

PUBLIC MEETING ON WEST LINDSEY STREET BOND PROJECT

September 3, 2013

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a public meeting at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building Council Chambers on the 3rd day of September, 2013, 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, Miller, Kovach, Williams, Mayor Rosenthal

ABSENT: None

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE WEST LINDSEY STREET BOND PROJECT BETWEEN INTERSTATE 35 AND BERRY ROAD.

Mayor Rosenthal said tonight's discussion will highlight improvements discussed by City Council on the West Lindsey Street Bond Project as Council faces a very important decision about the final design of the Lindsey Street Corridor. She Council is grateful for the voter's support for this very important project and seven other bond projects by approving them last August. Tonight's meeting will possibly provide a clear explanation about what is actually being discussed and debated and what is not. She said this meeting will also allow citizens to weigh in with a question and comment time after the presentation.

Mayor Rosenthal provided a brief overview of the history of improvements to the West Lindsey Street Corridor over the last 40 years. This project has been brought forward for approval a few times, but has been unsuccessful in earning the voters' confidence. She said Council and Staff worked many months from June, 2011, to August, 2012, to put a package together that was approved and are grateful for the 63% support of the voters. Lindsey Street is a main East-West Corridor and a section line road through the community. Section line roads were originally designed to give farmers access to their farmland and as development has occurred around section line roads, they no longer serve the same purpose they did originally. She said Lindsey Street has been shaped by development patterns along the corridor and today the corridor goes from intense commercial use near the interstate to strictly residential east of Berry Road. She said the traffic counts are highest near the interstate, approximately 27,000 vehicles per day, and at Berry Road, that number drops to 17,000. She said the corridor needs a recognized plan that does not violate these different land uses along the way.

The ballot language for all of eight bond projects specified the funds were "for the purpose of widening streets and bridges and constructing related drainage and other improvements in connection with said streets and bridges." She said in the case of Lindsey Street, a conceptual plan was developed with a twofold purpose, an estimated cost needed to be established going forward to have some basic idea of what we were talking about in terms of the potential improvements, The largest improvement is the drainage section which is the box culvert underneath the roadway that ultimately will drain to the Canadian River. It was intended to show the voters a way to solve the issues related to the Lindsey Street Project; however, it was not a final engineered design and was developed with modifications to improve the project's ability to deliver the best possible outcome. She said voters were promised the Lindsey Street Project would achieve the following goals:

- The drainage problem would be fixed, Lindsey Street would be safer for all modes of transportation and travel, which includes walking, biking, and bus ridership;
- Congestion would be alleviated - Lindsey Street is one of the most congested streets and has one of the highest accident rates in the metro area because of the level of traffic on the corridor;
- Enhanced aesthetics on the corridor. It was hoped our investment in the Lindsey Street Corridor would rejuvenate, bring in additional investment, and bring back the corridor as a vibrant commercial corridor;
- Leverage federal funds to the maximum possible – this was the campaign appeal that went to the voters; and

- Coordination with the I-35 Widening and the Reconstruction of the Lindsey Street Interchange to minimize the disruption to the community.

All of these proposals bring safer, improved traffic flow and manage the stormwater issues, have the same curb-to-curb dimensions and none of the proposals narrow the existing roadway. She said the biggest difference is in how they individually manage traffic within that basic roadway width. All proposals have a commitment to all modes of transportation, although some are better for certain modes of transportation than others and all have a commitment to enhance landscaping. She said the original conceptual plan had a 68-foot roadway section from curb to curb and included bike lanes, two travel lanes in each direction, landscaping along the edges, and pedestrian sidewalks.

Mayor Rosenthal highlighted the current project design embracing a triple canopy, which means essentially a median down the center of the roadway that serves to manage traffic and to beautify the corridor. In the Conceptual Plan, there is a middle lane which is often referred to as a “suicide lane” in which traffic flows in both directions, turning left and right throughout the corridor. That fifth center lane is essentially a continuous turn lane with unlimited access and unlimited turning. She said the current proposal has a triple canopy instead of the fifth center lane also has U-turn access and five-foot bike lanes. She said the total distance from curb to curb is 67- feet. She stressed that the drainage box culvert is in place on this proposal and fits within the existing right-of-way.

