



*association of central oklahoma governments*

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Executive Director  
John G. Johnson

July 21, 2015

Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager  
City of Norman  
PO Box 370  
Norman, OK 73070

OFFICE OF  
CITY MANAGER  
JUL 23 2015

Dear Mr. Lewis:

The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) is an association of city, town and county governments within Central Oklahoma. The ACOG area encompasses Oklahoma, Cleveland, Canadian and Logan counties. ACOG currently has 38 dues-paying member entities.

Formed under the Interlocal Cooperation Act, ACOG's mission is to build a stronger regional community by means of cooperation, leadership and planning. ACOG serves the greater Oklahoma City region as the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO), and works on mobility, public safety and livability programs for Central Oklahoma.

Through ACOG's leadership, area jurisdictions and diverse community interests collaborate to address the region's challenges and identify the opportunities for cooperative solutions. These efforts, in turn, enhance the effectiveness of local government. The City of Norman, a Charter member, has been an active participant in ACOG since its beginning in 1966.

### **A Forum for Addressing Regional Objectives and Diverse Community Issues**

ACOG provides an opportunity for city leaders to foster relationships with neighboring communities with the goal of finding common solutions for shared actions.

For example, in 1987, the city and the region needed to develop and implement a life-saving enhanced 9-1-1 emergency telephone system, which was unaffordable to most communities (on an individual basis). ACOG met with its member cities to develop a system of service that would be compatible with everyone's individual needs. The system was ultimately made affordable through state authorizing legislation and local elections. Again, in 2005, ACOG (9-1-1 ACOG) and the City of Norman led the efforts to establish enhanced wireless 9-1-1 service throughout Central Oklahoma.

Other examples of regional programs managed by ACOG that impact and benefit Norman include:

Air Quality Program – For almost two decades, ACOG has been the leader in preserving the air quality in Central Oklahoma. However, Central Oklahoma is faced with a new challenge as a result of the proposed revisions to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone. A new, more stringent, ozone standard will most likely result in our region's violation of the standard, requiring expanded and regulated efforts to get back into compliance. The implications of violating the ozone standard could have a negative impact on economic development in Norman and neighboring communities. For example, certain types of businesses would be unable to obtain the required air permits to expand or locate in Norman. In addition, all capacity enhancing projects using federal transportation funding would be postponed until the region could develop a plan to bring the region back into attainment. As of summer 2015, the Central Oklahoma region is still classified an attainment region yet an announcement on the new standard is expected in October 2015.

Legislative Issues - ACOG staff monitors legislation and rules that could impact local governments and communities and keeps its members up to date through correspondence and presentations at ACOG Board meetings.

Economic Development – ACOG worked with regional and city staff to become a designated Economic Development District (EDD). This designation will allow ACOG to work with the U.S. Economic Development Administration on infrastructure improvement projects that would aid in community and economic development. ACOG has completed a plan and a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

### **Long-Range Transportation Planning**

Transportation Planning – A significant benefit of participation in the regional transportation planning process is the ability of member entities to access federal transportation funds for pennies on the dollar. Norman has long served as the cornerstone for the required local participation in the regional transportation planning process. The City's active membership on committees, assistance with defining needs within the City and the region have helped support the federally certified Oklahoma City Area Regional Transportation Study (OCARTS) area planning process since its inception 46 years ago.

As a member of the MPO, Norman is eligible to receive funding through ACOG for a variety of roadway, traffic safety, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements using Surface Transportation Program Urbanized Area (STP-UZA) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds. The approximate STP-UZA funds that will be made available to the City for FFY 2015 are \$9.73 million, and the FFY 2016 funds are \$8.51 million.

Since 2009, ACOG has been leading and coordinating the Regional Transit Dialogue (RTD) and related regional transit planning efforts with entity partners, including Norman. Important milestones to date include the completion and adoption of the Central Oklahoma Intermodal Transportation Hub Study and the Central Oklahoma Commuter Corridors Study (CentralOK!go). Together these studies identified Santa Fe Depot in downtown Oklahoma City as Central Oklahoma's intermodal hub and three future rail transit alignments radiating from the hub to serve regional travel corridors and communities. In the coming fiscal year, ACOG will continue to coordinate with its local partners, including Norman, to create a Regional Transit Authority Task Force for the establishment of a Regional Transit Authority to govern, plan and implement the regional transit vision for Central Oklahoma.

ACOG continues to implement the region's long-range transportation plan, Encompass 2035, through biennial development of the Oklahoma City Area Regional Transportation Study (OCARTS) Transportation Improvement Program, and will lead efforts throughout the coming fiscal year to develop the next regional transportation plan, Encompass 2040. Completion of Encompass 2040 is anticipated in spring 2016.

### **Water Resources**

The Water Resources Division of ACOG helps our members maximize the use of ground and surface water resources. This includes planning, management, protection, and research of potable water supplies.

