

Modern transit and more may be coming to OKC

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MAPS 3 taxes must first be approved by the people



Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett and members of the Oklahoma City Council announced plans for a MAPS 3 proposal that is expected to be considered by the citizens of Oklahoma City on December 8. MAPS 3 is a diverse list of eight projects including a new rail based transit system.

It's being called modernization as Oklahoma City officials tout 'transit progress' while prepping citizens for another MAPS tax. Mayor Mick Cornett and members of the Oklahoma City Council have announced plans for a MAPS 3 proposal that is expected to be considered by the citizens of Oklahoma City on December 8.

At an event held at the Skirvin Hotel last week, Cornett spoke to guests saying, "The council and I announced the approval of the project today [Sept. 17th]. We are not just the city that is, but the city that will be."

The ordinance calling for the election will be introduced at the September 22nd City Council meeting and considered at the September 29th meeting.

"What I didn't want to do is shortchange this system so we can build the best street car system ever, [even] if we don't get funding from any other sources." This initiative is part of what some see

as a beginning of "the big picture" in connecting regional transit systems to Oklahoma City.

Also last week, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation held a presentation about preliminary plans for high-speed rail and some of the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Transportation officials, joined by community planning organizations and city officials presented details of improvements planned between Tulsa, Oklahoma City and the Texas state line.

The MAPS 3 initiative proposes a diverse list of eight projects: a new, approximately 70-acre central park linking the core of downtown with the Oklahoma River, a new rail-based streetcar system, plus potential funding for other rail transit initiatives, such as commuter lines and a transit hub, a new downtown convention center, sidewalks to be placed on major streets and near facilities used by the public throughout the City, 57 miles of new public bicycling and walking trails throughout the City, improvements to the Oklahoma River, including a public whitewater kayaking facility and upgrades intended to achieve the finest rowing racecourse in the world, state-of-the-art health and wellness aquatic centers throughout the City designed for senior citizens and improvements to the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds

MAPS 3 calls for a seven-year, nine-month one-cent sales tax that will maintain the Oklahoma City sales tax rate where it currently stands. If approved, the collection of the sales tax will commence on April 1, 2010, the day after the conclusion of the sports facilities sales tax collection that voters approved in March, 2008. The MAPS for Kids sales tax collection lasted seven years.

"We are creating a city where our kids want to live," adds Cornett. The estimated total cost of the initiative is \$777 million. That total cost includes \$17 million in contingency funds. Mayor Cornett is urging citizens to withhold judgment on the MAPS 3 proposal as he and the Council explain the eight projects in detail over the next two-and-a-half months.

Information on MAPS 3 is available at www.MAPS3.org, www.mtpokc.com and will continue to be added at www.okc.gov/maps3.



