

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 22, 2020

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:02 p.m. in a virtual meeting hosted in the Council Chambers on the 22nd day of October, 2020, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Nash, Petrone, and Chairman Holman

ABSENT: Councilmembers Bierman, Hall, and Peacock

OTHERS PRESENT: Mayor Breea Clark
Councilmember Joe Carter, Ward Two
Dr. Marilyn Dillon, Ph.D., Mobility Management Administrator/American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator for Embark
Mr. James Garney, Consultant for Nelson/Nygarrd Consulting Associates, Inc.
Ms. Jane Hudson, Director of Planning and Community Development
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Public Transit Coordinator
Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer
Mr. Michael Scroggins, Information Technology (IT) and Marketing Manager for Embark
Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

PUBLIC TRANSIT RIDERSHIP REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 2020 AND TRANSIT RIDERSHIP FARES.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Public Transit Coordinator, said the fixed route service transported 18,978 passengers in September, which is a 6.75% increase compared to September 2019. The daily average ridership was 759, an increase of 10.59%. There were 628 passengers with bicycles and 407 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in September.

Item 1, continued:

The paratransit service transported 1,450 passengers in September, an increase of 7.24% compared to September 2019. Average daily ridership was 58, an increase of 3.57%. For the month of September, the paratransit service had 0% trip requests denied due to capacity.

Mr. Johnson highlighted transit activities and said Staff continues to work with Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc., (Nelson/Nygaard) for a comprehensive evaluation of existing transit service, which will identify opportunities to improve transit service for the community. He said the study includes a review of local demographics, socio-economic characteristics, travel patterns, land use, and infrastructure. The outcome of the study will be a strategic plan to optimize and expand transit over the next 20 years.

Upcoming outreach activities include promotion of the project website to citizens and stakeholders; promotion of an online survey to obtain feedback on existing transit service and suggestions for potential improvements; two stakeholder meetings for all member of the public, including riders and non-riders; three virtual meetings for all members of the public, including riders and non-riders; and discussion with bus operators, EMBARK Staff, and City of Norman Staff.

Mr. Johnson said the City reinstated Saturday service for City transit operations on August 15, 2020, from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. with total ridership of 1,094 for the month of September.

Councilmember Carter said there is a need for a bus stop near the Cleveland County Detention Facility because people that are released do not always have transportation. He said the County has stated that one stop a day would be helpful and they can coordinate releases with the bus stop schedule. He asked if the process with Nelson/Nygaard would address these type of needs and Mr. James Garney, Consultant for Nelson/Nygaard, said it has been brought to his attention, through this process, that a bus stop is needed near the Detention Facility as well as Moore-Norman Vo-Tech and Johnson Controls so there is definitely discussion regarding transit needs in this area.

Items submitted for the record

1. Transit System Monthly Report for September 2020
2. Go Norman Transit Study Project Objectives and Timeline

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Item 2, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE RURAL ROAD SAFETY AUDIT.

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said in February 2020, there was discussion regarding centerline striping and all-way stop sign installation on rural roads, which morphed into the need for a road safety audit. He said Staff will be updating the Committee on the results of that audit.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer, said in the February meeting, Staff recommended a comprehensive road audit of the four roadway segments with the higher crash rates in east Norman to determine if there are any opportunities to reduce the crash rate. The four roadway segments included Cedar Lane Road: between one-half mile east of 48th Avenue S.E.; and one-half mile east of 60th Avenue S.E.; 60th Avenue S.E.: between one-half mile north of State Highway 9 and one-half mile north of Lindsey Street; 120th Avenue N.E.: between Alameda Drive and one-half mile south of Rock Creek Road; and 156th Avenue N.E.: between one-half mile of Rock Creek Road and one-half mile north of Tecumseh Road.

