

CONNECT TRANSIT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES – JANUARY 28, 2020

**351 Wylie Drive – Board Room #135
Normal, Illinois 61761**

The January regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held on January 28, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. in the Board Room of Connect Transit located at 351 Wylie Drive, Normal, Illinois 61761.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Chairman Mike McCurdy
Vice Chairman Ryan Whitehouse
Secretary Monica Bullington
Trustee Julie Hile
Trustee John Bowman
Trustee Judy Buchanan

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

STAFF PRESENT: General Manager, Isaac Thorne
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Martin Glaze, Chief Operations Officer
Jeff Holtke, Marketing Manager
Cassie Mosier, Procurement Manager
Shelly Perry, Operations Manager
Brady Lange, Maintenance Manager
Julie Dockham, HR Director
Brendan O'Neill, Outreach Coordinator
Steve Stockton, IT Manager
Jill Baxter, Board Clerk

The January monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was called to order by Chairman Mike McCurdy at 4:30 p.m. Roll call was taken.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was one (1) public comment. Deb Presley of Bloomington thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve on the *Connect to the Future Working Group*. She stated that when the group began, she never dreamed that it could collectively come up with such a comprehensive set of *Recommendations* that represent changes which will make real differences in the lives of many in our community. She stated that she is a mom with an adult child with disabilities who relies on Connect Mobility to get him back and forth to work. Continuing, she stated that when the *Recommendations* are implemented, one

rate for all says to her son that the City and Town value his ability to get back and forth to work for the same fare as his non-disabled peers. He will no longer be penalized for having a disability but instead, a needed accommodation – a Connect Mobility bus. She stated one rate for all says to him and his friends who are low-income and living on SSI, that their financial struggle is recognized and that an affordable monthly pass and fare cap will now exist. Once Connect Mobility is expanded to the City and Town limits, it will no longer matter where he and his friends live, work or play, they will have access to public transportation to get them where they need to go. Securing adequate financial support from the City and Town will make sure that Connect Transit is in a healthy financial position to implement these changes and provide quality public transportation to our community. She stated she was hopeful that the Connect Transit Board will act swiftly and boldly to implement these recommendations that will provide a public transportation system which we can all be proud.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of December 5, 2019 Board Meeting *Minutes* and *Special Board Meeting Minutes* of December 17, 2019
2. Disbursements for the months of November and December 2019
3. Monthly Statistical Report for December 2019
4. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report

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

DISCUSSION

Trustee Bowman inquired about ridership numbers on the Pink route and whether there had been any analysis on ridership.

General Manager Thorne stated that the larger numbers of ridership on the Pink route are due to the modification of the route to the Orlando/Northbrook area in addition to the Pink route coming every 15 minutes.

Martin Glaze, Chief Operations Officer, stated most of the ridership is coming from the Orlando/Northbrook area and the Lincoln Square area ridership.

Trustee Bowman commented that the Yellow is down in ridership over the previous year's 6-month mark and inquired if the impact of utilized hours taken from the elimination of the Teal route had been analyzed?

General Manager Thorne responded that no analysis of the Yellow route nor a look back at the Teal route in terms of ridership have been studied.

Trustee Bowman stated it may be instructive to look at the cost benefit of the elimination of peak service on the Tan and the Brown routes in order to put late-night service on other routes.

General Manager Thorne stated that with respect to adding frequency to the Brown route, the McLean County Regional Short-Range Transit Plan stated that as a suggestion/recommendation. Continuing, he stated the addition of hours for the Lime, Yellow, Red and Green has benefited Heartland Community College students to scheduled night classes.

Trustee Bowman stated that looking at routes that received hours from the elimination of the Olive, the Lime does not seem to show increased ridership and there is a need for the Board to look in retrospect at the decisions which had been made and how they impact the system.

General Manager Thorne stated there is more ridership now from the Pink route in the Orlando/Northbrook area than was accomplished with the Olive route because frequency was added which pulls riders from the Yellow route to the Pink route. Connect has heard nothing but compliments from riders who live in that area.

Town of Normal Manager, Pam Reece, stated that once Connect has a year under the belt with the changes to routes, you would expect to see ridership numbers change, taking into consideration the implementation of some of the *Connect to the Future* recommendations.

AYE: All.
NAY: None.

The Board approved the *Consent Agenda*.

