

# ALABAMA PRISON TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE

## Information Paper



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# ALABAMA PRISON TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE

## Introduction

In his State of the State Address on February 2, 2016, Governor Robert Bentley announced a new and bold initiative that will historically transform the state's prison system and prepare it for success into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## Prison Transformation Initiative Overview

The Governor's Prison Transformation Initiative will consolidate 14 high and medium custody level prisons into four large scale, state-of-the-art regional correctional facilities. Three men's facilities will have 4,000 bed capacity and one women's facility with 1,200 bed capacity.

## Purpose for the Prison Transformation Initiative

The Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) operates 28 correctional facilities in 17 counties throughout Alabama. These facilities have an architectural design capacity to house 13,318 inmates. The ADOC currently houses over 24,000 inmates, resulting in an occupancy rate over 180%.

The average age of these facilities is approaching 40 years old with approximately \$90 million in deferred maintenance outstanding. The Department of Corrections is authorized to have 5,832 employees but is currently staffed with 3,818, resulting in an overall staffing level of 65%.

Forty-year-old correctional facilities require labor intensive security management operations to properly oversee offenders. In order to ensure a safe, secure and humane environment moving forward, the most cost effective long term approach is to replace existing facilities with large state-of-the-art, operationally efficient regional prisons.

## **Details of the Prison Transformation Initiative**

The Prison Transformation Initiative will allow the department to close 14 existing major prisons, consolidating the operations into four new facilities.

A viable prison build program in Alabama would require three new regional prisons with a capacity to house 4,000 male offenders each and one new female prison with a capacity to house 1,200 offenders, resulting in a net design capacity increase of approximately 3,000 beds.

Increased design capacity coupled with recent prison reform legislation designed to decrease the prison population would reduce prison occupancy rates to 125% in the next five years.

New operationally efficient prisons operate at security staffing ratios close to 15:1, allowing the Department to use current employees to fully staff new facilities providing effective and safe population management and freeing resources to invest in rehabilitation and reentry services.

In addition to security staffing efficiencies, large scale regional facilities allow for support and medical staff consolidation as well as the potential for on-site medical care facilities designed to reduce both security and transportation costs.

## **Investing in Rehabilitation and Reentry**

Redesigning the entire system allows ADOC to balance resources toward offender rehabilitation and reentry programs that have taken a back seat to the security issues facing the department.

State-of-the-Art facilities allow for the delivery of a host of evidenced-based rehabilitation and reentry programs providing substance abuse treatment and counseling, education, vocational training, and prison industry and work release opportunities that prepare offenders to transition successfully back into the community upon release. These programs and services effectively delivered have proven to reduce recidivism.

## **Impact on ADOC Workforce**

ADOC proposes siting the facilities in the northern, central, and southern regions of the State in proximity to current prison locations to reduce the impact to the department's existing workforce. All current ADOC employees will have the opportunity to continue their employment with the department.

## **Phased Timeline Beginning February 2016**

There are three phases to the Alabama Prison Transformation Initiative timeline:

1. Pursue State Legislation to authorize the bond and to allow the Department of Corrections to build the three male correctional facilities under one contract.
2. Request for Proposals
3. Contract, Design and Build

## **Funding the Plan**

This proposal requires borrowing approximately \$800 million through a bond issue. The debt would be serviced through a combination of reduced annual personnel cost, operational savings achieved through consolidation of facilities, supply, logistics, and transportation costs, and reduced medical and mental health costs. The construction period is estimated to be approximately 36 months.

## Questions and Answers

### **Q. What is the Alabama Prison Transformation Initiative?**

A. The initiative will consolidate 14 of 16 maximum and medium custody level prisons into four large scale, state-of-the-art regional correctional facilities. Three men's facilities will have 4,000 bed capacity and one women's facility with 1,200 bed capacity. Two of the 16 facilities will remain open.

Increased design capacity coupled with recent prison reform legislation designed to decrease the prison population would reduce prison occupancy rates to 125% over the next five years.

State-of-the-Art facilities allow for the delivery of a host of evidenced-based rehabilitation and reentry programs providing substance abuse treatment and counseling, education, vocational training, and prison industry and work release opportunities that prepare offenders to transition successfully back into the community upon release. These programs and services effectively delivered have proven to reduce recidivism.

### **Q. Where will ADOC build the new facilities?**

A. ADOC proposes to build four new correctional facilities in the northern, central, and southern regions of the state. ADOC has not selected the facility sites at this time.

### **Q. What correctional facilities will close and consolidate?**

A. 14 of 16 maximum and medium correctional facilities will consolidate into three, 4,000 bed male correctional facilities, and one 1,200 bed female correctional facility. 13 male facilities that will close have not been identified. The Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka is the only facility in the initiative that has been slated to close at this time. Two male correctional facilities will remain open. The plan also includes renovation and consolidation of lower security level facilities.

**Q. Will current ADOC employees lose his or her job because of the initiative?**

A. No. Every current employee will have the opportunity to continue their employment with the Department of Corrections. The department is proposing to site the four facilities in proximity to current facilities to reduce the impact on the department's existing workforce.

**Q. As prisons close, will employees be displaced?**

A. Closing 14 prisons around the State will potentially displace some employees; however, new regional prisons will be sited in locations to accommodate the current staff to the maximum extent practical. Many of the department's employees already deal with significant commutes to current facilities.

**Q. What is the plan for the facilities that will close?**

A. The final disposition of each of the closed facilities will be evaluated and determined through the prison transformation initiative planning process.

**Q. When will the Prison Transformation Initiative begin?**

A. First, the department will pursue legislation during the 2016 State Legislative Session that will allow the department to design and construct the three male facilities under one contract. Second, ADOC will announce the Request for Proposals following the approval of the legislation. Third, once selected, the contractor will begin construction. The department has not selected the sites for the new facilities.

**Q. What specific legislation is required for this project?**

A. Legislation is needed to authorize the State to issue bonds; and to allow the men's facilities project design and build phases to be solicited under one contract.

**Q. How much and for how long will the bonds be issued for?**

A. The project requires an \$800 million bond issue for a period of 25 to 30 years.

**Q. How much is the annual debt service on these bonds?**

A. Projected debt service is approximately \$50 million per year.

**Q. How will the debt service be paid?**

A. Operational savings within the Department of Corrections achieved by consolidation and facility design efficiencies will be used to pay the debt service.

**Q. How much additional funding will the Department of Corrections need from the State General Fund to make the debt service payments?**

A. No additional funding requests from the General Fund are planned for this project. Estimated departmental savings in personnel, leased beds, and delivery of inmate healthcare will be sufficient to make the debt service payments.

**Q. How does this fix the prison system?**

A. First, most of the State's prison infrastructure has outlived its useful life. Significant long-term capital investment is required to modernize the system yet investment in the current infrastructure would achieve minimal results. Second, the plan addresses the overcrowding and understaffing problems simultaneously through increased capacity and efficient design. This plan reduces the overcrowding in state prisons to 125% in the next 5 years. Third, the plan increases the State's capacity to offer evidenced-based rehabilitation and reentry services designed to prepare eligible inmates to return to society and reduce recidivism.