

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 28, 2021

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:03 p.m. in the Executive Conference Room on the 28th day of October, 2021, 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 Hall, Peacock, Schueler, Studley,
and Chairman Holman

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Kevin Foster, Police Chief
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program
Manager
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
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

PUBLIC TRANSIT RIDERSHIP REPORT.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the fixed route service transported 21,584 passengers in September 2021, compared to 20,789 in August 2021. The daily average ridership was 863. There were 762 passengers with bicycles and 438 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in September.

The paratransit service transported 1,696 passengers in September 2021, compared to 1,637 in August 2021. Average daily ridership was 68, an increase of 7.75%.

Saturday service totaled 1,113 in September 2021, a 33.63% decrease over 1,677 in August 2021.

Mr. Johnson said during the months of August and September, City Staff offered transit system Ride Alongs each Friday, and a City Staff member rode with citizens on Route 110 on its 10:00 a.m. trip throughout Norman. These Ride Alongs were created as an opportunity for anyone interested in public transportation to join Staff for a bus ride and ask questions. During the Ride Alongs, City Staff, Norman Regional Health System Staff, citizens, and elected officials participated.

Item 1, continued:

The Go Norman Transit Plan was approved by Council on June 22, 2021, and Staff is continuing exploratory work on the next steps as recommended by the Plan. This includes work on the downtown transit center and potential grant opportunities for creating additional bus stops that are associated with the recommended route changes in the Plan.

During Council's October 12, 2021, Conference, Staff presented an overview of existing public transit services and the concept of micro-transit and on-demand services. At the conclusion of that discussion, Staff was directed to look at options for a pilot project for next fiscal year, which Staff is in the process of doing.

The City is also in the process of purchasing 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. Mr. Johnson said the City's project was one of 49 projects selected in the nation. Staff continues to identify other avenues to purchase transit vehicles to modernize and standardize its fleet using existing local and federal funds available.

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. Staff is analyzing this funding opportunity to see how transit could benefit, such as bus stop improvements associated with the long range plan.

Staff is working to complete the City's second National Transit Database Report as required by federal law. Each transit agency in the country receiving federal funds is required to submit the report with data covering the previous fiscal year. Data points include financials, fleet and facilities inventory, and operation performance.

Mr. Johnson said progress continues to be made on the construction of the new Transit Maintenance and Operation Facility on North Base and commended Fleet Maintenance Division Staff for continuing to ensure the transit fleet is in operational condition despite the age of the vehicles (19 out of 27 buses have met their useful life). This maintenance includes mechanical maintenance as well as fueling, cleaning, and sanitizing the buses each night at the conclusion of service.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated October 28, 2021, 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. Transit System Report for September 2021

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Item 2, being:

OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC PARKING AVAILABLE IN THE CAMPUS CORNER AREA.

Item 3, being:

UPDATE OF THE EFFICACY OF THE COMMERCIAL DELIVERY ZONES ON CAMPUS CORNER.

The Committee discussed Item 2 and Item 3 simultaneously.

Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer, said he will be presenting information on existing public parking in the Campus Corner area; recent revisions to public parking in the Campus Corner area; past parking planning and studies; attempts to provide more parking in the Campus Corner area; potential uses for the Asp Avenue parking lot; and Campus Corner commercial loading zones.

Mr. Riesland said there are 154 total public parking spaces on Campus Corner, 61 parking spaces in the Asp Avenue parking lot owned by the City, and numerous private parking is also available. In the summer of 2021, all single space meters were replaced with pay stations or upgraded with newer single space meters remaining on the north end of Buchanan Street. Currently, pay stations operate between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. at \$1 hour with a two-hour maximum prior to 6:00 p.m. and a three-hour maximum after 6:00 p. m. He said over \$41,000 has been collected from on-street parking since mid-July 2021, and just over \$12,000 in 2021 at the Asp Avenue parking lot. He said this change brings all public parking in Norman as well as the University of Oklahoma (OU) operated parking under the same payment umbrella (Flowbird), which is a huge benefit to those wanting to park in the area and meets some of the goals from adopted parking studies.

Mr. Riesland said the 2013 Campus Corner Parking Management Business Plan was approved by Council on August 1, 2013, and revised in 2015 and 2019; the 2013 Downtown Parking Lot Management Business Plan was approved by Council on August 1, 2013, and revised in 2016 and 2019; the 2014 City of Norman Comprehensive Transportation Plan was approved by Council on May 13, 2014; the 2016 Norman Parking Study was approved by Council on August 9, 2016; and the 2018 Parking Strategic Plan was approved by Council on December 11, 2018.

Highlights from the 2018 Parking Strategic Plan include acknowledging the need for additional parking in the Downtown and Campus Corner areas; proposed sites for new parking structures; creating a separate parking fund, governance structure, and hiring additional parking Staff; working with Cleveland County on this aspect of parking; providing consistent management (meter times, meter costs, meter pay methods, enforcement) for customers and updating technology; and integrating with and considering a multimodal future, and increasing the walkability and bikeability in these areas as well as investment in additional mass transit.

Items 2 and 3, continued:

In 2014, the 211 Boyd Planned Unit Development (PUD) project proposed to construct a multi-story office, retail, and restaurant building with an internal parking garage to serve the proposed development while providing an additional 182 parking spaces for a Campus Corner parking solution, but the application never went to Council. In late 2015/early 2016, another developer proposed to redevelop the east side of Asp Avenue on the north end of Campus Corner that would also have included a parking garage, but no application was ever submitted.

Mr. Riesland said the City has invested almost \$1,250,000 for real estate, lighting, and pay stations in the Asp Avenue parking lot. Use of the lot since it opened in February of 2019, has been lower than the on-street meters, perhaps because of the location and impacts of COVID. The City has made numerous offers to the Campus Corner Association to lease spaces, at a reduced rate, for employee parking. This would satisfy the previously adopted parking plans while still allowing the City an opportunity to recoup these investments. Staff has not been contacted with respect to any of these offers.

The Campus Corner commercial loading zones are in operation between 3:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. with multiple signs within the loading zone depending on the length of the zone and Parking Enforcement Officers enforce those times as well as all parking meters. He said the City has been contacted over the years by the Campus Corner Association to modify these zones and Staff is happy to help. There is currently discussion about relocating some commercial loading zones, and marking them in non-standard ways (striped lines, additional signage, etc.).

Councilmembers expressed concern about the Asp Avenue parking lot being underutilized and suggested the City continue to reach out to Campus Corner Association regarding employee parking. They also suggested placing additional signage directing traffic to the parking lot. As far as the loading zones, Councilmembers felt more enforcement was needed to address issues of large trucks not using the loading zones and blocking the roadway. They understood that sometimes, people park in the loading zones because they think they will only run into the store, get what they need (coffee), and be right out, but may end up blocking the loading zones so vendors trying to deliver product are forced to stop in a traffic lane blocking the entire lane. Councilmembers said they would like to have a deeper discussion about loading zone options.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Campus Corner Parking" dated October 28, 2021
2. Campus Corner Parking Management Business Plan dated September 11, 2015
3. 2016 Norman Parking Study by Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc.

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The meeting adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Attest:

City Clerk

Mayor