

**Connect Transit Board of Trustees**  
**October 24, 2023, 4:30 p.m.**  
**351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room**  
**Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 11/28/23 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  
Vice Chair Julie Hile (4:34)  
Secretary Tim McCue  
Trustee Mandava Rao (4:33)  
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

**Trustees Absent:** Trustee Barbara Singer

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

**Staff Present:** David Braun, General Manager  
Brady Lange, Procurement Director  
Janice Crago, Board Clerk  
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director  
Steve Stockton, IT Manager

**Guest(s) Present:** None

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**  
None

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

- a. Approval of Regular Session Minutes for September 26, 2023
- b. Approval of Executive Session Minutes for September 26, 2023
- c. Approval of Financial Information for September 2023
- d. Monthly Statistical Reports for September 2023
- e. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report
- f. Cornerstone – Illinois Weekly Update

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

**Discussion:**

David Braun, General Manager, stated the Financial Information reflects routine expenses, and explained that the \$123,270.82 expense to Cummins Sales and Service was for a mid-life overhaul previously approved by the Board.

Mr. Braun shared the Monthly Statistical Report had been updated and condensed to a one page report, instead of separate reports for each service we offer. He explained the intention is to make it easier to review, compare, and identify trends. Mr. Braun shared the report may still be modified in time, as the need for data arises and based on requests from the Trustees.

Mr. Braun stated that as predicted, Connect Mobility ridership is flattening compared to last year, with last year's ridership at this time being 12% and this year's ridership being 11.5%. Connect Mobility service hours were considerably higher than this time last year, up by 300 hours, but that we only increased 7.79%, which means our efficiency is getting better.

Trustee Buchanan noted that there was a decline in on-time trips and asked what would be causing that? Mr. Braun stated he did not know if it was traffic or something else causing the fluctuation, but that if it continued to trend downward month over month, we would look further into it.

Chairman Whitehouse noted that Fixed Route for September looks consistent year over year.

Mr. Braun noted that the Cardinal Infrastructure report stated some concern over the possible government shutdown, but that the FTA is funded by the Highway Trust Fund so we are not concerned it will impact our funding stream. Additionally, most of our funding comes through the state and he does not anticipate any issues if there is a shutdown.

Mr. Braun stated the Cornerstone report followed the paid leave legislation that was passed in the spring of 2022. This legislation is paid sick leave without notice, meaning the employee can call at any time and say they are sick that day and not be charged with an attendance issue or absence, up to five times a year. We have a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), which supersedes the legislation, but this could come up in the next CBA negotiations. This legislation poses a service issue for transit industries because if drivers decide to call in, we may not be able to provide service that day. The report also highlighted the \$1 billion in federal funding awarded to Illinois for a hydrogen hub. Mr. Braun stated he does not know if we will move towards hydrogen buses when we are able to buy buses again, but that we are looking at it as an alternative fuel for when we have to buy buses again in 2029. The industry is looking at battery electric and hydrogen electric, but have not decided which direction they want to move in.

Chairman Whitehouse stated the new report was easier to read and encouraged Trustees to look it over and share feedback with Mr. Braun either now or at a later date.

**Rollcall Vote:**

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Secretary McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### a. Attendance by Other means for Executive Session Discussion – Informational

#### **Discussion:**

Chairman Whitehouse stated we have two signed but conflicting policies regarding attendance by other means for closed meetings, one stating we allow virtual attendance and one stating we do not. Chairman Whithouse stated we need further clarification on this and tonight we will discuss it and come back in November to vote on the policy.

Mr. Braun stated Connect Transit Administration has two sets of signed and notarized By-Laws dated May 2015 and September 2015. The May 2015 By-Laws indicate that trustees cannot attend a closed meeting by other means. In our meeting RSVP request to trustees, we have included the following language:

‘Other means’ is by video or audio conference. A Trustee(s) may not attend a closed meeting by other means. If a Trustee wishes to attend a meeting by other means, the Trustee must notify the recording secretary or designee of the Board before the meeting unless advance notice is impractical. A majority of the Board of Trustees may allow a member to attend a meeting by other means only in accordance with and to the extent allowed by rules adopted by the Board of Trustees.

A question about this clause was raised when a Trustee attended a closed meeting by other means earlier this year. When Administration researched the origin of the language, we found another set of by-laws dated September 2015 that did not have this language included.

Each of the By-Laws indicate that it was “approved unanimously by the Trustees at a meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> Day of May 2015 and are still in full force and effect.”

We also researched notes and minutes but could not find a discussion of this issue. Given the difference between By-Laws, the concern raised, and the inconsistent information provided to the Board, Administration would like to get clarity as to how to proceed.

For reference, the Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA) offers the following:

“Except as otherwise provided in this Act, a quorum of members of a public body... must be physically present at the location of a closed meeting. Other members who are not physically present at a closed meeting of such a public body may participate in the meeting by means of a video or audio conference...”

The OMA defines a “meeting” as “any gathering, whether in person or by video or audio conference, telephone call, electronic means (such as, without limitation, electronic mail, electronic chat, and instant messaging), or other means of contemporaneous interactive communication, of a majority of a quorum of the members of a public body held for the purpose of discussing public business...”

A closed meeting is allowed for specific purposes, including:

- Employment Matters
- Real Estate Matters

- Sale or Purchase of Securities
- Security Matters
- Litigation or Claims
- Informants
- Professional Ethics
- Peer Review
- Auditing Matters
- Closed Meeting Minutes
- A few others that don't pertain to the business of this Board.

Closed meetings are allowed because these are sensitive topics that impact the privacy and security of people or the agency. The question of whether to allow attendance by other means directly concerns whether the location of the "other means" is private and secure, and not open to others listening in and hearing the sensitive business of the Board.

Chairman Whitehouse stated our current policy for attendance by other means allows for work related, illness, accident, death, all in our by-laws and OMA statutes. He stated that during COVID the Governor gave an Executive Order that everyone could hold virtual meetings, and once that was over we went back to our original policy and asked others for their thoughts on the Executive Sessions.

Trustee Buchanan stated she was not sure of her stance on it at this time but wanted to know where our local municipalities, City Councils and counties stand on this. City Manager Pam Reece stated that she was not sure if the councils adopted an actual policy, but their practice is that you must be physically present for a closed session.

Trustee Buchanan stated she would like to know what the county and both municipalities do for their closed meetings since we have such strong ties with them.

Trustee McCue stated that not because of anyone on this Board but thinking of the long term and bigger picture, he is hesitant to allow virtual attendance for closed sessions because we do not know who else might be in the room with the Trustee.

Trustee Foster shared that when we revisit the wording of the policy, we should reconsider the reasons we allow attendance by other means.

Vice Chair Hile agreed with Trustee Buchanan that we should find out what the municipalities do. Mr. Braun stated he would find out and let everyone know before the next Board meeting.

Chairman Whitehouse stated we would find out the necessary information, share it with everyone before the next meeting and revisit it at our November meeting.

Trustee Buchanan asked if our legal counsel had looked into this to find out if there were any legal requirements. Janice Crago, Board Clerk, stated Mr. Mahrt had looked into it and stated it was at the Board's discretion.

- b. APTA Transit Board Member Seminar Recap – Informational

## **Discussion:**

Vice Chair Hile thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend the conference in July and encouraged Trustees to attend the next conference as their schedules allow. Vice Chair Hile then shared an onscreen presentation available in the General Manager's Presentation on the Connect Transit website.

## Highlights:

### **Being a Powerful Advocate: Telling Transit Success Stories**

#### **National Goals**

- Strengthen existing congressional support
- Neutralize opposition to federal transit funding
- Broaden our voice by leveraging traditional and non-traditional allies

#### **Local Engagement: Cindy Chavez, Santa Clara County**

- “Our riders tell the story better than we do.” – Boost their authentic stories, use influencers.
- “We need people to fall in love with transit every day.”
  - Green, good for economy, get people where they want to be.
  - Reach deep, be urgent, be bold.

#### **How do we reach naysayers?**

- Backbone lines with higher frequency to get customer satisfaction with service provision up.
- Board member talking points *with assignments on who we will talk to.*

#### **The Strategy**

- Focus our outreach on key stakeholders
- Leverage the voices of those who benefit
- Build and leverage enthusiasm of APTA members
- Create resources for elected officials that show local impact

#### **APTA Resources**

- Social Media toolkits  
*#InvestInPublicTransportation*
- Key messages and talking points
- Campaign landing page with APTA resources
- Advocacy leave behinds

#### **The Public and Workforce Safety Challenge**

Julie Hile, Vice Chair, Board of Trustees, Connect Transit

- Public safety is top of mind for transit agencies. Increased numbers of unhoused patrons and a perceived increase in crime can make employees and passengers feel unsafe. Speakers described multi-faceted efforts their transit agencies are taking on policing, community involvement, and a focus on customer service.

Jeffrey Travillion, Chair, Board of Directors, CAPMET, Austin, TX

Gardner C. Tabon, CSE, EVP, Systemwide Accessibility & Chief Safety Officer, CAPMET, Austin, TX

- CAPMET: “Multi-pronged teams—Public Safety Ambassador, Community Intervention Specialist, Transit Police—changing how we treat calls and promote customer and staff safety.”  
“Responding to incidents that are disruptive, but non-violent.”

Paul C. Smedberg, Chair, Board of Directors, WMATA, Washington, DC

- WMATA: “Working Differently: Compassion, Cameras, Cops.”

#### **Transit, Equity, and Justice**

Rita Scott, moderator, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)  
Minneapolis Metropolitan Council, Charlie Selle, Sam O'Connell

- “We have moved past equity to justice.” “Adjusted to talking/feeling, being with it, being vulnerable.”
- Broad based response to George Floyd murder: MN Governor Tim Walz expanded Met Council authority and resources. Signed a ¼-cent transportation bill
  - 2-area “Fare Elimination” program.
  - 200 families moved into Section 8 housing.
  - Bus stops near murder site became public space for clothing exchange.
  - Murder location will never be driven over again. Considered sacred.
  - Stopped transit services and started listening: “We are here with you.”
  - Guides/Ambassadors who act as racial justice docents.

