

OKC won't offer economic incentives to Buc-ee's

Steve Lackmeyer

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Documents submitted to the Oklahoma City Council show Buc-ee's, the Texas-based mega-chain travel stop company, is set to build a store at the northwest corner of Cimarron Road and Interstate 40. Photos taken in Oklahoma City on Sept. 25. NATHAN J. FISH/THE OKLAHOMAN

Oklahoma City will likely look at additional infrastructure near Cimarron Road and Interstate 40, but the city is not offering economic incentives to Buc-ee's as the chain prepares to open its first Oklahoma location at the rural junction.

City Manager Craig Freeman said the city council vote set for Tuesday is on whether to contribute \$10 million in federal funding toward rebuilding the I-40 and Cimarron Road junction. The funding was secured by Sen. Markwayne Mullin prior to his appointment as Secretary of Homeland Security.

"There will not be city incentives," Freeman said. "But there will be other infrastructure that will be tied into this, including sewer lines that will serve existing customers in that area. Buc-ee's will pay into their proportionate share for tying into that."

The Oklahoman on Friday, Sept. 25, first reported the deal, already signed by representatives of Texas-based Buc-ee's, includes an agreement by CSMS, the chain's land acquisition and development arm, to pay up to \$8 million for the project. The proposal calls for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to pay up to \$15 million.

The total estimated cost is \$25 million, while the remaining amount of up

to \$8 million is reserved for construction contingencies. Tentative plans include a wider bridge, access roads and Texas turn-around lanes.

TJ Dill, chief engineer at ODOT, said the project, based on its current timeline, would likely result in design completion and construction starting within the next two years. Dill said the funding split and cooperation are a model for the new standard being set by highway officials.

“You will not find us taking on a project like this without partnerships at this stage,” Dill said. “Without the city, without the developer’s interest, this would not be something in our immediate plans that we would be looking to do.”

Buc-ee’s is a Texas-based chain that offers road trippers gas, food, clothing and other merchandise.

The company is well known for its Beaver Nuggets, homemade brisket and iconic beaver mascot. It also claims to be the home of the “cleanest bathrooms in America.”

The popular convenience megastore chain is known to generate heavy traffic, especially upon new openings. The city of Goodyear, Arizona, reported 41,000 people visited a new store along Interstate 10 when it opened in late June.

Community Facebook posters in Goodyear, meanwhile, have reported waiting 20 minutes or longer to get into the store since its opening.

A map of the proposed Oklahoma City Buc-ee’s being shown to the city council, indicates it will be built on the northwest corner of I-40 and Cimarron Road. The Cimarron Road bridge over the highway is currently a two-lane crossing with an old-fashioned set of on- and off-ramps.

“It would definitely have some breakdowns for drivers if it came in with this in its current configuration,” Dill said. “We really appreciate the early engagement of the developer in something like this because it allows us to leverage resources and really plan for the transportation needs for the state of Oklahoma rather than just being reactive.”

Freeman said the infrastructure improvements for the area are not just for Buc-ee’s, but also for land acquired by the city to use for recruiting large new employers.

“This will also serve the employment land,” Freeman said. “We wouldn’t make this much improvement just for one project.”