



[Comments](#) 1 | [Recommend](#) 0

Dallas City council moves convention center hotel plan forward

12:00 AM CST on Thursday, December 11, 2008

By RUDOLPH BUSH / The Dallas Morning News
rbush@dallasnews.com

During its last and possibly busiest meeting of 2008, the Dallas City Council pushed forward Wednesday a plan to build a city-owned hotel next to the downtown convention center.

The council authorized City Manager Mary Suhm and her staff to finalize details of a development agreement with Matthews Southwest, the Dallas firm chosen to design and build the hotel at Market and Lamar streets.

Under the proposed agreement, the city's cost for constructing the hotel will be capped at \$356 million.

A majority of the council has determined that the hotel is critical to the viability of the convention center, a view that received a boost Wednesday from Phillip Jones, president of the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Addressing the council, Mr. Jones said that bookings at the center are up 20 percent to 25 percent over last year on word of progress on the hotel.

Two council members, Vonciel Jones Hill and Angela Hunt, voted against the authorization because of concerns that the cost of covering debt to build it could fall back on taxpayers if the hotel is not as profitable as city officials predict.

Trinity proposal

The council also approved spending an additional \$4.5 million for work associated with the proposed Trinity toll road.

The city has pledged \$84 million to the toll road, which will be constructed and operated by the North Texas Tollway Authority.

Including the \$4.5 million approved Wednesday, the city has paid \$14.5 million for toll road design and engineering work.

Council member Dave Neumann urged the council to pressure its partners to complete their work by a May 1 deadline. That date is critical because it marks the anticipated start of an environmental impact study by the U.S. Corps of Engineers that will ultimately determine whether the toll road can be built.

NTTA contractors have warned the council that it will be challenging to meet that deadline.