

## CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

September 9, 2008

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a conference at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 9th day of September, 2008, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at 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 Butler, Cubberley, Dillingham, Ezzell, Griffith, Kovach, Quinn, Thompson, Mayor Rosenthal

ABSENT: None

### DISCUSSION REGARDING DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE STATE HIGHWAY 9 WIDENING AND RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT.

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, and Mr. Angelo Lombardo, City Traffic Engineer, provided background information regarding the State Highway 9 Widening and Reconstruction Project. A meeting was held on September 27, 1999, with concerned citizens regarding traffic conditions on Highway 9 east. On June 22, 2001, a scoping meeting was conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) with participation by City of Norman Staff to discuss typical preliminary roadway sections as follows:

- Six lane divided urban section from Interstate 35 to 24th Avenue S.E.;
- Five lane undivided urban section from 24th Avenue S.E. to 36th Avenue S.E.;
- Four lane undivided rural section with ten foot wide outside paved shoulders; and
- Separate multimodal path from urban area to Lake Thunderbird State Park.

A second scoping meeting was conducted on December 17, 2001, and ODOT agreed to determine if a divided roadway section in the rural area was justified. In June 2002, Staff received a copy of ODOT's Proposed Improvement Report, which did not include the City's request for a separate multimodal path. City Council, in its meeting of July 22, 2003, adopted Resolution No. R-0304-21 supporting ODOT's initiative to improve Highway 9, but outlined the City's specific requests for the project as follows:

- Additional turn lanes be included at section line road intersections and other major intersections;
- Design the project as a multimodal transportation facility to include a separate bike path along the north side of Highway 9 from 24th Avenue S.E. to Lake Thunderbird State Park;
- Construction of a full width paved shoulder in the rural area throughout the project;
- Installation of flashing yellow signals where appropriate; and
- Design the roadway for a lower design speed in areas of high cross traffic or pedestrian activity.

On October 6, 2003, the State Transportation Commission approved inclusion of the State Highway Improvement Project in ODOT's eight year construction program, which included the area between 24th Avenue S.E. to 72nd Avenue S.E. ODOT hired CH2M Hill as the design engineer for the project and in October 2004, a public meeting was conducted to discuss the project from 84th Avenue S.E. to Highway 177 in Tecumseh. Mr. Lombardo said it was at the public meeting that Staff first learned ODOT was planning to construct a four-lane undivided highway with an extra continuous two-way left turn lane creating a total pavement width of 84 feet for the entire length of the project. The City objected to a continuous fifth lane and felt it was not needed due to the limited number of driveways and zoning restrictions for future development. ODOT conducted a second public meeting in September 2005, to discuss the area between 24th Avenue S.E. to 84th Avenue S.E. and portrayed the continuation of the 84 foot roadway with no bike path.

City Council, in its meeting of October 25, 2005, adopted Resolution No. R-0506-75 providing comments on the proposed design and strongly suggested the design eliminate the flush median and replace it with a grass median for greater separation between eastbound and westbound traffic and include a separate multimodal path along

the north side of Highway 9 to accommodate bicyclists. On March 27, 2006, ODOT submitted the plans to the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) requesting approval of the design concept and clearance to begin final design and right-of-way acquisition. FHA asked ODOT and the City to work together to resolve the outstanding issues prior to approval. Staff met with ODOT on several occasions in 2006 with no resolution.

On May 27, 2008, City Staff met with ODOT and their position remained unchanged due to limited funding; however, they agreed to include the design of the bike path in their plans and its grading where sufficient right-of-way existed along with divided pavement and a narrow median between 36th Avenue S.E. and 48th Avenue S.E. ODOT's position on each outstanding issue along with the City's concerns are outlined as follows:

**Issue No. 1 - Roadway Typical Section:** The City of Norman requested a four-lane divided section with a grass median. ODOT proposes an 88 foot paved section consisting of four 12 foot lanes with 12 foot outside paved shoulders and a 16 foot wide paved flush median/fifth lane (a two-way continuous left turn lane).

City Concerns

- Typical section is inconsistent with existing and future land use and the limited driveways fall short of ODOT's criteria for a five-lane undivided section.
- Development pressures and corresponding requests for access to Highway 9 will increase with a continuous two-way left turn lane, which introduces more vehicular conflicts and increases the potential for higher number of crashes.
- Narrow flush median/fifth lane section does not completely address the problem with head-on collisions on Highway 9.
- Scenic character of existing highway will be disrupted by an 88 foot paving section.