Mr. Riesland said a Road Safety Audit (RSA) is the formal safety performance examination of an existing or future road or intersection by an independent, multidisciplinary team. It qualitatively estimates and reports on potential road safety issues and identifies opportunities for improvements in safety for all road users. The goal of an RSA is to find out what elements of the road may present a safety concern – to what extent, to which road users, and under what circumstances as well as what opportunities exist to eliminate or mitigate identified safety concerns.

Cedar Lane Road

Mr. Riesland said ten collisions have occurred since January 1, 2018. He said six collisions occurred at the intersection of 60th Avenue S.E. and Cedar Lane Road and all were related to at least one of the two motorists not being able to see adequately. Two of the collisions were run-off the road collisions along Cedar Lane Road west of the 60th Avenue S.E. intersection.

An audit of Cedar Lane Road was conducted on September 25, 2020, that considered road/lane conditions, traffic control signs, pavement delineation, nighttime illumination, and a speed study. Mr. Riesland said 19% of drivers traveling through the area were at speeds of 60 miles per hour (mph) or higher; object markers around an existing drainage culvert were either missing or in need of an upgrade; vegetation removal was needed in three corners of the 60th Avenue S.E. intersection and along roadway edges to make edges of road more visible; dangerous drop-offs exist on both sides of the road; and guardrail protecting an existing drainage culvert appears to be substandard.

Mr. Riesland said the results of the speed study were sent to the Norman Police Department (NPD) to address speed in the area, Staff upgraded object markers around an existing drainage culvert and pavement drop-offs, and vegetative removal is being addressed by the Stormwater Division as well as the substandard guardrail.

120th Avenue N.E.

Mr. Riesland said there have been four collisions on 120th Avenue N.E. since January 1, 2018. He said three collisions occurred at the 120th Avenue N.E. intersection with Alameda Street and two of the collisions involved at least one of the two motorists not being able to see and one collision involved an ill-attempted passing maneuver.

Item 2, continued:

120th Avenue N.E., continued:

An audit was conducted on September 28, 2020, that revealed 5.65% of drivers traveling through the area were at speeds of 60 mph or higher; pavement drop-offs along most of the east side of the street along with the southern third of the west side of the street are deficient; small trees exist within the safety clear zone on the east side of the street near Alameda Drive; a large concrete drainage structure exists under a driveway on the west side of the street with large headwalls within the safety clear zone; a large arrow sign for southbound traffic needs to be relocated to be in line with the actual lane; and vegetative clearing is needed on the northeast and northwest corners of the Alameda Drive intersection.

Mr. Riesland said no action was required for the results of the speed study; pavement drop-offs and vegetative removal are being addressed by the Stormwater Division; object markers were installed for the large concrete draining structure on the west side of the street by the Traffic Control Division; and the large arrow sign was relocated.

60th Avenue S.E.

Mr. Riesland said there have been six collisions on 60th Avenue S.E. since January 1, 2018. He said five collisions occurred at the 60th Avenue S.E. intersection with Lindsey Street with multiple instances of at least one motorist reported not being able to see properly. One fatality collision involved excessive speed and reckless driving that occurred on 60th Avenue S.E. south of the Lindsey Street intersection.

An audit was conducted on September 30, 2020, that revealed 1.15% of drivers traveling through the area were at speeds of 60 mph or higher; pavement drop-offs exist in only two small areas; a pothole was found on the centerline of the road near the end of the study area; vegetative clearing is routinely needed at the Lindsey Street intersection; and a luminaire that was located at the Lindsey Street intersection is no longer there.

Mr. Riesland said no action was required for the results of the speed study; pavement drop-offs and vegetative removal are being addressed by the Stormwater Division; the Street Maintenance Division addressed the pothole; and the Oklahoma Gas and Electric (OG&E) Company has been notified of the need to replace the luminaire.

156th Avenue N.E.

Mr. Riesland said there have been two collisions on 156th Avenue N.E. since January 1, 2018. He said both collisions occurred on 156th Avenue south of the Tecumseh Road intersection and one involved excessive speed through an s-curve and the other involved a single southbound motorist striking a black cow in the dark.

