

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
January 24, 2023, 4:30pm
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 2/22/23 Meeting

Chairman Ryan Whitehouse called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.
Board Clerk, Janice Crago, recorded attendance via roll call.

Trustees Present: Trustee Judy Buchanan
Trustee Linda Foster
Secretary Tim McCue
Trustee Mandava Rao
Trustee Barbara Singer (4:32)
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

City Managers Present: Bloomington Deputy City Manager Billy Tyus

Staff Present: David Braun, General Manager
Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager
Brady Lange, Procurement Director
Germaine Walls, Interim HR Manager
Jacob Smith, Transportation Planner
Janice Crago, Board Clerk
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Shelly Perry, Operations Manager
Steve Stockton, IT Manager

Guest(s) Present: Jennifer Schmid, Senior Director, Dovetail LLC
Adam Pulley, CPA, Principal, CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP

Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to approve Trustee Barbara Singer to attend virtually due to reason one – personal illness or disability, as stated in the by-laws.

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee McCue.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Secretary McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse
NAY: None.

Motion to approve Trustee Barbara Singer to attend virtually due to reason one – personal illness or disability, as stated in the by-laws was **approved**.

Chairman Whitehouse led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and read the Connect Transit Mission Statement

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Janice Crago, Board Clerk, read a card sent to Connect Transit by Cathy Beck, Emergency Management Agency Director of McLean County. Ms. Beck shared her appreciation in keeping the citizens of the community warm and safe by providing fare free service during the life threatening weather in December 2022.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of November 22, 2022, Regular Session Minutes
- b. Approval of November 22, 2022, Executive Session Minutes
- c. Approval of Financial Information for November 2022
- d. Approval of Financial Information for December 2022
- e. Monthly Statistical Reports for November 2022
- f. Monthly Statistical Reports for December 2022
- g. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report
- h. Cornerstone – Illinois Weekly Update

Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda.

Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

Discussion:

David Braun, General Manager, shared there was no unusual activity in the November 2022 or December 2022 financial reports. However, he did want to point out the December 2022 Fixed Route Statistical Report shows that ridership does continue to increase, with the report reflecting that we are at a nearly 18% increase over last year's ridership. In addition, our passenger accidents are down 43% over last year and farebox recovery rate is very similar to last month, and down 15% over last year due to some of our recent zero-fare initiatives. The Connect Mobility report reflects a nearly 40% increase, which is about 14% higher than 2019, which shows we have recovered all of our pre-COVID riders and added about 14% additional. Mr. Braun stated we continue to monitor these numbers, but that even though we continue to grow our efficiency has maintained because we are putting more people on the buses with a minimal increase in hours and miles. Finally, Mr. Braun noted our System Wide Pay Hours to Service Hours are down by 4% because we are paying 34% more than the service that we run, report time, training time, etc. and we are managing that, and our overtime is 57.54% more than it was last year due to the Bus Operator shortage we are experiencing.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the increase in Connect Mobility ridership could be due to it now being affordable when it previously may not have been? Mr. Braun shared they do speculate the one fare for all is a large reason, as well as the expansion of the service area, allowing for more people to be served.

Chairman Whitehouse asked for an update on the Rivian route? Mr. Braun stated they will be providing a quarterly update on the Sapphire Route, with the next update due at the March 2023 meeting.

Mr. Braun stated the Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report listed five topics to watch in 2023, of which Connect Transit is a part of all five. The topics include supply chain pressure, recruiting and retention, perception of reality of the rider experience versus the reality of actual rider experience, and the continued growth of Microtransit. The Cardinal Infrastructure report also mentions a Notice

of Funding Opportunity for a \$20m grant for Areas of Persistent Poverty that focus on transportation in areas of persistent poverty, as well as historically disadvantaged communities to see how transit can help them. Mr. Braun has reached out to a few other local agencies to see if they would be interested in working with us on this opportunity.

Trustee Foster stated she looks forward to the March Sapphire report and the one fare for all impact on the Connect Mobility ridership.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Secretary McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. November Consent Agenda Included October Regular and Executive Session Minutes as sent in Email – Informational

Mr. Braun, General Manager, stated that on November 18, 2022, the Trustees received their meeting packet via email, which included the October 2022 Regular Session and Executive Session minutes. Trustees reviewed and voted on both of those minutes at the December 2022 meeting, but the Executive Session minutes were inadvertently left off the December 2022 Consent Agenda. Mr. Braun is clarifying that the October 2022 Executive Session minutes were received and voted on at the December 2022 meeting.

- b. Dovetail Messaging Campaign Update – Informational

Mr. Braun, General Manager, stated that our messaging campaign began last fall and Jennifer Schmid, Senior Brand Director with Dovetail will be giving an update on their efforts.

Ms. Schmid stated they have completed the key stakeholder interviews in Phase 1 of the REV process, which is about discovery and understanding. The stakeholders consisted of decision makers and opinion leaders in our community and the list was provided by Connect Transit. The key take away from these interviews is that there is a potential stigma with riding the bus but that once someone rides the bus they are won over because the buses are clean, and the drivers are friendly. There are other topics that came up that will be reported, but this topic rose to the top. Creative Entourage will be conducting a community survey and public opinion focus groups, using the key stakeholder interview results to form their questions in order to get a well-rounded amount of data to start building the messaging strategy for Connect Transit, and to start telling the story.

Chairman Whitehouse asked for a timeline of the next steps? Ms. Schmid stated they plan to deliver a report in February, and then Creative Entourage will be able to share their report.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if they have enough people to speak with to get a good sense of what the image is? Ms. Schmid shared she feels they have enough with 10 people from

assorted backgrounds, providing input from different dimensions of how Connect Transit serves the community. In addition, Creative Entourage will come in with the quantitative survey and do focus groups to help inform the campaign being developed.

Trustee McCue asked if we heard from any of the student population in the community, even though it was during the holidays? Ms. Schmid said that this round focused on the key stakeholders and decision makers, however the community focus group surveys that Creative Entourage will be doing can include the students.

c. FY22 Audit Presentation by CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP – Informational

Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director, introduced Adam Pulley, CPA, Principal, CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP who gave an onscreen presentation of Connect Transit's FY22 audit results.

Mr. Pulley stated the Financial Statement Audit opinion was:

- Unmodified, clean opinion.
- Clean opinion in accordance with GAS and Uniform Grant Guidance.
- No findings

Mr. Pulley stated the Governance Communication Letter reflected:

- No transactions noted which there is lack of authoritative guidance.
- No new accounting policies adopted.
- No changes in scope of audit.
- Estimate of \$0 allowance for uncollectable grant receivables.
- Estimate for grants receivable.
- No difficulties with management.
- No disagreements encountered.
- Management representation letter was signed by the System's General Manager and Finance Director.
- No corrected or uncorrected financial statements were identified.

Mr. Pulley thanked the finance team of Connect Transit for making the audit such an easy process and always being so responsive to their requests.

Chairman Whitehouse congratulated Connect Transit for a job well done on their successful audit.

- d. To approve moving forward with 73 planned Better Bus Stop Campaign improvements and 70 high confidence Better Bus Stop Campaign improvements. The remaining Better Bus Stop Campaign bus stops will be delayed until after the route study is completed.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to approve moving forward with 73 planned Better Bus Stop Campaign improvements and 70 high confidence Better Bus Stop Campaign improvements, with the remaining Better Bus Stop Campaign bus stops delayed until after the route study is completed.

Secretary McCue motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Discussion:

Mr. Braun stated that at our November 2022 meeting he suggested we pause the Better Bus Stops campaign until we can take a better look at them, but that there were some already in review and the Board asked him to come back with a plan. Mr. Braun asked Jacob Smith, Transportation Planner to further investigate the Better Bus Stops Campaign.

Mr. Smith reminded everyone that at the November 2022 meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Board and staff discussed the Better Bus Stops Campaign and the next steps regarding the program given our upcoming route analysis, with the intent to bring a recommendation on which stops we will be pursuing next, along with a plan for community members, businesses, and riders alike to request a new stop or to request a stop be updated.

To briefly recap, to-date we have improved 180 of 461 stops and have invested a total of \$1.2 million into the program. Staff has reviewed the existing plan, as well as upcoming Connect Transit activities, to develop a program that will allow Connect to continue building accessible stops without investing unnecessarily on stops with no utilization.

This spring, as we work with our consultant for Microtransit and planning, our goal is to not spend additional dollars in areas with the chance that routing or long-term plans will be adjusted. Staff feels confident, however, that some corridors like those near densely residential or commercial areas, will be safe to invest funds into as service will exist in one form or another. With some grant funding remaining in the Better Bus Stops program, staff recommends beginning NEPA and other review processes on these 70 high confidence stops to ensure that secured funding is appropriately invested into the community.

In addition to the 70 high confidence stops, NEPA and design work has been completed on 73 stops throughout Bloomington and Normal. Staff recommends targeting these stops for completion this year as well, allowing for Connect to obligate all remaining federal grant funds.

Finally, after this batch of 143 stops, we can expect to have completed 323 of 461 total stops, or 70%. For the remaining 30% (138 stops), staff hopes to begin with the highest ridership stops first as consulting and decision making takes place, avoiding spending valuable resources on stops with little, or in some cases, zero, ridership. Staff also aims to have a stop and service request portal in place on the Connect Transit website by late spring with the hope of better community engagement.

No change in planned expenses.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if the 143 stops will take all of the federal grant dollars we have to complete? Brady Lange, Procurement Director, stated we will be able to use the remainder of our federal dollars and we will have some state funding for any of the remainder of stops, confirming we will have enough money to complete all of the stops.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the 73 stops close to completion will be completed this year? Mr. Lange confirmed they will be complete this year.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the 70 high confidence stops will be complete this year? Mr. Lange stated they would probably be complete next year due to NEPA studies and design work, starting construction next spring.

Mr. Braun reminded the Trustees that this is not a discontinuation, just a pause until after the review of the stops to make sure the outlying stops will be served by fixed route.

Chairman Whitehouse thanked Mr. Braun for bringing this to the Board. The original goal of the Better Bus Stops Campaign was the 100% by 2024, but with the interruption of COVID we do get a little leeway. However, as soon as have the data, he would like to see this completed as quickly but as responsibly as possible.

Trustee Buchanan also shared her appreciation for Mr. Braun bringing this to the Board because it is fiscally responsible and the right thing to do.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Secretary McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

The motion to approve moving forward with 73 planned Better Bus Stop Campaign improvements and 70 high confidence Better Bus Stop Campaign improvements, with the remaining Better Bus Stop Campaign bus stops delayed until after the route study is completed was **approved**.

- e. To reimburse Trustee Buchanan the out-of-pocket expenses of \$1,077.62 associated with the APTA Transform Conference.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to reimburse Trustee Buchanan the out-of-pocket expenses of \$1,077.62 associated with the APTA Transform Conference.

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Discussion:

In October of 2022, Trustee Buchanan traveled to the APTA Transform Conference in Seattle, WA as a representative of Connect Transit’s Board of Trustees. Trustee Buchanan incurred some out-of-pocket expenses related to this trip as detailed below.

| | | |
|----------|--|------------|
| 10/9/22 | Luggage Fee for Trustee Buchanan and Aubrey Staton (Marketing Manager) | \$60.00 |
| 10/12/22 | Sheraton Seattle Hotel | \$,1017.62 |

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Foster, Secretary McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Trustee Buchanan

Recommendation to reimburse Trustee Buchanan the out-of-pocket expenses of \$1,077.62 associated with the APTA Transform Conference was **approved**.

- f. To authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Avail Technologies for Enterprise Transit Management Solution (ETMS) software, hosting, and support.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Avail Technologies for Enterprise Transit Management Solution (ETMS) software, hosting, and support.

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

Discussion:

Brady Lange, Procurement Director, shared that Connect Transit began using the Fleet-Net Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software package in 2012. Since that time, we have used Fleet-Net as the primary software for most of our core functions including payroll, accounting, Maintenance operations, asset management, and much more.

The Fleet-Net product has not evolved much since its original installation other than minor improvements and bug fixes. In 2017 Avail Technologies acquired Fleet-Net with the goal of modernizing the software as a companion for its existing CAD/AVL solutions. Since 2017, Avail Technologies has been doing extensive work to modernize the underlying database and software. The next phase of the modernization roadmap includes moving the Fleet-Net product from a traditional on-premises software solution to a cloud-hosted product. As such, Avail Technologies has outlined an End-of-Life announcement for the current on premises ERP product. In order to continue to modernize the software, it must become a cloud-hosted solution.

Connect Transit staff frequently seeks to modernize software solutions used in providing the services to our community. Like this one, many of these systems are not customer facing but are vital in operating the agency. As such, Connect Transit staff is recommending that we move forward with completing this transition to the cloud hosted ETMS solution.

There was no procurement action taken on this project and it will be considered a valid sole source project. This is simply a planned upgrade that was previously communicated with an existing vendor. Only the support and hosting for the software is being updated to a more secure and reliable environment. In addition, the cost to replace the existing software in a new deployment with a new vendor is estimated to cost up to ten times the cost of this project.

To complete this project, Connect Transit staff will work with Avail Technologies to begin moving the existing ERP system to the cloud-hosting provider. Moving the product to the cloud will shift the burden for supporting software and hardware to experts that can resolve problems much more quickly. In addition, Avail Technologies ensures us that the data stored within the system is not only more secure, but it is also accessible by appropriate Connect Transit staff from anywhere they have an internet connection. Avail has also outlined a roadmap to continue to develop the software into the future by introducing new user interfaces and features.

The total cost for this project is \$153,537, this includes continued support for the current on premises solution until the ETMS conversion can take place, the conversion to the ETMS system, and ongoing support and hosting fees associated with the ETMS through the end of 2024. This project is funded as an operating expense.

Trustee Buchanan asked if there any additional applications or activities that we anticipate being able to use with the new revision? Mr. Lange stated that once they move the program to the

cloud, we will be more mobile with the application and able to use it in the field, have more interface with other programs through the cloud, and more modules will be available to us.

Trustee Buchanan asked if there will be additional fees once the contract expires in 2024? Mr. Lange stated we will reevaluate at that time to determine if we want to pursue a yearly contract.

Trustee Rao asked if our existing module is moving to the cloud? Mr. Lange confirmed our existing module is moving to the cloud.

Trustee Rao asked if our existing modules are changing? Mr. Lange stated they are not changing, just the way we access them is changing.

Trustee Foster asked if the cost is in addition to or a cost we would have anyway? Mr. Lange stated this cost is a little of both.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Secretary McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

The motion to authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Avail Technologies for Enterprise Transit Management Solution (ETMS) software, hosting, and support was **approved**.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Chairman Whitehouse thanked the Trustees who attended the January 18 Senator Durbin press conference at Connect Transit. Mr. Whitehouse also thanked Connect staff for putting the event together on such short notice, noting they did a great job. Mr. Whitehouse went on to state that Connect received another \$9.6m from the Rebuild Illinois grant, noting that we wouldn't be receiving these grant fundings if we weren't doing something right and thanked the staff, citizens, and community for making it happen.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:

Mr. Braun shared his General Manager's report and stated it will be available online where the meeting packets are posted.

Community:

Mr. Braun stated that we continue with community outreach events because they spread the message of Connect Transit, lets the community know we are easy to work with and that we support our community.

Outreach:

- Stuff the Bus where we helped collect 11,700 pounds of goods.
- ARC visit to help sign riders up for our services
- Job fair at Connect Transit to recruit more employees
- McLean County Social Isolation Committee
- United Way McLean County Housing Coalition Meeting
- EDC Real Estate Committee
- City of Bloomington Streetscape group

Employee Welfare Events:

- Holiday Lunch – December 14
- Apprenticeship Program Meeting with ATU Leadership

Political:

- Senator Durbin Visit – January 18
- Congressman Sorenson Visit – January 18
- Representative Sharon Chung Visits – December 14 & January 18

Media:

- Recorded interviews with WMBD, WEEK, WGLT, live interview with WJBC

50th Birthday:

- Offered sponsorships to offset price of event with assorted mentions in return
- To date we have \$5,300 in sponsorships

Employee Development:

Mr. Braun shared that employee development continues with employees participating across the agency.

- Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director –
 - Annual Governmental Generally Accepted Accounting Principles Training on 12/8/22
- Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager
 - Screen Reader Introduction and Training with LIFE CIL on 11/22/22
 - U.S. Small Business Administration's Disability Sensitivity Sessions
 - Social Media and Accessibility on 12/7/22
 - Creating Accessible PDF's on 12/14/22
- Justin Allen, Safety and Training Coordinator
 - Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies 12/19/22-12/22/22

Recruiting:

Mr. Braun shared we have filled 10 Bus Operator positions, one Mechanic position, and three Service Technician positions. However, we are still recruiting for 13 Bus Operators, one Custodian, one Dispatcher, one HR Manager, one Mechanic, and two Service Technicians.

Mr. Braun stated that Germaine Walls, interim HR Manager was hired as an interim HR Manager until her husband received the long-term plan for his employment, which has been received. As a result, they will be moving, and she will be leaving Connect Transit.

The current class of Bus Operators started on 1/9/23 and are performing well, expected to take their CDL test soon. The next class is scheduled to start on 2/13/23.

Trustee Buchanan asked if we ask the new hires how they heard of the job opening? Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager, stated we do ask on the form they complete when they come to the job fair, and most are stating they heard about it on Facebook. Ms. Staton also explained they are hanging fliers in places where people gather, such as churches, laundromats, etc.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

No Executive Session was held.

TRUSTEE COMMENTS:

Trustee Singer stated she was sorry to see Germaine Walls, interim HR Manager leave and wished her well.

Trustee Foster also expressed her regret in seeing Ms. Walls leave and wished her well. Ms. Foster thanked everyone for a clean audit and thanked Trustee Foster for attending the APTA conference.

Trustee Rao thanked the Connect Transit team for the Senator's press conference event and expressed his support for the planned migration to the cloud.

Chairman Whitehouse stated that the next planned Board meeting is scheduled for when both he and David Braun will be in Washington, DC for the Economic Development Council's One Voice conference, as a result, we need to reschedule the February Board meeting. Janice Crago will send out a poll for rescheduling the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Adjourn.

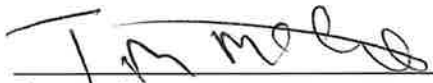
Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Secretary McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Motion to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting was **approved**; meeting adjourned at 5:32p.m.


Trustee Tim McCue, Board Secretary


Janice Crago, Board Clerk

[SEAL]

