

Will IndyCar carry a new tune in Nashville for 2019?

Robin Miller

Indy cars going back to Nashville in 2019? It's a possibility but it won't be at the same place the series ran for eight years.

After months of speculation, an idea was officially pitched to the Metro Sports Authority on Thursday to have a five-day event highlighted by a race around Nissan Stadium — home of the NFL's Tennessee Titans.

"Today, the Sports Authority authorized the organizing group behind the Grand Prix of Nashville to move forward with studying the feasibility of bringing this event to our city," Mayor Megan Barry said in a statement. "This could be an exciting opportunity so long as it can be done in a way that fits the community and minimizes any negative impact on residents, workers, and visitors in the area."

And the proposed Grand Prix of Nashville would either be an IndyCar or IMSA race, according to co-promoters Joe Mattioli and Matt Crews.

"We are keeping our options open and having ongoing discussions," said Mattioli, the former president of Pocono Raceway, told The Tennessean. "Both sanctioning bodies have strong interest about being in Nashville, but we're being very diligent about making that decision."

"Both have indicated their excitement about the market. Really, I think it's a toss-up right now."

WKuhndSC 4492Nashville SuperSpeedway, a 1.3-mile oval 30 miles southeast of downtown, hosted



2003 Nashville IndyCar winner Gil de Ferran's unique trophy. Image by F. Peirce Williams/LAT.

IndyCar from 2001-'08 and drew decent crowds but never had very good racing on the concrete surface.

Tony Cotman, who works for IndyCar as track consultant and has laid out several circuits during the past few years, originally was instructed to design a track in downtown Nashville before it was decided to go around the stadium.

IndyCar has run races in the past around football stadiums at The Meadowlands in New Jersey and Reliant Stadium in Houston and the Nashville circuit would be 1.7 miles long.

The group, known as GPNTN LLC, hopes for a five-day show beginning on a Wednesday and leading up to Sunday's race that would include a downtown street festival, riverfront concert, a celebrity race, a drone race, autograph sessions with drivers, a gala for charities, and other festivities.

"Our goal at the Grand Prix of Nashville is to build on past successes like this past weekend," said Crews, executive vice president of the Grand Prix of Nashville and former CEO of Baker/Curb Racing, pointing to the massive crowd that descended downtown for the NHL's Stanley Cup Final and CMA Music Festival. "Nashville throws a great party, like this recently Stanley Cup has shown us, and like the NHL All-Star Game last year."

The next step is for GPNTN LLC to raise \$2.5 million in initial private funding with no financial obligations from the city. Nashville is also the headquarters of Bridgestone/Firestone, the tire manufacturer for IndyCar.

IndyCar's last new venue, at Baltimore from 2011-'13, was well attended but lost millions of dollars and the proposed 2016 street race in Boston disintegrated in financial and political strife before being shelved five months before it was to be held.