

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 26, 2015

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:03 p.m. in the Conference Room on the 26th day of March, 2015, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Miller, Williams, and Co-Chairman Holman

ABSENT: Councilmember Allison and Chairman Jungman

STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Jeff Bryant, City Attorney
Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development
Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator
Ms. Sara Kaplan, Retail Marketing Coordinator
Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager
Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Transportation Engineer
Mr. Shawn O’Leary, Director of Public Works
Mr. Scott Sturtz, Capital Projects Engineer
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

OTHER GUESTS PRESENT: Mayor Cindy Rosenthal
Ms. Susan Coldwater, Manager of Operations for Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART)
Mr. Roger Gallagher, 1522 East Boyd
Mr. Harold Heiple, 218 East Eufaula
Mr. John Johnson, Executive Director, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG)
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Planning Intern with Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART)
Mr. Daniel O’Connor, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments
Mr. Tom Sherman, University of Oklahoma

Item 1, being:

CART RIDERSHIP REPORT INCLUDING SAFERIDE AND EXTENDED SERVICE FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY, 2015.

Ms. Susan Coldwater, Manager of Operations for Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART), highlighted the CART ridership report for February, 2015. She said fixed route ridership was up 7% with the most dramatic increases on the Lindsey East and West routes, Research routes, and Sooner Express. She said CARTaccess ridership increased 8% for the month and 4% for the year with 113 average daily riders. CARTaccess passengers can now ride the fixed route at no charge and since that was enacted in January, 30 CARTaccess riders have requested CART Identification (ID) cards for the free fixed route service. She said there has also been an increase in bicycle riders using CART.

Ms. Coldwater said a “Turn Up for Transit” event will be held March 25, 2015, on the University of Oklahoma (OU) South Oval to promote alternative transportation including CART fixed route service, bicycling, and ride sharing.

Item 1, continued:

CART is planning a “Stand Up 4 Transportation Day” event on April 9, 2015, and will continue to promote its extended service to 10:00 p.m. and its free fare for CARTaccess riders on fixed routes.

Fifteen bicycle racks in groups of five have been installed at Headington Hall, Huffman Center, and the Brooks Street Station. Bicycle repair stations are being installed at the Brooks Street Station, the Lloyd Noble Center, and the Norman Public Library.

Ms. Coldwater said two new 35 foot Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fixed route buses are scheduled to arrive in July.

Items submitted for the record

1. Cleveland Area Rapid Transit Ridership Totals for the Month of February, 2015
2. Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART) Monthly Report, February, 2015

* * * * *

Item 2, being:

PRESENTATION OF FINAL DESIGN OF THE CART BUS WRAP PROMOTING BICYCLE SAFETY AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Transportation Engineer, said the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program was created in 1991 to fund transportation projects or programs that will contribute to attainment or maintenance of the Nation Ambien Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter.

Mr. Lombardo said as part of a one year program in the Oklahoma City (OKC) metropolitan areas, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG), made an Air Quality Awareness Grant (AQAG) available to eligible applicants. A minimum of \$75,000 in CMAQ funds was available for small active transportation infrastructure projects and public education programs that serve to improve and enhance awareness of Central Oklahoma’s air quality. Eligibility was limited to city governments, county governments, public schools, public school districts, and tribal governments and requires 20% matching funds, but no entity can receive more than 56% of the total grant award amount.

The City’s Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) identified a public education program compatible with the AQAG and asked Staff to explore the possibility of applying for funding. The program is intended to serve as a public safety campaign to raise awareness of bicyclists riding on City of Norman roadways. The goal is to develop a safer riding environment for bicyclists and to encourage more people to use their bicycles as a basic means of transportation. The campaign is designed to utilize a special bus wrap installed on one of the buses operated by CART. The message on the wrap will have information that reminds motor vehicle operators that bicyclists have the right to occupy part of the roadway.

City Staff discussed the grant opportunity with CART and obtained an estimate of \$575 for the fabrication of the wrap as well as the annual cost of \$6,000 to display the message as an advertisement mounted on one of their buses for a total cost of \$6,575. Cart officials also agreed to fund 50% of the local grant match with the City of Norman providing 50%.

An application was prepared by Staff and submitted to ACOG. The grant was approved and ACOG offered \$5,260 in CMAQ funds to pay for 80% of the program’s cost. City Council approved Contract No. K-1415-47 on October 14, 2014, which described the program and enumerated the conditions the City would need to comply with in order to receive the funds.

Item 2, continued:

Since that time, the BAC has worked with Staff and other volunteers to develop the bus wrap design. The design will be a picture of a mother and child bicycling in the roadway with the child in front and a car near the bicycles. The message will state, "Share the Road – Allow at least 3 feet for cyclists" with the ACOG and City of Norman emblems. Mr. Lombardo said the final concept is consistent with recommendations made and concurrence from the CPTC is requested in order to move forward with fabrication.

Co-Chairman Holman asked when the wrap will be installed and Mr. Lombardo said, hopefully, in spring 2015, in conjunction with Bike to Work Day.

Councilmember Heiple was excited about the wrap and thanked Staff and the BAC for a job well done.

Mayor Rosenthal asked if the bus would be used on different routes and Mr. Taylor Johnson, Planning Intern with CART, said the bus will be rotated on a variety of routes.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated March 19, 2015, from Angelo Lombardo, Transportation Engineer, to Community Planning and Transportation Committee Members
2. City of Norman Bicycle Advisory Committee minutes of October 13, 2014
3. Legacy Trail Data Collection Locations map
4. City of Norman Bicycle Advisory Committee minutes of November 10, 2014
5. Picture of bus wrap design

* * * * *

Item 3, being:

PRESENTATION BY A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GOVERNMENTS FOR AN UPDATE ON THE REGIONAL TRANSIT DIALOGUE AS IT RELATES TO FUTURE COMMUTER RAIL IN CENTRAL OKLAHOMA AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS.

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, introduced Mr. Daniel O'Connor, Director of Transportation for the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG), and Mr. John Johnson, Executive Director of ACOG. He said there has been a remarkable thing happening at ACOG and in the region (Oklahoma City (OKC), Norman, Edmond, Moore, Midwest City, Tinker Air Force Base, Del City, etc.) regarding dialogue on regional transit service.

Mr. O'Connor said regional transit discussions have been a collaborative effort and Norman's leadership and assistance has been greatly appreciated. He said the Central Oklahoma Commuter Corridors Study (COCCS) consists of four phases, 1) Goals and Objectives, 2) Developing Transportation Alternatives, 3) Detailed Evaluation of Alternatives, and 4) Central Oklahoma's Future Transit Options. He said some of the reasons for the study include improving mobility; providing lifestyle choices and improved access for workers; enhancing quality of life; generating economic development; and providing safe energy efficient transportation.

Mr. O'Connor said over the last 20 years, Central Oklahoma has experienced significant growth in population and employment. He said ACOG is projecting a growth of 425,000 in the region by 2040 and with that growth comes new jobs. There are currently 600,000 jobs in the metro area and ACOG is expecting another 300,000 to 350,000 in the next 25 years and jobs drive transit needs. This growth also brings increased traffic, congestion, and the need and desire for more mobility choices, which has a direct impact on a region's economic health and quality of life. He said the key reason people use transit is to get to and from work and to and from school. In order to keep the region moving forward and competitive as a desirable place to live, work, and play, a well-balanced transportation system is a must. A well-balanced transportation system includes a variety of travel options such as

Item 3, continued:

roadways, buses, bicycles, pedestrians, and high-capacity transit that consists of passenger rail, bus rapid transit (BRT), and an expanded local and regional bus system.

Mr. O'Connor said there is a close correlation between traffic and air quality so a multi-regional transit system would lessen air pollution. Currently, there are three transit providers in the region; Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART), Central Oklahoma Transit and Parking Authority (COTPA), and City Link (in Edmond). He said these are locally funded independent transit systems and Central Oklahoma does not have a regional dedicated funding mechanism.

Mr. O'Connor said CentralOK!go is an analysis of transit options for three major commuter corridors. With input from local communities and stakeholders CentralOK!go identified options for moving people throughout the Central Oklahoma region, either for work, school, shopping, or leisure. CentralOK!go considered various routes and modes of public transportation focusing on three regional corridors, north, east and south all converging in downtown OKC at the Santa Fe Station Intermodal Hub. The locally preferred alternatives resulting from CentralOK!go serves as the start for a regional high-capacity transit system in Central Oklahoma.

High capacity transit is public transportation that travels in its own right-of-way for at least a portion of its route. Public transportation has priority and traffic signals are designed to hold a green light longer (green light priority) when transit vehicles approach. Transit vehicles make fewer stops, travel at higher speeds, have more frequent service, and carry more people than local buses.

The 2005 Regional Fixed Guideway Study (2005 Study) resulted in a 2030 Transit System Plan for Central Oklahoma and recommended specific corridors for further investigation into the implementation of passenger rail; RBT; a downtown OKC streetcar system; and an improved bus system to enhance connections among all public transportation services. Following recommendations from the 2005 Study, CentralOK!go was the next step in the federal planning process for evaluating the feasibility of a regional transit system in the three corridors identified to have the most potential for high-capacity regional transit. CentralOK!go provides more in-depth analysis and information concerning alignment; technology; ridership forecasts; estimate costs; and potential funding sources for each corridor and a system as a whole.

Another outgrowth of the 2005 Study was a visioning process, known as the Regional Transit Dialogue (RTD), initiated by ACOG in 2009. The RTD has been used to engage locally elected officials, policy stakeholders, private sector leaders, and the public in discussions about how the region could develop a more comprehensive public transportation system in years to come. The RTD Steering Committee was charged with exploring potential governing concepts, funding strategies, and transit supportive land use policies throughout the region.

Transportation facilities located within the three Central Oklahoma commuter corridors were identified and evaluated for their compatibility with transit use. Existing land use and environmental features were analyzed within one-half mile of each transportation facility identified. Evaluation criteria was established from the goals and objectives developed by the Steering Committee, stakeholders, and the public. The criteria was dependent on mode selection in combination with alignment and in the early phase, alignment and mode were evaluated separately.

North Corridor

Sixty-five surveys were completed at the outreach events held in the North Corridor. When citizens were asked about their preferred alignment, 64% preferred an alignment between OKC to Edmond and when asked about their preference of mode, 84% preferred commuter rail.

Item 3, continued:

South Corridor

Sixty surveys were completed at the outreach events held in the South Corridor and 82% preferred an alignment between Norman and OKC with commuter rail being the preferred mode.

East Corridor

Sixty surveys were completed at the outreach events held in the East Corridor and a variation of alignments were preferred due to the fact that ridership results pointed to travel time between downtown OKC and Tinker Air Force Base (AFB) as being the most important alignment factor.

Steering Committee Recommendations

The Steering Committee considered three primary factors in identification of locally preferred alternatives (LPAs) for each corridor that included capital costs for construction and on-going operation and maintenance costs, technical feasibility and detailed evaluation, and public and stakeholder sentiment. This approach ensures the LPAs for each corridor represent the best transit solution from a technical, funding, and public support standpoint. The LPAs from the individual corridors must also enhance the overall transit system.

The Steering Committee reached a preliminary agreement on the North and South Corridor LPAs, but requested additional information and coordination with representatives of the East Corridor. Further discussion was held with Tinker AFB officials and project partners in Del City and Midwest City. The Steering Committee reached final consensus on the LPAs for the three corridors in July, 2014.

The North Corridor would provide a one-seat ride between downtown Edmond and Norman with the OKC Santa Fe Intermodal Hub being recommended to be served by commuter rail. Additionally, a five mile extension of the OKC streetcar is recommended to run along Classen Boulevard between N.W. 10th Street and Walker Avenue to 63rd Street to provide a connection of a future commuter rail station to the Chesapeake Energy campus. Capital costs for commuter rail are estimated between \$260 million and \$360 million with the streetcar route expansion estimated between \$270 million and \$370 million. Ongoing operating and maintenance costs are estimated at \$5 million per year to the commuter rail and \$2.5 million per year for the streetcar extension. Daily commuter rail ridership is expected to be approximately 5,700 with 2,100 expected daily streetcar ridership to Chesapeake Energy campus.

The South Corridor recommendations would connect the downtown OKC Santa Fe Intermodal Hub and Norman extending to SH9 via commuter rail. Existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) right-of-way would be used as available along the 17 mile route. The combined alignments of the North and South Corridors would allow for a one-seat ride between Norman and Edmond. Capital costs for commuter rail between Norman and OKC are estimated between \$310 million to \$410 million with an estimated operating and maintenance cost of \$5.5 million per year. Commuter rail ridership for the entire North/South Corridor between Norman and Edmond is projected to be approximately 5,700 daily riders.

The East Corridor recommendation would connect Tinker AFB, Midwest City, and Del City to the downtown OKC Santa Fe Intermodal Hub via streetcar. Also recommended is an internal circulator on Tinker AFB that would be operated by the base. Capital costs for this nine mile streetcar are estimated between \$320 million and \$440 million with an estimated operating and maintenance cost of \$2.5 million per year. Streetcar ridership is estimated at 2,300 riders per day. This alignment would use abandoned railroad right-of-way in Midwest City and Reno Avenue to provide direct access to the intermodal hub for connections to the OKC streetcar and future commuter rail services to Norman and Edmond.

Item 3, continued:

The alignment system is comprised of north, south, and east corridors that will focus on north-south commuter rail service between Edmond and Norman with intermediate stops in OKC and Moore and east-west streetcar service between OKC, Del City, and Midwest City, terminating near Tinker AFB. All lines are planned to focus service on the future downtown OKC Santa Fe Intermodal Hub, which will also be served by buses providing a distribution network in downtown OKC.

Mr. O'Connor said one-fourth (1/4) of the jobs in the region are within one mile of the Santa Fe Intermodal Hub. He said the Norman/Edmond link is important from a strategic standpoint and connecting those cities to the OKC market is critical for economic development growth in the region. He said the regional transit system would serve an estimated 32,000 riders daily.

While all three corridors were evaluated independently, the focus was to develop a regional system that could provide a single-seat ride for north-south and east-west travel. This approach will help make the system understandable and user friendly for transit riders.

Mr. O'Connor said the next steps include a long-range transportation planning process and adoption of a regional plan. Construction of the system will require a phased approach that includes expansion of the bus network. The system will be implemented in segments based on regional needs, desires, and available funding.

Environmental assessment/clearance and engineering design are the next steps following the selection of LPAs and if any of the LPAs are identified for federal funding, the investment must comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Under NEPA, greater engineering detail will be assessed for potential beneficial and/or detrimental impacts to the physical and natural environments.

CentralOK!go provides the groundwork for establishing a governing structure, funding mechanisms, and phasing opportunities for the implementation of a regional transportation system. At present, funding sources have not been identified to build the LPAs; however, the RTD Steering Committee's next step will be to address the structure and formation of a Regional Transit Authority, a new entity which would provide governance to expand and operate a regional transit system.

Mr. O'Connor said in 1983 80% of 18 year olds held a driver's license and in 2010 that percentage dropped to 61%. He said 66% of millennials are locating in regions with high quality, multi-modal transportation options including walkability. He said 50% of people looking at places to retire want a bus stop close to their home.

Mr. O'Connor said Central Oklahoma needs to compete with national transit from an economic development standpoint. He said regions are taking the approach of looking at transit from a regional level because the need for transit does not stop at city limits. He said many regions have developed a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) that does all the planning, coordinating, funding, and implementation of regional transit services. He said, nationwide, transit is expanding and everything from commuter rail to light rail to bus rapid transit to streetcars are being seen.

Co-Chairman Holman asked what the largest cost would be for commuter rail and Mr. O'Connor said the largest costs would be for transit vehicles, engineering services, rail lines, railway stations or station upgrades, and land acquisition or right-of-way. He said railroad companies want to continue to use the rail lines because the lines have an economic purpose so in some cases more capacity is needed, which means more rail, land, or right-of-way acquisition. He said the big question is how to add capacity without conflicting with railroad traffic, but still have a good, dependable transit trip between Norman and OKC that is not delayed by freight. Co-Chairman Holman asked if BNSF is planning to double track from Norman to OKC at some point and Mr. Johnson said they are not planning anything like that, but would not be adverse to cities doing that for them. Co-Chairman Holman said if cities did install a second track would that mean commuter rail would have priority on that track and Mr. O'Connor said it would be difficult to ensure cities would have an open track 100% of the time because the

Item 3, continued:

railroad owns the land. Mr. O'Leary said installing secondary tracks on bridges would be where the big money is spent, not necessarily the rail itself and Mr. O'Connor agreed that cost would be significant.

Councilmember Miller said the Santa Fe Intermodal Hub would be the hub for the different commuter "spokes" and asked if riders would have to change transit vehicles if they traveled from Norman to OKC then to Edmond. Mr. O'Connor said, ideally, it would be the same train from Norman to Edmond; however, there could be a slight delay at the Santa Fe Intermodal Hub going to Edmond.

Councilmember Miller asked the amount of time it would take to travel from Norman (from SH9) to OKC with no stops and Mr. O'Connor said an estimated 30 minutes then another 20 minutes to downtown Edmond.

Mr. O'Connor said all the things he has talked about tonight have taken ten years to accomplish. Based on math and how long it takes to build the systems the earliest a commuter rail would begin is probably ten years out. He said there are a lot of federal requirements, a lot of funding requirements, a lot of studies still to do, etc. There are interim steps the Steering Committee feels need to be looked at such as trying to determine if there is enough local desire to create a RTA; how that could be done; once the system is in place should an expanded system plan be developed to look at other corridors; creating an implementation plan; and finding a regional funding mechanism.

Mr. O'Conner said there are ways to get regional services out ahead of the rail, such as getting more buses out to build ridership and begin building regional transit lines. He said with growth conditions, cities want to do this before it gets to a point where it is hurting the economy and quality of life.

Councilmember Heiple asked what it would take to get commuter rail in less than five years and Mr. O'Connor said it cannot be done in five years. Mayor Rosenthal said there has been a lot of discussion regarding governance, districts, and funding. She said a district-wide election for a funding source would decrease the timeline and although it would take time to build these systems, enhanced bus service could be seen almost immediately.

Mr. Tom Sherman, Steering Committee member, said a majority of the capital funding is rail construction and improvement. He said it will take double tracking and BNSF will support that, but wants someone else to pay for it. Once the rails are constructed BNSF will be able to more efficiently schedule trains so there will not be as much clog. Mr. O'Connor said cities are behind in transit because they pay for transportation out of general revenue and if a regional funding mechanism was found that would pay for operations and there would no longer be a city obligation.

Mr. Johnson said another advantage of having more buses is to close gaps between Edmond/OKC and Norman/OKC where there is currently no service. Mr. O'Connor agreed and said even though rail service is preferred, more buses could build the market and riders would see a quicker benefit. This will also help determine where rails are needed based on where riders are going.

Councilmember Williams said if cities employ a regional bus system, would they mark a specific bus lane and if not what is the difference between sitting in traffic in a car versus sitting in traffic on a bus? Mr. O'Connor said those are things the RTA could look at. He said Minneapolis and Kansas City allow buses on shoulders if there is a traffic jam and other cities allow green light priority.

Co-Chairman Holman said the costs seem high, but at the same time Norman is spending \$200 million on two interchanges.

When asked about the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) involvement, Mr. Sherman said ODOT has one thought process, they like anything that takes cars off the road, lengthens their maintenance calendar, and lessens their maintenance costs. He said transit has a bigger impact on air quality than anything else.

Item 3, continued:

Mr. O’Leary said ODOT’s mission is all transportation so they are always at the table on transportation discussions.

Mr. O’Leary said the Comprehensive Transportation Plan adopted by Council last year is totally reflective of the regional transit vision.

Mayor Rosenthal said the main cities within the central regional transit discussions will be asked to share a proportionate share of the transitional period costs before there is a district and a funding source so that is something Norman needs to be thinking of in terms of its budget.

Items submitted for the record

1. Central OK!GO - Central Oklahoma Commuter Corridors Study presented by the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) and prepared by URS Corporation dated January 2015
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, “Project Update: Central Oklahoma Regional Transit,” Norman Council Community & Transportation Committee, March 26, 2015

* * * * *

Item 4, being:

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLIC COMMENTS.

None

* * * * *

The meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.