



<http://www.latimes.com/sports/la-sp-nfl26may26,1,7874517.story?coll=la-home-sports>

NFL Provides L.A. a Stadium Timeline

League executives say they intend to settle on a site within a year in hopes of having a team in place by the 2008 season.

By Sam Farmer
Times Staff Writer

May 26, 2004

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The NFL has added an element to the Los Angeles stadium derby: a finish line.

League executives said Tuesday they intended to settle on an L.A. stadium site within a year in hopes of having a team ready to play in the nation's second-largest market by the 2008 season.

"We feel that everyone has been working at this — Carson, the Rose Bowl and the Coliseum," Commissioner Paul Tagliabue said after the first day of NFL meetings at the Ritz-Carlton hotel on Amelia Island. "At some point, decisions need to be made. Everyone's had a real good period of analysis, and now we have to start making some decisions."

But that one-year time frame doesn't work for developer Steve Hopkins, whose real estate group is in escrow on the 157-acre Carson site. The way Hopkins sees it, that toxic landfill will be well on its way to becoming a shopping mall by then.

"We're not going to be left at the altar," said Hopkins, reached in Las Vegas at the International Conference on Shopping Centers. "With that kind of time frame, it makes our decision really easy."

He added: "Judging by what you heard today — that they'd make a decision in a year and have a team there by 2008 — I'd say you have a better chance of being struck by lightning than seeing a stadium in Carson."

Neil Glat, an NFL senior vice president in charge of assessing the competing sites, said he was confident the timeline would work for all three stadium concepts. He downplayed the notion that this could knock Carson out of the hunt.

"Our process is looking toward next spring," Glat said. "Is it a concern? Yeah, if you're telling me that at some point they're going to want to go with retail and then develop it in the next two months, then I think that's something they want to talk to us about."

Glat made a presentation to NFL owners on Tuesday, focusing not so much on the financing of a potential NFL stadium, but on the advantages and shortcomings of the three sites. He said the league was not interested in simply choosing the project that can be completed most quickly or most easily.

"The ownership has shown the willingness to go through the process and make sure we have the right decision, rather than one that's a few months earlier," he said.

Within the last year, the Coliseum has gone from afterthought to front-runner in the process. It's the only contender with a completed environmental-impact report, and — unlike the Rose Bowl — its redrawn plans have the blessing of historic preservationists. This month, the league took the unusual step of issuing the Coliseum a "term sheet," the NFL's version of what a venue deal might resemble. The Coliseum Commission, which has not released details of that document, plans to respond to it by mid-June.

"The negotiation, the give and take of the term sheet, is going to take some time," Coliseum General Manager Pat Lynch said. "But the items have been identified for us to deal with. It makes it easier to negotiate once we have a decent starting point — and now we have one."

Glat said Coliseum officials have told the league they could have their stadium ready for a team by the 2007 season. But he added it probably would take about 2 1/2 years for a stadium to be completed on any of the three sites and would cost between \$400 million and \$500 million.

The Rose Bowl group has yet to devise a design plan that pleases the NFL and historic preservationists. That has set back the yearlong EIR process, which cannot begin until the design is completed. Glat said the league was unhappy with some of the elements of the Rose Bowl proposal, such as the underground structures, sight lines and the accessibility of concession stands and bathrooms.

Rose Bowl point man John Moag said the design issues are real but can be resolved in "much less than a year."

"Not only are we a viable option," Moag said, "I absolutely believe that we are the most-quality option out there. It's on the back of Pasadena to decide whether they want to invite the NFL to Pasadena, rather than vice versa."

Tagliabue has not ruled out the possibility that the league will award an expansion franchise to L.A., even though that would leave the NFL with an imbalanced total of 33 teams. There are a handful of franchises who could get out of their leases in time to relocate to L.A. in time for the 2008 season, or even earlier.

The Indianapolis Colts are one of those teams, and owner Jim Irsay said Tuesday he questioned whether even a new stadium in Indianapolis could solve his team's annual revenue shortfall.

"Since we have been there, we have seen the corporate world going backwards, losing some key corporations," Irsay said. "As we're looking at the studies, it's really questionable if a new stadium can solve the dilemma, because you already have as good a team as you're ever going to have in terms of superstars and winning. And at the same time it doesn't seem like there's much ability to gain a lot more."

"From my standpoint, it's more, how much can you keep putting your own money into your franchise with no hope of seeing things change?"

Irsay, a member at Riviera Country Club who has close ties to the music industry and spends a lot of time in L.A., said he was focused on striking a favorable long-term deal in Indianapolis.

Asked whether he has weighed the options of relocating — as his father did when he moved the Colts

from Baltimore — he said: "I don't operate that way. You don't negotiate with two people at once."

If you want other stories on this topic, search the Archives at latimes.com/archives.

TMSReprints

[Article licensing and reprint options](#)

Copyright 2004 Los Angeles Times