

AGENDA
DOWNTOWN TRANSFER CENTER SITE COMMITTEE
MARCH 15, 2022 1:00 PM
LAWTON CITY HALL
212 SW 9TH STREET
3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Jay Burk, Allan Hampton, Mary Ann Hankins, Onreka Johnson

OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Cleghorn, City Manager; Richard Rogalski, Deputy City Manager; Jonathan Stone, Planning Department; Kameron Good, Planning Department; Paul Martin, Planning Department; Janet Smith, Community Services Director; Kim McConnell, Lawton Constitution; Ryan Landers, LATS By Phone: John Hendrickson and Joseph Dvorsky with Hendrickson Transportation

BUSINESS ITEMS:

1. Discuss possible locations in downtown area for future transfer center administrative and maintenance buildings.

Rogalski stated LATS was started about 20 years ago and there was an attempt to locate a Transfer Center at the time, but nothing came available, so it was put on B Avenue along the roadway adjacent to Wayne Gilley City Hall. That worked well until City Hall was moved to the current building and Wayne Gilley City Hall was closed. In 2017, a committee got together and talked about a new transfer center possibly located at the old fire station at 17th and Lee or the old police station at 4th and Gore. They ended up recommending the location at 4th and Gore, but the trust did not think that was a good idea at all. Now, we are looking at an area East of that location. The 2019 CIP included \$2 ½ million for a local share to acquire property if necessary. Before, we were trying to find existing City owned property as a local match, but now that we have a potential local match, we have a broader idea of where to look. The focus is generally between 4th Street and Railroad Street and North of C Avenue and South of Gore. This area has a lot of open property. We have also acquired the mall since that time, so we have even more City owned property, but the mall has other uses right now. We are now looking North of C and deciding what can fit in that area. Ryan Landers is going to give a presentation of why we are looking at more than just a transfer center as far as the long-term vision of LATS and this facility.

Landers stated he will be giving a presentation about why we need this transfer center, some other ideas they have come up with during this process, and an area that they've looked at with some possible design concepts. We need a transfer center to enhance pedestrian traffic safety, improve the transit operating efficiency, and provide amenities for the customers. The current transfer center has two shelters and no bathrooms. It also

needs to provide a safe facility for people to transfer. Currently, it is just out in the open. Mobility issues are also a concern with the current transfer center. It doesn't have the ADA access that could be provided with a new transfer center. The last few concepts are just a general purpose. A new transfer center can provide a sense of place and civic pride. It could be something nice and something that brings history out, which is what we are wanting to do. A new transfer center could also contribute to the neighborhood economic development. These are the concepts of why we need a new transfer center, and that's what we have started off with over the last couple of years.

Landers stated one of the ideas they came up with was to put everything in one location, meaning the operations facility, the maintenance facility, and the transfer facility would all be in one location. That would help improve the overall operation by providing fewer dead head miles, less lack of communication, and less spacing on road calls. We are currently leasing, so we are not putting any type of investment into a location, so that is money that we could actually save going forward. The biggest thing is that it is ideal for future transit needs and future transit expansion. Right now, we don't have any intercity buses or other types of services that we can do. We've talked about expansion of other transit services, and we need to be able to look towards the future. We feel like this is the best way to accomplish that. We wanted to come up with a couple of concepts of what it would actually look like to have everything in one location. Landers presented a map showing the maintenance facility, administrative facility, bus parking, employee parking, fueling station, bus washing stations, and transfer center on one plot of land.

Rogalski stated the location on the map is not necessarily the location they are suggesting, just what it would look like if it was there.

Landers stated this is a very simple concepts, but it can be expanded to look really nice. He showed pictures of transfer centers in Waco, TX, Denton County, and one in Amarillo, TX that is still in the design phase. He stated that one shows you that this can be a very nice, modern-looking building. It can bring a lot of life into the community.

Rogalski stated this does not have to be a little ugly, scrappy-looking building.

Burk stated no, we aren't going to do that since we've done the Public Safety Facility.

Landers stated that's correct. We want to put the same kind of design element of the safety facility into the transfer center. We also want to include some of the culture from Lawton, like the buffalos.

