

CONNECT TRANSIT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES – JULY 28, 2020

**351 Wylie Drive – Training Room
Normal, Illinois 61761**

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held on July 28, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. at Connect Transit in the Training Room with Board Members participating in the meeting virtually.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Chairman Ryan Whitehouse
Vice Chairman Julie Hile
Secretary Monica Bullington
Trustee Judy Buchanan
Trustee Mike McCurdy
Trustee Linda Foster
Trustee Tim McCue

CITY MANAGERS: Town of Normal Manager Pam Reece – Present
Bloomington City Manager Tim Gleason - Absent

STAFF PRESENT: General Manager, Isaac Thorne
Jill Baxter, Board Clerk
Martin Glaze, Chief Operating Officer
Patrick Kuebrich, Finance Director

The July monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was called to order by Chairman Ryan Whitehouse at 4:30 p.m. Roll call was taken and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes of June 23, 2020 Board Meeting
2. Monthly Statistical Report for June 2020
3. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report

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

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Chairman Ryan Whitehouse; Secretary Monica Bullington; Trustee Judy Buchanan; Trustee Mike McCurdy; Trustee Linda Foster; Trustee Tim McCue

NAY: None.

ABSTAINED: Vice Chairman Hile

The Board approved the *Consent Agenda*.

NEW BUSINESS

Recommendation to Extend Suspension of Fares

Chairman Whitehouse called for a *Motion for Recommendation to Extend Suspension of Fares*. Trustee Buchanan so moved, seconded by Trustee Bullington.

General Manager Thorne stated as the Board and the Connect Transit staff is monitoring the suspension of fares on a month-to-month basis, this *Recommendation* is for the Board to approve the continuation of the suspension of fare collection until September 8, 2020. Staff is estimating a loss of approximately \$80,500 in farebox revenue in the month of August. The fare revenue loss will be replaced with federal funding provided by the CARES Act.

DISCUSSION

In response to Trustee McCurdy's question regarding the status of Connect's CARES Act funds, General Manager Thorne stated that \$931,000 has been allocated for the operating budget for FY2021. He stated that Connect can allocate more of the CARES Act funding for this fiscal year and those allocations will depend on where future fare revenues fall. The last two (2) months of fare suspension totals approximately \$161,000. The remaining revenue source is IDOT. It is unknown beyond September at what level IDOT will be funding Connect. He stated that he and the staff will continue to keep the Board updated on the IDOT funding. The financials for this month are not provided since Connect is closing out FY2020. The July and August financials will be provided at our next month's Board meeting.

In response to a question by Trustee Buchanan regarding the CARES Act dollars and how money is accessed, General Manager Thorne stated that the CARES Act dollars are allocated exactly like Connect's FTA *Section 5307* dollars which are allocated by the Federal government. Connect draws down dollars based on those expenses. The \$9M is sitting in the Federal Treasury and allocated into a Grant and as we incur expenses, we can draw down the funding. We need this for either operating or capital and requires zero local-matched dollars. Currently there is no expiration date on these funds.

In response to a question raised by Trustee Foster, General Manager Thorne responded that there is a possibility that IDOT may not be reimbursing Connect at the 65% level that we expect. Therefore, we

may have to use CARES Act funding and may also have to use local reserve funding. Continuing, he stated that Connect is prepared to get through this period without having to reduce or eliminate service in the community as we recognize these services are valuable.

There was no further discussion.

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Chairman Ryan Whitehouse; Vice Chairman Julie Hile; Secretary Monica Bullington; Trustee Judy Buchanan; Trustee Mike McCurdy; Trustee Linda Foster; and Trustee Tim McCue.

NAY: None.

Motion carried and the *Recommendation to Extend Suspension of Fares* until September 8, 2020 was approved by the Board.

Recommendation to Delay Full-Service

Chairman Ryan Whitehouse asked for a *Motion* on the *Recommendation to Delay Full-Service*, moved by Trustee McCurdy, seconded by Vice-Chairman Hile.

General Manager Thorne stated that at the June Board meeting, the Board voted to restore full service in July. He and the staff have continued to monitor operations to determine how we proceed to provide service safely. The General Manager asked Connect's Chief Operating Officer, Martin Glaze, to discuss the operational issues Connect continues to face during COVID-19 in restoring full service.

