

Mayor: Mobility, job growth key issues for Fort Worth

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Mayor Mike Moncrief outlined his priorities for moving Fort Worth through the recession and past city budget cuts at his Feb. 25 State of the City address.

Moncrief listed his priorities as job growth, mobility, creating better neighborhoods and growing Fort Worth's tourism industry while stabilizing the city's budget.

"As we consider the state of our city, Fort Worth's future is extremely bright," he said. "But to reach that shining point, to emerge from this dark tunnel with a robust post-recession economy, we must maintain our current course and commit ourselves to what I call an 'Agenda of Opportunity.'"

In order to bring more jobs to Fort Worth, Moncrief said the city has to focus on economic development opportunities and creating an environment business owners want to relocate to and where entrepreneurs want to open businesses.

Moncrief later said mobility issues and traffic congestion are the top issues posing the greatest threat to Fort Worth's ability to compete with other cities for business. He added that to meet growth expectations during the next two decades, North Texas needs to invest \$130 billion in regional transportation system improvements.

"That number should be no surprise to anyone who frequents our congested highways," he said. "I've sat in that traffic more than I'd like to admit. I know how frustrating it is. Some days you can change a tire without losing your place" in traffic.

He added that transit projects such as the North Tarrant Express, Southwest Parkway and commuter rail plans are key to overhauling transportation and mobility in the region.

Also, Moncrief said he plans to appoint an 11-member task force to find solutions to Fort Worth's infrastructure issues, and said he will charge the task force with presenting recommendations to the city council within 90 days of its first meeting.

“This will allow any proposals to be thoughtfully considered during the next budget cycle,” he said, adding that further transportation delays “are as dangerous as licking a steak knife.”

Another priority Moncrief outlined was creating better neighborhoods, which he said began with safety. He cited a 7 percent decrease in violent crime in 2009, and successes from the Citizens on Patrol program, success of the Directions Home plan to end homelessness, and the voter-renewed Fort Worth Crime Control and Prevention District.

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