Landers stated the location is important for a few reasons. The first is federal funding. We currently have a 2016 federal grant that we will lose if we do not use it soon. It's a little under \$600,000.00. There is also a new infrastructure bill that was recently passed that has a lot of federal funding including a huge chunk dedicated to transit-oriented things. That's the general idea of why federal funding is important right now. The location is also important because of our transit master plan. Until we have a location of where our transfer center will be, we can't continue to build that master plan. In order for

us to build new routes, determine what type of transit system we will do, whether it's fixed route, air transit, or on demand, we need to be able to determine where we're going to be located to move onto that next step. The last step goes into something that just got approved, the zero emissions study. This will go with the maintenance facility, so we need to know where exactly that's going to be located. If we end up going to zero emission electric buses, we have to know what type of charging stations are needed and where they will be located. Ideally, if everything is at one location, the charging stations can be at the transfer center. That's why the location is important and why we need to nail that down as soon as possible.

Landers pointed to an area on a map (available in the City Clerk's Office) and stated this is the area we were looking at when developing the all-in-one concept because it is owned by the City and is convenient for our current customers. This location is only a few blocks from where the current transfer center is, and it is centrally located.

Burk asked where exactly this is located.

Landers referenced the library, Warren Imports, and Platt College.

Burk asked if this is the original property that was discussed two years ago.

Rogalski stated anywhere in that basic area would work. As you can see in his drawing, he needs about a block and a half for all three facilities. You can more or less do any block and half that you see on the map.

Smith asked what the main streets shown on the map are.

Rogalski pointed to C Avenue on the West side which curves into 1st Street, then 2nd Street and 3rd Street to the North of that, and then Railroad Street at the Public Safety Facility on the South side. Pointing off the map to the South, Rogalski stated the City owns all of this property all the way to the half a block North of the creamery. He pointed out the area leased to Comanche Lumber and stated that lease is long term, so that area is off the table. He pointed to the lots that are owned by LURA and stated these areas would help with creating less acquisition.

Burk asked if the LURA property is on Second Street.

Rogalski pointed back to the LURA property on the map.

Burk asked if that's where the old gas station was.

Rogalski stated yes and pointed to the second LURA property, located where the concrete underground facility is located.

Burk stated he believes the plan from inception has been to use some of the property across the street from the Public Safety Facility if it was available. It's a great site because it's off of a major road, there is a stop light there, and it doesn't affect anything in the commerce area. He hesitates to put anything on Second Street because it is prime property for future developments like retail and restaurants.

Rogalski stated five years ago, we didn't know about the FISTA, the mall was someone else's property, and they weren't improving it, so the City invested in anything they could downtown. At this point, it seems the City has owned their own destiny; they are investing in the FISTA, and you would really hope that, especially with the concept of building projects on the South side of C Avenue, you could really increase the value of the property. It really should be higher retail, so that points to another area being a little better. One of the thoughts we had to take two half blocks in one area and another half a block by Fairmount Creamery, between Railroad and Larrance.

Burk asked what would be done with that lot.

Rogalski stated that's where the maintenance facility would go. There are three pieces: the transfer center, the administration center, and the maintenance facility.

Burk stated that's not a bad idea. Comanche Home Center would be in the middle?

Rogalski stated just to the South of that. It had an old brick building on it that was torn down.

Burk stated that would help develop that area.

Rogalski stated all the facilities will run on Railroad Street. There is something about using both sides of the road. For example, B Avenue doesn't go all the way through because it is not a public street anymore, so you could potentially close B Avenue, and it would become part of the overall facility.

Burk stated he likes the idea of it being close to the Public Safety Facility. He thinks this puts it in a place that a lot of people would have access to because it is right off of Gore. He stated we had talked about walkability in those areas, and I think there is a lot of walkability in the downtown area now. This is a whole lot better than what we had figured out a few years ago at the old police station. That wasn't ever going to be a centralized location that we could call our spot. This seems like a much better idea than anything we looked at before. He then asked for an explanation of the \$600,000.00 grant and what it is to be used for.

Landers stated it is a capital grant, so it can be used for any capital purchases. It could be engineering or design or anything along those lines. He stated he also wanted to say that bringing in a nice transit facility can really help develop the rest of the downtown area. It can bring other types of businesses into that area. That is one of the concepts we have been looking at. There would be lease spacing that we can bring into this concept as well.

Landers stated this facility could be used by not just LATS but by pretty much anyone. You could bring in the concept of having a daycare facility in there. You can have all kinds of different ideas. Everything is on the table at this point. This would be at the design/ engineering phase. Right now, the biggest thing is the location. You don't necessarily have to build out, you can build up as well.

Burk pointed to the original area that was proposed by Council on the map. He agreed that the landscape downtown has changed.

Rogalski stated they didn't want to be on two side of Second Street since it is a major traffic corridor. That breaks it up too much. Then they thought it should all be on one side of Second Street. Now there is some interest in that property, so that pushes us a little further over and we end up in the big block displayed on the map. We're really stuck on that concept of City owned property, and the City owns about half of this property. That makes it a much smaller acquisition.

Burk stated this will clean it up a lot and it will look good in that area.

Landers stated the other thing about the lease spacing is that it can be used for local share. That will help pay for it. Again, all of that will be part of the master plan, so once we decide the location, we can start working on what's developing.

Burk stated the Amarillo location looked amazing to him.

Landers stated that is actually in development right now. It's not something that would take that long once the location is selected. We have the federal funds to start engineering, preliminary design, and the start of construction. I don't want to say it will go too quick, but maybe "federally" quick.

Burk asked if the grant stays once everything is earmarked.

Landers answered they will have to rewrite the current grant with these ideas in it. Once we do that and FTA knows what we are doing with those funds, we would be okay. Right now, it's just in limbo, so if they start looking at all of our outstanding grants, the \$600,000.00 is the one they would go after.

Burk stated when we first started this, we had a bunch of different locations picked out. I think you've landed on a really great property because it's using City property and acquiring some property, and it's in an area that's already being redeveloped. I think Second Street would be a bad idea at this point because of what I've been hearing about proposed businesses that might be interested in going in there.

Hampton stated that is a commerce area.

Smith stated the Planning Department has worked with Ryan and Richard while trying to decide the best spot for them to recommend. What we've ended up putting together is

exactly what you said. Get it closer to the Public Safety Facility. There are a lot of reasons for that. People feel safer to ride a bus and be dropped off somewhere when they are in close proximity to police officers. If I go somewhere, I want to know that the police aren't going to be far away if I have a problem. What we've looked at, with a lot of different perspectives, is on Railroad between A Avenue and B Avenue. That's the area that we've highlighted with the Planning Department because we can take advantage of the success that we've had with the Public Safety Facility. We can follow along with the architectural structure of that, and it will compliment this. If we are going to spend money here, let's get some bang for our buck. I know Rich just wants to get it done, but some of us care how it looks too. I'm just joking. What we've talked about is that if we can take advantage of the City owned property, either through LURA or some other entity, and get it over there close to the Public Safety Center, then we're going to benefit all the way around because that starts developing out from there. We're already looking at that for sidewalks, and this is obviously going to be a big part of our transportation. I would like to say we are not going to call it the Transfer Center. Sorry Ryan.

Landers stated no no no. That's just an overall term.

Burk stated that's just what we think in our minds.

Smith stated if we are going to put it on Railroad, let's take advantage of the nostalgia of that, and let's go with something like "Grand Central Station". Let's start thinking big and presenting our picture in a big way so we have buy-in. If we're going to do something, let's do it right. What we would like to do is kind of go vertical with this and provide some type of architecture to it that will be eye catching. We can put our office there but also put some retail on A and B, so we draw people on the outsides of that coming in, whether it's a coffee shop or a sandwich shop or something like that. Those people that are riding are going to be hungry. You also want to draw in those that are passing by, too, so we'll have to factor in some parking that will allow people that are not getting on the bus to still come in and take advantage of whatever retail is there, too.