Mr. Glaze stated that staff continues to monitor course of operations with the main focus on health and safety of our riders and employees. We want to be able to provide time off when employees are not feeling well and when they might need to quarantine. Going to full service at this time simply would not allow us to provide that time without an exorbitant amount of overtime. Currently we are running with quite a bit of overtime and we currently have several employees who are out for various issues which are unrelated to COVID. Connect had issues with hiring at the beginning of COVID in March. We had a class of drivers ready to start but with the DMV closed, we were not able to get those drivers licensed for CDL training. The DMV testing site did not re-open until mid-July. We have a small class starting next week for those who are willing to wait it out and another small class we are hoping to hire within the next 45 days to get us to our regular staffing levels. We also want the service to be consistent. If we run full service and get 1-2 drivers who must quarantine or simply cannot come into work, we might have to pull a route and that is not reliable and consistent service. Because of these reasons, we are recommending that we keep the current level and hold-off on peak service.

DISCUSSION

Chairman Whitehouse thanked the General Manager and Mr. Glaze for making the health and safety of the drivers and our passengers a first priority.

Trustee McCurdy stated that he believed this is the right move as consistent and reliable service is of upmost importance to our riders. Many of our customers are hurting right now and suspending fares is the right move.

In response to a question from Pam Reece, the Town of Normal's City Manager, General Manager Thorne confirmed that this only applies to fixed route service.

There was no further discussion.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Chairman Ryan Whitehouse; Vice Chairman Julie Hile; Secretary Monica Bullington; Trustee Judy Buchanan; Trustee Mike McCurdy; Trustee Linda Foster; and Trustee Tim McCue.

NAY: None.

Motion carried and the *Recommendation to Delay Full-Service* was approved by the Board.

*Recommendation and Board Resolution of
FY2021 IDOT Downstate Operating Assistance Program Agreement*

Chairman Whitehouse asked for a *Motion* on the *Recommendation and Board Resolution of FY2021 IDOT Downstate Operating Assistance Program Agreement*, moved by Trustee Buchanan, seconded by Trustee Linda Foster.

General Manager Thorne asked the Board to approve the *Illinois Downstate Operating Assistance Program Agreement for FY2021*. Generally, the *Agreement* contains the usual routine items and the Board approved the FY2021 Budget in May and we took that budget and applied it to the *Downstate Operating Assistance Program* and then forwarded it to IDOT for review. Once review is complete, IDOT sends this *Agreement* for execution. This *Agreement* allows Connect Transit to obtain reimbursement for 65% of its expenses through the Illinois Department of Transportation.

DISCUSSION

Prior to full discussion, Chairman Whitehouse asked Connect's Financial Director, Patrick Kuebrich, if there was anything different from this *Agreement* from previous years?

Mr. Kuebrich stated that it is basically the same "boiler" contract. In response to a Trustee's question Mr. Kuebrich stated that there is nothing in the contract addressing COVID.

General Manager Thorne again stated that IDOT has not addressed anything in terms of COVID. Connect's last update in terms of IDOT's funding was received last week. IDOT is telling us that

downstate agencies will be refunded up to 65% of the expenses. Beyond September there are no guarantees.

Trustee Buchanan inquired if the proposed funding is linked to the tax question taxpayers will be voting on in November?

General Manager Thorne stated that he believed funding for State of Illinois budgets predicated on the graduated income tax vote in November which is predicated on their request for a \$5B grant loan from the Federal government. Those are the two (2) items that are going to drive this budget for the State of Illinois and neither one of those questions are answered at this point.

There was no further discussion.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Chairman Ryan Whitehouse; Vice Chairman Julie Hile; Secretary Monica Bullington; Trustee Judy Buchanan; Trustee Mike McCurdy; Trustee Linda Foster; and Trustee Tim McCue.

NAY: None.

Motion carried and the *Recommendation and Board Resolution of FY2021 IDOT Downstate Operating Assistance Program Agreement* was approved by the Board.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Better Bus Stop Campaign

General Manager Thorne asked Mr. Glaze to present an update to the Board on the *Better Bus Stop Campaign*.

Mr. Glaze commented that the report included in the Board Packet has a few changes since it was compiled. Instead of 14 stops, 16 stops were completed early last week and infrastructure will hopefully be installed next week. We will be updating these two (2) additional stops on the interactive website map. The ten (10) *Easement Agreements* we are working on is currently down to six (6). As noted, one stop was moved down the street and placing it where it will fit in the public right-of-way.

