

CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 28, 2022

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 28th day of February, 2022, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmember Hall and Chairman Holman

ABSENT: Councilmember Peacock, Schueler, and Studley

OTHERS PRESENT: Ms. Danielle Clark, Administrative Technician III
Mr. Ricky Jackson, Deputy Police Chief
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager
Ms. Sara Kaplan, Retail Marketing Coordinator
Mr. Steve Miller, Norman Operations Manager, VeoRide, Inc.
Ms. Beth Muckala, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Shawn O’Leary, Director of Public Works
Ms. Heather Poole, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. David Riesland, Transportation Engineer
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING E-SCOOTERS.

Ms. Beth Muckala, Assistant City Attorney, said the City has been referring to mobile scooters as “e-scooters,” but Staff is suggesting language be consolidated to use the term “motorized scooter.” She said motorized scooter is being used in State laws to address these devices and Staff has approached amending the ordinance using the term motorized scooter. She said during the last discussion, Council gave Staff some great ideas, which are being incorporated into the proposed ordinance.

Ms. Sara Kaplan, Retail Marketing Coordinator, said motorized scooters initially landed in Norman in 2018, without prior knowledge by City Staff. She highlighted usage from 2018 through 2021, and said there is seasonality to the usage with significant usage in August, September, and October 2019.

Item 1, continued:

Ms. Kaplan said there are currently three (3) licensed motorized scooter companies and the City bases its fees on number of vehicles deployed, not on ridership. She said in 2019, the City collected quarterly deployment fees of approximately \$12,856, \$14,791 in 2020, and \$12,606 in 2021. She said according to Police Department (NPD) data, 101 calls regarding motorized scooters was received; however, many of those were personally owned motorized scooters and many of the calls were not accident related. She said Staff also requested data from the scooter companies operating in Norman and that data was minimal. Mr. Ricky Jackson, Deputy Police Chief, said NPD does not really differentiate between motorized scooters versus other types of scooters or personal versus rented, so the data provided is as close to accurate as possible.

Ms. Kaplan said Staff is exploring better ways to manage scooters as well as improve communication with scooter companies. She said potential monitoring software would be applicable to all rideshare operations, consolidate live data from multiple vendors in one place for Staff's ease of identification issues, and include an invoicing component for collecting fees from multiple vendors. She said Staff researched the possibility of the City purchasing software or working with EMBARK to maximize efficiencies and save costs and is in the process of gathering cost data, which may potentially be off-set by increasing annual license fees.

Ms. Muckala said initially, the City crafted a revocable license agreement with City Council's input regarding fees and regulations. The motorized scooter companies are allowed to operate as bicycles in conformance with the license agreements and as otherwise posted or stated. A pilot program was initiated; however, the impact of the OU selected provider as well as COVID on motorized scooter operations has slowed down the implementation of the pilot program and at the last meeting, Councilmembers felt the City should move forward with regulations without the pilot program. She said Staff recommends keeping licenses approved through the contract agreement formula that will be vehicle specific so the agreements can be crafted to respond to different sizes and types of vehicles. She said traffic regulations, based on Council input, have been refined to be applicable to all types of vehicles potentially found on Norman streets, whether rented or personally owned.

Ms. Muckala highlighted license fees as \$300 per company per year with an infrastructure impact fee of one dollar per day per scooter. She said there is potential for an increased fee if additional administrative licensing costs are identified. Current contractual fees of \$1 per day per scooter is recommended for maintenance, development, and shared mobility infrastructure (specific areas to deploy and park motorized scooters). She said this is preferable to a "per ride" fee because it motivates companies to deploy motorized scooters based on demand and avoid overcrowding sidewalks.

Enforcement will be addressed on a complaint basis and can be enforced by Norman Police Department (NPD), Code Compliance Division, or Traffic Division. She said if motorized scooters are left in inappropriate places, such as on personal property, in drainage channels, alleyways, in the street, etc., the City will pick them up and charge \$5 per day to store the devices until they are claimed by the company.

Item 1, continued:

Ms. Muckala highlighted proposed changes to licenses that include Ridership Data – data is now more available, but requires access for a cost; Fleet Size – no reason to suggest a different approach because of current fee structure; No Ride/No Park Zones – adding language requiring good faith cooperation, administrative to allow flexibility without need to bring agreement back; Scooters After Dark – updated language on rebalancing, focusing on residential streets; Contact Information – proposing hang tags for better visibility of company information and, if successful, may specify that approach; and Parking Guidelines – language being incorporated into Traffic Regulations as referenced in the license agreement.

Ms. Muckala said Staff is seeing different devices other than the stand-on riding scooters and OU has an arrangement to allow different types of vehicles, which Staff is currently addressing. She said because the City's agreements are specific to motorized scooters, other types of motorized vehicles do not have permission to be deployed on City right-of-way; however, whether or not they can be on City streets is a different matter. She said that is why the City needs to have a case-by-case revocable license agreement for each type of device in order to have creative solutions on how motorized vehicles are deployed, how they are parked, etc., before they are allowed on the streets.

Ms. Muckala said general rules regarding motorized scooters include obeying speed limits. She said, by ordinance, a motorized scooter cannot drive faster than 25 miles per hour (mph) in any circumstance and cannot be driven on a road with a speed limit greater than 25 mph. According to State law, the City can adopt ordinances “governing the operation” of motorized scooters “upon roads, streets, alleys, bridges, sidewalks, or other places within its respective jurisdiction.”

In previous discussions, Staff suggested Council consider whether or not to require helmets, determine where riders can ride (currently allowed on street/bicycle lanes/sidewalks, and paths/trails unless marked), setting a minimum age requirement to ride (State law specifies a minimum age of 14 years), and thinking about designating parking areas versus leaving motorized scooters all over town. Ms. Muckala said the consensus among Councilmembers was a minimum age 16 years or above, which was drafted in the ordinance, but she changed it to 14 years to match State law and Councilmembers agreed language should be consistent with State law. She said there is currently no State law regarding wearing helmets on motorized scooters, so the City could require helmets up to a specific age or require everyone on a motorized scooter to wear a helmet.

Ms. Muckala said the proposed ordinance includes rules for riding on streets, riding on sidewalks, identification of “no ride” zones, speed zones, and general guidance on parking to keep motorized scooters off pedestrian/bicycle paths. She asked if dedicated parking spaces should be established, such as in Downtown Norman, Campus Corner, near bus stops, some parks, etc., and Councilmembers felt that would be appropriate. She said Staff will focus on options for parking in Downtown Norman and Campus Corner to bring back to the Committee for review and address other areas as identified. She said the motorized scooter companies address issues quickly when brought to their attention.

Item 1, continued:

Chairman Holman said he would like the presentation to go before full Council for further review and input.

Mr. Steve Miller, Norman Operations Manager, VeoRide, Inc., said VeoRide contracts with OU and the motorized vehicles are programmed for 15 mph and VeoRide has no plans to change that due to safety issues. He said VeoRide performs neighborhood sweeps every 48 hours to pick up any motorized vehicles left in neighborhoods. He said VeoRide wants to be a good neighbor and partner in Norman and does not want to be a nuisance to residents. He said the motorized vehicles are also programmed to stop running when the vehicle is ridden outside of specific OU property boundaries.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Motorized Scooter Regulation Update," dated February 28, 2022
2. Draft Legislatively Notated Ordinance

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Item 2, being:

PUBLIC TRANSIT UPDATE.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, said the fixed route service transported 17,709 passengers in January 2022, compared to 20,245 in December 2021. The daily average ridership was 738. There were 565 passengers with bicycles and 216 passengers with wheelchairs or other mobility devices transported in January.

The paratransit service transported 1,549 passengers in January 2021, compared to 1,748 in December 2021. Average daily ridership was 67, an increase of 30.52% compared to December 2021.

Saturday service totaled 1,325 in January 2022, a 20.78% increase over 1,097 in December 2021.

Mr. Johnson said the new Transit Maintenance and Operation Facility on North Base opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony on February 11, 2022. He commended Fleet Maintenance Division Staff for continuing to ensure the transit fleet is in operational condition despite the age of the vehicles. This maintenance includes mechanical maintenance as well as fueling, cleaning, and sanitizing the buses each night at the conclusion of service.

Mr. Johnson said on October 1, 2021, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) announced the grant cycle for the Air Quality Small Grant Program was open. This program seeks to improve air quality in Central Oklahoma by reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicle trips. Small transportation infrastructure projects and transit improvements as well as projects focused on congestion relief efforts are all eligible. He said ACOG approved a grant to install 80 new bus stops associated with the recommended route change in the Go Norman Transit Plan.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Johnson said on January 18, 2022, Council approved the purchase of property located at 318-320 Comanche Street, which will be renovated into a Transit Center so Staff will begin reviewing design options for presentation to Council. He said Nelson/Nygaard will update the Go Norman Transit Plan maps to incorporate the Transit Center (originally mapped the Norman Depot as the Transit Center).

City Fleet Maintenance continues to ensure the transit fleet is in operation condition each morning, which includes mechanical maintenance as well as fueling, cleaning inside and outside, sanitizing activities, etc.

On November 9, 2021, Council approved a contract with AngelTrax to provide a public transportation onboard surveillance system for the City of Norman public transportation fleet. The contract provides sufficient camera coverage, both inside and outside the vehicle; sufficient storage on each vehicle to be able to download video up to 240 hours in the past; an automatic system that would download tagged video wirelessly when the vehicle comes in range of the public transit fleet yard; and a computer software solution that enables both EMBARK and City employees to tag/request a video be downloaded and viewed. Over the next few weeks the equipment will be installed, calibrated, and tested for quality verification as well as training provided for Staff.

The City purchased two battery electric buses and Staff anticipates receiving these vehicles in August/September 2022. Approximately 70% of the vehicle purchase price will be reimbursed through a grant received from the Federal Transit Authority's 2021 Low or No Emission Vehicle Program. Staff continues to identify other avenues to purchase transit vehicles to modernize and standardize its fleet using existing local and federal funds available.

On December 14, 2021, Council approved the purchase of five (5) Dodge Promaster vans for the City's public transportation fleet; however, due to supply chain issues the vehicle costs have increased and Staff is working on an agenda item to address the increase. He said Staff has identified additional Federal Transit Authority (FTA) grant money to supplement the cost increase and potentially decrease the amount of the local match.

Mr. Johnson said the federal mask mandate is anticipated to expire March 31, 2021, for all public transportation.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated January 27, 2022, from Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager, through Shawn O'Leary, P.E., CFM, Director of Public Works, to Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee
2. EMBARK Norman Performance Report for December 2021

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The meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.