Burk stated he is proud that we are to the point of picking out a location. We've been doing this for so long. When they mentioned to me that they were going to bring this before Council, I said we better have another committee meeting because we really haven't decided what we want to support. I think you've found a great location. Speaking to Landers, he stated we want to get going on this because we believe that we need it soon. We are having some issues down at the other transfer area, and we need to get that cleaned up and moved.

Burk stated I think it will be more accepted because we are using some City property. That other area was never going to be big enough, unless we wanted to just do the transfer center.

Landers state you are absolutely right. It's been an opportunity that we've taken some time to rethink our overall concept. I think this is a good plan of action. It gives us a lot of opportunities and the most bang for our buck visually.

Burk asked if the committee agrees that this is the location.

Johnson stated she agrees. She thinks there will be a lot of buy-in from the citizens because of where it's going to be located and the all-in-one concept. She asked if there is an estimated total on how much it will be to acquire property not owned by the City.

Rogalski stated he can get that. He has spoken with Johnny Owens a couple of times about property ownership in that area as kind of a rough overview since he has property listed down there. He stated he's asked about how much the price is on some of the properties in the area, so Johnny will give me a ballpark estimate on that. That way we will have an estimated cost when it goes for approval. This is not a terrible plan. Most of the property around what we are looking to acquire is vacant.

Burk stated that's what I'm saying. This is not a high use area that someone is going to want a lot of money for. They'll want money, but not as much as if the area was built out.

Speaking to Landers, Burk stated we really need to work on our pick-up spots for handicap accessibility and for some cover for people to get under when there is severe weather. During the ice storm, I saw a person out by Comanche Casino on Gore standing under an ice-covered tree trying to get some coverage. All we have there is a pole, and that's just not acceptable. We have got to do better, and I mean city wide. I see them all the time. You can see where we have accessibility from a major thoroughfare like Gore, but there is nothing from the backside coming from the sidewalk. To me, that just defeats the whole purpose because you have to have connectivity to the back. You can go out to the Apache Casino or Cameron and it's nice, but we need nice in a lot of places, especially around the schools. A lot of our kids are riding around MacArthur High School, and those kids are standing out there waiting for the bus.

Landers agreed and stated that brings up an interesting concept because that is a huge area that we identified in the master plan as well. Any grant that we go after would include additional passenger amenities. The transfer center is the main piece, but the main plan is to actually restructure the routes to make them a little more efficient. Once we do that, we will be able to identify the areas that need shelter or covered bus stops. All of that would be included in the overall master plan.

Burk stated years ago they talked about length of routes and that being messed up. He asked if this location is going to be okay and if all the research has been done to make sure this is good.

Landers stated this is not too far from where we are currently at. The other part in the master plan is that we also have another hub that we would be building on the Northwest end. We still like that particular area, but we are going to have to look at it again. The overall concept is that you would have buses that would connect from one hub to another and then we can shorten the routes to 30 or 40-minute headways to make it more efficient and so more people can ride. Again, where this would be located on Railroad, there is a

light there, so that would help getting onto Gore. Then, if you go South straight down Railroad, you're on Lee. You're next to main streets to get places.

Smith stated Planning looked at that, too, just to make sure it was accessible and easy to get in and out. We were satisfied with that. As far as the bus routes go, one of the things we need to consider is our CDBG areas, our low-income areas. We need to be sure we are providing service for our community service centers and our food banks and that we are able to provide transportation that's easy for our passengers to get to and from. That will be part of what I work with Ryan on.

Hankins stated a lot of jobs are in that area as well.

Johnson stated she agrees with Hankins. Also, at the Social Security Office there is only a pole. DHS has something covered, but the Child Support Office doesn't. Those types of areas are a little bit more challenging for people to get to. It's already a challenge, you know, if I go to the Social Security Office and I need an ID, then I have to get back on the bus to go get it. Shortening those routes is an awesome idea.

Cleghorn stated Ryan represents HTG and HTG manages the LATS system for the City. You, as the LATS Trust Authority, can direct HTG on what you want them to focus on. Your group as a body can direct HTG to look at those things. What you're doing is telling them to look at those things and make them a priority. I think Ryan grasps that. You guys have the right as the trust authority to give him direction to move in a certain way.

Hankins stated she wishes we could get people to where a lot of the jobs are, like Goodyear, Bar S, and Republic. She stated she was helping people get jobs and there were all kinds of barriers to get to that area to work. That was the hard part.

Landers stated you bring up an interesting idea. In the beginning of the master plan, we had to do some surveys and community meetings, and we actually got a lot of feedback on that. Transportation to the industrial park is one of our big focuses. We've actually already started surveying out there to get more feedback, and we've had conversations with them. That's absolutely going to be a big part of our plan. The other part is that with any master plan, we have to take Title VI into consideration. Anytime we take something away or put something on, it always has to be wrapped around Title VI. We make sure the low-income places are a huge priority. One of the other concepts that we've looked at is because Lawton is designed so interestingly. You have your main roads, Cache, Gore, and Lee, going perpendicular and then you have your other streets going up and down. There are a lot of interesting ways you can design a fixed route system for that layout. You could do a BRT Light type of thing, where your main roads are your fixed route, then in between you have sort of an on-demand thing. We're looking at a number of different ways that we can operate this more efficiently and try to get more people to ride. We are presented with a lot of unique ways to do this. We've never actually done this in 21 years that LATS has existed, and we haven't expanded on different things. There haven't been a whole lot of changes, so now is kind of the perfect time to do that, and we want to get everyone's feedback on how to do it. I think it's probably a good idea to do

another community meeting to get everyone up to date on where we're at, where the transfer center location is going to be, and present the information that we currently have. Then we can ask what they want us to do. Do we want intercity buses to go up to Oklahoma City? That was big thing at last Summer's meeting. Do we want to go outside the city limits? Right now, we're only inside city limits so we can't go to anything that's not within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of our fixed route system. There is a lot of opportunity that we have, and I think right now is the best time to get those ideas.

Burk stated they definitely wanted to talk about Oklahoma City connectivity and Wichita Falls connectivity because we have people that need to get there for certain things and then come back, and there's just not an avenue for that at this time. I think that it needs to be a part of the master plan that we figure out a way to do that.

Hampton stated that needs to be a part of the overall plan so it can be built into it.

Landers stated absolutely. It was just part of the concept, but the picture shows where you would have intercity buses coming through the transfer center. That would be a part of the design.

Burk stated that was the area where the original Lawton Bus Station was located.

Landers stated yes, then it moved right by where the LATS facility is, and we started operating it for them. Then they decided they didn't want to do that anymore. Like I said, the industrial park, intercity buses, more on-demand type of transit, more efficient fixed route systems...those are the types of concepts we are looking for in a better transit system.

Burk asked how many students are transported back and forth from school annually.

Landers stated pre-COVID, we were venturing probably about 75,000 trips a year, and it was still going up. After COVID, I would say since August, the numbers are going up and I hope that trend continues to grow still. I would say we will be at about 35 or 40,000 at the end of this year.

Burk stated that's a lot of kids. I'm really glad we did that and made that connection with LPS. I want to say as a parent, having the Public Safety Facility right across the street from the transfer center makes me feel safer if I have a child that has to get off a bus and get onto another bus. I feel like there's a safety issue there, and that really helps my child. That, to me, is important.

Hampton stated when we first did the Public Safety Facility over in that area, I thought man, that's really kind of stuck off over away from the downtown area. I think this is really kind of conjunctive in a way that it pulls the City back in. With the way that things have played themselves out, where we were going to put it before, closer to the mall, this pulls everything together now. When people come in, they have stores and restaurants going in, there's Cracker Barrel and all that other stuff down there. For people that don't

have cars, we are getting that walkability going on. We've got the Farmer's Market and we're really building our City back. I don't want to say this pushes it out of the way, but in the sense that it will be out of the way of the development that will be happening. We were going to put that bicycle trail on the corner, but now it can be used for commerce. For location this is great. This is right behind Brittain's. They are going to build that other area. That ties all this together where they are going to build that kind of industrial city type of feel there. I think that moving this back towards Railroad Street has a better feel to it.

Burk stated he does a lot of events at the Hilton Garden Inn, and with the military, it is full all the time. Those people have to rent cars or carpool because there's not a way for them to get around. We should be focusing on areas like that when Fort Sill is filling those hotels full of people, and they need to get from point A to point B. You'll see them walking over to Mike's Sports Grill or over to Salas'. I think the same thing would happen if they had a way to get over in other areas. They love to walk.

Rogalski stated the old railway system is a trail system that links up to Elmer Thomas Park, then the park links to Fort Sill Boulevard all the way up to Fort Sill. We eventually want to try to get that trail all the way from Railroad up to Rogers Lane and all the way down to the airport. This would be on that trail system, so we are truly multi-mobile in that regard.

Johnson stated correct me if I'm wrong, but the bus comes down 67th to Gore, but it doesn't go all the way to Walmart. Is that correct?

Landers asked all the way to Rogers Lane.

Johnson stated to Walmart on Quanah Parker.

Landers stated correct, it detours.

Johnson stated the reason she said that was because there are some people in the apartments in that neighborhood that are low-income that don't really have a way to get there. I know people that have to work, so they get off the bus at Gore, and then walk to Walmart. We need to take that into consideration.

Burk stated we also need to take into consideration hours of operation. We have complaints about that.

Landers stated correct. That was brought up at the community meeting, too. There's a cost to it, for obvious reasons, so we would have to look at all those things. Speaking to Johnson, Landers stated to your point, that would be the area where you have your other hub. There would be other buses that stream off of that to go to that particular area. Right now, we're looking at staying on the main arterial roads for the fixed route because going in and out of neighborhoods is difficult at times, especially when the weather is bad. That's where you would have more of your on-demand service filtering in there. That's

the concept now. We want to be able to expand to more service if we are able to do it. That's ideal. I would love to expand to more service right now, but we've actually had to kind of decrease right now because COVID has impacted ridership and personnel. If we can have a dedicated plan that says, "hey, in the next two years, this is what we're going to do and then in the next five years, this is what we're going to do", and it constantly starts to expand, that would be ideal for the City and the citizens.

Smith stated they have also spoken with Ryan about something that is connected to an entertainment district where we've got a smaller trolley. We probably want to do something different, like rewrap some of them, so that they look different. We would want to have some for an entertainment district that is in the area where we have our restaurants on that side of the City. Then we could designate some routes that they would take on Friday nights and Saturday nights. This would be your entertainment trolley.

Burk stated we have major issues with Lyft and Uber after 8:00. You can get there, but you can't get back.

Hampton stated when you build a transfer center and you're going to have different services, which is what I'm hearing...

Burk stated yes, and I'm loving it.

Hampton stated there's short term service that kind of takes people around the city area....

Burk stated you hear soldiers talk and they'll say they want to go to this certain place at night, but we can't get back from there. We're having multiple issues. How important is transportation? I went to a class and heard that in 2017 and 2018, when Uber and Lyft were coming to Oklahoma, they had 31,000 DUI cases a year, and now it's down to 13,000. It's all because of Uber and Lyft. It's safe transportation, but like the soldiers say, if you don't have it... They're going to go out there anyway, but how are they going to get back.

Hampton stated you're right, Jay. There's a part of this transportation system that will help commerce. We've got to connect where people want to go and get back to. The wraps can be designed around some of that because that will help to soldiers. I was looking at some of the historic stuff and there was a train and a trolley that went to Fort Sill. They were used to bring those soldiers downtown to spend their money here.

Rogalski stated not to interrupt, but a few of you have a meeting in 5 minutes.

Burk asked Landers when he will bring this back to Council.

Landers stated whenever. We can do a similar type of presentation.

Rogalski stated can put something together with that particular site.

Burk stated yes, can we just show that slide and say this is what the committee is agreeing to send to Council.

Rogalski asked so you're ready for the trust, then?

Burk stated yes.

Rogalski stated okay, got it.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.