

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

December 30, 2021

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:00 p.m. at 201 West Gray Street, Building A, Room D, on the 30th day of December, 2021, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Hall, Peacock, Studley, and
Chairman Holman

ABSENT: Councilmember Schueler

OTHERS PRESENT: Ms. Cinthya Allen, Chief Diversity and Equity
Officer/Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
Coordinator
Captain Shawn Hawkins, Norman Police
Department
Mr. Jesse Hill, ADA Technician
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program
Manager
Ms. Beth Muckala, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. Heather Poole, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer
Ms. Jeanne Snider, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

PUBLIC TRANSIT UPDATE.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the fixed route service transported 21,566 passengers in November 2021, compared to 21,834 in October 2021. The daily average ridership was 863. There were 748 passengers with bicycles and 336 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in November.

The paratransit service transported 1,772 passengers in November 2021, compared to 1,637 in August 2021. Average daily ridership was 71, an increase of 2.90%.

Saturday service totaled 1,570 in November 2021, a 13.40% decrease over 1,898 in October 2021.

Item 1, continued:

The Go Norman Transit Plan was approved by Council on June 22, 2021, and Staff is continuing exploratory work on the next steps as recommended by the Plan. This includes work on the downtown transit center and potential grant opportunities for creating additional bus stops that are associated with the recommended route changes in the Plan.

Mr. Johnson said progress continues to be made on the construction of the new Transit Maintenance and Operation Facility on North Base and commended Fleet Maintenance Division Staff for continuing to ensure the transit fleet is in operational condition despite the age of the vehicles (19 out of 27 buses have met their useful life). This maintenance includes mechanical maintenance as well as fueling, cleaning, and sanitizing the buses each night at the conclusion of service.

During Council's October 12, 2021, Conference, Staff presented an overview of existing public transit services and the concept of micro-transit and on-demand services. At the conclusion of that discussion, Staff was directed to look at options for a pilot project for next fiscal year so Staff is actively looking into options to propose during the FYE 2023 budget cycle.

City is in the process of purchasing two battery electric buses and Staff anticipates receiving these vehicles in August/September 2022. Approximately 70% of the vehicle purchase price will be reimbursed through a grant received from the Federal Transit Authority's 2021 Low or No Emission Vehicle Program. Staff continues to identify other avenues to purchase transit vehicles to modernize and standardize its fleet using existing local and federal funds available.

Mr. Johnson said on October 1, 2021, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) announced the grant cycle for the Air Quality Small Grant Program was open. This program seeks to improve air quality in Central Oklahoma by reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicle trips. Small transportation infrastructure projects and transit improvements as well as projects focused on congestion relief efforts are all eligible. Staff continues to analyze this funding opportunity to see how transit could benefit, such as bus stop improvements associated with the long range plan.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated December 30, 2021, 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 November 2021

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Item 2, being:

CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING CAMPUS CORNER PARKING AND COMMERCIAL LOADING ZONES.

Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer, said Staff previously presented information to the Community Planning and Transportation Committee (CPTC) regarding existing public parking in the Campus Corner area as well as recent revisions to public parking in the Campus Corner area; past parking planning and studies; attempts to provide more parking in the Campus Corner area; potential uses for the Asp Avenue parking lot; and Campus Corner commercial loading zones.

During the last CPTC meeting, Council requested options to increase utilization of the Asp Avenue parking lot and discussed the challenges of commercial loading zone locations on Campus Corner. Mr. Riesland said tonight Staff will be presenting information on how lease parking is accommodated in the Gray Street parking lot; challenges with lease parking in the Asp Avenue parking lot; recommendations to better utilize the Asp Avenue parking lot; how other cities accommodate commercial loading zones; and recommendations for more effective commercial loading zones.

Mr. Riesland said the Gray Street Parking Lot has 45 spaces available for annual leases and citizens interested in leasing a space can contact the City Clerk's Office and, depending on the interest, the City Clerk's Office either grants the request or if there are more citizens interested in a lease than there are spaces available, a lottery is held to award spaces. Those who receive a leased space pay the annual fee and are given a hangtag to display for the calendar year entitling them to park in one of the 45 assigned lease spaces. If the hangtag is lost, a replacement fee of five dollars is required. He said this type of lease system would probably not work in the Asp Avenue parking lot for several reasons. He said a lease on Asp Avenue would likely need to be viable from August through May when classes are being held at the University of Oklahoma (OU) rather than coinciding with a calendar year because leases would most likely involve students. He said a portion of the Asp Avenue lot could be designated for leased parking, but it would be difficult to determine the number of spaces to designate due to employee turnover on Campus Corner compared to the Gray Street lot. To be successful, a lease system would almost certainly have to be run through the merchants who would likely be in business through the lease period even if the employee/student is not. A lease system would conflict with game day operations in the parking lot as well and the City Clerk's Office would have a very difficult time keeping up with who actually holds the rights to a leased space.