**APTA TBM Connect Seminar Opportunities**

- Build our team through a well-structured national program
- Learn and connect to the history and purpose of public transit
- Benchmark with other systems on easy and hard issues
- Compare our priorities and projects to what other systems are working on
- Network with other TBMs, find colleagues and mentors
- Tell Connect’s story, grow our regional and national influence
- Access other APTA resources

Mr. Braun stated the conference is a unique experience for Board members because it offers a higher level of thinking and is focused on Board members.

Vice Chair Hile stated that next year’s seminar will be in San Jose, California, which is an area that has nine systems.

Trustee Buchanan thanked Vice Chair Hile for her presentation and said her prior experience at conferences has been enriching because it offers the opportunity to speak with other Board members.

Chairman Whitehouse shared he appreciates the time each Trustee gives as a volunteer on this Board and if they can fit this into their schedule, we have funds available to pay for Trustees to attend the conference.

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT:**

Chairman Whitehouse shared he attended the awards banquet we held for our employees and that he appreciated Trustee Rao and Trustee Foster attending as well. He visited with the employees, thanked them for their work at Connect Transit and encouraged Trustees to attend next year’s banquet.

Trustee Foster stated she was impressed to see how long drivers had been with the company and how long some had gone without any accidents. She expressed her appreciation to the staff who put the event together and looks forward to the next one.

Trustee Rao shared it was nice to visit with the families, and that he was surprised to see one driver had been 25 years without an accident.

**GENERAL MANAGER’S REPORT:**

Mr. Braun shared his monthly General Manager report.

**Morale:**

- Employee Awards Banquet
  - Years of Service
  - Attendance
  - Safety
  - Vendor-provided raffle
  - Dinner
  - Family invited

**Community:**

**Outreach**

- Heartland Community College Social Services Fair
- Early Stuff the Bus
- Streetscapes Open House
- Brightpoint Fall Safety Event
- Eastland Suites & Tentac Trunk or Treat
- Bloomington Streetscape Steering Committee
- Downtown Bloomington Streetscapes Public Mtg.
- Presentation to Association of Professional Energy Consultants
- McLean County Behavioral Health Forum

**Professional Development:**

- Training Classes, New Bus Operators:
  - One training class for new Bus Operators is currently underway. CDL testing will be completed before the end of the month.
- Justin Allen completed the Transportation Safety Institute Course for Advanced Problems in Bus Collision Investigation in September.
  - Justin is one class away from completing the FTA TSSP (Transportation Safety and Security Program) certification. His final class will be in February 2024.
- Dave White provided job shadowing/education for the new Safety and Training Director from CityLink in Peoria. Various topics were covered, and Dave provided several documents and forms to assist this colleague with his new duties.
  - He was very impressed with the Connecteam application that we are using on a daily basis. It was noted that the application gives us the ability to communicate quickly, create/store forms to replace paper documents, and has helped us be more efficient.

**Recruiting:**

- **Positions Filled**
  - Bus Operator (3)
    - Phillip Ellis
    - Tom O'Shea
    - Michael Gravitt
  - Service Technician (1)
    - Austin Denham
  - Dispatcher (1)

- Ashley Walls
- **Positions Open**
  - Bus Operator (5)
  - Dispatcher (2)
  - Mechanic (1)
  - Microtransit Operator (1)
  - Service Technician (1)
- **Offers Extended and Accepted**
  - n/a

Mr. Braun stated the 2024 meeting calendar was given to each Trustee and noted we would need to discuss changing the November 2024 meeting date due to it falling the same week of Thanksgiving.

**TRUSTEE COMMENTS:**

Chairman Whitehouse thanked Connect Transit for their support of the St. Jude event over the weekend. The event raised \$286,000.00.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

- a. (ILCS 120/2(c)(1) – Personnel Matters

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to adjourn Regular Session and move into an Executive Session.**

Secretary McCue motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

**Rollcall vote:**

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

**Motion carried, and the Board of Trustees adjourned Regular Session and moved into Executive Session at 5:23 p.m.**

**REGULAR SESSION RE-OPENED:**

Chairman Whitehouse called Regular Session back to order at 7:12 p.m. and Board Clerk, Janice Crago took attendance via roll call.

**Trustees Present:**

Trustee Judy Buchanan  
 Trustee Linda Foster  
 Vice Chair Julie Hile  
 Secretary McCue  
 Trustee Mandava Rao  
 Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

**Trustees Absent:**

Trustee Barbara Singer

**City Managers Present:**

City Manager Pam Reece

**Staff Present:**

David Braun, General Manager  
 Janice Crago, Board Clerk



**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Secretary McCue.

Meeting adjourned by consensus at 7:13 p.m.

  
Trustee Tim McCue, Board Secretary

  
Janice Crago, Board Clerk

[SEAL]

