



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

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

Thursday, January 26, 2023 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

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CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Holman called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler
Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman, Chair

ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Mr. James Briggs, Park Development Manager
Ms. Bethany Grissom, Park Planner I
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager
Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
Ms. Heather Poole, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager
Mr. Jessie Rush, Assistant Director of Operations, EMBARK

AGENDA ITEMS

1. PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the fixed route service transported 24,581 passengers in December 2022, compared to 20,245 in December 2021. The daily average ridership was 947. There were 725 passengers with bicycles and 260 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in December.

The paratransit service transported 1,707 passengers in December 2022, compared to 1,748 in December 2021. Average daily ridership was 66, a decrease of 1.49% compared to December 2021.

Saturday service totaled 2,582 in December 2022, a 135.37% increase over 1,097 in December 2021.

Mr. Johnson said Staff continues to work closely with the architects to finalize renovation plans for the 320 East Comanche Street property into a City Transit Center. On December 12, 2022, Council approved a resolution to alter bus routes and transit bus services as recommended in the Go Norman Transit Plan to take effect in 2023. He said the Plan creates 80 bus stops and discontinues 63 bus stops throughout the City and bus stop improvements will take time and coordination with EMBARK and Tyler Media who supplies bus shelters.

On October 31, 2022, Staff submitted a grant application to the annual Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – Urbanized Area (STBG-UZA) through the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) to replace two 32-foot Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fixed-route buses. Staff continues to research eligible grants to support existing operations, vehicle needs, and future improvements. Mr. Johnson said the City has secured grant funding to purchase 12 new buses including two electric buses, which is about one-third of the fleet.

Mr. Johnson said following Study Session feedback from Council, Staff conducted a second workshop on January 3, 2023, regarding possible alternatives for a microtransit pilot program. After the workshop, Staff reviewed all of the data and is recommending a pilot program consisting of a turnkey microtransit service, which would be offered Monday through Saturday from 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. (or 7:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.) and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in defined zones of limited scope.

Chairman Holman said a constituent requested a bus stop at Imhoff Road and Oakhurst Avenue, but he thought a microtransit service could close the types of gaps where bus stops are not located near neighborhoods needing bus service by transporting citizens to the nearest fixed route bus stop, particularly if a fixed bus stop route for an area is not feasible.

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

Item 1, continued:

Chairman Holman voiced concerns about the impact of eliminating the West Norman route because even though it has a low ridership (244 in December 2022) there are apartments near the bus stop and he believes the residents may depend on the bus for transportation. Mr. Johnson said Staff had to make a few tough decisions and that bus stop was not productive in terms of ridership.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated January 26, 2023, 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 December 2022

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2. DISCUSSION REGARDING CITYWIDE PARK IMPROVEMENTS.

Mr. James Briggs, Park Development Manager, introduced Ms. Bethany Grissom, Park Planner I. He said the Parks and Recreation Department goals are to distribute as much of the piece of the pie (funding) as possible. He said the City owns six Recreation Centers, four Cultural Centers, and parks in about every Ward. He said programming has evolved over the years to include different cultural, racial, ethnic, and minority communities. The Recreation Centers have continued to develop programming that brings parks to a space that does not have a park (pop up mobile parks). He said the Parks and Recreation Department includes activities and amenities for a range of physical and/or cognitive disabilities with access to green space and events evenly distributed throughout the entire City. Staff is gathering community input regarding needs and feedback on current offerings.

The City also owns the Young Family Athletic Center and Senior Wellness Center, which are both under construction as well as Griffin and Reaves Parks that are currently under renovation. There are 32 events scheduled in 2023 with 35% of household participating in a program and 88% of residents rated the quality of the programs offered as excellent or good.

Top programming priorities include adult fitness/wellness, nature education, fitness classes, and outdoor hiking. In 2021, two pop-up park events were held to bring programming to parks (Ruby Grant and Colonial Estates) where special events currently do not take place. Mr. Briggs said pop-up events were well attended by community members. He said continuation of the pop-up park initiative would create easier access to recreation events while providing desired outdoor programming. He said the City needs a dedicated truck/trailer (\$50,000 to \$75,000) where equipment could be stored and pre-packaged food served, which would help to lower labor and financial costs associated with these pop-up park events.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Briggs said playground amenities will be installed, such as wheelchair accessible merry-go-rounds, grade synthetic surfacing, and play alone features. He said projects will adhere to Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines in all facilities. The City has 67 parks, which is anticipated to grow to 71 over the next five years.

Currently, 53% of residents can walk to a park in ten minutes or less (National average is 55%); 76% of residents report they are satisfied with the proximity of parks to their home, and 85% of houses report visiting a park/facility during the past year (National average is 76%).

The greatest opportunity to improve access to parks is to create more access points to parks via roads, sidewalks, green corridors, etc. Green corridors, specifically trails, have the greatest support within the community and were ranked as the top priority and highest unmet need by residents.

Today, 13 out of 38 NORMAN FORWARD Project parks have been completed east of the railroad tracks and 7 out of 29 parks have been completed west of the railroad tracks. Future NORMAN FORWARD Projects include 41 parks east of the railroad tracks (16 completed) and 30 parks west of the railroad tracks (12 completed).

NORMAN FORWARD Project park improvements over the next five years include:

- Year One: William Morgan, Sunrise, Canadian Trails, Pebblebrook;
- Year Two: Kiwanis, Northeast Lions, Sutton Place, Woodslawn, Rock Creek;
- Year Three: Springbrook, Eagle Cliff, Deerfield, Eastridge, Colonial Commons;
- Year Four: Normandy, Oak Tree South, Little Axe, Crestland, Brookhaven; and
- Year Five: Chisholm's Trail, Lions Memorial, Colonial Estates, Kevin Gottshall III.

Mr. Briggs said the Park Master Plan has not been updated in 15 years and needs to be updated.

Councilmembers thanked Staff for the update.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Park Improvements," dated January 26, 2023

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:41 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor