

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
June 24, 2025, 4:30 p.m.
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at July 22, 2025 Meeting

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Secretary Linda Foster called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL:

Board Clerk, Janice Crago, recorded attendance via roll call.

Trustees Present:

Trustee Gina Bianchi
Trustee Judy Buchanan
Secretary Linda Foster
Trustee Mandava Rao
Trustee Elicssha Sanders

Trustees Absent:

Vice Chair Julie Hile
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

City Managers Present:

City Manager Jeff Jurgens
City Manager Pam Reece (4:40)

City Managers Absent:

None

Staff Present:

David Braun, Managing Director
Brady Lange, Deputy Managing Director
Alex Giantamidis, Transit Planner
Ashley Strupek, Procurement Manager
Charlie Busse, Maintenance Manager
Janice Crago, Board Clerk
Mark Huffman, Marketing Manager
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Shelly Moss, Operations Director
Stephanie Butler, HR Manager
Steve Stockton, IT Manager

Guest(s) Present:

Hannah Cullerton, Lauterbach & Amen, LLP (Virtual)

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MISSION STATEMENT:

Secretary Foster led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and read the Connect Transit Mission Statement.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

E. CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of Financial Information for May 2025
- b. Monthly Statistical Report for May 2025
- c. Approval of Minutes for April 22, 2025 – Regular and Executive Sessions
- d. Approval of Minutes for May 27, 2025 – Regular Session
- e. Approval of Minutes for June 13, 2025 – Strategic Plan Workshop and Special Meeting
- f. Cardinal Infrastructure; Federal Report
- g. Cornerstone; Illinois Weekly Update

Secretary Foster called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Buchanan.

Discussion:

David Braun, Managing Director, stated an expense that stood out in the Financial Report was for a gravel lot. He explained the gravel lot is being used for the buses that are out of commission, which makes room for employee parking since we are growing and running out of parking spaces. He stated the other expenses are routine expenses.

Trustee Buchanan noted that Miscellaneous Revenue increased significantly and asked if we knew why.

Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director, stated that it was due to interest income.

Mr. Braun stated the Income Statement reflects several line items exceeded what we had planned and that we will take a deep dive into those to see what happened so we can plan for the future. He stated we are at 87% of our expenses when we should be at 91%, showing we are below expenses; and revenue is above expected.

Mr. Braun explained the Performance Statistics were very close to what we budgeted for the year, with only a slight decrease in ridership. He said we have reexamined the ridership numbers for Mobility, and we are very close to what was budgeted for the year to date; FLEX continues to grow, with new riders every week; Fixed route operates more efficiently at 19.6 passengers per hour and 4.6 passengers per hour on FLEX, both improvements; Mobility is down a little but that correlates to ridership being down; Operator pay hours per service hour is up, with Connect budgeting for about 1.3 and actual being 1.32 - this means we have paid a little more than anticipated for payroll and training.

Mr. Braun stated the Cardinal Infrastructure report did not contain anything that would significantly impact Connect Transit. The FTA is continuing to work on the new Administration's goals, and we have not heard anything negative that will be happening in the future.

Mr. Braun stated the Cornerstone report showed they were successful in securing a reappropriation of \$3m for Connect Transit, which was originally appropriated back in 2018 for the transit center but never put into the budget. If the budget passes this year, we will be able to start drawing down from those funds. Cornerstone also worked on a legislative amendment to allow e-mirrors on buses, which would be safer for our Operators, but are currently not allowed in the state. This did not pass in the regular session, but they anticipate working through it in the veto session. He stated the

Transit Reforms passed the Senate but did not pass the House. The Transit Reforms are meant to solve an issue with the RTA in Chicago, and since it did not pass, Chicago [transit systems] will have some problems. Our reforms were for downstate to secure additional funding for the next 20 years. We will continue to work with the RTA and the Illinois Public Transit Association to look for transit reforms but do not expect anything to happen until 2026.

Secretary Foster asked if the Trustees had any questions or comments for Mr. Braun.

Secretary Foster called for a vote on the motion on the floor since there were no questions or comments and asked the Clerk to call the roll.

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Trustee Bianchi, Trustee Buchanan, Secretary Foster, Trustee Rao, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

The motion to approve the Consent Agenda was **approved**.

F. NEW BUSINESS:

a. FY24 Audit Results – Informational

Mr. Braun explained the audit was a little later this year due to having a new audit firm and gave Mr. Kuebrich the floor.

Mr. Kuebrich introduced Hanna Cullerton from Lauterbach and Amen to present virtually.

Ms. Cullerton thanked the Finance Department for their help completing the audit and congratulated Connect Transit on receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the eighth year in a row, stating it is a very prestigious award. She stated Connect Transit received an unmodified/clean opinion, which is the highest opinion they can give as auditors.

Ms. Cullerton then referred to two documents on screen and available upon request through the Board Clerk:

1. Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System Annual Comprehensive Report for FY24
2. Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System Management Letter for FY24

Trustee Buchanan congratulated Connect Transit.

Secretary Foster stated it was always nice to hear about receiving certificates of excellence and high opinions, and thanked Ms. Cullerton for her report.

b. Recommendation for State Lobbyist Contract Extension – Roll Call Vote

Secretary Foster called for a motion to authorize the Managing Director to execute a single-year contract extension with Cornerstone Government Affairs to provide state representation in Illinois.

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Discussion:

Mr. Braun stated we are pursuing a one-year extension with our current lobbying services given their familiarity with what we are trying to accomplish and do at the state level. He explained Cornerstone has been supportive of Connect and helped us get grant funding, get some legislative actions in front of legislators due to having great relationships with those legislators. He then gave the floor to Ashley Strupek, Procurement Manager.

Ms. Strupek explained Connect Transit has contracted with Cornerstone Government Affairs for seven years to provide state representation in Illinois. State lobbying services helps increase our return on state dollars through grant programs, legislation, and regulatory actions. Lobbying services also help Connect Transit maintain and develop relationships with our state delegation and state agencies to promote and protect the interests of Connect Transit.

Over the past year, Cornerstone Government Affairs has helped Connect Transit introduce legislation to replace side mirrors on buses with digital e-mirrors, supported the Downstate request regarding stabilizing our funding source, and lobbied to get the remaining \$3 million in appropriated DCEO funding for the transit center in the state budget, finally allowing us to spend it towards the transit center development.

This single-year contract extension will cost \$4,000 per month, which is the same rate as the current agreement. Federal and state regulations require the use of local funds to pay for these services.

Trustee Buchanan asked if this was the same amount we've been paying.

Ms. Strupek confirmed it is the same amount.

Secretary Foster asked if there were any other questions or comments for Ms. Strupek.

Secretary Foster called for a vote on the motion on the floor since there were no additional questions or comments and asked the Clerk to call the roll.

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Trustee Bianchi, Trustee Buchanan, Secretary Foster, Trustee Rao, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

The motion to authorize the Managing to execute a single-year contract extension with Cornerstone Government Affairs to provide state representation in Illinois was **approved**.

c. Recommendation for Federal Lobbyist Contract Extension – Roll Call Vote

Secretary Foster called for a motion to authorize the Managing Director to execute a single-year contract extension with Cardinal Infrastructure to provide federal representation in Washington, DC.

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Bianchi.

Discussion:

Mr. Braun stated we have been working with Cardinal for quite some time, and they have been doing a great job representing us. He stated we meet with them bi-weekly to discuss what is happening at the federal level and they share advice on everything from the type of grants that are available and how to apply for them, to other FTA issues we are facing. He then gave Ms. Strupek the floor

Ms. Strupek shared that Connect Transit has contracted with Cardinal Infrastructure for eight years to provide federal representation in Washington, DC. Federal lobbying services help increase our return on federal dollars through grant programs, legislation, and regulatory actions. Lobbying services also help Connect Transit maintain and develop relationships with our Congressional Delegation and federal agencies to promote and protect the interests of Connect Transit. Finally, lobbying services provide information and insights into funding opportunities and share Notices of Funding Opportunities, as well as insights into success factors for funding applications.

Over the past year, Cardinal Infrastructure has helped Connect Transit navigate through the FTA approvals process for the transit center, communicate information regarding vehicle issues from other clients, identify and communicate to our legislators' recommended changes for the upcoming transit reauthorization bill, and research specific issues including rural funding, e-mirrors, and grant research. Given the upcoming transit reauthorization and Cardinal's familiarity with our issues, Connect Transit believes a one-year extension would serve us better than a competitive procurement.

This one-year contract extension will cost \$7,000 per month, which is the same rate as the current agreement. Federal and state regulations require the use of local funds to pay for these services.

Trustee Buchanan stated it has been a good investment for us.

Secretary Foster asked if there were any more questions or comments.

Secretary Foster called for a vote on the motion on the floor since there were no additional questions or comments and asked the Clerk to call the roll.

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Trustee Bianchi, Trustee Buchanan, Secretary Foster, Trustee Rao, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

The motion to authorize the Managing Director to execute a single-year contract extension with Cardinal Infrastructure to provide federal representation in Washington, DC was **approved**.

d. Route Modification Discussion – Informational

Mr. Braun stated that one of our goals is to make our system as efficient as possible for our passengers. In order to make sure we achieve that goal, we are continually analyzing our performance, and we recently found that we are missing the major employers that we feel would benefit [from transit], we are duplicating some services and areas, and not running some of the services as efficiently as we could. He stated that our Transit Planner, Alex Giantamidis, will be giving a presentation of the proposed modifications we would like to make. Before the

modifications can take place we will hold public engagement sessions, then come back to the Board at the July 22 meeting for final approval. Mr. Braun reminded the Trustees that this presentation is informational only and gave the floor to Mr. Giantamidis.

Mr. Giantamidis referred to an onscreen presentation available as part of the Managing Director's Presentation available online.

Jeff Jurgens, Bloomington City Manager, asked if Connect was following the IGA updates done in 2023 for these proposed modifications.

Mr. Braun confirmed Connect is following the process outlined in the new IGA and made sure it was not 20% of the route mileage or hours.

Mr. Braun explained the cost of these modifications can be afforded because of some delays in our ability to purchase microtransit vehicles for the services that were planned to start in November, which we hope to now start in April. Because of that change, we can make these modifications and improve people's access to service.

Secretary Foster asked about the financial impact.

Mr. Braun stated it will not impact this year's budget but it will impact next year's budget so we will have to take a hard look at next year's services.

Trustee Buchanan asked how we came up with the larger employers and other locations.

Mr. Giantamidis stated that people have come up at events or called us and asked if we go to those places or if we would consider going there.

Mark Huffman, Marketing Manager, stated that Lifelong access misses the buses near them often and has stated they would like a better route near them many times.

Trustee Bianchi stated she appreciates the work that has been put into these modifications, the fact they are in response to the needs of the community and not just finance driven.

Secretary Foster thanked Mr. Giantamidis for listening to the employees and the riders.

Secretary Foster asked if there were any more questions or comments.

Secretary Foster stated we would move to the next item on the agenda since there were no more questions or comments.

e. Route Naming Discussion – Informational

Mr. Braun stated that with the route modifications we would like to make a naming change and that the strategic plan talks about leveraging projects for a positive customer experience and making the system more convenient and understandable. He explained our current system uses colors and that it is understandable for those who use it – where it goes and how it goes. Mr. Braun stated we are proposing a name change that allows people to understand where that bus will eventually end up,

whether it is Downtown Bloomington at the transfer area, or at Uptown Station in Normal or neither. He then gave the floor to Mr. Giantamidis to explain.

Mr. Giantamidis referred to an onscreen presentation available online as part of the Managing Director's Presentation.

Secretary Foster asked when we would start using the numbers system.

Mr. Giantamidis stated we would start using the numbers along with the color in August and keep the color for a year.

Mr. Braun stated we will hold two engagement sessions in Normal at the ISU Alumni Center and two in Bloomington at the Bloomington Public Library. All comments gathered at the sessions will be presented to the Board at the July 22 meeting and the changes will go into effect in August, if approved.

Secretary Foster asked how else the changes will be conveyed in addition to press releases

Mr. Braun stated that we will put a sign at the stops impacted.

Mr. Huffman stated he will be visiting the Housing Authority, local churches, promoting on social media, shelters, sharing information with the new route employers and apartments, and many other ways.

Secretary Foster asked if there were any more questions or comments.

