



Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee

February 6, 2024

Summary and Motions

Chair Sheehan called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. Committee Members Vice Mayor Wu, Lynch, LeGris, Monarrez, Gray, Worley, F. Brown, and Sevigny were present. Committee Member Worley was absent. Council Members Plomin, Baxter, Reynolds, and Ellinger were present as non-voting members.

I. Approval of December 5, 2023 Committee Summary

Motion by LeGris to approve the December 5, 2023 Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee Summary. Seconded by Wu. Motion passed without dissent.

II. Microtransit

Chuck Ellinger, Council Member At Large, introduced *Microtransit*, sometimes called on-demand transit, which is public transportation that captures trip requests and groups passengers into shared rides in real-time. There are options for how microtransit is deployed by cities and Lextran would prefer a turnkey partnership. Ellinger explained what the *Via Rider App* is, what the possible benefits are, and how it can be implemented in Lexington. He shared three success stories from Memphis, TN, Columbus, OH, and Birmingham, AL.

The company Via would help Lexington identify and access funding sources for their turnkey services. Via leverages industry experience and connections to help partners turn pilot programs into long-term, sustainably funded services.

Emily Elliott from Lextran continued the presentation by explaining the gaps in public transportation. Ultimately, microtransit can be funded sustainably through a variety of unique means based on local dynamics. When asked about the gaps in Lextran services, Elliott explained the original plan was to improve services, but they are dealing with operator shortages. Speaking about MPO grants and federal funding for this program, Chris Evilia, Planning Manager in Transportation Planning, said the demand nationally exceeds our ability to get funding. Historically, we have horribly underfunded public transportation. When asked if Via is the preferred company for this potential venture or if we are looking at multiple companies, Evilia said that we would issue an RFP, and this would be open to anyone.

Speaking about the virtual bus stop, Elliott said most of the apps would provide you with walking information to and from the stop. The virtual bus stop allows you to have a centralized location in an area, but it can be wherever you want. When asked how we came up with \$400,000 to earmark, Ellinger said it was based on Lextran's analysis. They looked at an in-house model and a turnkey model. Elliott clarified turnkey is a third party that is built out to do this. Elliott said they were more focused on making near and mid-term improvements to the system that currently exists. There was concern that we would have to be willing to double the tax rate to make this happen. Considering our goal is carbon neutrality, there were concerns that adding more vehicles to the road would increase that.

III. Odor Control Plan

Charlie Martin, Director of Division of Water Quality, spoke about the sources and reasons for the odors in the sewers. The pipelines have a long time of travel in an oxygen deficient situation and venting is a risk. The air release valves are designed to emit trapped air pockets in pressurized pipelines. The treatment plants and pump stations are concentrated points of collection and retention. Weather and the lack of rainfall reduces flow to minimum when the system is designed for the maximum. Fall seems to be the worst time because it is warm in the daytime and cool at night. The result is temperature inversions that trap odor at ground level.

Martin reviewed the 2023 to present odor control response at treatment plants. This includes regenerated carbon unit at Town Branch north primary; cleaned and rebalanced odor collection for West Hickman Headworks; regenerated ASH tank scrubber at West Hickman; created a unit price contract so that odor monitoring equipment can be installed at high-risk locations. They signed an emergency purchase order issued by the mayor to hire Webster Environmental Associates. Martin reviewed next steps which include executing a long-term contract with Odor Control Program Management team to design and construct the treatment plant equipment improvements; direct optimization of chemical feeds or other solutions intended to mitigate point source odors in the collection system and limit odor loadings at treatment plants; plan and execute collection system investigations; and assist Division of Water Quality in providing progress reports to interested parties. When asked about the carbon scrubber, he confirmed that has not been replaced. The quote for that was \$300,000 and it was only 3-4% of the issue so replacing the scrubber would not be beneficial.

Speaking about health concerns that residents have, Martin said the chemicals are nitrate-based, but it is very inert, and it is just lending oxygen to the sewage, so it doesn't attack sulfate which produces the smell. The chemical itself is not the problem, the bigger problem is the chemical used in the scrubber which doesn't get out anywhere else. When asked about the odor that is now in people's homes where it wasn't before, Martin said they will be doing smoke testing. There was some concern about the cost of chemicals and Martin said the cost adds up quickly. As an example, he said it costs about \$140,000 annually to feed 300 gallons a day at East Hickman in chemical dosing alone.

When asked how long it has been since we have issued an RFP for these services, Martin said there has not been anyone in charge of odor control since before the consent decree started in 2007. We have always done odor control improvements when we have upgraded things such as Headworks. When asked how many responses there were to the RFP that was issued, Martin said there were three responses and the workgroup reviewed them and made a recommendation which is on the Work Session for today. He clarified the design work at both treatment plants is estimated at \$550,000. There is additional work that will be issued via task order for smoke testing, chemical optimization, etc. He pointed out they are following the model that was used for the Consent Decree. Martin confirmed the goal is for the smell to eventually be at zero and they are trying everything to make that happen.

IV. Items Referred to Committee

No Action was taken on this item.

The meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.