

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 25, 2021

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:04 p.m. in a virtual meeting hosted in the Council Chambers on the 25th day of March, 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, Nash, Peacock, and
Chairman Holman

ABSENT: Councilmembers Bierman and Petrone

OTHERS PRESENT: Mayor Breea Clark
Ms. Jane Hudson, Director of Planning and
Community Development
Mr. Brandon Huxford, Freese and Nichols
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Public Transit Coordinator
Mr. Tim Miles, Capital Projects Engineer
Ms. Beth Muckala, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
Mr. Mike Rayburn, Capital Projects Engineer
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer
Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney
Ms. Mindy Wood, The Norman Transcript
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Public Transit Coordinator, said the fixed route service transported 11,802 passengers in February compared to 15,975 in January 2021. The daily average ridership was 492, a decrease of 23.04%. There were 278 passengers with bicycles and 234 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in February.

The paratransit service transported 989 passengers in February compared to 1,290 in January 2021. Average daily ridership was 41, a decrease of 20.14%. For the month of February, the paratransit service had 0% trip requests denied due to capacity.

Saturday service began August 15, 2020, and totaled 1,087 in February 2021, but there is no comparable data at this time.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. Johnson said the entire State of Oklahoma endured significant winter weather in February with high temperatures of around four degrees and low temperatures of minus twelve degrees from February 8 through February 19, 2021. Wind chills were regularly measured around minus ten to minus thirty degrees. Along with freezing temperatures, precipitation in the form of freezing drizzle and snow led to hazardous roadway conditions and the snow was prone to snowdrifts, further complicating pedestrian and vehicular traffic. As a result, EMBARK Norman operated modified Saturday service and one route did not operate due to dangerous travel conditions on February 15th through February 19th. This was the most significant weather event of its kind in decades and residents were advised by government officials and local media to take precautions and avoid travel if possible. He said these weather conditions and the ongoing pandemic contributed to low ridership.

Mr. Johnson highlighted transit activities and said Staff continues to work with Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc., (Nelson/Nygaard) for a comprehensive evaluation of existing transit service, which will identify opportunities to improve transit service for the community. The outcome of the study will be a strategic plan to optimize and expand transit over the next 20 years. He said outreach activities included promotion of the project website to citizens and stakeholders, promotion of an online survey to obtain feedback on existing transit service and suggestions for potential improvements. He said two virtual public meetings were held on February 23rd and February 24th as well as stakeholder meetings for all member of the public, including riders and non-riders; three virtual meetings for all members of the public, including riders and non-riders. Staff anticipates at least one additional public meeting to discuss the final draft of the Long Range Transit Plan.

Mr. Johnson said Staff is waiting for a final Notice to Proceed from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality to purchase the City's first battery electric vehicle, a 35-foot transit bus. Staff is also preparing a grant application to the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) Low or No-Emission Vehicle Program for one battery electric bus and associated charger, which is a very competitive grant. He said Staff will continue to modernize and standardize the bus fleet using funds available to the transit program.

The Traffic Control Division began installing EMBARK Norman bus stop signs in February, which is anticipated to be completed within the next few weeks. 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 in in operational condition despite the age of the vehicles (19 out of 27 busses have met their useful life). This maintenance includes mechanical maintenance as well as fueling, cleaning, and sanitizing the busses each night at the conclusion of service.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said the Transit Maintenance and Operations Facility will not have a vehicle wash station and the busses need to be washed every night. The University of Oklahoma (OU) is currently allowing the use of their vehicle wash facility, but once the City's facility is complete and busses moved, the only alternative will be to hand wash the busses. He said this would be a huge undertaking so Staff is working on funding and design for a vehicle wash facility, which will be presented to Council soon.

Mayor Clark said once pandemic restrictions end, she would like to see more encouragement for the public to ride the busses and Mr. Johnson said Staff will be doing more outreach and marketing activities once pandemic capacity restrictions have been lifted. He said the OU Capstone Marketing Class has partnered with EMBARK Oklahoma City (OKC) to specifically focus on EMBARK Norman to improve the transit system.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated March 25, 2021, from Taylor Johnson, Public Transit Coordinator, through Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, to Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee
2. Transit System Monthly Report for February 2021

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Item 2, being:

PROJECT UPDATE – JENKINS AVENUE BOND PROJECT, IMHOFF STREET TO LINDSEY STREET.

Mr. Brandon Husford with Freese and Nichols said improvements to Jenkins Avenue between Imhoff Road and Lindsey Street included a traffic analysis; increasing roadway capacity; additional intersection improvements; drainage improvements; multi-modal travel and walkability; and coordinating with OU Campus. He said existing conditions consist of a two-lane open section roadway north of Constitution Street four-lane with median south of Constitution Street; drainage issues, especially from Timberdell Street to Constitution Street; no sidewalks south of Timberdell Street on the west side; and extensive utilities throughout the corridor.

