



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

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

Thursday, April 24, 2025 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

The Community Planning & Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, will meet in Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room in the Municipal Building, on Thursday, April 24, 2025 at 4:00 PM, and notice of the agenda of the meeting was posted at the Norman Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and on the City website at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

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

PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman - Chairman
Councilmember Ward 2 Matthew Peacock
Councilmember Ward 3 Bree Montoya
Councilmember Ward 5 Michael Nash

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball

OTHERS PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 5 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney II
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer
Mr. Joseph Hill, Streets Program Manager
Mr. Scott Sturtz, Director of Public Works
Mr. Tim Miles, City Engineer
Mr. Brent Barbour, Police Department Major, Support Bureau
Mr. Jesse Mitchell, Fire Department, Chief of Training
Mr. Larry Wyatt, EMBARK Operations Specialist
Ms. Kathy Hammans, Admin Tech III, City Clerk

AGENDA ITEMS

1. PRESENTATION OF THE MARCH PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, presented the March 2025 Public Transit Report.

The cutaway busses previously ordered, arrived on March 26, 2025, and are being on-boarded for use in April, leaving just three of the original fleet to be replaced.

The new transit software has been online for the first full month in March and staff anticipates next month's report numbers will be more reflective of actual ridership activity.

The total ridership for EMBARK Norman in February 2025 was 37,386 compared to 35,374 in February 2024, with the average daily ridership being 1,589. Total ridership for the 2025 YTD is 329,340, compared to the 2024 YTD of 303,003.

The fixed route service had a great month, transporting 43,178 passengers in March 2025, compared to 31,961 in March 2024. Passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices totaled 614, compared to 747 for March 2024. Passengers with bikes or other mobility devices totaled 1,133 compared to 523 for March 2024.

Norman On-Demand completed 3,838 rides in March 2025, compared with 4,021 for February 2025, representing a 4.55% decrease.

Chairman Holman said the numbers are impressive and he is pleased with the increased riders with bikes or other mobility devices over March 2024 as it shows people are either using transit more or are more aware of the availability to take their mobility device along on their trip.

Chairman Holman asked, with the 200 square miles the City of Norman covers, are there places with no Plus Program ride requests and asked for the cost for coverage of 200 square miles versus 100 square miles. Mr. Johnson said the program is demand response and if there are no requests for a zone, no dispatch is made to go to the area and no costs are incurred.

Councilmember Grant asked about Strategic Performance Measures and how the fiscal expenditures are planned for. Mr. Johnson said the fiscal year runs July 1st to June 30th and historical data helps plan for the annual cost of service and helps project fluctuating costs from year to year. Staff is currently working on numbers for the Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

Councilmember Grant asked about possible fee increases or measures being taken to reduce costs on the administrative side and fleet expenses. On-Demand is not currently included in the proposed 25-26 Fiscal Year budget, but staff has been making cuts where possible in order to keep the service in place.

Mr. Johnson will be meeting with VIA next week regarding possible fare increases. Councilmember Grant asked if reducing overlap runs and/or trimming services will be a viable option. Mr. Johnson said staff has looked at the ridership for

1. (continued) PRESENTATION OF THE MARCH PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

the last hour of service each day and will be analyzing it to see if this might be a good cost cutting option.

Mr. Johnson also said OU is not happy with a decrease in service and may increase their contribution to \$127,000, and OU will be discussing an August 20th ten-month contract to help continue services for students. This contract change would result in approximately a \$95,000 savings and put transit \$80,000 in the black – 1% of the total operating costs.

Chairman Holman asked if these changes would result in the likelihood of not needing a General Fund subsidy. Mr. Johnson said yes and any additional unbudgeted funds would be recognized through budget adjustments in the current year.

Chairman Holman said Transit should continue services as is for now and wait on more information from VIA. The committee asks for an update on cost and revenue be provided if fares are changed. Mr. Johnson said he will have a consultant work on getting all the numbers together and report back.

Chairman Holman said a few regular users of the system have come to express their concerns regarding the transit program.

Ms. Kris Nanny, citizen and transit user, said that she is the spokesperson for the group and all are active Paratransit users. In the last few months they have had some difficulties using the services. The new software has caused a lot of scheduling issues, leading to missed rides, appointments, etc. and communication with EMBARK has become very difficult.

With the upcoming EMBARK renewal, she and others request their concerns be considered. Ms. Nanny said they feel the needs of the software are taking priority over the safety and care of the riders. The pickup arrival times given to the drivers and riders are not matching, causing missed appointments from delayed travel, with the riders sometimes experiencing up to three-hour travel times and stuck on the bus for multiple hours before arriving at their intended destination.

