



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

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

Wednesday, November 30, 2022 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

It is the policy of the City of Norman that no person or groups of persons shall on the grounds of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, place of birth, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, marital status, including marriage to a person of the same sex, disability, retaliation, or genetic information, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in employment activities or in all programs, services, or activities administered by the City, its recipients, sub-recipients, and contractors. In the event of any comments, complaints, modifications, accommodations, alternative formats, and auxiliary aids and services regarding accessibility or inclusion, please contact the ADA Technician at 405-366-5424, Relay Service: 711. To better serve you, five (5) business days' advance notice is preferred.

CALL TO ORDER

Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman, Chair

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler
Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer
Mr. Jessie Rush, Assistant Director of Operations, EMBARK
Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney

AGENDA ITEMS

1. PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the fixed route service transported 25,881 passengers in October 2022, compared to 21,834 in October 2021. The daily average ridership was 999. There were 861 passengers with bicycles and 443 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in October.

Item 1, continued:

The paratransit service transported 2,079 passengers in October 2022, compared to 1,898 in October 2021. Average daily ridership was 80, an increase of 9.59% compared to October 2021.

Saturday service totaled 138 in October 2022, a 133.33% increase over 12 in October 2021.

Mr. Johnson said Council approved and acknowledged the proposed public participation process for the recommended route network changes through the Go Norman Plan on September 27, 2022. He said citizens were notified by a press release, notice in The Norman Transcript, posters (in English and Spanish) placed in all buses and City Hall, social media posts, and through stakeholders via emails.

Staff is working to submit an application to the annual Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – Urbanized Area (STBG-UZA) through the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) to replace two 32-foot Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fixed-route busses. The grant application was due October 31, 2022, and Staff continues to research eligible grants to support existing operations, vehicle needs, and future improvements.

The City is currently in the process of purchasing two battery electric busses and Staff anticipates receiving the vehicles in December 2022. The City is also purchasing five CNG 35-foot fixed route busses that Staff anticipates receiving in October 2023 through January 2024.

Mr. Johnson said 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.

In an effort to better organize information, Staff worked diligently on revisions to the City's website. In large part, these changes provide more information about the transit service the City provides and reflects the ongoing transition of parking operations from the Traffic Divisions to the Transit and Parking Division by ensuring other City Staff and the public have the correct information. Following the general landing page, there are subpages with information on transit operations, e-scooters, transit planning and assets, where to park and how to pay, parking planning, and bus transit changes. The information can be found at www.normanok.gov/residents-visitors/transit-parking.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated November 30, 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 October 2022

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2. DISCUSSION REGARDING TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AROUND THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA CAMPUS.

Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer, said the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) adopted in May 2014, contains a number of action items that can serve as a roadway improvement project for potential submittal to ACOG as a Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – Urbanized Area (STBG-UZA) Project or as a potential bicycle/pedestrian project for a future ACOG or Oklahoma Department of Transportation - Transportation Alternative (ODOT TA) Project.

Transportation corridors are designed with complete street principles and context sensitive solutions in mind. Corridors identified for heightened attention will require further study and collaboration with stakeholders to identify all relevant issues and develop a design concept for each corridor that includes Lindsey Street between Berry Road and Jenkins Avenue; Porter Avenue between Alameda Street and Robinson Street; James Garner Avenue between Boyd Street and Robinson Street; and Berry Road between Imhoff Road and Robinson Street.

Mr. Riesland said James Garner Avenue's connection to Flood Avenue will have significant impacts on three of the special corridors (Porter Avenue, Flood Avenue, James Garner Avenue) and the City needs to wait until the projects are complete to reassess impacts on the design concept of the corridors as well as the two-way conversion of Main Street and Gray Street.

The 2019 Transportation Bond package was approved by voters on April 2, 2019, which is a \$73 million transportation bond that would undertake 19 transportation projects. The proposition passed by a margin of nearly two to one (9,038 votes for and 4,601 votes against) and the Lindsey Street Special Corridor (Pickard Avenue to Jenkins Avenue) was project number two of the 19 approved projects. The remaining projects includes Porter Avenue and Acres Street Intersection; Jenkins Avenue – Imhoff Road to Lindsey Street); James Garner Avenue – Acres Street to Duffy Street; Cedar Lane Road – east of 24th Avenue S.E. to 36th Avenue S.E.; Constitution Street – Jenkins Avenue to Classen Boulevard; 36th Avenue N.W. – north of Indian Hills Road to Moore city limits; Traffic Management Center; 36th Avenue S.E. – Cedar Lane Road to Tecumseh Road; 48th Avenue N.W., Phase I – Robinson Street to Rock Creek Road; Lindsey Street Special Corridor – Elm Avenue to Jenkins Avenue; Indian Hills Road – 48th Avenue N.W. to Interstate 35 (I-35); Indian Hills Road and I-35 Interchange; 48th Avenue N.W., Phase II – Rock Creek Road to Tecumseh Road; Lindsey Street Special Corridor – Elm Avenue to Pickard Avenue; Tecumseh Road – 12th Avenue N.E. to 24th Avenue N.E.; and Rock Creek Road – Queenston Avenue to 24th Avenue N.E.

The Lindsey Street Special Corridor, Pickard Avenue to Jenkins Avenue, will include roadway widening to add left turn lanes at intersections; traffic signal modifications; on-street bicycle lanes; a stormwater drainage system; curb and gutter; and sidewalks. Key issues include restricted left turns at signalized intersections, lack of continuous sidewalks/bicycle lanes, and chronic flooding. The City will need stakeholder participation to define final scope of the project.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Riesland said before, during, and since the 2019 Transportation Bond package was approved, there has been local discussion regarding the conversion of Lindsey Street between Elm Avenue and Jenkins Avenue to a pedestrian mall. Some of the discussion has been centered around the University of Oklahoma's (OU) pending move from the Big 12 to the Southeastern Conference (SEC). The Council adopted CTP does not recommend that Lindsey Street be converted to a pedestrian mall and the 2019 Transportation Bond package approved by voters did not include a concept to convert Lindsey Street to a pedestrian mall. This portion of Lindsey Street currently carries 14,000 vehicles per day including significant traffic related to OU.

Mr. Riesland said the pending update to the CTP could focus attention on the idea to convert Lindsey Street to a pedestrian mall between Elm Avenue and Jenkins Avenue. He said significant modeling will need to be undertaken to understand the ramifications of closing a portion of Lindsey Street to the surrounding street network and there will be impacts to the 2019 Transportation Bond package if changes are made.

Chairman Holman said he would not approve of a pedestrian mall on Lindsey Street due to traffic volume, which is anticipated to increase significantly when OU joins the SEC.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Traffic Management Around the OU Campus," dated November 30, 2022

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3. DISCUSSION REGARDING RAILROAD SAFETY IN NORMAN.

Mr. Riesland introduced Dr. Jack Webb, OU Professor, who helped City Staff in the process of applying for the Railroad Quiet Zone (RQZ). He highlighted responsibilities of railroad safety as follows:

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

- Promotes and regulates safety throughout the nation's railroad industry
- Application for RQZ initiated through FRA
- Inspections of RQZ through FRA

Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT)

- ODOT oversees the Heartland Flyer passenger service, highway construction projects affecting railroad property, railroad crossing safety improvements, and maintenance of the State owned rail lines

Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC)

- Monitors the operations of Oklahoma railroads for compliance with State railroad safety regulations for at-grade crossings in the State
- Conducts routine review of public at-grade railroad crossings

Item 3, continued:

Responsibilities of railroad safety, continued:

City of Norman

- Signing and markings on each public road approach to an at-grade railroad crossing
- Upkeep of RQZ appurtenances installed prior to approval

Dr. Webb said in a RQZ, trains are prohibited from sounding their horns in order to decrease noise levels for nearby residential communities; however, train horns can only be silenced when other safety measures are used to compensate for the absence of horns. He said the City wanted to pursue a RQZ for quality of life issues and economic impact on areas. He said train horns are sounded every 45 minutes, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and there are currently 32 trains going through Norman each day. He said train traffic will only increase with the proposed Regional Transportation Plan.

The Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold is the average of the risk indexed for all the gated public locations nationwide. Risk Index for Horns – the calculated risk of the crossings in the designated “zone” of crossings in conjunction with the use of train horns. Quiet Zone Risk Index – the anticipated risk associated with a designated “zone” of crossing (i.e., public crossing in the City limits of Norman) after the improvements have been completed.

Dr. Webb said there has been more collisions in the five years following implementation of the RQZ than in the five years prior to its implementation and suicides continue to make up the largest percentage (78% post and 100% pre) of the collisions and the train will sound its horn when the operator sees someone on the tracks. He said even the non-suicide collisions in the five years during the RQZ implementation would have resulted in the train blowing its horn as the operator sensed danger so there is no evidence that the existence of the RQZ has negatively impacted safety. In fact, the presence or lack of a RQZ has no impact on railroad safety.

Mr. Riesland said the City will continue to respond to and cooperate with FRA officials regarding requests to evaluate or inspect conditions with the next inspection anticipated to be after the conversion of Gray Street to two-way (there are currently no annual inspections, but any changes to the RQZ requires an inspection). Staff will also continue to provide information to FRA related to future collisions and look for opportunities to replace Kwik-curb medians with something more permanent and more substantial as well as addressing any potential changes with conversion of Gray Street from one-way to two-way in 2023.

Chairman Holman said he believes the RQZ has been a success and when citizens hear the train horn they know something is wrong. He said pedestrians will always cross the tracks whether they are at a pedestrian crossing or not and the pedestrians that have been hit by a train have mental health/suicidal issues. He said there is no pedestrian crossing at Constitution Street and Brooks Street, which he would like to see addressed. He thanked Dr. Webb and Staff for the update.

Item 3, continued:

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Railroad Safety in Norman," dated November 30, 2022

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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.