



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

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

Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 4:00 PM

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## MINUTES

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### CALL TO ORDER

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

### PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler  
Councilmember Ward 5 Michael Nash (4:30 p.m.)  
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman, Chair

### ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock

### OTHERS PRESENT:

Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant  
Mr. Kevin Bloss, P.E., Olsson (an Engineering Firm)  
Mr. Paul D'Andrea, Capital Projects Engineer  
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager  
Mr. Tim Miles, Capital Projects Engineer  
Ms. Beth Muckala, Assistant City Attorney  
Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works  
Ms. Liesel Polwort, P.E., Olsson  
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer  
Mr. Jessie Rush, Assistant Director of Operations, EMBARK  
Mr. Tim Johnson, Johnson and Associates  
Ms. Ashlynn Wilkerson, Assistant City Attorney

## AGENDA ITEMS

### 1. PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT INCLUDING SERVICE CHANGES.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the fixed route service transported 36,156 passengers in August 2023, compared to 24,440 in August 2022. The daily average ridership was 1,346 and there were 1,091 passengers with bicycles and 519 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in August.

The paratransit service transported 2,173 passengers in August 2023, compared to 2,149 in August 2022. Average daily ridership was 80 in August 2023, which was the same count in August 2022.

Saturday service totaled 3,011 in August 2023, a 79.55% increase from August 2022.

Mr. Johnson said Norman On-Demand is a pilot microtransit service, which launched late night and Sunday services, and is a turnkey service provided in Core Norman by TransitTech provider Via Transportation. This service complements existing public transit service by extending service into the late night hours and during the day on Sundays for a small fee (\$2 first passenger, \$1 each additional passenger, and OU SafeRide is free). Since inception of the service on August 21, 2023, 1,633 individual people have created accounts, which is a direct result of marketing efforts for the new program.

Following interest from the University of Oklahoma (OU), a contract with OU and a companion amendment were added to the existing contract with Via Transportation to expand the program to include OU's SafeRide Program. Staff has not been able to differentiate the number of student riders yet, but is looking forward to being able to break those numbers down soon.

Chairman Holman said the pilot program expires in August 2024, unless Council decides to keep the services, alter hours of service, or alter service boundaries, and he already has suggestions about adjusting hours of service. Mr. Johnson said the online transit app has the ability to take suggestions from the public and the City may want to re-evaluate the program's services and/or hours in January.

Chairman Holman said he would like to see how many Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) riders use the on-demand service and Mr. Johnson said he would provide those figures in the report next month.

The Go Norman Transit Plan was adopted by Council on June 22, 2021, following an eleven month process of collecting data and receiving feedback from stakeholders, City Staff, City Council, and the public. Mr. Johnson said projecting ten years into the future, the Go Norman Transit Plan identified many recommendations for transit improvements in Norman that included additional frequency, Sunday service, and expanded hours on weekdays and Saturdays. On September 27, 2022, Council approved and acknowledged the Public Participation Process for service changes as identified in the Go Norman Transit Plan.

Item 1, continued:

The City purchased property at 320 East Comanche Street to be remodeled into a new Transit Center that includes exterior bus bays; ADA compliant site circulation, benches, trash cans, and shelters. The interior will include public and Staff restrooms, waiting area with vending machines, water fountain/water bottle filling station, and Staff breakroom.

Mr. Johnson said the City provided notice of three public meetings in order to receive comments on proposed transit service modifications planned for implementation in August 2023. These service changes will affect the entire Norman Transit Service and in total, 41 official interactions were collected during the public comment period. On December 13, 2022, Council approved the proposed service changes with the goal of starting the new route service in August 2023. All routes will be operated out of the new the Norman Transit Center and all routes will be reconfigured to improve service operations and passenger usability that will include routes that have typically operated bidirectionally. Some route segments will be eliminated or realigned resulting in both retired and new bus stops. He said new route changes will begin October 16th in coordination with the opening of the new Transit Center on October 12, 2023.

Chairman Holman said the new route system travels further east than the existing route system so that is helpful.

Councilmember Schueler asked if there has been outreach to citizens regarding retired bus stops and the option for On-Demand Service and Mr. Johnson said yes, through flyers on each bus; information on the City's website; email to 115 stakeholders; mass email to OU students and staff; and a front page article in The Norman Transcript.

Councilmember Schueler asked if there has been any discussion regarding the route that used to serve the Little Axe Community. She asked if this is something Council would need to address in the future, and if so, what are the costs? Mr. Johnson said Staff will evaluate that route and calculate costs; however, this seems to be the type of "gap" the On-Demand Service could fill.

Chairman Holman said routes are needed to Cleveland County Detention Center and Moore Norman Vocational Technical (MNVT) Center and Mr. Johnson said Staff is looking these areas as recommended by the Go Norman Transit Plan.

Chairman Holman asked how much one route costs and Mr. Johnson said costs change based on inflation, cost of living adjustment, etc., so he would like to run the numbers before giving an estimate.

Mr. Johnson said there will be ambassadors present at the Transit Center to help people get to and from routes they may not be accustomed to and guide them through the route changes.

Mr. Johnson said Staff is researching project opportunities for the various Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) air quality grants available over the next few months and Staff will continue to research eligible grants to support existing operations, vehicle needs, and future improvements.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. Johnson said the Fleet Maintenance Division continues to ensure the transit fleet is in operational condition each morning, despite the age of the vehicles. The maintenance includes fueling, cleaning, and sanitizing each transit vehicle daily.

Councilmembers thanked Staff for the update.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated September 28, 2023, from Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, through Shawn O'Leary, P.E., CFM, Director of Public Works, to Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee
2. EMBARK Norman Performance Report for August 2023
3. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "City of Norman Transit Service Changes Effective October 16, 2023," dated September 28, 2022

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## 2. UPDATE ON THE 2019 TRANSPORTATION BOND PROGRAM.

Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer, introduced Ms. Liesel Polwort, Olsson Program Manager, P.E., and Mr. Kevin Bloss, Olsson Client Relationship Manager, P.E.. Mr. Sturtz said the 2019 Transportation Bond Program was approved by voters on April 2, 2019, for a bond total of \$72 million, program total of \$139 million, and anticipated federal funds of \$67 million (48.2%). He said this is a ten-year program ending in 2030, that consists of 19 projects selected by City Council, citizens, and the 2014 Comprehensive Transportation Plan. The Bond Program did not increase property taxes and Staff leveraged federal funds with City funds for improvements that include Traffic Management Center; widening and reconstruction of roads; installation of new traffic signals; improvements to stormwater drainage system; and addition of sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-modal paths.

Mr. Sturtz said the 19 transportation projects include five bond funded projects and 14 federally funded projects that include 36th Avenue West: Indian Hills to City of Moore limits; Indian Hills Road and Interstate 35 (I-35) Interchange; Indian Hills Road: West to I-35; Rock Creek Road: Queenston Avenue/Bruckner Drive to 24th Avenue N.E.; East Tecumseh Road; 12th Avenue N.E. to 24th Avenue N.E.; Traffic Management Center; 24th Avenue N.E.: Rock Creek Road to Tecumseh Road; 48th Avenue West: Phase I, Robinson Street to Rock Creek Road; Gray Street two-way: University Boulevard to Porter Avenue; Porter Avenue/Acres Street Intersection Improvements; 48th Avenue West: Phase II, Rock Creek Road to Tecumseh Road; James Garner Avenue: Acres Street to Duffy Street; Porter Avenue Streetscape; Lindsey Street Special Corridor: Phase I, Picard Street to Elm Avenue; 36th Avenue S.E.: Cedar Lane Road to State Highway 9 (SH-9); Lindsey Street Special Corridor: Phase II, Elm Avenue to Jenkins Avenue; Jenkins Avenue: Imhoff Road to Lindsey Street; Cedar Lane Road East: 24th Avenue S.E. to 36th Avenue S.E.; and Constitution Street: Jenkins Avenue to Classen Boulevard/12th Avenue S.E.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Sturtz said in order to obtain the funding, the City has to be in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) through the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) and \$20 million is available per year. He said this is a highly competitive process (individual projects rated and ranked). ACOG member agencies within the Encompass Planning area are eligible to apply and no single local government can receive more than 56% of the total funding. Beginning in 2021 (FFY 2022-2024 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)), the first two years are guaranteed, but subsequent years need to compete again.

Project selection criteria for eligible project include widening, including Railroad/Highway Grade Separations; new construction; intersection improvements; resurfacing, reconstruction, rehabilitation, restoration; bridges; independent bicycle and pedestrian facilities; transit, park and ride, high occupancy vehicle lanes; carpool/vanpool; and safety projects (100% federal).

Significant changes to the project selection criteria were made for FFY 2019, with additional modifications in FFY 2024 in Call for Projects. New criteria requires projects align with the regional Multimodal Transportation Plan goals and objectives; add transportation system performance management; develop a process/methodology to ensure that the region's transportation funding is being used effectively; adjust the scoring between types of projects to reflect the region's needs; improve the competitiveness of projects that utilize cost-effective congestion mitigation and safety enhancing strategies from the Congestion Management Plan toolbox; and simplify the project application process and criteria. The 2019 changes were used for the first time in the formulation of the FFY 2020-2023 TIP. Project readiness (2024 change) earns five bonus points on any project that has progressed to 60% plan stage (no points with 2019 changes).

Mr. Sturtz said over the last 28 years, the City has averaged \$5.5 million per year in federal funding through the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) that included over 140 transportation projects for total federal funding of \$105 million.

Ms. Liesel highlighted 2019 Transportation Bond project funds and timelines and said Porter Avenue and Acres Street Improvements are complete and under budget by \$500,000 (approximately 15%). With Council's authorization, federal funds have been secured for four projects and \$9 to \$11 million has been added to the program with these changes and no ACOG funds were secured in FYY 2025. The four projects included Jenkins Avenue: Imhoff Road to Lindsey Street; Porter Avenue Streetscape; Gray Street Two-Way Conversion; and Traffic Management Center. The Porter Avenue Streetscape is under construction with Gray Street Two-Way Conversion to bid in November. The Traffic Control Center is expected to bid the first quarter of 2024 and Jenkins Avenue to bid in spring of 2024. James Garner Avenue will bid in November (bond funding only) and changes in project scope and construction costs continue to be a challenge for project budgets.

Item 2, continued:

Ms. Liesel said projects planned to be submitted to ACOG for FFY 2026 or FYY 2027 include James Garner Avenue - Acres Street to Duffy Street; Cedar Lane Road – East of 24th Avenue S.E. to 36th Avenue S.E.; Constitution Street – East of 24th Avenue S.E. to 36th Avenue S.E.; 36th Avenue S.E. – Cedar Lane Road to SH-9; 24th Avenue N.E. – Rock Creek Road to Tecumseh Road; Lindsey Street Special Corridor – Elm Avenue to Jenkins Avenue; Lindsey Street Special Corridor – Pickard Avenue to Elm Avenue; and Tecumseh Road – Queenston to 24th Avenue N.E.

Cedar Lane Road and 36th Avenue S.E. are under design and can be accelerated; however, \$12.6 million is needed to replace federal funds originally estimated for the projects. The east to west connector Turnpike will possibly eliminate the Indian Hills Road Project and the need for a new Indian Hills and I-35 Interchange. This will release \$11 million in bond funds to utilize on other projects. Utilizing available bond funds from previous projects and removing Indian Hills Road Projects as discussed would allow the City to proceed with design and construction of Cedar Lane Road and 36th Avenue S.E. with bond funds only.

Eleven projects are currently under construction and should be completed by 2027, while the original schedule called for 13 projects to be under construction and completed by 2027. ACOG funds, grants, and other funding will be pursued for the remaining projects.

Pending the Oklahoma Transportation Authority's (OTA) decision, should the City utilize bond funds only to finalize design and construction of at least two projects in 2024 and 2025 that do not receive ACOG funds? This would allow the bond program to continue constructing projects through 2025.

Councilmembers unanimously agreed to move this item forward to full Council.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "2019 Transportation Bond Program, Program Update and Funding Strategies," dated September 28, 2023

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3. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE URBAN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE CENTER CITY TAX INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICT.

Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer, said as part of the Center City Formed Base Code (CCFBC), a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District was adopted by Council in December 2017. To assist in the cost estimates for the TIF, an Infrastructure Analysis was completed by Johnson and Associates in April 2017. This analysis looked at the CCFBC area in blocks and approximated what infrastructure improvements would be necessary for each block. The infrastructure improvements included roadway, alleys, sidewalks, streetscape, storm sewer, water, and sewer. The total estimated costs was \$44,002,509. TIF funds have begun to be collected and Council expressed a desire to beginning infrastructure updates; however, the Infrastructure Analysis did not attempt to prioritize the improvements.

Item 3, continued:

In FYE 2023, Council requested an update to the Infrastructure Analysis report to include more information on prioritizing improvements. Staff determined that costs have increased and the update should include revised cost estimates. Proposed an update to include Priority Improvements Matrix; updated Cost Estimates; updated Street Sections; and Street Condition and Rating Map for a cost of \$75,000. During the March 23, 2023, Planning and Transportation Committee (CPTC) meeting, it was determined there was no need for the street condition because Staff can utilize the existing pavement ranking system (PMS) and Staff completed an alley ranking than can be utilized for the prioritization of alleys. The CPTC expressed interest in the Priority Maintenance Matrix and suggested Staff meet with Johnson and Associates to reduce the scope to omit street condition and alley rankings.

On August 24, 2023, Staff presented the reduced scope and fees to perform the work as discussed to include Priority Improvements Matrix, updated Cost Estimates, and updated Street Sections. Johnson and Associates reduced the fee to \$50,000 for the scope of services.

In the CPTC meeting, Councilmembers shared concerns that the current scope was not representative of the studies that were necessary for infrastructure development utilizing TIF funding in the CCFBC. Councilmembers proposed that an Urban Design and Implementation Plan be part of the scope to better understand the need for improvements.

Staff contacted Johnson and Associates with the information regarding the proposed scope and fees, including elements discussed at the CPTC meeting. The revised fee for these services is \$218,600.

Councilmembers expressed their approval to move this item forward to full Council.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated September 28, 2023, from Scott Sturtz, P.E., CFM, City Engineer, through Shawn O'Leary, P.E., CFM, Director of Public Works, to Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee
2. Letter dated September 15, 2023, to Mr. Scott Sturtz from Timothy W. Johnson, P.E., Johnson and Associates, L.L.C.

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:33 p.m.