



Connect Transit

AGENDA

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

February 26, 2013

4:30 PM

Board Room
Connect Transit Facility
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL

"We are the best choice for moving people in our community"

- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Public Comments
- D. Approval of Minutes of Previous Special Meeting, January 12, 2013 (Page 1) and Previous Regular Meeting, January 22, 2013 (Page 9)
- E. Items Removed From Consent Agenda
- F. Consent Agenda
 - a. Review and approve February Disbursements (Page 25)
 - b. Review and receive January Monthly Ridership Report (Page 29)
- G. Old Business
- H. New Business
 - a. Review and Approve Federal Transit Administration ECHO System Access Authorizations (Page 31)
 - b. Review and Approve Joining the "Getting America to Work" Transit Coalition (Page 33)

- I. General Manager's Report
 - a. Listening Session Update
 - b. IDOT Capital Grant Status
 - c. Labor Contract Status

- J. Correspondence and Media (Page 37)

- K. Trustee Comments

- L. Request for Executive Session to Discuss Personnel Matters

- M. Adjournment

CONNECT TRANSIT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
January 12, 2013

The special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held at the Advocate BroMenn Medical Center, Tower Building, Conference Room 20, 1304 Franklin Avenue, Normal, Illinois on January 12, 2013 at 9:30 a.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Judy Buchanan, Chairman
John Thomas, Vice Chairman
John Bowman, Secretary
Mike McCurdy
Mary Caisley
Ryan Whitehouse
Bill Wilson

TRUSTEES ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Andrew Johnson, General Manager

CITY MANAGERS: Mark Peterson, Town of Normal

OTHERS PRESENT: David Selzer

Ms. Judy Buchanan, Chairman, resumed the meeting and asked the Trustees to look at the list of General Manager Goals which was passed out to everyone. This list was the result of the General Manager's review from the September Board meeting. Chairman Buchanan read down the list which included: transition into the proposed route restructuring, investment, technology, staff development, funding, planning, development of Board Manual (Chairman Buchanan may take on this task herself), Study Group, growing the system, reigning in labor costs, communication (internal & external), increasing visibility & community outreach, budget amendments (reducing & curtailing), and universal access. There may be more items the Trustees wish to put on the list as priorities.

Mr. John Bowman inquired if the Trustees are going to revise the mission statement. Chairman Buchanan responded yes, but not at this particular meeting. Perhaps a separate group will work on that and bring it back to the rest of the Board at a later date. Mr. Bowman continued an effective mission statement can truly guide much of what an organization does and frankly the mission statement we have now is more of a pretentious assertion than a mission statement.

Ms. Mary Caisley suggested that the group working on the new mission statement be given the supporting documents that went with the original statement. Mr. Andrew Johnson, General Manager, stated some of the staff was not completely on board with the strategic planning process at that time and his files may not be complete. If anyone has the complete copy of the records from that process he would appreciate seeing them. Mr. Johnson continued the strategic planning should be done with a facilitator and will take longer than a 2 hour meeting, possibly several days.

Mr. Mark Peterson, Town of Normal, thinks this is a good list of goals and suggested plagiarizing when attempting to write a Board Manual, copy from other manuals. Don't try to reinvent the wheel. The goal that states "continue to grow the system" would be better stated as "continue to improve system service quality". Mr. Johnson added the words effectiveness and efficiency are two words used often in Transit which might work better with this item description. Mr. Peterson continued talking about the goal to continue to work closer with city and community planners to ensure transit-friendly development and corporate outreach, which might include universal access, stating these are important issues.

Mr. David Selzer added his priority would be the advocacy item, which should be a separate item.

Ms. Caisley would like to add the word "Board" to the item "communication internal & external". There was not Board meeting in December and Ms. Caisley thought it would have been beneficial to have had some communication and indication of what was going on with Transit from the General Manager during that time.

Mr. Mike McCurdy asked if the technology item would include revising the Transit web site. Mr. McCurdy added the current web site is awful and almost negligent because the maps of the routes aren't even on the web site. Mr. Johnson responded he was of the understanding the maps were on the web site and if that is not the case he will be sure someone gets them on the site soon. Mr. Peterson asked if someone was on staff who could work on the website. Mr. McCurdy stated a content management system should be established for monitoring and maintaining the web site. Perhaps it would be best to have a group of several people who can access, help maintain, and update the site, working on different sections, so one person is not saddled with the whole responsibility. Mr. Johnson stated we have gotten some quotes and done some ground work to get a new web site soon, hopefully by this summer. Mr. Johnson continued the bigger problem facing the Board will be once it is up and running how do we manage the content and maintain the site? It takes time and personnel and you have to have the right group of people who know what they are doing if you are spreading it out amongst a group in order to manage it, especially on the social media side. If you mismanage the social media side, it is almost worse than not having any social media at all. It will take some planning and time. Mr. McCurdy stated that could all fall under a marketing director position. Mr. Johnson added he was not going to ask for additional staff, but if

you look at systems that are doing it well, like Champaign-Urbana, they have three people who are working on the web site almost exclusively. It takes a great deal of time, but it pays off with big benefits. Mr. John Thomas stated one major person could be in charge of the site with several others trained to step in as needed. Mr. Johnson continued stating with all the technology flooding into this system over the last year, we will need some additional tech support to help us maintain everything.

Mr. Bowman commented he would really like to see some mechanism set in place that would report to the Board just how well the new technology is functioning. The Trustees have approved a great deal of spending for technology over the past year and some of it is not working at all, for example the automated voice announcing on the buses that was supposed to be installed in September is still not working. Mr. McCurdy stated he just heard from a rider on the Yellow "G" that it was working great and they were happy to hear it. Mr. Johnson added it is working, but not perfectly, due to some geo-fencing issues that need to be worked out. It is getting better, but it has taken much longer than we initially thought it would take to get all the errors worked out. Mr. Thomas asked if that problem is route based. Does one route work and another route not? Or is it a problem on every route? Mr. Bowman stated he has not been on a bus yet where it has been working. It appeared only to work on about every fifth stop and it was so garbled that it was not understandable. Mr. Johnson stated perhaps not all the drivers are turning the system on due to some of these issues. Mr. Johnson continued that staff is riding various buses and routes to see if the system is working and what problems there are with it. Mr. Bowman restated if the Trustees are approving all these expenditures they need to get reports on how well it is working, some feedback mechanism is needed.

Mr. Peterson inquired if "secret shoppers or riders" are ever used to report back to management on how well the system is running. Mr. McCurdy rides constantly and he is certain not all the drivers know he is a Trustee. Mr. McCurdy stated he sits back and quietly observes and reports to Mr. Johnson any concerns he witnesses. Chairman Buchanan added that if any Trustee observes any problems or spectacular occurrences she hopes that information would be emailed or relayed somehow to Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson stated we are now in a position with our safety and training and operations departments to begin sending out some "secret riders", whereas six months ago that was not possible. All the data collecting is only as good as what you end up doing with it. We are slowly getting to the point where we are going to be able to do something and apply all the information we are gathering.

Chairman Buchanan stated the above mentioned items are the priorities and we are adding advocacy to the list. Chairman Buchanan asked the Trustees if those are indeed the items we wish our General Manager to direct his attention first. Some of the items are in the works and some will just happen anyway. Whether we make it a priority or not, union negotiations will happen. Mr. Peterson added having it on the list acknowledges it is happening and is a time and manpower consuming issue. Mr. Bill Wilson commented all the priorities are excellent and do not necessarily need to be

prioritized. Mr. Ryan Whitehouse stated he is confident Mr. Johnson will or already has prioritized these items.

Mr. Bowman commented for the overall health of the system, it would be helpful if the Trustees had an updated work flow chart of all the reporting relationships within the system and what the main responsibilities and duties are for each position. We know Mr. Johnson is the General Manager, but beyond that it would be helpful to know who has what responsibility for different areas and issues. Mr. Bowman stated it would help him to understand how the system is functioning. We can then better evaluate the effectiveness of the function and where accountability would lie if there is an issue or problem. Mr. Whitehouse agreed and added the Chamber of Commerce has a flow chart and it is very helpful. The chart lists what is the hierarchy, who reports to whom, and what are the responsibilities. Mr. McCurdy stated that if he has an issue or question he just goes to Mr. Johnson. Mr. Bowman stated the federal regulators that we are going to be reporting to regularly are going to require this chart of us. Mr. Johnson agrees that it is good for the Trustees to know what the primary responsibilities and duties are of the departments. Mr. Johnson stated we are required to have a comprehensive organizational work flow chart and he will be glad to add an explanation of responsibilities and essential duties of each department to the chart for the Trustees. Mr. Peterson agrees with Mr. Bowman that we should know how the system works and agrees with Mr. McCurdy that if we have a problem or issue, we should go directly to Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson stated many of the items on the list of goals will be done regardless. The other items are all good and are workable and realistic. Hopefully, the communication will be such throughout the year that none of these items mentioned will come as a year-end surprise. Mr. Johnson stated the list looks fine and definitely obtainable. Mr. Johnson commented all of the items are realistic, although subject to some interpretation. Mr. Johnson believes the Trustees have not over estimated or underestimated that the system is capable of achieving with these goals.

Mr. Peterson acknowledged the labor relations item will take a considerable amount of time this year and the Board needs to realize that fact. Mr. Peterson continued some of the goals are general and not very specific, but are important enough that they need to remain on the list. Perhaps over time more specific issues will arise, but for now this is a good list.

Mr. Wilson inquired if we are looking for direction on the route restructuring. Mr. Johnson stated that is already moving right along, although he would be very hesitant to put a specific date deadline on it. The goal is to have the route restructuring in place by the time the universities begin fall semester. Mr. Johnson suggested if the Trustees wanted to add an item in the goals referring to "continue working towards accomplishing the timeline for the route restructuring" that would be fine. The route restructuring is one of the most important things we are working on and probably one of the most time consuming items. Chairman Buchanan mentioned the listening sessions and asked

how the planning is coming along. Mr. Johnson responded staff is working on finding locations for the sessions. Mr. Wilson stated he realizes a great deal of energy is behind it and he just doesn't want the route restructuring to fall by the wayside.

Mr. Peterson asked if there were any other items or initiatives he is working on that need to be included in the list. Mr. Johnson stated he is currently working with a national organization sitting on the committee for the Reauthorization of Transportation Bill Task Force representing our system. Mr. Johnson is one of five members nationally on the committee representing small operators. It is not taking up the majority of time, but it is an important item with regards to what he is doing. Mr. Johnson suggested that could be on the list.

Mr. McCurdy inquired if the universal access item should be made more specific stating maintaining and further developing the agreements we already have and efforts to secure new universal access agreements. Mr. Johnson responded we do wish to get more access agreements. We have received express interests from other companies and we are still pursuing Illinois Wesleyan University. Mr. Johnson stated we definitely want to expand our universal access partners.

Mr. Johnson stated a big part of what we are doing now is working on getting new rolling stock and fleet vehicles into the system. We are busy seeking the financing for that project. Currently, the State will cover 75% of the cost on those new buses. We are in the first step requesting money from the State. Mr. Johnson commented we are in a very good position for the funding and are leveraging federal dollars against it. In the instructions it states doing so would give priority to an application. We are in a good position and have been talking with our elected officials at the State level to be sure they are ready to submit a letter stating their opinions when the time comes for that assistance.

Ms. Caisley asked about our quarterly payments from IDOT. Mr. Johnson replied we are two quarters behind, which is pretty typical for the State. Mr. Johnson stated it is a testament to the conservative nature of this organization that we have reserve funds to take care of this situation and get us through. Mr. Johnson continued staff has been working through the State Association and also individually keeping in touch with our administrative contacts at IDOT and FTA and making sure they are aware of what is happening with this process.

Chairman Buchanan asked Mr. Johnson to make a summary of the meeting and list of goals so it can be put in the next Board Packet.

Chairman Buchanan inquired of Mr. Johnson how the extra things are handled at other transits comparable to us with a similar size Board. Perhaps breaking up and organizing into committees would help accomplish more. This Board may try to move in that direction and in the meantime, Chairman Buchanan may ask individuals to assist and provide direction with several tasks such as the Board Manual. Formal committees

may be the direction we need to go in order to tackle some of these other issues. Committees can come forth with recommendations and may allow the Board to cover more territory and not have such lengthy Board meetings.

Mr. Bowman inquired if the seven recommended goals, with the addition of advocacy, are the priorities the Board and Mr. Johnson are to focus on and put the bulk of attention on. Mr. Bowman inquired if there are measurable deliverables that can be tied to these goals that we can use to assess the progress and performance, because these are rather broad and ambiguous items.

Mr. Whitehouse mentioned if the Board can get together for a strategic plan then the Trustees would determine the objectives and tactics on how to meet each goal. Chairman Buchanan believes these goals are more operational and would not be part of the strategic plan. Mr. McCurdy agreed they would be outside of the strategic plan, as they are more immediate. Mr. Whitehouse stated he was thinking advocacy would be in the strategic plan. Other Trustees agreed some of the goals would be both immediate and on-going for the strategic plan.

Mr. Thomas added a strategic plan is organizing planning for the next five years. These goals are more specific to this year. Mr. McCurdy agreed with Mr. Thomas that these are broad priorities and perhaps having some sub goals under them might be a good idea. For instance under universal access agreements, have increase revenue to existing contracts, bring in three more corporation contracts, make five more contacts, and get Illinois Wesleyan University on board. Mr. McCurdy continued that for advocacy we could list all the legislators and try to get them all here for a bus ride. This way there are some measurable marks in the goals.

Mr. Bowman continued it is important to have some things to look to otherwise it becomes very subjective. Mr. Peterson stated some of them are very straight forward for example the labor negotiations and Study Group. The other items perhaps we should add a few bullet points below the goal to indicate measurable items. The Trustees decided they would like Mr. Johnson to add some measurable indicators, which are steps in accomplishing the goal, below the goal item.

Mr. McCurdy asked what the difference is between outreach and advocacy. Mr. Whitehouse is referring to political advocacy. Mr. Whitehouse stated this should be in the strategic plan with multiple tactics on how the goal is going to be accomplished. Mr. Johnson stated political advocacy is more aggressive. The outreach is referring to community outreach, such as participation in a community activity. Anything to get the public involved and interested in Transit. Mr. McCurdy stated we need to distinguish the two into political advocacy and community outreach.

Ms. Caisley suggests we need to think about investigating having the Transit pursue servicing outside the corporate city limits in future years. This needs to be investigated.

Adjournment

Chairman Buchanan thanked everyone for coming and giving up their Saturday morning. Chairman Buchanan stated this has been a very productive and valuable meeting and suggested the Trustees may wish to schedule another special meeting to continue the discussion and discuss similar new topics. Mr. McCurdy suggested the Board not let too much time go by before scheduling another special meeting so we keep the topics fresh.

On a motion by Mr. Thomas, and a second by Mr. McCurdy, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

John M. Bowman, Secretary

CONNECT TRANSIT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
January 22, 2013

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held at the Connect Transit, Board Room #135, 351 Wylie Drive, Normal, Illinois on January 22, 2013 at 4:30 p.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Judy Buchanan, Chairman
John Thomas, Vice Chairman
John Bowman, Secretary
Mike McCurdy
Mary Caisley
Ryan Whitehouse
Bill Wilson

TRUSTEES ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Andrew Johnson, General Manager
Roy Rickert, Operations Director
Isaac Thorne, Procurement Director
Michelle Ferguson, Human Resources Director
Carl Rokos, Maintenance Director
Trish Tilton, Administrative Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT: Jennifer Sicks, McLean County Regional Planning
David Calhoun, ATU Local 752
Brian Enata, ATU Local 752
Bonnie Johnson
Rita Davitt
Chelsea Davitt
Charles Smith
Cary Supalu

Call to Order

Chairman Judy Buchanan called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and roll call was taken. Chairman Buchanan welcomed everyone and invited anyone wishing to make public comment to step forward to speak.

Public Comment

Chelsea Davitt introduced herself and stated she was a student at Illinois Wesleyan University where she has recently finished a class on geographic information systems. Geographic information system is software used for environmental studies and city planning. Ms. Davitt explained she wrote a paper using the software to research the current route system compared to the proposed route changes. Ms. Davitt did an analysis comparing the routes and distances people would have to walk, the population being served, and the median household income of the riders. Ms. Davitt explained currently 80.1% of the population is being served with the present routes and 68.9% of the population would be served with the proposed route restructuring. That is a difference of 11.2% riders. According to the American Public Transportation Association survey, the largest income group riding the bus makes between \$15,000 and \$49,999 and the middle class (\$50,000-\$99,999 median household income) make up 24.8% of the bus ridership. The proposed bus routes have longer distances to walk for this middle class rider. If these riders are not willing or able to walk the longer distance to get to the bus, that would cut out one fourth of all bus riders in Bloomington-Normal. Ms. Davitt also stated safety for the riders is a big concern noting that many of the new bus routes do not have any streetlights or sidewalks. The new routes would also have an increase of active railroad track crossings creating delays and safety issues. Ms. Davitt stated she would be happy to answer any questions or make any explanations.

Chairman Buchanan thanked Ms. Davitt for her report and asked if copies will be available for Trustee review. Mr. Andrew Johnson, General Manager, responded he was sent a digital version of Ms. Davitt's paper and he will be happy to forward it to the Trustees once he has time to review it. Mr. Johnson suggested the Board discuss the paper after everyone has had a chance to read it.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Buchanan stated the Board did not have a meeting in December; therefore the minutes to be approved are from the November 27, 2012 meeting.

On a motion by Ms. Mary Caisley, and a second by Mr. Bill Wilson, the minutes for the November 27, 2012 meeting were approved as presented.

Mr. Mike McCurdy mentioned the order of the meeting changed to accommodate the auditors; however the minutes followed the order of the agenda. Ms. Trish Tilton, Administrative Assistant, replied the change in the order of the meeting was mentioned in the section covering the Audit Report and the minutes did follow the order of the agenda.

Items Removed From Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda

On a motion by Mr. McCurdy, and a second by Mr. John Bowman, the Trustees voted to approve the Consent Agenda as presented including the following items:

- 1. Review and Approve December and January Disbursements**
- 2. Review and Approve November and December Monthly and Year-to-Date Financial Statements**
- 3. Review and Receive November and December Capital and Self-Insurance Reserve Fund Balances**
- 4. Review and Receive November and December Monthly Ridership Report and Executive Summary**

Consent Agenda Discussion

Mr. McCurdy had questions on the multiple repairs for the fleet. Mr. Johnson responded the majority of the repairs are for engines and transmissions on the 2004 and 2005 Gillig 30' coaches. No mid-life overhauls were done on these buses. We are working with the Federal Transit Administration to get the State of Good Repair Grant in place to help pay for the engine overhauls. The grant should pay for a number of those capital expenses. In the meantime, as buses go down and we need to get them fixed right away, the money is coming out of the operating budget. We are watching that very closely. It may be necessary to do a budget amendment. Reviewing the December financial statements through the mid-point of our fiscal year we are still under budget on most every line item. We will be assessing this closely to determine if a budget amendment is necessary. Mr. Johnson added Mr. Carl Rokos, Maintenance Director, has advised him we will be losing a bus every other month due to these extensive repairs. That is what has been happening. Our fleet consists of 29 buses and 20 of those are the 2004 and 2005 Gilligs having the engine and transmission problems. Mr. Johnson continued the buses are maintained well and are safe, but the engines and transmissions last only so long. Going forward we will perform mid-life overhauls on all our buses.

Chairman Buchanan asked about the status of the used California buses. Mr. Johnson stated he just received the contract for that purchase from San Mateo, California today. Once the contract is reviewed it will be signed and returned to them and we can get a trucking company ready to start taking those buses off site and back to our garage. By spring they should be running and taking the strain off our existing fleet.

Mr. McCurdy had a question about the Heart Technologies computer and server fee in the disbursement list. Is there an ongoing problem or is this our monthly fee? Mr. Johnson responded Heart is our IT provider and that is our monthly fee. Heart provides

our server and manages our technology, internet, and any problems. Mr. Johnson continued we are taking a look at our IT relationship. With all the new technology we are adding lately it has become more complex. We are assessing our needs and where we need to go from here.

Mr. Bowman had a question about the disbursements for Express Employment Professionals related to the Dispatch area. Mr. Bowman asked if we are fully staffed in Dispatch now. Mr. Johnson responded that disbursement item is not for Dispatch Replacements. What we did with those positions was to run a pilot program for customer service representatives which would answer phones, take paratransit reservations, and get the dispatchers off the phones so they can pay attention to what is going on out in the street with our GPS system. They are not replacing dispatch, rather expanding the scope of the transportation department. We are coming to the end of that pilot project and we will determine whether we will bring any customer service people on board permanently. The temporary employees can apply for the positions should we decide that is the direction we need to go.

Old Business

1. Review and Approve Tire Lease RFP #12-05

Mr. Johnson stated many transits are now using tire lease programs to save money on tires. A tire lease eliminates the disposal costs and worry of constantly deciding where the tires are coming from. This will help us manage tires and we will always be sure to have an ample supply at a fixed rate. There has been a dramatic increase in the cost of tires. The tires we have been using have increased from \$265.00 to \$384.00 each. This contract will allow us to use a better tire for transit, which will run between \$450.00 and \$550.00 each. Mr. Johnson reported we hit several road blocks trying to put this agreement together mainly due to the price of tires increasing so much and the fact that the bigger suppliers such as Michelin and Bridgestone prefer to deal with larger transit systems in larger metropolitan areas. This means they have to set up local distributors for us. Mr. Johnson continued Mr. Isaac Thorne, Procurement Director, put a great deal of work in this RFP. Bridgestone came up with 101 questions and there were many legal issues to deal with. This lease will ensure we will have a consistent reliable source of tires for the next three years at a locked-in price. This will save the Transit money as compared to purchasing the tires on the open market. We will begin to use Michelin tires, Michelin will manage the inventory, and when the tires are worn to a certain degree, Michelin will haul them away. Mr. Johnson recommends the Board approve this contract agreement.

Mr. Bill Wilson asked about how the price was determined. Mr. Johnson responded the price is based on mileage, on how many miles the buses will run. We can lock in that price which will be \$84,000.00 a year. With the lease agreement we will be

able to budget more effectively. There is a good possibility of a 200% increase in the price of tires over the next year. This locks in a price and also ensures we will get good quality tires every time.

Chairman Buchanan inquired if this requires us to purchase a certain number of tires. Mr. Johnson responded the number of tires is inconsequential. When we buy new buses they will bring more new tires. The contract is for three years.

Mr. Ryan Whitehouse asked about the mileage. This contract is based on our current route mileage. We are working on possible new routes. Will the difference in the route mileage effect anything with the lease contract? Mr. Johnson stated the previous route restructure proposal covered roughly the same amount of miles as the current routes. Mr. Johnson continued if we were to change service hours, or add Sunday service, that would change the price on the contract.

Mr. McCurdy asked if there was a projected cost savings. Mr. Thorne responded taking what it would cost to purchase the tires compared to the cost to lease the tires there is roughly a \$41,000.00 savings with the lease.

Mr. Rokos estimates we are going through one tire a year for each tire on every bus. Mr. Rokos added we are seeing more and more recap tires failing, because of the poor quality of the recaps. The lease will bring all new tires so it will eliminate the problems with recaps. The bulk of the money we are spending now is mostly on rear recapped tires.

Mr. Bowman added he calculated the difference between leasing and purchasing tires and it comes to \$533.40 per tire leased versus \$657.36 purchased.

Ms. Caisley inquired of Mr. Johnson when he expects he'll be asking the Board to amend the budget. Mr. Johnson responded if we are going to do a budget amendment he expects it would be by the next Board meeting and he would expect to have notification to the Trustees far in advance of that. Mr. Johnson continued we just closed out December last week and we are reviewing those numbers to project where we think we are going to be. We are taking into consideration the maintenance situation regarding the engines and transmissions as well as the customer service situation in transportation. The customer service positions were added to free up and allow the dispatchers to tend to the pressing issues of buses, drivers, and customer situations out on the street especially with buses running late. We will be evaluating how much that will cost to continue and see if there is enough room in the budget to continue, based on current projections, or whether we need to adjust the budget. We are under budget in most categories in the budget, and we are half way through the fiscal year. Mr. Johnson wants to have the budget amended only if it is truly necessary.

On a motion by Mr. Wilson, and a second by Mr. McCurdy, the Trustees voted unanimously to approve the three year tire lease proposal RFP #12-05 with Michelin Fleet Solutions.

New Business

1. Review and Approve Recommendation for Award of Sedan Vehicles RFP #12-11

Mr. Johnson reported the State of Illinois contract for vehicles has expired and a new contract has not been issued. This makes the procurement process very involved and detailed. It is difficult to find the vehicles on your own and get comparable bids. Every vehicle is different. We sent out the RFP two different times and finally did get one bid. That was for three Chevrolet Malibu Sedans. These will be used by staff for road supervision, driver relief, and other trips we need to make. Currently we have old Ford Taurus Sedans and one Chevrolet Mini Van that are being used. The Malibu's would replace a couple of those older vehicles. We will probably keep one or two of the old vehicles. This purchase would be funded by Federal Transit Administration. This is one of those grants where the FTA took very old money, which should have lapsed, and allowed us to convert it to buy these vehicles. The vehicles will be purchased with 80% Federal funding and 20% local capital. We can purchase three Chevy Malibu's for \$74,965.50. The local share amount that Connect has to pay is \$14,993.10. Once we receive the vehicles we will put Connect Transit Graphics on them and they will be very visible in the community.

Chairman Buchanan asked about the \$81,446.00 total FTA grant amount for support vehicles. Mr. Johnson stated the Transit would also like to purchase a new service truck to replace the 1993 we are currently using. Mr. Johnson added we also would like to purchase a generator for the building.

Mr. John Thomas asked if there was rationale of sedans over minivans. Mr. Johnson responded that we have two service trucks if we need to move items and we have a minivan already. We just need the sedans to move people around. These are not revenue service vehicles. The sedans should be the right size for our current needs. Mr. Johnson continued the sedan will work well as a street supervision vehicle. One of our current fleet vehicles just had the transmission go out on it.

Mr. McCurdy mentioned he would like to see the electric vehicles kept on the table as an option in the future. He continued this is a sustainable transportation organization and electric vehicles would be a perfect fit, except for snow or ice situations. Mr. McCurdy realizes there are some infrastructure issues to deal with up front, but he would like to keep these electric vehicles on our list. Mr. Johnson stated we will certainly keep that in mind.

On a motion by Mr. Thomas, and a second by Mr. McCurdy, the Trustees voted to approve the award of the Sedan Vehicles RFP #12-11 to Miles Chevrolet.

Mr. Bowman asked which dealerships were approached for the RFP. Mr. Thome replied; Ray Dennison in Pekin, Leman Chevy City, Dennison in Bloomington, Ufring, Rebbec, Baum, and Miles.

Ms. Caisley asked if businesses did not apply due to the lengthy paperwork. Mr. Johnson responded yes and we would like to hold some workshops for vendors who are often put off by the amount of paperwork involved with our RFP. The workshops would give vendors a better understanding of the regulations and what the benefits are when doing business with us. Hopefully that will be put in place soon. Sometimes the RFPs are over 30 pages long. We need some better competition. Mr. Johnson thanked Mr. Thome for all the extra work and effort he had to put in on this RFP.

2. Review and Approve Authorizing Resolution for Illinois Department of Transportation Technical Studies Grant

Mr. Johnson stated IDOT has come out with a Technical Studies Grant Program. This would allow us to use IDOT funding to study areas where we would not have the technical expertise on staff. In this case we are looking at operational efficiency including service needs and placement of bus stops and shelters. There are many technical issues that accompany that process; locating the proper sites for each stop and shelter, making sure they are ADA compliant, and finding the safest places for bus stops. It is a very large task and we do not have a planning staff that can handle a task such as this. We will have to outsource the expertise and get a consultant. This money will pay for that. This will authorize the General Manager to direct staff to make an application for these grant funds. This gives permission to apply for the grant. We will be asking for \$150,000.00. We are very hopeful the State will look upon our application favorably and give us the ability to get a consultant for this project.

Mr. Thome states the grant is ready to go and with your approval tonight we can submit it tomorrow. The State is indicating it may be only a few weeks to find out if our application will be accepted and approved for funds.

Ms. Caisley asked if this project will work in conjunction with the new bus routes. Mr. Johnson stated the new routes will have to be approved first and then we will have to go through a procurement process to get a consultant. Mr. Johnson mentioned that the listening sessions will no doubt bring up suggestions for bus stops, benches, and shelters and we can give all that information to the consultant. IDOT will be very helpful to pay for all this technical study.

Mr. McCurdy asked how staff arrived at the requested \$150,000.00 amount for this study. Mr. Johnson responded the amount came with some help and suggestions from IDOT guiding us to be sure to ask for enough money. Mr. McCurdy asked if the shelters on North Avenue can be removed and repurposed because people are still waiting at them thinking it is a proper bus stop. Mr. Johnson stated he has spoken with ISU about this, and he will talk to them again. The shelters belong to ISU and are at the old transfer center. Mr. McCurdy inquired if it is possible to remove them and store them somewhere until it is determined where they should be relocated. Mr. Johnson will bring this up at the quarter end meeting with ISU.

On a motion by Mr. McCurdy, and a second by Mr. Wilson, the Board voted to approve the Authorizing Resolution for Illinois Department of Transportation Technical Studies Grant.

General Manager's Report

1. Study Group

Mr. Johnson reported the Study Group met just recently and they have had very good discussion on a wide range of topics ranging from funding, education, marketing, and increasing ridership. Mr. Johnson stated the discussion finally concluded the Group needs to wrap all those topics around the basic question of why we are here, which is determining whether a local funding source for transit is feasible. We had a very good discussion including other local funding sources such as private deals with local business, more universal access, and a tax referendum. We are going to schedule another meeting and have a real push to get everyone in the room and have a more in-depth discussion to see if it is feasible to have a local funding source. The Group may come to the conclusion that it is not feasible, which then gives the Board and staff an idea on how to move forward if we encounter funding cuts at the state and federal level. This is a touchy subject, but the real purpose of the Group is to determine what direction to take should our normal funding sources fall short.

Chairman Buchanan inquired if other local funding options were discussed in addition to the tax option. Mr. Johnson stated several primary options were put on the table; full blown referendum for a dedicated transit tax, modifying the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal sales tax, which they evidently have room for, getting more funding from the city and town just out of general revenue. They discussed working out deals with private business in exchange for service that is tailored to an extent (but still available to the public) to that business, without negatively impacting the rest of the public. It was mentioned that the YMCA is currently exploring getting sales tax funding for acquiring a new facility and has been talking to the City of Bloomington about that possibility. Mr.

Johnson stressed the Board needs to understand that no matter what is decided or recommended, the Transit will survive and move on. It may not look exactly the same as it is today. If the business community is not on board with this and is not promoting it, it is not going to happen. The community needs to state that they want the tax first. It won't happen if the community is not behind it completely.

Chairman Buchanan appreciates that the Study Group is focused. We are fortunate to have a representative group of community leaders engaged in the process. We are grateful to Mr. Johnson and our consultant for their leadership and look forward to receiving their recommendations.

General Manager's Goals

Mr. Johnson stated these goals were discussed at the special meeting on January 12th. Mr. Johnson listed the goals as follows:

- **Successfully negotiate modifications to the existing labor agreement.**

These negotiations are currently in progress

- **Assist Study Group in providing a recommendation on local funding feasibility by the end of 2013.**

This was just discussed in the meeting.

- **Complete the Route Restructuring by September 2013.**

Mr. Johnson stated we are moving forward with the plan that he detailed to the Trustees in November.

- **Scheduling Listening Sessions.**

These sessions will give the community an opportunity to discuss any aspect of the transit system that they wish to discuss, and possibly open our eyes to other issues we were not thinking about. Chairman Buchanan asked what will the format be for these listening sessions and do we have dates and locations? Mr. Johnson replied the dates and locations will be scheduled this week. It is difficult to find facilities that can or are willing to host these sessions. Ms. Trish Tilton, Administrative Assistant, has come up with a good list of locations where we could go, attempting to hit all sides of the communities, north, south, east, and west.

Mr. Ryan Whitehouse asked as a form of courtesy, is there a way to share the possible dates with the Board Members before they are scheduled? Mr. Whitehouse thinks it is important for Board members to be in attendance and he was not able to attend one of the public hearings due to a work commitment. Before we finalize the dates and times if the list could be sent out to the Trustees first and if only one Trustee can attend on a particular date then he suggests another date be selected. Mr. Whitehouse continued he thinks the Board needs to be represented. Mr. Johnson stressed we are planning on doing six listening sessions and it is not realistic for the Board to make all of them. There should be several Trustees in attendance at each session. Ms. Tilton added the only dates ISU has available are January 29th and February 12th.

Chairman Buchanan asked how these sessions would be promoted. Mr. Johnson responded we will be going through community groups, doing advertisements, posting it on all the buses, and getting representatives from all stake holders of transit service to be there. The Trustees decided the February 12th date for ISU would work best. Chairman Buchanan noted that not every Trustee will be available to attend all the sessions. Mr. Johnson stated these sessions are not public hearings. They are more informal. We will be recording everything and keeping track. Chairman Buchanan agrees with Mr. Johnson, and offered that it is important for the Board to have a presence. The route restructuring proposal, and all the work put into it, is really going to be a very substantial proposal for the Board to be considering, probably the most substantial and critical votes we as Trustees will have to make in our tenure, considering it has never been done before.

Ms. Tilton stated the first Listening Session would be at ISU Bone Student Center, in the Old Main Room on Tuesday, February 12th from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Mr. Johnson stated after the listening sessions a revised route restructuring proposal will be presented. Then we will have open houses where we will clearly detail everything we are changing. We will have interactive question and answer time and make sure all the questions are answered. We will likely get input during the open houses which may require us to rethink and modify other things. We may have to repeat the open houses with the modifications. Then we will have more public hearings and a vote.

Mr. Bowman brought up the fact that the Connect Transit web site is not very sophisticated and not easily navigated. Has any thought been given to putting a special page on the web site which addresses the issues brought up at the public hearings or these listening sessions? Chairman Buchanan asked if the transcriptions from the public hearings are posted on the web site. Mr. Johnson responded they are on the web site. Mr. Johnson

continued there was a problem trying to truly convey the differences between existing routes and the proposed routes because it is completely eliminating the old routes and creating completely new routes. It is difficult to adequately convey that on a pdf file on the web. We are trying to find a better way to do it. We are also trying to get the website redone. Our goal is to have a new web site in place by the beginning of the fall semester. The changes in website require huge amounts of input from staff and it is a lengthy process. Getting a new web site is a priority. We recognize the current site is less than adequate.

- **Seek out opportunities for expansion of universal access agreements.**

Mr. Johnson stated the last contracts with educational partners resulted in increased revenue. We are looking for additional opportunities as well. We have also been in contact with Illinois Wesleyan University about universal access. We have also had discussions with possible corporate partners as well.

- **Increase level of political advocacy at the State and Federal levels.**

Mr. Johnson stated the best way to get funding is to keep our political leaders informed on how valuable our service is to the community. This requires being in Springfield and Washington, D.C. and working the local districts as well. We have discussed strategies with Mr. Whitehouse to put that in place

- **Work closer with City, Town, and County planners to ensure transit-friendly development in the community.**

Mr. Johnson explained we have had many instances of developers building and developing areas and then hoping transit can serve the area after the fact. We are working with regional planning and with the City and Town to have a seat at the table to discuss these issues before it is too late. If developers want transit there, here are the things you need to do and incorporate in your plan. We will continue to work closer with these planners.

- **Increase transit system outreach to the local business community.**

Mr. Johnson continued the Transit will not do well if business is not behind us. We need to work on partnership opportunities with local business and make them aware of the benefits of Transit.

- **Expand channels of internal communication with staff and the Board.**

Mr. Johnson stated a number of good ideas came up during the working session about providing more regular updates to the Board. We did not have a December Board meeting due to the holidays, but we still need to have communication to the Board to keep the Trustees informed. Also, with staff, our Human Resources Director, Ms. Michelle Ferguson, has started a news letter and we are also going to be having listening sessions with our employees as well, on a quarterly basis. This will be an opportunity to hear what employees have to say about the Transit, how we can make it better, how we can fix things, or what is good about it. This will make management staff fully accessible to everyone.

Mr. Bowman added he was looking through the Transit Personnel Manual and he inquired if there is a mechanism for anonymous reporting or confidential reporting on issues. He continued he knows for sexual harassment and other forms of harassment it is clearly stated. Mr. Bowman asked if there was an ethics hotline or even whistle blower option for employees. Ms. Ferguson responded there are steps for harassment issues and discipline actions, other than that, no we don't. Mr. Bowman asked if there was an ethics hotline or anything. Ms. Ferguson responded no there is nothing in place for those issues.

2. IDOT Capital Grant Application Status

Mr. Johnson stated we are requesting approximately \$2 million dollars to purchase new buses and other equipment. The status of the grant is it is being reviewed by the State now. We do not have a definitive date on when any decision may be made. We have not been asked for any letters of support from any elected officials. We are keeping the elected officials up to date on the progress so they can supply those letters should we be asked. We hope to hear from the State soon.

3. Labor Contract Status

Mr. Johnson reported negotiations with the labor union are on-going. There were meetings last week, which presented some constructive requests. The progress is good and moving quickly. Another meeting will be scheduled soon. Mr. Johnson feels it will be concluding soon.

Correspondence and Media

Chairman Buchanan noted the positive correspondence found in the packet including Cardinal Court and Stuff-the-Bus.

Trustee Comments

1. Ad Hoc Committees

Chairman Buchanan stated three committees of the Trustees would be formed. A Political Advocacy committee would be comprised of Mr. McCurdy and Mr. Whitehouse. The Strategic Plan committee would consist of Mr. Thomas and Mr. Bowman. The 2013-2014 Leadership Committee would include Ms. Caisley and Mr. Wilson.

2. Advocacy Efforts

The Political Advocacy efforts have had a jumpstart with Mr. Johnson and Chairman Buchanan making trips to Washington, D.C. and visiting with elected officials when they were able to be in town. Chairman Buchanan stressed it is very important to reach out to these lawmakers. We are anticipating a visit from a member of Senator Kirk's office on February 7th to visit and have a tour of our Transit Facility. We are also looking forward to a visit from congressman Schock in February. We are hopeful Congressman Davis, who is on the Transportation Committee, will stop by as well sometime. Senator Durbin is planning to send a member of his staff to visit our facility soon.

Mr. Whitehouse believes it is money well spent to get at least the General Manager out to D.C. to get the political attention on our needs and goals and securing our relationship with our leaders. Mr. Whitehouse stated last year there were two to three Peoria Transit Board Members on the Congressman Schock D.C. trip. Contact with our political leaders is a very important relationship to secure and maintain especially during these financially tight times. Mr. Whitehouse stated when he is in Washington he reminds lawmakers he is with the Transit, but Mr. Whitehouse believes they see him as a representative of his professional job first and Transit secondly. Mr. Whitehouse asked the Board to consider in the Budget an increase for such advocacy with political leaders as it will be extremely important.

Chairman Buchanan stated Mr. McCurdy, Mr. Whitehouse, and Mr. Johnson will keep the Board informed of visits and activity. These visits will happen any time during the day. We will be careful of the attendance so, if needed, a special meeting notice can be posted within the timeline.

Ms. Caisley asked if anyone was considering attending the One Voice Trip. Mr. Whitehouse responded that last year the topic was transportation and this year it will focus on agriculture. Mr. Whitehouse recommends the Economic Development Conference or Congressman Schock Fly-In instead. Mr.

Whitehouse feels for the Transit the Schock Fly-In would be of better value. The Fly-In should be in the fall, when Congress is in session. The dates have not been scheduled yet. It is not just for Congressman Schock, our Senators will come in also. Mr. Whitehouse will be on that trip representing the McLean County Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Johnson announced he and Mr. Roy Rickert, Operations Director, will be in Washington, D.C. in March for the American Public Transportation Association Legislative Conference. It will be roughly one week before the One Voice Trip. We will be making the rounds on Capitol Hill and making a presence at that time. At that time the topics being discussed will all be transit specific.

3. Review of Board By-Laws

Chairman Buchanan reported that the By-Laws need to be updated. Copies of the By-Laws, with recommended changes, will be available for discussion at the February Board Meeting.

4. Correspondence

Chairman Buchanan announced the American Public Transportation Association will be having a meeting in Indianapolis in the spring and Chicago in the fall. No specific dates have been set. We will get the dates to the Trustees as soon as possible. These meetings will be a good opportunity for Trustees to attend and not overly tax the budget. Chairman Buchanan is hopeful several Trustees will be able to attend.

