



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 07/08/2025

REQUESTER: Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager

PRESENTER: Scott Sturtz, P. E., Public Works Director

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF ACCEPTANCE, APPROVAL, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF AMENDMENT FOUR TO CONTRACT K-2223-164: BY AND BETWEEN THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AND RIVER NORTH TRANSIT, LLC, (VIA TRANSPORTATION, INC.), IN THE AMOUNT OF \$691,985, FOR A REVISED NOT-TO-EXCEED AMOUNT OF \$2,243,470, FOR EXTENSION OF THE NORMAN ON-DEMAND MICROTRANSIT PROGRAM BEGINNING AUGUST 21, 2025 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2026.

BACKGROUND:

Over the course of 2021-2023, Council requested more information about “microtransit”, a type of service intended to help fill gaps between public fixed route bus service and the rideshare services with which many people are familiar. In an effort to bring in expertise and fine tune what the service would look like, the City hired consulting firm HNTB and alongside City staff conducted two workshops with Council on October 18, 2022 and January 3, 2023 respectively.

Following feedback from Councilmembers through those workshops, two recommendations were made. The first was for a microtransit pilot program consisting of turnkey microtransit service that would operate in the late evenings Monday through Saturday as well as during the day on Sunday. This recommendation suggested the service be offered in a defined zone, limited in size, to be proposed by potential vendors in response to a Request for Proposal (RFP). The second recommendation was to invest in more robust software to improve existing paratransit service, which has since been discussed and implemented in partnership with EMBARK.

City staff and HNTB then worked to create RFP-2223-59, and proposals were scored by the selection committee using the evaluation criteria in the RFP which included: responsiveness to scope of work, past performance and references, cost, qualifications of project staff, qualifications of firm, and if the proposal included an Oklahoma-based firm or satellite office. At the conclusion of the evaluation process, River North Transit, LLC (a wholly owned subsidiary of Via Transportation, Inc.) was selected as the most qualified proposer and Council approved Contract K-2223-164 on June 27, 2023.

In the Spring of 2023, as Norman was concluding the RFP process, staff of the University of Oklahoma (“OU”; the “University”) was looking to begin a similar process for their “SafeRide”

program, which offers students free rides Thursday through Saturday between 10:00 pm and 3:00 am. It was identified that there may be efficiencies in combining resources to have one late night transit service for the community. Staff from both the City of Norman and OU worked together to combine resources with a goal of expanding the City and Via proposed service to incorporate the University's SafeRide program.

On August 8, 2023, Council approved Amendment 1 to K-2223-164 with River North Transit (Via Transportation) and its companion agenda item contract K-2324-50 with OU for Microtransit Services to include the SafeRide program. This combined program was scheduled to operate from August 21, 2023 through August 20, 2024. On May 1, 2024 the service was revised to include an additional vehicle, expand the service map westward, and to reduce the SafeRide hours during summer operation by concluding service at 1:00 am, Monday through Saturday. These changes were accomplished through Amendment 2 to contract K-2223-164 with River North Transit, LLC (Via Transportation, Inc.) and Amendment 1 to contract K-2324-50 with the University of Oklahoma both of which were approved by City Council on April 23, 2024.

A "Year 2" extension of the program maintaining the SafeRide program and clarifying the hours during the school year vis a vis summer hours was authorized by Council on July 9, 2024 with the approval of Amendment 3 to Contract K-2223-164 with River North Transit, LLC (Via Transportation, Inc.) and Amendment 2 to contract K-2324-50 with the University of Oklahoma. Operational information for the service such as hours, pricing, and maps can be found online at city.ridewithvia.com/norman.

DISCUSSION:

Staff has presented information and discussed this service with Council at various Community Planning and Transportation Committee meetings since the beginning of the microtransit program. Since the service began on August 21, 2023 through the end of FYE 25 (June 30, 2025) the service has completed 70,735 rides (44,934 rides in FYE 25 alone), with a 4.9 out of 5 star rating (customer satisfaction), and a ridership per service hour rate of 5.9. Approximately 33% of all rides completed were requested by OU student accounts, however only one third of these, or approximately 12% of all rides completed were offered as part of the free to students SafeRide program. Approximately 67% of all rides completed, the remaining rides offered by the service, were requested by non-OU rider accounts.

Extension of this pilot program for fiscal year ending 2026 is contingent on amendment of existing contracts with both River North Transit, LLC (Via Transportation, Inc.) and the University of Oklahoma. The estimated cost for this service extension between August 21, 2025 through June 30, 2026 is \$691,985, for a total contract not-to-exceed amount of \$2,243,470. The requested \$691,985 is available in the Transit and Parking Fund, Miscellaneous Services – Transit Operation Contract (account number 27550277-44766).

Please note that this is a companion item to the proposed Amendment 3 to Contract K-2324-50 between the University and the City (K-2324-50; Amendment 3).

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Staff recommends that City Council approve Amendment Four to Contract K-2223-164 by and between the City of Norman, Oklahoma, and River North Transit, LLC (Via Transportation, Inc.) in the amount of \$691,985, for a revised not-to-exceed amount of

\$2,243,470, for extension of the Norman On-Demand microtransit program beginning August 21, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026.