Item 2, continued:

156th Avenue N.E., continued:

An audit was conducted on October 1, 2020, that revealed 22.08% of drivers traveling through the area were at speeds of 60 mph or higher; pavement drop-offs exist on both sides of the road throughout much of the study area; and a winding road sign was found to be in need of replacement.

Mr. Riesland said no action was required for the results of the speed study, pavement drop-offs and vegetative removal are being addressed by the Stormwater Division, and the Traffic Control Division replaced the worn winding road sign.

Councilmember Nash asked how many City crews do vegetative removal and Mr. O'Leary said Staff is limited and staying on top of vegetative removal as well as mowing right-of-way (ROW) throughout Norman can be challenging so the City tends to be more reactive than proactive. He said the City currently has five people that mow the entire City and because of the hiring freeze, his department does not have enough Staff to be proactive.

Chairman Holman suggested talking with the County to help with rural mowing and/or vegetative removal. He said these are safety issues that need to be addressed, but Norman has hundreds of miles of roads to maintain and hundreds of miles of land to mow and it is not possible to stay ahead of that. He said every department in the City needs more Staff so Council needs to keep that in mind.

Chairman Holman asked for an update on 36th Avenue S.E. and Cedar Lane Road and Mr. O'Leary said that is a very unique intersection. He said this intersection is a top priority for the 2019 Bond Program and Staff will be submitting grant applications to the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) for additional funding. He said this will be an \$8 or \$9 million project to improve the entire corridor of Cedar Lane Road and a portion of 36th Avenue S.E. literally raising the intersection 15 to 20 vertical feet; however, this project is not expected to begin until 2023 or 2024. He said Destin Landing, one of the largest development projects (800 acres) at Cedar Lane Road and 36th Avenue S.E., has yet to commence, but when it does there will be a greater need and urgency to improve these roadways.

Chairman Holman asked Staff to keep the Committee informed about the ACOG funding, but felt a four-way stop at that intersection could be a short term solution.

Chairman Holman said there are also two urban intersections he would like to see four-way stops installed, which are George Avenue/Stinson Street and Elm Street/Hoover Street, which are currently two-way stops.

Councilmember Carter said other urban intersections that need four-way stops are Berry Road/Imhoff Road and Poplar Street/Imhoff Road.

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Item 3, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING PLACING STREET FURNITURE (BENCH) ON PORTER AVENUE.

Chairman Holman said there was a request from a citizen to place a bench between Robinson Street and Rock Creek Road (along Porter Avenue). Mr. O'Leary said that would be a policy matter, but the City generally does not grant these requests for various reasons. He said the City does place street furniture on streetscape projects, such as Lindsey Street, Main Street, and Porter Avenue. He said when the City installs street furniture, it has to be maintained, trash picked up regularly, comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), etc.

Mr. O'Leary said Staff is requesting guidance on the Porter Streetscape Project before launching into a larger street furniture discussion.

Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer, said street furniture is a term used to describe amenities in the public ROW adding functionality and vitality to the pedestrian realm. Examples of street furniture include banners; benches; bike racks; public art; transit shelters; trashcans; decorative lighting; wayfinding signage; and landscaping. He said street furniture is usually used in highly urbanized areas with lots of pedestrian traffic, such as Downtown, Center City areas, and shopping districts. Street furniture is also typically placed between the roadway and pedestrian walkway or throughway zones. When selecting street furniture, placement must be considered as well as a theme to meet a particular corridor or district.

Main Street was the first streetscape project from the railroad tracks to Porter Avenue and from Park Avenue to the railroad tracks. The project included benches, trash cans, pavers, decorative bike racks, and public art. The second portion from Park Avenue to the railroad tracks has the Oklahoma Land Run theme at the Main Street bridge with various amenities.

Legacy Trail, between Duffy Street and Acres Street, has public art, seating areas, and placards depicting Norman's history, which was paid for with private funds.

