



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

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

Thursday, June 26, 2025 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

The Community Planning & Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room in the Municipal Building, on Thursday, June 26, 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 Stephen Holman opened the meeting at 4:00 PM.

Members Present:

Chairman Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 5 Michael Nash

Members Absent:

Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball
Councilmember Ward 2 Matthew Peacock
Councilmember Ward 3 Bree Montoya

Other Attendees:

Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Gran
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager
Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney II
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit, Parking & Program Manager
Mr. Chris Mattingly, Director of Utilities
Mr. Tim Miles, City Engineer
Mr. Scott Sturtz, Director of Public Works
Ms. Grace Holloman, Accessibility & Cultural Coordinator
Dr. Marilyn Dillon, Mobility Management Administrator, EMBARK
Mr. Larry Wyatt, EMBARK Operations Specialist
Mr. Bill Stanley, AWE Board of Directors Member
Ms. Katherine Hammans, Admin Tech III / City Clerk

AGENDA ITEMS

ITEM 1. PRESENTATION OF THE MAY PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

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

Transit staff discussed the Central Oklahoma Long-Range Transit Plan with Council last month and expect to bring it back one more time before the plan goes to the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) Board for final review and adoption. A Town Hall meeting is coming soon, check out the project website and provide comments, even if you can't attend in person.

Staff will be bringing a budget amendment to Council for the continuation of the Microtransit Program, to be included with the budget which is scheduled to be adopted.

Staff are working on contract amendments with both VIA and OU and plan to have the contracts in front of Council at the first meeting in July, in order to allow the program to continue past the end of the second year.

The Transit program had some issues with the initial installation of the Paratransit software. Staff met on May 12th with riders and staff at the Adult Wellness and Education Center (AWE) and held a follow-up meeting on June 20th to discuss and work on resolutions to the software and ridership issues. Based on user feedback things have improved greatly. A follow-up meeting is scheduled to be held near the end of July to check in and keep the conversation going.

Ridership Numbers (May 2025):

- Total Rides - 42,400 (paratransit and fixed route) - 22% increase over May 2024
- Fiscal Year-to-Date: 462,000 rides - 27% increase over the previous fiscal year

Breakdown:

- Fixed Route (May 2025): 40,250 – compared to 32,583 in May 2024 (8,000 increase)
- Paratransit ("Plus"): 2,150 in May 2025 - Slight increase from 2,110 in May 2024

By Route:

- Nearly all routes continue to show year-over-year increases
- Social Security Route: Fewer rides overall, so small changes show as larger percentage swings
- Saturday Service: Increased significantly, though possibly due to having one more Saturday this May compared to last year
- West Lindsey Route:
 - Began 30-minute frequency last fall
 - Staff are still comparing current data to the previous 60-minute service
 - Staff believe the frequency increase has contributed to rising ridership

Riders per Service Hour:

- Fixed Route (May) - 19.9 riders/hour (rounded to 20) - Up from 18 in May 2024
- Paratransit (Plus – Weekday) - 1.73 riders/hour - Up from 1.33 in May 2024 (30% increase)

ITEM 1.(continued) PRESENTATION OF THE MAY PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

Mr. Johnson said the software improvements are helping deliver more efficient services, particularly with more effective co-mingling of rides. Mr. Johnson went on to present data on ridership for Councilmembers.

Significant ridership increases noted:

- West Lindsey (M–F): 59% increase (from 1,900 to just over 3,000)
- Rock Creek (M–F): 57% increase
- Saturday Ridership:
 - West Lindsey: 93% increase
 - Westheimer: 72% increase
 - Rock Creek: 88% increase

Mr. Johnson said ridership increases are due to route frequency changes and interlined routes, (121/122 switching every 30 minutes).

- This reflects the success of restoring Saturday service, which had previously been removed under CART (University-operated system).
- Interest was raised about rider destinations, especially near the airport, Norman North, Rock Creek, and Porter Ave on Saturdays.

Weekend Service Strategy:

- Unlike many agencies, Norman maintains Saturday service frequency at weekday levels, with the West and East Lindsey routes operating every 30 minutes.
- Sunday service is identified as a top priority for future expansion, but comes with increased costs for fuel, maintenance, staffing, etc.

