CITY OF NORMAN, OK

STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 11/10/2026

REQUESTER: Taylor Johnson, AICP, Transit and Parking Program Manager

PRESENTER: Scott Sturtz, P. E., Public Works Director

TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF BID 2627-20, CONTRACT K-2627-71: A CONTRACT BY AND BETWEEN THE CITY OF NORMAN AND LOWE-NORTH CONSTRUCTION INC., IN THE AMOUNT OF $448,888, PERFORMANCE BOND B-2627-40, STATUTORY BOND B-2627-41, AND MAINTENANCE BOND MB-2627-21; FOR THE TRANSIT CENTER EV BUS PANTOGRAPH SYSTEM INSTALLATION PROJECT; AND ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION R-2627-55 GRANTING TAX-EXEMPT STATUS; AND BUDGET APPROPRIATION AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT. (WARD 4)

BACKGROUND:

On February 24, 2009, the Norman City Council adopted the City's first Alternative Fuel Program which strongly supports the acquisition and operation of alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs). This set the City's goal to increase the usage of alternative fuel vehicles each year as technology allows while monitoring each new technological advancement to suit the application and departmental needs. At that point in time fully electric vehicles were not an option, but the technology has now advanced in this direction and the City of Norman is still striving to be a leader in the implementation of alternative fuel technology. This is also in accordance with the "Ready for 100" resolution passed by Council on May 28, 2018, which set a goal of 100 percent renewable energy sources for transportation by 2050.

The City of Norman took over the operations of the City public transportation system on June 1, 2019, from the University of Oklahoma. Since then, staff has worked diligently to pursue federal grant opportunities to maximize local funding to replace the aged vehicles that were inherited as a part of the transition of service. 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 Federal Transit Administration (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.

An authorization to purchase the City's first battery electric vehicle, a transit bus, was approved at Council's May 25, 2021 meeting. Approximately 50% of the vehicle purchase price was reimbursed through a grant received from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality

through the Volkswagen Settlement Fund. An authorization to purchase the City's second battery electric transit bus was approved at Council's August 10, 2021 meeting. Approximately 70% of the vehicle purchase price was reimbursed through a grant received from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) 2021 Low- or No-Emission Vehicle Program. The City's project was 1 of 49 projects selected in the nation.

On December 14, 2021 Council approved funding for additional costs on both electric buses to add charge rails to the top of the buses. Adding the charge rails to the buses ensured that they are properly wired and outfitted for overhead pantograph charging which allows the vehicles to charge while in service and thereby stay in service for longer stretches of time. Both buses entered service in Spring of 2023.

On September 26, 2023, Council approved Resolution R-2324-60 to submit an application to the ACOG Public Fleet Conversion Grant Program for the purchase of pantograph charging infrastructure, which allows the electric transit buses to be charged in service during a layover at the Norman Transit Center. The pantograph charging solution can be thought of as an awning the bus drives underneath which extends and connects to the charge rails on the top of the bus. On Thursday, February 15, 2024, ACOG approved a ranked list of projects for funding. Because the City of Norman had submitted multiple projects, these were grouped together as a single project, which was ranked first out of nine projects that received funding. Overall ACOG awarded $2,580,782 to the City of Norman through this grant opportunity which was accepted March 26, 2024. As part of the award, the Transit Center EV Bus Pantograph System Installation project will receive $1,078,880.

Due to the pantograph charging equipment being somewhat specialized and unique, staff spent considerable time between grant acceptance in spring 2024 and winter 2025 identifying possible avenues for procurement. On December 9, 2025, Council authorized the purchase of two (2) ABB 300kW On-Route Pantograph Chargers from Gillig in the amount of $772,100 utilizing the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority contract C-22-MT-001 and approved a budget appropriation through Resolution R-2526-87.

DISCUSSION:

Purchase order number 26006207 for the pantograph chargers was encumbered at the same 80% federal/20% local match split as the original grant funding. Due to the entire local match being budgeted within a Public Transportation Fund (Fund 27) capital outlay account (27550276-45007) for the purchase of the pantograph chargers, the remaining local match amount of $115,300, intended for the installation, was rolled into the Fund 27 fund balance at the conclusion of fiscal year 2026. Staff advise appropriating the remaining local match amount ($115,300) for the installation of the chargers, from the Public Transportation Fund balance.

The Transit Center EV Bus Pantograph System Installation project includes specialized electrical installation of the overhead EV bus pantograph charging system which allows the electric transit buses to be charged in service during a layover at the Norman Transit Center. Expected work includes installation of underground conduit, electrical cabinet, pantograph chargers, and protective bollards as well as restoration of any pavement, curbs and gutters, sidewalks, and grass/sod disrupted during the installation process.

The bid documents and specifications for the Transit Center EV Bus Pantograph System Installation project were advertised on September 17 and 24, 2026 according to State Law. Two (2) bids were received on October 8, 2026. Upon receipt of the bid proposals, Small Arrow Engineering, the design consultant for the project, analyzed the bids and found no errors.

The low bidder is Lowe-North Construction Inc. in the amount of $448,888, which is $23,722 below the next lowest bidder. The consultant's final estimate for the project was $278,205, approximately 60% less than the lowest bid. The very specific nature of this work and a lack of projects of this type factored into the engineer's estimate being significantly lower than the bids received. As discussed above, Staff and the engineer have completed a comparative analysis of these bids, and have determined the lowest bid is competitive, and the bid represents a fair bid.

The remaining budget for this project is $576,500 after acquisition of the pantograph charging system, architectural and engineering services, and miscellaneous other costs. The Lowe-North Construction Inc. bid amount of $448,888 would leave the Transit Center EV Bus Pantograph System Installation project under budget by $127,612 despite being above the consultant's final estimate.

RECOMMENDATION No. 1:

Staff recommends a budget appropriation of $115,300 from the Public Transportation Fund balance (account 27-29000) to the Bus Pantograph Charger Infrastructure project (Project No. BG0094 - Const, Account No. 27550277-46101).

RECOMMENDATION No. 2:

Staff further recommends Bid No. 2627-20, for the Transit Center EV Bus Pantograph System Installation Project, be awarded to the selected bidder, Lowe-North Construction Inc. of Spring Hill, KS for $448,888.

RECOMMENDATION No. 3:

Staff further recommends that, upon approval of Bid No. 2627-20, the following contract and bonds be approved:

Contract K-2627-71,
Performance Bond B-2627-40,
Statutory Bond B-2627-41 and
Maintenance Bond MB-2627-21

RECOMMENDATION No. 4:

Staff further recommends that, upon approval of Bid No. 2627-20, Resolution R-2627-55 be approved, authorizing and appointing Lowe-North Construction, Inc. as project agent for purposes of obtaining tax-exempt status.