Secretary Foster stated we would move to the next item on the agenda since there were no more questions or comments.

G. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Marketing and Communications Committee:

No report.

Finance Committee:

No report.

Operations and Planning Committee:

Mr. Braun stated he shared the route modifications with the Operations Committee ahead of time.

Trustee Bianchi stated she had no additional comments; she was very pleased with the suggested modifications and additions.

H. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Secretary Foster thanked everyone for the reports brought forth tonight and thanked Connect Transit for providing cooling buses.

I. MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Braun shared his monthly Managing Director's report available online as part of the Managing Director's Presentation.

Strategic Plan Scorecard:

Mr. Braun gave an update on how he plans to report on the Strategic Plan and the progress of updating the plan.

- Continue to report progress in regular Highlights email.
- Develop GANTT style chart including current projects, and planned objectives
- Plan Additional Meetings
 - Purpose:
 - Align with existing projects and perceived service needs.
 - Continue to review goals and objectives for relevance to current operating and funding environment.
 - Meetings:
 - 2-3 months
- Report
 - Draft: 3-4 months
 - Final: 4-6 months

Community Outreach:

- Survey for Yellow-Pink route changes
- Milwaukee UMO (fare collection equipment) visit
- Saturdays on the Square
- Connect Job Fair -two weekends
 - Social media posts, flyers and Pantagraph ads. Attracted good candidates.
- ISU Hewett & Manchester Residence Halls Incoming Freshman
 - Five banners
 - Handouts, posters, etc. & elevator wraps
- Airport disaster training
- Cooling bus downtown 6/21-6/22
- Pride Picnic cooling bus.
- Dave White, Safety & Training Director, and Norm Ellison, Training Coordinator participated in an emergency exercise at Heartland Community College on Friday, June 6, 2025. This exercise simulated a battery-electric vehicle fire in the Electric Vehicle Lab (EVL) at Heartland College and tested the response capabilities of the local agencies to a hazardous environment event on the campus.
- Dave White and Norm Ellison also participated in a disaster drill at the Central Illinois Regional Airport on Saturday, June 21, 2025. This drill is conducted every three years and tests the airport's response plans to a critical event involving aircraft. Connect Transit provided two 40ft buses that will be used to simulate the fuselage of a passenger aircraft that has crashed. We will also provide two buses in our role as a transport provider for groups of passengers who have injuries that are not life threatening or severe ("walking wounded").

Employee Outreach:

- May Employee Birthday and Work Anniversary Celebrations
- June Employee Birthday and Work Anniversary Celebrations

- Fun games in monthly newsletter
- Employee interview in monthly newsletter

Professional Development:

- Transportation Safety Institute - Transit System Safety
 - Norm Ellison, Safety & Training Coordinator
 - Kalamazoo, Michigan
 - The class provides students with an opportunity to learn the fundamentals of occupational health and safety, to conduct an evaluation of the safety measures at the host property and is a key step towards earning the Transportation Safety and Security Professional (TSSP) certification from the Transportation Safety Institute.

Recruiting:

- Positions Open
 - Bus Operator (6)
 - Customer Service Representative (1)
 - Mechanic (3)
 - Rural Service Coordinator (1)
 - Service Delivery Manager (1)
- Positions Filled
 - Bus Operator (3)
 - Microtransit Operator (1)
 - Operations Intern (1)

J. TRUSTEE COMMENTS:

Secretary Foster thanked Mr. Braun for his reports.

K. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None

L. ADJOURNMENT:

Secretary Foster called for a Motion to Adjourn.

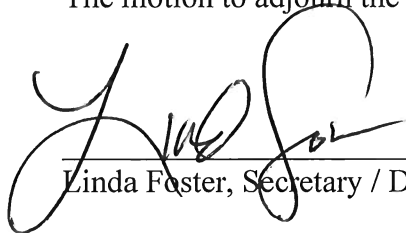
Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Sanders.

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Trustee Bianchi, Trustee Buchanan, Secretary Foster, Trustee Rao, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

The motion to adjourn the meeting was **approved at 5:35 p.m.**


 Linda Foster, Secretary / Date

7/22/25

 Janice Crago 7/22/25
 Janice Crago, Board Clerk / Date

[CONNECT TRANSIT SEAL]