Chairman Buchanan announced she has a letter from Mayor Koos to read to the Board. The letter is from fellow Trustee Ms. Mary Caisley. Chairman Buchanan read the letter which stated after much consideration Ms. Caisley is submitting her resignation from the Board of Trustees effective upon the appointment and confirmation of her successor. The letter continued to state Ms. Caisley has appreciated the opportunities afforded to her to serve on the Board since mid 2005. Much advancement in public transit has taken place during those years including; high speed rail, the Multi-Modal Center, the expansion of Central Illinois Regional Airport. There is more work to be done. At this point the Board is entering into a new union contract, new bus routes are being mapped, and a Board planning session is scheduled. This is an appropriate time for a new member from Normal to start serving. During her tenure as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Ms. Caisley acknowledges the tremendous co-operation from elected officials, city manager Mr. Mark Peterson, attorney Mr. Steve Mahrt, and the staff of the Town of Normal. Ms. Caisley has great appreciation for the support that these individuals gave to the Transit System and to her when there were many detours to maneuver in the administration of B-NPTS. At this time

the Transit System is under new leadership of Mr. Johnson and Chairman Buchanan and enthusiastic and educated new Board members and is in very good hands. Ms. Caisley ended the letter by stating her thanks for giving her the opportunity to serve the citizens of Normal and the larger community. Chairman Buchanan stated Mayor Koos received the letter late last year and the appointment process is in place. However, Ms. Caisley is not leaving just yet. Chairman Buchanan added we are losing a very valued, experienced, and loyal supporter and leader of B-NPTS. Chairman Buchanan added the appointee from Normal would be fulfilling an unexpired term which ends in June 2014. Several Trustees will have terms that will expire in June 2013 and we will be working with the city managers and Mayors on whether those Trustees will be re-appointed or new appointments will be made. Chairman Buchanan thanked Ms. Caisley for all her service and willingness to stay until a new appointee has been confirmed.

Mr. McCurdy shared that ISU sent out a very nice "tweet" and media correspondence about the Cardinal Court resolution for about 9,000 users. There was also a nice mention of this on the ISU Parking and Transportation web page. Mr. Johnson complemented Mr. Dave White, Safety and Training Director, and Mr. Rickert for all their hard work to ensure Cardinal Court got the service that ISU wanted.

Chairman Buchanan reported that before the end of the calendar year she and Mr. Johnson had a very productive meeting with the Vice-President of Finance and Planning for ISU. It was decided to meet on a quarterly basis. ISU acknowledged the discussions need to be two way and they hope to increase promotion of the availability of local transit among the campus community.

Request for Executive Session

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Bowman, and a second by Mr. Wilson, the Trustees voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 pm.

John M. Bowman, Secretary

Disbursements to be Approved
February 26, 2013

1st Ayd Corporation	\$166.88
A.T.U.-C.O.P.E.--(Payroll Deduction)	\$188.27
ABC Bus Companies--(Bus Parts)	\$909.22
Ace-Hi Glass Co.--(Bus Shelter Repairs)	\$209.44
Advocate Medical Group--(Employment Expense)	\$300.00
Amalgamated Transit Union #752--(Payroll Deduction)	\$4,321.20
American Solutions for Business--(Office/Operations forms, checks)	\$154.22
Assurance Agency, Ltd.--(RLI Motor Vehicle General Liability)	\$36,771.00
Bellas Landscaping--(Snow Removal & Lawn Mowing)	\$3,800.00
Blitt and Gaines, P.C.--(Wage Garnishment)	\$278.04
Bloomington Municipal Employees Credit Union--(Payroll Deduction)	\$10,990.80
Buchanan, Judy--(Reimburse for Special Meeting)	\$17.22
CDS Office Technologies--(Office Supplies)	\$80.14
Central Illinois Trucks--(Bus Repair Parts/Outside Repair Services)	\$102.48
City of Bloomington--(Utilities)	\$878.52
Clark and Barlow Hardware--(Bus Repair Parts/Other Transportation)	\$4,956.25
Clark, Baird, Smith LLP--(Legal Service)	\$3,970.08
Comcast--(Internet)	\$396.90
Commerce Bank--(Transfer of Funds)	\$200,000.00
Copy Shop, The--(Stroller brochure & Monthly Passes)	\$450.00
Corn Belt Energy--(Utlitiy)	\$9,570.09
Cummins Mid-States Power--(Bus Repair Parts/Outside Repair)	\$314.42
Dean's Graphics--(Bus Decal Work)	\$6,300.00
Dennison Corp.-- (Outside Repair)	\$107.06
Dish Network--(Television Service)	\$97.98
DNDC of Illinois--(Telephone)	\$1,680.00
Don Owen Tire Service, Inc.--(Tires)	\$11,030.68
Euclid Products Company --(vault for fare box)	\$3,433.61
Evergreen FS--(Fuel)	\$91,098.12
Express Employment Professionals--(Dispatch Customer Service Pilot)	\$11,484.00
Fastenal Company--(Bus Repair Parts/Garage Overhead)	\$576.76
Fasteners, Etc.--(Garage Overhead)	\$41.44
Fink, Judd--(Tool Allowance)	\$450.00
Florida State Disbursement--(Payroll Deduction)	\$286.50
Four Seasons Association--(Membership Dues Withheld)	\$74.50
Frontier--(Tablets Internet)	\$752.13
G & K Services--(Garage Overhead/Mechanics Uniforms)	\$635.40
Garmon, Jason--(Study Guide Reimbursement)	\$100.17
GE Capital c/o Ricoh USA--(Copies)	\$1,438.77
Germeraad, John H.--(Wage Deduction Proceedings)	\$960.00

Gillig Corporation--(Bus Repair Parts)	\$21,762.41
Global Equipment, Inc.--(Garage Supplies)	\$36.84
Goranson Consulting, Inc.--(Study Group Facilitator)	\$450.00
Health Alliance Medical Plans--(Group Health Insurance)	\$62,763.00
Heart Technologies, Inc.--(Computer & Server Fee)	\$2,140.80
Henson Disposal--(Garage Overhead)	\$164.50
ICMA Retirement Trust--(Pension Plan)	\$32,728.51
Idaho Child Support--(Wage Garnishment)	\$115.36
Illini Fire Equipment--(Annual Inspection & Recharge)	\$19.00
Illinois Cooperative Association--(New Narrow Band Radio System)	\$105,673.99
Illinois Department of Revenue--(Payroll Deduction)	\$16,731.22
Illinois State Disbursement Unit--(Payroll Deduction)	\$2,406.06
Inter-City Supply Company--(Office Supplies)	\$158.46
Interstate Battery System--(Bus Repair Parts)	\$876.00
Johnson, Andrew--(Car Allowance)	\$500.00
Johnson, Andrew--(Travel Reimbursement)	\$87.97
Kirby Risk Corporation--(Garage Overhead)	\$110.10
Lincoln National Life Insurance Co.--(Dental)	\$19,658.63
Luminator--(Lights for vehicles)	\$8,307.19
MC United Fence Co--(Fence Repair)	\$8,794.00
McLean County Chamber of Commerce--(Membership Dues)	\$719.00
MCS Office Technologies--(New Website Design & Internet)	\$35.00
Medical Reimbursements	\$129.49
MedServ--(Scooter Chair Repair Carey)	\$481.00
Midwest Transit Equipment, Inc.--(Bus Repair Parts & New Buses)	\$664,694.80
Miller Janitor Supply--(Maintenance Supplies)	\$599.80
Mohawk Mfg. & Supply Co.--(Bus Parts)	\$147.60
Motion Industries--(Bus Repair Parts)	\$149.30
Nicor Gas--(Utilities)	\$5,311.20
NMHG Financial Services--(T90 Commander Floor Sweeper)	\$813.63
Normalite, The--(Public Notice Financial Report)	\$575.00
Oberlander Alarm Systems, Inc.--(Fire Security Alarm Service Fee)	\$191.00
Office Collection Section-IDOR--(Wage Garnishment)	\$381.78
Orkin Pest Control--(Garage Overhead)	\$71.50
Pantagraph--(Executive Asst. Ad)	\$520.68
Payroll - Net	\$245,089.39
Payroll Tax	\$96,841.73
Petty Cash Reimbursement	\$75.00
Pipco Companies, LTD--(Fire Protection Check)	\$298.00
Rainguard Seamless Gutters--(Gutter Work)	\$250.00
Ricoh USA, INC--(Copier/Printer Rent)	\$87.48
Rilco of Peoria--(Oil, Antifreeze)	\$971.40
Rockford Industrial Welding Supply--(Welding Supplies)	\$161.10

Rokos, Carl--(California Travel Reimbursement)	\$23.00
Safetylane Equipment--(Bus Lifts)	\$40,293.60
Secretary of State--(Title & License Fee)	\$110.00
Seico, Inc.--(Repair work on Entry Doors)	\$723.00
Southtown Wrecker Service--(Outside Repair)	\$435.00
Staples--(Office Supplies)	\$176.87
Star Uniforms--(Driver's Uniforms)	\$1,851.90
Tech Electronics--(New Phones)	\$914.23
Terrian, Ann--(4 Seasons Reimbursement)	\$53.00
TeVoert Auto Electric, Inc.--(Outside Repair Services)	\$211.50
The Great Display Co.--(Signs Garage Bay Doors)	\$263.00
Tilton, Trish--(Office Supplies Reimbursement)	\$96.61
Town of Normal-- (Utilities)	\$9.20
Truck Centers, Inc.--(Bus Parts)	\$3,157.82
Turner, James--(Tool Allowance)	\$150.00
U. S. Postmaster--(Office Supplies)	\$182.00
Verizon Online--(Mobile Data Terminals for SS)	\$366.09
VISA 0288--(D. C. Trip Expenses)	\$666.23
Visa 3481--(Baltimore Trip Expenses, software Owens, Panera, bus locks)	\$1,549.16
Visa 5882--(Travel Expenses Californis)	\$220.48
VSP--(Vision Insurance Plan)	\$520.49
White, David--(Safety Supplies Reimbursement)	\$40.90
Winkle Environmental Service--(Garage Maintenance)	\$170.00
TOTAL	\$1,763,635.29
Capital II Account	
Fleet-Net Corporation--(Maintenance/Finance Software)	\$15,000.00
Capital II Total	\$15,000.00
Grand Total	\$1,778,635.29



Statistics	Jan 2013					Jan 2012					% Change				
	Customers	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Boardings per Revenue Hour	Boardings per Revenue Hour	Customers	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Boardings per Revenue Hour	Boardings per Revenue Hour	Customers	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Boardings per Revenue Hour	Boardings per Revenue Hour
Connect Transit															
Academy Blvd	24,088	9,249	703	23.99	23.33	21,702	9,282	710	31.23	31.23	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Red B (2 lines)	19,942	9,019	729	23.68	23.04	17,451	9,245	729	23.04	23.04	8.9%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.5%
30055 (3 lines)	14,286	5,415	723	19.99	19.99	11,932	9,446	737	19.02	19.02	3.1%	2.0%	3.0%	0.0%	2.7%
Park D (1 line)	6,621	4,493	342	19.65	19.65	7,147	4,493	342	20.89	20.89	6.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.4%
Blue (1 line)	9,794	6,229	374	14.99	14.99	8,891	6,229	374	14.63	14.63	9.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.0%
Brown F (2 lines)	8,733	10,218	782	11.63	11.63	10,078	10,242	755	13.35	13.35	-13.4%	-0.2%	-0.4%	-0.4%	-13.0%
Orange G (2 lines)	7,112	10,318	744	13.03	13.03	15,985	10,000	744	21.48	21.48	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%
Orange H (2 lines)	16,294	10,009	741	21.98	21.98	16,091	10,000	741	21.71	21.71	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Line J (1 line)	18,234	12,352	724	25.22	25.22	17,271	12,629	734	23.84	23.84	5.7%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	5.7%
Teal J (1 line)	2,035	9,182	365	6.58	6.58	1,770	9,350	367	4.83	4.83	15.0%	-1.8%	-0.5%	-0.5%	15.6%
Orange K (1 line)	5,993	3,904	373	17.64	17.64	5,964	5,934	373	18.65	18.65	-5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-5.4%
NCMHS Tripper (1 line)	36	51	2	14.57	14.57	30	31	2	19.74	19.74	20.0%	62.5%	62.5%	62.5%	26.2%
BU 16 Transfer (2 lines)	22,218	2,796	200	85.65	85.65	19,841	2,341	220	93.10	93.10	12.0%	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%
BU College Station (2 lines)	7,564	4,212	318	23.78	23.78	3,604	3,564	269	13.39	13.39	100.9%	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%
Blue Hills (1 line)	3,248	3,324	241	23.69	23.69	2,997	3,245	236	11.45	11.45	20.5%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	0.0%
Total Fixed Route	168,340	106,025	7,399	22.75	22.75	161,095	106,892	7,313	22.63	22.63	4.6%	0.4%	1.2%	1.2%	3.3%
Demand Response															
Boarded Monthly	4,122	20,294	3,439	2.87	2.87	3,471	22,894	3,697	2.95	2.95	18.8%	-11.4%	-15.8%	-15.8%	10.6%
Connect Late Night	672	3,782	219	3.07	3.07	720	6,087	309	2.01	2.01	-6.7%	-37.9%	-39.0%	-39.0%	52.9%
Total Demand Response	4,794	23,986	3,654	2.90	2.90	4,191	28,981	2,066	2.64	2.64	14.4%	-17.0%	-19.5%	-19.5%	42.5%
SYSTEM TOTALS	173,134	130,011	9,053	19.12	19.12	165,286	134,483	9,369	17.64	17.64	4.7%	-3.3%	-3.4%	-3.4%	8.4%



Metrics	Month: Jan 2013			% Change
	Target	FY2013	FY2012	
Efficiency				
	1.6	1.7	1.7	0%
	1	1.3	1.3	30%
	1	1.2	1.2	20%
Safety				
Total Preventable Accidents (Total Incidents less those responded)	0.0	2	3	-33.3%
Preventable Accidents per 100,000 Miles	0.0	2	4	-50.0%
Financial				
Total Customers	173,134	173,134	165,286	4.7%
Total Revenue Hours	9,053	9,053	9,300	-3.4%
Total Revenue Miles	130,011	130,011	134,453	-3.3%
Total Boarding/Normal Population (per the 2010 US Census)	129,107	129,107	129,107	0.0%
Total Operating Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	N/A
Total Operating Revenue (includes all other operating revenues such as Unleash Account)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	N/A

Analysis & Interpretation



Memo

To: Board of Trustees
Connect Transit

From: Andrew Johnson
General Manager

Date: February 20, 2013

Re: Federal ECHO Access Authorizations

The Federal Transit Administration disburses grant funds to grantees via a web-based electronic clearinghouse called ECHO. It is our link to the FTA's financial management system and, ultimately, the US Treasury. In order for Connect Transit employees to access the system, the users must be authorized by the Board of Trustees. Each transit system is limited to three authorized users - two who can initiate fund drawdowns and one who can perform informational inquiries only. There is a formal internal approval process that must be followed by an authorized user prior to the initiation of a drawdown.


Recent personnel changes, including an extended leave by our Treasurer, have prompted us to recommend changes to the authorizations. I am recommending that Jim Cochrane, Accountant, and David White, Safety and Training Director, be authorized to initiate fund drawdowns. The General Manager will be the third user, with inquiry access only. These changes would necessitate removing our Treasurer's drawdown authority, although that authority can be reinstated upon her return from leave.

These changes will allow Connect Transit to have a proper backup in place to make federal fund drawdowns on a timely basis and staff recommends approval.



Memo

To: Board of Trustees
Connect Transit

From: Andrew Johnson
General Manager 

Date: February 20, 2013

Re: Getting America to Work Transit Coalition

For many months, the Getting America to Work transit coalition that originated with the Chicago RTA has been asking us to join. There was some early concern that it was too Chicago-focused and efforts were undertaken by the APTA Legislative chair, who also happens to be the Rock Island transit manager, to define what the longer term focus was for the coalition. Since then the coalition has broadened and now counts members from across the country, as well as almost all of the major transit systems in Illinois. There is no expense involved and it is my recommendation that Connect Transit join the coalition at this time.



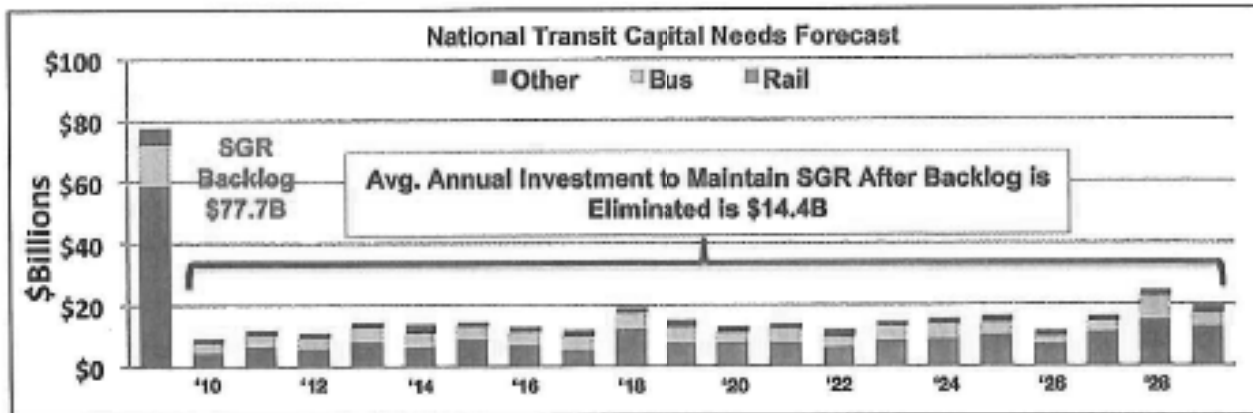
GETTING AMERICA TO WORK

Putting American Transit on The Right Track – Fact Sheet

What is the Problem?

Because federal funding is insufficient to maintain and replace America's aging transit assets, such as trains, buses, bridges, and stations, they are being utilized beyond their "useful lives," which is resulting in slower and less reliable service.

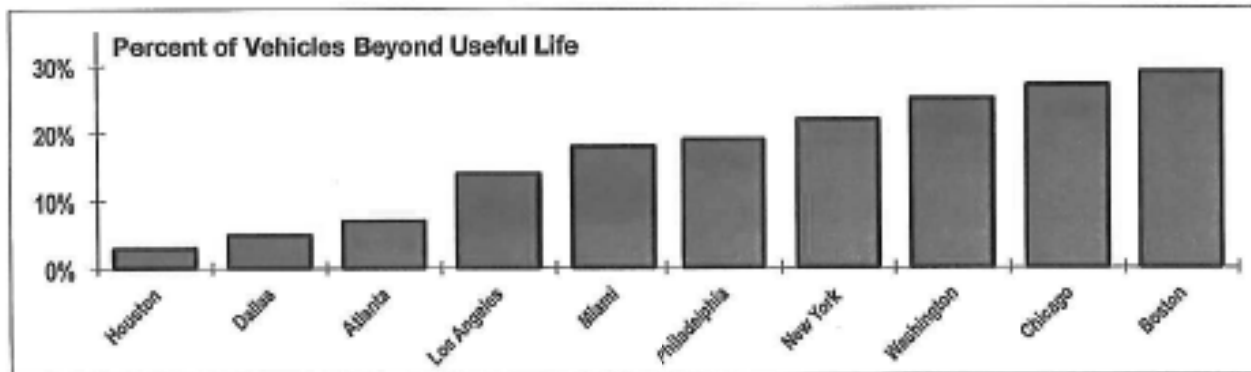
How Big is the Problem?



How Does It Impact Commuters?

- **Delays** – Equipment breakdowns and slow zones on tracks needed to maintain safety mean longer commutes and more congestion.
- **Less Frequent Service** – Without adequate replacement and upgrades, unsafe assets are retired and not replaced leaving riders with fewer options and longer commutes.
- **Less Comfortable Ride** – When assets go beyond their useful life, rider comfort declines as seats, shocks, and other parts wear out without replacement.

How Do America's Transit Assets Compare Across Cities?



What is the Risk to America's Economy?

- **More Congestion** – Transit reduces road congestion and increases productivity.
- **Fewer Employers** – High-quality transit systems gives employers access to top talent.
- **Less Investment & Jobs** – Every dollar spent on transit generates an economic return of at least 4 to 1. And 24,000 jobs are created for every \$1 billion of capital spending on transit.
- **More Pollution** – A well-used transit system reduces greenhouse gas emissions equal to that of 1 million cars.



GETTING AMERICA TO WORK

Current *Getting America to Work* Members

Transit agencies and associations

- Allen County Regional Transit Authority (OH)
- Bay Area Rapid Transit (CA)
- Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (IL)
- Chicago Regional Transportation Authority (IL)
- Chicago Transit Authority (IL)
- Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (OH)
- Denver Regional Transportation District (CO)
- Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (IL)
- Illinois Public Transportation Association (IL)
- Jackson County Mass Transit District (IL)
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CA)
- Metra (IL)
- Ohio Public Transportation Association (OH)
- Pace Transit (IL)
- Port Authority of Allegheny County (PA)
- Rock Island County Metro Mass Transit (IL)
- Sandusky Ohio Transit System (OH)
- San Mateo County Transit District (CA)
- Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (PA)
- Springfield Mass Transit District (IL)
- Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (OH)

Transit advocacy groups

- Transportation for Illinois Coalition (IL)
- Metropolitan Planning Council (IL)

Councils of government

- Council of Mayors Executive Committee (IL)
- Lake County Municipal League (IL)
- Northwest Municipal Conference (IL)
- South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (IL)

Business groups

- American Council of Engineering Companies of Illinois (IL)
- Chicago Jobs Council (IL)
- Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce (IL)
- Illinois Association of Aggregate Producers (IL)
- Illinois Road and Transportation Builders (IL)
- Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce (IL)
- Suburban Minority Contractors Association (IL)

Environmental groups

- Illinois Environmental Council (IL)

Labor Groups

- Chicago and Cook County Building-Construction Trades – AFL-CIO (IL)

**CONNECT TRANSIT
MINUTES OF TRANSIT FUNDING STUDY GROUP MEETING
January 16, 2013**

A meeting of the Transit Funding Study Group of Connect Transit was held at the Connect Transit, Board Room #135, 351 Wylie Drive, Normal, Illinois on January 16, 2013 at 7:30 a.m.

STUDY GROUP PRESENT: Mike Fitzgerald, Resident, City of Bloomington
Julie North, ISU
Mike Matejka, Great Plains Laborers District Council
Ben Watkins, Advocate BroMenn
David Selzer, Community Health Charities of Illinois (via phone remote)

OTHERS PRESENT: Dave Goranson, Goranson Consulting, Inc.
David Hales, Bloomington City Manager
Andrew Johnson, Connect Transit General Manager
Trish Tilton, Connect Transit Administrative Assistant

Call to Order

Mr. Dave Goranson, facilitator, called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m. Mr. Goranson welcomed and thanked everyone for coming. Mr. David Selzer, Community Health Charities of Illinois, was reached by phone to join the discussion remotely. Mr. Goranson continued we have learned a great deal about Transit during these meeting discussions. It seems we are at a critical juncture and the issue we face now is, "what is our purpose, our direction, our goal, our target?" It is clear we have had good discussion regarding raising ridership, raising public/community awareness, and raising education about Transit. This is a good foundation. Mr. Goranson added raising ridership, awareness, and education all takes time and money and still there is no guarantee on the other end. It is all important, but won't get the Transit over the financial hump which has brought this Group together. Mr. Goranson asked if the Group was going to talk about local funding as a key component. He stated he understands that tax is a bad word and gets many people upset. It appears that is where we are now with this critical juncture. Otherwise Transit can't get there fast enough based on what is being said. It seems we need to find our number one priority of direction.

Mr. Selzer commented that his thoughts were leading him to that conclusion also. Mr. Selzer lived in Champaign for several years. Champaign went through many changes before it got to where it is today. Mr. Selzer felt the citizens of Champaign thought Transit was a good thing for the community. Mr. Selzer would like to know more about that option, what is involved, and what the process is. Champaign Transit did become a taxing authority which has put the Transit on solid footing. Mr. Selzer stated he fears the State will have critical financial problems and decisions in the near future and when that occurs it will impact Transit in a very big way.

Mr. Andrew Johnson, General Manager, wanted to caution the Group not to get ahead of themselves. Champaign-Urbana does have a taxing authority that was implemented decades ago. The one thing he would like the Group to discuss is if this group wants to move forward discussing any type of local funding, but not necessarily focusing on taxes. Mr. Johnson believes the ultimate goal of the Study Group is to stabilize service over the long haul by coming up with revenue sources that are alternatives to the State and federal funding, which we almost exclusively rely on currently. The funding source that is used to do that almost nation-wide is some form of local funding source, which ultimately comes out of tax dollars. However, it is a matter of how it comes out of those tax dollars. Does the Group want to discuss the feasibility of local funding with the understanding that the Group may say no, that is not what is going to happen in this community, or let's see what options are out there? Mr. Johnson stated he is not advocating any type of funding source. What he is saying is that being General Manager he needs to make long range plans. If we are going to seriously consider a local funding source then he needs to keep that in mind. If the local funding is absolutely off the table, then he needs to consider a different direction.

Mr. Mike Matejka, Great Plains Laborers District Council, commented he has not been able to attend the past meetings because of work, but he has been reading the minutes. He has been trying to catalog options. Creating a Transit District is one option, which will require a referendum vote and a campaign to pass a referendum. Mr. Matejka continued he did not wish Mr. David Hales, City Manager of Bloomington, to fall off his chair, but he believes there is still ¼ cent wiggle room in the sales tax. Mr. Hales responded that Bloomington and Normal are ¼ cent below average on sales tax. Mr. Matejka explained that one option would have ¼ cent of the sales tax directed to Transit. This would be a politically liable campaign. Another option is to go to the businesses, universities, companies, and corporations to ask them to help support the Transit in exchange for some possible service changes, such as free passes for employees. This would change the demographics of the Transit. This would involve a different type of campaign because approaching corporations would be a totally different sales job. It would require knowing what the company's needs are and what exactly the Transit could offer. This could open up a whole new list of problems, because State Farm may wish to have a bus running from LeRoy, to Downs, to Bloomington, which would require buses running beyond our current operating and legal

parameters. These are a couple ideas. It is important to lay the choices out and determine which would work the best.

Mr. Mike Fitzgerald, City of Bloomington, stated he believes these comments are presumptuous. State Farm would want to know how they would benefit and how much it would cost them. Mr. Fitzgerald continued we first must determine what we should be funding. That goes back to numbers of routes, numbers of riders per route, costs per routes, and when it is determined what are the best routes, then we can take a real hard look at what are the costs of those routes. One of the goals of the Group requested by the Connect Transit Board of Trustees is get community input from leaders to find out what the Transit means to each entity. As a volunteer at St. Joseph's Hospital, it appears the Transit means nothing to the hospitals. People will get to a hospital one way or another for their needs, whether it is a ride from a friend, or taxi, or bus. We need to identify what is needed route wise, seat wise first. That information then drives the resources needed to accomplish those things. Mr. Fitzgerald doesn't want to talk cost before it is determined what the need is.

Mr. Johnson stated those comments bring up two issues: #1 The Group must not forget what the capital funding needs of Transit are and , #2 It is beyond the mission of the Group to determine the routes. It is an internal matter for staff to handle. It is a very involved detailed process.

Mr. Fitzgerald commented if the Group doesn't know the nuts and bolts, how can we be expected to go out into the community and ask for funding? This is what the population is saying they need and how do we support it.

Mr. Johnson added the Group and Transit need to determine what must be done to insure status quo of the Transit, maintaining our current level of service, if we have future funding issues. That should be the baseline. Or the Group could take the approach of rather than maintaining status quo, if we have no other funding and under existing conditions how are we going to scale back the system. I don't think that's the way the Group needs to go, but you are entirely entitled to do so. Mr. Johnson continued asking the Group if it is feasible to have a local funding component or not. If the Group decides it is not, then Transit managers will continue down the path we are already on planning contingencies for funding reductions and corresponding service reductions.

Ms. Julie North, ISU Parking and Transportation, asked if there is a deadline today on local funding, do we need to make this decision today?

Mr. Goranson clarified that the Group needs to determine today if funding is a critical component. The ultimate goal is not to increase ridership, but to at least be able to maintain what we have now, not let it deteriorate, and go from there considering funding options.

