EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TO THE FAYETTEVILLE MOBILITY PLAN EXISTING CONDITIONS FACTBOOK

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Fayetteville is the third largest city in Arkansas, centrally located in Washington County, in the northwest corner of the state. The city is home to the University of Arkansas, in close proximity to the Ozark National Forest and just more than 100 miles due east of Tulsa, Okla. Fayetteville currently is home to about 83,000 residents and more than 26,000 students attend the University of Arkansas (43 percent of students are non-residents). Travel in and around Fayetteville is heavily influenced by the University and its students, faculty, and staff that commute to campus daily. Other major influences include the medical campus around Washington Regional Hospital, shopping and office areas in Uptown Fayetteville, industrial and manufacturing centers in the south part of the City, large corporations headquartered in the area, such as Walmart in nearby Bentonville and Tyson Foods in Springdale, and numerous neighborhood and regional attractions in and around the downtown area and the University. The combination of all these factors presents particular challenges for growth, development, and infrastructure in Fayetteville and the region, as well as opportunities to improve connections, safety, and overall mobility for residents, workers, businesses and visitors to Fayetteville.

The Fayetteville Mobility Plan will outline a blueprint for long-term, multimodal mobility in the City of Fayetteville based on this setting, as well as the operating environment, transportation policy goals, and land use trends. The Plan will also establish mechanisms for funding local and regional projects, with the latter feeding into the Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Plan. This Factbook sets the stage for the work of the Plan, by describing the existing transportation network, land use designations in the city, and local and regional goals that could affect mobility needs of those who live, work, shop, or play in and around Fayetteville. To support the Plan, the Factbook covers the needs of all travelers in the area, whether on foot, on bike, in a car, or on transit. In addition to the policy and network conditions, this document includes a summary of public and stakeholder input in an effort to refine programs and projects that will improve accessibility and mobility for Fayetteville (described in chapter 3, Public Outreach).

Background

In 2003, the City of Fayetteville completed a transportation plan, the Fayetteville Traffic and Transportation Study, identifying approximately $220M (2003 dollars) in transportation needs on approximately 50 transportation projects and associated programs to be delivered over 20 years. In 2006, voters approved a bond issue of $65M for street improvements and $2M for trail improvements to fund many of the identified projects, with funds released as recently as 2014. This amount has been used to leverage an additional $40M in State and Federal Funding and is further supplemented by various other local public and private funds to complete approximately $108M in improvements. The vast majority of this funding has gone to roadway widening and new locations, although several trail projects have been funded through the $2M dedicated for trails and as part of street improvement projects. Since the inception of the bond, the City has completed 15 projects with a total of $45M in local funds and $29.5M in state and federal funds. Completion of all bond projects is expected by the end of 2018.

In 2008, the City updated transportation needs as part of City Plan 2030, with major roadway improvements incorporated into Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Plan (2011, 2015). More recently, the City has undertaken plans and programs specific to particular modes of travel, such as the Active Transportation Plan (2015) for walking and biking in Fayetteville, Northwest Arkansas Transit Development Plan (2010) for transit, and the UA Transportation and Parking Plan (2015), and as well as plans to address development needs, such as the Fayetteville First Economic Development Plan (2016), among others.

The plans described above, as well as development trends, expansions of city services due to population growth and citizen input, and various other factors help inform the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which describes the capital infrastructure needs of the City over a 5-year period. The current CIP (2015-2019) includes a total of approximately $113M in funding to build, operate, and maintain the City's infrastructure within the CIP timeframe. Though the CIP covers all infrastructure needs—water, sewer, transportation, etc.—transportation needs make up approximately 25 percent of the CIP, with the vast majority of this funding going to in-house paving, sidewalk construction and maintenance, and trails construction programs. More detail on the policy environment and overall background for the Mobility Plan is included in chapter 2, Planning Context.

Most Fayetteville residents work within the city limits, commuting to the Washington Regional Medical Center and the nearby medical offices, and Proctor & Gamble in the north, office parks/retails areas along the College Avenue/Highway 71, University of Arkansas and office buildings in Downtown, Tyson Foods in the south-west, as well as to industrial areas in the south-eastern areas of the city. With so many options for job locations, the flow of workers into Fayetteville is greater than those leaving the city for work. The majority of commuting trips are focused in north-south corridors and the southeastern part of the city edge from the more dispersed locations. Nearly nine in 10 (86 percent) of employed residents drove to work in 2014, remaining relatively steady since 2010. However, between 2010 and 2014, the number of people who drive alone for commute trips increased from 72 to 80 percent, with a corresponding decrease in carpooling from 14 to six percent. The average commute distance is 7.4 miles, and even though 23% of Fayetteville's workers commute less than 3 miles, only 2.3% bike to work.

Existing Network

Fayetteville hosts approximately 470 miles of streets, roads, and trails within the city limits. The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) operates just 15 percent of the road network, or approximately 70 miles, however these state highways carry well over 100,000 trips each day. I-49 carries the vast majority of these trips, with daily traffic ranging from 65,000 to 80,000 trips each day depending on the location along its route. College Avenue/Highway 71 carries up to 40,000 vehicle trips and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard carries up to 30,000 vehicle trips. Arterials make up about 16 percent of the network, with neighborhood streets, downtown commercial streets, and other local streets making up the remainder of the network. Together streets and roads account for 10.5 percent of the total land area of Fayetteville.

The most trafficked corridors are also plagued by greater traffic congestion than other areas of the city, with a combination of construction projects and planning efforts underway to improve mobility. Like many urban environments, traffic congestion is worst during p.m. peak hours along segments of the major north-south corridors I-49, College Avenue/Highway 71, and Crossover Road/Highway 265. East-West routes that see greater congestion during the same time period include Huntsville Road/Highway 16, the Wedington Drive/North Street, Mission Blvd Corridor, Township Street, and Joyce Blvd. There are several projects underway such as Rupple Road (part of Fayetteville's arterial loop) that provide additional capacity and expand route choices for motorists, along with various highway and interchange improvements. More detail is provided on traffic congestion and roadway projects in chapter 7, Street Network.

These highly trafficked corridors also host more traffic incidents and collisions than other locations around the city, which should not be surprising given the volume of vehicle trips, and overall activity, along these routes. Fortunately, the number of traffic fatalities per 100,000 people dropped from 6.5 in 2012 to 3.7 in 2014, less than half the state average of 11.1. There were more than 3,200 incidents of varying degrees reported in 2015, predominantly concentrated along the routes with greatest activity and trip-making, although it is noteworthy that 25 percent of collisions took place within a 15-minute walkshed of a school, library, or recreation center. In the past five years, there were 58 severe and fatal collisions, four or which involved pedestrians. All incidents involving pedestrians added up to 121 (including severe and fatal collisions). Severe incidents and fatalities involving pedestrians and cyclists focused mostly around the city's 101 signalized intersections on major arterials as well as

within the downtown area, where pedestrian and biking activity is higher. The highest densities of such incidents were found along College Avenue/Highway 71, Garland Avenue, Route 16, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, North Street, and Sycamore Street. Planned implementation of the city's Active Transportation network will help to address some of the prevailing issues at these locations, along with sustained effort to examine network conditions through this Plan. More detail on safety is provided in chapter 8, Traffic Safety.

This Factbook also provides an overview of parking conditions, in chapter 10, Parking. Information in this chapter focuses on the Downtown Business and Entertainment District areas, partially due to the interplay between parking, mobility, and particular development patterns, but also because parking needs and conditions in the downtown areas are more specialized than in the residential area or commercial and office concentrations outside of the downtown. The City manages a large portion of parking in these districts, which also includes privately managed lots and garages accessible to the public. During evening peak times, parking supply in close proximity to key destinations can be extremely busy, where the most accessible lots close to top destinations are nearly full while others are nearly empty. Only 6 percent of top destinations in this study area are not accessible from the downtown garage structures by foot, however, some patrons and residents have noted that walking routes may not feel safe, inviting, comfortable or continuous. Though these conditions might be seen as a barrier to access, they can offer opportunities to improve access to businesses by reviewing ways to change parking policies, improve walking and biking routes, and possibly transit stops or Park&Ride facilities.

Walking and Biking

The City currently boasts 70 miles of bicycle lanes and trails, with 80 additional miles by 2030 included in the 2015 Active Transportation Plan, the guiding document for identifying and prioritizing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements. Although the City is working to expand the walking, biking, and trails systems, in occasions the sidewalks network is not continuous or only exists in one side of the street due to hilly terrain, changing cross sections, and historically inconsistent sidewalk guidelines: there are 435 miles of public sidewalks for the entire 470 miles of street network. Although the CIP allots approximately $3M annually to walking, biking, and trails, and federal and private grants have provided an additional $8 million in funding over the past 10 years, there has been public support for faster implementation of safety improvements and network expansion. In addition, the Master Street Plan and associated development codes require developers to provide sidewalks on new streets and along existing streets as new developments are implemented. While this practice may be challenging where dense development exists, or where multiple modes compete for space, continued public and private investment will advance network implementation and perhaps spur innovations in pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure, such as pedestrian zones, bike-sharing, and complete streets design.

Transit

Two transit operators serve Fayetteville and connect the neighborhoods and job centers within the city and to the region. The University of Arkansas's Razorback Transit provides the largest transit service in the city, with 18 routes serving a total annual ridership of 1.8 million. Ozark Regional Transit's (ORT) nine routes serve a ridership of 300,000 each year. Though it emerged as a university service, and fluctuates seasonally as a result, Razorback Transit routes are free and open to the public. Razorback Transit offers more routes and more frequent service (every 8-30 minutes, depending on the routes, day, and time) and, notably, commute trips by transit are higher in areas served by Razorback Transit than in areas served solely by ORT (every 60 minutes).

Approximately 24 percent of Fayetteville residents live within a 5-minute walk of a transit stop, and 25 percent of jobs are located within a 5-minute walk of a transit stop. However, just 1 percent of Fayetteville residents commute by transit, indicating an opportunity to make a substantial improvement in transit trip-making with policies, projects, and funding that increases connections, frequency, and accessibility. While additional transit projects or operational investments are critical to make these connections over time, it is just as critical to make improvements that can facilitate integration with other modes of travel. For example, there are 191 ORT stops

within ½ mile of the Razorback Greenway and 47 stops within 500 feet of the greenway. Since both transit systems maintain bike racks on their buses, improvements to the greenway can also help improve access to transit. More details on transit conditions are described in chapter 9, Transit.

Next Steps

Although many of the transportation measures that indicate the City is moving toward the goal of improved mobility and accessibility in and around Fayetteville, some figures show that there is still work to do. The Mobility Plan seeks to understand the network so that projects, plans, and programs can be designed to improve mobility and accessibility to, from, and within Fayetteville. Following the assessment of the existing conditions and future needs, the consultant team will devise scenarios for improving the network for all modes through a combination of projects and policies. Through technical analysis and discussions with the public and key stakeholder groups (major employer groups, business owners, community groups, etc), these concepts will be refined to create a suite of modal networks that depict projects and programs that form a comprehensive, multimodal Transportation Management Plan. The draft and final Mobility Plan, along with potential early action items and demonstration projects, will be presented for comment and adoption in 2017.