



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

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

Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

The City Council Community Planning & Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room of the Norman Municipal Building, on the 25th day of January, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., and notice of the agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and on the City website at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

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

PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman, Chair
Councilmember Ward 5 Michael Nash
Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock
Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler

ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer
Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer, Interim Public Works Director
Beth Muckala, Assistant. City Attorney III
Kathryn Walker, City Attorney
James Briggs, Park Development Manager
Lora Hoggatt, Planning Services Manager
Jane Hudson, Director of Planning and Community Development
Lamar Hammon, EMBARK Norman Operations Specialist
Dr. Marilyn Dillon, EMBARK Mobility Manager

AGENDA ITEMS

1. PUBLIC TRANSIT REPORT.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, provided the transit report to Council.

Staff is making good progress on vehicle procurements. Over the last five years, transit has been able to purchase several vehicles through grants and local fund authorizations. Currently waiting arrival of five paratransit, (two of the five are on their way) and four transit vehicles.

Supply chain issues have caused a delay on production of vehicles and transit is taking possession as vehicles are completed. Staff is waiting to receive the vehicles on order before beginning the procurement process on the six paratransit vehicles that were funded with grants in the summer.

Previously recommended route changes are now in place and the next priority of the Go Transit Plan is the Sunday service.

Chairman Holman asked if the ridership numbers can be included in the report information, especially for Sunday Services, ie: busiest hours, how many people are paying for rides?

Taylor is working on data points for reports at this time and asked council to submit the items they want to see reported, what days/hours are the busiest on average, Sunday Service user numbers, etc.

The second and third priorities were increased frequency on Route 110 (24th & Main (mall area) and Route 112. (Lindsay West)

Route 112 was already a decent route length, but has been extended to 60 minutes long and is hitting higher ridership areas like Robinson Crossing, Brookhaven, leading to increased ridership of 75-110% due to being more accessible in these high ridership locations, doubling the ridership since its implementation.

Route 110 has seen a 40% decrease since route changes were implemented, but the planned developments along 24th Avenue NW are expected to increase ridership along this route as well.

Mr. Johnson said the total ridership for EMBARK Norman in December 2023 was 31,168 compared to 26,288 in December 2022, with the average daily ridership being 1,247. Total ridership of 203,000 year-to-date, which is a 25% increase system wide.

The fixed route service transported 29,350 passengers in December 2023, compared to 24,581 in December 2022. Passengers with bicycles totaled 701 and Embark transported 511 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices in December 2023.

Saturday service totaled 3,723 in December 2023, compared to 1,097 in December 2022, a 239.38% increase, averaging 16.91 riders on each route per service hour. Norman On-Demand completed 2,605 rides in December 2023, with 25 wheelchair accessible vehicle requests for a total of 10,770 riders since August 2022. There are currently 595 active accounts that have completed more than five rides each.

Councilmember Schueler requested information on how many people are paying to ride and number of repeat riders? A repeat rider is defined as someone who has completed at least two rides.

The on-demand system is a contributing factor to budget deficits at this time. The partnership with OU is great but the costs out-weigh the revenue.

Councilmember Schueller asked how many safe rides were provided to students; how effective is it; how much is it being used; how much does OU contribute? Mr. Johnson stated the initial Embark contract was \$640,000 and OU partnered to add \$120,000 for a total of \$760,000 for an overall contract price.

Chairman Holman stated that the budget deficit in future year's vs cost of On-Demand may be problematic at some point.

Chairman Holman asked if EMBARK had problems in OKC? He stated Norman could work together to find solutions. Dr. Dillion said EMBARK will work to address concerns, problems and workable solutions.

Staff will continue to monitor the new route changes and ridership of all transit options in order to meet the needs of the community.

Transit is operating out of the new Transit Facility and things are running smoothly. Initially staff was concerned whether the HVAC system would work properly and cool, but it has worked quite well. Staff is looking at replacing paper towel drying with electric dryers to reduce potential sewer issues.

Items submitted for the record

1. EMBARK Norman Performance Report for December 2023

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2. PRESENTATION FROM EMBARK REGARDING MOBILITY PROGRAMS AND COORDINATED SERVICES.

Dr. Marilyn Dillon, EMBARK Mobility Manager – presented Mobility Programs provided in OKC and what may be future options for Norman to assist seniors/disabled. mobilitymanagement@okc.gov.

Mobility Management Services assist those who have none or limited access to a vehicle, leading to social isolation resulting in increased health complications, like Alzheimer's, dementia, heart attack, etc. These services are important to quality of life.

Older Americans Grant – Provides daily meal site delivery, grocery and other shopping store routes, round trip, AND door to door non-emergency medical services.

Service provided by OKC – MAPS - 8-5 M-F service – go to the senior center closest to their residence. Embark is well funded in the OKC budget (no fee to rider).

Share A Fare Program – not cost effective – has to be subsidized, trip cost \$25 so a larger subsidy or contribution is needed from the rider.

OKC Police Department program – for identity theft victims

Climb Ride Program – A Family Reunification Program through Oklahoma Department of Human Services. \$1 million grant - pilot transportation program – child welfare system and help improve reunification rates. 63% increase in reunification rate and program has been continued by Oklahoma Department of Human Services, (DHS). DHS is looking at an expansion for rural areas, include TANF clients, children aging out of foster care, etc.

EMBARK does a lot of partnerships to improve services and has had partnerships with Palomar Family Justice Center since 2019, providing transportation assistance related to domestic violence needs, Remerge (single mothers) 2023 – diversion program for single mothers.

Next on the horizon for mobility services – \$500,000 to replace trip software in order to provide continuous dynamic mobilization for coordination and comingled vehicle system to be more efficient and to help reduce the cost of the ride programs. Have to get program up and going before they can add other services to software.

EMBARK was recently named the coordinating agent for the Federal 5310 program in the central region, coordinating the program for seniors and individuals with disabilities in urbanized area. The 5310 program has flexible mandates using vehicles all the time for other services and allows the pulling of all the 5310 vehicles into a merged pool for usage.

Oklahoma Housing Authority is going to join the coordinated network, as well as Community Action Agencies, Daily Living Centers, and Dale Rogers Training Center. These partnerships have taken the network from two to thirty-seven mobility vehicles. This is an exciting prospect for everyone and results of the coordinated effort should be realized sometime in October 2024.

Councilmember Schueller asked who is eligible for the 5310 funds and Dr. Dillion stated, non-profits, cities, public transit providers. Who can use is based on the program, but it encourages coordinated use so the vehicle can be filled up.

Dr. Dillon said it is great knowing what programs are available and that could be modeled in the City of Norman.

Norman On Demand does not qualify for the 5310 program right now, but someday it will. In October 2024, they will be looking at additional funding and program opportunities to provide more services to the community.

Items submitted for the record

1. Power Point presentation entitled, "Mobility Programs and Coordinated Services" by Marilyn J. Dillon, Ph.D.

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3. DISCUSSION REGARDING ENGINEERING DESIGN FOR THE TWO-WAY MAIN STREET PROJECT.

Presentation was given to Council by Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer and Interim Public Works Director and David Riesland, Transportation Engineer on conversion of Main Street from One-Way to Two-Way. The original study for the conversion was done in 2015/2016.

Main and Gray were originally configured as two-way streets, one lane in each way with angled parking. In 1974 they were converted to one-way to increase capacity and for safety reasons.

In the 1990's requests to convert back to two-way began, but the 2002 study recommended that Main and Gray remain one-way.

The 2014 Comprehensive Transportation Plan showed that traffic patterns could be changed by reducing one travel lane thru downtown and installing six foot buffers between parking and two travel lanes. Further analysis was recommended on converting Main and Gray to two-way streets and the study began in July 2015.

A focus group was formed to review the potential conversion to two-way with left turn lanes at intersections.

The study found that converting Main and Gray Streets to two-way using the three existing travel lanes on each street will reasonably accommodate traffic operations with room for 20% growth. The reconfiguration will reduce traffic speeds through downtown, enhancing pedestrian safety and driver behaviors.

Main Street will be the predominant travel street, with two directions of visibility to enhance business exposure. Gray Street will be the lesser traveled street and the two directions of travel can create a new business atmosphere.

Some key issues for implementation are....

Consider the "road diet" on one-way Main and Gray Street as an interim measure (per 2014 Norman CTP);
Coordinate with the City's Railroad Quiet Zone Project;
Conduct public information and input meetings;

Item 3, continued

Confirm James Garner and Porter Avenue projected traffic volumes with Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, (ACOG)

Observe traffic changes with Gray Street two-way conversion.

Status of steps identified in two-way study include:

City Council accepts study – COMPLETED
Implement Railroad Quiet Zone in 2016 – COMPLETED
Construct James Garner Extension, Acres Street to Flood –
UNDER CONSTRUCTION, (April Completion anticipated)
Secure funding for Main and Gray conversion – GRAY STREET
FUNDING SECURED
Detailed design of recommended improvements – GRAY STREET
COMPLETE
Convert Main and Gray Streets to two-way operation – GRAY TO BID
IN MARCH BY ODOT.

Next steps identified for Main Street two-way conversion.

Engineering Design cost estimate - \$600,000
No right of way required
No utility relocations required
Secure funds for Main Street two-way – \$4,500,000

Benefits.

The 6' buffer lanes could be used as bicycle lanes as part of the conversion.

Sidewalks were upgraded in last 20 years and all other infrastructure has already been upgraded.

Utilities underground already. New signal controls, poles to support change.

Main Street up for repaving in approximately 10-15 years, preventative maintenance in five years.

Would like to get the engineering done so that the project could be shovel ready for future funding sources.

Chairman Holman – get design done so project is shovel ready, look at funding sources, maybe downtown Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District for funding with federal grants

Councilmember Peacock said maybe do the project in phases over multiple years, but be design ready to fund with surplus funds or grants.

Item 3, continued

Items submitted for the record

1. Power Point presentation entitled, "Conversion of Main Street from One-Way to Two Way" dated January 25, 2024.
4. DISCUSSION REGARDING PARKING SPACE MAXIMUMS, PARKING LOT DESIGN, AND LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS

Postponed to February

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