Lindsey Street has a Cherokee Gothic theme and the street was designed to create a walkable corridor. That project required property owners to invest in redeveloping property and the City contracted with Gateway Consulting to help property owners. The plan also included moving buildings to the ROW and parking in the rear. This project included benches, trash cans, bus shelters, landscaping, and bridge aesthetics. The Lindsey Street bridge pays homage to the University of Oklahoma.

Mr. Sturtz said the Porter Streetscape Project from Robinson Street to Alameda Street will have an Art Deco theme being designed by Cabiness Engineering, Inc., and Laud Landscaping Architecture and Urban Design.

Mayor Clark left the meeting at 4:53 p.m. and Councilmember Petrone left the meeting at 4:55 p.m.

Item 3, continued:

Mr. Sturtz said all road corridors require maintenance including landscaping maintenance, street furniture maintenance, and removal of waste from trash can. The maintenance costs for Main Street is \$2,700 annually and \$3,900 annually for Lindsey Street and the City is still working on waste removal for these areas because it is different by corridor. He said all bus stop shelters and benches are provided and maintained by Tyler Media and they have advertising rights.

As for the bench request on Porter Avenue, between Rock Creek Road and Robinson Street, there is a potential location at the Norman Church of the Nazarene, which is the halfway point. The bench must meet ADA requirements meaning it has to be a minimum of 42 inches long with arms, 20 to 24-inches deep, have back support, and have companion seating that must be a 30 by 48-inch on solid surface, which means a ten-foot by four-foot concrete pad must be installed to anchor the bench. Mr. Sturtz said Porter Avenue is a narrow corridor with little room and ROW for street furniture. He said this is not an ADA request and there are currently no rules or best practices for placing street furniture for these types of requests according to U.S. Access Board. Staff also reached out to other communities and found no policies addressing this type of request. He said additional considerations are that the bench must be durable and easy to maintain (would be metal so heat would be a factor in summer), a trash can must be placed at the location, and the property owner must consent to the placement of the bench on their property. The bench would cost an estimated \$15,00, the concrete pad would cost an estimated \$2,500, and a trash can would cost an estimated \$200; however, no funds are currently available for this request. The maintenance costs are also undetermined at this time.

Mr. Sturtz said the City needs to establish a policy for placement of street furniture outside of special corridors that considers who can apply, if there is consent of the property owner, if ROW is available, if the area is pedestrian friendly or walkable, if the furniture is ADA compliant, and if there could be a cost share with applicant. Other considerations include who would be responsible for the capital and maintenance costs; does the City want street furniture in corridors that are not designed for it; how will the City address future requests for all street furniture; and is the request justified based on the number of complaints or pedestrian volume. He asked how the Committee would like Staff to proceed.

Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager, said a conversation during the Council Retreat was about the establishment of some Ward specific funds in the budget so Council could solve Ward specific problems. He said if the City creates a good policy as it relates to street furniture, that could be one of those requests that Councilmembers could address if they had some small Ward specific project funds.

Chairman Holman said if this were to move forward, the City should definitely talk with the Church, but if the location is moved further south there is a tree that could offer shade. He said the property owner might be open to sharing costs. He said the citizen requesting the bench lives in a Section 8 housing complex at Rock Creek Road and Porter Avenue and often walks to Downtown Norman, which is over a mile. He definitely thinks criteria is needed for street furniture outside of special corridors, such as the distance from Section 8/low income housing and public transit service

Item 3, continued:

Councilmember Carter said most street furniture is installed when there are streetscape projects where an entire corridor is included and state or federal funding is available. He said this type of project could open a can of worms and lead the City down a slippery slope of cherry picking locations throughout Norman. He would appreciate Staff's recommendations if there are other priorities for spending this amount of money even if Ward specific funding is available. He complimented Staff's work on Lindsey Street and said they did a fantastic job.

Chairman Holman said this item was requested by Councilmember Foreman and he would like to further discuss a street furniture policy and get her feedback after she has had a chance to review this meeting.

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Item 4, being:

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS.

None

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The meeting adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor