

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
August 26, 2025, 4:30 p.m.
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 10/28/25 Meeting

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chair Julie Hile called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL:

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

Trustees Present:

Trustee Judy Buchanan
Secretary Linda Foster
Vice Chair Julie Hile
Trustee Elicssha Sanders

Trustees Absent:

Trustee Gina Bianchi
Trustee Mandava Rao
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

City Managers Present:

City Manager Pam Reece

City Managers Absent:

City Manager Jeff Jurgens

Staff Present:

David Braun, Managing Director
Alex Giantamidis, Transit Planner
Brandon Miles, Rural Service Coordinator
Dave White, Safety and Training Director
Janice Crago, Board Clerk
Jeff Mancil, Service Delivery Manager
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Steve Stockton, IT Manager

Guest(s) Present:

Ted Carlock, Connect Transit Employee

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MISSION STATEMENT:

David Braun led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and Vice Chair Hile read the Connect Transit Mission Statement.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

E. CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of Minutes for July 22, 2025 – Regular Session
- b. ~~Approval of Financial Information for June 2025~~ – delayed due to year end closing
- c. ~~Approval of Financial Information for July 2025~~ – delayed due to year end closing
- d. Monthly Statistical Report for July 2025

- e. Cardinal Infrastructure; Federal Report
- f. Cornerstone; Illinois Weekly Update

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

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Secretary Foster.

Discussion:

David Braun, Managing Director, stated the statistical report only reflects one month since the fiscal year has just started and reflects a slight gain when compared to last year.

Mr. Braun stated he would be reporting on many of the financial issues mentioned in the Cardinal Infrastructure report later in the meeting. He stated that Mark Molinaro is our new FTA Administrator and that he has heard Mr. Molinaro is very positive about smaller systems. Having a disabled child of his own, Mr. Molinaro feels very strongly about the ADA community and making sure we are providing the level of access that everyone deserves.

Mr. Braun stated that each Trustee had a printed version of an updated Cornerstone Government Affairs report and that the report briefly goes into what is happening with our \$3,000,0000 funding allocated to us in 2018. He explained that the funds made it into the budget this year and we are trying to get them released.

Trustee Buchanan asked if they were putting the funding in the veto session.

Mr. Braun stated it is already in the budget so now it is just a matter of allowing us to spend that money.

Mr. Braun stated they will be looking at the operational change for the RTA area and Downstate Transit in the veto session, which would be the operations funding, and we are not sure our funding will make it through the veto session.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the E-mirror initiative was advancing.

Mr. Braun stated that we were looking for a shell bill to attach it to.

Trustee Buchanan asked if we knew why it did not make it in the spring.

Mr. Braun explained it was the political environment. We recommended the legislation after all the other bills were submitted, so we attached it to a shell bill and that shell bill turned out to be more controversial than anticipated and did not pass, nor did our E-mirror legislation attached to it.

Mr. Braun stated we did not have financials this month because we are still collecting bills for fiscal year 2025.

Vice Chair Hile asked if the Trustees had any other questions or comments for Mr. Braun.

Vice Chair Hile 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 Buchanan, Secretary Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

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

F. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Recommendation for Additional Check Signatory – Roll Call Vote

Vice Chair Hile called for a motion to approve Brady Lange, Deputy Managing Director, to be added as an additional authorized signatory for all Connect Transit bank accounts.

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Secretary Foster.

Discussion:

Patrick Kuebrich, Finance Director, explained that Connect Transit must have two (2) signatures on each written check. Currently Connect signatories are David Braun, Managing Director; Dave White, Safety and Training Director; and Steve Stockton, IT Manager.

Staff recommends four (4) bank account signatories, David Braun, Managing Director; Dave White, Safety and Training Director; Steven Stockton, IT Manager; and Brady Lange, Deputy Managing Director, to cover when staff are out of the office. Having these staff as signatories offers sufficient security through separation of duties to avoid a conflict of having procurement or finance involved in a purchase from beginning to end.

Secretary Foster asked for clarification that the checks still only require two signatures.

Mr. Kuebrich confirmed that only two signatures are required on the checks, but we are asking for four authorized to sign for back-up purposes.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if the Trustees had any more questions or comments.

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

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Secretary Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

The motion to approve Brady Lange, Deputy Managing Director, to be added as an additional authorized signatory for all Connect Transit bank accounts was **approved**.

b. Regular Committee Meetings and Upcoming Topics – Informational

Mr. Braun stated that this activity aligns with *Objective 2*: Expand the Board’s role to advocate on behalf of Connect Transit and *Activity*: Communicate “talking points” to the Board concerning Connect Transit services and issues facing Connect.

In 2024, the Board of Trustees approved a committee structure to discuss and consider, on an ad-hoc basis, topics that require Board attention before they are raised with the full Board. This proposed structure allows us to regularly discuss and consider alternatives, potential concerns, and additional information required well before staff recommends initiatives to the full Board. Standing Committees and Committee Members include:

- Executive Committee:
 - Chairman Whitehouse
 - Vice Chair Hile
 - David Braun, Managing Director
- Finance Committee:
 - Vice Chair Hile
 - Trustee Rao
 - David Braun, Managing Director
 - Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
- Planning and Operations Committee
 - Trustee Bianchi
 - Trustee Sanders
 - David Braun, Managing Director
 - Alex Giantamidis, Transit Planner – as needed
 - Open, Operations Manager – as needed
 - Jeff Mancil, Service Delivery Manager – as needed
- Messaging/Marketing Committee:
 - Secretary Foster
 - Trustee Buchanan
 - David Braun, Managing Director
 - Mark Huffman, Marketing Manager

Connect Transit staff have been working on several initiatives that will come to fruition during this fiscal year; a list of initiatives and expected timelines for discussion and development follows. Many of these initiatives will require Board consent or approval at some point of the year, and I believe that working in collaboration with the Trustees within the standing committee structure will allow us to provide richer information that has been considered from several perspectives.

Mr. Braun went through the following projects that are in progress or coming up that he anticipates bringing to the committees over the next several quarters:

Q1 (July – September)

- Initiatives
 - Connect Transit/Connect GO service coordination.
 - Operations and Planning Committee
 - Messaging/Marketing Committee
 - Transfer/Fare policy between Connect GO and other Connect services.
 - Finance Committee
 - Messaging/Marketing Committee
 - Fare policy considerations with new fare collection system.
 - All Committees
 - Collective Bargaining Agreement Proposal.

- Executive Committee

Q2 (October – December)

- Initiatives
 - Transit Center funding discussions
 - Executive Committee
 - Finance Committee
 - Transit Center design and aesthetic considerations
 - Executive Committee
 - Messaging/Marketing Committee
 - Operations and Planning Committee
 - FY27 Budget
 - Operations and Planning Committee
 - Finance Committee
 - Replace Radio System
 - Finance Committee

Q3 (January-March)

- Initiatives
 - FY27 Budget
 - Operations and Planning Committee
 - Finance Committee
 - RFP/Award for Transit Center construction contractor
 - Executive Committee
 - Operations and Planning Committee
 - DT Transit Center construction progress/information website
 - Messaging/Marketing Committee
 - DT Transit Center groundbreaking ceremony
 - Messaging/Marketing Committee
 - Connect FLEX Zone discussions t
 - Operations and Planning
 - State funding initiative for Downstate Transit – Ramifications
 - Finance Committee
 - Messaging/Marketing Committee
 - Federal transportation funding reauthorization considerations.
 - Executive Committee
 - Messaging/Marketing Committee
 - New Connect FLEX Vehicle Delivery
 - Messaging/Marketing Committee
 - Via Paratransit Scheduling and Trip Planning Software Implementation
 - Messaging/Marketing Committee

Mr. Braun stated two of the committee meetings have been set up and that we have one more to schedule.

Secretary Foster asked if there will be monthly reports from the meetings.

Mr. Braun stated there will be minutes shared after each meeting and the committees can report to the Board.

Vice Chair Hile stated this structure represents a shift in Board Member responsibilities and reminded the Trustees of their commitments; stating they will be a more informed and engaged Board as a result.

c. Year-End Ridership Analysis – Informational

Mr. Braun gave the floor to Alex Giantamidis, Transit Planner, to present a ridership analysis for FY25.

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

Secretary Foster asked how we keep from losing passengers during construction and what we offer them during that time.

Mr. Giantamidis explained we communicate through drivers when we can, but sometimes we do not get advanced notice. He stated we also provide detours to allow a good alternative for the stop.

Secretary Foster asked what type of notifications we receive from the state and city on what is coming so we can be proactive, asked if we are at the tables where the decisions are being made.

Mr. Giantamidis explained that it depends on who is doing the construction; the Town and City do let us know, but that once construction starts the notifications become less frequent.

Secretary Foster stated her concern about making sure we notify riders as early as possible when there are changes.

Mr. Giantamidis stated we do our best to notify our riders using signage, social media, and apps as soon as we know.

Vice Chair Hile stated the reliability factor is enormous and that she would like to hear the plan to win the customers back once the construction is over.

Mr. Giantamidis stated Marketing would be working on that.

d. Connect GO Update – Informational

Mr. Braun gave the floor to Brandon Miles, Rural Service Coordinator.

Mr. Miles referred to an on-screen presentation available online as part of the Managing Director's Presentation.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the towns that use it the most with us are the same towns that were using it the most with Show Bus.

Mr. Miles stated he did not have that information but would presume so.

Mr. Braun stated that we rolled it out with limited resources. He shared we will be adding service hours, rolled it out as more of an on-demand service to serve the entire community every weekday, allow bookings five days out instead of just three days, and other things as we learn from the riders who use the service.

Secretary Foster stated she was glad Connect had met with the Mayors of the rural communities and asked if they were interested in improving ridership.

Mr. Braun stated they met in May, and they were all very excited; they allowed us to put flyers in their bills and newsletters. He stated that we will be going back in October to give updates to the County Board and hope to also meet with the Mayor's Association.

Vice Chair Hile asked if he anticipates a fixed route type dynamic for Connect GO by October.

Mr. Miles stated they had given it some thought, but that he doesn't have a definitive answer at this time.

Vice Chair Hile asked Mr. Miles to elaborate on the healthcare systems and mixing Connect GO with our urban system.

Mr. Miles said that we are talking with riders to determine their needs, speaking with healthcare providers to see who they feel needs service and are working with those people, and then establishing best practices to not have contracted rides exceed 50% of the total rides.

Mr. Braun shared that in speaking with healthcare representatives they have learned one of the major issues is missed appointments, which is very expensive for them. They track how many appointments are missed because of a lack of transportation. We would like to help fill that gap so they are more profitable, and we can establish a fixed route.

e. Federal and State Funding Update – Informational

Mr. Braun stated he had provided a detailed memo and would now go over some of the positive items for Connect Transit and some of the items that might lead to concern.

In the Administration Budget, public transit received a small increase in funding, as did the Senate's Budget.

The House's Budget reduced the public transit budget, mostly in areas of new start rail, capital investment grants, and larger projects for us. Mr. Braun believes our formula funding for operations from the federal budget will remain stable in FY26; in FY27 there will be a reauthorization – which is something we will talk with our American Public Transit Association and Illinois Public Transit Association to see how those changes will impact us. The current Administration prefers formula funding; it is consistent and stable, we don't have to compete for it, and it allows us to build big, beautiful things. He further explained that capital funding, what we use to purchase buses and things like that, would have to compete with the larger systems for funding. He stated it is

incumbent on us to manage those finances if the formula funding goes up so that we can buy capital, we already never receive enough funding to buy several buses at one time.

Mr. Braun stated we do not know how the DOT will treat formula funds and dispersing the grants. One of the considerations we have a concern about is how the Administration views sanctuary cities and sanctuary states. Illinois is a sanctuary state and Chicago is a sanctuary city so we do not know how our federal funds will be impacted. We are keeping an eye on this, as well as our legislators.

Mr. Braun stated that we have been working through Downstate funding since last year, explaining that our Downstate Operational Assistance Program funding comes from the Downstate Public Transportation Fund, which is underfunded. This means that the allocation we receive for state funds for all of Downstate is higher than what the fund actually has in it from year to year. He explained they are trying to stabilize the fund, get the state to increase the amount of the sales tax received into the fund, and get the state to change the local match requirement for property taxes.

Mr. Braun stated that statewide capital funding is few and far between. He shared we just applied for a state grant of \$5m for the transit center. The grant was specifically for underfunded projects, which aligns with the transit center since we were awarded the dollars in 2020, and the cost of materials and labor has significantly increased since then. We have also applied for a federal grant in the same amount, and we have a federal earmark that was recommended by Senator Durbin that has made it to the budget process. He expects that by the time we put the transit center out for construction we will know about the additional funding we have and what other resources we might need.

Trustee Buchanan asked if Mr. Braun is speaking with local or state legislators.

Mr. Braun stated he wrote a letter to the legislators who represent McLean County, and that he has never had to reach out to McLean County legislators because Representative Chung and Senator Koehler represent Bloomington and Normal. He shared having a conversation with them would be impactful so they can see how this funding would benefit them on the McLean County side and what we could do with that funding.

G. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Marketing and Communications Committee:

No report.

Finance Committee:

No report.

Operations and Planning Committee:

No report.

H. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Vice Chair Hile thanked Connect for the invitation to the employee awards banquet and expressed her pleasure in attending the event and opportunity to speak with the employees.

Secretary Foster agreed with Vice Chair Hile's sentiment and shared the location change was nice.

Trustee Sanders stated the banquet was not what she expected and that she was happy to see Connect show appreciation to their employees.

I. MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

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

Service Delivery Manager:

Mr. Braun welcomed Jeff Mancil to his new role as Service Delivery Manager.

Community Outreach:

- Cooling Bus
 - Pride (+ Tabling Event)
 - IWU BBQ
- Assorted Heat Wave Days
- Backpack Back to School
- Connect Presentation to 135 RAs at ISU
- Mobility Riders Group
- ISO Resource Expo International
- Destination Uptown Scavenger Hunt
- IWU BBQ
- Updating Shelter Signs
- Fear the Bird
- Replacing maps at all our shelters (ongoing)
- Sweet Corn Circus
- Heartland Tabling Event

Employee Outreach:

- August Employee Birthday and Work Anniversary Celebrations
- FY25 Employee Awards Banquet
- Fun internal games

Professional Development:

- Jeff Mancil, Service Delivery Manager
 - Community Transportation Association of America Small Urban Network Conference in St. Cloud, MN.
 - August 12 – 15, 2025
- Ashley Strupek, Procurement Manager
 - Procurement III on RFPs and Competitive Contract Negotiations in St. Paul, MN,
 - August 4 – 7, 2025
- Angela Pearl, Medicaid Billing Specialist
 - Completed ADA Coordinator Training Certification Program

Strategic Plan Next Steps:

- Coordinate meeting day/time with consultant and Board of Trustees.
- Compile current projects list to provide context for on-going efforts.

- Continue to report weekly and quarterly progress towards strategic plan goals and actions.

Recruiting:

- Positions Filled
 - Bus Operator (2)
 - Dispatcher (1)
 - Rural Service Co
 - Mechanic (1)
 - Service Delivery Manager (1)
- Positions Open
 - Bus Operator (6)
 - CSR (1)
 - Mechanic (1)
 - Microtransit Operator (1)

Trustee Buchanan asked if there was an update on the transit center.

Mr. Braun stated they are exchanging sales agreements to purchase the property now, with attorneys working out finer details. The City will be giving us a combination of land and dollars to help us design it, and in exchange for some parking. He shared we are working on parking we will maintain for Board Meetings, staff and other events downtown and re-engaged our architect.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the Board would have input on the design.

Mr. Braun stated he plans to bring the aesthetics, layout, functioning of the transit center for passengers and buses are items he plans to bring to committees.

Trustee Buchanan asked if we have received a request from The City to provide a shuttle now that they are shutting down the garage.

Mr. Braun stated he made the offer again and has not heard anything.

Vice Chair Hile asked if there was an update on the timeline.

Mr. Braun stated we are in design and hope to have 30%, which is what it will look like, by October or November; put it out to bid for construction at the beginning of next year; break ground in the spring. He shared that because the facility is less complex, we are thinking 12 – 14 months for completion instead of 14-18 months as before.

J. TRUSTEE COMMENTS:

None

K. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None

Reminders:

- Labor Day Parade, Monday, September 1, 2025

- Next Meeting: September 23, 2025

L. ADJOURNMENT:

Vice Chair Hile called for a Motion to Adjourn.

Secretary Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee Buchanan.

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Secretary Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

The motion to adjourn the meeting was **approved at 5:37 p.m.**

 10/28/25
Linda Foster, Board Secretary / Date

 10/28/25
Janice Crago, Board Clerk / Date

[CONNECT TRANSIT SEAL]

