

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

January 16, 2018

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a Study Session at 5:35 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 16th day of January, 2018, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray, and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Allison, Castleberry, Clark, Hickman, Holman, Karjala, Wilson, Mayor Miller

ABSENT: Councilmember Bierman

Item 1, being:

PRESENTATION FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GOVERNMENTS TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE REGIONAL TRANSIT TASK FORCE INITIATIVES.

Mayor Miller said regional transit for passenger commuter rail has been studied for more than a decade. Mayors from Norman, Del City, Edmond, Oklahoma City, Midwest City, and Moore signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to create a Central Oklahoma Regional Task Force (Task Force) to develop a Regional Transit Authority (RTA). The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) will coordinate the activities of the Task Force.

More transit options give citizens better access to jobs, educational opportunities, medical services, social services, and retail centers. There are currently 100,000 cars per day on I-35 in Norman and another 600,000 in population growth is expected in the metro area by 2040, so public transportation will be key to alleviating congestion.

Mr. John Sharp, Acting Director of the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG), said ACOG monitors the region's growth and prepared a 30 year Transportation Plan that forecasts population and employment growth as well as vehicle miles traveled daily. He said from 2010 to 2040 population is anticipated to grow by 500,000 and employment is anticipated to grow by 270,000 so cities need to think about how these people are going to move around. There is even more growth when you consider vehicle miles traveled, which is expected to increase from 30,266,000 to 46,550,000.

Mr. Sharp said in 2005, the Central Oklahoma Transportation Parking Authority began work on a Regional Fixed Guideway Study that looked at transportation from a regional standpoint. The Regional Transit Dialogue (RTD) included a study for an Intermodal Transportation Hub (Hub) to determine the best location for a Hub and it was determined the Oklahoma City Santa Fe Station would be the optimal location. He said restoration of the Santa Fe Station, in the approximate amount of \$28 million, was funded by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma City, and ACOG as well as a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Grant and restoration is anticipated to be completed in 2018. He said Oklahoma City is currently developing a fully funded downtown streetcar with the Santa Fe Station acting as the center hub for all transit.

The downtown streetcar will consist of a 4.9 mile route traveling north and south and a two mile route traveling between the Santa Fe Station and the Bricktown area.

Mr. Sharp said a Community Corridors Study began in 2012 that included regional collaboration with Norman, Oklahoma City, Edmond, Midwest City, Del City, and Moore as well as local elected officials, policy stakeholders, private sector leaders, and the general public to find the right opportunities to design a plan to advance regional transit in Central Oklahoma from a planning standpoint to an actual implementation/funding strategy. House Bill 2480 was passed in 2014 and allowed the RTD group to determine the footprint to be established for specific service areas that included allowing a vote of the public on a funding tax mechanism for transportation needs.

Mr. Sharp said in 2014, all of the city sponsors collectively came together and conducted a detailed analysis, specifically the preferred transit options, for three (3) of ten (10) identified corridors that consisted of commuter rail service north to Edmond and south to Norman, with streetcar service east to Midwest City/Tinker Air Force Base. He said estimates of \$300 to \$450 million for each corridor would need to be updated since these costs are based on 2014 figures.

Ms. Kathryn Holmes, Holmes and Associates, L.L.C., said Holmes and Associates was contracted to assist in creating the RTA that will implement and oversee a regional system. She said the RTA is critical because transit is inherently a regional operation and an effective governance structure must address the fact that most bus and rail lines do not terminate, and should not terminate, at a city or county border. She said transit service that is not seamlessly connected results in sub-optimal transit service and recognizing that, the federal government has made clear that demonstrated regionalism is an essential component of being effective in competing for federal funding, which is extremely limited. To be most competitive, a RTA must demonstrate that the entire region is aligned in support of the regional transportation plan, the region is capable of turning each dollar into the highest value in relation to the plan, and the RTA has the institutional capacity to be an effective partner in the oversight, planning, budgeting, and spending of federal funds.

Ms. Holmes highlighted the legal framework for RTA and said in May 2014, the Oklahoma legislature authorized the creation of a regional transit district out of "any combination of any portion of any cities, towns or counties, either equal to or less than the entirety of the boundaries of such cities, towns or counties." She said this allows a district the flexibility to create a footprint that will work best for its communities and State statute requires the transit system be funded with sales tax so it is critical that the Oklahoma Tax Commission (OTC) is able to collect sales tax from a district. She said Holmes and Associates is currently working with OTC to review whether or not OTC has the infrastructure and capacity to establish and administer sales tax for the district.

Mayor Miller asked if the RTA can look at using property tax or some other type of funding or does it have to be sales tax and Ms. Holmes said the current legislation authorizes the use of sales tax.

Ms. Holmes said the RTD boundary prepared in 2010 was based on the 2010 Census, but growth is projected to increase by 50% by 2040. She said aligning the boundary of the urbanized area designated by the United States Census Bureau to the maximum extent possible is important for federal funding. An effective governance structure must address the fact that most bus and rail lines do not terminate and should not terminate at a city or county border. She said population and

employment assumptions should be based on 20-year projections as reflected in the most current 2040 Transportation Plan so there will be enough room to grow.

Ms. Holmes said other RTD recommendations include creating sub-districts by population, such as Oklahoma City – sub-districts 1,3,4,5, and 8; Edmond – sub-district 2; Norman – sub-district 6; Moore - sub-district 7; and Midwest City - sub-district 9.

Ms. Holmes said achieving funding and population equity among participants in a regional entity is always a challenge and the goal is to achieve equitable representation using an approach that is durable and easy to modify on a decennial basis. Other regional entities achieve equity by defining the number of board representatives that may be appointed by each member, determining what weight will be given to each vote, and identifying which issues require what level of approval (simple majority, super majority, unanimous).

Ms. Holmes highlighted board selection and voting protocols from other RTA communities and operating and governance models vary among communities and the RTA Task Force should focus on creating a transit system that will meet the transportation needs of the region as well as being unique and meaningful to Oklahoma.

Mr. Marion Hutchison, RTA Task Force member, said creating districts versus city by city or county by county governance makes voting for funding more manageable if there is a one person one vote rule. Ms. Holmes said a vote to create a district is a vote of the City Council to join the RTA and once communities decide if they are in or out there will be a separate entity governing the transit system who will report to the City Council.

Councilmember Wilson said Council would not vote on what happens in the district if the district has its own governance, so citizens would not be voting, correct? Ms. Holmes said that is correct because Council will be creating a regional government entity and once it is create it is just like another city.

Councilmember Hickman asked when cities would vote to join the districts and Ms. Holmes said hopefully, by fall of 2018.

Councilmember Wilson asked how the RTA would interact with the current bus system operated by Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART) and Ms. Holmes said the municipal bus service does not have to be pulled into the RTA, but that decision would be based on what is best for the community. At the minimum, the current bus system will want to redesign its service to feed into the rail lines. She said some communities keep the bus system separate while others do not, so cities would need to review the pros and cons.

Councilmember Wilson said if boundaries are set then ten years down the road transportation needs change and boundaries need to be changed, what action would need to take place? Ms. Holmes said there would be an annexation process built into the governing documents.

Councilmember Holman said there has been discussion about how an effective regional bus system would be the key to the success of a commuter rail or streetcar system. He said the bus system being bound by city limit lines is a problem; however, if CART was a regional system the routes would not

be bound by city limits. Ms. Cindy Rosenthal, RTA Task Force member, said retaining the quality of service maintained through CART and not losing that this was a major concern of the Task Force. She said CART representatives were involved in the discussions and although she does not know how this would all play out, it is important to continue discussions with CART.

Mr. Kris Glenn, Director of CART, said CART receives federal funding through the City so CART is basically a sub-contractor of the City.

Councilmember Hickman asked in reference to infrastructure needs that could include platforms, stations, etc., what the additional costs would be to cities above and beyond the RTA sales tax and how will technology, such as autonomous vehicles, affect the RTA? Has the impact of technology on the long term viability of a regional transit investment and/or incorporating technology into the regional transit plan been considered? Ms. Holmes said there is a base package included in the sales tax dollars for basic stations and platforms, but any betterment to those stations and platforms would be the responsibility of the cities. She said as far as technology, if autonomous technology can be used for vehicles it can also be used for trains, streetcars, and buses. She said it would be great if labor costs are eliminated so this type of technology would definitely apply to the transit world as well as the single driver world.

Councilmember Karjala said it appears that some of the growth patterns on the growth maps for 2040 should include cities like Yukon, Mustang, and Noble. Is there a reason they are not included in the current RTA agreement being discussed because if the RTD is presuming to be preparing for the future then why not bring them into the fold? Ms. Holmes said Yukon and Mustang have not shown much interest, but Holmes and Associates continues to reach out to cities within the regional boundaries that can be brought into the RTA. She said any city within the district will need to decide if they are in or out and if a city is going to accept the sales tax, they need to have representation on the Board.

Mr. Glenn said the City of Norman receives \$1.7 million in federal funding designated to CART to operate the bus system. If an RTA operates the system, will the \$1.7 million be designated to the RTA and, if so, will the money stay in Norman or be distributed regionally to be spent? Ms. Holmes said that is a question every community will want answered, but the RTA will want to ensure the money generated within a certain community goes back into that community; however, there will be overhead expenses. She said there needs to be accountability for dollars generated and benefits received so that is why voting protocols are so important to ensure every member has a meaningful voice on how the money is spent. She said the dominant communities will need to be regulated in a way that is fair to the rest of the communities contributing to a lesser degree.

Mr. Hutchinson said there are more than 100,000 people commuting through the metro area every day so just picture 100,000 vehicles traveling on the interstate creating congestion. He said all types of transit will be needed, including rail, and the only way to maximize usage of a transit system is to have coordination so buses arrive at rail stops at the time the train arrives or departs. He said the reason transit systems fail is because they become inefficient when people have to wait too long or make too many transit moves.

Ms. Holmes said additional steps to RTA formation include refreshing the assumptions of the underlying technical studies; confirming access arrangements for commuter rail service; drafting

RTA formation documents, charters, by-laws, Memorandums of Understanding, and resolutions; preparing an initial staffing plan, budget, and key policy documents; developing educational information for the public; and continuing outreach to stakeholder and constituency groups.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated January 11, 2018, from Steve Lewis, City Manager, to Mayor and Council
2. Central Oklahoma Regional Transit Authority Task Force member list
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Regional Transit Dialogue – RTD Update," dated October 2017

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The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

City Clerk

Mayor