Mr. Selzer agrees that without ideas in place we can't go to an employer and say what we have to offer, but you can't put a system into place before you know what people want and are willing to pay for. Looking back, Mr. Selzer recalled the time when the buses stopped service at 5:00 p.m. and people could not get to work or not get home from work without the bus service. Businesses had trouble getting a workforce. Service expanded and a partnership with ISU was created. No one thought that would ever happen. Then NiteRide was proposed and funding was established. We need to find a way to do both. How do we get this moving? Mr. Selzer continued he would be happy to identify some stake holders and get together a neighborhood coffee. This would be an opportunity to sit down with neighbors and find out where they want buses to go and when do they want buses to run. We could do this with various stake holder groups and survey needs and wants. Mr. Selzer added the hospital may not need the buses for patients, but they probably need the bus for numerous employees. These meetings would accomplish several things. First bus schedules and maps can be handed out to attendees and find out if people even knew about where and when the buses run and second, these meetings can ask the questions about sales tax and corporate sponsors. A large corporation may wish to contribute one million dollars a year, if it would save them from building an eight million dollar parking garage. Also, there can be discussion about advertising, bus shelters, social networks, and what can we do to promote the Transit to add to revenue. We should also talk to the schools, the private schools, and work more with those needs. We need to get people to brainstorm and investigate options, service improvements, partnerships, focus groups.

Mr. Goranson stated his point with the urgency of local funding is that if no one is willing to consider it, then the rest won't get you there. Transit won't be able to get over the hump without considering local funding or it will have to consider reduction in service.

Ms. North asked about the State of Illinois Funding and how long should it be good for. Mr. Johnson responded there is no expiration date. The general consensus, considering the troubled financial situation the State is currently in, is the State won't be able to maintain the 65% funding for Transit operating expenses that we currently have and by 2016 the demand will be more than the supply. Federal funding will end in 2014 with the current two-year Federal Reauthorization Funding for capital and operating for highways and Transit. The Transportation Bill was extended two years because that was as far as they could find funding for the Highway Trust Fund. After that, the expectation is, the fund will be bankrupt. Mr. Johnson does not believe federal government will let the transportation network go dry; on the other hand the funding could be vastly different moving forward. We have a reauthorization bill called Map 21 for transportation; it is being funded out of the previous Transportation Bill because Ways and Means Committee can't figure out how to get budget money for it. A solution to the problem has not been found. Mr. Johnson stated all funding is very uncertain past 2014.

Mr. Matejka added in the past the Transportation Bill was for four to six years. It went eighteen months while the old federal bill was reauthorized and then we were given this two year bill. The big issue now is gas tax. Since vehicles are more efficient, gas tax has been greatly reduced and gas tax is the main funding of the Transportation Bills for Transit and highways. The question is how do you fund transportation? Every term there can be a huge fight for what entity gets the funding. Currently, Illinois gets more State operating funding for Transit than any other state.

Ms. North asked if any state has totally lost state or federal funding for Transit. Mr. Johnson responded that Georgia has no state funding. Mr. Johnson added the one thing this Group was set up to do was to have these discussions before these possible funding cuts happen and we are having a crisis situation. For example, Pierce Transit in Tacoma, Washington is forced to cut 34% of their service in September, which will be very difficult. The Group is here to help prevent or prepare for such a scenario.

Ms. North expressed the desire to develop some structure to the Group. Ms. North said Mr. Johnson was kind enough to give the group the different scenarios which the Group can respond to and present to the Board the concluding report. Ms. North feels the Group should identify the goals and prioritize them. Perhaps we need or organize some sub groups on education, ridership, get more stakeholders involved at neighborhood coffee sessions, take surveys, Ms. North feels the Group should make the mission clear and focus on the goals to achieve what the Board would like. Ms. North asked if there was a deadline or timeline to complete the report for the Board. Mr. Johnson responded it all depends on the Group and how quickly they wish to complete the task. Ultimately, it will be up to the Board to act on the recommendation of the Group or not.

Mr. Matejka suggested listing the options before we get people together. So we would list sales tax, Transit District, corporate support, cutting service. Otherwise, he is fearful; people will come and ask things like "why doesn't the bus come by my house?" We want to direct discussion to how do we sustain the system. We need to determine what means of substance is most palatable or most sellable out in the larger community.

Mr. Selzer commented if there were twelve people who attended twelve neighborhood coffee meetings and from those meetings we found a common thread that would boost ridership it could make a significant revenue increase. There could be neighborhood ambassadors for Transit and block captains for the Transit. This is just one part, but we don't want to ignore it. Everyone will probably be taking big cuts when it comes to State funding. There will be law suits coming down the road because the constitution is being hit from both sides. One side states the State must have a balanced budget and the other side states the constitution requires the pensions be paid. When the funding gets cut, it will impact everyone. The quicker we move looking at alternatives the better off we will be. Mr. Selzer added cutting the service of the Transit starts to be the death of

the Transit. We should be thinking of how to grow the system. The communities are growing. We just need to educate a new generation on Transit.

Mr. David Hales, Bloomington City Manager, would like all the options and ideas for local funding to be listed and investigated. The list should include all the pros and cons of each option. Mr. Hales stressed there should be no "Sacred Cows". Looking at the data, ISU, HCC, and LCN make up 45% of the revenue generating ridership. Perhaps the universities and colleges should pay more. We just need to look at everything, even with if it causes controversy. It all should be on the table. Are there any other ways to raise local revenue from those who are using the Transit? If we go back to the taxpayers and ask them to subsidize the service for those who can't afford it, the taxpayers are going to want to know who is using the Transit. We need to be open and transparent. Can those using Transit, that can afford it, pay more? Mr. Hales continued stating as we look at all the local revenue; it also helps if we know what is coming next. Currently, there are rumors a local group is lobbying the City Council on a \$30 million project for sports and YMCA for a sales tax increase, and the school district also asking for sales tax revenue for school funding. We are also looking at property taxes that can be hit for pensions, to help with the State pension crisis. We need to look at what everyone may be facing in the next five years, what will be the total pressure on the tax payer. Public transit is a key component for economic development and jobs. The last point Mr. Hales expressed was if we can't maintain status quo then what are the scenarios facing Transit and the community. Stating those consequences will help raise the urgency level and awareness to the taxpayer. Rather than facing cut backs, what are the two or three options the community can consider? The Study Group should list all the options, including the pros and cons of each and include the list in the report to the Board. Perhaps the Group will make a recommendation to the Board. That recommendation should show what the trade-offs would be for each scenario. This will create urgency awareness for the Board as well.

Mr. Johnson agreed with Mr. Hales stating it is the responsibility of the Transit to show that it has maximized every source possible before it considers service cuts or going to the communities and asking for more funding. It is important to document every possibility, grant, and source of revenue to show that the money is being used to the maximum. The Transit will do everything possible to show the pros and cons of the situation so when the public is approached there will be a realistic view. Declines in service, due to funding shortages, is becoming standard operating procedure in this day and age.

Mr. Selzer stated his daughter went to University of Illinois Chicago Circle Campus and paid \$100.00 per semester for her CTA transit pass. This was a mandatory fee for every student. If every student at ISU had to pay that, it would generate \$2 million.

Ms. North, quickly spoke up, stating she is representing ISU!

Mr. Selzer continued saying his daughter was told she did not need a car at the university because she had a transit pass. Since there are no "sacred cows", we need to discuss all the options. Of course if the students pay that much, I am sure there will be plenty of service ramifications to go along with the fee. If everyone says "no" then we have to be able to face our neighbors and business associates and tell them why we have a contingency plan to cut transit service and cut hours, which will effect economic development. What should this Group do next? Should we have a half day of meetings where we break into smaller groups so we have brainstorming sessions to move this along?

Mr. Goranson commented local funding is on the table and it needs to be addressed along with all the elements surrounding it. Is this a critical component which needs to be addressed?

Mr. Matejka is hearing from Mr. Johnson that it is one of the main purposes of this Study Group. We need to talk about the things no one wants to talk about. Funding and taxes are always difficult topics.

Ms. North brought up the example of Portland, Oregon's transit. Employers who employ one thousand employees or more must pay a fee to the transit authority. Ms. North suggested a survey to the major companies in Bloomington-Normal to find out what Connect Transit could do for the employers and if that is possible then the company would be in agreement to pay a fee to the Transit. Ms. North was not sure how that was done through legislation, but she would check. The university also paid a fee for having over one thousand employees.

Mr. Matejka brought up the "what's in it for me?" component which would lead to possible changes in Transit service and mind set if the businesses get involved. Perhaps more shuttle buses, park-n-ride locations, and earlier service would be requested. Maybe now is the time to initiate those conversations.

Mr. Johnson has been talking to Mitsubishi Motors, Country Companies, and State Farm about service options.

Ms. North stated she is on the Electric Vehicle Task Force and currently you can lease a vehicle per month. Perhaps these businesses can lease EV's to get employees to and from the various corporate locations. We need to wrap our heads around the concept of Transit and what it means to be sustainable and aware of our carbon footprint.

Mr. Matejka brought up how many vehicles could be eliminated from our streets and parking lots if everyone could use transit. This community believes no one uses transit, because they see no one riding the bus.

Mr. Fitzgerald added status quo here is where we are now and what we are doing presently. We need to show what we can do based on receiving fewer funds and how that will impact the communities. Also, if we increase funding then we must show what Transit can do and list the scenarios. We will get the same results, but it is showing what we can provide, rather than what will be decreased or taken away.

Mr. Matejka stated that people do ride the bus to work. The popular perception in Bloomington-Normal is that only the poor and indigent are riding the bus to get to the store or doctor appointments.

Currently we are $\frac{1}{4}$ cent below Champaign and Peoria in terms of local sales tax. The rumor is the YMCA is going to make a bid for the tax money for a new facility. We will be in competition with them for the City and Town Councils' ear. Those council members will be looking long and hard at any and all proposals.

Ms. North stated the department of parking funds the transit program for ISU students. It currently does not come out of student fees. The university has to be very careful not to put too much on the student's backs. Tuition has been increasing yearly as well. Ms. North suggested establishing goals that everyone can be working on through email.

Mr. Selzer would like to sit down and create smaller groups. Mr. Selzer reported that every student at University of Illinois is charged \$46.00 per semester for the transit. U of I is looking at 38,000 students and three semesters, which brings in \$5.2 million per year. We need to know which universities charge what and then what service does the transit provide for those students and what legislation is involved. We need to know all the options otherwise all our discussions are worthless, because they all hinge on "if this, then that". Mr. Selzer would like to have a planning morning or day and explore and discuss all the alternate revenue sources. We can split up into groups and start working on getting some answers.

Mr. Matejka commented one very positive thing is Normal is working to create a sustainable community and you can't have that without Transit.

Mr. Fitzgerald commented that Ms. Mary Caisley, Transit Board of Trustees, reminded the Group at a previous meeting the Transit is currently only allowed to operate inside the corporate city limits of both communities. That would need to be changed. Mr. Johnson responded it may not be a big problem to change. We would just need to incorporate the counties involved into the intergovernmental agreement. Transit is aware there are little communities outside the operating limits that would like to be part of Transit in the future. It would not require the State changing any laws; just the County would need to be part of the intergovernmental agreement.

Mr. Matejka asked if the Group is looking at a larger, longer session bringing up all the options, not just the up and down issues of sales tax. At that session all the pros and cons of each option should be discussed and who would be impacted by each option.

Mr. Selzer stated he liked Ms. North's suggestion of selecting a Chairman and then breaking up into sub groups and have a day to brain storm the ideas. A small format or analysis could be put together that every group needs to respond to, listing all the pros and cons of each idea, what is the cost (negative or positive), and who does your idea impact. The groups could go out into the community with the worksheets and talk about all the ideas listed and get the community feedback. After thirty or forty days the Study Group would get back together to report the results. The discussion would be results of what was supported the most, what was hated the most.

Mr. Johnson suggested we should have a major push to get the majority of the Study Group together for the next meeting so all this could be set up. At the next session a leader should be selected to help orchestrate and set up sub groups.

Mr. Selzer added we also need to identify who the stakeholders are and what the topics are for the sub groups. Mr. Selzer suggested sending out a "Doodle" to assist in setting up the next meeting to hopefully get more Study Group members to attend. This makes setting up the meeting much easier.

In the meantime, Mr. Johnson will reach out to the other Group members, let them know where the Group is heading, and convey the importance of their attendance at the next meeting, hopefully within a month.

Mr. Goranson thanked everyone for coming and the meeting adjourned at 8:35 am.



connect
TRANSIT

For Immediate Release

February 11, 2013

Contact: Andrew Johnson
Connect Transit
(309) 829-1123
ajohnson@bnpts.com

Connect Transit Announces Community Listening Sessions

Normal, IL – Connect Transit will be hosting a series of Community Listening Sessions throughout the Bloomington-Normal area between February 12th and February 28th, 2013. These sessions will provide an opportunity for citizens to talk to transit system staff about current and future transit service. The schedule of sessions is as follows:

Tuesday	Feb. 12 th	ISU Bone Student Center Old Main Room	3-5 pm
Friday	Feb. 15 th	Western Avenue Community Center Gym	1-3 pm
Monday	Feb. 18 th	Heartland Community College (Community Commons Building Room #1406-1407)	6-8 pm
Wednesday	Feb. 20 th	YWCA Gym	3-5 pm
Monday	Feb. 25 th	Normal Town Council Chambers	6-8 pm
Thursday	Feb. 28 th	Bloomington City Council Chambers	6-8 pm

"Connect Transit is excited to hold these listening sessions and we hope they are well attended by Bloomington-Normal citizens, whether they are regular transit customers or not," said Andrew Johnson, Connect Transit General Manager. "These listening sessions are different from formal public hearings, and our staff looks forward to asking and answering many questions from the community in a more informal setting while gathering valuable input that will make our transit system better."

For more information about the Community Listening Sessions, please contact Andrew Johnson at 309-829-1129.

Connect Transit has provided reliable and affordable public transportation to the Bloomington-Normal community since 1972.

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Connect Transit

Community Listening Sessions

Connect Transit would like to hear input from the community on what you think of the current public transportation system as well as what you want the transit system to become in the future.

These listening sessions are open to comments regarding all aspects of the transit system.

The following are the dates and locations for the upcoming sessions:

Tuesday	Feb. 12 th	ISU Bone Student Center Old Main Room	3-5 pm
Friday	Feb. 15 th	Western Avenue Community Center Gym	1-3 pm
Monday <small>wa</small>	Feb. 18 th	Heartland Community College (Community Commons Building Room #1406-1407)	6-8 pm
Wednesday	Feb. 20 th	YWCA Gym	3-5 pm
Monday	Feb. 25 th	Normal Town Council Chambers	6-8 pm
Thursday	Feb. 28 th	Bloomington City Council Chambers	6-8 pm

"We are the best choice for moving people in our community"

'Listening sessions' set on Connect Transit services

PANTAGRAPH STAFF

BLOOMINGTON — Connect Transit will have a series of "listening sessions" this month to give the public a chance to talk about current and future transit services with the agency's staff.

"These listening sessions are different from formal public hearings, and our staff looks forward to asking and answering many questions from the community in a more informal setting while gathering valuable input that will make our transit system better," said Andrew Johnson, Connect Transit general manager, in a pre-

pared statement.

The sessions will be:

• 3 to 5 p.m. today, Old Main Room, Illinois State University's Bone Student Center, Normal.

• 1 to 3 p.m. Friday, Western Avenue Community Center gym, Bloomington.

• 6 to 8 p.m. Monday, Community Commons Building Room 1406-1707, Heartland Community College, Normal.

• 3 to 5 p.m. Feb. 20, YWCA gym, Bloomington.

• 6 to 8 p.m. Feb. 25, Normal City Council chamber, Uptown Station

• 6 to 8 p.m. Feb. 28, Bloomington City Council chamber, City Hall.

Blo-No group looks to change bus routes

DAN FOX
Senior Staff

A Bloomington-Normal watchdog group is seeking to work with Connect Transit in order to adjust bus routes.

Connect Transit made a proposal to adjust the bus routes, and the proposed routes, which were centralized around the middle of the Bloomington-Normal, would have cut-off large sections of town, Charles Smith, organizer of Citizens to Ensure Fair Transit (CEFT), said.

"People would have been stranded at places like The Landing, and trailer-parks out towards the edge of the town," Smith said.

They had proposed for smaller vehicles to go out to old sites and pick-up people and take them to new transfer areas, Smith said.

The problem was with the current special services program at Connect Transit, which was having issues in the first place. If they had introduced the new program it would have eroded the system.

Smith said when people went to the hearings about the new system their questions were not adequately answered, and this made citizens angry about the way the hearings were held. That is why they decided to start the advocacy group, CEFT.

"We felt that the original proposals were horrible," Smith said. "We felt there was a disconnect between Connect Transit, Bloomington-Normal Transit and the community."

They [CEFT] want the transit



Vivianne Velazquez / Senior Staff

Bloomington-Normal residents ride the orange-H bus toward Lincoln Square apartments on Tuesday afternoon.

systems to base any changes off of the current routes, instead of tearing the whole old system down, Smith said.

"If they are willing to work with us, we are willing to work with them," Smith said.

Right now, the original proposals are on hold, while they take a closer look at some of the community concerns, Dave White, training/safety director at Connect Transit, said.

They want to "streamline" the

service because a lot of the bus routes they have tend to run late during the day, and they want to address the issues by making the routes more efficient, White explained.

They went into the proposal planning to use the same number of busses they did a year ago, because funding is always an issue when it comes to getting new busses, White said.

"Even when you have the funding available, once you place the

order it can take anywhere from year to 18 months to get the busses produced and then shipped to the property," White added.

There will be listening sessions starting later this month, when the community will have a chance to voice their opinions.

The Citizens to Ensure Fair Transit will be meeting at 4 p.m. Friday, in the Life Center for Independent Living, located at 2201 Eastland Drive, Suite 111 in Bloomington.

**FRIDAY,
February 15, 2013**

A6

CHEERS

... to Connect Transit for setting up another series of "listening sessions" over public concerns about the former Bloomington - Normal Public Transit System's proposed changes, including route alterations.

Some government agencies make decisions without public input or disregard complaints. Connect Transit's current management is doing a good job about listening, updating and listening again before making any moves.



Contact: Lisa Thompson
Project Oz
(309) 827-0377
lisat@projectoz.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Connect Transit Provides Mobile “Safe Places” for Teens

Bloomington, Illinois. January 17, 2013 – The closest Safe Place site for Bloomington and Normal area youth may be the bus stop down the street. Connect Transit and Project Oz are partnering to provide mobile Safe Places, making it even simpler for youth to access immediate help and safety.

The partnership between **Connect Transit** and **Project Oz** has created a new kind of Safe Place site. Any teen who has run away, feels threatened, or unsafe can board any bus in the system, and ask the driver to contact the staff at Project Oz. The staff at Project Oz are trained and ready to respond, and will help the youth access safety through their offices or their emergency shelter network. When a youth requests assistance, the bus driver provides a secure place for the youth to wait while he or she contacts Project Oz who sends someone to offer help and support.

Project Oz has been part of the Safe Place program for years. Through this affiliation, they have partnered with the fire stations in Bloomington and Normal, plus the Jesus Coffeehouse on west Washington Street, to provide a secure place for young people to go for help with a wide variety of problems. All fire stations are open 24 hours every day of the year. Project Oz has been serving the community since 1973 in drug prevention, runaway intervention, drop-out prevention, and assistance to street youth and homeless youth.

Safe Place is a national outreach and prevention program designed to provide immediate access to help youth experiencing abuse, neglect, or other crisis situations such as riding with an unsafe driver, or being followed by a stranger. Safe Place communities offer a network of businesses, public locations, and mobile units that display the bright yellow and black, diamond shaped Safe Place logo. Site employees receive training so that they are prepared to respond to any youth who may ask for help. Youth can access these locations in the community also by using **TXT 4 Help**, a program that allows teens to text the word SAFE and their current address to find the nearest Safe Place location.

Safe Place was established in 1983 to provide easy access to help for young people in dangerous, threatening or vulnerable situations. Since then, more than 240,000 youth have accessed help at a Safe Place site or contacted their local youth shelter after learning about Safe Place at a school presentation. There are over 17,000 Safe Place sites in 38 states and 1,500 communities.

Connect Transit has provided reliable and affordable public transportation to the Bloomington–Normal community since 1972.

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Connect Transit to offer shelter

By Rachel Wells
rwells@startribune.com

BLOOMINGTON — A program designed to help teens find immediate shelter in an emergency is expanding to the area's public transit system, greatly increasing visibility and access.

In place locally since 2008, the Safe Places program designates sites across the community where runaway teens and young people who feel unsafe can go to feel secure while workers at the site contact staff at social service organization Project Oz.

Connect Transit this year is joining the program to provide mobile Safe Places on each of its 42 fixed route and special services buses. Starting next week each bus will have a yellow decal to signify a point of access to Project Oz's services, said bus system spokesman Dave White.

When a threatened teen boards a bus and tells the driver he or she needs help, the driver will contact a dispatch worker, who will pick up the teen from the bus route and bring him or her to headquarters until a Project Oz staff member can intervene.

"This will open up additional opportunities for them to enter into our services," said Lisa Thompson, Project Oz vice president.

She said it will help those who need it after Project Oz offices close and who "aren't going to go to the police department, who aren't going to call PATH, who aren't going to talk to their school counselor. It doesn't cost the community anything. It just enhances the community's commitment to young people."

SATURDAY,
January 26, 2013

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Already, the Twin Cities have several Safe Places sites, including the Bloomington and Normal fire stations and the Jesus House on Bloomington's west side.

Thompson said the transit system's partnership is a "strategic" addition to the program, which requires initial site staff training and ongoing oversight and quality control from Project Oz.

"This is the culmination of a year's worth of work," she said.

Connect Transit General Manager Andrew Johnson said he'd heard about the program before he was hired at the transit system in 2011.

"I figured, once I landed here, if we had the ability to put it in place, I'd certainly pursue it," he said. "The fact that we have buses all over town, at all times of the day, makes them a perfect place to install the program."

He said Connect Transit is "looking forward to increasing the positive contribution we have for the community."

Young people also can go straight to Connect Transit headquarters, 351 Wylie Drive, Normal, during its normal business hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday to access help.

To find out where the nearest Safe Place site is, teens can text the word SAFE and their current address to 69866. The "TXT 4 Help" program is a nationwide network of Safe Place sites and service providers, Thompson said.

FRIDAY,
February 1, 2013

A6

Our Views
**Cheers
and jeers**

CHEERS

... to Connect Transit, for joining the Safe Places program to help teens in danger.

The program offers a way for threatened teens to find a safe place and to find help from a trusted adult. Using a city bus as a mobile site is a great way to broaden access to the program and provides an easy and familiar way for teens to find help.

VIDETTE EDITORIAL BOARD

Flexible bus hours needed

Universities all over the United States are taking action when it comes to keeping their student population safe. Safety has become a huge concern for schools in recent years due to increased incidents of violence. Public health and safety should be the priority of university presidents, and it's good to see new precautions are being taken to prevent unnecessary tragedies from taking place.

Aside from the obvious classroom safety procedures being discussed, universities also have the obligation to protect their students around campus. One way that nearly all universities could improve upon is transportation. While ISU offers free public transportation to any student who presents his/her ID to the bus driver, that is not enough.

The bus system used by most students here at ISU is the Bloomington-Normal public transportation system, which is not limited to students. Places such as Walmart and Eastland Mall are easily accessible for students without any other means of transportation (granted, students definitely sacrifice time when taking the bus because of the numerous stops in between destinations). But the bus can be difficult to access when students are busy for the majority of the week.

ISU's NiteRide offers late transportation for students seven days a

week. The NiteRide begins at 7 p.m. and stops operating at 1 a.m.

If safety is such a concern, there should be buses operating 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

ISU has utilized programs to ensure the health and safety of its students. For example, we receive text messages whenever there is a danger present on or near campus. Some of these techniques succeed without question.

But the buses should be fixed.

Walking around campus late at night can present numerous dangers. With all of the headlines in the news consisting of violence in school areas, one can be incredibly reluctant trekking across campus. But if that student has no choice, they run the risk of encountering unsupervised areas that are perfect for something bad to happen.

A 24-hour bus system can provide some security for these people.

Realistically, being in a college environment, students are going to stay out late, whether they are cramming for an upcoming test or drinking at a local house party. There is a Late NiteRide bus that is offered until 2:30 in the morning, but drunken college students tend to stay out until 4 or even 5 a.m. If buses were available to students 24 hours a day, students might second-guess walking through the unsupervised Quad or, even worse,

get behind the wheel of a car.

Another concern is the weather. We have had a relatively calm winter so far this year, but late January and early February usually possess some of the coldest days of the calendar year.

Students should not have to cross campus in the early hours of the morning when it is dangerously cold outside.

The university might claim that money is the primary reason buses do not run as late as they should. But if money was an issue, why does the Late NiteRide run until 2:30 a.m.? We have buses operating seven days a week on this campus; does it really cost that much more extra money to run buses in the early hours of the morning?

This university is prospering in almost every aspect. It is hard to believe that extending the hours of the Late NiteRide bus route would affect ISU's budget so negatively; The Editorial Board believes the pros outweigh the cons regarding safety measures.

With all the new policies ISU has introduced trying to protect students, it becomes obvious that this institution cares about them. Twenty-four hour public transportation should be the next step to guarantee that students experience a safe environment here at this university.



GoodToGo
Commuter Challenge

GoodToGo is an ongoing community-wide project of GUT and ISU designed to encourage healthy lifestyles and promote the use of alternative transportation modes of driving alone.

NEWS AND CURRENT EVENTS

News Flash: Attention Campus Residents

Announcing improved transit service to Cardinal Court:

The Office of Parking and Transportation and Connect Transit worked together to provide increased frequency to the Cardinal Court apartment complex. The Record Express Blue Route will now include Cardinal Court. Stops will be added at the complex during the various transit lines that service the complex. Follow the links below for an abbreviated schedule of stop times to Cardinal Court, as well as The Towers and Shelburne Apartments. Reminder, Connect Transit makes every effort to keep the routes running on time, but outside factors can influence this process. Please plan to arrive at your bus stop 5 minutes before the scheduled pick up time.

- Cardinal Court Transit Service
- The Towers Transit Service
- Shelburne Apartments Transit Service



Track Your Bus

Special Events Parking

Pay Your Citation

Latest Updates

Parking Map:

Make the date flying but where to take with your permit? Visit the Office of Parking and Transportation's site using [Campus Parking Map](#).

Cardinal Court:

The new Cardinal Court apartment complex will be open and housing residents in the fall of 2012.

For information about zoning forms, complete please select "permits" in the navigation bar at the top of this page and click on that page select "concepts" on the



Press Release

For Immediate Release

January 29, 2013

Contact: Trish Tilton
Connect Transit
(309) 829-1151
tilton@bnpts.com

Relief Fund Created for Bus Driver's Home Destroyed by Fire

Normal, IL – Last Thursday, January 24th a fire destroyed the home of one of Connect Transit's Bus Drivers.

Steve Thornton has been driving a bus for Connect Transit, formerly Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System, since December 1977. This fire has been devastating for his family.

In an effort to help and show support to this 35 year dedicated employee an account has been set up at Bloomington Municipal Credit Union for Steve Thornton's Family.

The account is called "Thornton Fire Relief" and the account is # 21670.

Anyone wishing to donate may do so through the Bloomington Municipal Credit Union account.