Accessibility and Fixed Route Service:

- 243 wheelchair riders in May 2025, (Down 49.06% from 477 in May 2024)
- Wheelchair usage may vary due to rider mobility, life changes, or shifting preferences
- EMBARK Plus ridership was stable (2,150 in May 2025 versus. 2,110 in May 2024)
- Bike usage increased

Bus Accessibility:

- Most fixed-route buses are equipped with Quantum self-locking wheelchair securement systems (except two vehicles inherited from OU).
- These systems increase independence and efficiency for riders using mobility devices.

Norman On-Demand Service Updates

- May 2025 Ridership - 3,400 rides in May 2025, up from 2,567 in May 2024
- Fiscal Year-to-Date - 42,130 rides vs. 25,000 last year
 - Ridership per service hour - May 2025: 5.8 versus May 2024: 5.3
 - Fiscal Year Average: 6.1
 - (Highly efficient for a Micro Transit service operating seven minivans)
- Completed trips requesting wheelchair-accessible vehicles increased 68% in May
- Council emphasized the importance of this, as private services like Uber and Lyft do not provide ADA-accessible vehicles in Norman.
- Norman On-Demand was created to meet this specific need.

ITEM 1.(continued) PRESENTATION OF THE MAY PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

Councilmembers recognized the continued growth and interest in the City of Norman transit services. Mr. Johnson let Council know the final ridership report for FY2025 will be presented at the August meeting.

Council emphasized the importance of seating and shade for passengers, especially in high-traffic, utility-heavy stops like grocery stores. Mr. Johnson said Staff perform ongoing reviews of bus stop benches/shelters and have:

- Noted absence of a shelter/bench at the east-side Walmart Supercenter
- Noted missing infrastructure near East Lindsey by Faculty Heights Park
- Ongoing evaluation of bus stop amenities, including benches and shelters, especially near grocery stores and high-traffic areas like Faculty Heights Park.

Council asked if the bus shelters/benches are provided by the City of Norman or through an advertising contract. Mr. Johnson said Norman contracts with Tyler Media, like Oklahoma City.

- To provide shelters and benches.
- To maintain the assets, including handling vandalism, accidents, and graffiti.
- City receives a share of ad revenue from Tyler Media.
- City is responsible for concrete foundation work only.
- City can request trash cans, though placement and maintenance are inconsistent.

Exceptions:

- A few city-installed benches exist, such as:
 - In front of the Transit Center facing Porter.
 - Across from Sprouts using downtown-style benches.
 - Brick shelters built during the West Lindsey Street Project are City-owned and City-maintained.

Staff received a report of possible sledgehammer damage to the brick bench on the North side at 24th Avenue NW. Staff will research and work with the appropriate City department or follow up with Tyler Media as applicable for the repair.

Council asked for an update on the Transit Center and any Federal funding news, especially on grants that provide 50% of operational support for the program.

Mr. Johnson said the City received notice of the Federal transit allocation for FY25, which will be used to fund FY26 operations. The allocation was approved at the national level and is now moving through the ACOG (Association of Central Oklahoma Governments) programming process. There has been no current indication of cuts; in fact, the last proposed Federal budget showed an increase in transit funding.

The Transit Center restroom was reopened recently, after upgrading to a more durable toilet system for high usage. Because of a recent incident occurring before security hours (approximately 10:00 am to 10:30 am), the restroom availability is limited to security operation hours. Monday–Friday: Noon to 8 p.m. and Saturday: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Council asked if the security hours for the Transit Center can be expanded in response to recent safety concerns. Mr. Johnson said the security hours are limited due to budget constraints, but there may be flexibility to adjust hours as necessary.

ITEM 1.(continued) PRESENTATION OF THE MAY PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

Reports show incidents tend to occur earlier in the day. Data is being reviewed, and a proposed change could be made to shift the service window from Noon–8 PM to 11 AM–7 PM, based on observed higher traffic between 10–11 AM. Staff is working with EMBARK to optimize the timing of security service deployment.

Current security service costs for eight hours of coverage per day for the transit center are approximately \$88,000 per year. Full coverage (15 hours/day) wouldn't necessarily double the cost, but that estimate gives a general idea for future budgeting.

ITEM 2. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE EMBARK WELL MOBILITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.

Dr. Marilyn Dillon, Mobility Management Administrator, EMBARK, introduced herself and gave a brief overview of EMBARK's mobility services in Oklahoma City.

EMBARK provides a full range of mobility management programs, some limited to city residents and others county-wide, depending on funding sources.

Some of the programs include:

- Homeless and low-income transportation support
- Senior transportation services under the Older Americans Act
- Grocery shopping
- Congregate meal site transportation
- Non-emergency medical transport
- Partnerships with the Regional Food Bank to deliver food to homebound seniors
- Transportation support for seniors who are victims of fraud or identity theft (in partnership with OKC Police Department)
- Social service transportation partnerships with: ReMerge (diversion program for single mothers) Hope House, Palomar Family Justice Center (domestic violence support)

The EMBARKWell Health and Wellness Transportation Program was launched in 2018 as a one-year pilot using a \$30,000 grant from the Federal Transit Administration, specifically for seniors.

The program was created in response to a growing focus on the Social Determinants of Health, such as:

- Community connection
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Recognized issue: seniors often cannot access non-covered health-related services like exercise classes or wellness centers, even when medically recommended.

Dr. Dillon shared a personal story about her own cardiac rehab experience to highlight the barriers seniors face in accessing daily wellness services.

ITEM 2. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE EMBARK WELL MOBILITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.

The EMBARKWell Program provides transportation to health-related, non-profit wellness locations, Operating Monday through Friday, 7 AM to 7 PM. A key partner in service is the MAPS 3 Senior Health and Wellness Centers in Oklahoma City, like the Norman Adult Wellness and Education Center.

The EMBARKWell Program serves all YMCA locations in Oklahoma City and collaborates with the Oklahoma City Parks Department to identify sites offering senior-oriented programming such as fitness or craft classes. These programs are offered at no cost to seniors 60 years and over to align with the Older Americans Act. To manage costs, seniors are required to use the wellness center closest to their residence.

Oklahoma City ridership dipped in 2021 due to COVID-19 but rapidly increased afterward. The program will conclude the current fiscal year with approximately 7,500 trips. To meet growing demand, a \$90,000 budget is planned, sourced from 50% City funds and 50% matching grants, including Section 5310 FTA, Federal Transit Administration program for senior mobility.

Discussion was held regarding launching a similar pilot in Norman. Initial steps would include estimating the senior population, surveying needs, and mapping eligible nonprofit health and recreation sites.

Potential facilities for inclusion: Norman Regional Health Club, YMCA, The Well, 12th Street Rec Center, various City recreation centers, the 'U' Gym and Pool, and possibly libraries or university-affiliated facilities.

The current transportation service is provided through Uber, with special arrangements for lift-equipped vehicles for mobility-impaired participants. EMBARK plans to transition to use its own fleet in the future.

Case studies tracked six participants for a year and demonstrated significant health improvements, including reduced A1C levels and elimination of some medications. Consistent access to wellness services showed notable benefits.

Representatives from board members and community stakeholders expressed strong support. Next steps include data gathering, budgeting analysis, and further discussion in approximately two months, pending fiscal availability.

ITEM 3: DISCUSSION REGARDING PAVING CONDITIONS AT 80TH AVENUE S.E. AND BLUE JAY ROAD.

The issue was raised regarding the deteriorated road conditions on Blue Jay Road by Ward 5 resident, Mr. Randy Carter. Blue Jay Road once connected via Lindsey Street to 84th Ave, was repaved in the 1990s but later abandoned. Now, there are concerns about its ownership and maintenance responsibility.

ITEM 3: (continued) DISCUSSION REGARDING PAVING CONDITIONS AT 80TH AVENUE S.E. AND BLUE JAY ROAD.

City staff said the history on this roadway is primarily anecdotal. The road functions as a private road, with no easement or dedication found in City records. No clear documentation confirming its dedication to the City or County has been located. City records show this to be a private road.

City Manager Darrel Pyle said the story he was told was that the road was abandoned during the reconstruction of the Twin Bridges and they detoured on the new route, which later became the main route.

Since the road is considered private, the City has no responsibility for its maintenance. However, under an existing interlocal agreement, if the County accepts maintenance responsibility, the City could participate in repairs. Current pavement shows signs of severe deterioration, including alligator cracking and extensive wear beyond service life.

