

## **FAQs – Bridge Bond Maintenance Program, City of Norman 2023 ELECTION DAY: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2023**

### **What is being proposed to voters?**

The City of Norman is proposing a bridge maintenance bond program in the amount of \$50 million dollars that will include repair, rehabilitation and replacement for up to 18 existing bridges across Norman. Ten bridge locations are identified in the ballot language with eight anticipated locations planned pending any emergency bridge failures. The construction will occur over 10 years and will improve the condition and safety of Norman's bridges.

### **Why is this needed?**

Since 2016, the City has experienced four bridge failures that resulted in serious safety hazards, road closures and expensive repairs. Regular maintenance and replacement of bridges are necessary to prevent future failures and to extend the life of these structures. Norman does not currently have a sustainable and consistent funding source for bridge replacement or major rehabilitation at the rate necessary to ensure our bridges remain open and safe. The City of Norman is responsible for the maintenance of 80 bridges; more than a quarter of its bridges were constructed prior to 1950. Investing in safe, reliable infrastructure is vital to keep the community thriving.

### **What bridge maintenance program is currently in place today and why is it not sufficient to carry out needed work?**

The city's current bridge maintenance program was established in FY 2018 when the city first adopted regular funding of \$100,000.00 in order to begin addressing maintenance of the City's Bridge inventory. Since this original budget approval, staff has worked to build up the annual allocation and the program received \$1,000,000.00 as a part of the FY 2024 budget process. Although the City has made progress in funding of bridge maintenance, the inventory condition is not sustainable without a larger investment. Approval of the Bridge Maintenance Bond program would allow the city to address multiple high priority locations through major repair or replacement while also allowing continued general maintenance activities through the annual capital budget allocation to ensure a multi-faceted approach for maintaining this infrastructure.

### **Are the bridges I currently drive on today safe?**

Yes. If there are any immediate safety concerns, bridges are closed to traffic until repairs are made. Safety remains the highest priority of the City of Norman. By federal law, each of the City's 80 bridges receives a detailed inspection and evaluation every two years. However, bridges continue to be worn down with daily driving and weather elements; many have exceeded their intended lifespans or will soon exceed their intended lifespans. Replacement and rehabilitation are imperative to public safety and our emergency response plans.

### **What bridges are being repaired or replaced as part of this plan?**

The locations of every bridge planned as part of this program can be [found here](#). Per the map, bridges that are indicated in green will be constructed between 2024 and 2030. Anticipated locations will then

be assessed and completed based on funding availability after priority locations are completed. All of the bond funds will be used to replace or rehabilitate existing bridges in Norman.

### **How were these bridges chosen?**

These locations were chosen based on a number of factors, to include: the condition rating of the bridge, the age of the bridge, and if a reduced load or weight limit has been applied to the bridge. Condition ratings are completed when the bridges are inspected by a third party every other year per federal and state requirements. The bridges selected for this program will be replaced or rehabilitated in prioritized order with all factors considered.

The bond proposal was finalized by staff and voted upon by Council after receiving community feedback through survey work in July 2023. Surveys reflected Norman community members favored a 10-year, \$50 million program above a shorter-term or lower-amount program. A copy of the survey work can be found at: <https://www.normanok.gov/media/18120>.

### **Who will carry out this work or manage these projects?**

Each bridge project will be designed by third party bridge engineering experts using adopted City engineering design criteria. The City will then accept competitive bids for the construction of each project. The lowest and best bid will be awarded the construction contract by the Norman City Council in an open public meeting. Construction management will be conducted with a combination of in-house City staff and third party bridge construction managers.

### **How will this affect my property taxes if passed, and when?**

Proposed monthly property tax increases for the 10-year program vary by home value; general estimates entail \$2.44 for a \$100,000 home, \$5.10 for a \$200,000 home, and \$7.75 for a \$300,000 home. As is standard with ad valorem programs, incremental increases would be consistent with the assessed value of the property (not market value). With passage, property taxes would change in 2024. New rates would be in place for at least 20 years, with voters having the ability to keep rates in place in accordance with future infrastructure needs and plans.

### **Would bridge work include any other type of work or improvements?**

Yes. Work may include items such as lighting, sidewalks/bike paths, landscaping, related drainage improvements, and driveway reconstruction if these items previously existed or are needed in the future on or adjacent to the bridge. Cost estimates per project are calculated factoring in the following:

- Engineering Design
- Land Acquisition
- Utility Relocation
- Environmental Assessments
- Construction
- Inflation
- Construction Contingencies
- Local, State and Federal Permits

**Are there any federal or state grants available to help replace or repair bridges?**

Staff continues and will continue to explore all funding options available to help match or off-set City dollars that will go toward the replacement and rehabilitation of bridges in the community.

**Can you explain the “70%” language in the proposition and why it is there?**

Yes. Article X, Section 27 of the Oklahoma Constitution requires that the City identify projects for at least 70% of the bond proceeds. Norman’s practice in previous street maintenance and construction bond programs has been to identify 100% of the proceeds; however, it is proposed that some of the bond funds in this program be made available for emergency bridge repairs or replacements at unspecified locations, or cost overruns on the listed projects. Due to our recent experience of bridge failures and potential for rapid changes in bridge condition and priority, this program recommends that some emergency funds be included. If funds are not needed for an emergency bridge repair or replacement after the specific projects are completed, the City will use the remaining funds to move down its anticipated list of high-priority bridge replacement and rehabilitation needs and identify additional projects to complete with the available funding. It is currently anticipated that up to 18 total bridges in Norman will be replaced or rehabilitated with funds from this program over the 10-year program term.

**Why does the North Porter Avenue bridge project cost substantially more money than others listed?**

North Porter Avenue is an important, continuous north-south arterial roadway in Norman. It is a public safety corridor. The existing bridge over Little River is too low in elevation, resulting in frequent over-topping of Porter Avenue during heavy rainfall events. The proposed new bridge must be elevated over a longer distance to avoid future flooding. The longer elevated bridge structure is more costly than the other bridges.

**What about the ad valorem package currently in place for roads and streets in Norman?**

The Street Maintenance Bond program is a voter approved 5-year \$27 Million Dollar program dedicated to street maintenance throughout the City of Norman. This program provides maintenance across the following five categories and can only be used for street maintenance activities as approved by the voters of Norman.

- Urban Reconstruction
- Urban Asphalt maintenance
- Urban Concrete maintenance
- Rural Asphalt maintenance
- Preventative maintenance

The 2021 Street Maintenance Bond program was approved by voters in April of 2021 and is the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive cycle of the Street Maintenance Bond program. This program, along with annual capital fund allocations for street maintenance activities has greatly improved pavement conditions throughout the City of Norman creating an average pavement condition index rating (PCI) of 77.

- **What about the 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bond Project that has not been completed as part of the 2012 Transportation Bond Program?**

The City's voter-approved 2012 Transportation Bond Program was predicated on matching the local bond funds with federal transportation grant funds for all eight projects. In fact, 52% of the program costs of \$89.5 million was anticipated to be federal grant funds. The City has completed seven of the eight major transportation projects in the 2012 Bond Program. The 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW Bond Project was always planned to be the last project completed at an estimated cost of \$17 million. \$5.5 million in local bond funds, or 32.3% of the total project costs, have been collected from local property taxpayers. Most of those funds have been spent by the City for engineering design services, land acquisition, utility relocation and environmental assessments, essentially making the project "shovel ready". However, the City has been unsuccessful in securing the remaining \$11.5 million in federal transportation grant funds for various reasons. The City is obligated to deliver this project. The City will continue to pursue every available federal grant opportunity for this project until the funds have been secured. The proposed 2023 Bridge Maintenance Bond Program is not predicated on matching the local bond funds with any other source of funds. If approved by Norman voters, all bridge replacement or rehabilitation costs will be paid with bond funds.

**What about COVID relief dollars/ARPA funds – how much was received by the City and could that have been used for bridges?**

The City of Norman received a total of \$22.4 million in American Recovery Plan Act entitlement funds. Within the guidelines for expenditure of the funds established by the U.S. Treasury Department, the Council allocated \$3 million to a major stormwater drainage project along Imhoff Creek in south central Norman, that will alleviate many potential future bridge maintenance issues. The ARPA guidelines would not allow for bridge replacement or maintenance projects, except as they relate to floodwater/stormwater mitigation or services in areas "disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Where can I learn more about the Bridge Maintenance Program?**

You can learn more by visiting [www.normanok.gov/BridgeByBridge](http://www.normanok.gov/BridgeByBridge)

**Where can I learn more about voting?**

You can learn more about voting and check your voter registration status at <https://oklahoma.gov/elections.html>

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