



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 01/18/2022

REQUESTER: Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager

PRESENTER: Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF RESOLUTION R-2122-81: A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, ACCEPTING THE APPORTIONMENT OF \$919,549 TO THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION'S NORMAN URBANIZED AREA THROUGH THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021 AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER OR HIS DESIGNEE TO SUBMIT, EXECUTE, AND FILE AN APPLICATION ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF NORMAN WITH THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO FORMALLY PROGRAM THE FUNDING FOR A VEHICLE WASH FACILITY.

BACKGROUND:

On May 22, 2019, the Governor of Oklahoma designated the City to be the direct recipient of federal funds to be used for the provision of public transportation services effective upon the date the FTA formally approves the City eligible to receive such federal funds. On June 20, 2019, the FTA formally designated the City to be the direct recipient of such federal public transportation funds.

On March 11, 2021 the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 was passed and provided a \$1.9 trillion federal relief package in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. ARPA includes \$30.5 billion in supplemental appropriations allocated to support the transit industry. Using existing Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant programs and formulas, the Norman urbanized area was allocated \$919,549 in relief funding through ARPA. Recipients are meant to use the funding for payroll and operations, unless it can be certified that no employees have been furloughed during the pandemic.

The City has made great strides in the operations of the public transportation system since the transition from the University in July 2019. Some of those accomplishments include: no missed days of service, both during the transition and the ongoing pandemic; designed, funded, and completed construction of the facility to house the transit operations and maintenance activities; successful award of competitive grants for two battery electric buses; completion of the update to the City's long range transit plan (Go Norman Transit Plan); and the City has allocated funds and is close to securing a site for a new transit center.

While the City has been successful in securing the proper personnel and facilities to operate a professional transit system, one piece in terms of facilities is still missing: a Vehicle Wash Facility. In order to keep the buses operating efficiently and looking professional, an automatic Vehicle Wash Facility is needed. Currently, staff are utilizing a power washer to clean the exterior of the buses at night in addition to the duties of fueling and cleaning the bus interiors.

DISCUSSION:

While the Transit / Public Safety Facility was being designed on North Base, the preliminary plans of a Vehicle Wash Facility was also being discussed for the same parcel. Staff included information on the Vehicle Wash Facility project at Council's Capital Retreat on November 16, 2021 (continued discussion on November 18, 2021 at Council's Finance Committee). Not only is the Vehicle Wash Bay a transit need, but the City has no way to regularly clean the exterior of the 900 pieces of equipment, of which 500 are on-road vehicles. Having one centralized Vehicle Wash Facility and operation will allow the City's entire fleet to be cleaned regularly, which will help with maintenance and general aesthetics.

Since the Vehicle Wash Facility would be a shared use with transit and other City functions, the FTA requires grantees to propose what transit's share of the construction cost and ongoing maintenance and operations of the facility will be. Staff created a spreadsheet of how many washes each City department/division would receive weekly/monthly/annually based on need and number of vehicles. Utilizing that spreadsheet, it was determined that 32% of the annual washes would be attributable to transit. Staff discussed this with FTA staff and it was agreed that transit's share of the construction cost could be 32% (please see the attached email from FTA for documentation of their concurrence). Ongoing maintenance and operations will be covered by a per-wash fee billed to the department/division through internal service charges; thus transit would only be paying for the washes used, which FTA also found acceptable.

Preliminary cost estimates for a complete buildout of the Vehicle Wash Facility is \$1.8 million. At 32%, transit's share would be \$576,000. However, due to ongoing construction cost volatility due to the pandemic in terms of materials and inflation, staff is recommending that the entire \$919,549 be allocated to the Vehicle Wash Facility with the understanding that only 32% of the construction costs would be reimbursed by the ARPA funds for transit as agreed upon with FTA. Once the Vehicle Wash Facility is completed, any remaining funds could be reprogrammed for another public transit-related purpose.

If approved by Council, staff will work to formally program the ARPA transit funds into an FTA grant. This will ensure that as the project is completed, the City will be eligible to receive the federal funding share of the project.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that City Council approve Resolution R-2122-81, accepting the apportionment of \$919,549 to the Federal Transit Administration's Norman urbanized area through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and authorizing the City Manager or his designee to submit, execute, and file an application on behalf of the City of Norman with the United States Department of Transportation to formally program the funding for a vehicle wash facility.