Despite being private, the road is actively used by the public. The route is not gated or restricted, allowing continuous traffic flow. Vehicles reach the end of Lindsey Street and continue the roadway to access the nearby section line.

Mr. Carter has been a resident on this street since 1979 and provided history information to the Council and Staff on the road. Originally 80th and Blue Jay were private roads and Lindsey from 72nd going east went all the way through to 84th.

Sometime between 1979 and 1984, Lindsey Street going east of 80th became completely inaccessible. Either the County or the City contacted all the property owners asking if they would deed all the private road easements to the county so the road could be upgraded and maintained as a major roadway through the area. The County told the residents the direction of the road needed to change to allow school buses, trash trucks and all other regular traffic to get through.

In 1984, the owners deeded road easements to the county, which were filed at the county courthouse. Mr. Carter said he has a copy of all the easements and will provide a copy to Mr. Scott Sturtz, Director of Public Works.

The easements were accepted by the Cleveland County Commissioner's at their April 9, 1984, meeting. The road was brought up to height requirements in 1984-1985, with dirt and gravel. In 1995, a combination of the City and County came out and paved the road with asphalt, with the City providing the labor and equipment and the County the materials. Somehow the easement documents never got from the County Commissioners to the County Clerk's staff until last summer for recording.

Chairman Holman said there is a website called *historicals.com*, with satellite images going back to 1957 and up to today. If you go back to 1975, you can see that Blue Jay Road did not exist, but Lindsey Street went through and connected to 84th, having been platted as part of a subdivision.

By 1995, Blue Jay Road had been built (sometime in the late '70s) and Lindsey Street was just a little white remnant on the maps, with no visual sign of it by 2003. It became totally inaccessible sometime between 1984 and 1995.

ITEM 3: (continued) DISCUSSION REGARDING PAVING CONDITIONS AT 80TH AVENUE S.E. AND BLUE JAY ROAD.

City Manager Pyle said the City can do a partnership and joint project with the County to get the street issue corrected. Mr. Carter said he visited with Mr. Jacob McHughes, Cleveland County District 2 Commissioner, and he is amenable to working with the City to help get the road up to grade, with some stipulations under the interlocal agreement as required for the process to move forward. (current year recently executed)

Councilmember Nash asked if there are any 2019 road maintenance bond funds available. Mr. Sturtz said the most recent bond is 2021 and staff would have to review if there are any unallocated funds. If the road becomes a County road, the question would be, can City funds be expended on it. In the interlocal agreement, the County typically buys the materials, the City lays it down.

Councilmember Nash asked if the City could work towards migrating away from the interlocal agreement entirely? Maybe just see how much it would cost to get the road up to code and officially adopt it, so we're not having to make deals with the County every few years?

Mr. Sturtz said the road would need to be extended to at least eighteen feet in width, and the length is probably a mile to a mile-and-a half. The depth of the subgrade is unknown at this time and there may be two, six, or eight inches of asphalt. Enough is not known to be able to give a detailed estimate. Just looking at the photos, there is obvious subgrade failure and work would need to start with the subgrade and the road completely rebuilt. Mr. Sturtz said estimates for bringing it up to City standards, (six inches of asphalt over eight inches of base material would be at least a minimum of \$1 million for the whole sector.

A traffic count has not been conducted yet to figure out how many cars use it and will have to be done in order to determine the best option for road repair. The fact that the road lasted 30 years before getting to this condition is meaningful, it's been a good road for a long time, but it's getting to the point where, if something isn't done soon, it's going to deteriorate badly.

Mr. Carter said Lindsey Street, from 72nd to 80th, was paved at the same time and hasn't had any attention since and is in the same shape. Lindsey Street has never been a private road, is working and has lasted up to where it was vacated by the County, with no additional maintenance.

City Manager Pyle said since the area is fully developed, no new development is anticipated. Staff will bring traffic count numbers and options to repave or replace for consideration. Legal will look at the documents to verify it is a County road and the interlocal agreement would cover City participation in the repaving.

Chairman Holman clarified the direction Council is leaning is to tell the County that we'll take over the road once it's brought up to City standard. We wouldn't contribute financially until after they bring it up to standard. Once that's done, the City will assume maintenance.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:02 pm.