Currently, the rates in the Asp Avenue lot are \$1.00 per hour; however, the desire to pay \$1.00 per hour does not exist as is evident in the low number of daily transactions (currently 18 per day). A lower hourly rate should result in a higher utilization of the lot and improved signage could make the lot much more visible. He said there may be an incremental exercise to determine the exact equilibrium point between the length of the walk. He said Staff is recommending changing the hourly rate from \$1.00 to \$0.50 per hour for the Asp Avenue lot only. Also, there is currently a two-hour maximum before 6:00 p.m. and it is expected that employees could have longer than a two-hour shift and suggested changing the maximum stay to four hours in the Asp Avenue lot. Mr. Riesland said the lower hourly rate and longer maximum parking time should encourage more employees/students/customers to park in the lot.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Riesland said improved signage to the Asp Avenue lot, particularly from the south for those circling and looking for a parking space, should help in directing the public to the parking lot. He said one treatment for all users of the lot would simplify enforcement and if problems with utilization of this lot persist or if employees still cannot find acceptable parking, the Committee can revisit a lease program.

Commercial Loading Zones

Mr. Riesland presented multiple pictures of commercial delivery trucks illegally parking and unloading product in undesignated loading zones. He said trucks park in the roadway and in parking spaces not designated as a commercial loading zone on Asp Avenue, Buchanan Street, and White Street. There are currently two designated commercial loading zones on Asp Avenue (in effect from 3:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.) and one on Buchanan Street (in effect from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.); however, deliveries are taking place at all hours of the day on these streets. He said based on his observations, there are clearly issues with where the commercial loading zones are currently located and how they are being utilized. He said it is clearly a safety issue with trucks stopping in the roadway to load/unload.

In practice, it is more common to designate commercial loading zones times for all the time rather than specific hours. Some cities require the commercial vehicle to register with the city to be able to load/unload and some cities issue permits to non-commercial looking or licensed vehicles to be able to utilize commercial loading zones. Mr. Riesland said some cities enact ordinances specifying how long loading/unloading activities should take. He said the registration concept seems to be the most appealing to Campus Corner merchants.

The first meeting with Campus Corner merchants took place on November 18, 2021, to discuss where commercial loading zones need to be located and when they need to be active, but there has been no real progress since that meeting. Campus Corner merchants conveyed they will discuss the locations of loading zones with all the other merchants to make sure the locations are optimized and it was agreed that all loading zones should be in effect from 3:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Research indicates that other cities use yellow with appropriate stencil and signing to demark commercial loading zones.

Mr. Riesland said there are potential new locations on Buchanan Street and White Street that are not currently commercial loading zones, but are being used by vendors to load/unload product, which seems to be a safe option to utilize.

Potential next steps include changing rates and maximum stay hours in the Asp Avenue lot and continuing meetings with Campus Corner merchants, Parking Enforcement, and Staff to discuss what needs to be done with the commercial loading zones. He said Staff can bring a firm recommendation to the Committee after completion of vetting exercises with merchants. The Campus Corner Parking Business Plan will need to be updated accordingly as well.

Item 2, continued:

Councilmembers were agreeable to recommendations from Staff and want to continue discussion of commercial loading zone locations and times to load/unload. They also wanted to explore using the Asp Avenue lot as a pick-up area for ride share vehicles/taxi's.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Campus Corner Parking and Commercial Loading Zone" dated December 30, 2021

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Item 3, being:

PRESENTATION OF THE 2021 AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) TRANSIT TRANSITION PLAN.

Ms. Cinthya Allen, Chief Diversity and Equity Officer/Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Coordinator, said in the original 2018 City of Norman ADA Self-Evaluation and Transit ADA Transition Plan, it was determined the City would continue to evaluate the remaining facilities and Transit ADA Transition Plan with the use of City employees consisting of Mr. Jesse Hill, ADA Technician, and Mr. Johnson. She said Mr. Hill and Mr. Johnson instituted a plan utilizing Colorado Springs, Colorado, as a guidance template.

The scope of the 2021 Transit ADA Transition Plan is an amendment to the 2018 Self-Evaluation Plan and applies to the evaluation of buildings and facilities, vehicles, and bus stop locations throughout Norman. This scope utilizes the authorities of the ADA of 1990; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended), United States (U.S.) Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as guidance to develop a comprehensive plan. During the development of the 2021 Transition Plan, the City of Norman conducted numerous public study sessions for the Go Norman Transit Plan. The overview of the plan includes assessing existing bus routes, location and characteristics of a future downtown transit center, and a detailed plan to guide service improvements and actively engaging the public and community in the development of the plan.

At present, the Transit System, known as EMBARK Norman, operates a fare-free service Monday through Saturday. There are five local routes servicing 112 locations that have been reviewed. With the transit study design it was proposed to install 80 new stops and discontinue 49 with 63 remaining unchanged bringing the total number of stop locations to 143. The transit study was unanimously approved by Council in June 22, 2021.

Item 3, continued:

Ms. Allen said the City of Norman is constantly looking for opportunities to not only improve bus stops, but to also improve access from the bus stop onto the bus. She said a complete stop inventory and assessment was conducted from August 2020 to January 2021 to evaluate each stop in the City of Norman's transit system. A master data spreadsheet was created for all stops in the network, which can be maintained and updated as improvements are made or stops become more active or are removed. Requests for copies of the bus stop master data spreadsheet or individual stop assessments can be made to the ADA Coordinator.

During the inventory process, five classifications were developed that include Class 1: Not ADA compliant or accessible – 14 stops identified (just a pole in the ground); Class 2: Not ADA compliant or accessible – 60 stops identified (has existing facilities); Class 3: ADA accessible with just an ADA pad – 23 stops identified; Class 4: ADA compliant with bench – 6 stops identified; and Class 5: ADA compliant with a shelter – 9 stops identified. Ms. Allen said the City will continue to work towards a goal of improving transit system access citywide. She said this could be accomplished through independent improvements to the stop network and by partnering with other City Departments during capital improvement plan projects. Bus stop improvements will be prioritized by available budget for improvements, proximity of scheduled road improvements, and customer needs or requests.

Signage was already in the process of being replaced at the time of the transit stop evaluations and it was noted the EMBARK bus signs were in compliance when audited in 2018.

An accessible bus stop loading and unloading area should be the same as the roadway, to the maximum extent practicable. Bus stop boarding areas shall provide a clear length of 96 inches minimum, measured perpendicular to the curb or vehicle roadway edge, and a width of 60 inches minimum, measured parallel to the vehicle road way.

Ms. Allen highlighted a few non-compliant bus stops, possible solutions, and costs as follows:

- 12th Avenue S.E. and Boyd Street - possible solutions include replacing boarding area with a boarding area that has a slope of less than 1:48 with a width of at least 60 inches for a projected maximum cost of \$639.00;
- Halley Avenue and Lexington Avenue – possible solutions include replacing boarding area that has a slope of less than 1:48 and at least 96 inches in length for a maximum cost of \$738.00;
- McGee Drive and Lindsey Street – provide an accessible route and boarding area that is firm and stable for a maximum cost of \$443.00;
- 36th Avenue N.W. and Havenbrook Street – provide an accessible boarding and alighting area that is firm and stable with a slope that is less than 1:48 for a maximum cost of 244.00; and
- Stubbeman Avenue and Ridge Road – replace boarding area with a boarding area that is at least 96 inches deep for a maximum cost of \$392.00

Ms. Allen said total costs to make all inventoried stops accessible is estimated to be \$68,000.

Item 3, continued:

Councilmembers were happy to hear that bus stops are being evaluated and being brought up to ADA standards and felt the money would be well spent.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Community Planning and Transportation Report: 2021 Transition Plan, Addendum to the 2018 Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan" dated December 30, 2021

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Item 4 being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING LOUD MUSIC SUBWOOFERS IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

Captain Shawn Hawkins, Norman Police Department (NPD), said noise concerns are difficult to deal with because the noise decibel needs to be measured and the NPD currently has one machine for measuring noise; however, the only officer trained to use the machine is no longer with the department. He said NPD is working on training another officer, but in the meantime, citizens can file a disturbing the peace complaint. He said the only problem with these types of noise complaints is that the noise is random and generally lasts a short period of time as the vehicle passes through neighborhoods. He said in order to measure the noise properly, the noise must continue for at least 15 minutes and most of the time, subwoofer or other vehicle noises last for short periods of times that cannot be measured.

Councilmember Peacock left the meeting at 5:26 p.m.

Ms. Jeanne Snider, Assistant City Attorney, said mediation could be a solution if this is an ongoing problem and the noise is frequently disturbing the peace of the neighbor(s). She said Hollywood Corners is an example of a successful mediation process as they were hosting live outdoor concert venues on weekends and neighbors were constantly complaining. She said since the mediation was held, she has not heard of further complaints.

Chairman Holman said he brought this item forward due to a complaint from a constituent and he appreciates the information regarding noise issues. He understands it would be hard to measure noise that lasts a just a few minutes and will inform his constituent of the options for a mediation process or filing a complaint for disturbing the peace.

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The meeting adjourned at 5:37 p.m.