MMAC as well as Transportation Security Administration (TSA) operations.

5 Economic Development and Local Grant Programs

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding

CDBG funding is critical for cities. Continued Congressional support for this program helps housing supply and affordability for Oklahoma City's residents. In FY 2022, OKC received \$4.9 million. The CDBG program is the primary federal funding mechanism the City uses to provide broad-based housing rehabilitation services for low- and moderate-income households, and critical public facilities and services in low-income areas within the community.

CDBG and the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program also provide flexible sources of business funding that has created low- and moderate-income jobs in our community.

Formula-based CDBG funding enables the City to take a long-term approach for addressing housing, community development and economic development needs. Without consistent and reliable access to CDBG funding, the City would have missed out on notable economic developments like Dell, Inc.'s creation of over 1,500 jobs, and renovating historic buildings now home to the Skirvin Hotel (over 250 jobs), 21C Hotel (138 jobs) and most recently the First National Center (220 jobs expected). Job creation alone is reason for undertaking these needed economic development activities, without mention of the rescue of iconic historic community buildings.

Last year, CDBG funding rehabilitated 33 housing units under the City's Housing Exterior Maintenance Program and provided emergency home repairs to 48 households under a program administered by Community Action Agency (CAA). The City also secured about 140 buildings using CDBG funding.

The funding helps provides public services as well. This year, over 63,000 discounted bus and transit fares were provided to seniors and people with disabilities and 500 people experiencing homelessness were provided health-care service.

Last year, CDBG funded an acquisition rehabilitation of an affordable housing project with 54 units. We also use CBDG to fund the City's Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) areas with programs like legal assistance, hazardous tree removal, and science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) after school and summer youth programs. SNI also implemented parks improvements, neighborhood sidewalks and lighting projects. Finally, small businesses owners are provided annual training by the CAA's small business development program. Last year, 1,000 people from over 139 businesses attended training.

The CDBG program also provides the City's Urban Renewal Authority with operating funds. The program, in partnership with HUD, continues to address blighted areas like the Oklahoma Health Center, Central Business District, the John F. Kennedy District and recently NE Renaissance Area.

Recent efforts include buying dilapidated properties for demolition and redevelopment, developing mixed-income housing and providing infrastructure improvements.

In addition to regular CDBG allocations, the City received \$4.3 M of additional CDBG-CV funds to address pandemic related issues in 2021-22. This was allocated to the Mental Health Association Oklahoma to purchase a 54-unit apartment building to be rehabilitated and converted into affordable housing for people with low incomes.

HOME Investment Partnerships Program

Administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Congress supports the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) program and recently increased its funding. The FY 22 allocation to the City was \$2,584,677.

The HOME program is the City's primary federal funding mechanism for whole housing rehabilitation services in low- and moderate- income households, affordable rental and for sale housing construction, and down payment and closing cost assistance to people with low income. It also provided funding for senior and assisted living housing.

HOME is used to rehabilitate about 20 housing units under the City's Whole House Rehabilitation Program and provide down payment assistance to 40 households every year. The City also uses HOME funds to support construction of new affordable apartments, and rehabilitation of existing units to house those with low/moderate incomes. HOME also funds local non-profit Community Housing Development Organizations who build and rehabilitate affordable homes.

Support

1 Support for FAA Operations

The FAA's Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center (MMAC) is Will Rogers World Airport's largest tenant. MMAC provides vital services and support missions for the FAA and the U.S. Department of Transportation. MMAC provides a significant number of high-paying jobs and brings hundreds of visitors for training.

The nearly 6,000 employees of the MMAC oversee the safety of U.S. private, corporate and commercial aviation. MMAC provides essential training in electronics, air traffic control, inspection and management, accounting and finance for the Department of Transportation. It also provides logistics, research, technical training and support for the National Airspace System (NAS), and regulates and certifies safety-related positions and equipment. The numerous and varied NAS support functions, at the MMAC distinguish it as the largest single site of NAS equipment within the FAA, underscoring its critical role.

2 Support for Tinker Air Force Base

OKC has supported Tinker AFB since its inception in 1941, when the City provided 1,440 acres of land. OKC has a good working relationship with Tinker, and with over 27,000 employees, the base is regionally important.

The City partnered with the Air Force and Oklahoma County to purchase 158 acres of land on the southwest side of the base to house a depot maintenance facility for the Air Force's next-generation aerial refueling aircraft, the KC-46A Pegasus. Tinker leaders believe supporting this will create the bedrock for the base for the next 50 years.

The land was formerly owned by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Co., where it operated a rail yard that served the former General Motors manufacturing facility.

Acquisition of this property wouldn't have been possible without partnership between all levels of government.

Recently, Tinker has proposed to close Douglas Blvd. from SE 44th to SE 74th to expand the footprint of the base to allow for expanded mission capacity. To accommodate this closing, the City will need to relocate a 60" water transmission line and provide infrastructure for increased traffic that will be diverted to Post Road. This project will include multiple partners to fund and construct this expansion.

3 Support for Amtrak and Passenger Rail Service

Passenger rail service has been in place from OKC to Fort Worth via the Amtrak Heartland Flyer since 1999. It had previously been absent from Oklahoma for 20 years.

The Heartland Flyer is state-sponsored by Oklahoma and Texas. Recently, funding for the service has come under fire as the state has been facing difficult budget cycles. This important passenger rail link between OKC and the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex is the only passenger rail service in Oklahoma. It was a key component in the City's efforts to secure a federal transportation TIGER grant to support the renovation of the Santa Fe Depot multimodal transportation hub.

The Heartland Flyer serves Oklahoma City, Norman, Purcell and Pauls Valley, then Gainesville and Fort Worth in Texas. Growing ridership is now about 81,000 annual passengers. Proposals to expand service to Kansas and to Tulsa are part of the passenger rail conversation. There is funding specifically for Amtrak expansion included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the City has partnered with several communities in Oklahoma and Kansas to promote an extension of the Heartland Flyer.

Passenger and commuter rail service is also part of the Association of Central Oklahoma Government's (ACOG) regional long-range transportation plan. It's important to keep existing service and consider expansion.

4 Support for National Weather Service operations

National Weather Service operations in the metropolitan area are significant to Oklahoma and nationally. Because of the risks that go along with severe weather conditions, this is an important public safety function of government that must be taken seriously.

5 Support for long-term reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

Oklahoma City is one of about 22,493 communities in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and has done so since 1972. Nationally, there are around 5 million policyholders with more than \$1.3 trillion in coverage through the NFIP. The NFIP requires property owners to buy flood insurance if in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) designated high-risk for flooding (a 100-year floodplain, or area with an estimated 1% or greater risk of yearly flooding).

About 94 square miles of OKC (15% of the city) are designated as a floodplain or floodway. Ninety-six of those 112 square miles (86%) are designated SFHAs. From 1977 to early 2020, OKC properties have filed 562 NFIP claims which paid out \$12.6 million (no inflation adjustment), an average of \$22,514 per claim.

From September 2017 to March 2021, Congress passed 16 short-term extensions for the NFIP, some for as little as two weeks to avoid funding lapses. Lapses like the four from 2008 and 2012 prevent borrowers from getting flood insurance to close, renew, or increase loans secured by property within a floodplain. FEMA cites an estimate by the National Association of Realtors that a lapse might impact about 40,000 home sale closings per month. The current reauthorization is in effect until September 30, 2023. It makes sense to provide a long-term funding authorization for this important program.

Monitor

1 Ensure tax-free status of municipal bonds

As federal budget challenges continue, several concepts will either raise revenue or cut expenditures, like the elimination of local tax-exempt status for bonds.

OKC and its trusts use bonds to fund capital projects. If local bonds lose federal tax-exempt status, the cost to the City in lost opportunities to fund capital projects would be about \$9 million and about \$13 million for the state.

2 Monitor issues that affect water and wastewater

One of the primary functions of local government is to provide drinking water and wastewater services to residents. Currently, the Oklahoma City Water Utility provides drinking water for 1.4 million people in central Oklahoma. It's important to maintain the quality and quantity of drinking water for a significant percentage of Oklahomans.

3 Monitor enforcement and definitions of compliance with the Clean Air Act and EPA standards

The Clean Air Act reduced compliance standards for ground-level ozone from .075 parts per billion (ppb) to .070 ppb. The City, ACOG and state agencies monitor the metro's compliance, which has remained consistent, though the City partnered with ACOG, the OKC Chamber and other entities to fund a study to learn the economic impact of not complying.

The City's approach to promote clean air is multi-tier. In 2020, the City adopted adaptokc, which is Oklahoma City's first sustainability plan and an implementation element of the City's Comprehensive Plan (planokc).

In 2016, the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority adopted an initiative to have a 100% alternative fuel fleet by 2025, and this plan is underway. In September of 2022, EMBARK received a \$6.8 million federal grant to purchase additional CNG and electric buses and vans.

Over many years, the City has invested in public transportation, bicycle facilities and alternative fuel fleet vehicles. These investments will take time, but as the City's population continues to grow, compliance will not be possible without alternative transportation options. The City continues to monitor the issue and collaborate with ACOG and our regional partners to promote clean air activities.

OKC Wards With Congressional Districts



