



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

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

Thursday, August 25, 2022 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

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CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman, Chair

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 1 Brandi Studley
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Dr. Marilyn Dillon, Ph.D., Mobility Management Administrator/American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator for Embark
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager
Mr. Tim Miles, Capital Projects Engineer
Ms. Heather Poole, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager
Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney

AGENDA ITEMS

Chairman Holman said Item 4 will be the first item discussed.

4. PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the fixed route service transported 18,906 passengers in July 2022, compared to 18,520 in July 2021. The daily average ridership was 757. There were 636 passengers with bicycles and 87 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in July.

The paratransit service transported 1,791 passengers in July 2022, compared to 1,654 in July 2021. Average daily ridership was 78, an increase of 13.18% compared to July 2021.

Saturday service totaled 2,056 in July 2022, a 5.71% increase over 1,945 in July 2021.

Mr. Johnson said Staff worked with Nelson/Nygaard, the consultant for Go Norman Transit Plan, on an amendment to their contract to make minor changes to reflect using 318-320 East Comanche Street as a Transit Center rather than the Norman Depot. Staff is now working with McKinney Partnership Architects on the architectural design for the renovation of the new Transit Center and cost estimates. He said this will be a functional Transit Center with indoor waiting area, restrooms, and a water bottle fill station and he hopes to present the proposed design to the Committee soon.

On October 1, 2021, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) announced the grant cycle was open for the Air Quality Small Grant Program. This program seeks to improve air quality in Central Oklahoma by reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicle trips. Small transportation infrastructure projects and transit improvements as well as projects focused on congestion relief efforts are all eligible.

Mr. Johnson said Nelson/Nygaard has been working on a new, efficient bus route system and Staff is looking at the overall schedule for implementing the recommended route network in the GO Norman Transit Plan. This will include a public participation process to finalize the route changes, implementing bus stop changes, renovating the new Transit Center, and marketing.

Staff has applied for the FY22 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Bus and Bus Facilities Grant, which is proposed to replace two Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) 35-foot fixed route buses and four paratransit vans.

The City has also applied for and received a grant from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) for two 35-foot CNG fixed route busses.

Mr. Johnson said Fleet Maintenance Division continues to ensure the transit fleet is in operational condition each morning for line up, despite the age of the vehicles. The maintenance includes fueling, cleaning, and sanitizing each transit vehicle daily.

Item 4, continued:

Mr. Johnson said the cities of Moore, Del City, and Midwest City have opted to drop out of the regional transportation plans. He said the City of Moore does not have a bus system, which would be a critical component in regional transportation. All cities had concerns regarding increasing sales tax for regional transportation funding.

Councilmembers said they would like to see more signage at the bus stops regarding bus route schedules and drop off points. Mr. Johnson said route maps are posted inside each bus and schedule/route brochures are available to riders on the bus as well as the Norman EMBARK website that has all the information needed. He said Staff is preparing to introduce an app that will give real time information to riders. Chairman Holman suggested using a QR Code that takes riders to the website.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated August 25, 2022, from Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, through Shawn O'Leary, P.E., CFM, Director of Public Works, to Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee
2. EMBARK Norman Performance Report for July 2022

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1. PRESENTATION OF THE EMBARK 2021 CUSTOMER SURVEY RESULTS.

Mr. Chris Tathan, ETC Institute (ETC), said ETC is the leader in market research for State and local governments. Since 2011, ETC has surveyed more than three million people for more than 1,000 government agencies on four continents. For more than 35 years, ETC's mission has been to help local governments gather and use survey data to make better decisions. The customer survey included major findings on characteristics of transit users, satisfaction with bus services, opportunities for improvement, and other issues.

Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of the survey is to help understand the characteristics of riders; assess satisfaction with transit services and changing expectations over time; identify opportunities to maximize the investment of available resources to continually improve quality of services provided, and gather feedback on other issues that may impact decisions related to transit service. The survey was administered during the fall of 2021 and 153 surveys were collected on routes in Norman. Another 1,432 surveys were completed with Oklahoma City (OKC) riders – 1,279 riders were surveyed on buses and 252 were surveyed on streetcars. Overall results have a precision of at least +/-2.5% at the 95% level of confidence.

Item 1, continued:

Characteristics of Transit Users

People of all ages are being serviced by EMBARK and Norman riders are more likely to be under 30 years old than OKC users. People of all races are using transit services in Norman (40% - Caucasian; 29% - Blacks/African American; 24% - Asians; 20% - Hispanic/Latino/Spanish). The main purposes of the trips include getting to work, shopping/dining/entertainment, medical, and getting to school or other. The majority of bus riders in Norman use transit service on a daily basis – 63.8% use the service daily, 31.4% use the service four days per week, and 4.7% use the bus once per month.

Satisfaction with Transit Services

Satisfaction with Norman bus services improved in 12 of 15 areas that include safe operation of buses – 95%; cleanliness of bus – 93%; courtesy of drivers – 93%; how safe you feel riding this bus route – 91%; availability of accessible bus stops – 91%; ease of locating a bus stop – 90%; COVID-19 safety precautions/procedures while riding – 90%; safety at Brooks Street Transfer Center – 88%; cleanliness of Brooks Street Transfer Center – 87%; ease of getting service information - 87%; safety while waiting at a bus stop – 84%; buses arriving on time – 81%; and frequency of service - 75%. Norman EMBARK is setting the standard for customer satisfaction in all areas. Overall satisfaction with the quality of service provided by EMBARK is very high with all three services rated above the national average.

Top Priorities and Opportunities to Improve Transit Services

Norman bus service items that are most important to riders include buses arriving on time; availability of accessible bus stops; frequency of service; feeling safe while waiting for the bus; COVID-19 safety precautions/procedures while riding; courtesy of drivers; ease of locating a bus stop; cleanliness of bus shelters; safe operation of buses; safety while waiting at a bus stop; cleanliness of bus; safety at Transfer Center; information at bus stops; ease of getting service information; and cleanliness of Transfer Center.

Mr. Tathan said EMBARK is setting the standard when it comes to providing riders with an excellent customer experience and satisfaction has stayed the same or improved in most areas over the past year. He said the importance-satisfaction analysis should be used to guide opportunities for further improvements.

Councilmembers were very pleased with the survey results.

Item 1, continued:

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, “EMBARK 2021 Customer Survey Results,” dated August 25, 2022

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2. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS FOR UNDERGROUND UTILITIES ON THE JENKINS AVENUE BOND PROJECT.

Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer, said the 2019 Transportation Bond Program is a \$142 million program that includes 19 Transportation Projects, 5 Bond Projects, and 14 Federal Funded Projects. He said, since the creation of the bond package, the project scoring was changed for federal funding and because of that, projects that used to be a “slam dunk” are not receiving the federal funding so Staff had to move some projects around to make the most of available funding for priority projects. He said Staff is looking for funding measures to complete all bond projects as voted on by the public.

The Jenkins Avenue Bond Project from Imhoff Road to Lindsey Street will provide roadway widening and reconstruction; four-lane divided roadway; new traffic signal at Timberdell Road; traffic signal modifications at Stinson and Constitution Streets; new sidewalk/multimodal path; decorative roadway lighting; stormwater drainage system; and landscaping.

Design considerations include realigning Timberdell Road with a signalized intersection. He said Stinson Street will have a four-way intersection with pedestrian crossings. Mr. Sturtz said quite a bit of right-of-way (ROW) will be needed from the University of Oklahoma (OU), the City of Norman, and four residents. He said Staff is working with private property owners to reduce impact to their properties.

Utility relocations include City water and fiber; Oklahoma Natural Gas (ONG); AT&T; Info Fiber; Cox Communication; Oklahoma Gas and Electric (OG&E) Company; OU fiber, water, gas, and electric. He said OU placed their utilities into the City’s ROW without informing the City so OU must move all their utilities outside of the ROW to allow enough room for the City’s utilities. Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager, said relocation of the utilities will cost OU approximately \$5 million.

The project budget includes total project construction estimate - \$10,091,743; construction management - \$11,031,530; total estimated project cost - \$11,031,530; federal share - \$7,500,000; current City bond share - \$3,531,530; surplus City bond funds - \$6,650,214 for total funds of \$9,601,000.

Mr. Tim Miles, Capital Projects Engineer, said there are approximately 5,300 liner feet of overhead utilities with the Jenkins Avenue Project. He said Cox, AT&T, and WI-FI Systems have been installed underneath the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company (OG&E) poles. He said on Lindsey Street, utilities were buried underground; however, transformers are too large to be buried so they are stored in large, green aboveground boxes at a cost of \$2.3 million. Jenkins Avenue underground utility costs would be an estimated \$1,260,000 that consists of OG&E - \$1,000,000; Cox - \$90,000; and AT&T - \$170,000.

Item 2, continued:

Councilmembers said they want to pursue placing electric utilities underground on this project as well as any future projects when feasible. Mr. Miles said there is not a lot of room in the ROW and some trees would be impacted if lines are buried plus there is not enough room for the above ground green boxes that hold the transformers, which are very expensive to bury underground.

If overhead electric is in conflict with proposed roadway improvements, the City pays the difference in cost between overhead and underground. Underground installation costs are approximately three to five times higher than overhead for an average section line street while feeder lines are four to seven times higher than overhead lines.

If overhead electric is not in conflict with proposed roadway improvements, the City pays 100% of underground relocation costs, which would be the case on the Jenkins Avenue Bond Project. The 2019 Bond funds do not include underground relocation costs and there are potential ROW implications for three overhead utilities. Mr. Sturtz said the City should expect delays in the project due to material shortages.

Chairman Holman said he would be willing to pay half of the expenses to bury electric lines for this project and asked Staff if they could try to negotiate an agreement with OG&E. Mr. Pyle said Staff should be able to build a good case study on cost savings, e.g., no tree trimming, no weather related outages, etc., that may persuade OG&E to consider paying half of the \$1 million costs.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Jenkins Avenue Bond Project: Underground Utilities," dated August 25, 2022

3. UPDATE ON THE ALAMEDA WIDENING BOND PROJECT.

The East Alameda proposed street improvements for the urban section includes a three lane reconstructed roadway; on-street bike lanes; curb/gutter; sidewalk on the south side; stormwater pipeline system; and new water line at a cost of \$2,171,000. There will also be new left-turn lanes on Alameda Street at 36th Avenue East and 48th Avenue East.

The East Alameda proposed rural section street improvements includes a two-lane reconstructed roadway; ten foot wide paved shoulders; and stormwater improvements for a cost of \$1,445,911. There will also be new left-turn lanes on Alameda Street at 36th Avenue East and 48th Avenue East.

The project budget overview consists of \$1,301,507 from 2012 Bond Funds; \$2,452,000 from 2016-2022 Streets Maintenance Bond Surplus; \$216,480 from 2021-2026 Street Maintenance Bond for a total budget of \$3,969,987. Key project cost saving elements include using a City paving crew on the rural portion; no sidewalk on the north side; three-lane roadway; no ROW acquisition; and limited utility relocation.

Item 3, continued:

Mr. Miles said the urban section proposal for three lanes with bike lanes can be justified by the fact that the lane configuration was not part of the 2012 Bond Program distribution materials nor was lane configuration a part of the 2012 Bond ballot ordinance. He said a four to five lane option was not warranted based on traffic projections, there was not enough ROW for five lanes, and no federal funding was received, which impacts land acquisition and construction costs.

Councilmembers thanked Staff for the update.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "East Alameda Street Bond Project: Update," dated August 25, 2022

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor