

City receives \$1.1 million in stimulus funding

By James Mayse

Messenger-Inquirer

March 11, 2009

The city of Owensboro will purchase three lower-emissions buses and make other improvements to the transit system with \$1.098 million in federal stimulus funds.

Mayor Ron Payne announced Tuesday the city received the money from a pool of \$5 million set aside for transit projects in Kentucky cities with populations between 50,000 and 200,000. Owensboro competed with six other cities, including Bowling Green, Ashland and Elizabethtown, for a share of the funds.

"When these dollars are combined with what we already know that we're going to receive, are stimulus money totals almost \$37 million," Payne said, at an afternoon press conference at City Hall.



Last week, it was announced that the community would receive \$35.65 million in stimulus dollars to use toward the U.S. 60 bypass extension project. Owensboro has also received \$144,000 in extra Community Development Block Grant funding from stimulus dollars.

"Our staff, working with (other) officials in this community, are doing everything we can to see Owensboro-Daviess County receives as much stimulus money as we can achieve," Payne said.

The buses are low-sulfur, low-emissions diesel buses that cost \$330,000 each. The new buses will replace several old buses that are at the end of their life span.

"The big trend today is hybrid buses. We chose not to go that route because there is a \$200,000 difference" between a hybrid and a diesel bus, said Louis Lindsay, the city's transit manager.

When applying for transit funds, "we asked for projects we needed, as opposed to projects we just wanted," Lindsay said.

The new buses will also lower maintenance costs because they will have standardized parts and will be required to meet updated vehicle emissions standards.

"The (buses) we have coming will be the 2010 buses ... which have more stringent emissions (standards) than previous buses," Lindsay said.

When asked when the city would have the money on hand to purchase the buses, Lindsay said, "The money is not the problem at all." But the buses will not arrive in the city for some time.

"The typical delivery time (on the buses) is 12 months," Lindsay said.

The city will also use \$75,000 in stimulus funds to build six bus shelters, and will spend \$33,000 to replace the hydraulic bus lift at the transit garage. The stimulus dollars will cover 100 percent of the costs.

Payne said he hopes Tuesday's event is only "the first such press conference" to announce the city has received stimulus money.

"This is only the beginning," Payne said.