

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 27, 2022

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:00 p.m. in the Conference Room on the 27th day of January, 2022, 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, Schueler, and
Chairman Holman

ABSENT: Councilmember Studley

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Paul D’Andrea, Capital Projects Engineer
Ms. Danielle Clark, Administrative Technician III
Ms. Jane Hudson, Director of Planning and
Community Development
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program
Manager
Mr. Tim Miles, Capital Projects Engineer
Mr. Brett Moran, Garver Engineering
Mr. Shawn O’Leary, Director of Public Works
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer
Mr. Jessie Rush, Assistant Director of Operations,
EMBARK
Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE I-35 CORRIDOR STUDY.

Mr. Shawn O’Leary, Director of Public Works, said Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) has taken approximately eight years to complete the I-35 Corridor Study and tonight the Committee will be presented an update on a recent virtual open house public meeting. He said ODOT focused on the eight-mile corridor, interchanges, and frontage roads between Norman, north of Main Street, to 4th Street in Moore. He said traffic continues to increase causing congestion along the I-35 Corridor so there needs to be a solution to move traffic more quickly and efficiently. Mr. O’Leary said there is a need for a new interchange at Rock Creek Road, pedestrian crossings and bicycle lanes on Tecumseh Road, and a new interchange at Indian Hills Road.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer, highlighted virtual meeting attendees and comments that included 1,885 viewers from November 15 through December 10, 2021. The virtual meeting included a study overview of Functionality: improve frontage road functionality; Efficiency: optimize interchange efficiency and safety; Connectivity: provide appropriate local access and connectivity to the supporting roadway network; and Safety: reduce the number of collisions within the study area. He presented a video of the virtual meeting (https://blantonassociates.com/ODOT_I35_vpm) provided by ODOT, City of Norman, and City of Moore.

Information provided alternatives that included one-way frontage roads, reconstructing interchanges, and making changes to on-off ramps. All three preliminary options will provide a one-way frontage road from just north of Robinson Street to S.W. 4th Street in Moore while maintaining one existing one-way frontage roads north of S.W. 4th Street, no changes to the I-35 freeway lanes are included in the options. Option 1 would improve interchange configurations at the existing five interchange locations using traditional ramp access as well as two additional interchanges at Rock Creek Road and Franklin Road and I-35 at 34th Street; Option 1B would improve interchange configurations at the existing five interchange locations using traditional ramp access, but would not add additional interchanges; and Option 1XB would improve the existing interchange configurations using an X-ramp access at the existing five interchanges. An X-ramp orients the entrance ramp before an exit ramp allowing vehicles to weave on the lower speed frontage road instead of the freeway lanes.

Interchange options were provided as follows:

	OPTION 1	OPTION 1B	OPTION 1XB
S.W. 4TH Street	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diverging Diamond Interchange with X Ramping
S.W. 19th Street	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diverging Diamond Interchange with X Ramping
S.W. 34TH Street	Slip Ramps with Frontage Road Connection	None	None
Indian Hills Road	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diverging Diamond Interchange with X Ramping
Franklin Road	Overpass with Frontage Road Connections	Overpass with Frontage Road Connections	Overpass with Frontage Road Connection

Item 1, continued:

Interchange options, continued:

	OPTION 1	OPTION 1B	OPTION 1XB
Tecumseh Road	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diverging Diamond Interchange with X Ramping
Rock Creek Road	Slip Ramps with Frontage Road Connection	None	None
Robinson Street	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diverging Diamond Interchange	Diamond Interchange with X Ramping

A Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI) allows free-flowing turns when entering and exiting an interstate, eliminating the left turn against oncoming traffic and limiting the number of traffic signal phases. It is easy to navigate, eliminates last-minute lane changes, and provides better sight distance at turns, resulting in fewer crashes. For improvement projects, a DDI often uses the existing bridge structure and the existing right of way, eliminates the cost of building new structure, eliminates purchasing additional right of way, and can be built in less time than it would take to build a new interchange with significantly less impact to motorists. In a national study, the design reduced crashes by an average of 37% after constructed at 26 interchanges across the United States. The design also reduced injury and fatal crashes by an average of 54%.

Mr. O’Leary said the Indian Hills Road Interchange is among the top ten worst interchanges in America and is a top priority project in Norman as well as Rock Creek Road Project.

Next steps include screening possible solutions; determining preliminary options; conducting operational analysis; holding three public meetings; selecting preferred option; evaluating freeway lanes; and finalizing feasibility report.

Councilmembers said the virtual meeting is an innovative way to engage the public and thanked Staff for the update. Councilmembers agreed that Option I is their preference and asked that full Council be updated for further input.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, “I-35 Corridor Study from South of Robinson Street in Norman to North of S.W. 4th Street in Moore – Status of Virtual Public Meeting Data through December 10, 2021,” presented by the Oklahoma Transportation Authority
2. EMBARK Norman Performance Report for December 2021

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Item 2, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE JAMES GARNER BRIDGE AESTHETICS OVER ROBINSON STREET.

Mr. O’Leary said the James Garner Project will create a new entry into Downtown Norman and help alleviate traffic on Flood Avenue as well as Porter Avenue. The project is part of the NORMAN FORWARD Sales Tax (NFST) approved by voters in 2015, and will consist of an extension of James Garner Avenue, providing continuous travel from Acres Street north to Flood Avenue. He said in order to support the construction of the new Central Library on Acres Street, the project was divided into two phases. Phase I included intersection improvements at Acres Street, which was completed in conjunction with the library. These improvements extended across the entire library frontage to the west and north to the new skate park to the south and east across the railroad tracks to Jones Avenue. Phase II will complete the extension of James Garner Avenue from the northern limits of Phase I, across Robinson Street with a new boulevard and bridge that connects to Flood Avenue north of Robinson Street. In addition, Legacy Trail is to be extended and reconfigured to provide improved pedestrian and bicycle access.

The James Garner Avenue Project is funded through a combination of NFST, Capital Funds set aside for railroad quiet zone improvements, and Norman Utilities Authority (NUA) Funds. Mr.O’Leary said Phase II of the project was awarded federal funding in FYE 2022 and summarized the budget status as follows:

City of Norman Funding	\$ 6,543,617.90
Federal Funds	\$ 4,825,733.00
Total Project Funding	\$11,369,350.90
Phase I Total Cost	\$ 1,871,000.00
Phase II Projected Cost	\$ 6,639,763.52
Total Project Cost	\$ 8,510,763.52
Total Project Surplus	\$ 2,858,587.38 (estimated)

Mr. O’Leary said the original project scope for the James Garner Avenue Project did not include a public art element and no funding was provided for that purpose. Stakeholder groups, such as the Norman Arts Council, various members of City Council, and members of the public have expressed interest in designing the new roadway to accommodate future public art as funding becomes available. Garver Engineering has designed the roadway to allow for spaces that can accommodate public art, such as in the center of the new roundabout on East Main Street and along the reconfigured Legacy Trail. The new James Garner Avenue bridge over Robinson Street presents an opportunity to incorporate aesthetics into the bridge design; however, these aesthetic elements would be more difficult to add later as these elements need to be integrated into the design of the bridge prior to construction. Incorporating the aesthetics will ensure the bridge has adequate structural capacity to accommodate the additions as well as fit seamlessly within the bridge design.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. O'Leary said the timeline for the project does not allow the time necessary to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to potential artists, analyze and select designs; approve a design contract, and complete the art prior to the anticipated construction of the bridge element portion of the project. With this in mind, Staff approached the roadway and bridge design team from Garver Engineering and asked them to submit a concept that could be easily incorporated into the roadway plans, which would add aesthetics to the new bridge. The Norman Arts Council through the leadership of their director, Ms. Erinn Gavaghan, is interested in managing a public art RFP process for a feature piece to be located at the center of the proposed modern roundabout.

Mr. Brett Moran, Garver Engineering, highlighted project aesthetic opportunities that include streetscape and landscaping along James Garner Avenue's roadway, median, and along Legacy Trail; an iconic entryway to downtown at the roundabout intersection at Flood Avenue; pay homage to the new roadway's namesake at Norman's only railroad underpass bridge. He said bridge aesthetic concepts include metal film strips flowing from the west to east on the sides of the existing bridge abutment walls highlighting more than 70 full-length films and television series starring James Garner; a rustic metal panel fencing with Hollywood inspired fonts; a custom Pontiac Firebird emblem (as seen on the Rockford Files); decorative metal bridge beam screen incorporating City of Norman logo elements; and James Garner's iconic signature. He said the concept is scalable with some interchangeable components.

Mr. Moran highlighted costs for a baseline concept, enhanced concept, and ultimate concept. The Baseline concept would cost \$131,400 to consist of standard decorative fencing; City name and Firebird emblem on center pylon (no lighting); James Garner signature and filmstrip (no lighting); and construction contingencies. The Enhanced concept would cost \$284,100 to consist of a metal beam screen with the Legacy Trail and Street name (no lighting); backlighting of James Garner signature and filmstrip elements; pier cap Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting; electric service, controller, and conduit; and construction contingencies. The Ultimate concept would cost \$368,100 to consist of backlighting of City name lettering and Firebird emblem on center pylon; backlighting of bridge beam screen; custom metal fencing on west side of bridge deck; deduction of standard fence on west side of bridge; stationery spotlight atop center pylon; and construction contingencies.

Mr. O'Leary said there is already a plans for future art installation planned for the roundabout with a proposed budget of \$200,000 as well as future opportunities for additional art features along Legacy Trail. He said Staff is requesting direction from Council on whether or not to use existing funding to incorporate the bridge aesthetic design into the current project, and if so, what optional features and costs does the Committee believe to be appropriate.

Councilmembers were concerned about the film reels distracting the attention of drivers and suggested incorporating the film reel concept along Legacy Trail rather than under the bridge. Councilmembers were divided on the decorative metal fencing at the bridge as well as the "Norman" lettering on the pylon. They requested Staff present the information to full Council for further consideration

Item 2, continued:

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated January 27, 2022, from Paul D'Andrea, Capital Projects Engineer, through Shawn O'Leary, P.E., CFM, Director of Public Works, to Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "James Garner Avenue Bridge Aesthetics Presentation," dated January 27, 2022

Councilmember Peacock left the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

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Item 3, being:

PUBLIC TRANSIT UPDATE.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the fixed route service transported 20,245 passengers in December 2021, compared to 21,566 in November 2021. The daily average ridership was 779. There were 714 passengers with bicycles and 274 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in December.

The paratransit service transported 1,748 passengers in December 2021, compared to 1,722 in November 2021. Average daily ridership was 67, a decrease of 5.15%.

Saturday service totaled 1,097 in December 2021, a 30.13% decrease over 1,570 in November 2021.

Mr. Johnson said the new Transit Maintenance and Operation Facility on North Base opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony on February 11, 2022. He commended Fleet Maintenance Division Staff for continuing to ensure the transit fleet is in operational condition despite the age of the vehicles. 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.

The City purchased 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 two City mechanics would be able to watch the vehicle being built, which takes one week once on the assembly line.

Item 3, continued:

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 submitted an application on November 19, 2021, requesting funding to install 80 new bus stops associated with the recommended route change in the Go Norman Transit Plan, which was approved by ACOG. He said the grant will be for \$120,000 and the City will budget an additional \$40,000 towards the project.

Mr. Johnson said on January 18, 2022, Council approved the purchase of property located at 318-320 Comanche Street, which will be renovated into a Transit Center so Staff will begin reviewing design options for presentation to Council. He said the Transit Center will be pretty basic, but will include public restrooms and a water fountain/bottle filling station. Chairman Holman explained to the newer members that the Committee has been requesting restrooms and a water fountain be provided at the Brooks Street Transfer Station for years, but it was very cost prohibitive and he is very happy to hear these will be provided at the new Transit Center.

City Fleet Maintenance continues to ensure the transit fleet is in operation condition each morning, which includes mechanical maintenance as well as fueling, cleaning inside and outside, sanitizing activities, etc.

Mr. Johnson said the Social Security Office in Moore recently reopened to the public and transit service for that route has resumed. He said the federal mask mandate for all public transportation is expected to expire March 18, 2022.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated January 27, 2022, 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 December 2021

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The meeting adjourned at 5:29 p.m.