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Introduction

In 2019, in accordance with House Bill (HB) 1365, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) established the Office of Mobility and Public Transit (OMPT) to improve the delivery and coordination of public transit services, ensuring that resources are aligned to meet mobility needs across Oklahoma. To aid in this effort, the Oklahoma Public Transit Policy Plan (OPTPP) was developed as a joint effort by ODOT and the Oklahoma Transit Association (OTA) and aims to:

- Establish standards and protocols for agencies involved in the delivery and funding of public transit services.
- Set the foundation for policies guiding transit investments statewide as well as establishing programs and strategies to enhance transit services.
- Support the development of policies that address the transit challenges of today while providing a strong and enduring vision for the future of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma has a full range of transit agencies, from large urban systems, to tribal systems, to rural door-to-door services. While existing funding has allowed certain systems to provide basic services, state and federal funding levels have not kept pace with changes in transit demand. The Plan is designed to identify the resources needed over a 20-year period. The Plan provides a set of strategies and policy recommendations to support OMPT in their charge to ensure a network of public transit systems receive adequate funding to ensure the mobility needs of all Oklahomans are met in a safe, affordable, reliable, consistent, and coordinated fashion.

Mission Statement

Ensure a coordinated statewide public transit network that meets the mobility needs of all Oklahomans in a safe, efficient, and economical manner.

House Bill 1365

Approved by Governor Kevin Stitt on April 25, 2019, HB 1365 states that the Plan shall: (1) be all-inclusive of the public transit systems in the state, (2) reflect the results of the 2018 Oklahoma Transit Needs Assessment, (3) include all stakeholder input, (4) provide for future collaboration and coordination of an effective network of public transit systems across the state, and (5) provide for future collaboration and coordination among all state agencies with an interest in public transit. The full HB 1365 text is available in Appendix A.

Plan Development Process

The development of this Plan involved significant data collection and analysis using a combination of qualitative and quantitative input. This data contributes to the analysis to understand and evaluate existing conditions, transit service performance, service needs, and transit funding. Data was collected and analyzed over a 13-month period through several project tasks, described in detail below.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement was a major component in developing the Plan. This effort included site visits with more than 30 transit agencies, stakeholder interviews, an online survey, regional stakeholder meetings, and regular meetings with the Stakeholder Advisory Group and Steering Committee.

Reviewing Previous Plans and Policies

The goal of reviewing previous plans and policies was to inventory and understand the broader context influencing transit service funding and development in the state of Oklahoma. The project team reviewed previously prepared plans, policies, and documents to understand the transit policies in place today.

Existing Conditions

The existing conditions analysis focused on collecting information and building data sets that describe and quantify how transit services are developed, managed, delivered, and funded in Oklahoma as well as the underlying market for transit service in the state. The project team compiled data sets using a combination of existing plans and publicly available data about transit agency performance and productivity. Input was also collected from transit agency leadership, members of the public, and other transit system stakeholders.

Peer Review and Best Practices Research

The project team identified peer states and collected examples of how these states have achieved success with their transit systems. The team reviewed the structure of various transit agencies as well as their methods for raising and distributing revenues. The best practices review was designed to help ODOT and stakeholders understand how processes have been executed in other states, which strategies and approaches have helped sustain momentum and innovation, and areas or key issues where other states have faced challenges.

Determining Transit Needs and Gaps

Using data collected during the existing conditions analysis, the goal of this task was to estimate transit service and capital needs. The analysis reflects needs associated with improving service levels over a 20-year period to keep pace with population growth, meet service levels consistent with peer

systems outside Oklahoma, and ensure transit service provides for the mobility needs of all Oklahomans.

Additionally, this task involved estimating costs associated with new or updated transit resources that offer opportunities to make Oklahoma's transit systems more effective, efficient, and accessible.

Developing an Investment Schedule

Building on the work from the needs and gap analysis, the project team evaluated possible outcomes based on public transit investment at different levels in a near-term to long-term timeframe. Informed by the goals and strategies identified for the OPTPP, the investment schedule articulates potential public transit outcomes based on different levels of funding. Because these investments will require new sources of funding, consideration was given to leveraging existing funding while also exploring new sources of revenue to close the gap in needed services.

OPTPP Organization

The Plan summarizes the research, analysis, findings, and recommendations for public transit. It is organized into 10 chapters:

Chapter 2 (Public and Stakeholder Engagement) describes the public and stakeholder engagement process undertaken for the Plan and synthesizes key themes heard through the online survey, agency site visits, stakeholder interviews, and regional meetings.

Chapter 3 (Planning Trends) presents the findings from a comprehensive review of previous plans and policies affecting public transit in Oklahoma. This inventory includes state and agency needs and opportunities related to public transit, together with planned or proposed investments in the public transit network.

Chapter 4 (Existing Conditions) summarizes the background information collected and analyzed as part of the Plan, including an overview of existing transit services,



the underlying market for transit service in Oklahoma, transit funding, and trends affecting transit demand.

Chapter 5 (Best Practices and Peer Review) presents research conducted on specific peer states and national best practices that can serve as a resource for Oklahoma moving forward. The peer review focuses on transit programs in other states while the best practices section provides examples of how those states have approached certain policies, programs, and issues.

Chapter 6 (Goals and Strategies) introduces the 10 project goals that were developed through extensive stakeholder input. These goals reflect the values identified by stakeholders and are aligned with the analysis of modal needs and gaps in services. Each goal contains multiple strategies that will assist in achieving the Plan's goals.

Chapter 7 (Needs and Future Service) presents the quantitative transit needs analysis, including both the estimated need

for transit service and the corresponding operating costs and capital investments. This chapter includes the findings and describes the methodology used to estimate these needs.

Chapter 8 (Strategic Investment Schedule) sets a schedule of progressive improvements and associated funding levels to meet future needs. This chapter describes the impacts of future funding and provides examples of potential transit improvements.

Chapter 9 (Investment Options and Considerations) addresses the funding gap in Oklahoma to meet future need, discusses how to better leverage existing funds, and identifies new sources of funding for operating, capital and transit resource management.

Chapter 10 (Implementation Priorities) presents recommendations developed as part of the Plan, an implementation framework, proposed performance measures, and next steps following plan adoption.

