

# Board of Trustees

Regular Session  
November 28, 2023



# Mission Statement

- Connect Transit provides safe, reliable transportation and access to opportunity to strengthen and enrich individual lives, our community, the economy, and the environment.

# Agenda

- Call to Order
- Roll Call
  - Attendance by Other Means/Virtual – Roll Call Vote
- Pledge of Allegiance and Mission Statement
- Public Comments

# Consent Agenda

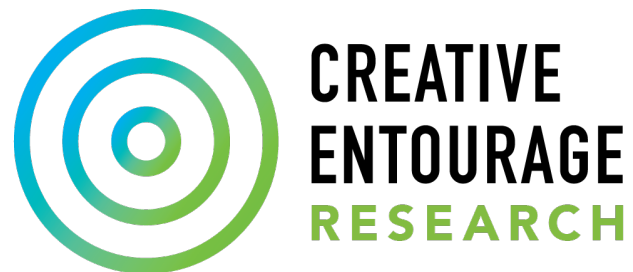
- Approval of Regular Session Minutes for 10/24/23
- Approval of Executive Session Minutes for 10/24/23
- Approval of Financial Information for October 2023
- Monthly Statistical Reports for October 2023
- Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report
- Cornerstone – Illinois Weekly Update
- Roll Call Vote

# New Business

🕒 Messaging Consultant Update – Informational

# Connect Transit Rider Survey Overview

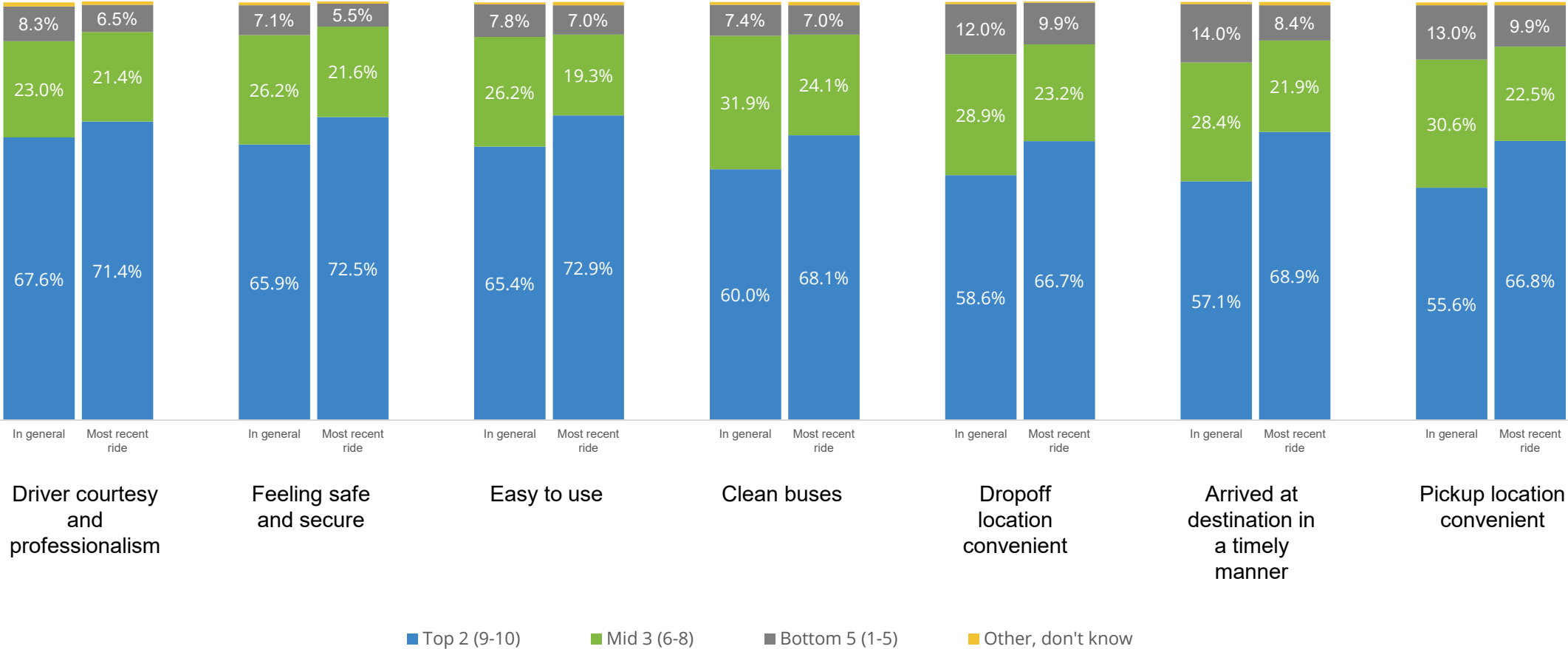
November 28, 2023



# BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

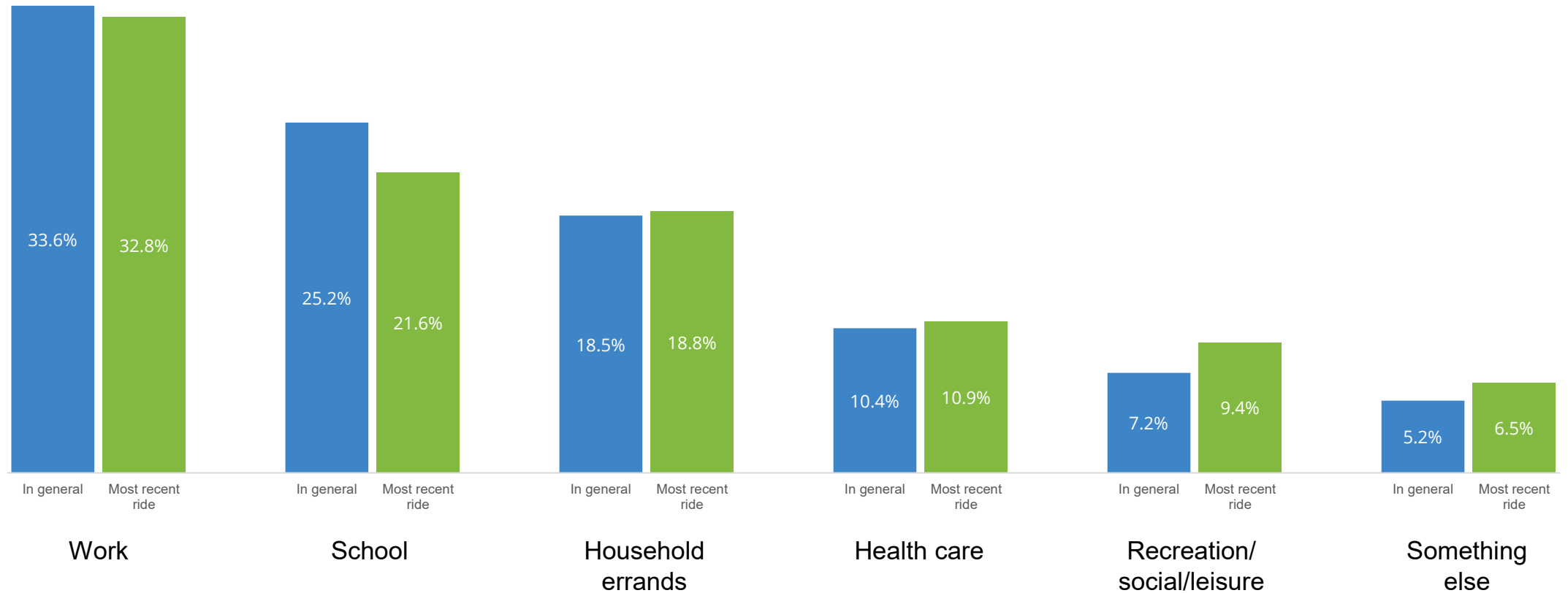
- Online survey conducted September-November 2023
- 408 completed surveys

# CONNECT TRANSIT BUS SERVICE PERFORMANCE

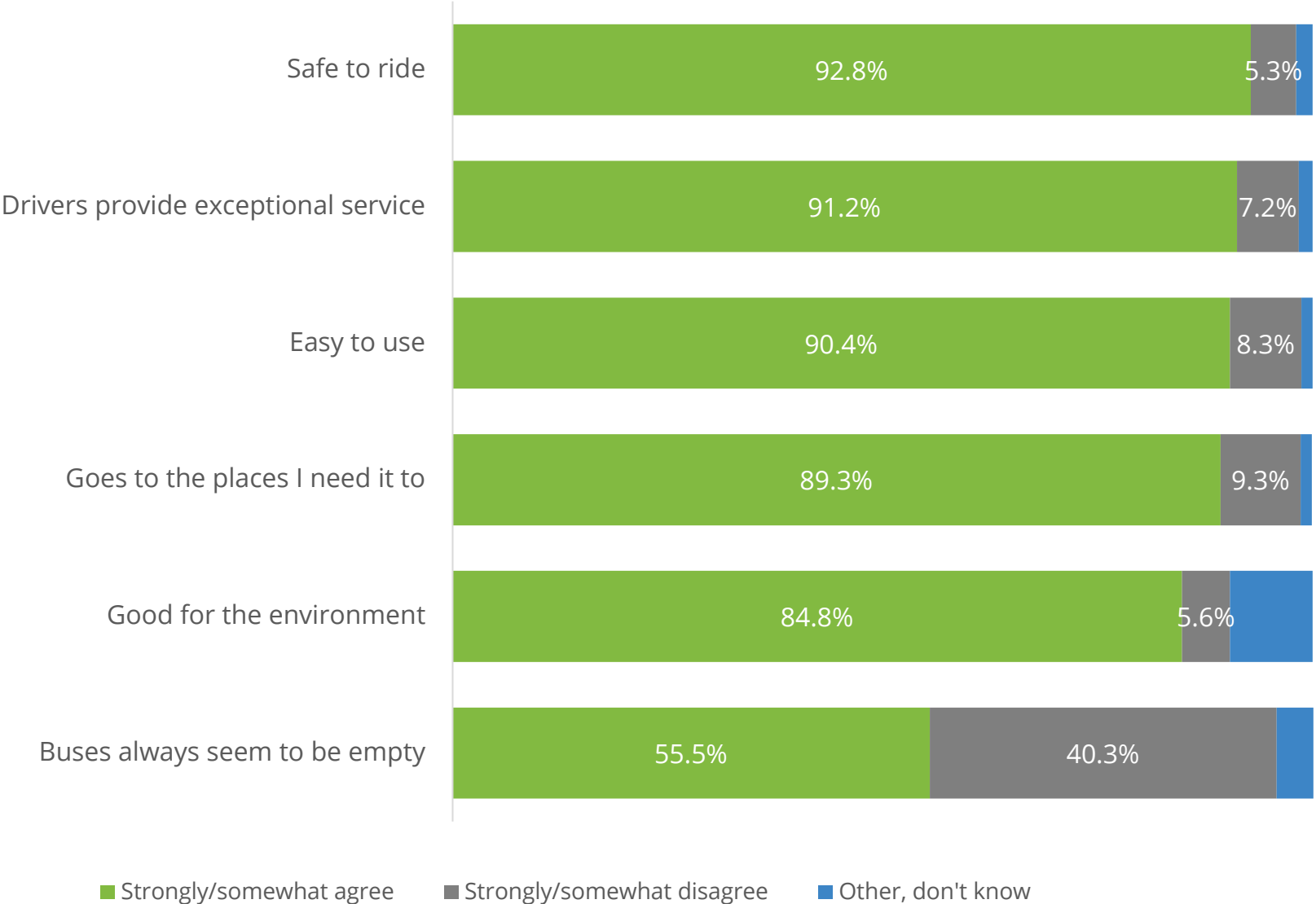




# ARE YOUR RIDES ON CONNECT TRANSIT USUALLY...



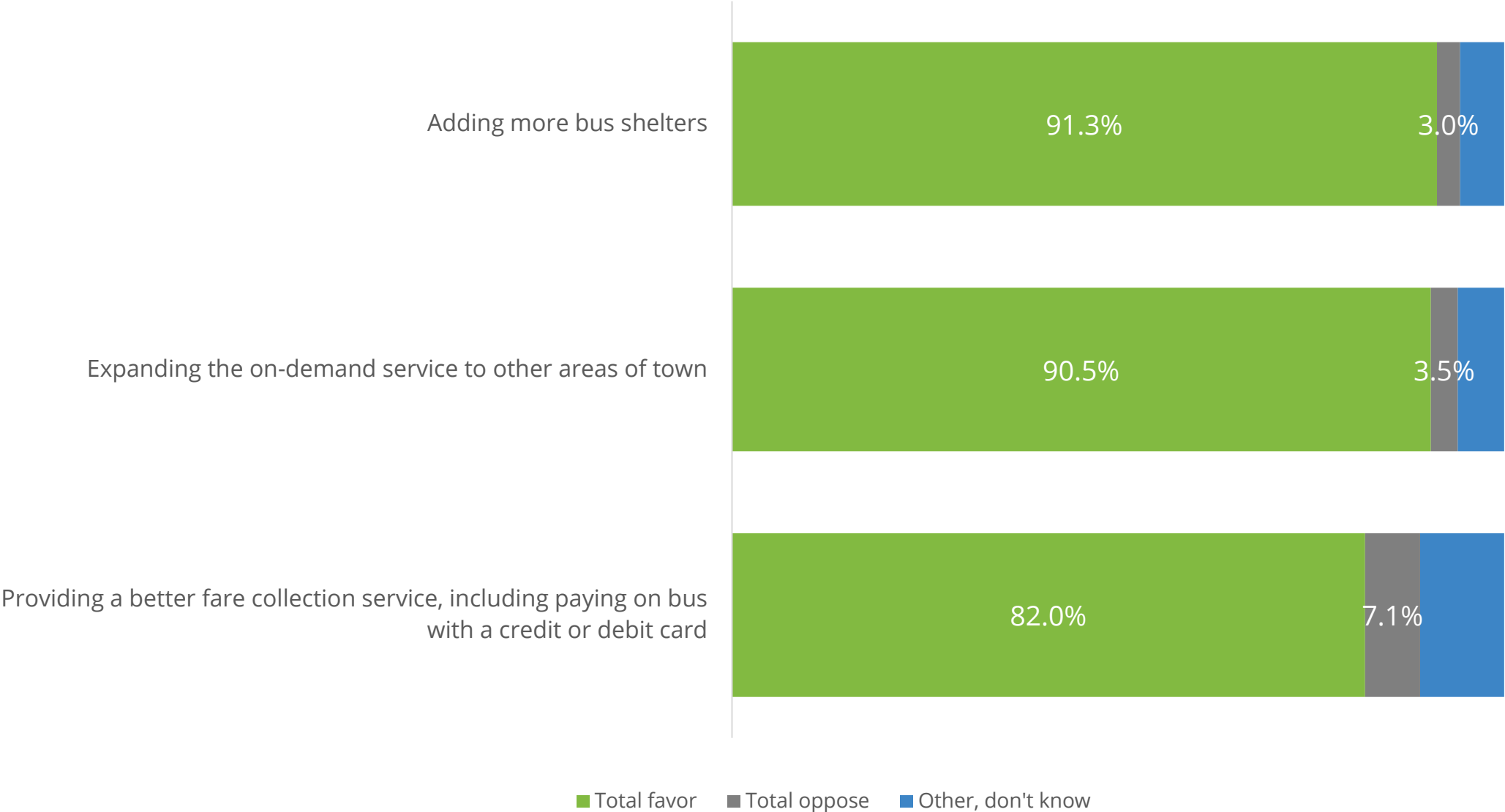
# STATEMENTS ABOUT CONNECT TRANSIT



# STATEMENTS ABOUT CONNECT TRANSIT

<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Total agree</b>	<b>Total disagree</b>
Goes to the places I need it to	46.9%	89.3%	9.3%
Drivers provide exceptional service	57.6%	91.2%	7.2%
Easy to use	60.0%	90.4%	8.3%
Buses always seem to be empty	21.3%	55.5%	40.3%
Good for the environment	56.3%	84.8%	5.6%
Safe to ride	64.5%	92.8%	5.3%

# SUGGESTED CHANGES TO OPERATION



# SUGGESTED CHANGES TO OPERATION

<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly favor</b>	<b>Total favor</b>	<b>Total oppose</b>
Adding more bus shelters	68.1%	91.3%	3.0%
Expanding the on-demand service to other areas of town	67.8%	90.5%	3.5%
Providing a better fare collection service, including paying on bus with a credit or debit card	55.9%	82.0%	7.1%

# RIDER PROFILE

How often do you ride Connect Transit buses?	Daily	51.1%
	Weekly	27.9%
	A couple times a month	16.9%
	Rarely	4.1%

Do you currently have a valid driver's license?	Yes	50.8%
	No	49.2%

On this trip...	I had a car available but chose Connect	16.1%
	A car was available at a less convenient time	6.6%
	I often have a car available but didn't this time	8.9%
	I generally do not have a car available	70.6%
	Other	9.4%

Did the trip involve a transfer?	Yes	33.8%
	No	66.2%

Do you identify as:	Male	35.6%
	Female	63.0%
	Gender non-conforming	1.4%

Do you currently work or attend school at an area college or university?	Yes -- work	24.0%
	Yes -- student	26.5%
	Yes -- both	10.9%
	No	38.7%

Are you...	Employed full time — work at job site	31.4%
	Employed full time — work is mostly virtual	3.1%
	Employed part time — work at job site	18.5%
	Employed part time — work is mostly virtual	3.4%
	Not employed	33.6%
	Retired	10.1%

Which racial/ethnic group do you identify as?	American Indian/Alaska Native	.0%
	Asian	5.4%
	Black or African American	25.4%
	Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin of Any Race	9.6%
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.3%
	White (non-Hispanic)	46.8%
	Two or more races	6.5%
	Prefer not to answer	5.4%
	Other	.8%

# Questions?



**CREATIVE  
ENTOURAGE  
RESEARCH**



# *Reimagine What's Possible*

INSIGHTS. STRATEGY. DESIGN. DIGITAL. ACTIVATION.

dovetail<sup>o</sup>



NOV 28, 2023



# Our Engagement Approach



## OUR REV PROCESS

Our branding process can accomplish all aspects discussed in your project RFP. This process allows for input from key stakeholders, employees and partners to understand their perspectives and build an inclusive brand platform that will stand the test of time.

The following briefly outlines the steps of REV that are recommended for Connect Transit:



# *REV Process, Step 2*



## **Brand Story & Message Development**

- **Brand Positioning**
  - Based on the foundational insights from Discovery, Connect Transit's brand positioning will be developed and will include:
    - Value-oriented positioning statement, competitive point-of-difference.
    - Reasons to believe.
    - Brand benefit ladder, rational and emotional benefits of Connect Transit.
    - Brand personality and tone.
  - Serves as foundation of brand communication strategy, message expression and platform designed to:
    - Inform decision-making regarding community, business and agency partnerships.
    - Improve public perception and educate about transit options in the community.

# *REV Process, Step 3*



## **Message Expression & Platform**

- Develop the Connect Transit story in a way that connects emotionally and communicates authentically

### **Brand Platform Ideation**

- More than a tagline, this creative expression brings to life your brand positioning and attitude in a powerful and authentic way.
- Will tell the story of Connect Transit’s “Why” – the magic behind storytelling.
- Dovetail will bring forward several options for review and consideration.

### **Brand Elevator Pitch**

- Once your brand platform has been created, it will need to be expressed to further tell your story. Your elevator speech will be a succinct document that authentically expresses the company’s strengths and can be used to inspire employees internally and to engage riders, influencers and key stakeholders.


# *REV Process, Step 4*



## **Measurement**

- The initial research phase can create a foundation that can be built upon and measured for years to come.
- As we move through the project and develop our messaging strategy, it will be important to give our messages time to be seen and resonate.
- Depending on the campaign tactics (not within this RFP) we can determine the best timing and methodology to perform follow-up surveys to interpret and evaluate perception changes with desired responses.



A night sky with the Milky Way galaxy and a mountain range with snow-capped peaks. The sky is dark blue and purple, with the Milky Way visible as a bright, hazy band of stars. The mountains are rugged and covered in snow, with some peaks illuminated by a warm, golden light. The overall scene is serene and majestic.

WE LOVE QUESTIONS

# *Discussion*





*Thank You*

*To view our most recent work, please visit [dovetail-stl.com](https://dovetail-stl.com).*

# *REV Process, Step 1 (COMPLETE)*



## **Discovery & Understanding**

- Discovery kick-off meeting.
- Confirm competitive landscape.
- Confirm primary, secondary and tertiary target audiences.
- Identify measurable goals and objectives (short- and long-term).
- Determine Key Performance Indicators that we will measure throughout our process (e.g., brand perception, internal support, enterprise-specific measurements, positive PR, brand story and marketing materials usefulness, etc.).
- Evaluate previous research provided.
- Conduct one-on-one key stakeholder interviews (decision makers, influencers) to provide insight regarding brand equities, barriers, opportunities and perceptions of public transit services in the community. Learning will be foundational to brand positioning.

# *REV Process, Step 1 (COMPLETE)*



## **Discovery & Understanding – Gathering Public Opinion**

- Learn what the community thinks about Connect Transit and the services provided through accurate, reliable and actionable survey results.
- **Input Sessions**
  - We will work with Connect Transit to create a unique discussion guide to use for up to ten different informal focus groups.
    - Groups could include frequent riders, senior citizens, city leadership, employees, etc.
    - Information learned will be used as the basis to generate survey questions.
- **General Public Survey**
  - A 400 random sample telephone survey of entire service area population will be conducted.
  - An opt-in online survey will allow more participation and inform the community that Connect Transit is listening and wants to hear the community's feedback.
- **Rider Survey**
  - A second questionnaire will be developed for an opt-in online survey of riders.



# New Business

○ Fare Discussion - Informational



# Fare Simplification and Modernization

Making Connect Transit Easier to Use.

# Purpose

- ▶ Simplify the boarding process for passengers
- ▶ Reduce the cost of fare collection
- ▶ Improve reliability of our service
- ▶ Incentivize passenger behavior

# Fare Modernization

- ▶ Replace current fare collection system
  - High cost of Maintenance ~ \$80,000 per year
  - High cost of Administration ~ \$10,000 per year
  - Poor reliability
  - Outdated technology - Magnetic Strip
  - Poor mobile ticketing performance

# Fare Modernization

- ▶ Replace with a system that has the following features:
  - Contactless tap card RFID technology
    - Compatible with current ISU, Heartland and Wesleyan Student IDs
  - Open Loop technology
    - Allows the use of regular credit cards, cell phone/wearables with payment app
  - Smaller space requirement on bus
  - Easy to load card, if credit card is not available
    - Retailers, Transit Centers, Online
- ▶ Cash Box will remain for unbanked

# Examples



# Fare Modernization

## ► Budget Implications

- Equipment cost is lower ~ \$1,500 per unit/year
- Equipment Maintenance is lower
- Transaction Cost is similar ~ 1%-4% per transaction
- Exploring sale or remanufacture of existing equipment to offset the cost
- Limited cost of fare media

# Fare Simplification

## Fixed Route Service

	From	To	Difference	Annual Estimate
Regular Cash Fare - Exact Fare Only	\$1.25	\$1.00	(\$0.25)	(\$87,505)
Regular Half-Fare - Exact Fare Only	\$0.60	\$0.50	(\$0.10)	(\$253)
1-day Fare Maximum	\$3.00	\$3.00	-	-
7-day Fare Maximum	\$10.00	\$10.00	-	-
30-day Fare Maximum	\$40.00	\$40.00	-	-
Student Fare (11-17 yo with Connect Transit issued ID)	\$0.90 to \$1.25	\$0.50	(\$0.40) to (\$0.75)	TBD
ADA Eligible Passengers (eligible for Connect Mobility only)	\$0.60	\$0	(\$0.60)	(\$1,520)
Senior Pass	\$0.00	-	-	-
Veteran STAR Pass	\$0.00	-	-	-
Benefit Access Program	\$0.00	-	-	-
Transfers	\$0.00	\$1.00	\$0.50 - \$1.00	\$0 - \$116,554



# Fare Simplification

## Connect Mobility Service

	From	To	Difference	Annual Estimate
Regular Cash Fare	\$1.25	\$1.00	(\$0.25)	Included in above.
30-day Fare Maximum	\$40	\$40	-	-

# Fare Simplification

## Connect FLEX Service

	From	To	Difference	Annual Estimate
Regular Cash Fare	\$0	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$65,000
Regular Half-Fare	\$0	\$0.50	\$0.50	TBD
1-day Fare Maximum	\$0	\$3	\$3	TBD
7-day Fare Maximum	\$0	\$10	\$10	TBD
30-day Fare Maximum	\$0	\$40	\$40	TBD
Student Fare (11-18 yo with Connect Transit issued ID)	\$0	\$0.50	-	-
ADA Eligible Passengers (eligible for Connect Mobility only)	\$1.00	\$0	\$1.00	TBD
Senior Pass	\$0.00	-	-	-
Veteran STAR Pass	\$0.00	-	-	-
Benefit Access Program	\$0.00	-	-	-
Transfers	\$0.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	TBD

# Fare Simplification

## Fixed Route Service

- ▶ **Loss/Gain** (note: does not consider potential increase in ridership)
  - Fixed Route: **-\$89,279** to +\$27,275
  - Connect Mobility: *Included in above*
  - Connect FLEX: +\$65,000
  - Net Change: **-\$24,279** to \$2,997
- ▶ Operations Savings Estimate: \$90,000
- ▶ Total Benefit: \$65,721 to \$92,997

# Fare Comparisons

System	Regular	ADA	Microtransit	Student	Transfers	Exact Fare
<b>Connect Transit Current</b>	<b>\$ 1.25</b>	<b>\$ 1.25</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 1.25</b>	<b>Free</b>	<b>Change card</b>
<b>Connect Transit Potential</b>	<b>\$ 1.00</b>	<b>\$ 1.00</b>	<b>\$ 1.00</b>	<b>\$ 0.50</b>	<b>Pay per ride</b>	<b>Required</b>
Champaign-Urbana	\$ 1.00	\$ 1.00	-	6 rides for \$3	Free	Required
Danville	\$ 1.00	\$ 2.00	-	\$ 0.50	Free	Change card
Decatur	\$ 1.00	\$ 2.00	-	\$ 0.80	Free	Required
Madison County	\$ 1.00	\$ 2.00	-	\$15/month	Paid (\$3)	Required
Peoria	\$ 1.00	\$ 2.00	-	FREE	Pay per ride	Required
Rock Island	\$ 1.00	\$ 2.00	\$ 1.00	FREE	Free	Required
St. Clair County	\$ 1.00	\$ 4.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 0.50	Paid (\$3)	Required
Sangamon County	\$ 1.25	\$ 2.50	-	\$ 0.60	Free	Change card
Rockford	\$ 1.50	\$ 3.00	-	FREE w/ ID; \$0.75 w/out	Free	Required
PACE	\$ 2.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 2.00	\$1.10 w/ ID	With pass only	Required
Chicago Transit Authority	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	-	\$0.75 w/ Student Pass	With pass only	Required

# Other Fare Actions

- ▶ Standardize and Re-brand Universal Access Agreement template.
- ▶ Develop Standard Non-Profit [501(c)(3)] Fare
  - Same program for all eligible 501(c)(3) entities
  - Allow them to invest in programming rather than transportation.

# Timeline Draft

- ▶ **Public Engagement** - December 2023 - February 2024
  - In-person meeting and online comments
  - Proposal to Board after input - February Meeting

# New Business

- General Manager's Annual Pay Increase –  
Roll Call Vote

# ○ Chairman's Report



# General Manager's Report Community

## Outreach

- 10th Grade BACC Career Expo
- Coleen Hoose Trunk or Treat
- Downtown Bloomington Trunk or Treat
- ISU Tailgate
- Chamber of Commerce Job Fair at Heartland CC
- Stuff the Bus at Donny B's
- Tour for Unit 5 Class
- Tour for Professional Engineers Group
- Local Hero Expo at Grossinger Arena
- Stuff the Bus at Keg Grove
- BabyFold Festival of Trees
- November 27 - December 2 - Stuff the Bus Week

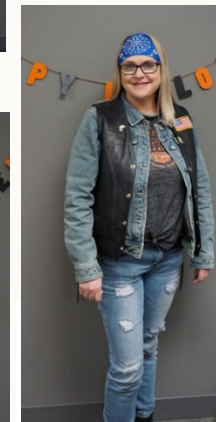




# General Manager's Report Community

## Employee Morale

- Halloween Potluck
- Thanksgiving Potluck





# General Manager's Report

## Professional Development

### APTA EXPO and Conference Recap

○ October 9–11, 2023 – Orlando, Florida; eight Staff and one Board Member attended

○ **Expo**

- **Public Information Displays (PIDS) and Wayfinding** – Our technology in Normal and even our bus stops is outdated. Technology has taken great leaps forward since we installed our PIDS in Uptown. Solutions vary, and most focus on easy-to-read displays using a “paperwhite” technology to reduce glare and clarify the letters and numbers.

We saw several opportunities for better digital signage and communication to passengers all running off one solar panel at the stop. Major stops could potentially have updated route information, real-time bus tracking, and advertising/educational opportunities.

Other wayfinding solutions offer messaging and communication to passengers, providing more accurate and easier to use bus tracking. Our CAD/AVL system is also getting outdated and will likely need to be replaced in the next few years.



# General Manager's Report

## Professional Development

### APTA EXPO and Conference Recap

- **Fare Collection systems** - Most companies provide the same level of functionality, and most can support open loop, RFID read capabilities, QR read capabilities, and an app to manage accounts. The differentiator will be the ability to integrate with other technology on-board the vehicle, the back-end processing and functionality, and the fee structure of the card processing.
- **EV Microtransit Vehicles and features** – Manufacturers are working to retro-fit existing chassis with electric components and batteries, while others are building new vehicles as small EVs. We discovered a vendor that has an electric van very similar to our current FLEX vehicles that can potentially be purchased off a State of Georgia contract which can help expedite the procurement of those vehicles.





# General Manager's Report

## Professional Development

### APTA EXPO and Conference Recap

#### ○ Conference

- **AI is the future** – Not for customer service bots or self-driving vehicles, but for system efficiencies, including scheduling, data entry, alert systems, predictive maintenance and more. Jon and Steve are going through some classes on our learning management system, Udemy, to see what would be beneficial to Connect.
- **Cybersecurity continues to be the primary concern for IT and Procurement** - We heard presentations from multiple agencies who had been infected with ransomware and how they dealt with it and how they prepared to prevent it in the future. We also learned about many system utilities available from CISA (Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency) that can help us establish best practices, evaluate our cybersecurity readiness, and train our users. In addition, agencies must focus on including cybersecurity requirements in future procurements, especially those related to software.

# General Manager's Report

## Professional Development

### APTA EXPO and Conference Recap

- **Keynote Address: AI is Not Your Enemy, Duncan Wardle** – Few staff indicated that the keynote speaker sparked a shift in mindset, introspection and inspiration that encouraged them to view their strategies and plans through a new, more reflective lens. The speaker helped drive home the point that great ideas sometimes come from the least expected places and people. Employee engagement is the key to a successful organization.
- **Telling our story** – We learned about the importance of telling our successes and challenges to our Senators and Representatives (and staff) in DC and in their local offices. They need to hear progress towards projects and the importance of what their financial support does for our services and our community.

We were urged to consider different approaches to encouraging participation from elected officials. Finding out what their passions are and who they enjoy serving and then finding stories within your transit system that can support those passions. We were also encouraged to communicate frequently, at least annually, to demonstrate our needs and show success in the projects our elected officials supported.



# General Manager's Report

## Professional Development

### APTA EXPO and Conference Recap

- **Employee Attraction and Retention** - We learned about the new things transit systems are doing to attract and retain workers, including child care assistance. Several agencies are looking for ways to assist parents who may want to work, but have childcare issues. From providing onsite support to giving stipends, this benefit is on the rise.
- **Diversity, Inclusion and Equity** - Conversations are more on the forefront with employers than before. From all gender restrooms to using preferred pronouns, many employees and/or applicants are being more conscious about the workplace environments they are choosing to work in.
- **Solar Project Support** – We received information about some potential Department of Energy (DOE) grants for solar or charging infrastructure related to grid and charging resiliency.





# General Manager's Report

## Professional Development

### APTA EXPO and Conference Recap

- **Fare Collection Processes** - “Just because your riders are currently using cash does not mean that they will continue to after a new fare collection method is provided. Determine their why. Why do they choose to pay with cash?” This thought resonated with some staff because we so frequently think of ways that we can serve certain demographics/groups because we know their behavior. But we don't always understand WHY they behave that way. If they had a better alternative, they might change their behaviors.
- **Reconsidering Mobility Policy** – It has been over 30 years since the ADA was introduced, however, many systems are still providing the bare minimum required for the passengers who need it. Some policies impact passengers' ability to have the freedom they need and sometimes limit it. Technology has improved as has our understanding of ADA eligibility, and our policies and practices should be reviewed to see if they should be improved as well.



# General Manager's Report Recruiting

## ○ Positions Filled

- Bus Operator (1)
  - Brian Greer
- Dispatcher (1)
  - Ashley Walls
- Service Technician (1)
  - David McKenzie

## ○ Positions Open

- Bus Operator (5)
- Dispatcher (2)
- Maintenance Supervisor (1)
- Mechanic (1)
- Microtransit Operator (1)
- Operations Analyst (1)
- Service Technician (2)



# Agenda

- Trustee Comments
- Executive Session – N/A

# Agenda

- Adjournment

  - Roll Call Vote

- Next Meeting: January 23, 2024