Mr. Huxford said the proposed project design includes a four-lane roadway with median, curb, and gutter; wide sidewalks on the west side; off-street hike/bike path on the east side; realigning Constitution Street and Imhoff Road via a roundabout; realigning Timberdell Road Intersection and adding a traffic signal; converting Stinson Street to a 4-way stop intersection; incorporating Reaves Park Study access changes; increasing roadway capacity of Jenkins Avenue; evaluating pedestrian crossings north of Timberdell Street; construction of an enclosed storm sewer system to replace existing drainage ditches; addressing existing drainage issues in coordination with Reaves Park Project; evaluating low impact development (LID) in median; evaluating median options; and irrigation in median. He said another goal of the project is to protect trees along the corridor when possible

Item 2, continued:

The project budget includes construction costs - \$7,156,370; design - \$1,216,583; right-of-way (ROW) acquisition - \$643,600; utility relocation - \$400,000; and inflation - \$143,127 for a total project cost of \$9,559,680. Mr. Sturtz said the City received \$1,765,853 of the requested \$7,500,000 from the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) for this project.

Mr. Huxford highlighted the project timeline as follows: Notice to Proceed - December 2, 2019; Concept Plan/OU Coordination - Ongoing; Community Planning and Transportation Committee Meeting - March 25, 2021; Preliminary 30% Plans - March 29, 2021; Begin National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process - March 29, 2021; 60% Plans and ROW Plans - July 12, 2021; 90% Plans - May 9, 2022; Final Plans - August 9, 2022; ROW and Utility Clearance - September 13, 2022; Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) Bid Opening - November 17, 2022; and Begin Construction - February 2023.

Chairman Holman asked if there are any plans to bury overhead utility lines and Mr. Huxford said impact of all overhead utilities will be evaluated, but no determination has been made at this time. Chairman Holman said he would prefer burying the overhead utility lines and many residents in the area feel the same.

Chairman Holman said his biggest concern about the project is the east side of Jenkins Avenue between Timberdell Street and Stinson Street because some of the houses are very close to the street as well as large trees. He wants to make sure the City is able to save as many trees as possible even if that means making a curve to the street. If any trees have to be removed, he would like them to be replaced with trees that grow quickly, i.e., two years versus 20 years.

Mayor Clark said the design has been very well done and is a much needed solution for the area. She said roundabouts are the best way to calm traffic and she is big fan. She also applauded the concept of a four-way stop on Timberdell Street.

Councilmember Hall said she supports burying utility lines on all project going forward whenever possible.

Councilmember Peacock asked if there will be mid-block crossings and Mr. Huxford said yes, negotiations with OU is ongoing to determine the best possible locations for pedestrian crossings.

Mr. O' Leary said OU has really been working well with the City on this project, which has not always been the case.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Jenkins Avenue Bond Project - Imhoff Road to Lindsey Street Project Updates," Community Planning and Transportation Committee dated March 25, 2021

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Item 3, being:

PROJECT UPDATE – CONSTITUTION STREET MULTIMODAL PATH – JENKINS AVENUE TO CLASSEN BOULEVARD.

Mr. Huxford said ACOG maintains a Bicycle Master Plan for the OKC Metro Region and Norman maintains a Bicycle Master Plan for its City limits. He said the key to these bicycle paths is connectivity with other regional routes and areas of interest within Norman. Many years ago, Norman made a concerted effort with input from many citizens to create a continuous multi-modal path between Ruby Grant Park and Lake Thunderbird (approximately ten miles). The Constitution Street multi-modal path consists of a ten-foot wide concrete path to serve all non-vehicular modes of travel such as pedestrians, bikes, scooters, wheelchairs, etc., to be located on the north side of Constitution Street between Jenkins Avenue and Classen Boulevard.

Mr. Huxford said on March 31, 2017, ACOG issued a Call for Projects for Transportation Alternatives Grant Program (TAP); on May 10, 2017, the City submitted a TAP Application; and in June 2017, ACOG selected the City's Constitution Street Multi-Modal Path Project for TAP funding that consisted of \$600,000 in grant funds and \$520,000 in local funds.

Challenges to the project include acquiring easements from OU that required approval from the OU Board of Regents; coordination with Burlington Norther Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad to allow the path to cross the existing railroad crossing; two bridge crossings; and a few trees that currently screen OU Golf Course from Constitution Street may have to be removed.

On November 14, 2017, City Council approved an engineering contract with Freese and Nichols for a pre-design feasibility study; on December 11, 2018, City Council approved a design contract with Freese and Nichols; in August 2020, plans were submitted to ODOT; and there will be a potential bid opening in April 2021.

Mr. Huxford said the design of the multi-modal path is complete; easement acceptance is complete; Environmental Clearance is anticipated in March 2021; Rail Certification is anticipated in March 2021; submittal of final plans is anticipated to take place in March 2021; and construction is anticipated to begin as early as July 2021.

Chairman Holman said he is happy to see the multi-modal paths throughout Norman coming together and Constitution Street has been the missing piece in southeast Norman for a long time. He is especially pleased about a path crossing the railroad tracks because there are a lot of bicycle and pedestrian traffic on Constitution Street with all the growing retail on Classen Boulevard as well as the location being so close to OU.

Item 3, continued:

Mayor Clark said so many OU students live east of Constitution Street at Classen Boulevard so she is happy about this project. She said there are so many areas in Norman that need sidewalks and she hopes the City can continue to invest in sidewalks using grant funds.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Constitution Street Multimodal Path- Jenkins Avenue to Classen Boulevard Project Update," Community Planning and Transportation Committee dated March 25, 2021

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Item 4, being:

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS.

Chairman Holman said next month he would like to discuss parking minimums and/or maximums.

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The meeting adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor