

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

May 26, 2011

The City Council Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 26th day of May, 2011, 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.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councilmembers Butler, Cubberley, Kovach,
Chairman Quinn

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
Ms. Linda Price, Revitalization Manager
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV
Mr. Mark Campbell, Interested citizen
Mr. Will Decker, Interested citizen
Mr. Stephen Tyler Holman, Interested citizen
Mr. Cody Ponder, Grants Specialist II for OU
Mr. Wayne Wickman, OU Transit Operations
Manager

DISCUSSION REGARDING CART RIDERSHIP REPORT INCLUDING SAFERIDE AND EXTENDED SERVICE.

Mr. Cody Ponder, Grants Specialist II for OU, said overall annual ridership was down due to CART closing four days in February when the winter storm hit Norman. Chairman Quinn asked if CART had closed during the recent tornado and Mr. Wickman, OU Transit Operations Manager, said CART held the 6:00 p.m. run and shuttled passengers into the nearest public and OU facilities then began running busses again at 6:30 p.m.

Items submitted for the record

1. Cleveland Area Rapid Transit Ridership Totals for the Month of April 2011

UPDATE ON DUMP THE PUMP DAY.

Mr. Ponder said Dump the Pump Day will be held June 16th and CART will offer free bus fare. He said free t-shirts will be handed out at the South Oval at the University instead of handed out on the busses because it becomes burdensome on the drivers. Chairman Quinn asked if Council needed to do anything that day and Mr. Ponder said CART Staff has been working with Mayor Rosenthal to hold a welcome reception and Council will present a Dump the Pump proclamation at their June 8th Council meeting.

POSSIBLE DISCONTINUANCE OF CART'S FAR SIDE STOPS.

Mr. Ponder said CART is still reviewing what action regarding the discontinuance of CART's far side stops and may be able to provide information at the July meeting. Chairman Quinn asked if far side stops were stops where citizens can hail a bus if they are not near a bus stop and Mr. Ponder said yes. Mr. Ponder said CART is reviewing far side stop records to determine where the most far side stops are taking place and deciding if these locations need a bus stop. He said many bus routes get behind schedule when too many far side stops are made.

UPDATE ON THE FOLLOWING CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS:

- Robinson Street Underpass Project
- Highway 9 Widening Project, 24th Avenue SE to 84th Avenue SE
- I-35 Widening Project, Main St to Canadian River Bridge
- Lindsey Street Project, Jenkins to BNSF railroad tracks
- Compressed Natural Gas Fueling Facility, Flood and Goddard
- Rock Creek Road Overpass Project at I-35
- 60th (Western) Avenue Project, Tecumseh to Highway 37 (134th St) – 5 mi.
- University North Park Tax Increment Finance Projects

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said these are major multi-million dollar transportation projects and provided an overview of each project. He said the Robinson Street Underpass Project is a \$25 million project and the opening of Flood Street on May 25, 2011, was a major milestone. He said closures of Flood Avenue and Robinson Street were needed to construct the temporary shoofly for Burlington Northern and Sante Fe (BNSF) Railroad. He said construction of the permanent bridge is now underway. Councilmember Cubberley said trains are traveling a lot slower and Mr. O'Leary said this is a transition period and trains will run 10 miles per hour (mph) in the beginning to test the stability of the temporary track, but will be allowed to travel 40 mph to 50 mph depending on direction of the BNSF. Mr. O'Leary said the shoofly is a full blown bridge that was brought in by the contractor, which is different than what the project originally planned, normally an earthen bridge is built.

The State Highway 9 Widening Project from 24th Avenue S.E. to 84th Avenue S.E. is an \$18 million project. He said the environmental assessment period ended May 6th and the land acquisition process purchasing strips of right-of-away should begin soon. Chairman Quinn asked if the City is involved in the land acquisition and Mr. O'Leary said no, the project is managed by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) with the exception of the City being engaged in coordination of the bike lanes. He said construction of 24th Avenue S.E. to 48th Avenue S.E. would begin in 2013, with the remaining portion in 2015.

The I-35 Widening Project from Main Street to the Canadian River bridge is a \$110 million project. Mr. O'Leary said the environmental assessment public hearing could be held in June but that has not been officially announced. He said a noise wall in the Normandy Park neighborhood will be built, but technically, that cannot be verified until the environmental assessment is completed and the project is approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHA). Chairman Quinn asked if the wall would have a theme design like the overpasses and Mr. O'Leary said that is unknown at his time, but the City would like aesthetics to be a part of the project. Councilmember Kovach asked if noise walls are always placed out away from the highway or if there been any built closer to the highway. He said the neighborhood is concerned that the further back the wall is built, the less sound will be muffled. Mr. O'Leary said he has seen them built both ways, but has seen more walls built on the joint property line, not for noise purposes, but for property purposes. He said the State owns the property and it is there for various reasons such as drainage, obstructions, conflict with the highway, etc. He said the State will want the wall on the joint property line so there is no land in between the wall and the properties because that triggers questions on who will maintain the property, whether or not utilities can be located there, etc. He said all conflicts will be resolved before construction and City Staff will be at all meetings for input.

The Lindsey Street Project from Jenkins Avenue to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) tracks is a \$5.2 million project and last bond project from 2005 to get started. Mr. O'Leary said the project will consist of a divided four lane roadway with raised medians, landscaping, and bike lanes on both sides. He said the Oklahoma Highway Commission (OHC) awarded the contract to Shell Construction Company, Inc., in May 2011, and construction is scheduled to begin June 1, 2011; however, he believes it will be later than that. He said ODOT will close the section of Lindsey Street between Jenkins Avenue and the BNSF tracks to build the box culvert bridge over Bishop Creek. He said ODOT has 28 continuous days to complete the bridge. Councilmember Cubberley asked how much lead time notice the contractor has to give the City before closing Lindsey Street and Mr. O'Leary said no less than two weeks.

Councilmember Cubberley asked if the neighborhood would be given notice of the closure and Mr. O'Leary said yes, through door hangers, press releases, etc., but said if Council believes a public neighborhood meeting would be helpful, Staff would schedule that as the City plays the role of public relations on these types of projects. He said closure for the bridge construction will have the biggest impact of the whole project and Councilmember Cubberley said he would like to see door hangers and a press release at the very least. He suggested placing early articles in the paper warning citizens that the project is scheduled in the very near future and see what types of calls are received then decide if a public meeting is needed. Councilmember Butler asked if signs would be placed at each end of the project parameters to alert citizens of the impending construction and Councilmember Cubberley felt that was good idea. He said 16,000 or more vehicles navigate Lindsey Street on a daily basis so this project really warrants signs.

Councilmember Butler asked how the closure would affect bus routes and Mr. Wickman said two routes will have to be adjusted, but he is happy the routes will be affected only 28 days.

The Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Facility Project may not be considered as a transportation project, but he feels it is a major part of the City's transportation plan. Mr. O'Leary said this is a \$1.6 million project funded with City funds, stimulus funds, and Clean Cities Grant funds. He said groundbreaking is scheduled for July 2011, with completion and opening of the facility in October 2011. He said the City is working on inter-local agreements with Norman Public Schools, Cleveland County, and local taxi companies that would like to convert to CNG.

Mr. O'Leary said the CNG Facility will be the first in Oklahoma and maybe one of the first in the Midwest of a City owned facility that will be open to the general public. He said the Staff is learning how to set prices for the various entities. Councilmember Kovach asked if the facility would have an attendant and Mr. O'Leary said there will be Staff on site to assist; however, the biggest issue is hours of operation as the Norman Fire Code does not allow operation when unattended. He said he is hoping the City can overcome that since the facility is CNG and not diesel or unleaded gas. He said there are a lot of safety features built into the facility and Council will be reviewing policy procedures in the near future.

Chairman Quinn asked who the CNG supplier would be and Mr. O'Leary said Oklahoma Natural Gas Company. Mr. O'Leary said the City's cost will be 85 cents per gallon and the public would pay \$1.35 to \$1.40 per gallon, which will change over time. Councilmember Kovach asked if the City would make a profit selling to other public entities and Mr. O'Leary said that discussion is ongoing and it would not be a "profit," but an overhead rate, future facility improvement rate, operations rate, etc. He said those are some of the policy decisions Council will be faced with within the next thirty to sixty days.

The Rock Creek Road Overpass Project at I-35 is a \$12.5 million project and is projected to be completed by July 1, 2011. Mr. O'Leary said a grand opening ceremony should be held no later than late July. He said the project has ten foot wide hike/bike trails on both sides of the entire corridor from 24th Avenue West to 36th Avenue West, which is pretty remarkable. He said there are also some great stormwater features on the west side of Brookhaven Creek such as a wetlands area and pond area. Chairman Quinn asked if the pond area is privately owned or owned by the City and Mr. O'Leary said it is a public drainage easement partly owned by the City and partly by the adjacent property owner. He said the pond will also be shared with any future development that may occur.

The 60th Avenue Project will replace of five miles of very rough roadway between Tecumseh Road and State Highway 37 that is a combined project between the City of Norman, Oklahoma City (OKC), and ODOT. Mr. O'Leary said the project cost is \$11.5 and has been discussed for twenty years or more and he believes it will become an important connection to OKC.

Mr. O'Leary provided updates on two University North Park Tax Increment Projects. He said progress is being made on the I-35 Northeast Interchange Ramp Project, a \$2.8 million project. The City of Norman is partnering with the Association of Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) and ODOT on the project with construction beginning in late 2011 or early 2012. He said the 24th Avenue N.W. and Rock Creek Road Intersection Project will be completed in July 2011.

Councilmember Cubberley said the Robinson/I-35 Interchange Ramp Project will bring huge traffic relief for that area. Mr. O'Leary agreed and said one of the big issues on the project will be the closure of the ramps, which he predicts will be three months. He said is negotiating with ODOT to oversee the closure and Staff will work closely with businesses that will be impacted to define the best time(s).

Mr. O'Leary said all of these projects not only address traffic congestion, but safety as well.

Councilmember Butler said she was happy that all entities involved are on board for bike lanes and multi-use sidewalks.

Items submitted for the record

1. List of projects with costs and status
2. Robinson Underpass Project Schedule map
3. Robinson and I-35 Interchange map

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION.

None

The meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.