

**CONNECT TRANSIT BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**BOARD MEETING MINUTES – MAY 25, 2021**

**351 Wylie Drive**  
**Connect Transit – Board Room (virtual)**  
**Normal, Illinois 61761**

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held on May 25, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. at Connect Transit with Board Members participating in the meeting virtually.

TRUSTEES PRESENT:                   Trustee Judy Buchanan (arrived at 4:45 p.m.)  
Trustee Linda Foster (arrived at 4:40 p.m.)  
Vice-Chairman Julie Hile  
Trustee Tim McCue  
Trustee Deb Presley  
Trustee Mandava Rao  
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

CITY MANAGERS:                   Town of Normal Manager Pam Reece – Present (arrived at 4:50 p.m.)  
Bloomington Deputy City Manager, Billy Tyus – (arrived at 5:01 p.m.)

STAFF PRESENT:                   Mark Peterson, Interim General Manager  
Jill Baxter, Board Clerk  
Steve Stockton, IT Manager  
Patrick Kuebrich, Finance Director  
Jeff Holtke, Marketing Manager  
Brady Lange, Maintenance Manager / Procurement  
Shelly Perry, Operations Manager

The regular Board Meeting of the Connect Transit Board of Trustees was called to order by Chairman Ryan Whitehouse at 4:30 p.m. Roll call was taken and Trustee McCue led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Approval of April 12; April 22; April 27; May 6; May 11; and May 19, 2021, Board Meeting Minutes
2. Disbursements for the month of April 2021
3. Monthly Statistical Report for April 2021

4. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report (*Addendum*)
5. Cornerstone Illinois Weekly Update (*Addendum*)

Chairman Whitehouse called for a *Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda*. Vice Chairman Hile so moved, seconded by Trustee Foster.

**DISCUSSION**

Chairman Whitehouse pointed out that the *Addendums* have not yet been received and will be sent out to the Trustees immediately upon receipt.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Foster; Vice-Chairman Hile; Trustee McCue; Trustee Presley; Trustee Rao;  
Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None.

The Board approved the *Consent Agenda*.

**NEW BUSINESS**

*Presentation Regarding "Go Safe Program" by Jennifer Sicks and Raymond Lai  
of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission*

Interim General Manager, Mark Peterson, introduced Raymond Lai, Executive Director of MCRPC, together with Jennifer Sicks who is the Senior Transportation Planner for MCRPC. Connect has a great partnership with MCRPC and Connect Transit does a lot of things cooperatively with MCRPC. This program is one example where Connect has been involved with a number of other agencies and institutions throughout the county, working on the *Go Safe Program*.

(See PowerPoint presentation attached.)

**DISCUSSION**

Interim General Manager, Mark Peterson, commented that the graphic which was astonishing was the safety transit versus other vehicle modes which was ten times safer in public transportation. That is the clear role for public transportation and why Connect Transit is trying to get more people to ride the buses because just by virtue it is safer and that means striving for better service, more responsive service, more convenient service, which is not easy. He also stated that the thought that micro-mobility, which comes in all kinds of forms, including bike-sharing, is something that we, as Connect Transit – an organization, need to look at closely to try to efficiently expand and improve our level of service throughout the community without incurring huge additional costs.

Trustee Buchanan wondered if the folks in regional planning can provide the slide presentation to the Trustees via email. There are a lot of opportunities for Connect Transit to work with in this program.

Vice-Chairman Hile commented that this program presents a good opportunity for Connect to highlight what a great and safe option we are for our community.

Trustee Foster commented on the conversation about safety and how important it is, not only on the business side but as well as the ridership. We want to make sure our riders feel safe with our drivers and the ability to get from one place to the other without any interruptions. It is very important in a variety of ways and safety should always be improved upon. That is something that you do not stop doing and should always be getting better at it. We not only want to provide the best service but also the safest service.

There was no further discussion.

*Recommendation for FY 2022 Property and Casualty Insurance Renewal*

Chairman Whitehouse entertained a *Motion for Recommendation for FY 2022 Property and Casualty Insurance Renewal*, moved by Trustee Rao, seconded by Trustee Foster.

Interim General Manager Peterson stated that Pat Kuebrich is on the call and he can drill down on the details. However, briefly, the renewal was not as good as we would have hoped as there are two coverage categories that hit us pretty hard this year. One is *Worker's Compensation* in which we had a big increase last year which is due in large part of our experience. We will be having conversations with United Healthcare, the carrier, to try to look at some new strategies on how to address some of our comp issues and be a little more aggressive on the loss control as well as the prevention side of the equation. We had really good experience the last few years and we have bad years from time to time and this is one of them, giving us an opportunity to redouble our efforts. The other category was auto liability which also shows a big increase. Some of that is driven by market conditions in the insurance industry but also the new buses that we will be taking delivery of that are covered under this policy are much more expensive than our older diesel bus fleet and that is reflected in part in the insurance premium. This is due to auto liability and partly to market and the value of our assets. Other than that we are in good shape. We did look at some other carriers just to make sure we are getting a good pricing but frankly, the comparisons were not advantageous so we are recommending the same program as last year.

Chairman Whitehouse inquired if the Board could be updated on this? Did we budget for this since it is a pretty substantial increase?

Pat Kuebrich responded that it is under the budget for this increase. Normally every year he places a little extra in the budget just in case the insurance rates increase so he did the same this past year. It is within the budget for next year. Workers Comp and auto liability were the two main ones and everything else was pretty stable. The cyber liability amount through year to date is only going to be around \$3-4,000 so it wasn't a huge number.

Chairman Whitehouse asked about the numbers for Work Comp and whether or not these were COVID related, accident related? Tell us why were the numbers higher?

Interim General Manager, Mark Peterson, responded that most of these are accidents or injuries that occurred during the course of someone's employment. It may have been a shoulder injury; a trip and fall; or a variety of things and in most cases, they were preventable so we have to do a better job on the prevention side. When injuries occur, we do analyze what happened and try to take steps to resolve it but we need to be a little more proactive as well as on the back side, we need to have better loss control measures so we do our best to get people back to work as quickly as possible or, if their injuries are such that they cannot work, we need to be a little more aggressive at looking at light duty so we can get them doing other things that are within their physical capabilities but are at least productive. Again, we have talked to United Heartland, our carrier, and asked them to come in and spend some time with our Safety Director, Dave White, and other staff to try to identify areas where we can do better. Again, our experience in the past few years has been quite good but this has been a bad year and you pay the price for a bad year. We are hoping we can bring that back down and see a precipitous drop in our premium next year.

Chairman Whitehouse stated that is the price we pay for new buses and the services we provide.

There was no further discussion.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan; Trustee Foster; Vice-Chairman Hile; Trustee McCue; Trustee Presley;  
Trustee Rao; Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None.

The Board unanimously approved the *Recommendation for FY 2022 Property and Casualty Insurance Renewal*.

#### *Recommendation for Illinois State University Universal Access Agreement*

Chairman Whitehouse entertained a *Motion for Recommendation for Illinois State University Universal Access Agreement*, moved by Trustee Buchanan, seconded by Trustee McCue.

Interim General Manager, Mark Peterson, commented that he will take the next two items together as they are both Universal Access Agreements. Essentially, what we are recommending is to renew what we have existing with both Heartland and Illinois State. This is for the second half of the year – 6-month extensions – July 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. These are both identical compensation and basically identical to what we have done in the past. We did talk to both organizations about possibly making some changes to those agreements but given the uncertainty of what is going to happen in the Fall term of both schools in terms of enrollment and actual ridership, we agreed it made sense to leave them consistent for the next 6 months. However, we do hope to look at some modifications starting next year. Hopefully, this will be something the new General Manager will work out with both ISU and Heartland. Both of those institutions have some ideas on how they would like to make some modifications in the agreements and the service level, and particularly the data that we are able to gather and provide back to both institutions which not only helps us but helps them. Otherwise, these

are straight-forward and we are happy to continue our Universal Access Program with both of these important institutions as it is a lot of revenue that is important to the system.

**DISCUSSION**

Chairman Whitehouse commented that we are fortunate that we have resources and because of COVID and ISU's downturn in numbers, he believed that we are doing the right thing to extend where we are at this point but when we reopen and get moving again, there needs to be some serious conversations with the University for the service they are receiving and the amount they are contributing. It is not a criticism and we appreciate their partnership.

There was no further discussion.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan; Trustee Foster; Vice-Chairman Hile; Trustee McCue; Trustee Presley;  
Trustee Rao; Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None.

The Board unanimously approved the *Recommendation for Illinois State University Universal Access Agreement (6 months extension)*.

**Recommendation for Heartland Community College Universal Access Agreement**

Chairman Whitehouse entertained a *Motion for Recommendation for Heartland Community College Universal Access Agreement*, moved by Trustee Foster, seconded by Trustee Rao.

**DISCUSSION**

There was no discussion.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan; Trustee Foster; Vice-Chairman Hile; Trustee McCue; Trustee Presley;  
Trustee Rao; Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None.

The Board unanimously approved the *Recommendation for Heartland Community College Universal Access Agreement (6 months extension)*.

**Recommendation for One-Year Extension to the Current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Between Connect Transit and the ATU Local 752**

Chairman Whitehouse entertained a *Motion for Recommendation for One-Year Extension to the Current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Between Connect Transit and the ATU Local 752*, moved by Trustee Buchanan, seconded by Vice-Chairman Hile.

Interim General Manager commented this is one-year extension of the current *Collective Bargaining Agreement* (CBA). There were a few changes made that were identified as issues by both the Union and Management, but essentially, 95% of the current *Collective Bargaining Agreement* remains in-tact and we are simply extending for one (1) additional year. We were somewhat sensitive to a new General Manager having to lead a negotiation of the entire *Agreement* and we explained that to the Union and he gave them credit and thanked them for their willingness to come to the table and work out what he thought was a very reasonable extension for one year. Quickly summarizing, it does include a 3% hourly salary adjustment for all Union employees and that covers about 80% of the employee workforce. There were some other changes that he believes are particularly beneficial to both the system as well as the employees. We changed the Bus Cleaner Classification position which is outlined in detail in the *Memo* which is a great example of the two parties coming together and working together to solve a problem that both sides recognize and he believed it was done in a way that everybody feels good about. A long-standing issue with the Union had to do with time off for the extra drivers which currently, we give them days off, but they cannot count on them. We assign them whenever we have a gap in the schedule so we were able to work with the Union and meet them half-way and provide these extra drivers with one bid day off per week so they at least have one day off that they can count on and plan around if they have errands or appointments. A second day off would be more of a "floating" day off to accommodate the need for flexibility so that we can make sure the system is covered and those are the flexible drivers that fill in for breaks, vacations, among other things. He believed it is a reasonable Agreement and the Union membership ratified the terms on May 4, 2021. Mr. Peterson acknowledged Shelly Perry who interacts more with Union contract issues than anyone and was instrumental in this process as was Brady Lange and other members of the staff, as well as our Labor Attorney with Clark Baird & Smith.

#### **DISCUSSION**

There was no discussion.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan; Trustee Foster; Vice-Chairman Hile; Trustee McCue; Trustee Presley;  
Trustee Rao; Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None.

The Board unanimously approved the *Recommendation for One-Year Extension to the Current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Between Connect Transit and the ATU Local 752*.

#### ***Recommendation to Resume Collection of Fares on June 1, 2021***

Chairman Whitehouse reminded the Board that at last month's meeting, there was a consensus of the Board to begin collecting fares on June 1, but at that time, we did not bring a *Recommendation* and *Vote* to the floor.

Chairman Whitehouse entertained a *Motion for Recommendation to Resume Collection of Fares on June 1, 2021*, moved by Trustee McCue, seconded by Trustee Rao.

Chairman Whitehouse thanked the Board for taking the steps last year in finding the revenue to provide this service to the community and our employees by allowing riders to ride fare-free for the last year. With the COVID numbers tolling down and vaccines going up, he believed this was the right move. We will go to the "One Rate For All" which the Working Group worked really hard on and he also thanked them for that. The Staff will give riders a reprieve of 30 days if a rider presents \$1.00 and not the \$1.25.

Interim General Manager, Mark Peterson, stated that staff has been working really hard on the upstart. We actually have drivers now that have never collected fares since they were hired. There has been an education for those drivers and a re-education for others. We will be implementing our mobile-ticketing app as well so we have been doing a lot of "dry runs" to make certain everything is working the way it should. We have also been doing a lot in terms of marketing the implementation of new fares and there has been a surprising amount of work to get ready for June 1.

#### **DISCUSSION**

There was no discussion.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan; Trustee Foster; Vice-Chairman Hile; Trustee McCue; Trustee Presley;  
Trustee Rao; Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None.

The Board unanimously approved the *Recommendation to Resume Collection of Fares on June 1, 2021*.

#### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

##### *Returning to In-Person Board Meetings*

Chairman Whitehouse reminded the Board that in June we will open back up at Connect Transit and masks for non-vaccinated people and on all public transit, masks are still required. Starting in June, the Chairman extended the invitation to start having Board Meetings in-person again in the Connect Transit Board Room. During the pandemic, the Governor issued an Executive Order that said that these meetings could be done via Zoom, but when the Governor rescinds the Order, being in-person will be a requirement unless traveling for work. It is not required if you are not comfortable in June and we'll still be doing Zoom but he was encouraging and asking if Members are able, to come to Connect Transit as he believed it was time. Some of the Board Members have never met each other in-person. We will not be asking you if you are vaccinated. He freely admitted that he is fully vaccinated.

### Update on GM Search

The second item the Chairman reported on was the GM search process. At the last meeting, the Board approved a sub-committee of the Board to provide a search committee and he appointed Vice-Chairman Hile, Trustee McCue and himself to do that. We have met with Mr. Boylan, our consultant, and Mark Peterson. It was more of a process meeting and we have a process in place going forward. Mr. Boylan recommended that next week we should have more information to share.

### **INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

#### Covid Update

Mr. Peterson stated that even though the CDC has made a recent modification in the guidelines regarding social distancing, Connect Transit, like other transit agencies are governed by the rules of the *Transportation Safety Administration* and they have not changed their protocols so we are still obligated to continue to mask and continue to social distance, which we are – even in the office and in the maintenance garage, and certainly on buses. Even the CDC guidelines require masks on buses and until the TSA changes its protocols, we will continue to observe all of the safety measures the CDC has suggested are appropriate and we will continue to require anyone that enters the building to be masked. We are looking at slowing relaxing our bus cleaning protocols. We are still on an every 4-hour cleaning protocol so that all of the interior surfaces are wiped down every 4 hours. We are looking at, as we get into June, relaxing those a little bit. First of all, we are following the science and the science is now indicating that transmission through surface interaction is not nearly as significant as we initially thought it was. That doesn't mean it is not important to have clean surfaces but maybe not every 4 hours. We are still talking about this internally and will report to you what our plan is to make certain you are comfortable with that. It would be a gradual pull-back.

#### Update on Resumption of Fares

Mr. Peterson stated that Jeff Holtke, Connect's Marketing Manager, is on the line to talk about what we have been doing in terms of marketing the resumption of fares and the "One Fare For All". Jeff has been holding internal meetings on a regular basis with a variety of staff expressing their ideas and input, not only the management team but drivers as well. He has been pushing all sorts of things out on social media as well as doing a lot of advertising on the buses, making certain that the community understands this is coming. Mr. Holtke took the floor to report an overview of what he has been doing the last 30 days.

Mr. Holtke reported that once the meeting concluded last month, we went ahead and rolled out the information on our website. He updated the fliers he had previously printed and those went out on all of the buses on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April. We worked on new display graphics for the monitors inside the buses as well. We attacked social media and we are continuing to queue multiple posts a week so the community is aware. We have also printed about a dozen ads for the outsides of our buses. Some space is a little limited right now with advertisers but we did have enough room to get about a dozen signs that promote that the fares are upstarting on June 1<sup>st</sup> with "One Rate For All". We also have audio



announcements running on the buses when it hits certain points on the routes. Typically, when it pulls into downtown and uptown, an audio announcement will come over stating we are resuming fares on June 1. On the arrival and departure monitors in uptown, we have that scrolling across the bottom of the ticker so when people are looking to see when their bus departs, riders will see the announcement. We have also scheduled radio spots and will have more spots in the next week with "Big Mike" on MAGIC to talk about mobile ticketing and the fares coming back on June 1. We hit a lot of the shelters with the \$1.25 graphic as well. He stated that about a year ago, he ordered some cellphone wallets that stick on the back of your cellphone for debit cards or credit cards and we will have a little information sheet that can go into those and we'll hand those out for the mobile-ticketing side of things. We have met a couple of times as a staff and we plan to be out in the public on Tuesday when fares do resume and answer questions and letting people know that there is a 30-day grace period and to be prepared. We are informing people of the new app to download for mobile-ticketing and we have come up with different ways to inform the public on the \$.75 they get back (\$1.25/ride) if they pay \$2.00, they will get a change card for \$.75. We are working on some videos now that the system is all set up on our end, we can shoot those videos and get those out this week as well to help promote that. We will be out most of next week and partly into the next week after that just to get the awareness up to speed. We have exhausted quite a few of our spots on the buses and we filled as many spots as we had open. We are excited to get going again and to get back to charging fares.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Trustee Buchanan stated that she was interested in Connect's communication plan and thanked Mr. Holtke for the update. She thanked him for getting the message out that we are resuming fare collection and what it is going to be. Does any of the verbiage in the ads indicate "continuation of reliable service"; "we're all about safety"; "we're all about getting you where you need to be"; or is it exclusively directed at what the fare will be and when it will be resumed?

Mr. Holtke stated that he could work "safety" into that and certainly after hearing MCRPC's presentation this afternoon, working that back into some of our messaging. "Transportation getting you to where you want to go" has always been part of our marketing all along – getting "Connected" has been our umbrella that encompasses all of that. It's nice to see events resuming so that we can get back out into the community and bring attention to that at the various scheduled sites for the summer. We are excited to get back out and continue to push that message.

There was no further discussion.

#### **TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS**

Trustee McCue recognized Mr. Holtke and the marketing folks for the work that they are doing. In particular, Mr. McCue acknowledged that getting out in the community is something that really sets us apart. Trustee McCue stated that Mr. Peterson has been highlighting the work of the staff since he came onto the Board. He believes that this is just another example of the excellent customer service and thanked the staff for all of the good work.

Trustee Foster also recognized the staff and the work they do as we have been living in an unprecedented year. We went through something that we have never gone through before with COVID and the adjustments and flexibility of staff to continue to forge ahead and to allow transit to be a choice ridership. Even though we are going back to the collection of fares, she is interested in what our riders are thinking. Any comments that we may receive in that regard, passing comments on to us would be beneficial because there were a group of folks that worked hard on that and we wanted to make sure that we hear from the community. Thank you to everyone who have done things to keep this moving by keeping our buses on the street and keeping our drivers and administrators employed.

Vice-Chairman Hile acknowledged the amount of work that is reflected in this month's *Agenda*. The number of projects that have been brought to a vote and she would reinforce what Trustees McCue and Foster have said that a lot of that work bubbles up from staff and she believes we have a really hard-working and capable team. Mr. Peterson has continued to serve us well as an Interim and it is not a small lift right now.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES**

Chairman Whitehouse commented to the Board in advance of entering into *Executive Session*. Twice a year the Board is required to review *Executive Minutes* to decide if we want to release those or keep them confidential. Most of our *Executive Minutes* are either personnel issues or collective bargaining issues. If there is no desire to enter *Executive Session* to talk about those, it would then be an acceptable practice to move to keep those confidential until our next review. Of course, as Trustees, if at any time you would like to look at the *Executive Minutes*, you can contact the Board Clerk and review any of them. Is there any interest to go into debate of the release of these or are you all comfortable with moving to keep all *Executive Minutes* confidential until the next time we review in November?

Trustee Buchanan commented that in the past, we generally had a recommendation from the staff as to the nature of them and they would recommend that we either release or not release.

Chairman Whitehouse stated that Mr. Peterson has recommended that we keep them confidential at this time.

Mr. Peterson stated that has been the tradition and you are allowed to do that under the statute. The state requires that at least you consider the *Executive Minutes* semi-annually and whether or not to keep them confidential and at this juncture, he recommended that we keep them confidential.

Trustee Buchanan moved to keep the *Executive Session Minutes* confidential, seconded by Trustee Rao.

AYE: Trustee Buchanan; Trustee Foster; Vice-Chairman Hile; Trustee McCue; Trustee Presley;  
Trustee Rao; Chairman Whitehouse

Motion carried and the Board approved to keep the *Executive Session Minutes* confidential and chose not to release any of the prior *Executive Minutes*.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Whitehouse entertained a Motion to Adjourn Regular Session, moved by Trustee Foster, seconded by Trustee Rao.

AYE: Trustee Buchanan; Trustee Foster; Vice-Chairman Hile; Trustee McCue; Trustee Presley; Trustee Rao; Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None.

Motion carried and the Board adjourned the regular monthly meeting of May 25, 2021, at 5:40 p.m.

  
Trustee Judy Buchanan, Board Secretary

  
Jill Baxter, Board Clerk