Thirty (30) stops are currently being reviewed by the Town of Normal. When approved, we can put them out for bid and start construction. These stops will be primarily in the Town of Normal and along IDOT roads.

The sixty-five (65) stops in Bloomington will be done in the spring to allow additional time to complete. Updating the Board on the stop at Wesley West Church on Washington Street, Mr. Glaze stated that this site is currently with the City for approval and that this is a large stop needing more than one easement. Continuing, Mr. Glaze stated that he will have a recommendation for the City to approve a

TIF District project on IAA Drive for the purpose of installing two (2) pads; shelters; ramps to cross IAA Drive; and a sidewalk from McDonalds to the new Sleep Number store. As this location is part of the TIF area, we are recommending that this project be part of those improvements.

DISCUSSION

Trustee McCurdy commented that he appreciated staff's forward momentum on this project.

Trustee Buchanan commented that a topic of the Working Group was that most of the public is not aware of the process it takes to improve a stop in the system and she also thanked the staff for its work and efforts to get these improvements completed.

Chairman Whitehouse echoed the previous Trustee comments and pointed out that the Board as well, has made the Better Bus Stop Campaign a priority in strategic plans in the past and thanked the staff and the Board for making this happen.

Downtown Transfer Center

General Manager Thorne reminded the Board that Connect Transit will be hosting a public input session at the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts tomorrow night at 5:30 p.m. in terms of the Downtown Transportation Center and will be seeking feedback from the public. At this meeting we will be seeking the public to provide input on six (6) questions. Those that cannot attend the meeting, the six (6) questions of the questionnaire is on Connect Transit's website and can be completed online and submitted. We will not be requiring the public to register in advance but will be limiting capacity to 50 individuals. Most of the members of the Downtown Advisory Committee Task Force, as well as Farnsworth Group staff, and a few members of the Connect Transit staff will be in attendance. In response to a Trustee's question, General Manager Thorne stated that the meeting had been advertised on Connect's social media; notices have been posted in each of the buses; and a sign is posted at the location of the meeting at the BCPA. If the public does not feel comfortable in attending the meeting, we ask that they complete the short questionnaire to provide individual input which will remain on the website until the second week of August or longer. We have also scheduled a meeting on Thursday of this week for input from employees.

Future Agenda Items

General Manager Thorne stated he will be coming to the Board in August with the *Heartland Community College* contract; Connect Transit's Sexual Harassment Policy; and the Solar Electric Infrastructure Bid. He added that we have received our *Economic Impact Study* which was being done by Illinois State University – Stevenson Center by Dr. Frank Beck. Dr. Beck will be giving a presentation to the Board at our next meeting and will answer any questions the Board may have on the final Study.

Employee Appreciation

General Manager Thorne stated Connect Transit held an Employee Appreciation lunch last Wednesday in which *Gill Street Eatz* provided a food truck to honor employees for the incredible work they are doing to provide essential transit service to our community during COVID-19.

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS

Chairman Whitehouse recognized Monica Bullington as a very valuable Board Member and thanked her for her service to the Board. Monica joined the Board in December 2017 and was reappointed in August of 2018, having served for almost 2.5 years. Monica has also served as Secretary.

Trustee Bullington thanked the Board for allowing her to serve the community as a Trustee on the Connect Transit Board.

Trustee Buchanan commented that she, Ryan, Isaac had the chance to speak before the Bloomington City Council recently. She believed the reception they received and the good discussion had with the Council is evidence of some of the work done by Ryan in terms of solidifying who we are, what we are doing and why it is so important, and our need for the Council's help and support.

Trustee Foster commented on the Employee Appreciation luncheon and she stated she appreciated the time allowing her to meet some of the staff, drivers, and workers in Maintenance. She stated she received a lot of good feedback and the morale is up and people are happy to be at work.

Chairman Whitehouse thanked Trustee Hile and General Manager Thorne for their recent presentation to the Town of Normal and Trustee Buchanan and the General Manager for their presentation to the City of Bloomington.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Whitehouse entertained a *Motion to Adjourn*, moved by Secretary Bullington, seconded by Trustee Foster.

AYE: All.

NAY: None.

Motion carried and the regular monthly Board meeting adjourned at 5:12 p.m.



Judy Buchanan, Board Secretary



Jill Baxter, Board Clerk