Mayor Rosenthal said a project design has also been offered by the Institute for Quality Communities (IQC), which only applies to the section between Wylie Road and Berry Road. Significantly there are two 11-foot travel lanes going both ways and 8-foot auxiliary lanes on the outside edge going either way. The auxiliary lanes are used principally for ingress and egress into businesses and the bus lane turn out to exit passengers, to take on passengers, and then come back and merge into traffic. There is a buffered bike lane between the two lanes of traffic to discourage travel between the two lanes and using the outside lane as a through lane. She said this is being proposed to transition from the commercial corridor to the residential corridor. In addition, the proposal is recommending a roundabout at Berry Road to transition into the residential area. She said it is the same width, 67 feet with a triple canopy in the middle.

She provided slides showing where the roundabout was proposed. Staff and the Federal Highway Administration have estimated there would be a reduction in accident severity by 40-60% and there are several merits for roundabouts such as gasoline reduction, slower traffic, etc.

She said all of the proposals improve upon the existing conditions and account for current and some future vehicular traffic. The question is how much will that traffic grow and provided a variety of assumptions that different authorities have made.

Mayor Rosenthal said the average vehicle miles driven per person is trending downward and *Governing Magazine* published an article pointing out that Oklahoma has seen a 5.5% decrease in driving miles since 2005. That is the national trend although Oklahoma is not as low as some of the other states. She said the question is how much growth is needed to accommodate the Lindsey Street Corridor. She highlighted the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) traffic counts for Lindsey Street Corridor from 1995 to 2013 and said this transportation pattern has not shown much change in the last 20 years in terms of growth. She also highlighted Lindsey Street Historical Traffic Counts provided by the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) at I-35 and Lindsey from 1998 to 2012; McGee Street and Wylie Road from 1997-2012; 24th Avenue S.W. and McGee Drive from 1995-2008; and Wylie Road and Berry Road from 1996 to 2012. She said one part of the debate is how much additional capacity is needed. ACOG uses a 4% growth rate across the metro area and ODOT uses a .5% to 1% annual growth rate. She said this is a very large difference and Council is struggling to make a decision.

She said during the summer, IQC hosted a series of workshops and dialogues featuring internationally recognized experts on walkable, livable, streets and how they shape individual behavior and how they can leverage new investments. She asked Mr. Blair Humphreys from the University of Oklahoma to speak

specifically to this issue because this is something that was very important to our business community on Lindsey Street. She said the business community has presented City Council a petition asking that Council look at some of the issues that were raised in the IQC summer dialogues.

Mr. Blair Humphreys, Executive Director of IQC, said the University of Oklahoma (OU) sees the IQC proposal as an opportunity for Lindsey Street and has promoted this project since March of 2012. He said Lindsey Street starts on one end as a highway and at Berry Road, it becomes a residential neighborhood. He said these two polar opposites have created tension and the answer is creating places where people want to be. He said if this is done right, property values will increase. He provided photographs of 16th Street in northwest Oklahoma City fifteen years ago. He said in 2000, the surrounding community worked together to design the streetscape that would revitalize the district and within five years the community was able to fund the project that provided a new streetscape from building front to building front. He said this was project was not the same as what was proposed for Lindsey but the lessons and opportunities are the same. The stores and buildings are changing to independent types of retail uses that serve the surrounding neighborhood/community and the commercial rates and rents continue to rise. This neighborhood is 100% occupied and has 32 new businesses. The district itself is unified and operating like a community Main Street. He said recently the City of Oklahoma City conducted a study to look at increases in commercial property values for districts and street corridors throughout the city and found this plaza district on 16th Street had seen a 250% increase in commercial property values from 2005 to 2011. He said this not only impacts the commercial value of the property but also gained on average 50% more in home values than the city-wide markets.

He said there is no larger critical mass of active pedestrians and bicyclists than at Lindsey Street on campus. He said it is as close to walk or ride a bike to the east end of Lindsey Street at Berry Road as it is to Campus Corner and thousands of students cross Lindsey Street within a single hour at lunchtime. He asked if Lindsey Street has to be one type of development or could something be created for pedestrians and cyclists, that creates a better transition into the neighborhood.

Mayor Rosenthal presented three comparisons, the IQC proposal, the originally proposed project design, and enhancements that staff has supported from the IQC input as follows:

IQC proposal: Construct a continuous, raised center median to improve traffic safety

Original Proposal: *Partially Included* – two-way left turn lane along section of the corridor to allow access to 90 driveways. However, sections approaching signalized intersection have raised center median to improve safety

Enhancements by Staff: Continuous raised center median with U-turn at intersections and mid-block. U-Turn opportunities through entire length of project proposed

IQC proposal: Provide mid-block pedestrian crossings at a minimum spacing of 300 feet

Original Proposal: *Not Included*. Design included controlled crossings at signalized intersections and satisfied the typical pedestrian demand.

Enhancements by Staff: Mid-block pedestrian crossings are supported at the mid-block U-Turn locations.

IQC proposal: Provide triple canopy

Original Proposal: *Partially Included* –allows for double-canopy with trees along the right and left sides

Enhancements by Staff: Continuous raised center median with landscaping (triple canopy).

IQC proposal: Provide minimum 5-foot sidewalks on both sides

Original Proposal: *Included*

Enhancements by Staff: No change

IQC proposal: Provide colorized bike lanes

Original Proposal: *Included*

Enhancements by Staff: No change

IOC proposal: Provide colorized U-Turn lanes

Original Proposal: *Partially Included.* The City's proposed center two-way left turn proposed to be colorized for distinction.

Enhancements by Staff: With the revised raised median design and mid-block U-Turns, the colorizing will be included.

IOC proposal: Provide bold edge lines on pavement (8"-10")

Original Proposal: *Not Included.*

Enhancements by Staff: Being implemented in the City's bond project design.

IOC proposal: Provide bicycle parking

Original Proposal: *Not Included.*

Enhancements by Staff: Addition of street furniture, including bike parking is currently being implemented in the City's bond project design

IOC proposal: Modern roundabouts

Original Proposal: *Not Included.*

Enhancements by Staff: City supports a design exercise in continued collaboration with OU to pursue opportunity for modern roundabout at Lindsey and Berry.

Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer, narrated a video simulation driving through an improved Lindsey Street from Interstate 35 east to Imhoff Bridge to give the audience an idea of what Lindsey Street could look like with four lanes of traffic. He pointed out various bike lanes, sidewalks, crosswalks, and canopies with landscaping.

Mayor Rosenthal said the bond project includes a segment of Lindsey Street from Berry Road across the Imhoff Bridge which is the transition from the commercial corridor to the residential area and OU gateway. She said this was included with a new bridge over Imhoff Creek with some very important stormwater management improvements under the bridge to deal with flooding issues south on Imhoff Creek. She said that bridge, while it is not yet designed and will be the subject of considerable discussion as we go forward, included a commitment to bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular traffic all within and not-to-exceed the 66-foot right-of-way across the area. Some of the key concepts include walkability, demarking the entrance into OU, keeping the tree canopy that exists and adding additional landscaping. Those design features have not been determined. The commitment in the bond issue was not to go beyond the 66-foot right-of-way across the bridge. The section east of the bridge is not part of the bond issue but needs to be discussed at a later date with the community.

Participants in discussion

1. Mr. Harold Heiple, 218 East Eufaula Avenue, representing the Norman Developers' Council, said the Developer's Council originally supported the two-lane concept with four roundabouts but now supports Staff's plan adding the alternative of a roundabout on Berry Road
2. Mr. Nick Hathaway, OU Executive Vice President, stressed the importance of Imhoff Creek and Lindsey Street east of Berry Road staying two lanes and not over building
3. Mr. Larry Naifeh, 818 West Lindsey Street, supports beautification and safety, but is opposed to widening east of Berry Road
4. Ms. Jayne Crumpley, 423 Elm Avenue, asked questions about funding of the design concepts whether additional funds will be required
5. Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
6. Mr. Joe Lester, 1100 West Lindsey Street, opposes roundabouts due to safety issues, supports Mr. Hathaway's comments, and would like the bridge to remain two lanes
7. Mr. James Greenwood, 1632 Greenbriar Avenue, opposes roundabouts and asked how much right-of-way expenses would be
8. Mr. Ty Hardiman, 620 Miller Avenue, felt Lindsey should be improved the best way possible even if it deviates from the original plan
9. Ms. Ellen Frank, 211 East Daws Street, asked if any of the proposals for Lindsey Street would change the number of vehicles that use Lindsey Street

Participants in discussion, continued

10. Mr. Randy Woods, 2221 West Lindsey Street, expressed concerns about bicycle paths and supports Staff's latest plan
11. Ms. Margaret Phillips, 1527 Lindale Circle, supports Staff's latest plan and expressed concerns about the drainage solution
12. Mr. Jim Hunt, 1013 Joe Keeley Drive, supports Staff's latest plan and opposes roundabouts
13. Ms. Ann Ryan, 923 South Flood Avenue, supports Staff's latest plan and expressed concerns about students trying to walk or bike from campus to the commercial area of Lindsey Street
14. Ms. Jacy Crosbie, 204 Mountain Oaks Drive, opposes roundabouts
15. Mr. Jerry Brust, 4708 Manor Hill Drive, said Lindsey is a major arterial and the ballot did not mention roundabouts but promised four lanes; and asked the Mayor to recuse herself from any decisions relating to OU
16. Mr. Joe Carter, 1524 Magnolia Street, asked if electric lines would be underground, wants the City to move forward with project and said OU is the economic driver for Norman and wants City to support OU's suggestions
17. Mr. Mark Campbell, Post Office Box 1531, supports roundabouts and asked why plan changed from installing several roundabouts to one and how proposed U-turns would affect cyclists
18. Mr. Scott Sturtz, City Engineer
19. Mr. David Wheelock, 2501 Butler Drive, asked for more information about the center lane being used by bicyclists
20. Ms. Becky Aquilar, 1902 Vine Street, supports Staff's latest plan and expressed concerns about roundabouts, asked if there was money in the budget to support the landscaping and if lines would be painted for pedestrians in crosswalks
21. Mr. Blair Humphreys, Executive Director of IQC, overall intention is to create an appropriate transition on Lindsey Street and supports roundabout at Berry Road
22. Mr. Jim Adair, 2824 Castlewood Drive, supports the bike lanes, landscaping, the University's proposal, and a roundabout at Berry Road
23. Councilmember Tom Kovach said this is a better project because of input from OU and asked questions about lane widths, auxiliary lanes being approved by ACOG, roundabouts, and the original design; and voiced concerns about radical changes to original plan because of what was promised to voters
24. Ms. Joy Hampton, *The Norman Transcript*, 215 East Comanche Street, asked how much right-of-way would be needed for a roundabout and is there a plan for enforcement of slower speeds
25. Ms. Mary Francis, 850C Cardinal Creek Condos, supports the City's most recent proposal and roundabouts and bicycle lanes
26. Mr. Harold Haralson, Sr., 607 South Berry Road, opposes roundabouts and supports underpasses for pedestrians at Jenkins Avenue and Lindsey Street
27. Ms. Jocelyn Wall, International Pantry, 1618 West Lindsey Street, expressed concerns about the effect the improvements, walk-able livable communities, and mixed use developments will have on local businesses and opposes roundabouts
28. Mr. Fred Pope, 1501 Navajo Road, opposes roundabouts and IQC's input and supports OU providing financial support for project and an underground railway to allow for pedestrian safety
29. Mr. Jeff Hughes, 124 West Himes Street, expressed concerns about the plan providing adequate Americans with Disabilities (ADA) accessibility
30. Ms. Michelle Sinclair, 2104 Oakridge Drive, supports Staff's latest plan and proposed a video be provided to help the public better understand the plan

Participants in discussion, continued

31. Ms. Judith Blake, 1414 Huntington Way, said she wants Lindsey to be a destination street and wants to be able to ride her bicycle and walk safely along the corridor
32. Ms. Ann Gallagher, 1522 East Boyd Street, said there will not be a reduction of drivers; supports the plan being decided by people who live in Norman, ADA accessibility, and the original plan because that is what the voters approved; expressed concerns about roundabouts being ADA accessible; and asked where funding would come from for the new plan
33. Mr. Robert L. Pendarvis, 2330 Gene McKown Drive, representing the owners of the Phillips 66 Station at the northwest corner of Berry Road and Lindsey Street, asked if additional land will be taken for right-of-way and expressed concerns about the effect the project will have on local businesses
34. Dr. Pat Garrison, 1207 Cherrystone, said traffic on Lindsey Street is terrible and opposes roundabouts and a four-lane road transitioning to two lanes at Berry
35. Mr. Richard Wall, 218 East Eufaula Avenue, opposes mixed-use development on Lindsey and expressed concerns about what will happen to local businesses

Mayor Rosenthal said an amendment to the design contract will be prepared and submitted to City Council on September 10th to include bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and a triple canopy. She said at this point no decisions have been made about including roundabouts or a transition area. She reminded everyone that all of the proposals presented this evening improve Lindsey Street over its current design, make it safer, improve the traffic flow, and make it more attractive and this was what was promised to the voters. She confirmed Lindsey Street will be widened and Council has a very serious obligation to ensure that Lindsey Street is safe and performs well for all of its various users. She thanked the audience for their attendance.

Items submitted for the record

1. Power Point Presentation entitled "Lindsey Street Improvement Project, 24th Avenue S.W. to East of Berry" Public Forum dated September 3, 2013

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor