

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 15, 2019

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:02 p.m. in the Conference Room on the 15th day of January, 2019, 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 Bierman, Clark, Holman, Scott
(arrived 4:22 p.m.), Wilson, and Chairman Hickman

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Ms. Carrie Evenson, Stormwater Program Manager
Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator
Mr. Kris Glenn, Director of Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART)
Ms. Jane Hudson, Interim Director of Planning and Community Development
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Planner and Grant Specialist for Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART)
Mr. Ken Komiske, Director of Utilities
Ms. Lisa Krieg, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Grants Manager
Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
Ms. Mary Rupp, Interim City Manager
Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer
Ms. Kathryn Walker, Interim City Attorney
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

CLEVELAND AREA RAPID TRANSIT (CART) RIDERSHIP REPORT INCLUDING SAFERIDE AND EXTENDED SERVICE FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER, 2018.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Planner and Grant Specialist for Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART), highlighted CART Ridership Reports for November 2018, and said fiscal year-to-date ridership (July to November) had a decrease of 3% over the same period last year. In November, CART transported 121,204 passengers that included 209 riders who traveled with bicycles and 235 riders who traveled with wheelchairs.

CARTaccess transported 2,764 riders in November, an increase of 1% over the same month last year with an average daily ridership of 120 riders. Year-to-date primary zone ridership increased by 1% while secondary zone ridership decreased by 6%.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. Johnson highlighted November activities and said CART submitted the annual National Transit Database (NTD) report as required by Federal Transit Authority (FTA) in November. He said CART offered free rides on both fixed route and CARTaccess on November 6, 2018, so riders could reach their respective polling places. At the beginning of November CART Staff distributed boxes to fill with toys and games for its annual Fill the Trolley campaign to benefit the Cleveland County Christmas Store. Also, CART, the University of Oklahoma (OU) Parking Services, and the OU Student Government Association held a Turn Up for Transit event on November 7th to answer questions related to ways students can get to campus using alternate modes of transportation.

Councilmember Clark said in regards to the bus system transfer transition, when are shareholders outside of the City and OU being brought into discussions? Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said step one is the Notice of Intent from CART to FTA (has been done) and step two is the FTA informing CART and the City what they need to do next; however, due to the government shutdown, that may not happen for a while so Staff is waiting for that before forming a committee. Councilmember Clark asked if the City has to wait and Mr. O'Leary said no, but Staff felt the FTA would provide guidelines, which might dictate who serves on the committee. Councilmember Clark said she would be interested in hearing what people have been identified so far so Council can provide feedback on who they believe should be on the committee. Mr. O'Leary said Staff is looking at representatives from the City; CART; Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT); City of Moore; Cleveland County; Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG); Norman Public Schools; and City Council. Councilmember Clark suggested a representative from OKAdapt so the bus system is even more handicap accessible than the existing system. Councilmember Bierman would like input from residents in east Norman that have to walk more than one mile to a bus stops and the residents do not have to be affiliated with any organization.

Mr. O'Leary said there is a federal regulatory process to transfer the grantee roles and millions of dollars have gone to CART for 40 years and now may come to the City so that will be a complex process. Unknowns include will CART continue to own their main bus station, who will own the busses, what will the next bus system look like? He said once that is known there are questions regarding accessibility, types of services, cost of services, fares, etc. He believes the City will need a private consultant to help the design and build a new transit operation because that has never been done in Norman.

Councilmember Clark thinks the City moves too slowly on many issues and would like the City to work in tandem on the transition because CART has set a goal timeline and Mr. O'Leary agreed.

Chairman Hickman said the likely transfer scenario will be that what is currently in place will remain in place while the City works through a transition to a new system. He would think a third party would operate the system for the City so there is no break in service and asked if Staff has explored who that third party may be. Mr. O'Leary said EMBARK operates the bus system in Oklahoma City and has expressed interest in the process; however, there is a commitment from CART to not have a break in service. He said FTA will not care who operates the bus system, but the level of services will have to be the same or better in order to continue receiving federal funding.

Chairman Hickman asked if FTA will dictate what assets will be distributed to the City or will that be negotiations between OU and the City? Mr. O'Leary felt that is something FTA will look at and give the City guidelines on the process of transferring assets and OU may have to pay some of the federal dollars back if they decide to keep the main bus facility and/or busses. He said the FTA will want to make sure the federal dollars were being used appropriately and are transferred appropriately.

Item 1, continued:

Councilmember Bierman said it sounds like Staff is expecting the bus system to be operated by a third party, not the City and Mr. O'Leary said Staff currently struggles to do all that needs to be done and operating a bus system would take a separate division with at least 35 employees while trying to sustain that with the current budget. He said it only makes sense to look at a third party to operate the bus system because it is a big, expensive operation, but if the City decides later on to become the operator, then Council can reassess.

Mr. Kris Glenn, Director of CART, said even if a third party operates the bus system, the City still receives the federal funding, the City is still the federal designee, and Council still has great input over the contracted operator. Mr. O'Leary said this transfer is really a grant agreement with the City as the grantee administering the program.

Ms. Mary Rupp, Interim City Manager, asked if bus service will run on January 21st, for the Mayor's Interfaith Breakfast and Mr. Glenn said yes, this will be the first time CART has operated on Martin Luther King Day, which was based on feedback from last year.

Items submitted for the record

1. Cleveland Area Rapid Transit Ridership Totals for the months of November, 2018
2. Cleveland Area Rapid Transit Monthly Reports for November, 2018

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Item 2, being:

CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING LOW IMPACT INCENTIVES AS IT RELATES TO WATER CONSERVATION.

Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, said the Community Planning and Transportation Committee (CPTC) has been discussing green infrastructure/Low Impact Development (LID) incentives and Council identified incentivizing optional "green building codes" as a secondary short-term goal during their August Retreat. There has also been discussion and input from the Comprehensive Plan (PlanNorman) Steering Committee recommending the City update the Engineering Design Criteria and Standards to include requirements for LID stormwater infrastructure elements and evaluate the prospect of development incentives.

Mr. Floyd introduced Mr. Richard McKown, Green Earth Land Design, and Dr. Jason Vogel, Director of the Oklahoma Water Survey and Associate Professor with the School of Civil Engineering and Environment Sciences at the University of Oklahoma, who will be presenting information regarding their experience with LID projects in Norman and Oklahoma.

Mr. McKown said Green Earth Land Design has been working on LID projects for several years throughout Norman and Oklahoma. He said with green infrastructure, bio-massive plants are really what is needed and two of his largest projects are a collaborative interactive research project with OU. He is attempting to build an English landscape in a semi-arid prairie, which Oklahoman's have been trying to do that since the land run. He said Oklahoma has always been grass with no trees, but an urban forest came later when homes were built and young trees were planted that grew up. He said Prince George's County in Maryland, which is right outside of Washington D.C., has the oldest stormwater research park and has been trying to figure out ways to make Chesapeake Bay healthy again. He said his brother sent

Item 2, continued:

him to Prince George's County and told him his job is to figure out how to make Green Earth Land Design the greenest development company in the United States (U.S.), which he has been trying to do the last 18 years.

Mr. McKown said he also visited Seattle, Washington, which has frequent rainfall. In Oklahoma it is dry with little rain, but when it does rain six inches or more flash floods occur. He said because all the top soil in Oklahoma blew away during the dustbowl years, Norman has really tight clay soil so water cannot percolate. His company is trying to deal with flood control and simultaneously filter and clean the water, which is what their rain gardens are designed to do. He said if the City wants people to care about stormwater the City has to get them to the water's edge by building walking trails. He said in Carrington Addition there are a lot of waterways connected together and one way his company manages these waterways is to let the edge of the water be fringy and scruffy looking by planting tall aquatic plants (cat tails, rushes, etc.) that take a lot of nitrogen from the water. He said for some reason, Geese do not like the tall fringy aquatic plants, which is good because Geese do not improve stormwater.

Mr. McKown said his first rain garden did not work out as planned because heavy rains kept washing it out and he has spent a lot of money trying to find a solution and make it more aesthetic. He said it was important to utilize plants that could survive inundation as well as drought conditions. He said in one neighborhood his company had buffalo grass (a native species) custom grown because it is not available in the nursery trade. He said the goal has always been to come up with recipes that allow residents to put in their own rain garden, but if it is too hard because, i.e., native species that are not readily available, it will never happen. His company is always trying to find ways to make rain gardens work in neighborhoods.

In many neighborhoods, rain gardens are in the common areas; however, when that common area abuts fences, people will dump their grass clippings over the fence or throw the entire bag over the fence into the common area. Mr. McKown said one solution to this problem was to build "social" fences that are not four feet tall and can be seen through (chain link, rail, metal, etc.) so people can see the water from their backyard. He said this type of fencing allows for a slope to the water to create a type of detention. However; people can see into the back yard, which is not really a good thing, plus there is a tremendous amount of distance to be able to see what is going on at the water's edge. He developed a tiered slope with a wider sidewalk that allows a better view of the water's edge and people get out more and walk along the trails and bring their children to feed the ducks and watch the fish come to the surface to feed. He said these types of neighborhoods outsell other neighborhoods because they become small communities that people care about.

Mr. McKown said the fundamental research of how to make an Oklahoma rain garden has not been done yet and cities along the coast can teach us a lot. He said so many times rain gardens can be beneficial to reduce the rate of runoff and land dedicated to detention ponds could be eliminated; however, Oklahoma soil deters most efforts.

Councilmember Clark asked if costs are passed on to buyers and Mr. McKown said costs are rolled into the development costs; however, ongoing maintenance costs are ensured through the Homeowner Association (HOA) fees.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. McKown said Trailwoods Addition is affordable by design with 1,000 to 1,600 square foot homes and is connected by a stream to Greenleaf Trails Addition. He said the stream was channelized because natural streams always move in a sinuous pattern and are inherently unstable. When a stream is channelized the bottom of the stream falls, known as a head cut, and tries to cut a new flood plain, both fascinating and terrifying at the same time. He spent a little over \$1 million recommunicating the stream with its flood plain and putting the curves back in so today Greenleaf Trails is in the process of putting itself back together.

Mr. McKown said he has learned enough about rain gardens at this point that he believes in order for the City to get where it wants to go in regards to green infrastructure, the City needs to reduce the front setback line and bring the front porch to the street. He said the easement would be used as a planting area for trees, aquatic plants, rain garden, vegetables, etc. He said this would eliminate the front yard source of pollution, have a place to plant a rain garden or trees, but the best part is the buildings are brought forward and given human beings an edge to walk against. He said if you brought a mouse into the room and let it loose it would not run through the middle of the room, it would get up against an edge. Cities that have made this work have that edge because people always want to walk where there is an edge to walk against.

Mr. McKown said one thing the City should not do is build alleyways. He builds green alleyways that are magical trails where people will actually turn their children loose and are comfortable walking in the constructed habitat that is out of the danger of vehicles. He said greenbelts are magical systems because they allow developers to manage stormwater and improve the quality of stormwater.

Councilmember Wilson said Ward Five residents do a lot to maintain the large open spaces and she believes leaving natural cross timbers helps stormwater more than developing stormwater infrastructure. Mr. McKown said decomposition of the leaf litter from those oak trees is the highest contributor to phosphorous in Lake Thunderbird. He said that is really not a negative because phosphorous is a natural occurring thing while developing infrastructure adds a whole massive level of complexity and unintended consequences that has to be mitigated. Dr. Vogel said yes, natural will be better from a water quantity and quality standpoint than developing. Councilmember Wilson said allowing streams to flow naturally is what should happen and a lot of Ward Five streams are doing without a lot of man-made intervention so that is what the City wants right? Dr. Vogel said yes and no, because most streams are under some influence even if that influence is a county road so the way streams in the rural look like now is not what they looked like 100 years ago. He said the streams vary in size and are detached from the flood plain so just because there is no structure contributing to the stream the streams are still getting much higher flows over geologic time so there can be some cutting, widening, erosion, and deterioration that need intervention of some type. The areas without intervention are more of an exception than the rule.

Mr. McKown said he is trying to build new neighborhoods in balance that can be maintained within the reasonable budget of the HOA so there is no need to ask the City for help in mitigating flooding issues.

Councilmember Scott asked if green infrastructure can be developed in older neighborhoods that may have creeks or streams running through the neighborhood. Mr. McKown said he is experimenting with designing rain gardens that involve an underdrain or bleed off system, but one of the great challenges is the clay soil. He is trying to figure out how to have bleed-off to the rain garden that will not hold runoff to the point that trees and plants get root rot and die. He said Green Earth Land Design continues to work on solutions. Dr. Vogel said rain gardens can be retrofitted almost anywhere and Council would be surprised how many areas of Norman and other parts of Oklahoma are sandy enough to drain fast enough.

Item 2, continued:

He said anytime there is a major river there are tributaries around that with silty sand areas. He said the rain garden needs to be properly sized to hold the amount of water that is needed to reduce stormwater volume. He has been working with the City of Tulsa to develop design criteria for a future incentive program they are planning, but if a City is going to have incentives there needs to be some set level for that incentive. He said there is also maintenance and inspection that has to go along with that incentive because it is not like putting in a culvert that is going to have water flowing through it for the next 20 years.

Councilmember Scott asked if Green Earth Land Design is using natural resource or can french drains be used to assist with infiltration and Dr. Vogel said if the soil allows infiltration then native soil can be used or artificial soil can be used to slow the flow of water and filters the water to make the quality of water better.

Councilmember Bierman asked about xeriscaping reducing the amount of lawn and questioned if that is just not desirable by potential home buyers or has Green Earth Land Design intentionally not gone that route for other reasons. Mr. McKown said people did not choose to buy homes in Trailwoods Addition because they thought the rain gardens were cool, they chose to buy a house because it was in their price range. When people see the greenbelt system and see people in the neighborhood out walking, see people socializing, and see children safely playing outdoors, they want to be in that neighborhood because they believe it will be a great place to raise kids. He said eliminating the front yard will probably go further in fixing that than anything else because that would transform the front yard from water hungry, resource hungry lawn that is providing almost no ecosystem service into an amazing collection of self-expression.

Councilmember Bierman said there is more incentive to use fertilizer to keep a lawn looking as green as possible so if the lawn can be limited in an attractive way it will help mitigate the use of fertilizer and promote as much xeriscaping as possible because cactus does not need much water. Mr. McKown said Oklahoma has a strange ecozone and experiences 36 inches of rain annually, which will kill a cactus.

Chairman Hickman said what he is hearing is the City needs to change or create new standards for these particular types of opportunities in the future, such as zero setback building lines, and create LID principles that will be tied to the incentive program. He said Tulsa has done a lot of work on stormwater so maybe the City should incorporate some of their standards.

Dr. Vogel suggested emphasizing incentives in areas that make the most impact on water quality in Lake Thunderbird. He said Tulsa will be prioritizing areas for future stormwater projects and Chairman Hickman said targeting areas for incentives is a good idea.

Mr. McKown said it would be great to create a by-right green development standard that would become the new path of least resistance that results in wildly better communities.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated November 21, 2018, from Kathryn L. Walker, Assistant City Attorney, through Jeff Bryant, City Attorney, to Members of the Council Planning and Transportation Committee

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Item 3, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Due to time constraints, Item 3 was postponed to the next regular meeting.

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Item 4, being:

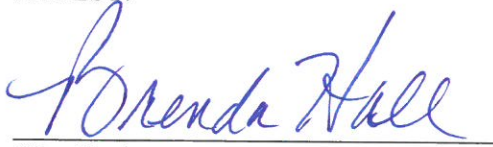
MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS.

None.

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The meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

ATTEST:



City Clerk



Mayor

