

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

March 18, 2014

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in study session at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 18th day of March, 2014, 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 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Castleberry, Griffith, Heiple, Holman, Jungman, Kovach, Miller, Williams, and Mayor Rosenthal

ABSENT: None

Item 1, being:

PRESENTATION FROM MR. EDDIE HAAS, FREESE AND NICHOLS, OF THE DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN.

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said Norman has never had a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) which is essential for a growing community. He said the CTP has been approximately a four (4) year process, beginning with the Porter Corridor Study in June 2010, which included a transportation piece that brought forward the realization that transportation planning needed to be looked at for the City of Norman. Mr. O'Leary said in March, 2011, the Council Planning and Transportation Committee (CPTC), recommended Staff move forward with a visioning process, i.e., Moving Forward, which included a Steering Committee, Citizen Committee, public meetings for each Ward, conducting a survey, and concluded with a final report which was submitted in January, 2012.

Mr. Eddie Haas, Freese and Nichols, said a draft CTP was submitted February 13, 2014, and since that time comments and/or input has been received from the Sub-Committees and the Citizen Visioning Committee (CVC). He said once Council input is received the goal is to submit a revised draft CTP by March 28, 2014, in order to allow time for Council to review and approve before submitting to the Planning Commission (PC) on April 13, 2014.

Mr. Haas said the CTP will set the framework for transportation policies and decisions going forward and is the first transportation plan for the City that combines a lot of other good planning work that has already been completed, i.e., transit, bike, pedestrian, etc. He highlighted the following transportation planning coming out of the Moving Forward process:

- Framework for growth;
- Land Use/Transportation interface;
- Multi-modal consideration;
- System alignments/rights of way (ROW) preservation/Design Standards;
- Coordination with other agencies regarding City plans;
- Infrastructure and utilities coordination;
- Capital Improvements Programming;
- Funding of improvements;
- Economic benefit; and
- Statement of Community Policy.

Mr. Haas said he met with the Association of Central Oklahoman Governments (ACOG) today to obtain an update on the Commuter Rail Study and discuss how the City's CTP correlates to ACOG's Commuter Rail Study.

Mr. Haas said the benefits of transportation planning is that Norman will have an informed public; increased mobility, options, and safety; facilitating growth and development; community connectivity; and sensitivity to land planning.

Mr. Haas highlighted the CTP planning process that was followed in the development of the draft CTP to include:

- Guiding principles, goals, and objectives of the CTP:
 - Norman is a special place to live,
 - Mobility,
 - Maintain and preserve existing infrastructure,
 - Fiscal Stewardship, and
 - Enhance economic vitality;
- Assessment of existing systems;
- Assessment of needs;
- Travel Forecast Modeling;
- Transportation plan and prioritization;
- Transportation policies and programs;
- Implementation; and
- Documentation.

Mr. Haas said one important component of the CTP planning was the sub-committee work and discussions had with the CVC to develop the Plan concept, refinement, and modal plans. He said the draft CTP document includes four (4) chapters to include: Basis for the Plan; Transportation System Needs; Transportation System Master Plan; and System Implementation Plan.

The Norman CTP, a Multi-Modal Plan for 2035, includes modal elements that will address the needs and growth of Norman over the next 20 years: Thoroughfare Plan and Typical Sections; Bike and Pedestrian Plan, Sidewalk Completion Plan; Transit Service Plan; and Airport, Freight, and Emergency Response.

Mr. Haas highlighted the modal elements of the CTP and provided maps for each element.

Highlights of the Thoroughfare Plan

- Added definition to functional classification and network;
- Design options for roadway sections;
- Formalization of internal loop for regional connection;
- Identification of Collector network supporting section grid;
- Creation of Special Corridors; and
- Railroad grade separations. (two proposed locations identified: Tecumseh Road and Lindsey Street)

Councilmember Williams asked whether Indian Hills Road, rather than Tecumseh Road, was considered as a possible grade separation and Mr. Haas said there is the potential of a commuter rail station at Tecumseh Road. Mr. Haas said along with possible commuter rail station there will be the potential for supporting development, whether that be transit oriented development or some other type of mixed use development, that can generate opportunity for economic benefit; therefore, the grade separation was chosen for Tecumseh Road rather than Indian Hills Road due to the location and Tecumseh Road has already been widened. He said emergency response, closeness to I-35, and community growth to the north were also factors. Mr. O'Leary said emergency personnel also favored Tecumseh Road over Indian Hills Road.

Councilmember Kovach asked whether the CTP addressed above or below grade separation and Mr. Haas said no, that not only engineering issues, but environmental and aesthetic issues, would need to be considered for either above or below grade separations.

Councilmember Castleberry asked about comments made regarding a grade separation on Lindsey Street and Mr. Haas said OU felt very strongly that a grade separation on Lindsey Street would promote more through traffic on Lindsey Street and the surrounding neighborhoods, thus potentially having a negative impact in the area. He felt a Lindsey Street Grade Separation should still be investigated as due diligence to the community to consider all options.

Councilmember Holman said Shawnee, Oklahoma, has a grade separation/tunnel under their municipal airport and asked whether that is a consideration for the draft CTP. Mr. Haas said yes, however the cost quickly became an issue and it was determined that several proposals could be implemented before spending a great deal of money on an underground tunnel.

Mr. Haas felt the downtown accessibility will be facilitated through the extension of James Garner Avenue, by extending and making connection between Acres Street and Robinson Street, and ultimately connecting with Flood Avenue. He said when this corridor is implemented, it may help with relieving some of the other north/south corridors that currently have issues, i.e., Flood Avenue, Berry Road, etc. Mr. Haas said these are the special corridors that require special considerations due to the existing development along them. He said how those evolve or change over time will all need to be considered when the design process goes into those specific segments.

Highlights of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan

- Side-paths: 8-10' along roadway
 - 12th Avenue East,
 - 48th Avenue East (through rural Norman),
 - Lindsey (12th Avenue East to Classen Boulevard), and
 - Robinson/Main corridor.
- Multi-use paths: 10-12' off road
 - Extension of Legacy Trail around Max Westheimer Airport,
 - State Highway 9 Path, and
 - Robinson Waterline Path.
- On-Street Facility Standards
 - Bike lanes on urban minor arterials, and
 - Shoulder bike lanes on all rural principal/minor arterials.
- Notable Bike Lanes along
 - Berry Road (Lindsey Street to Robinson Street),
 - Lindsey Street (Elm Avenue to 24th Avenue West),
 - Rock Creek Road, East and West of Airport, and
 - University Boulevard/Webster Avenue.

Councilmember Castleberry asked about proposed bike paths on Lindsey Street and Robinson Street and Mr. Haas said bike paths could be considered in the future as those corridors are enhanced and/or improved. Mr. Haas said in the rural areas the CTP has identified side paths along some of the principle section lines as well as multi-purpose paths along State Highway 9, Robinson Waterline Path, and the extension of Legacy Trails, etc. Councilmember Miller asked for a description of what the paths might look like and Mr. Haas said along the principle arterials the side paths would be an 8-10' trail in a trail easement pathway along the roadway and in the rural areas the multi-purpose paths would be 10-12' off road, i.e., wider shoulders along the roadway, etc.

Highlights of the Transit Plan

- 2008 Oklahoma City Area Regional Transportation (OCART) enhanced for
 - Porter Avenue – Classen Boulevard corridor;
 - Moore Norman Technology Center;
 - University North Park; and
 - SH9/Cedar Lane area.

Highlights of the Transit Plan, continued:

- Increased service frequency and hours of operation;
- Better accommodation of patrons with wheelchairs;
- American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance at stops;
- Regional Commuter Rail Stations:
 - Tecumseh Road, Downtown, SH9/Imhoff Street; and
 - Platform for University of Oklahoma (OU) special events.
- I-35 – Reversible HOV lane concept (probably will not happen due to physical constraints).

Councilmember Heiple asked how the ridership forecast regarding the commuter rail was factored into the CTP when ACOG has not released their report yet and Mr. Haas said locations have been identified in the CTP that Norman would ideally want to have commuter stations. Mr. Haas said that fortunately ACOG has also identified those locations in their planning, although the ridership numbers have yet to be seen. He felt if funding is found that commuter rail would come to Norman. Mr. O’Leary said if commuter rail comes to Norman and is embraced by the public, the draft CTP is designed as such that it will recognize the traffic that will be lessened for the streets and/or highways. He said Norman has been fortunate to work with ACOG while developing our CTP simultaneously while they have developed their rail plan. He said ACOG will publish their Commuter Corridors Study which will include final preliminary set of recommendations in June or July, 2014.

Mayor Rosenthal said the ACOG Study will be more than just rail and also includes regional transit that contains other modes of transportation, e.g., bus, rapid transit, etc. She said ACOG is completing an alternatives analysis looking at alternative legs and stations in the south corridor (Oklahoma City to Norman), the north corridor (Oklahoma City to Edmond), and the east corridor (Midwest City to Tinker). Mayor Rosenthal said these corridors have been identified as major corridors and the question is what is the best way to maximize and relieve congestion as well as where ridership will most likely occur. Councilmember Kovach feels that if commuter rail is timely, affordable, and has connectivity to other modes of transportation then people will use it as a public transportation alternative.

Mr. Haas said the CTP will identify areas the City of Norman desires to have rail stations; therefore, going forward if Norman can support, position, and be proactive the orientation of those potential rail commuter stations it can help set up the framework for long term planning regarding commuter rail. Mayor Rosenthal felt multi-modal transportation systems should support one another, e.g., rail, bus, etc.

