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Study of city's transit system underway

By James Mayse Messenger-Inquirer

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Pamela Canary

A Florida-based community planning firm has begun work on a thorough analysis of Owensboro's transit system.

Pamela Canary, city transit manager, said the Tampa firm of Tindale Oliver is the data-gathering phase of the study, that will look at the needs of people who use the city's bus system, identify gaps in service give recommendations on how the transit system could run more efficiently.

The city issued a request for proposals in September, and Tindale Oliver was awarded the \$145,479 contract.

Canary said the study will go into all aspect of the transit system's operations.

City commissioners briefly discussed the study during a Thursday hearing about the proposed 2021-22 city budget. Public Works Director Stephen Franklin said the study would look at issues such as whether city buses need to operate beyond 6 p.m.

“We are doing a comprehensive transit study,” Franklin said. “...We are in the early stages.”

Mayor Tom Watson said the study should also examine the potential benefit of extending bus service to MidAmerica Airpark for second shift workers, and the possibility of having evening bus service to Owensboro Community & Technical College.

The study “would include looking at our routes, to make sure we are covering all necessary areas,” Canary said Friday. “We’ll also look at rerouting routes to include areas in need of service.”

Tindale Oliver was primary consultant for the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority’s 2019 regional transit development plan, and the firm has done similar trans studies for Hillsborough, Florida, Broward County, Florida, Bozeman, Montana, and Clayton County, Georgia.

“This is what they do for multiple agencies across the U.S.,” Canary said. “That’s their expertise.”

Officials with Tindale Oliver did not return a call for comment Friday.

Owensboro last studied its transit system about eight years ago, Canary said.

As part of studying operations, the firm will look at bus driver salaries, whether the system has a enough bus drivers to meet demand and the needs to people who use the bus, Canary said.

“They are going to look at everything as a whole,” Canary said.

The plan will examine how the city might change in the future, “so we are keeping up with the growth of Owensboro,” Canary said.

“Ten years ago, Kentucky 54 was nothing like it is today,” Canary said, adding that the transit system had to add service to the area to reach the Gateway Commons development.

“We want to be proactive, not reactive,” she said.

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