



Environmental Quality & Public Works (EQPW) Committee

April 22, 2025

Summary and Motions

Chair Hannah LeGris called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Committee Members Dave Sevigny, James Brown, Tyler Morton, Emma Curtis, Liz Sheehan, Denise Gray, Amy Beasley, and Hil Boone were present. Committee Member Joseph Hale was absent. Vice Mayor Dan Wu, Council Member Chuck Ellinger II, and Council Member Shayla Lynch were present as non-voting members.

I. APPROVAL OF MARCH 11, 2025 COMMITTEE SUMMARY

Motion by Morton to approve the March 11, 2025 Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee Summary. Seconded by Curtis. Motion passed without dissent.

II. URBAN FORESTRY / STREET TREES UPDATE

Heather Wilson, Urban & Community Forestry Section Manager, began with an overview of Urban Forestry and how trees provide Lexington with environmental, health, social, and economic benefits. She reviewed the canopy tree coverage statistics and future goals for the program. She spoke about the Lex Grow Trees campaign and reviewed the target areas for funding. There was an infusion to the Hazardous Street Tree (Cost-Share) Program to help clear the backlog. Pilot programs resulted in 389 trees being planted and addressed targeted goals. In round one, nine recipients received grant funding; in round two, six received grant funding. Lauren Gawthrop with Impression Marketing reviewed the survey results from 454 online surveys representing all Lexington zip codes. There were 37 survey questions with a combination of open-ended questions and ranking exercises to assess attitudes and feelings about trees. She mentioned the things Lexington residents said were of concern or things they love.

She reviewed a graphic to illustrate that a significant percentage of people understand the correct method for mulching, but there is still confusion about tree care practices. Wilson suggested never planting a tree over 1.5 inches in diameter. Planting larger-caliper trees provides an instant impact, but the smaller trees catch up and grow quickly. There is concern about areas where several trees are planted, but the trees are not growing. Wilson said mulching and pruning help, and the idea is to have a program dedicated to mulching and maintaining. Tree plotter software allows you to see the tree canopy grow. When asked about percentages and how they correlate to districts, Gawthrop said there wasn't a strong correlation.

Wilson noted that Fayette County Public Schools is engaged in increasing the canopy, but the University of Kentucky's grounds include agricultural research spaces that are not ideal for the canopy. Looking for ways to be impactful and increase tree canopy, Wilson said some rights-of-way are state-owned, and issues are with Traffic Engineering and the location. Spaces ideal for planting need to be free from being used for events, etc., and trees can also slow traffic. Regarding the Tree Canopy website, Wilson said the Tree Plotter is live, and she can work with each office to navigate this. **No action was taken on this item.**

III. LEXTRAN SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Fred Combs, General Manager of Lextran, provided an overview of Lextran's services and environmental impacts. Highlights for 2025 include Transit Center renovation, Collective Bargaining Agreements, micro-transit feasibility, on-time performance, technology systems improvements, hiring and retention, and paratransit outreach. There are 25 fixed-route service routes; paratransit services (Wheels) operate county-wide. Combs reviewed the micro-transit feasibility study, including data analysis, case studies, and preliminary findings. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a bus service that mimics light rail: high frequency, dedicated lanes, faster boarding times, and unique branding. He reviewed environmental impacts such as replacing diesel with cleaner fuels, expanding CNG fueling, and installing solar lighting at bus stops. Looking ahead to 2026, the focus is on completing major projects, making fixed route service improvements, and incorporating new vehicles.

Combs confirmed the micro-transit study should be complete next month; however, implementation depends on securing funding. There was concern about the Wheels program when a passenger scheduled a ride in advance; however, they remained on the bus for a while before they arrived at their destination. Combs said they are working on improvements to the reservation process. Combs noted that micro-transit will not replace bus routes but must interface with the fixed route service. Combs confirmed the feasibility study will not be complete until after the fiscal year, and no funding is requested for micro-transit in their budget because their priority is service frequency. They are looking for partners because they can manage and operate the service; however, they can't justify diverting resources to micro-transit when they have other needs. Considering a pilot program to test this out, Combs said it would likely be over \$500,000 per year for one zone, but the feasibility study results will show the exact funding amounts. Combs confirmed they have not included money in their budget for a pilot program.

Regarding an additional study for implementing *Imagine Nicholasville Road*, including BRT, Combs said the study is close to completion. He noted that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) manage this project. The study's outcome is what they would need to be able to write a grant, but there is uncertainty regarding federal grants at this time. Combs pointed out they don't have to wait to pull some of the elements of BRT into their current service. **No action was taken on this item.**

IV. ITEMS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

No Action was taken on this item.

The meeting adjourned at 2:26 p.m.