

CITY COUNCIL  
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION  
COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 24, 2022

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:00 p.m. in the Conference Room on the 24th day of March, 2022, 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: Councilmember Hall, Peacock, Schueler, Studley,  
and Chairman Holman

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Kelly Lynn, Ward Three  
Ms. Danielle Clark, Administrative Technician III  
Ms. Jane Hudson, Director of Planning and  
Community Development  
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program  
Manager  
Mr. Chris Mattingly, Director of Utilities  
Ms. Beth Muckala, Assistant City Attorney  
Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works  
Ms. Heather Poole, Assistant City Attorney  
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer  
Mr. Jessie Rush, Assistant Director of Operations,  
EMBARK  
Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer  
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney  
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the fixed route service transported 16,059 passengers in February 2022, compared to 17,709 in January 2022. The daily average ridership was 669. There were 637 passengers with bicycles and 172 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in February.

The paratransit service transported 1,366 passengers in February 2022, compared to 1,549 in January 2022. Average daily ridership was 57, a decrease of 11.81% compared to January 2022.

Saturday service totaled 1,361 in February 2022, a 2.72% increase over 1,325 in January 2022.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. Johnson said the new Transit Maintenance and Operation Facility on North Base opened February 11, 2022.

On October 1, 2021, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) announced the grant cycle for the Air Quality Small Grant Program was open. 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. He said ACOG approved a grant to install 80 new bus stops associated with the recommended route change in the Go Norman Transit Plan.

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 318-320 Comanche Street to be used as a Transit Center rather than the Norman Depot. Staff is now working on an additional amendment to include architectural design for the renovation of the new Transit Center.

City Fleet Maintenance continues to ensure the transit fleet is in operating condition each morning, which includes mechanical maintenance as well as fueling, cleaning inside and outside, sanitizing activities, etc.

On November 9, 2021, Council approved a contract with AngelTrax to provide a public transportation onboard surveillance system for the City of Norman public transportation fleet. The contract provides sufficient camera coverage, both inside and outside the vehicle; sufficient storage on each vehicle to be able to download video up to 240 hours in the past; an automatic system that would download tagged video wirelessly when the vehicle comes in range of the public transit fleet yard; and a computer software solution that enables both EMBARK and City employees to tag/request a video be downloaded and viewed. Over the next few weeks the equipment will be installed, calibrated, and tested for quality verification as well as training provided for Staff.

The City purchased two battery electric buses and Staff anticipates receiving these vehicles in August/September 2022. Approximately 70% of the vehicle purchase price will be reimbursed through a grant received from the Federal Transit Authority's 2021 Low or No Emission Vehicle Program. Staff continues to identify other avenues to purchase transit vehicles to modernize and standardize its fleet using existing local and federal funds available.

On December 14, 2021, Council approved the purchase of five (5) Dodge Promaster vans for the City's public transportation fleet; however, due to supply chain issues the vehicle costs have increased and Staff is working on an agenda item to address the increase. He said Staff has identified additional Federal Transit Authority (FTA) grant money to supplement the cost increase and potentially decrease the amount of the local match.

Item 1, continued:

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated March 24, 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 February 2022

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Item 2, being:

#### DISCUSSION REGARDING MICRO TRANSIT.

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of current City services that include fixed route and paratransit services through EMBARK Norman and EMBARK Norman Plus. On October 12, 2021, Council discussed the transit budget for operation, maintenance, and fleet replacement as well as a Transit/Public Safety Maintenance Facility, Transit Transfer Center, Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) of Central Oklahoma, and Go Norman Transit Plan.

Service options include On-demand Paratransit, Microtransit Zones, and Citywide On-demand Service using providers that include Via (operations, maintenance, and/or technology); Spare (technology); Moovit (technology), Routematch by Uber (technology) and RideCo (technology). Mr. Johnson said on-demand/microtransit services are usually provided in low-density areas where service is provided to a fixed route transit service.