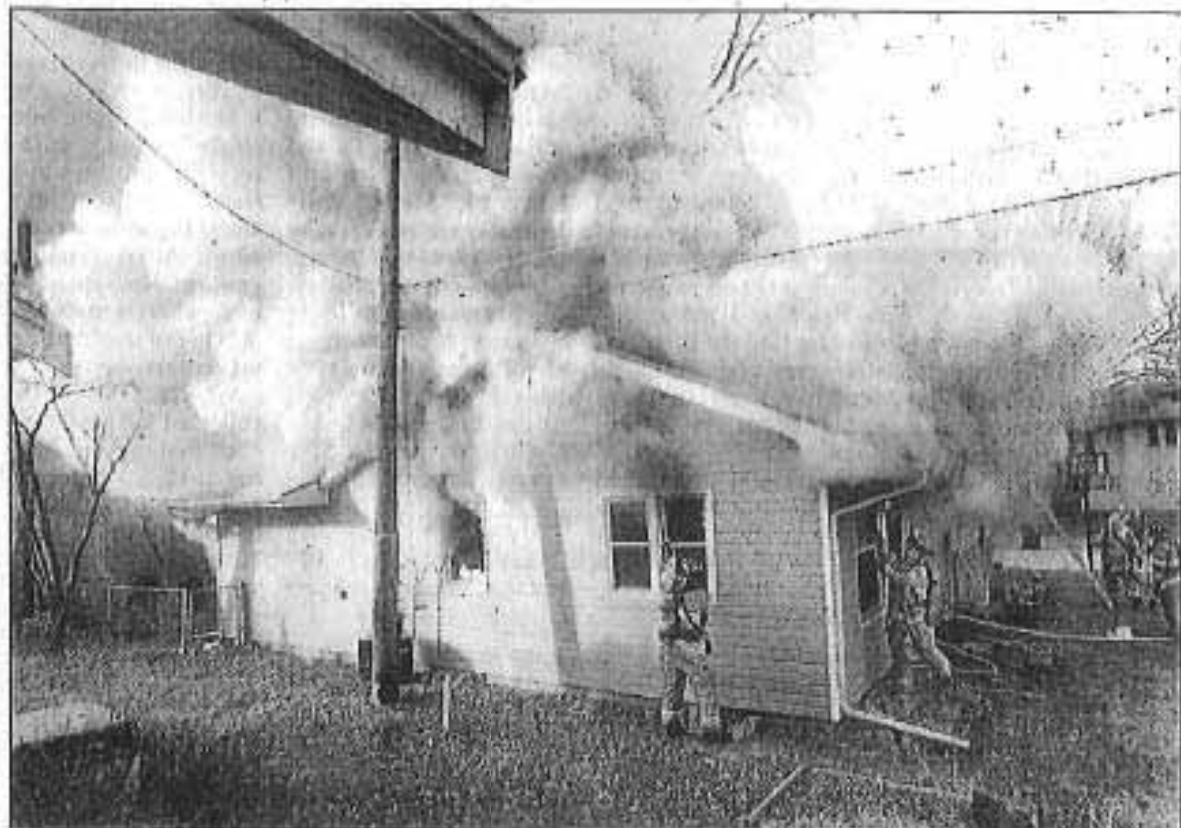
Donations may also be mailed to:

Bloomington Municipal Credit Union
602 South Gridley
Bloomington, IL 61701

"Thornton Fire Relief" Account #21670

For more information on service, please contact Connect Transit at 828-9833 or 828-7511 (TDD).

Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System has provided safe, reliable and affordable public transportation to the Bloomington-Normal community since 1972.



The Pantagraph/STEVE SMEDLEY

Normal firefighters battle a house fire at 19 Payne Place on Thursday morning and were able to get the blaze under control in 25 minutes. The house was a total loss. To view a photo gallery and video of the fire, go to www.pantagraph.com.

House a total loss

By Kevin Barlow
kbarlow@pantagraph.com

NORMAL — A Thursday morning fire left a family homeless and caused \$85,000 worth of damage to a home at 19 Payne Place in Normal.

Neighbors called 911 at 9:10 a.m. and reported seeing flames and heavy smoke at the rear of the residence owned by Steve Thornton, said Normal Fire Department spokesman Matt Swaney.

It was the third fire in less than a week in which a McLean County family was displaced by fire. A Jan. 18 fire damaged a home in Colfax, and a fire Tuesday destroyed a mobile home in Bloomington.

The first engine companies arriving at Payne Place pulled hose lines into the house and made an interior attack on the



Normal firefighter Jeff Hilton pulls off his breathing air mask as steam rolls off his body after making the initial attack on a house fire at 19 Payne Place on Thursday morning.

fire. Firefighters broke windows on the single-story home and used a saw to cut ventilation holes in the roof to ventilate the extreme heat and toxic

gasses from inside the home.

Firefighters had the fire under control in about 25 minutes, but they remained on scene for another hour to look for any remaining hot spots.

The home was considered a total loss, Swaney said.

The Thorntons and their son were not home at the time, Normal Fire Chief Mick Humer said.

Temperatures were in the mid-teens at the time of the fire.

"It makes it more difficult because the water freezes so fast and we have to be extra careful of slipping on ice," Humer said.

There were no injuries reported, and a cause has not yet been determined.

The Bloomington Fire Department's Rapid Intervention Team assisted.

The

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Two-Alarm Fire Destroys Home on Payne Place



Photo by Matt Swanson/VFD

A swift-moving fire ripped through the Steve Thornton family home on Payne Place Thursday, January 24, caused an estimated \$85,000 in damage and left them homeless.

Normal Fire Department responded to 19 Payne Place at 9:10am this morning at the report of a house on fire. Neighbors called 9-1-1 and reported seeing flames coming from the rear of the residence and heavy smoke.

The first arriving engine companies pulled hose lines into the house and made an interior attack on the fire. A second alarm was struck which calls in off-duty Normal Firefighters to man the stations during the incident and requests a Rapid Intervention Team from Bloomington Fire Department. Firefighters broke

windows and used a saw to cut ventilation holes in the roof to ventilate the extreme heat and toxic gasses from inside the home.

Firefighters had the fire under control in about 25 minutes, but remained on scene for another hour to perform overhaul and look for any remaining hot spots.

The fire caused an estimated \$85,000 in damage. The house sustained heavy fire, smoke and water damage throughout the structure and is considered a total loss.

The residents were not home at the time of the fire. There were no injuries reported.

Normal Fire Department investigators determined the cause of the fire to be accidental.

See related story above.

Relief Fund Created for Bus Driver's Home Destroyed by Fire

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In an effort to help and show support to this 35 year dedicated employee an account has been set up at Bloomington Municipal Credit Union for Steve Thornton's Family. The account is called "Thornton Fire Relief" and the account is # 21670.

Anyone wishing to donate may do so through the Bloomington Municipal Credit Union account. Donations may also be mailed to: Bloomington Municipal Credit Union, 602 South Gridley, Bloomington, IL 61701 "Thornton Fire Relief" Account #21670

For more information on service, please contact Connect Transit at 828-9833 or 828-7511 (TDD).

10 years later, hero sees other side of tragedy

Man who saved family from fire loses home, possessions in blaze

By Kevin Barlow
kbarlow@pantagraph.com

BLOOMINGTON — A bus driver for Connecticut Transit, who was credited with saving the lives of a family of five from a fire 10 years ago, described the

feeling of losing his own home to fire last week as "overwhelming."

Steve Thornton, his wife, Rebecca, and son, Reese, lost their home Jan. 24 at 19 Payne Place, and now co-workers are collecting money to help

"It's really devastating what happened," said Mick Ferrell, president of Amalgamated Transit Union International Local 752. "He is well-liked and would give anything to anyone and that is why we have worked to set up an account."

In December 2002, Thornton, while driving for what then was known

How to help

Donations to the Thornton family fire relief fund may be made to Bloomington Municipal Credit Union, 602 S. Gridley St., Bloomington, IL 61701.

as the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System, noticed billowing smoke early one morning along his route on West Olive Street. He tracked

down the source to a house and pounded on doors until the family of five was alerted and able to escape.

Because of that, he was
SEE TRAGEDY / PAGE A7

TRAGEDY

FROM A1

recognized in a video honoring transit worker heroes at the 2004 Amalgamated Transit Union International convention.

On Jan. 24, Thornton was driving west on Vernon Avenue in Normal in his own car when he pulled over to allow a fire truck to roll past him. A few minutes later, he found the entrance to the Payne Place neighborhood blocked and he feared for the safety of his neighbors.

When he exited his car, he found firefighters working on his own house.

"I was shocked," he said.

Five investigators say a

kitchen appliance malfunctioned and started the fire while no one was home. The home was declared a total loss, and damage was estimated at \$85,000.

"One day you have everything you need and the next, you don't have anything to your name," Thornton said, who is on medical leave from his bus route. "It's an overwhelming feeling, and until you live through the experience, you can just never understand it."

The family has insurance, Thornton said, and is staying at a Bloomington-Normal hotel.

A fund to raise donations to help offset expenses has also been established.

"He is an excellent guy, a good guy and a good sports fan," said friend and co-worker Brian Enata. "We call him Mr. Oakland Raider because he had this room of Oakland Raider memorabilia that was lost. But that's not what he is known for. His passengers will tell you he is an excellent driver and really cares about everyone."

The Thorntons plan to rebuild, in part, because they don't want to leave the neighborhood.

"We have the greatest neighbors and we love them," he said. "I am amazed at the outpouring of everyone in this community. The people of Bloomington-Normal are very special people."

2/10/13

LOC



Bill Flick

‘... See the man on front in Big Bird bottom ...’

On TV, with all the homicides, car chases and murder probes, the life of a police officer can be awfully high stress.

In fact, you could wonder if, during the commercials, officers are out renewing their Paxil prescriptions, or at least stopping off at Kroger to use one of those self-test blood-pressure sleeves.

But in real life?

If you spend time next to a police scanner in a newsroom, you learn that officers are not only Sgt. Friday, but also a Girl Friday, especially when it comes to tons of odd calls and bizarre requests.

Like, just over the past few months ...

▷ A man called Bloomington police to say he'd just arrived home to find a Diet Pepsi on his kitchen counter and he does not drink Diet Pepsi. He asked police to come out and fingerprint it.

▷ Police took a call that four women on West Olive Street were standing in the middle of the street, arguing about being lesbians.

▷ Police were called to a Normal apartment where a faucet had broken and water was spraying; the resident ~~was~~ ^{wasn't}

offered the

water would short-circuit her battery-powered wheelchair.

▷ A sparrow reportedly flew directly into a home on Dream Drive.

▷ Police in Bloomington were looking for a man reportedly walking down West Front Street, last seen wearing only the bottom half of a Big Bird outfit.

▷ In Normal, a public transit bus reportedly hit a skunk and the smell was so rancid, no one wanted to get near the bus.

▷ While the ice cream truck was trolling a Bloomington neighborhood, a resident trying to take a nap called police to demand they stop the truck and force the driver to turn down the volume of "The Sting" that it was playing continually over its P.A. system.

▷ Police got a call about a man in Bloomington going door-to-door, offering to rake yards — except he was going door-to-door at night and didn't have a rake.

▷ In McLean County, a woman called sheriff's police to report someone was making phone calls to her home and only giggling on the other end before hanging up. Later, officers discovered it was her son and a friend calling her from the basement.

SEB FLICK / PAGE A4

1/27/13



Bill Flick

In amazing times, 'smart' phone may be most amazing

As a man in his 50s, let me just say I've seen some amazing technological advances in my lifetime.

When I was a kid, our phone was connected to a wall and my sister and I had to take turns waiting to use it.

We turned on the TV, had to wait a minute for it to "warm up" and the color was so awful, Ed Sullivan's face was either asparagus green or so crimson, you wondered about his blood pressure.

We had one car ... for the entire family.

We even had to make our own ice cubes!

(This is all the truth, kids ... I would not kid here.)

But only a few dozen years later? All of life is different. Change itself is ever-changing.

In fact, the other night during all the inauguration proceedings, a CNN panelist asked a question I'd not pondered: Technologically, had Barack Obama's first four years also witnessed the biggest changes in the history of simple, everyday American routine — thanks to all that has come into prominence, like everything wireless, online shopping, Google, the "explosion" of websites and (drum roll here) the "smart" phone.

As a curmudgeon and longtime crank, all I will say is this: Of all the tools of innovation since the '70s, I don't think any thing is as big as that little "smart" phone.

They used to talk about how amazing a personal computer was.

But have you thought about your phone lately?

On my own phone, while still just a novice, I now keep a weekly grocery list and what I need at the drug store or Sam's. It stores hundreds of phone numbers, has a calendar that logs all my times and dates, keeps my music and let's me roam the Internet. It has GPS, gives me the 15-day forecast, allows me to post on Facebook and awakens me each morning with harp chords in the key of B-flat.

It has a dictation app in which I speak into my phone and it transcribes my voice and sends whatever I said to my computer at the newspaper office downtown. It counts my calories and finds me the nearest restaurant, service station or hospital. I can play Yahtzee, check my stocks, make a bank deposit, see what's on TV, watch a show, figure out my restaurant tip or simply wave my phone at Walgreens or CVS to get a discount.

SEE FLICK / PAGE A4

FLICK

FROM A3

With one finger-punch, I can see — at this very moment — the location of the “Blue E” bus from B-N Connect Transit that passes near my home, or instantly check on a movie at any theater in town — and get a preview, too.

I can read stories in this newspaper, map my walk or run, check my heart rate,

hold my phone to the sky at night and have the constellations identified, use it as a flashlight or wall level, check my flight on a live radar or ask for the price of that home for sale over on Inglewood Lane.

I can take pictures and, with three little lenses (telephoto, macro and fisheye) I bought myself for Christmas, can also get a better photo with my phone than with my camera.

I wonder how incredible a

kid must have felt when his dad came home from work one day on his horse and exclaimed, “Hey, I have something out front that’s weird but cool — it’s called a car!”

I wonder how amazed folks must have been when in the ‘50s they pushed aside their radios and, via something called “television,” got a moving picture.

And now, here I am, with a “smart” phone.

What’ll they be doing by

the end of Obama’s second term? Taking chest X-rays? Preprogramming my car for the drive to work? Warning me of a heart attack (Thursday’s “Rock Center” with Brian Williams had a feature on an app)? Writing this column?

(OK, you can hope, right?)

Hey, as they joke on that TV commercial, did I even mention I also can make phone calls with it?

www.pantagraph.com

This column? Just for fun, it was sent to the newspaper Friday — using

my phone. Amazing times.

Bill Flick is at bill.flick@pantagraph.com.