ODOT Concerns

- Minimum median width required by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials is 46 feet.
- Additional right-of-way needed
- Higher cost

Staff's Planned Response to ODOT as a Possible Comprise

- Change the design of the areas between 36th Avenue S.E. and 48th Avenue S.E. and 156th Avenue S.E. and 168th Avenue S.E. (next to Thunderbird Casino) by lowering the design speed from 60 mph to 45 mph and reducing the median width similar to Flood Avenue north of Robinson Street to include landscaping and maintenance of the median.
- Accept ODOT's recommendation for the remaining roadway segments reducing the shoulder width from 12 feet to 10 feet.

**Issue No. 2 – Multimodal Bike Path:** The City proposes construction of a separate multimodal bike path from 24th Avenue S.E. to Lake Thunderbird State Park (10 foot wide along the north side of Highway 9).

City Concerns

- Compliance with the City's Bicycle Transportation Master Plan, which recommends separate path.
- Bike facilities designed for all user levels.
- Biking on the shoulder of a high speed highway will limit use to only the experienced riders.
- Biking on shoulder is not as safe.

ODOT Concerns

- Additional right-of-way needed
- Higher cost
- ODOT proposes a wider shoulder (12 foot) to accommodate cyclist riding next to vehicular traffic.

Staff's Planned Response to ODOT as a Possible Comprise

- ODOT to design the path in conjunction with the roadway projects.
- Include grading of path, where possible, in future Highway 9 roadway projects.
- City will pursue Transportation Enhancement Program funding for the acquisition of additional right-of-way and paving for the path.

Mr. Lombardo said if Council desires, Staff will prepare a resolution for on the September 23rd agenda outlining the proposed compromises. If ODOT concurs they will submit the design changes to FHA for environmental clearance. He said the next steps will include submission of the City's application for the Transportation Enhancement Grant for the Bike Path Project by October 1, 2008. ODOT will complete the design and right-of-way acquisition by October, 2009, and begin construction of Phase I, 24th Avenue S.E. to 36th Avenue S.E. He said construction for Phase II, 36th Avenue S.E. to 72nd Avenue S.E. will probably begin in January 2012.

Councilmember Cubberley expressed concerns with the inconsistency of speeds in the various segments along Highway 9 and felt it would be confusing for motorists. He also expressed concern with certain segments having a separated median and other segments having continuous pavement. Mayor Rosenthal said the areas platted between 36th and 48th Avenue S.E. support reduced design speeds. Councilmember Dillingham asked Staff if there were safety advantages to one proposal over the other and Mayor Rosenthal asked who controls the speed limits on Highway 9. Mr. Lombardo said having a center median increases the safety and the speed limits are established by ODOT. Mr. O'Leary said in an effort to reduce the inconsistency in speed limits, Staff could propose the same design speed from Interstate 35 to 48th Avenue S.E. He said ODOT is faced with reductions in Federal funding and this particular project was in jeopardy of being cut if a resolution can not be reached. Council felt the resolution should be submitted, but should include a consistent speed and raised medians in as many areas as possible similar to the median on north Flood Avenue north of Robinson Street.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "State Highway 9 Widening and Reconstruction Design Questions" dated September 9, 2008

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED PROJECTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM FUNDING – STATE HIGHWAY 9 BICYCLE PATH PROJECT AND DOWNTOWN MAIN STREET (WEST END) IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT.

Mr. Angelo Lombardo, City Traffic Engineer, said Transportation Enhancement Program projects are related to an intermodal transport system by function, proximity, or impact. He said funding is provided through the Surface Transportation Program at 80%, which requires 20% matching funds from the City and projects are limited to \$600,000 per project. He highlighted the proposed projects approved to be submitted for funding as follows:

Highway 9 Bike Path

- Extends from 24th Avenue S.E. to 60th Avenue S.E.
- Separate bicycle path that parallels the widened Highway 9 on the north side
- Designed as part of Highway 9 Widening Project, Phase I
- A portion is located within existing right-of-way to be graded as part of widening project
- Enhancement Program funding would partially pay for additional right-of-way, surfacing, and any other enhancements

Downtown Main Street Improvements Project - West

- Landscaping
- Cobblestone paving band
- Street furniture
- Decorative lighting upgrade
- Stamped and colored asphalt
- Americans with Disabilities (ADA) ramps

City Council Conference Minutes

September 9, 2008

Page 4

Mr. Lombardo said the City Council Planning Committee recommended the Highway 9 Bike Path as the City's first priority and felt approval of this project would be helpful in achieving completion of the overall Highway 9 Widening Project. He said the Downtown Main Street Improvements Project will be the second priority. The Planning Committee also recommended Staff meet with the Finance Committee for further discussion related to funding for the Downtown Main Street project. A resolution supporting the projects will be submitted for Council's consideration on the September 23rd agenda.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Transportation Enhancement Program" dated September 9, 2008
2. Planning Committee minutes of August 29, 2008

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

ATTEST:

---

City Clerk

---

Mayor