



# CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

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

Tuesday, January 03, 2023 at 5:30 PM

## MINUTES

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### CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Heikkila called the Meeting to Order at 5:30 p.m.

### ROLL CALL

#### PRESENT

Mayor Larry Heikkila  
Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler  
Councilmember Ward 6 Elizabeth Foreman  
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman

#### ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 3 Kelly Lynn  
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant  
Councilmember Ward 5 Rarchar Tortorello  
Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock  
Councilmember Ward 1 Brandi Studley

### AGENDA ITEMS

#### 1. UPDATE OF MICRO TRANSIT STUDY

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the City of Norman assumed the transit service on July 1, 2019; GO Norman Transit Plan was adopted on June 22, 2021; a budget adoption of \$750,000 for a microtransit pilot program was approved on July 1, 2022; a contract with HNTB Corporation (HNTB) was approved on September 15, 2022; kickoff meeting with HNTB was held October 18, 2022; a Council

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Workshop No. One was held December 6, 2022; and tonight will be Council's Workshop No Two.

Ms. Allison Buchwach, Planner IV for HNTB, said workshop themes include increasing convenience for paratransit users; filling the gap for after-hours service; reducing traffic congestion and reducing need for parking; convenience/access to the program of all of City of Norman; access for medical appointments; filling in service gaps with access for most residents; access for southeast or east Norman; affordable access; and efficient use of transit vehicles.

During the first screening qualitative analysis, alternatives include On-Demand Paratransit – microtransit that replaces existing paratransit operations with on-demand software and service; All-Day Fixed Route Supplement – microtransit rides are offered on a limited basis during existing fixed route service periods (defined as capturing 25% of current transit riders); Weekday Nights – microtransit available weekday late evenings/nights outside of fixed route service; Sunday Service – microtransit available on Sundays; Saturday Service – microtransit available on Saturdays as a replacement to fixed route service; Suburban/Rural Mobility – microtransit to increase mobility to those traveling to, from, and within Zone 2; and Go Norman Priorities – implement Go Norman Transit Plan in order of recommended priorities. Alternatives for Fixed Route Service Supplemental, Suburban/Rural Mobility, and Go Norman Priorities were determined to be less optimal alternatives.

The second screening qualitative analysis focus was narrowed to four alternatives that include On-Demand Paratransit; Weekday Nights; Sunday Service, and Saturday Service. HNTB felt the remaining alternatives should be ranked holistically rather than individually. The criteria became focused on Feasibility of Vendors – operations/staffing drivers and start-up efforts; Rider Comprehension – easy-to-follow service schedule and offering enough service to make it worth testing or adopting into trip habits; Cost Refinements; and Internal Feasibility – opportunities with Embark or existing software.

There seemed to be interest in moving forward with On-Demand Paratransit through an opportunity to partner with Embark's contract for on-demand software and moving forward with Weekday Nights packaged with Saturday and Sunday service to maximize the budget. Weekday Nights would serve as a foundation with appeal for vendors, customer uptake, and case study while Saturday service could be added with additional budget and Sunday service could be added as budget allows and where no transit service currently exists.

The recommended pilot program includes providing microtransit service during weekday evenings, Saturday evening, and Sunday with some overlap with fixed route service. Weekday service evenings would be provided from 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. (or 7:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.) for six hour spans of service and Sunday service would be provided from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for eight hour spans of service. Riders within a defined zone would be limited in size. Ms. Buchwach said this recommendation offers a pilot program that puts a strong case forward for micromobility success; offers some overlap with fixed route as a case study for the service's appeal; allows for little to no disruption to Embark's current operations (can be done as a turnkey and be removed or modified after the pilot period); allows sufficient service periods to be attractive to a

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vendor and for uptake by riders; and fits the budget with workable tradeoffs based on vendor response.

Ms. Buchwach said limiting pilot zone size to a small zone assures service standards including low wait time for a ride request, serving areas with demographics that are most likely to use the service, and gains understanding in rider behavior and lessons learned to justify an increase in or adding a zone. A large zone demand may be too large to maintain service standard of low wait time dissuading people from using the service again and the mechanisms to control demand, if greater than estimated, may be perceived negatively, may require introducing a fare, and increasing wait times or having variable wait times, which could mean less likelihood for future support.

Mr. Johnson said a Request for Proposal (RFP) would not define the zone size as the vendor would propose the size can be served based on service goals and budget. Mr. Rick Billings, Transit and Mobility Planner for HNTB, said the RFP will be built in a way to produce goals, i.e., faster response times (15 minutes), a demographic of people served, origin destinations, etc. He said the industry in general have very complex tools at their disposal where boundaries can be drawn quickly, how many vehicles would be needed, who the service would serve, cost of service, etc.

The paratransit recommendation is to invest in microtransit software for existing paratransit service area in partnership with Embark to improve convenience to the customer that would not require a pilot program. It would not be a case study in how microtransit may be a mobility option for more general application to Norman, it is more suitable as a policy decision on *when* to make the investment rather than *whether* to make the investment.

Next steps include an Implementation Plan, coordination with Embark on paratransit software, and considering broader mobility services currently available from Embark, such as NEMT (a transportation service provided to individuals who need more assistance than a taxi service is able to provide. Service providers are specially equipped to transport riders in wheelchairs or with other special needs); grocery routes; share-a-fare, etc.

Councilmembers thanked HNTB and Staff for their hard work and agreed to move forward with a RFP.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Norman Microtransit Pilot Program," dated January 17, 2023

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## 2. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE RECODIFICATION PROCESS

Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney, said Staff began this process in the Fall of 2020 with Municode (the company that currently published Norman's ordinances) who has

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extra capabilities within their software, but in order to access those the City Code needed to be codified. She said recodification is generally done every ten years and the City of Norman has not had to recodify in 50 years.

Ms. Walker said one Municode representative and one Staff person was assigned to look at the City's Code and compare it to State law, provisions within itself, and Federal law to ensure there are no conflicts. She said every line in the Code of Ordinances is read more than once to catch any errors. The two most exciting things is the Zoning Ordinance will be incorporated into Code of Ordinances and fee schedules will be updated. She said all fees, other than water rates, will be in one fee schedule, which will be convenient for users. She said Staff is currently finalizing the ordinance adoption with a plan to place it on the agenda for First Reading on January 24, 2023, and Second Reading on February 14, 2023. She said the Code of Ordinances would be more user friendly and cleaner looking on the website. There will also be hyperlinks that take people to the actual ordinance to see if language is changed, how they were changed, etc. She said Staff would be able to access other things Municode software that includes self-publishing that will help make the changes easily and save Staff time.

Councilmembers thanked Staff for the update and were excited about the recodification effort.

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:33 p.m.