NEW BUSINESS

Recommendation to Approve Contract Amendment for Solar Array and Electrical Infrastructure

General Manager Thorne asked the Board to approve a Contract Amendment with Keith Engineering in the amount of \$28,040. He stated that Connect has been working with Keith Engineering for a period of six months but paused when contracting with the electric bus manufacturer. Looking at the design together with Cornbelt, it was decided that having the electrical infrastructure on the east side of the building was not going to be workable and should be moved to the west side of the building. Cornbelt has been heavily involved with our meetings in an on-going basis. We discovered that energy produced by the solar arrays could be sold back to Wabash which is the company providing Cornbelt Energy with power. Cornbelt will be giving Connect an "EV" rate which will give Connect a better return on investment. We also scaled back to 120KW solar array on the project and halted the idea of the use of solar array battery packs. These decisions will reduce the construction costs of the project by \$500,000-\$600,000.

DISCUSSION

Responding to questions from Trustees, General Manager Thorne explained that electrical infrastructure placed on the east side of the building would cause a disruption as all tools and work on the buses are

performed on the east side. The entire wall would hold very large electrical panels and moving the electrical infrastructure to the west wall works better simply as a matter of safety. The decision to halt on solar array battery packs was made as that comes at a very high cost. Earlier we discussed our desire to partner with Rivian but in the process it was discovered that Rivian is not a point where it can partner. There is a loss of 10% of solar energy coming from the arrays to battery storage using almost all the power in a matter of a few hours, it is not worth the cost.

Chairman McCurdy inquired if the reduction in kilowatt hours would the solar arrays generated be only for the buses or would it also power part of the building?

General Manager Thorne responded that part of the administration building and the entire maintenance building would use the solar power. Days during the summer we would sell solar back to Wabash, while still keeping a surplus of power.

Trustee Hile inquired what is being done to position decisions being made now so that we can partner with Rivian later?

General Manager Thorne stated that this is being planned as Phase I with a 20-bus capacity.

Speaking specifically to the battery packs, Maintenance Manager Brady Lange, stated the basic structure of the system is designed so that we will be able to service up to 40-50 buses but having the initial feed to service 20 buses. Adding, the backbone of the system is built in a way that we have the potential to have the entire fleet be electric. In response to the remark that battery packs are not worth the cost, he stated that if you look at the battery packs as a diesel fuel tank – you can only store so many gallons of diesel fuel – then you fill the buses up, the energy is gone. The batteries are incredibly expensive so to have an array large enough to charge the entire fleet does not make financial sense.

Trustee Bowman asked for amount of the total spend of the initial Contract and the requested amendment? General Manager Thorne stated that the total cost would be \$59,795.

Chairman McCurdy asked the Board for a *Motion of Recommendation to Approve Contract Amendment for Solar Array and Electrical Infrastructure*. Trustee Buchanan moved to approve the *Recommendation*, seconded by Trustee Hile.

AYE: Chairman Mike McCurdy
Vice Chairman Ryan Whitehouse
Secretary Monica Bullington
Trustee Julie Hile
Trustee Judy Buchanan

NAY: Trustee John Bowman

Motion carried by 5-1 and the *Recommendation to Approve Contract Amendment for Solar Array and Electrical Infrastructure* was approved by the Board.

Recommendation to Amend RFP 19-01 for Bus Stop Improvement Plan: Site Designs

General Manager Thorne asked the Board to approve a Contract Amendment with Lewis Yockey & Brown to add 70 additional stops for site designs for the *Better Bus Stops Campaign*. The cost will not exceed \$140,000 for the 70 additional stops which will be for FY2020-21. Stating, that we are working closely with them to complete the site designs so when July 1st is upon us, we can start construction on the 70 additional stops to ensure that by 2024, all the stops will be complete.

Chairman Mike McCurdy asked the Board for a *Motion* on the *Recommendation to Approve Contract Amendment for RFP 19-01 Bus Stop Improvement Plan: Site Design*. Trustee Buchanan moved to approve, seconded by Trustee Bowman.

DISCUSSION

Trustee Whitehouse commented that the community sees the importance of moving forward and this Board believes in this and it has been a part of our Strategic Plan for a long time, adding that while in D.C., Senator Duckworth commented that if we can do this Connect would be the first system that is 100% ADA compliant.

Trustee Hile asked the General Manager the number of stops improved or completed since December?

General Manager Thorne stated that we are in the planning stages remarking that eleven (11) Easement Agreements (for the Town of Normal) are being prepared and we are also working with Lewis Yockey & Brown and the City and Town to obtain the permits for 50 more stops that we want to complete. All the stops for the Town of Normal have already been through the permitting stages.

Martin Glaze, Chief Operations Officer, stated that the Bloomington stops have been designed (with a couple requiring a redesign) and the work will be ready as soon as the weather warms up. The 70 for next year, the Town and City have already given input and some have been preliminarily approved. Once we can sit down with Lewis Yockey & Brown, the design work can start and hopefully construction can start on July 1st.

Trustee Hile added that she would like to have a data-point on the completion stages and would like to see it placed on the website. She believed a chart could detail which stops are "red, yellow, green".

General Manager Thorne stated that our plan is to have an interactive map on the website of all our stops we plan on improving every single fiscal year. We are still looking for software that allows us to do that where it can be interactive.

In response to a question posed by Trustee Bowman regarding the cost of each stop, Cassie Mosier, Connect's Procurement Manager, stated that each stop is \$1,500 without any extra work. We estimated that each stop would be about \$2,000, padded with an extra \$500 for redesign or extra work.

AYE: All.
NAY: None.

Motion carried and the *Recommendation to Approve Contract Amendment for RFP 19-01 Bus Stop Improvement Plan: Site Design* was approved by the Board.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Fiscal Year 2020 Strategic Plan Update

(See Board Packet.)

In response to Chairman McCurdy's question regarding the age of the Strategic Plan, General Manager Thorne stated that the Plan needs to be updated and added the current Strategic Plan was approved by the Board in August of 2017.

General Manager Thorne commented on the *Working Group* and stated that the *Group* has finished its work and approved *Recommendations*. He thanked all the *Working Group* members for their time and thoughtful attention made in compiling the *Recommendations*. He believed the *Group* addressed needs of the community and called for investment in affordable and reliable public transportation. He also thanked Trustees Buchanan and Hile for all their work and effort put into what he believes are excellent *Recommendations*.

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS

Trustee Buchanan stated that the *Group* wrestled with how to overcome the negativity and bad press. The *Group* exhibited determination and overcame any obstacles and moved on. She believed that the comments from the *Working Group* at the last meeting said it all. Each Member indicated how proud they were to attach their name to the document which says volumes. Several Members stated that once the *Recommendations* are moved to the appropriate policy-making sources, some are wanting to become ambassadors. Trustee Buchanan stated that a Special Board Meeting to discuss the *Recommendations* should be scheduled.

Trustee Hile added there is a lot for the Board to learn from this process. We have a level of community engagement, together with the knowledge the *Group* has learned. They are true champions of the system and really understand that this system is about economic development; public safety; a system that is about the spirit and personality of the community and that we want to be a part. People were fearful that we couldn't live up to the values that we say we believe in. The breakthrough in the last month was the Work Group Members were genuinely listening and hearing one another.

Trustee Buchanan added that the conceptual understanding of the system by the *Group* was quite phenomenal.

Trustee Hile thanked the Connect staff again for its tireless support in the process and the staff was always there for the *Working Group* which made a big difference in the outcome.

General Manager Thorne commented that we will soon be meeting with CTAC members to go over the approved *Working Group's Recommendations*.

Trustees Bullington and Whitehouse each inquired what differences exist between the *Working Group's Recommendations* as compared to the direction of the Board's plans, as the direction of the Board at that time was based on recommendations by staff and added that it would be good to see an analysis on each point.

Chairman McCurdy added that there is nothing in the *Recommendations* that is foreign to us and are within the boundaries of things the Trustees have talked about at meetings or with staff and are generally all good recommendations.

Trustee Hile commented that taking time to understand the *Recommendations* will resonate well with those who worked on this project.

ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR SESSION TO MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Mike McCurdy entertained a *Motion for Adjournment* to move into *Executive Session*.

Trustee Bullington moved to adjourn regular session to move into *Executive Session*, seconded by Trustee Buchanan.

AYE: All.

NAY: None.

Motion carried, and the Board of Trustees adjourned regular session and moved into *Executive Session* at 5:28 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION RE-OPENED

Chairman McCurdy called regular session back to order at 6:26 p.m. and roll call was taken.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Chairman Mike McCurdy
Vice Chairman Ryan Whitehouse
Secretary Monica Bullington
Trustee Julie Hile
Trustee John Bowman
Trustee Judy Buchanan

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

TRUSTEES COMMENTS

Chairman McCurdy stated that he and the Vice Chairman will plan a meeting with the General Manager and the Board will plan to have another Executive Session placing an item to address the General Manager's compensation on the *Agenda*.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman McCurdy entertained a *Motion to Adjourn*, moved by Trustee Bullington, seconded by Trustee Bowman.

AYE: All.

NAY: None.

Motion carried and the regular monthly Board meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.



Monica Bullington, Secretary



Jill Baxter – Board Clerk

[SEAL]