Mr. Johnson said Arlington, Texas, offers citywide on-demand services highlighted the difference between Arlington and Norman. He said Arlington's population in 2020 was 398,864 while Norman's population was 125,763; Arlington's FY20 ridership (between October 1, 2020 thru September 25, 2021) was 179,814 and Norman's FY20 ridership was 179,814; and Arlington's cost of operations was \$8,300,000 and Norman's cost of operations was \$6,231,850. He said Norman's fare is free while Arlington charges \$3 for trips from zero-1.5 miles; \$3.50 for trips from 1.5 to 3 miles; \$4 for trips from 3 to 4.5 miles; \$4.50 for trips from 4.5 to 6 miles; and \$5 for trips over six miles. Arlington also offers a \$25 per week ViaPass that allows up to four trips per day.

During the Go Norman Transit Plan discussions, on-demand/microtransit service was considered for northwest and/or southeast Norman, but was not pursued as it was resulting in a large increase in the transit program budget. In the Go Norman Transit Plan horizon, approximately ten years, out, it was identified that there are greater needs, particularly with frequency, in areas already served by fixed route service. During the pandemic, 10 to 40 riders per service hours was recorded compared to 6 to 17 riders per service hours in FY 21 with limited capacity restriction. Pre-pandemic paratransit ridership was 1.5 riders per service hour pre-pandemic and is currently 1.5 riders per service in FY 21. On-demand/microtransit service typically has three to four riders per service hour when used as a fixed-route replacement.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Johnson said after the October 12, 2021, Conference, Council directed Staff to research the cost to establish microtransit zones in Norman. He said Via is a provider of advanced public mobility solutions and some of their services include microtransit and paratransit services. Staff consulted with Via to discuss options for microtransit in Norman and both parties acknowledged the need for a formal, competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process if the project was funded. A proposed service design was discussed so an estimate could be provided to serve as the basis of the FY23 Budget proposal.

Mr. Johnson said requesting a new service contract with an outside contractor for turnkey microtransit operations would include four to six “vans” in two zones (generally northwest and southeast urban Norman) for on-demand services within the zone; increased flexibility and shorter trip durations for transit customers that live within the designated zones; and complimenting Norman’s fixed-route and paratransit services. Estimated costs for the first year is \$1,500,000; however, selection of microtransit provider and costs are still subject to a RFP selection process if funding is allocated.

Councilmembers said they would like to try a pilot program for on-demand/microtransit service.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, “FY 2023 Microtransit Proposal,” dated March 24, 2022

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Item 3, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE POTENTIAL ESTABLISHMENT OF ONE-WAY ALLEYS IN THE CENTER CITY FORM BASED CODE AREA.

Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer, said alleys are defined as a narrow passageway between buildings. Public alleys are in platted easements or rights-of-way (ROW), are maintained by the City, and can be used in commercial, residential, or mixed uses. He said many alleys contain utilities, trash containers, and are used for parking. There are 170 blocks of alleys, which is almost 14 miles, in core Norman. Staff performed an assessment of alleys in 2021, that includes pictures, surface conditions, estimated traffic, etc.

Alleys within the Center City Form Based Code (CCFBC) include 29 blocks or almost 7.5 miles, vary in width from 12 to 15 feet, has varies surfaces from gravel to concrete, and is a mix of commercial and residential properties. Mr. Sturtz said it was proposed to change the current two-way alley system to one-way systems in CCFBC; however, the CCFBC requires rear parking from the alleys, which has put additional traffic and users in these alleys as well as additional polycarts to serve the residential development. He said five signs cost \$632 and there are 29 alleys proposed for one-way consideration for a proposed total cost of \$18,328 plus future maintenance costs.

Item 3, continued:

Alleys are generally short enough that violation occurs quickly and one-way alleys are difficult to enforce. Mr. Sturtz said 24-hour enforcement is not practical for the Norman Police Department (NPD) and after a test case study, Staff found no change in travel behavior. He said concerns regarding one-way alleys include utilities/sanitation – would have to move polycarts to one side of the alley; enforcement; franchise utilities – will have to discuss to determine their needs; developers/owners – need to determine if one-way alleys will have an impact; cost of installing and inspecting signage; and compliance without enforcement.

Councilmembers agreed there is no need to change two-way alleys to one-way and they do not want to pursue this issue any further.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, “One-way Alleys – Center City,” Community Planning and Transportation Committee, dated Thursday, March 24, 2022

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The meeting adjourned at 5:38 p.m.

ATTEST:

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City Clerk

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Mayor