



Notes: Meeting of the Connect to the Future Working Group

July 20, 2019

Overview of topics covered at the July 20 Working Group Meeting

The following major topics were covered during the meeting:

- Introduction to the Smart Growth America Facilitator Team
- Discussion of an approach and process for collecting, responding to, and processing feedback from individuals outside the Working Group
- Brainstorming of key topics that should be addressed by the Working Group during this effort, as well as types of riders to address in the recommendations. These topics will form the basis for smaller focus groups that will meet between monthly Working Group meetings.

Topics to be covered at the August 17 Working Group Meeting

The next Working Group meeting will cover:

- Information from Connect Transit on transit funding and operational considerations that guide decisions.
- Information from the Facilitator Team on transit operational metrics and funding options used by other agencies around the country.
- Goal-setting and looking to the future of the system.

Meeting Summary

In attendance

Chair Judy Buchanan – Connect Transit
Board Trustee
Julie Hile – Connect Transit Board
Trustee
Kimberly Klepec
Tim Bassett
Marty Eckert

Dylan Hile-Broad
Steven P. Kossman
Josh W Barnett
Deb Presley
Katy Killian
De Urban

Members absent:

Jerry James
Linda Foster
Jose Antonio Patino

Public Comment

The following public comments were submitted:

- Jeff Crabill: Relayed a message from Karen Cook, Manager of Orlando/Northbrook regarding the PINK route: “The new route for the Orlando area is working well with people getting on and off all day long; buses running 30-40% full most of the time.”
- Mark Tiritilli: Spoke of a “fare-free” system and posed the question of whether it would be feasible if Connect Transit could achieve a ten percent (10%) expenditure reduction. Spoke of a few ways to make that possible: (i) suggested switching to smaller buses, noting that the propane bus seems to be an ideal size for a lot of the routes; and (ii) suggested other possibilities in how ISU integrates into the system.

Introduction of Connect to the Future Facilitator Team

Chair Judy Buchanan introduced the Connect to the Future Facilitator Team from Smart Growth America.

Chris Zimmerman, Vice President for Economic Development at Smart Growth America, provided more information about each member of the team:

- Chris Zimmerman, Vice President for Economic Development
- Beth Osborne, Vice President for Transportation (not present for this meeting)
- Rayla Bellis, Program Manager
- Jeri Mintzer, Program Manager (not present for this meeting)

Two of the four Smart Growth America facilitators will attend each meeting.

Presentation – Chris Zimmerman

Chris Zimmerman presented an overview of the Working Group's charge and ground rules for external communication and the importance of transparency. Zimmerman then presented on the historical developments in land use planning and the rise of automobile travel that impact transit today (slides provided separately). Spread out development patterns have made transit less cost-effective to operate and less convenient for riders, contributing to a negative cycle in which service is reduced and ridership continues to decline. As a result, many transit systems today primarily serve those who are dependent on transit.

Discussion of ground rules for communication

Members of the Working Group expressed concerns that the group had not yet adequately addressed ground rules for communication through Zimmerman's presentation. They noted that they need a clear process and approach for collecting, responding to, and processing feedback from individuals outside the Working Group.

A facilitated discussion followed, including the following major points:

- General agreement that proactively soliciting input from individuals in the community will benefit the process.

- Working Group members intend to be clear that they are speaking as individuals when appropriate, rather than for the group. However, they should always *listen* on behalf of the full group, and need a process for relaying the feedback they receive back to the full group.
- Riding transit and talking to people onboard can be one of the best ways to hear the needs of people using the system.
- It is crucial to set clear expectations for how outside input will inform the process so that people feel heard.

Working Group members agreed to the following process moving forward:

Process for collecting, responding to, and processing feedback and questions:

1. Members of the Working Group are encouraged to solicit and receive input from individuals outside the group, particularly transit riders.
2. In responding to questions, Working Group members will clarify as appropriate that their opinions are their own rather than those of the group.
3. Working Group members will also encourage people to use the official channels to provide feedback:
 - a. Via email: trustees@connect-transit.com, with the subject line: "Connect to the Future"
 - b. Via mail:

Connect Transit
351 Wylie Drive
Normal, Illinois 61761
 - c. By providing public comment at Connect to the Future Working Group meetings.
4. All individuals who email feedback will be sent a response acknowledging receipt and noting that the Working Group will review and discuss their feedback at the appropriate time in the process.

Discussion of key topics the Working Group should address

The Working Group brainstormed key topics the group should address through this effort. These topics will form a basis for 3-5 smaller focus groups that will meet between meetings. The facilitators and core Connect Transit project leads will propose groupings of these topics for smaller focus groups before the next Working Group meeting.

Topics include:

- Differently-abled riders and ADA accessibility
- Transit dependent riders
- Connect Mobility vs. Connect Transit (serve different populations with overlap)

- Affordability of fares
- Funding:
 - Developing recommendations with real solutions
 - Funding for capital vs. operations
 - Partnering with major employers
- Future strategic capital investments
- Route planning and services: how are choices made?
- Safety for riders and operators
- Standards and measures used:
 - Ridership?
 - Minimum levels of service?
- Operational considerations and tradeoffs:
- Partners and funders
- Role of land development in transit access and cost-effectiveness:
 - Where new development is located
 - How location of buildings and parking within new development impact transit
 - Preserving transit access during private construction
 - Impact of infrastructure, streets, and sidewalks on transit
- What are this community's overarching values for the transit system?

In addition, the group brainstormed a non-exhaustive list of distinct types of riders to address in recommendations:

- Universal access riders (ex. university students and faculty)
- Aging residents seeking alternatives to driving
- Younger residents without a drivers license

Major Next Steps

The following major actions will be taken before the next meeting:

- The facilitators and Connect Transit project leads will propose 3-5 focus groups to meet between meetings based on the topics brainstormed. Working Group members will provide feedback on the proposed subgroups.
- The facilitators and Connect Transit project leads will take necessary administrative steps to implement the agreed-upon approach for collecting feedback from individuals outside the Working Group.
- The facilitators will provide materials at least one week in advance of the next meeting to educate participants about Connect Transit's operational needs and considerations, criteria for making decisions, and finances, and other best practices.

Working Group homework for the next meeting

The facilitators gave Working Group members the following homework for the next meeting:

Use the transit system to do something you haven't done before. For example:

- Go to work
- Travel between downtown Bloomington and Normal in the evening
- Travel during off-peak hours to the grocery store
- Travel on the weekend to a medical office

Then, come to the next meeting prepared to discuss the following:

- Is it safe to walk to the station?
- How long did you wait? How long was the trip?
- Was the trip convenient?
- How many of your daily needs can you reach with this trip?
- Did you need to make a connection?
- BONUS: If you feel comfortable, ask these questions of someone also riding transit

The next Connect to the Future Working Group Meeting will be August 17, 2019