

**Connect Transit Board of Trustees**  
**June 27, 2023, 4:30pm**  
**351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room**  
**Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 7/25/23 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 (4:37 p.m.)  
Trustee Linda Foster  
Secretary Tim McCue  
Trustee Mandava Rao  
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

**Trustees Absent:** Vice Chair Julie Hile  
Trustee Barbara Singer

**City Managers Present:** City Manager Pam Reece  
City Manager Tim Gleason

**Staff Present:** David Braun, General Manager  
Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager  
Brady Lange, Procurement Director (Virtual)  
Charlie Busse, Maintenance Manager  
Jacob Smith, Transportation Planner  
Janice Crago, Board Clerk  
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director  
Shelly Perry, Operations Manager  
Stephanie Butler, HR Manager  
Steve Stockton, IT Manager

**Guest(s) Present:** None

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**  
None

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

- a. Approval of Regular Session Minutes for May 23, 2023
- b. Approval of Financial Information for May 2023
- c. Monthly Statistical Reports for May 2023
- d. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report
- e. Cornerstone – Illinois Weekly Update

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda.**  
Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Secretary McCue Rao.

**Discussion:**

David Braun, General Manager, stated that the midlife overhaul expense reflected in the Financial Reports was previously approved by the Board, everything else had been budgeted for and discussed previously. He stated the Performance Reports show fixed route ridership continues to increase, ending the year with a higher than 18% increase despite the fact that we had to reduce service. Connect Mobility shows we are 33% higher than we were at this time last year, but we are flattening out month to month, with only a 6.3% month to month increase over the last few months. System Totals show efficiencies continue to trend at the same rate, and we look forward to having the new Operations Manager on board to help improve these numbers.

Mr. Braun stated the Cardinal Infrastructure report showed we were not awarded a Low-No or Bus and Bus Facilities Grant this year, however we awarded over \$21m over the last few years so this was not a surprise. He stated the Cornerstone report highlighted several bills, including the Transit Riding Privilege bill that was enacted for the RTA region and we have asked for clarification; the Transportation Benefit Program, which is statewide. Once this bill gets started, we will begin marketing it to employers for their knowledge and use.

Chairman Whitehouse stated at one point we were at about 80% of pre-COVID and asked if that was still on track? Mr. Braun stated we are still on track, and at about 82% now.

**Rollcall Vote:**

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

NAY: None

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. Reimburse Vice Chair Julie Hile the out of pocket APTA Transit Board Members and Board Administrators Seminar registration fee of \$795.00.

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to reimburse Vice Chair Julie Hile the out of pocket APTA Transit Board Members and Board Administrators Seminar registration fee of \$795.00.**

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

**Discussion:**

Mr. Braun stated as required by law, reimbursements to Board members must be approved by the Board. He explained Vice Chair of the Connect Transit Board of Trustees Ms. Hile will represent Connect Transit at the APTA Transit Board Members and Board Administrators Seminar in Birmingham, Alabama July 15 – 18, 2023. Ms. Hile paid for her registration out of pocket and will need to be reimbursed by Connect Transit.

This will cost Connect Transit \$795 and has been budgeted for in the FY24 travel expenses.

**Rollcall Vote:**

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

NAY: None

The motion to reimburse Vice Chair Julie Hile the out of pocket APTA Transit Board Members and Board Administrators Seminar registration fee of \$795.00 was **approved**.

- b. Authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Creative Bus Sales, Inc. for the purchase of three 2023 Starcraft Allstar 22” cutaway vans to be used in paratransit service.

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Creative Bus Sales, Inc. for the purchase of three 2023 Starcraft Allstar 22” cutaway vans to be used in paratransit service.**

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Secretary McCue.

**Discussion:**

Brady Lange, Procurement Director, explained in recent years we have partnered with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) on their Consolidated Vehicle Procurement (CVP) program to provide paratransit vehicles at virtually no cost to us. Due to continued supply chain and vehicle shortage issues resulting from the pandemic, IDOT has been unable to negotiate a contract for vehicles since 2020. While they do anticipate awarding a contract soon, there is a large backlog of need for vehicles, and we cannot guarantee the availability of vehicles for our needs.

In addition, our paratransit ridership has grown approximately 12.8% over pre-pandemic statistics and we continue to experience supply chain issues with parts availability, which lengthens repair times and requires buses to be in the repair shop longer than usual. As a result, we have started to experience a strain on fleet availability for regular service.

For all these reasons, staff has determined it necessary to expand our fleet of paratransit vehicles by purchasing three additional units. By adding three units to our fleet, we will be able to provide the exceptional experience that our passengers expect, as well as reduce the pressure our Maintenance staff is experiencing by repeatedly repairing aging vehicles as quickly as possible to keep a sufficient fleet available to meet our ADA obligations. The addition of these vehicles to our fleet will allow for some time to pass so the IDOT CVP program can stabilize, and we can continue to use that program when necessary.

We released an Invitation for Bid (IFB) for paratransit vehicles on May 29, 2023, and detailed ideal vehicle specifications. The IFB was sent directly to four vendors and was advertised publicly. We received three bids in response to the IFB. A bid summary is provided below.

<b>Bidder</b>	<b>Total Cost (3 Vehicles)</b>
Central States Bus Sales	\$422,610
Creative Bus Sales, Inc.	\$344,310
Transportation Equipment Sales Corp	\$368,841

Creative Bus Sales, Inc., based in Indianapolis, was the lowest responsive and responsible bidder for these vehicles, and currently supplies over 5,000 similar vehicles per year to transit agencies across the country. These vehicles are immediately available and upon contract award Creative Bus Sales, Inc. will deliver the vehicles within 14 days.

The Starcraft Allstar cutaway paratransit vans feature six passenger seats and two wheelchair locations. Like our other paratransit vehicles, they are built on a Ford E450 chassis and feature a Braun

wheelchair lift. The vehicles include the original equipment manufacturer bumper-to-bumper warranty of 3-year / 36,000-mile and includes a 5-year / 100,000-mile Starcraft manufacturer warranty.

The purchase of the three 2023 Starcraft Allstar 22' cutaway vans will total \$344,310.00 which will be funded by local capital funds.

Secretary McCue asked why we are at a point we need these vehicles now? Mr. Lange stated we have a continued increase in ridership numbers over pre-pandemic levels, maintenance is experiencing issues getting parts in a timely manner which is keeping vehicles in the garage for longer times, straining the operations and scheduling of the fleet.

Secretary McCue stated he understands the need after hearing the explanation and is concerned we would reduce our quality of service if we didn't make this purchase.

Chairman Whitehouse asked how much we have in Local Funds? Mr. Braun stated we have a significant reserve in Local Funds because we received so many grants to pay for many of our projects.

Trustee Buchanan asked if we could use the grant funds we just received? Mr. Braun stated we have to get these vehicles now and can't wait two or three years for the grant funds we just received.

Chairman Whitehouse asked Mr. Braun to explain the grant Trustee Buchanan just mentioned.

Mr. Braun explained we did not receive a Low-No or Bus and Bus Facilities grant but that the state did receive two grants at over \$12m each. One of those grants will distribute two electric buses to small urban and rural providers to see how electric paratransit vehicles will work in a public transit environment. We know this first grant will give us two electric buses, but the process will take a couple of years from the beginning of the Request for Procurement to manufacturing to delivering. The second grant is to support their CVP program, which hasn't even started yet and there is no guarantee we will receive any buses under this second grant.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if we received these types of buses through the CVP program prior to the pandemic? Mr. Braun stated we did and with a 90 day turnaround, with the supply chain issues now, the wait times exceed 18 months. These vehicles we are asking for approval to purchase are already made and, on a lot, ready to purchase.

Trustee Foster asked if we have drivers ready to drive these new vehicles? Mr. Braun stated our drivers are trained to operate both fixed route buses and mobility buses so we don't have to worry about hiring a specific type of driver, we can utilize any of our drivers.

Trustee Rao asked if there is a challenge in purchasing the parts inventory we need for our current vehicles. Mr. Braun stated there is a challenge purchasing the inventory once our current inventory is depleted.

Chairman Whitehouse asked the expected useful life of the mobility vehicles? Mr. Braun stated the useful life of the mobility vehicles is seven to eight years. Charlie Busse, Maintenance Manager, stated our current oldest vehicle is six years old with 120,000 – 130,000 miles on

them. Mr. Busse also explained that 120,000 on these vehicles is not the same as on one of our personal vehicles due to the amount of idling done while waiting for pickup and drop off.

**Rollcall Vote:**

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

NAY: None

The motion to authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Creative Bus Sales, Inc. for the purchase of three 2023 Starcraft Allstar 22” cutaway vans to be used in paratransit service was **approved**.

- c. Authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with JG Stewart Contractors, Inc. for construction of 79 bus stops throughout Bloomington-Normal.

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with JG Stewart Contractors, Inc. for construction of 79 bus stops throughout Bloomington-Normal.**

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

**Discussion:**

Mr. Braun stated that last year we asked to suspend the Better Bus Stops Campaign while we evaluated where the fixed route stops would be going, but that we had 79 bus stops already designed and we feel confident these are in the areas the fixed route will continue to serve.

Mr. Lange, Procurement Director, explained Connect Transit is in the fourth year of our Better Bus Stops Campaign. As part of this campaign we are seeking to improve bus stop accessibility throughout Bloomington-Normal.

We released an Invitation for Bid (IFB) on May 10, 2023, detailing the 79 stops to be constructed as part of this project. The IFB was sent directly to three potential bidders and advertised publicly. The group of stops in this project includes 74 stops that were recently designed and approved by the municipalities, as well as five stops that were previously designed but not constructed for various reasons, which is usually an easement that required a property owner’s signature. Many times, property owners of businesses are out of state and difficult to get in touch with. The stop at Kroger on College Avenue is included in this project, which staff has been seeking an easement for some time, is an example of a stop that was previously designed but not constructed because of the business owner being out of state.

Bidder	Estimated Annual Price
JG Stewart Contractors, Inc.	\$377,865

As noted in the table above, we received a single bid for this project. Per Connect Transit’s Procurement Policy, staff completed a thorough price analysis to confirm this price is fair and reasonable because only a single bid was received. This analysis took into consideration a recent bid for similar work, the increase in the Produce Price Index (PPI) for concrete since that time (July 2021 – June 2023: 25.2%), and the current bid price. The current bid is nearly identical considering the PPI, so the bid is considered fair and reasonable.

JG Stewart Contractors, Inc. has a long-standing history in Bloomington-Normal and has completed many other similar projects, such as sidewalk replacements for both municipalities, as well as previous bus stop improvement projects for Connect Transit. JG Stewart Contractors, Inc. believes construction can begin very soon after contract award and completed prior to fall.

The cost for construction of the 79 proposed bus stop improvements throughout Bloomington-Normal will be \$377,865. Funding for these improvements will be made available by FTA 5339 grant funds for bus stop improvements and IDOT DOAP Debt Service.

Chairman Whitehouse asked what the blue dots on the map represent? Mr. Lange explained the blue dots are stops that include a pad, which is an improvement connecting the existing sidewalk to the street curb, making the stop ADA accessible. The green dots represent a pad with a bench/two Simme-Seats. The orange dots are stops that will include a shelter.

Trustee Buchanan asked for the criteria for a pad with a bench versus just a pad? Mr. Lange explained it is usually based on ridership at that specific stop with higher ridership stops usually getting a bench or Simme-Seats.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if there is a specific number that defines the criteria? Jacob Smith, Transportation Planner, explained he took into consideration the number of benches, seats, and shelters we already had in stock after doing repairs at other stops. Anything within the top 30% of ridership received a bench, anything within the top 10% received a shelter.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the cost of adding a bench to the shelters is significant? Mr. Lange stated he did not recall the cost of the bench but would get that information to her.

Trustee Buchanan stated she appreciates it is based on ridership but there could be benefit in having a bench at all stops for safety and comfort.

Trustee Foster asked if the shelters all come with solar lighting? Mr. Braun confirmed they do come with solar lighting.

Trustee Foster asked if we had given further consideration to advertising at the shelters? Mr. Braun stated we do sell advertising at some of our shelters, but we have to be very careful which shelters we sell advertising at for safety and visibility reasons.

**Rollcall Vote:**

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

NAY: None

The motion to authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with JG Stewart Contractors, Inc. for construction of 79 bus stops throughout Bloomington-Normal was **approved**.

- d. Authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Proterra for the purchase of five 40-foot battery electric buses.

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Proterra for the purchase of five 40-foot battery electric buses.**

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee McCue.

**Discussion:**

Mr. Lange stated in September 2019, the Connect Transit Board of Trustees approved a five-year contract with Proterra for up to 17 battery electric buses. That contract was fulfilled and we will take delivery of the final five buses in early spring of 2024. That contract has allowed us to replace all 2003 era buses, the oldest buses in our fleet. We recently had to purchase three 12-year-old used buses to support route and frequency expansion. Purchasing used buses was necessary to support continued operations but is not a long-term solution to our fleet needs. Since the time of purchasing used vehicles we have been considering the replacement of those buses to support the upcoming needs of our system.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) allows for a partnership provision in grant applications for the Section 5339 Buses and Bus Facilities program. The goal of allowing this partnership is to simplify and streamline the procurement process for low or no emission vehicles to allow transit agencies and the communities they serve to realize the positive impacts of these vehicles sooner. Staff determined that developing a partnership grant application with Proterra to replace the aging used vehicles and supplementing our fleet to support our growing community would provide the most advantageous path forward for current and future needs. Another consideration for this partnership is to continue to maintain a standardized fleet. A standardized fleet helps reduce inventory costs and improve efficiency of maintenance.

We worked closely with Proterra to develop a partnership grant application and were awarded the maximum allowable federal share of these buses, which totals \$5,176,800 (80%). Since that award we have been working with Proterra to configure the buses very similar to the five vehicles which will be delivered in the spring of 2024. Upon award of this contract, Proterra will be able to secure our order in the production schedule and anticipates delivery of these five buses in the fall of 2024. Delivery of these buses will bring our total fleet of electric vehicles to 22, which will be half our fleet of fixed route buses.

After this contract for vehicles, we will not be able to replace buses until 2029, per FTA useful vehicle life guidance. Until that time, we plan to continue to monitor the performance of the electric fleet and industry trends towards alternative fueled/zero emission vehicles prior to developing specifications for the next Request for Proposals.

The total contract price for the buses in this agreement will be \$6,482,483.50, which is an increase of \$23,451 per vehicle since the last contract. To fund this contract we will utilize \$5,176,800 that was awarded as part of the FTA 5339 Buses and Bus Facilities program and \$1,305,683.50 in IDOT Downstate Operating Assistance Program Debt Service.

**Rollcall Vote:**

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

NAY: None

The motion to the General Manager to execute a contract with Proterra for the purchase of five 40-foot battery electric buses was **approved**.

- e. Acknowledge and approve the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System (DBA Connect Transit) Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) as required by Federal Transit Administration regulation (49 CFR part 673).

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to acknowledge and approve the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System (DBA Connect Transit) Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) as required by Federal Transit Administration regulation (49 CFR part 673).**

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

**Discussion:**

Mr. Braun explained the PTASP regulation (49 CFR part 673) intends to improve public transportation safety by guiding transit agencies to manage risk effectively and proactively within their systems. It requires certain recipients and sub-recipients of FTA grants that operate public transportation to develop and implement safety plans that establish processes and procedures to support the implementation of a Safety Management System (SMS). SMS is a comprehensive, collaborative approach to managing safety. It brings management and labor together to control risk better, detect and correct safety problems earlier, share and analyze safety data more effectively, and measure safety performance more precisely.

As a recipient of FTA 5307 funding, we are required to have a Board approved plan. The plan meets the requirements of the FTA and has been shared with the State of Illinois, without comment or concern.

There is no financial impact from this recommendation.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if this is a boiler plate type form? Mr. Braun stated it is a boiler plate form but we have modified it to fit Connect Transit and it covers everything required.

Trustee Buchanan asked if our legal counsel has reviewed it? Mr. Braun stated it was reviewed back in 2020 and the minor changes do not change the integrity of the plan.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the Directors referred to in the document are the Board of Directors? Mr. Braun explained is the Directors of the transit system.

**Rollcall Vote:**

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

The motion to acknowledge and approve the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System (DBA Connect Transit) Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) as required by Federal Transit Administration regulation (49 CFR part 673) was **approved**.

- f. APTA Mobility Conference Recap – Informational

Mr. Braun stated that Trustee McCue had previously requested that conference attendees provide a brief summary and their value to the attendees. Shelly Perry, Operations Manager, will be giving an update on the APTA Mobility Conference attended by mostly her staff.



- Attendees
  - Charlie Busse, Maintenance Manager
  - Jeff Mancil, Operations Supervisor
  - Carrie Bailey, Operations Supervisor
  - Dora Kohtz, Operations Supervisor
- April 23-26 in Minneapolis, MN
- Conference Sessions
  - Maintenance Managers Workshop, All Day Session with a Zero Emissions Focus
  - What's New, What's Next – Micromobility, Microtransit, MaaS, and Mobility Hubs
    - Ms. Perry explained our staff felt like we are already on the right track after attending this workshop
  - Learning from Workforce Challenges: Strategies, Solutions, Bragging Rights Workshop
    - Each group received a topic to talk about and share their experiences on, then they had to present to the session and brought best practices back.
  - Tour – Metro Transit's Busiest Transit Station: A behind the scenes tour of the Mall of America Transit Station.
  - Innovations in Mobility Without Breaking the Bank
  - Bus Operator Assault Prevention and Management: FTA/Transit Agency Programs, Technology, and the Bus of the Future
- Mall of America Tour (Transit Center Thoughts)
  - Learning from Workforce Challenges: Strategies, Solutions, Bragging Rights Workshop
  - Tour – Metro Transit's Busiest Transit Station: A behind the scenes tour of the Mall of America Transit Station.
  - Innovations in Mobility Without Breaking the Bank
  - Bus Operator Assault Prevention and Management: FTA/Transit Agency Programs, Technology, and the Bus of the Future
  - The combination of lighting placement and the ceiling tile utilized made the interior feel bright and warm.
- Elerts: "See something? Easy. Say Something? Not so much."
  - People want to do the right thing but calling 911 can be intimidating or feel too involved.
  - Operator Assaults – Passengers spoke up
  - Person in Danger – Passengers spoke up
  - Human Trafficking – Driver spoke up
  - Safety Hazards – Community and passengers spoke up
  - Maintenance Issues - Community and passengers spoke up

Chairman Whitehouse asked if the elert would go to Bloomington or Normal Police? Ms. Perry stated it would go to whomever we set it up to receive the alert, our Dispatch Office, or one of the Police Departments and we can incorporate the Voice From Above option where the Dispatch Office can talk directly to the passengers on the bus.

Ms. Perry elaborated further and explained she will be doing more research for presentation to the Board if they decide to make a recommendation to purchase.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

Chairman Whitehouse thanked Alderman Cody Hendricks for touring Connect Transit and learning about our service and giving us the opportunity to learn more about him.

## **GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:**

Mr. Braun shared his monthly General Manager report.

### **Government:**

- Bus and Bus Facilities Grant
  - Connect was not awarded this year. We requested funding for a new radio system, retrofit buses with passenger alert system, and proximity lock upgrades for the office.
  - IDOT was awarded two grants
    - \$12,299,377 for battery electric paratransit and associated charging equipment
      - Connect Transit will receive two vehicles from this award.
    - \$12,600,000 for paratransit vehicles to be distributed statewide
      - We have requested four replacement and two expansion vehicles but may receive fewer due to rural and urban request backlogs.
    - We anticipate a minimum wait of 18-24 months before we receive vehicles under these programs.

### **Community:**

#### **Outreach**

- Bloomington Gold Shuttle
- Western Avenue Community Center Visit
- Heartland Community College Electric Vehicle Employer Panel
- Bloomington Councilman Cody Hendricks Visit
- Rockford Mass Transit District Electric Event
- Corn Belt Electric Annual Meeting
- Ecology Action Center – Illinois Recycling Conference Tour

### **Employee Welfare**

- Company potluck luncheon
- Retirement celebration for Marty Eckert and Thom Larson

### **Employee Development:**

- Classes 2303 and 2304 have been completed and the Bus Operators are in service.
- Employees are completing the annual training on our LMS platform. Classes are computer based, interactive, and include:
  - Sexual Harassment for Employees
  - Workplace Dynamics: Bullying and Boundaries
  - Workplace Violence
- Supervisors are completing additional training:
  - Driver Safety Training: Distracted Driving Dangers and Prevention
  - Bloodborne Pathogens: Standard Precautions in the Workplace
- Training for Safety & Training Personnel:
  - Dave has completed the Federal Transit Administration Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (PTSCTP).

### **Recruiting:**

Positions Filled:

- Customer Service Rep. (1)

- Dispatcher (3)

Positions Open:

- Bus Operator (8)
- Mechanic (1)
- Microtransit Operator (10)
- Service Technician (3)

Offers Extended and Accepted:

- Executive Assistant for Procurement (1)
- Marketing Assistant (1)

Mr. Braun invited the Trustees to attend our Business Before Hours event on Wednesday, July 26 at 7:00 a.m. in the garage. He explained this is an event we put on with the Chamber of Commerce and that no Board business will be discussed.

**TRUSTEE COMMENTS:**

Trustee Buchanan stated the Intergovernmental Agreement was passed at the City of Bloomington meeting last night and asked that a summary be prepared for the Board when the agreement is finalized. Chairman Whitehouse stated that he had purposely kept at a distance during the process because it is an agreement between the City and the Town that we adhere to.

Secretary McCue thanked Ms. Perry for her conference summary, it was exactly what he was hoping for when he made the request.

Trustee Foster thanked Ms. Perry for the summary and thanked Connect Transit for the sympathy flowers.

Chairman Whitehouse welcomed City Manager Gleason back to the Board.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

No Executive Session was held.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Adjourn.**

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Meeting adjourned by consensus at 5:30 p.m.

  
Trustee Tim McCue, Board Secretary

  
Janice Crago, Board Clerk

[SEAL]

