

**League of Women Voters of Norman**  
**ACTION ALERT**

October 31, 2008

**OKC Union Station Rail Yard**

An issue that affects the future of passenger and freight service throughout Oklahoma

City governments in four communities in central Oklahoma have passed resolutions requesting the Governor of Oklahoma "to appoint a special commission to consider future rail transit options in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area; future uses of Union Station and its associated rail lines to enhance future rail transit for the state of Oklahoma; and alternate routes for the Interstate 40 Crosstown Expressway."

Earlier this week Oklahomans for New Transportation Alternatives Coalition ([OnTrac](http://www.ontracok.org)) held a press conference at the state capitol and clarified the issue for the press. Press coverage of that event has increased public awareness of the issues. Links to news coverage can be found at the OnTrac Web site <http://www.ontracok.org> .

It is important for citizens who believe that OKC Union Station Rail Yard is vital to the future of transportation in Oklahoma to impress upon the Governor **NOW** the importance of appointing a special commission as soon as possible to examine this issue.

Below you will find a list of talking points compiled by OnTrac that you may find useful in formulating your message. Write or call Governor Henry.

**Governor Brad Henry's Contact Information:**

**Web Site:** [www.governor.state.ok.us/contact](http://www.governor.state.ok.us/contact)

**Email:** [Via Web Form](#)

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**Mailing Address:** The Honorable Governor Brad Henry  
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., Room 212  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Also, please send a copy to your legislators and local newspaper.

## **Why Rail Transit?**

- Rail transit stimulates economic development. A study by the University of North Texas found that the DART metro system in Dallas had led to \$4.26 billion in economic development! Office properties near suburban DART Rail stations increased in value 53% more than comparable properties not served by rail.
- A transit hub would attract residential development to downtown & midtown. If residents can get around without a car, they can afford higher housing prices.
- It is important for those unable to drive: the elderly, people with disabilities, the poor.
- It reduces traffic and congestion even for those who continue to drive cars. Being stuck in traffic is one of the leading causes of stress; if you commute to work on a train you can read a book or get some work done!
- Cheaper than: Car payments/purchase, car insurance, tickets, DUI's, and gas. If footballs fans could take the train to Norman on gamedays, there would be fewer cars in town and no need to worry about parking or drunk drivers.
- Rail is more energy efficient than automobile travel, reducing our dependence on foreign oil.
- Compared to individual cars and trucks, mass transit produces much fewer emissions of ozone and greenhouse gases.
- The American Lung Association gave Oklahoma and Tulsa counties an F because of unacceptable levels of ozone, which is largely caused by car and truck emissions.
- Ozone contributes to asthma, emphysema, and other diseases, especially among youth and the elderly.

### **Why here?**

- Oklahoma City was ranked **last** out of the 50 largest metropolitan areas as best prepared to handle high gas prices  
([http://money.cnn.com/2008/06/12/news/economy/cities\\_oil/index.htm?cn n=yes](http://money.cnn.com/2008/06/12/news/economy/cities_oil/index.htm?cn n=yes)).
- Tulsa was ranked second to last.
- The largest problem identified was a **lack of public transit**.
- The era of cheap gas will soon be over. Major cities in surrounding states, including Dallas, Kansas City, Albuquerque, Houston, Denver, and Memphis, have prepared for this reality by investing in commuter rail and/or light rail. If we do not prepare for the future then people will move out of Oklahoma to areas with better infrastructure.

### **Why is Union Station important?**

- The rail yard has tracks going in six directions. It would provide access to all major towns and cities throughout the state. We need tracks for freight, passenger rail, and eventually light rail as well as ample space for bus routes up to Union Station.
- It could easily make valuable connections to the State Capitol, OU Health Sciences Center, Will Rogers Airport, Zoo, Omniplex, and Remington Park.
- Links to military bases -- Tinker Air Force Base, Altus Air Force Base, Ft. Sill. Mass transit links are needed to protect these facilities from the next round of base closings.
- The current plan for the Crosstown would leave only a single track!
- "Once lost, forever gone" - it would cost considerably more time and money to build a new station.
- It cannot be easily replaced by using Santa Fe Station. It does not have enough tracks or space to expand to the number required for a functioning transit hub. Also, the tracks are elevated, which does not allow easy connection to buses.

## **A Win-Win Solution**

- Not a choice between Crosstown or Union Station...Crosstown can be rebuilt or relocated without destroying the Union Station rail yard by building two overpasses and moving the highway 200 to 250 south into land already owned by ODOT.
- When asked about this alternative, ODOT Director Gary Ridley told the Senate Transportation Committee that they had not even studied it, but that "anything is feasible."
- It is not a choice between Union Station and MAPS/Core-to-Shore. A mass transit hub would greatly enhance both projects.

## **ALL OKLAHOMANS are affected**

- Union Station is a state asset - It was originally purchased by the state with the purpose of eventually being used for a transit hub and does not belong to just Oklahoma City.
- All surrounding cities and towns have **not** been notified of this potential loss or the full extent of the project. Many have made transit plans under the assumption that the lines would be in use, not realizing they were about to be destroyed.
- All surrounding cities and towns should have a voice and a say. Chickasha, El Reno, Norman, and Shawnee city councils have all passed resolutions in support of protecting the rail yard, and several other cities are considering it.
- ODOT officials should not be attempting to intimidate Oklahoma mayors and city council members who are trying to represent their constituents.