

AN OMNIDOME IN OKLAHOMA'S FUTURE?

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The score, Rep. Jack Bonny, D-Burns Flat said, is Texas 7, Oklahoma 0. Bonny was speaking at the first meeting of House Interim Study 96-15, Thursday. He was referring to the fact that Texas has seven IMAX theaters, Oklahoma has none, a situation Omnplex hopes to remedy.

The meeting was held at the Omnplex, Oklahoma's premier science museum. Omnplex trustees and representatives of the interim study are working together to figure out a

way to help Omnplex fund a \$7.3 million IMAX theater for Oklahoma. "Omnplex wants to ask Oklahoma to invest in a world class educational facility of benefit to its citizens," Chairman of the Board of Trustees Jerry Austin said.

Listing some of the reasons why Omnplex is the obvious site for the state-of-the-art theater, Austin said:

- Omnplex is among the largest and best attended museums in the U.S., Austin said. It ranks in the top three percent of more than 8,500 museums.

- Among science museums, average attendance is 95,000 per year, according to the American Association of Museums (AAM). Omnplex averages 350,000 visitors a year.

- *Parents Magazine* recently recognized Omnplex as one of the nation's best museums for children.

- Omnplex is one of 743 fully accredited by the above-mentioned AAM. Only nine Oklahoma museums are so accredited.

Another measure of respect, Austin said, is Omnplex' charge to develop educational programs for NASA.

Now, Austin said, the museum is planning the largest project in their 40-year history, the OmniDome. It will be the first in Oklahoma

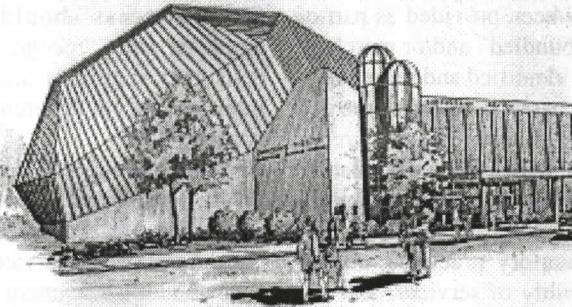
and one of only 80 in the U.S. Surrounding states have 15 IMAX theaters. Omnplex has already raised more than \$3.2 million of the money needed, and plans on a total of \$5 million in private donations. "We've never asked for state help before," Austin said, "but we'll not be able to fully fund the project through private donations."

Trustees of the museum are hoping for a loan of about \$2 million from the state, to be repaid — they hope — from sales taxes collected at Omnplex, in the amount of \$200,000 annually.

State statute 68 OS

1991, Section 1356, allows for tax exemptions for colleges and universities. Omnplex trustees hope to add "accredited museums" to the exempted facilities. The statute reads, in part: "The amount of proceeds received from the sales of admission tickets . . . for the repayment of money borrowed . . . for the purpose of construction or enlarging any facility . . . not limited to athletic fields, athletic stadiums, field houses, amphitheaters and theaters. To be eligible for this sales tax exemption, the amount separately stated shall be a surcharge imposed, collected and used for the sole purpose of servicing . . . the debt incurred by the college or university to effect the capital improvements herein before described."

Rep. Ray Vaughn, R-Edmond, agreed a bill would be drafted to change the statute if the committee feels it would be advantageous.



TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION HITS THE ROAD

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Members of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission will hit the road in October and November to conduct nine transportation summits designed to discuss Oklahoma's current and forecasted transportation demand.

"These meetings will initiate useful dialogue between transportation commissioners and their communities," said commission chairman Herschal Crow. "Certainly, the information compiled from the summits will act as a catalyst to aid the commission and department in gauging the transportation needs of each area."

The summits are scheduled on Mondays and Tuesdays, beginning Oct. 21 and 22. Each commissioner will attend his multi-county area summit and the entire commission will attend the statewide summit set for Okla. City.

Department of Transportation officials will present a 45-minute overview of Oklahoma's current funding versus projected needs at each summit, followed by a 45-minute feedback or public comment session. Citizens will be encouraged to present specific transportation goals for their area either in person or in writing.

The dates and locations of the meetings include:

- Oct. 21, Lawton, 5 to 6:30 p.m.;
- Oct. 22, Altus, 2 to 3:30 p.m.;
- Oct. 28, Durant, 5:30 to 7 p.m.;
- Oct. 29, Ada, 1 to 2:30 p.m.;
- Nov. 4, Oklahoma City (statewide summit) 3 to 4:30 p.m.;
- Nov. 18, Enid, 5 to 6:30 p.m.;
- Nov. 19, Woodward, 10 to 11:30 a.m.;
- Nov. 25, Muskogee, 2 to 3:30 p.m.; and
- Nov. 26, Tulsa, time to be announced.

APPOINTMENTS TO STATE BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

From the Governor's Office

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Governor Frank Keating Thursday announced several appointments to state boards and commissions.

The Governor named John Brock of Tulsa to the Oklahoma Capital Investment Board to serve a term ending Dec. 31, 1998. He succeeds David Johnson who resigned. Senate confirmation is required.

Virgil Jurgensmeyer of Miami, Don Ramsey of Jones, Dean Smith of Hydro and Michael Wright of Minco were named to the Industry Advisory Board. Jurgensmeyer will serve a term ending July 1, 1997. Ramsey and Smith will serve terms ending July 1, 1998. Wright will serve a term ending July 1, 1999. This is a new position created by SB 1030.

Steve Kelley and Joe McGraw of Tulsa, Bob Rollins, Willis Wheat and Nancy Leonard of Oklahoma City were named to the Oklahoma Capitol Complex Centennial Commission to serve terms expiring at the pleasure of the Governor. This is a new position created by SB 823.

★★ Important Date ★★

General Election
Tuesday, November 5