Groundwater - The Water Resources Division staff also maintains the largest technical database on the Garber- Wellington aquifer and other groundwater resources of the region. The state of Oklahoma has conducted a yield study on the aquifer, the eventual goal being a reassignment of water use permits from temporary status to a permanent use status reflecting the actual yield of the aquifer. ACOG staff is currently working with state, federal, and local communities to ensure a technically sound yield study and a fair and equitable distribution of water rights in Central Oklahoma. In addition, this regional study will be used by ACOG staff to design groundwater models of specific well fields in the aquifer for planning purposes.

Surface Water - As an EPA designated 208 Agency for surface water quality management, ACOG reviews, maintains, and implements necessary plans for discharge permits and TMDL studies. As part of this 208 strategy, ACOG staff organized a regional water quality study on the Canadian River. This study encompassed all the municipal dischargers along the river segment from Minco to Purcell, including Moore, Mustang, Norman and Oklahoma City. One of the goals of this study will be a fair and equitable waste load allocation between users of the water resource.

The Canadian River project is a regional ACOG effort that benefits the City of Norman not only in the short term effort of renewing their OPDES permit, but gives the city an informed understanding with regards

to securing an equitable share in the assimilative capacity of the watershed for future waste load allocations.

In 2006, the Oklahoma Water Resources Board reassessed the Beneficial Use Designation for the Canadian River between Minco and Purcell. The change upgraded the designation from Habitat Limited to Warm Water Fishery, based on the amount and diversity of the fish species found. The issues resulting from the change affected all the OPDES waste load allocation permits for dischargers in the watershed.

In November 2007, a regional group was formed with the intent to organize and execute a waste load allocation survey. A consultant was chosen (C.H. Guernsey). The first phase will collect preliminary data in the watershed which will help design the actual location and number of sampling stations for the waste load allocation survey.

The second phase of the project was the actual waste load allocation survey, which consisted of two rounds of sampling – one in July 2010 and one in August 2010. This sampling was to help calibrate the model which is used to calculate the wasteload allocations. A regional WASP model was developed to assess the assimilative load and develop the loads which would be reflected in the new permits. The final report was produced in October 2014. The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), who was an integral partner in the project, opened the project for public review and comment on the model in April 2015. The public review and comment period closed a month later with no comment, allowing ODEQ to formally submit the study to EPA Region VI for final signatures.

## **REAP**

ACOG continues to aid the smaller communities of Central Oklahoma through the State funded Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) program. Each year, the Oklahoma Legislature appropriates funds for the REAP to the 11 councils of government for communities with a population of less than 7,000 for projects such as road construction or repair, drainage projects, rural water quality improvements, solid waste disposal or treatment, sanitary sewer construction or improvements, rural fire protection and public safety services, projects designed to increase employment, provision of health care and emergency medical care, telecommunication facility construction or improvements, municipal energy distribution improvements and community facility rehab or construction.

Through a competitive grant process, ACOG distributes just over \$500,000 a year to successful applicants. For the past three REAP cycles (FY13, FY14 & FY15), over 20 different ACOG communities have received REAP funds totaling over \$1.6 million.

This past legislative session, despite an historic state budget shortfall, the REAP program escaped cuts for the first time in nearly a decade. ACOG led OARC in statewide advocacy efforts for REAP.



### Technical Assistance and Other Services

Technical Assistance (TA) – ACOG prides itself on being responsive to its member entities. Members are encouraged to contact staff whenever they have a need. According to our records, Norman has contacted ACOG for assistance on such things as:

- Alternative fuel fleet information and grant opportunities (Transportation staff)
- Stormwater Phase II Planning (IGS and Water Resources staff)
- Socioeconomic and data information (Transportation staff)
- Emergency management training information (9-1-1 staff)
- Transportation policy and funding information (Transportation staff)
- Air Quality information (Transportation staff)
- Wireless Phase 2 testing information (9-1-1 staff)
- Bike Month and Bike to Work Day information (Transportation staff)
- Groundwater information (Water resources staff)
- Federal and state legislative issues (IGS staff)
- Bicycle and Pedestrian safety (IGS and TPS staff)
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (IGS staff)

To summarize, the dues paid by the City of Norman and the member governments in Central Oklahoma supplements a dedicated and professional staff who:

- Provide a fair and impartial setting for regional decision making.
- Track and analyze issues that may affect our local governments.
- Provide guidance and assistance in problem solving.
- Provide quality services that are relevant, effective and efficient.

*Our programming and commitment to our members and the citizens of Central Oklahoma illustrates that ACOG operates as a sole source to the City of Norman for a variety of professional services.*

Norman is a vital player in the regional planning process. Regional cooperation doesn't just happen on its own. It stems from visionary communities like Norman who strive to see the full potential of the Central Oklahoma region. ACOG is committed to assisting its member communities as they strive for excellence and in providing a cooperative forum in which to achieve that goal.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please call me at 234-2264.

Sincerely,

John G. Johnson  
Executive Director

