



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman,
OK 73069

Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

The Community Planning & Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room in the Municipal Building, on Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 4:00 PM, and notice of the agenda of the meeting was posted at the Norman Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and on the City website at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Mayor Stephen Holman at 4:00 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Stephen Holman, Chairman
Councilmember Ward 2 Matthew Peacock
Councilmember Ward 3 Robert Bruce
Councilmember Ward 5 Brandon Nofire
Councilmember Ward 7 Kimberly Blodgett

OTHERS PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 1 David Gandesbery
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon
Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager
Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney IV
Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney II
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager
Mr. Scott Sturtz, Director of Public Works
Mr. Chris Mattingly, Director of Utilities
Mr. Mike Anderson, Safety Manager
Mr. Larry Wyatt, EMBARK Operations Specialist
Mr. Kharlie Barnaby, EMBARK Assistant Director of Operations
Ms. Katherine Griffith, Admin Tech III, City Clerk

AGENDA ITEMS

1. PRESENTATION OF THE JANUARY PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, presented the January Public Transit Report and provided an update on current transit operations.

Mr. Johnson reported that three large buses are currently on order. The bus that was totaled in a recent accident has not yet been reordered due to unresolved liability issues, and staff anticipate addressing the replacement in the upcoming fiscal year.

Staff also advised the committee of potential cost increases related to tariffs affecting vehicle parts and goods. The bus manufacturer, Gillig, received an amendment through the State of Washington contract allowing the possibility of passing along tariff-related cost increases. Although the buses are assembled in the United States, certain components may be subject to tariffs. Staff will continue to monitor the situation and report any potential budget impacts.

Mr. Johnson reviewed January 2026 ridership data for EMBARK Norman. Total ridership was just under 35,000 rides compared to approximately 40,000 rides in January 2025. Staff noted the decrease may be attributed to one fewer weekday of service and four weather-related service impact days in January 2026 compared to one in January 2025.

Despite the overall decrease, several areas experienced increases. PLUS ridership increased by approximately 1,000 riders, use of bicycles and mobility devices increased from 608 to 926, airport route ridership increased approximately 21 percent, and Saturday fixed-route service increased 29.7 percent, with the Westheimer route experiencing a 92 percent increase.

Mr. Johnson also reported that Norman On-Demand service recorded 1,813 riders in January 2026 compared to 3,272 riders in January 2025. Staff indicated the decline may be partially related to the rate increase implemented in September 2025. The service operator, VIA, has adjusted service hours in response to demand to help control costs, which may result in fiscal year savings while maintaining the ability to increase service capacity if ridership rebounds.

2. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE FYE 2027 TRANSIT BUDGET.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, presented an overview of the City's transit program and discussed preliminary considerations for the Fiscal Year Ending 2027 transit budget.

Mr. Johnson briefly reviewed the transition of transit operations from the University of Oklahoma to the City in July 2019 and the subsequent voter approval of the dedicated Public Transit Sales Tax in November 2019. He also highlighted major milestones since the transition, including adoption of the Go Norman Transit Plan, construction of the Transit/Public Safety Maintenance Facility, and opening of the Norman Transit Center.

Item 2, continued

Staff outlined guiding principles used in developing the transit budget, including maintaining self-sustaining operations when possible, expanding service incrementally as funding allows, and pursuing grant funding for capital needs.

Projected FY27 transit revenues are estimated at approximately \$6.9 million with major sources including Federal Transit Administration funding, the dedicated transit sales tax, Oklahoma Department of Transportation funding, Norman Regional contributions, and advertising revenue. The EMBARK operations contract is projected to cost approximately \$4.9 million. Based on current projections, staff indicated a potential surplus of approximately \$589,000 but cautioned that using the full amount would eliminate the fund balance in Fund 27. Staff emphasized the importance of maintaining reserves to address unexpected expenses and avoid reliance on the General Fund.

Staff then reviewed several potential expenditures not currently included in the FY27 budget, including continuation of the Norman On-Demand micro transit service, a proposed frequency increase for Route 110, potential financial assistance to maintain the Norman–Oklahoma City Route 24 service, and expanded security coverage at the Norman Transit Center.

Councilmembers discussed the costs and benefits of continuing the Norman On-Demand micro transit service, noting both its relatively high cost per ride and its role in providing late-night, Sunday, and ADA-accessible transportation options. Council also discussed possible adjustments to service hours or coverage areas to reduce costs.

Councilmembers expressed general support for expanding security coverage at the Norman Transit Center and discussed the possibility of assisting with funding for Route 24 to maintain the Norman–Oklahoma City connection while longer-term regional transit solutions are explored. Several Councilmembers suggested delaying the proposed Route 110 frequency increase due to current budget constraints.

Staff also provided updates regarding the City’s application for the EMBARK Well grant program through the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust, which would provide funding for a pilot transportation program serving older adults if awarded.

Based on discussion, Council expressed preliminary interest in continuing the micro transit program at a reduced service level, expanding transit center security coverage, exploring short-term support for Route 24, delaying the Route 110 frequency increase, and maintaining a portion of the fund balance in Fund 27. Staff will continue refining budget scenarios and return with additional information as the FY27 budget process progresses.

Transit budget discussions will continue during upcoming meetings prior to final budget adoption.

3. DISCUSSION REGARDING DOWNTOWN PARKING.

Staff presented background information regarding downtown parking operations and recent questions from business owners and Cleveland County officials related to timed and paid parking in the downtown area. Staff noted that parking and transit operations are coordinated through Public Works and include paid parking management, timed parking coordination with the Police Department, traffic control, permit administration, and Municipal Court processing of parking violations.

Staff reviewed recent updates to the Parking Management Plan adopted by Council on December 9, 2025, which consolidated the Downtown and Campus Corner parking plans and updated operational policies, payment options, and parking rates. Updated rates include an increase in the Grey Street Lot and courthouse-area on-street parking from \$0.25 per hour to \$0.50 per hour and an increase in the Grey Street annual permit from \$450 to \$600. Staff also presented an overview map showing the various downtown parking designations, including no-limit parking, short-term loading zones, timed parking areas, and paid parking locations.

Council discussed inconsistencies in downtown parking time limits and expressed interest in simplifying parking regulations. Several Councilmembers suggested establishing more uniform parking durations in key downtown corridors to improve clarity for visitors and support downtown businesses. Council generally supported maintaining short-term loading zones while considering a consistent two-hour time limit for most downtown parking areas.

Cleveland County Commissioner Jacob McHughes addressed Council regarding parking access near the Cleveland County Courthouse. Commissioner McHughes noted that the County is pursuing construction of a parking structure near the courthouse and requested consideration of timed parking rather than paid parking for courthouse visitors to improve public access. Council discussed the request and acknowledged the challenges associated with courthouse parking demand.

Council also discussed broader downtown parking considerations, including future structured parking opportunities, shared-use parking arrangements, and potential funding mechanisms for long-term parking infrastructure. Staff noted that parking enforcement is primarily intended to encourage turnover and compliance rather than generate revenue.

Following discussion, Council reached consensus to convert current one-hour downtown parking areas to two-hour parking and to evaluate converting courthouse-area paid parking spaces to two-hour timed parking. Specialized areas such as loading zones and certain no-time-limit parking areas will remain unchanged. Staff indicated that required signage changes would be manageable and can be adjusted if necessary.

Council noted that additional discussion regarding courthouse-area parking and long-term downtown parking strategies may occur in future meetings.

4. PROJECT UPDATES AND DISCUSSION OF THE ACCESS OKLAHOMA - EAST/WEST CORRIDOR.

Staff provided an update on the Access Oklahoma east/west corridor project led by the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority.

Staff reported that the contract for the Canadian River bridge has been awarded, with contractor mobilization expected in early March and construction activity to begin shortly. Staff also discussed coordination related to Phase Two improvements at 36th Avenue NW. Under a proposed agreement, the Turnpike Authority would construct the improvements while the City contributes approximately \$2.2 million, including in-kind services, resulting in an estimated City savings of \$3.5 to \$4 million. The agreement is anticipated to come before Council on March 10.

Staff reviewed the tentative construction schedule for upcoming segments of the east/west corridor, including future interchange and roadway improvements between 60th Avenue NW and Interstate 35. The Turnpike Authority anticipates east-west traffic between I-44 and I-35 to be operational by the end of 2027.

Staff also provided updates on other transportation projects, including ongoing improvements to Oklahoma State Highway 9 led by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. Construction began in September 2024 and is nearing completion. Staff noted that ODOT is conducting a corridor study for the Highway 9 segment between I-35 and East 24th Avenue and will present results from a Highway 9 safety audit at a future committee meeting.

Councilmembers also discussed the ongoing I-35 corridor study between Robinson Street and Fourth Street and encouraged review of ODOT's public meeting materials outlining potential access and interchange changes along the corridor.

Staff confirmed the anticipated future agenda placement for the Turnpike Authority agreement and briefly discussed considerations related to sales tax allocation for large infrastructure projects. Council thanked staff for the update and noted that parking discussions will continue at a future committee meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:38 p.m.

ATTEST

City Clerk

Mayor