Ms. Nanny said they would like to offer some possible solutions like, bring drivers and dispatch back to Norman. Scheduling out of Oklahoma City does not allow for timely correction of transportation issues. Local dispatch and drivers allow people with challenges the ability to have hands on, real time contact to address issues in a timely manner.

Chairman Holman thanked Ms. Nanny and the other citizens for their valuable input.

Next month, staff anticipates having updated information on the Central Oklahoma Long Range Transit Plan to share with the committee.

2. DISCUSSION REGARDING PROJECT DESIGN FOR THE 24TH AVENUE NW AND 48TH AVENUE NW WIDENING PROJECTS.

Mr. Tim Miles, City Engineer provided an update on the 24th Avenue NE and 48th Avenue NW widening projects.

The two road segments were included in the 2019 Transportation Bond Project package and are in different phases of development. During the design analysis, physical constraints, construction cost increases, and developmental patterns warranted a re-evaluation of the segments.

The design evaluation supports staff proposed changes to the roadway design from plans previously presented in the 2019 Transportation Bond Project descriptions. Changes include decreasing the proposed lanes while still meeting the intent of the original projects, rendering a more constructible design which will reduce costs by using less pavement.

The improvement to the original plan will include on-street bike lanes and widening at intersections only. The proposed designs will still provide improved levels of service in these areas over existing conditions.

48th Avenue NW from Robinson Street to Rock Creek Road will go from a three-lane roadway with on-street bike lanes to a two-lane roadway with center left-turn lanes at major entrances and replacing on-street bike lanes with a 10' multimodal trail on the east side. This change is sustainable as there is only one turn on the roadway section.

24th Avenue NE from Rock Creek Road to Tecumseh Road will go from a four-lane roadway, with on-street bike lanes, to a three-lane road with a 10-foot multi-use path. Staff is working on obtaining federal funds for the next fiscal year and the lane change will allow the project to rank higher on the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) because of increased benefit to cost ration.

The 24th Avenue NE Project is in an area of large acreage with homes. With the volume of traffic, a three-lane roadway makes more sense. Adding to the project expense, is the fact that the City of Norman will be responsible for 100% of the cost to move Oklahoma Gas & Electric (OG&E) services, as they are located on private property and not on an easement.

Councilmember Montoya asked about storm water improvements in the area. Mr. Scott Sturtz, Director of Public Works, said some improvements, such as larger storm pipes, would be needed to move storm water away.

Councilmember Hinkle said he has concerns about widening 24th Avenue NE to four lanes from Alameda Street to Robinson Street and asked if there will still be four-way stops at the intersections. Tecumseh is a two-lane asphalt road from 24th Avenue NE to 12th Avenue NE and this could become a dangerous intersection and road.

Mr. Sturtz said Tecumseh Road is part of the bond program and staff is aware changes will be needed. Developers could be required to do turn lanes as part of their projects in order to support the increased traffic resulting from the development.

2. (continued) DISCUSSION REGARDING PROJECT DESIGN FOR THE 24TH AVENUE NW AND 48TH AVENUE NW WIDENING PROJECTS.

Councilmember Grant said she likes the proposed changes and the economical and aesthetic changes that are part of the road project. Councilmember Peacock said he supports any time four-lane roads can be changed to three-lane roads.

Mr. Miles said the timeline for the 24th Avenue NE project will be sometime in 2026 and 48th Avenue NW is anticipated to be sometime in 2029.

3. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE POTENTIAL INSTALLATION OF STREET BOLLARDS ON CAMPUS CORNER.

Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer, provided an update on the Festival Street Bollard Pilot Project for the committee.

In early 2023, staff received requests from Council to look into a potential pilot program for the installation of aesthetically pleasing bollards to replace some Type III barricades so Campus Corner could be closed to traffic on game days.

Mr. Joseph Hill, Streets Program Manager, said staff started working on the project in April 2023 and set an anticipated completion date of June/July, (before the return of OU students), and the start of the football season.

When the project was funded in the FYE 2024 budget, materials were ordered and concrete maintenance and preparation performed, (summer of 2023), at the proposed bollard locations.

Due to safety and feasibility concerns raised by first responders and merchants, the project was delayed so concerns could be addressed. Questions about who would have a key to the bollards, who would be responsible for raising the bollards before and after an event, etc.

Fire and Police were concerned about response times if they did not have a key to lower the bollards in the event of an emergency or if there was a malfunction. Who would have access, how many keys, who receives keys, who maintains inventory and what happens if a key is lost or stolen.

Everyone was concerned that a system requiring bollards to be physically raised and lowered could be problematic for those needing access to the closed areas at various times.

Then in January 2024, New Orleans happened. The question now; could this system prevent a driver from going through bollards/barriers and killing/injuring the participants in the area?

3. (continued) DISCUSSION REGARDING THE POTENTIAL INSTALLATION OF STREET BOLLARDS ON CAMPUS CORNER.

Bollards no longer seemed to be the proper solution to prevent an episode like occurred in New Orleans, where the roads were closed and the driver used the sidewalk to enter the area. The same thing could happen in an attempt to close the Campus Corner area using bollards in the street.

After multiple internal meetings with Fire, Police and Public Works, many concerns were expressed and staff were made aware by the vendor that the type of bollards purchased were mostly aesthetic and would only stop a very small vehicle driving at slow speed, not a vehicle of substantial size and speed. The initial project did not account for off roadway bollards, left gaps in security, causing concerns for many that the bollards purchased were not a feasible solution to the problem.

In May 2024, the Bollard project was brought back to Council, including the Campus Corner Merchants Association in the discussions. The project was approved by the Community Planning and Transportation Committee and quotes were solicited on viable systems.

Councilmember Peacock asked how the current barriers are moved. Mr. Riesland said the Fire Department has designated ingress/egress locations so they can get in and out of the area easily and a Fire Truck is able to push the concrete barriers out of the way in an emergency.

Mr. Hill said if a bollard is hit and stuck in the up position, the road will need to be cut away to remove it. Mr. Hill further said that there are utilities in the areas where bollards would be installed and property and/or easements are not available to install the high maintenance system.

Councilmember Grant asked if staff have met with Campus Corner Merchants about the issues and the need to change the bollard systems. Mr. Hill said the change was brought up by Council, as the current pilot is no longer applicable and staff chose to explore options before presenting a viable alternative.

Chairman Holman asked about closing streets for events until completely over in order to keep traffic out of the area until pedestrian traffic is clear. Major Brent Barbour, Support Bureau, Norman Police Department, said if the roads are left closed, it becomes an all-night party.

Mr. Hill said upon reviewing the May 2024 notes, it looks like Campus Corner wants to close more often, but the merchants do not want to manage the street closures. Councilmember Grant asked if it was feasible if merchants only want to close a portion of Asp. Mr. Sturtz, said there would still be issues. Mr. Sturtz said staff is looking into a couple possible solutions for street closures that will be flexible and can be moved where needed.

3. (continued) DISCUSSION REGARDING THE POTENTIAL INSTALLATION OF STREET BOLLARDS ON CAMPUS CORNER.

Councilmember Peacock said he initially thought the bollards would be remotely controlled at the Emergency Operations Center, (EOC). Councilmember Peacock said staff needs to review the Norman Music Festival event and determine additional things to consider. Councilmember Peacock said he would like to see that, whatever is put in place for Campus Corner, duplicated for Main Street events as well.

Mr. Riesland said the previously purchased bollards will not be a loss to the City as they will be used somewhere else, like in a park. Alternative systems will have the capability to be picked up and used at other locations as needed.

Mr. Hill said it would be beneficial to establish event zones so that maintenance, safety benches, barriers, etc. could be put in place permanently. Major Barbour said it would be great to offer a choice of locations that are pre-cleared and ready to go, helping to reduce event and security costs. Councilmember Grant said she likes having designated areas with ready-made event locations.

Mr. Hill said staff is looking at the Meridian Rapid Defense, (MRD) modular barrier system. The system is mobile, can be expanded beyond the roadway, is ADA accessible, can be deployed rapidly, blends well with current event security and can be incorporated with other systems, such as concrete barriers and traffic rated streetscape elements. This system can be solar or generator controlled, is more affordable, robust, low maintenance and has a direct purchase or rental option.

Councilmember Peacock asked if the MRD system will be sufficient, without the need for a bus or something else put in place to stop traffic and if there will be warning signs for event traffic of the road closures. Mr. Sturtz said there would be road closed advance warning and stopped traffic signs ahead of closures.

Councilmember Grant said Campus Corner needs to be included in discussions, especially regarding potential weekend street closures. If Campus Corner merchants want to close the streets every weekend, they may need to invest in their own system and cover security costs.

Mr. Hill said this would be a policy decision by Council on how many events the City can support. Game day is the most important as it brings in revenue to the campus merchants and the City of Norman.

Mr. Hill said funding is still available in the Bollard Construction project and asked Council if they want staff to obtain some of the MRD system barriers to see how they fulfill the need.

Councilmember Grant agreed with renting and testing the MRD system out before a major investment is made. Chairman Holman said the main goal is to allow free flow of pedestrian traffic in a safe manner and he loves what he has heard and seen on the MRD system and looks forward to seeing it work.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:51 pm.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor