

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 24, 2015

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:04 p.m. in the Conference Room on the 24th day of September, 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: Councilmember Holman, Miller, Williams and Chairman Jungman

ABSENT: Councilmember Allison

STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator
Ms. Sara Kaplan, Retail Marketing Coordinator
Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Transportation Traffic Engineer
Mr. Shawn O’Leary, Director of Public Works
Ms. Madeline Oujesky, Mayor’s Intern
Ms. Karla Chapman, Administrative Technician III

OTHER GUESTS PRESENT: Ms. Joy Hampton, *The Norman Transcript*
Ms. Haley Mathis, Progressive Independence
Mr. Cameron Ritchey, University of Oklahoma Student
Ms. Karleen Smith, Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART)
Dr. Jack Webb, JWebb and Associates, LLC

Item 1, being:

CLEVELAND AREA RAPID TRANSIT (CART) RIDERSHIP REPORT INCLUDING SAFERIDE AND EXTENDED SERVICE FOR THE MONTH OF JULY AND AUGUST, 2015.

Ms. Karleen Smith, Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART), highlighted the CART service changes that began on August 24, 2015, to include two (2) 30 minute service routes on Main Street (Route 10) and Alameda Street/E. Norman (Route 21). She said the implementation of the Park and Ride Lot on CART routes at Lloyd Noble Center continues to be very successful and CART added two (2) additional lots; Sooner Mall Parking Lot and Bethel Baptist Church Parking Lot. CART prepared marketing material for local and social media to promote CART’s new 30 minute service, the Park and Ride Lots, and distributed the new CART Rider Guide. Ms. Smith said additional CART marketing and outreach include working with Syncromatics to develop a new CART app that lets people know where the fixed route bus stops are located, bus schedules, when buses will be arriving at a stop, e.g., 10 minutes out, 15 minutes out, etc. She said CART has also developed new branding that will be used on new buses and distributed the new branding decal stating it has been installed on one (1) bus and a second bus will have the new branding decal installed soon.

Ms. Smith highlighted the CART Ridership Reports for July and August, 2015, stating an increase of nearly 200 riders daily from July, 2014, as well as an eight percent (8%) increased ridership for August, 2015, primarily due to the University of Oklahoma (OU) beginning its school year. She highlighted the CARTaccess Ridership Report for July and August, 2015, stating CART had an average of 112 riders daily and ridership is down 5% from this time last year. CART continues to encourage CARTaccess riders to ride free on the fixed route service and that ridership is increasing because riders likely do not have to schedule a ride 24 hours in advance and with fixed route they can go where they want when they want. Ms. Smith said the CARTaccess routes are more expensive than the fixed routes, not only for CART but riders as well. She said CART’s goal is to eventually do away with CARTaccess and create better choices and changes for riders.

Item 1, continued:

Two (2) new 35 feet Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses arrived on July 20, 2015, and are in service and are being rotated on various CART routes. Ms. Smith said CART has been awarded the New Freedom Grant funds from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) to purchase three (3) American with Disabilities Act (ADA) conversion vans later this fall. She said CART's FYE 2016 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant has been approved and executed.

Ms. Smith said the Community Planning and Transportation Committee (CPTC) recently requested a new water fountain at the Brooks Street Station and CART has submitted a request for a quote. She said CART has also hired a new training supervisor certified to teach Commercial Driver's License (CDL) courses and will soon begin a student CDL training program.

Chairman Jungman asked why CARTaccess does not have routes on Sunday and Ms. Smith said it was due to costs and driver shortage. She said CART is very interested in having CARTaccess as well as fixed routes on Sundays and it is definitely a goal of CART's. Councilmember Miller felt not having a Sunday route is an issue for senior citizens. Ms. Smith said CART will be conducting a future survey and poll potential Sunday CARTaccess and fixed route riders to determine the interest.

Chairman Jungman asked whether CART was looking to implement a future looped route from Campus Corner to Downtown Norman and Ms. Smith said that CART was discussing it. Ms. Smith said this was one of the recommendations from the Center City Visioning Charrette and very much a goal of CART's. She said CART is looking to make possible changes to Route #52, the current Campus Loop route, because ridership is low and such a change would meet the Charrette's recommendation and CART's goal.

Ms. Joy Hampton, *The Norman Transcript*, asked if the Park and Ride program is temporary and Ms. Smith said no, CART's intent is to retain this program if the need continues. Ms. Smith said to date, the program reflects the need is present and CART will continue to monitor the program to determine whether more locations should be added.

Items submitted for the record

1. Cleveland Area Rapid Transit Ridership Totals for the Months of July and August 2015
2. Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART) Monthly Reports, July and August 2015
3. CART brochure entitled "30-minute service coming August 24, on Routes 10 and 21"
4. CART brochure entitled "Free Parking? Yeah, It's FREE!" with attached park and ride locations for Sooner Mall, Lloyd Noble Center, and Bethel Baptist Annex
5. Community Planning and Transportation Committee, CART Monthly Report, July and August 2015

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Item 2, being:

UPDATE ON THE RAILROAD QUIET ZONE PROGRAM IN NORMAN.

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Public Works Director, said the Railroad Quiet Zone (RQZ) Program has been discussed for seven (7) or eight (8) years and the \$1.2 million RQZ program is in this year's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget to be implemented. He said establishing quiet zones is fairly complex and Staff has been working with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway to meet their guidelines as well as equip proposed grade crossing with adequate safety measures to overcome the decrease in safety created by silencing the train horns.

Mr. O'Leary said the City is facing a challenge regarding implementing quiet zones and how they will affect the two-way of Main Street and Gray Street. He said the possible answer is to achieve quiet zone status before Main Street and Gray Street are converted back to two-way streets. Mr. O'Leary said the timing is crucial to save money.

Item 2, continued:

He said if the quiet zone came after Main and Gray Streets are changed back to two-way streets, getting a quiet zone would require seven (7) locations with expensive four-quadrant gates costing up to \$1 million per crossing.

Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Transportation Traffic Engineer, said initially the quiet zone target area was from Robinson Street south and Mayor Rosenthal indicated she wanted Staff to look at extending the quiet zone north of Robinson Street. He said research indicates the FRA suggests including the full length of the corridor now as the easiest method. Mr. Lombardo said Council approved Contract No. K-1415-135 with JWebb and Associates, LLC, on May 26, 2015, in the amount of \$41,781.25, for the design and coordination of railroad crossing improvements which includes a \$12,250 option to extend the length of the quiet zone to the northern City limit but will require Council approval.

Mr. Jack Webb, JWebb and Associates, LLC, said in a quiet zone the train horns are silenced at crossings unless there is an emergency or safety concern. He said safety measures used for mitigation include four-quadrant gate systems, one way streets with gates, gates with medians or channelization devices, wayside horns, and/or permanent closures of dangerous crossings.

Mr. Lombardo said approximately 15 years ago the City invested \$2 million to modernize crossing controls and surfaces, providing gated protection and active devices at every crossing. The upgrades also included a new constant warning circuitry, a key element needed to even consider a quiet zone. He highlighted the FRA rules on train whistles including the process to create a quiet zone stating locomotive engineers must begin to sound train horns at least 15 seconds, and no more than 20 seconds, in advance of all public grade crossings; however, the FRA also administers rules nationwide that allow cities and towns to mitigate the effects of train horn noise by establishing a quiet zone.

Mr. Webb said he completed the assessment of Risk Index to confirm quiet zone eligibility under the FRA rule and conducted the Diagnostic Team Inspection (DTI) with the BNSF Railway and FRA on August 27, 2015. He highlighted the FRA prediction formulas and quiet zone risk calculations to the Committee. The risk is normalized to the national average of "predicted probability of incident occurrences." Mr. Webb said Norman currently has a Quiet Zone Risk Index that is greater than the National Significant Risk Threshold and would not be subject to annual review to maintain the corridor. He said Norman qualifies because of improvements previously completed by the City at Duffy Street and Cedar Lane, as well as Pre Supplemental Safety Measures (SSM) designations associated with current one-way operations at Main Street and Gray Street. Chairman Jungman asked if the current rating for Norman means to state that Norman's corridors are safer than the national average of quiet zone corridors and Mr. Webb said yes, that is correct.

Mr. Lombardo highlighted recommendations of the DTI, as well as pictures depicting each of Norman's 17 at-grade railroad crossings. He said Norman's railway corridor qualifies for a quiet safety zone with no more special safety features because of the recent improvements; however, the City wants to exceed the safety requirements. Mr. Lombardo said the DTI felt like we should put in some safety measures and Staff is suggesting the use of medians, as well as decorative fencing in areas where Legacy Trails run close to the railroad tracks. He said medians prevent cars from circumventing gates at railroad crossings and fencing along Legacy Trail areas will increase pedestrian safety and prevent people from crossing the tracks where there is no crossing.

Mr. O'Leary requested guidance from the Committee on the City extending the project to the northern City limit, i.e., north of Robinson Street. If so, it will ultimately require full Council approval of an additional option in the JWebb and Associates, LLC, contract for additional design and coordination, as well as compliance with DTI recommendation. Staff will need estimates from BNSF Railway for crossing improvements, and upon approval of estimates, Council will need to approve the contract with BNSF Railway. The Committee discussed and agreed the contract should be extended to JWebb and Associates, LLC, and requested Staff schedule it as an agenda item for Council consideration.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. O'Leary said Staff can develop updated estimates based on DTI recommendations; update the National Inventory in Norman to reflect new conditions; and submit a Notice of Intent to create New Quiet Zone. Mr. Webb said the diagnostic team will get a list of suggested improvements from BNSF Railway and it could have a high price tag attached; however, since the City already qualifies, those suggestions will only be suggestions. Staff said this is a good bargaining position for the City to be in when requesting a quiet zone without having to do anything; however, some suggestions will be followed for the benefit and safety of residents.

Mr. Lombardo said Staff will continue to research the impact of the Main Street/Gray Street Two-Way Conversion on the Railroad Quiet Zone. He said Staff's plans are to bring the Plan to Council in January, 2016. Mr. O'Leary said Staff will continue to begin and/or complete median treatments at Post Oak Road, Constitution Street, Lindsey Street, Brooks Street, Boyd Street, Eufaula Street, Acres Street, Lexington Avenue, Rock Creek Road, Tecumseh Road, Franklin Road, and Indian Hills Road. The City will submit notification to BNSF Railway and install signage at all crossings requiring silencing of train horns. BNSF Railway will need to comply within 21 days and the entire process could take six (6) to 12 months to complete.

Mr. O'Leary asked the Committee specifically about their comfort level on analysis regarding the two-way to one-way on Main Street and Gray Street and the Committee suggested a future Study Session should be scheduled, inviting all the Main Street and Gray Street business owners to attend so project details can be explained to them.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled "*Railroad Quiet Zone Project Update*," City Council Planning and Transportation Committee, City of Norman, dated August 24, 2015

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Item 3, being:

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLIC COMMENTS.

None

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The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor