

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

December 22, 2014

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 5:00 p.m. in the Conference Room on the 22nd day of December, 2014, 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 and Chairman Jungman
ABSENT:	Councilmembers Miller and Williams
STAFF PRESENT:	Mayor Cindy Rosenthal 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. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works Mr. David Riesland, Traffic Engineer Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV
OTHER GUESTS PRESENT:	Ms. Joy Hampton, <u>The Norman Transcript</u> Mr. Stephen Koranda, Norman Downtowner's Association Ms. Karlene Smith, Marketing Specialist for Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART)

Item 1, being:

CART RIDERSHIP REPORT AND EXTENDED SERVICE FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER, 2014.

Ms. Karlene Smith, Planner and Grant Specialist, Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART), highlighted the CART ridership report for November, 2014. She said CARTaccess ridership is up 2% and fixed route service is up 3% from the previous year. She said ridership for CART's Research Campus route continues to increase.

Ms. Smith said beginning January 12, 2015, CARTaccess riders will be able to ride any fixed route service free of charge by showing their Americans with Disability Act (ADA) card. She said all CART busses are ADA equipped and CART is hoping to encourage those who are able to use the fixed route more often.

CART is also extending service one additional hour to 10:00 p.m. for routes on Main Street; Lindsey East; Lindsey West; West Norman Link; Alameda/East Norman; and Research Park. CART will modify the Alameda/East Norman route to move the bus stop nearer to the YMCA so YMCA patrons will not have to walk so far to access the bus stop. She said CART is working with the University of Oklahoma (OU) to create an ADA accessible bus stop and sidewalk that will tie into the existing sidewalk.

Item 1, continued:

Ms. Smith said, at the last meeting, Councilmember Miller asked for the cost to implement Sunday fixed route service, which is a much needed service especially for transportation to Church. Ms. Smith said it would cost \$180,000 in operating expenses and additional buses would be needed because as many of the existing buses are aging out. Councilmember Holman asked if the \$180,000 would be an annual cost and Ms. Smith said yes and that is based on a six hour service. Councilmember Holman suggested a pilot program servicing the top two most used routes having Sunday Service and Ms. Smith said CART can look at the top three routes that consist of Main Street, Alameda Street, and Lindsey Street. Chairman Jungman asked what percentage that dollar figure equates to CART's annual budget and Ms. Smith said it would be a very low percentage.

Items submitted for the record

1. Cleveland Area Rapid Transit Ridership Totals for the Month of November, 2014
2. Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART) November Monthly Report

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Item 2, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING ONE WAY – TWO WAY TRAFFIC ON MAIN STREET AND GRAY STREET IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA.

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, presented a brief history of Main Street and Gray Street. He said Main Street in Downtown Norman was originally constructed as a two-way street with traffic lanes (one per direction) and on-street parking. Main Street was reconfigured in the 1950's to include four traffic lanes (two per direction). Prior to the conversion to one-way, the block between Peters Avenue and Crawford Avenue was the most accident prone segment of roadway in Norman.

Mr. O'Leary said in 1968, Council approved a contract with Wilbur Smith and Associates to develop a Traffic Operations Improvement Program. One of the recommendations was to convert traffic flow on Main Street and Gray Street from two-way to one-way. The final report stated, "To ensure the continued stability and growth of Downtown area of Norman, it is essential that improved traffic operations be provided. The increasing traffic demand requires the maximum efficiency and capacity be realized from the existing street system through the application of traffic engineering operational improvements such as effective traffic signal system control, one-way operation, parking regulations, running movement control, and intersection channelization."

He said the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1968 focused attention on increasing operational efficiency of existing street and highway systems in urban areas by initiating "TOPICS," a Traffic Operations Program administered by the Federal Highway Administration to increase capacity and safety. A TOPICS Program developed by Pinnell-Anderson-Wilshire and Associates of Dallas, Texas, was completed in March of 1971, and was accepted by Council resolution on May 4, 1971. Norman TOPICS identified Main Street between University Boulevard and Porter Avenue as the most accident prone segment of roadway in Norman and head-in parking was identified as the major cause of collisions therefore the plan recommended conversion to parallel parking.

In April 1974, the Norman Chamber of Commerce (NCC) held a Board Retreat and voted unanimously to approve the conversion of Main Street and Gray Street from two-way to one-way. On May 21, 1974, Council voted unanimously to approve the conversion and on August 15, 1974, Main Street and Gray Street became one-way.

On March 27, 1990, Council received a petition (signed by 171 citizens) from Ms. Marti Lance, 214 East Main Street, requesting that traffic patterns on Main Street and Gray Street be returned to two-way. On March 29, 1990, Dr. James Gattis, PhD, Professor of Civil Engineering at OU, offered his professional opinion on the proposed change stating, "Conversion of Main/Gray to two-way operation would constitute a major step

Item 2, continued:

backward for both the general public's traffic mobility and for business access to the properties along Main and Gray. Norman has had a shortage of funds to improve transportation facilities, but the Main/Gray pair is one of Norman's bright spots. The current one-way operations is much more desirable than the two-way operation."

On April 5, 1990, after becoming aware of Ms. Lance's petition, Mr. Mark McGucking, President of the Norman Downtowner's Association (at the time), submitted a letter voicing objection over the conversion. His objection letter included a copy of a survey of 65 downtown property owners objecting to the change.

On November 13, 2001, Council approved a contract with Cobb Engineering Company to provide engineering services for the preparation of a Downtown Traffic Study to specifically look at the conversion of Main Street to two-way.

On January 15, 2002, Council met in a study session to discuss the Cobb Engineering study results, findings, and recommendations. The study concluded that in order to maintain adequate traffic operations on Main Street and Gray Street under the two-way scenario, five traffic lanes would be required on both facilities and current angle parking needed to be converted to parallel parking. At the conclusion of the study session, Council chose to keep Main Street and Gray Street as a one-way couplet.

In December 2014, the Downtowners Association conducted a survey, with 13 responses, indicating that two-way streets ranked an 8.7 on a one to ten scale. It was by far the highest ranked transportation initiative with connection to Campus Corner ranked second, ample parking ranked third, and bicycle/pedestrian friendliness ranked fourth.

Mr. O'Leary said there has not been much change in traffic flow over the past forty years. There are approximately 12,000 cars per day on Main Street and there were 12,000 cars per day in 1970, so the request to change Main Street and Gray Street from one-way to two-way is not capacity driven.

Mr. O'Leary highlighted FYE 2016 projects and initiatives for Downtown Norman that includes Downtown Main Street "Streetscape," Railroad Quiet Zone, Central Library, and the Norman Center City Visioning Process.

Downtown Main Street "Streetscape"

The Downtown Main Street Improvements Project on the west end includes landscaping; cobblestone paving band; sidewalks; street furniture; decorative lighting upgrade; stamped and colored asphalt; and ADA ramps. Improvements will not need to be modified in the event Council decides to move forward with the conversion of Main Street. He said ODOT has been sitting on federal grant money for two years thinking the Transportation Bill was going to change, but that did not happen so ODOT is now putting pressure on the City to spend the money by the end of 2016 and keep the Downtown Main Street Improvements Project moving.

Railroad Quiet Zone

Mr. O'Leary said Railroad Quiet zones are railroad (RR) crossing at which trains are prohibited from sounding their horns in order to decrease noise levels for nearby residential communities. He said the train horns can be silenced only if additional safety devices/measures are used to compensate for the absence of horns. He said there are eleven RR crossing that would need additional safety devices and Main Street and Gray Street already have crossing arms (gates); however, the City will have to take extra measures to ensure cars do not attempt to drive around the gates especially if trains are not blowing their horns. He said if trains do not sound their horns, people may be more inclined to do unsafe things such as going around the gate, so the City would need a Four-Quadrant Gate System, which has gates at all four lanes. He said another option is channelization devices or raised medians and other special considerations for quiet zones would be increasing pedestrian safety since horns will not be sounded. He said Norman has had multiple pedestrian fatalities over the last ten years so Council may want to consider fencing along both sides of the downtown corridor.

Item 2, continued:

Central Library

Mr. O'Leary said Council has recently been discussing a Central Library location on Acres Street next to the RR tracks. He said there would be no impact to that location if Main Street and Gray Street were converted to two-way streets, but timing of the RR quiet zone would be critical.

Norman Center City Visioning Process

Mr. O'Leary said during the Norman Center City Visioning Process, it was recommended that Main Street and Gray Street be converted from one-way to two-way flow. He said it was recommended that Main Street be converted from three lanes eastbound to one lane eastbound, one lane westbound, and a two-way continuous left turn lane. It was recommended that Gray Street be converted from three westbound lanes to one lane eastbound, one lane westbound, and a landscaped median and left turns at intersections.

He said an active survey was taken during the Center City Visioning Charrette asking if Main Street and Gray Street should be converted to two-way streets and the overwhelming response was yes. Another question asked citizens to prioritize four items and converting Main Street and Gray Street to two-way was ranked number one with mixed use buildings ranked second, sidewalks designed for dining ranked third, and more housing ranked fourth.

Mr. O'Leary presented proposed concept designs of the conversions and said there are proposed "sharrow" lanes on Main Street, which are lanes shared by vehicles and bicycles. He said the Bicycle Advisory Committee and others have expressed concerns about the safety of a sharrow on Main Street with only one lane going both directions with vehicles backing out of parking spaces. He said Gray Street would have a landscaped raised center median.

Mr. O'Leary highlighted advantages and disadvantages of one-way and two-way streets as follows:

One Way Streets

- Allows for more cars thereby decreasing congestion
- Easier than two-way streets to time traffic signals (timed signals improve traffic flow)
- Fewer turning prohibitions
- Fewer traffic collisions because there are less vehicular conflicts
- More on-street parking (depending on amount of right-of-way)
- Possibly safer for pedestrians

Two Way Streets

- Slower traffic speeds
- Decreases "vehicle miles traveled" by eliminating indirect routes (driving around the block to get to your destination)
- Increased access to businesses
- Livability: vehicles stop less on one-way streets, which is hard for bikers and pedestrians
- One-way street networks are confusing for drivers (especially out-of-towners), which leads to more vehicle miles traveled and makes it difficult for bus riders to locate stops for a return trip
- Local businesses believe that two-way streets increase visibility
- Possibly safer for pedestrians

Item 2, continued:

Mr. O'Leary said Norman's Comprehensive Transportation Plan was adopted by Council on May 13, 2014, which currently maintains a one-way couplet. He said specific improvements for Main Street and Gray Street would be needed if they were converted to two-way streets. He said while the Plan recognized the City is staying with the one-way couplet, the Plan showed some interesting one-way options for road diets versus conversion to two-way. The Plan recommended further evaluation if Council or the community wanted to convert the one-way streets. The Plan suggests a comprehensive feasibility analysis be done to consider all options. A study would cost approximately \$100,000.

Mr. O'Leary said key elements of a feasibility study would include review of traffic operations at the two critical intersections in the corridor consisting of Main Street and University Boulevard, Main Street and Porter Avenue, and Porter Avenue and Gray Street; review RR crossing traffic flow disruption; and review the impact on the James Garner Boulevard Project.

He said preliminary assessment of fiscal impacts associated with two-way conversion include *short term* improvements as follows:

- Traffic signal modification at University Boulevard, Webster Avenue, Santa Fe Avenue, Peters Avenue, Crawford Avenue, and Porter Avenue - \$200,000;
- Railroad crossing improvements - \$300,000;
- Pavement markings - \$200,000; and
- Additional supplemental safety devices for Railroad Quiet Zone - \$1,000,000.

Mr. O'Leary said other needed improvements include intersection capacity improvements needed to mitigate the effects of the two-way conversion, e.g. turn lanes, which would cost an estimated \$3 million.

Mr. O'Leary said the RR Quiet Zone can be done today, but if the two-way conversion happened, the Four Quad Gate System would have to be installed after the fact. Councilmember Holman asked the difference between the initial RR Quiet Zone Improvements and the above stated additional supplemental safety devices and Mr. O'Leary said the Quiet Zone currently assumes a one-way street configuration and the supplemental devices assume a two-way street configuration. Mr. David Riesland, Traffic Engineer, said whether or not a quiet zone is done at all, cantilevered signals would need to be installed on both sides of the tracks if the streets are configured as two-way, which would require additional funds.

Councilmember Holman said according to the Porter Corridor Study, the only way to make improvements to Porter Avenue is to make it a three lane street and if Main Street were three lanes it would tie into a three-lane Porter Avenue fairly well. Mr. O'Leary said the Porter Corridor Plan discussed rebuilding the entire corridor of Porter Avenue while tonight Staff is only talking about reconstructing the intersections of Main Street and Gray Street at Porter Avenue. He said a feasibility study would look at the impact on each intersection.

Mr. O'Leary said there are two options moving forward, which are:

Option 1

Proceed with the Downtown Transportation Enhancement and Railroad Quiet Zone Projects assuming one-way flow on Main Street and Gray Street

Include the feasibility study for the two-way conversion as a separate contract in the FYE 2016 Capital Budget. (This option does not preclude the two-way conversion at a later date).

Item 2, continued:

Option 2

Proceed with the Downtown Transportation Enhancement and Railroad Quiet Zone Projects assuming one-way flow on Main Street and Gray Street (spring/summer 2015).

This option will require an amendment to the FYE 2015 Capital Budget in the approximate amount of \$100,000

Mr. O'Leary said his only concern with this project is the Staff work load.

Chairman Jungman said whatever the Council decides there is no reason to slow down on the Quiet Zone Project and Mr. O'Leary said that is correct.

Councilmember Holman would like to see the Downtown Main Street Streetscape improvements be done in a way to accommodate a two-way Main Street. He said even if Main Street and Gray Street are not converted to two-way, he would rather they not be three lanes going in one direction because that encourages high speeds and frequent lane changes. He felt a better plan would be making Main Street two lanes going in one direction and converting Gray Street to two-way.

Ms. Sara Kaplan, Retail Marketing Coordinator, asked if it were feasible for a two-way conversion project to be done in stages such as constructing Gray Street first (as a pilot) since it has lower traffic counts. Mr. O'Leary said it may be possible, but felt it would still require some type of analysis and that could be a recommendation from an analysis. He said Salina, Kansas, phased in several one-way to two-way conversions that were quite successful.

Councilmember Holman said in previous attempts to convert Main Street and Gray Street to two-way, businesses were apprehensive about losing parking spaces or changing parking to parallel parking.

Mr. Stephen Koranda, Norman Downtowner's Association, said businesses have repeatedly heard the suggestion of converting these streets to two-way streets and they would like to see any movement towards two-way streets expedited.

Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, read a statement from Mr. John Woods, Norman Chamber of Commerce Executive Director. Mr. Woods stated that the Chamber of Commerce is actively involved in discussions regarding conversion of Main Street and Gray Street and the issue is of great importance to the local business community. There has been nothing but positive and encouraging words from local businesses for the City to pursue the change of one-way traffic to two-way. The change is critical to downtown business growth, increasing in-fill development, and producing a more sustainable downtown environment. Councilmember Holman said retail businesses struggle more on one-way street than two-way streets because two-way streets increase exposure.

Chairman Jungman said the options seem to be to begin the project now or push it back one year and Mr. O'Leary said that is correct; however, he strongly suggests a feasibility study be done. Chairman Jungman asked the Committee's opinion and Councilmember Holman did not want to lose any federal or state funding so he wanted to do whatever would keep all the projects moving forward. Mr. O'Leary said the two-way conversion would not impact current projects.

Mayor Rosenthal was concerned with a "feasibility study" because it makes it sound as if the City is going to look at whether or not two-way conversion is *feasible*. She said the community wants to see this happen so how do we do it and make it work in the best way possible. Chairman Jungman felt the feasibility study would simply be a roadmap on how to get this done. Mayor Rosenthal said she would rather call it an "implementation study."

Item 2, continued:

Mayor Rosenthal said she did not want to wait a year from now to start an implementation study. She said if the budget is amended, could Staff proceed with an implementation study within the first quarter of the year and Mr. O'Leary said yes, if that is the direction Council chooses. He said progress will be more about selecting the team which has to be very multi-dimensional and the project is not just being looked at from an engineering approach.

Mayor Rosenthal suggested the Finance Committee review amending the budget because there are other capital projects the Finance Committee will be reviewing as well. Chairman Jungman asked Mr. Lewis if he would place the item on the next Finance Committee agenda and Mr. Lewis said he would.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "One Way – Two Way Main Street and Gray Street," Community Planning & Transportation Committee, Monday, December 22, 2014
2. Article entitled, "Downtown Streets – Are We Strangling Ourselves on One-Way Networks,?" by G. Wade Walker, Walter M. Kulash, and Brian T. McHugh
3. City Council Study Session minutes of January 15, 2002
4. PowerPoint presentation entitled, Executive Summary – Downtown Traffic Study," dated January, 2002
5. Technical Memorandum, City of Norman Downtown Traffic Study, Contract K-0102, Phase I, presentation to Council by Cobb Engineering dated January 2002

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Item 3, being:

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLIC COMMENT.

Mayor Rosenthal said the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) would like to meet with City representatives and local business representatives in February regarding the next steps for regional transit. Part of that discussion will be the timeline in creating a Regional Transit Authority to bring back to the public for a funding mechanism.

Councilmember Holman said there are a lot of Planned Unit Development (PUD) proposals coming forward to Council and he would like to discuss PUD enforcement after construction is completed to make sure developers are doing what they promised. Chairman Jungman felt that would be a good topic of discussion and asked Staff to place that on the CPTC agenda for January 2015.

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The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.