Councilmember Castleberry asked how survey questions were developed and/or worded and Mr. Haas said it was a random scientific survey 800 person sampling plus online submittals.

Sidewalk Completion Plan

Mr. Haas said an analysis was completed on Norman’s sidewalk network and the needs were prioritized for fixing the sidewalk network for the pedestrians in the community. He provided a map of the Sidewalk Completion Plan for arterial and collector roads which reflected priorities for system gaps, committed City projects already being implemented, and priority needs. Mr. Haas said also highlighted on the map are areas that are not-committed, i.e., development not occurring at the locations and/or a way needs to be found to facilitate sidewalks. He said the sub-committee made a great comment regarding sidewalks and suggested as development occurs and contributions by way of sidewalk completions that maybe the funds could go into a “sidewalk bank” for implementing certain corridors. Mr. Haas said developer driven areas were also highlighted for sidewalks, i.e., sidewalks that are expected to occur because of pending and/or anticipated development over the next 20 years.

Councilmember Castleberry said he would like Staff to overlay the Sidewalk Plan to the City’s FYE 2015 budget items to see how the implementation of sidewalks would fit into the equation and Mr. O’Leary said Staff has already begun putting together numbers and priorities for sidewalks that have been identified in the CTP; therefore, should Council adopt the CTP, Staff is prepared to bring forward Capital projects that include the identified sidewalk(s) for the FYE 2015 budget for Council approval. Councilmember Castleberry asked why the sidewalks

along Robinson Street are not identified as a priority and Mr. O'Leary said the priorities tend to be gaps in sidewalks rather than maintenance needs and the sidewalks along Robinson Street are identified as maintenance needs. Mayor Rosenthal agreed that using the CTP as a tool throughout the Capital planning process will help with Council choices and/or decisions.

Airport, Freight and Emergency Response Needs

- Protect zoning around airport and industrial districts to serve freight, rail and air transportation needs;
- Additional grade separated crossings with railroad;
- Corridor enhancements; and
- Land use coordination.

System Implementation Plan

Mr. Haas said the Implementation Plan is in located in Chapter 4, of the CTP and breaks out actions into immediate, short, medium, and long range.

- Implementation Strategy
 - Immediate, ongoing, i.e., adoption of CTP, Bike Plan, etc.;
 - Short-range (0 to 5 years), i.e., develop an aesthetic or enhancement standard for Norman, using what we've learned from previous projects, to include Lindsey Street and Main Street;
 - Medium-range (5 to 10 years); and
 - Long-range (10 to 20 years).
- Actions to achieve CTP goals
 - Institute design standards and procedures; and
 - Focus on the CTP Goals and Objectives, as well as Performance Measures.
- Prioritized projects and programs
 - Special corridors; and
 - Strategic funding opportunities-the City has done really well with General Obligation (GO) Bonds that have funding previous projects; there may be other mechanisms to include Special Districts and Re-investment Zones.
- Funding Sources
 - Local and public – private partnerships, impact fees, developer agreements;
 - Regional and State; and
 - Federal.

Citizen Visioning Committee Comments

- Thoroughfare Plan: specific issue on railroad grade separations, associated cost and prioritization; discussion of key corridors, i.e., James Garner Avenue Extension; potential timing and configuration relative to other recommended projects; and considerations for project prioritization.
- Transit Plan: Incorporation of 2008 CARTS plan, need to have more incremental projects (“pilot projects”) to advance current transit to recommended system, and approval of commuter rail stations locations.
- Bike Path: Specific feedback on system additions.
- Implementation and funding strategies: General approval of short/medium/long-range prioritization, and any new funding strategies need to be evaluated relative to current policies and benchmarking with other municipalities in the region.

Councilmember Williams asked how projects were considered and then prioritized within the CTP. Mr. Haas said there are many factors to include cost of improvements; urgency of need; public input; elevation of existing or pending traffic congestion; completion of gaps in the network; implementation of strategic elements in the transportation system, etc. He said the ranking process is described in more detail in the Criteria Section, Chapter 4, page 29, as well as in Appendix H of the CTP.

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Mayor Rosenthal asked whether the CTP is on the City's website and Mr. Haas said the Plan will be on the website prior to any Public Hearing(s).

Councilmember Kovach said the City of Norman should look at purchasing land for rail stops. Councilmember Castleberry asked how large of a plot of land is needed and Mr. Haas said five to six acres with walkable area(s).

Councilmember Kovach said as far as the Lindsey Street Grade Separation goes, it may have been a good idea prior to reconstruction and felt the public will not like redoing/reconstructing the same area.

Councilmember Heiple said he would like to see a signature/brand on the City roads that would help identify Norman.

Mayor Rosenthal encouraged Council to read through the draft CTP so that specific feedback can be given to Freese and Nichols and Staff.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Norman City Council, The Norman Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP)," dated March 18, 2014, presented by Freese and Nichols

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The meeting adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor