

CONNECT TRANSIT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES– AUGUST 27, 2019

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

The August regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held 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
Secretary Monica Bullington
Trustee John Bowman
Trustee Judy Buchanan
Trustee Julie Hile (via telephone conference)

TRUSTEES ABSENT: Vice Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

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

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

The monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was called to order by Chairman Mike McCurdy at 4:32 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Chairman McCurdy asked for a *Motion* to allow Trustee Julie Hile to participate in the Board Meeting via telephone conference; *Motion* made by Trustee Bullington, seconded by Trustee Buchanan.

AYE: All
NAY: None

Motion carried, and Trustee Hile was approved by the Board to participate in the Board Meeting via telephone conference.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes of July 23, 2019 Board Meeting
2. Disbursements for the month of July 2019
3. Capital and Self Insurance Reserve Fund Balances for month of July 2019
4. Monthly Statistical Report for month of July 2019
5. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report

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

DISCUSSION

Trustee Bowman inquired regarding expenditures for reimbursement of tools and reimbursement of travel expenses.

General Manager Thorne stated that Maintenance employees are given an allowance up to \$475 per fiscal year for tools and travel expenses were for three (3) Connect Transit employees' attendance at the *APTA Mobility Conference* and three employees' attendance at the *Avail (Fleetnet) User Conference*.

Ridership was discussed by General Manager Thorne stating that fixed route ridership for this month was up 4.6%, making it the fourteenth straight month of increased ridership. *Connect Mobility* ridership for the month was down 2%.

There was no further discussion and the Board voted to approve the *Consent Agenda*.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried, and the *Consent Agenda* was approved by the Board.

OLD BUSINESS

Recommendation for Marketing and Communications Plan FY2020

Jeff Holtke, Connect Transit's Marketing Manager, stated FY2020's Marketing and Communications Plan is an abbreviated version of last year's submission. New things this year would be some digital advertising with WEEK as well as Comcast, which has become quite competitive on advertising spots. Continuing, Marketing Manager Holtke stated that Comcast offered some advertising spots for as low as almost under \$3 a spot and Connect will be participating in a *Community Calendar* with Cumulus,

and this year partnering with *Neuhoff*, Grossinger Motors Arena – we have the marquees outside and have taken a few things from inside the building out but will still have the video board which gets thousands of impressions every day as people drive by. Mr. Holtke stated that the Marketing Plan is working with tweaking a few things here and there and still exploring trades with different radio stations trying to lower actual costs and has worked out very well.

Trustees discussed with Mr. Holtke: (i) future plans to promote the Ventra-type card available in November; (ii) whether riders will be utilized with personal message or on-screen or face; and (iii) how is the effectiveness of the Marketing Plan Campaign judged?

Mr. Holtke responded that it is very flexible at this point. He stated that Connect is not locked into the messaging and can be changed-up frequently. Once the mobile ticketing app is ready, a blitz message can be sent across all platforms, promoting at the arena as well as television and radio. Once the new app is up and ready this will be a big plus. Mr. Holtke continued his response by stating that on radio ads Connect will use riders and rotate them. With our video for Comcast we will find a few riders that can help get the message across. Continuing, he added that rider guides are offered to those who do not have access to smartphones or Comcast and that recent numbers have proven to be over 37,000 downloads and an activity of 2 million sessions. Recently, by working with Bloomington-Normal Township, a larger custom map was created promoting predetermined locations.

Mr. Holtke stated that the Marketing Department is out in the community so much, there is constant follow-up by staff asking riders where did you see or hear our ad? General Manager Thorne added that on Connect's website, the link is embedded in advertisements which allows at any given time the capability to monitor how many clicks a specific ad receives.

Chairman McCurdy asked the Board for a *Motion of Recommendation for Marketing and Communications Plan FY2020*. Trustee Buchanan moved to approve the *Recommendation*, seconded by Trustee Bullington.

AYE: All.
NAY: None.

The *Recommendation for Marketing and Communications Plan FY2020* was approved by the Board.

NEW BUSINESS

Recommendation of Vice-Chairman Ryan Whitehouse Travel Expenses

Chairman McCurdy asked the Board for a Motion for approval of the *Recommendation of Vice-Chairman Whitehouse's Travel Expenses*. Trustee Bowman moved to approve the *Recommendation*, seconded by Trustee Judy Buchanan.

A rollcall vote was taken:

Chairman Mike McCurdy	AYE
Secretary Monica Bullington	AYE
Trustee John Bowman	AYE
Trustee Judy Buchanan	AYE
Trustee Julie Hile (via telephone conference)	AYE

Motion carried and the *Recommendation of Vice-Chairman Ryan Whitehouse Travel Expenses* was approved by the Board.

Recommendation of Human Resource Policy

General Manager Thorne stated Connect Transit’s Human Resources Director has updated three (3) areas of the *Human Resource Policy* to reflect Illinois statutes related to: (i) Military Leave; (ii) Pregnancy; and (iii) Anti-harassment.

Chairman Mike McCurdy asked the Board for a *Motion to Approve Recommendation of Human Resource Policy*. Trustee Buchanan moved to approve, seconded by Trustee Bullington.

Human Resource Director, Julie Dockham confirmed the updates had been reviewed by legal counsel and Labor attorneys.

AYE: All.
NAY: None.

The Motion carried and the *Recommendation of Human Resource Policy* was approved by the Board.

Recommendation of Heartland Community College Universal Access Agreement 6-Month Contract

General Manager Thorne reported that he and Connect Staff have held multiple meetings with HCC Staff. Martin Glaze reported that HCC is in the process of separating fees paid by the Students from fees which are paid out of HCC’s General Fund. Connect has also had discussions with HCC staff and students informing them of an upcoming increase of fares and each are aware of the fact of a substantial monetary increase in the *Universal Access Agreement* with Connect Transit upon the end of the proposed six-month extension Contract which would begin July 1, 2019; however, fares would be held at the current Contract rate (\$.75 per ride) through the end of 2019. General Manager Thorne reiterated there will be a substantial increase and students and HCC staff are completely aware of the future increase. There are State law changes that are affecting what Heartland can pay from the General Revenue Fund and what students need to start paying for.

Chairman McCurdy asked for a Motion, Trustee Bullington moved to approve the *Recommendation of Heartland Community College Universal Access Agreement 6-Month Contract*, seconded by Trustee Bowman.

Responding to questions by the Board, Mr. Glaze stated that Connect is steering away from the “per ride” charge model. Connect needs to be able to justify how much of its service is actually utilized by HCC.

Trustee Bowman asked for clarification regarding the charge-back provision in the Contract. Mr. Glaze stated that if the ridership proves lower, a reimbursement would be issued. General Manager Thorne added that Connect is budgeting \$150,000 in revenue, with any risk lying with the actual ridership and whether any reimbursement would need to be issued.

In response to Chairman McCurdy’s question regarding a future increase in fees to Students of HCC, General Manager Thorne stated that the Student fee would be embodied in the next 6-month Contract, an increase possibly 25% more than Students are currently paying, and that Students would be voting on the Student Fee for transportation within the next 6-8 months.

General Manager Thorne stated that discussions are currently in progress with Illinois Wesleyan and ISU which will more than likely be 6-month Contracts like HCC; adding that legal counsel will advise Connect during this process. There was no further discussion.

AYE: All.
NAY: None.

The Motion carried and the *Recommendation of Heartland Community College Universal Access Agreement 6-Month Contract* was approved by the Board.

Recommendation of Strategic Plan Goals FY2020

General Manager Thorne briefly discussed the 3-year objectives of Connect’s Strategic Plan Goals for FY 2020 (included in Board Packet – not in order of importance).

- Provide Customer Education; ConnectU Training Program
- Build a Downtown Transfer Center; Conduct Downtown Transfer Center Study/Recommendation
- Identify private sector benefactors and public sector partners for amenities; universal access and marketing collaboration
- Articulate and advocate for the benefits of transit-oriented and transit-supportive development
- Vividly portray the way transit benefits sales and commerce

Trustee Bowman commented on the importance of not losing sight of serving the current built community in favor of advocating for transit-supportive and transit-oriented development and Trustee Hile commented there is a very clear link between strong bus stops, accesses and curb-cuts with effective fixed route practices.

Chairman McCurdy ask for a Motion, Trustee Buchanan moved to approve the *Recommendation of Strategic Plan Goals FY2020*, seconded by Trustee Hile.

AYE: All.
NAY: None.

Motion carried and the *Recommendation of Strategic Plan Goals FY2020* was approved.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Approved Contract for Architectural & Engineering - Customer Service Center

General Manager Thorne stated a Contract was approved with Farnsworth Group to provide architectural and engineering services for the Customer Service Center at Uptown Station which will not exceed the total cost of \$27,500; adding that the Board was aware of this approval. Connect Transit received two (2) bids for A&E services and Farnsworth was the lowest bidder. This amount is below the threshold approval by the General Manager in the Procurement Policy.

Update on Better Bus Stops FY2020

General Manager Thorne stated that regarding the Better Bus Stops Campaign, of the 56 stops Connect is currently focused, Connect is working diligently to completely improve 20 of the stops in the next few months and noting that Connect's contract with the concrete contractor ends October 1 of 2019.

In response to a question regarding the number of bus stops Connect can actually improve in a year, Mr. Glaze directed the Board through the steps Connect must take in order to improve a bus stop and/or infrastructure:

- Identify stops and infrastructure involved for improvement
- Design consultants/engineers assess the site; draw plans – looking at slopes; landings; angles; connections, etc.
- Take to Town and City and their staff – obtain initial input, taking it back to the engineer
- Engineer will make any changes needed and submit for permit/approval by City, Town and IDOT
- Connect receives an approval back from IDOT
- Connect can then proceed with the work on the stop

Mr. Glaze continued by stating that the 20 stops in the Town of Normal, the design process and permitting is nearly a 2-month process for the specific 20 stops. Going forward, stops that are not as frequently used and the infrastructure is not as large, usually speeds up the process of completion. Mr. Glaze added that a positive note: IDOT reached out to Connect after seeing the *Better Bus Stops Campaign* and inquired about planned improvements to stops along Route-9, as IDOT has plans of improving in the very near future. IDOT also asked what improvements had been completed; what Connect has planned, along with the designs; and stops that need improvements that Connect did not have plans to fix and IDOT will now fix for us. This coordination has led to some improvements being made by IDOT and in a much quicker fashion.

In response to Board Member questions, General Manager Thorne stated that Connect is now jump-starting many of the improvements. However, the General Manager stated that he wants to start moving on Connect's FY2020-2021 plan by having the site plans started within the next few months so Connect can meet with the City and Town to talk about sites Connect has plans for improvement to infrastructure and coordinate resurfacing projects the City and Town have slated, allowing Connect more time to have conversations with IDOT, the City and Town, and coordinate with them Connect's plan structure.

In response to questions regarding the new Customer Service Center at Uptown Station, General Manager Thorne stated Connect will place a Customer Service Representative and a Supervisor inside the Service Center. Connect will sell passes, answer questions from customers, and help coordinate Connect buses with other provider buses that are coming in and out of the facility. General Manager Thorne added that Connect may need to add another employee to staff the Service Center.

Board Members agreed that Connect needs to keep pushing on access points as some riders still cannot get to the stops.

In response to a question regarding the timeline on the Customer Service Center, General Manager Thorne stated that Connect expects to have all engineering aspects completed within the next 30 days (early to mid-October). Mr. Glaze added that technical details with the Uptown facilities; such as the electric load of the Service Center, to see if a separate meter is required. Plans would then go to Town Council and Staff to set up contractually. General Manager Thorne added that construction is anticipated to commence in April or May as Connect needs IDOT's approval before commencement of any work.

General Manager Thorne stated that hours of operation and staffing for the Service Center are currently anticipated to have one staff personnel available 8:00am-5:00pm or some combination thereof with the addition of also having a Supervisor with an office on-site. The biggest positive is the ability to answer rider's questions now, taking that burden off the drivers. Having Connect staff on-site, we can hand out Rider's Guides; load money on rider's smartphones for mobile ticketing which is planned to be introduced in November-December; and sell passes as well. Adding, it is advantageous for Connect to be involved with the number of buses, not just Connect Transit but several other provider buses that come in and out of the Center, having a Supervisor on-site involved to help guide that process.

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS

Trustee Judy Buchanan updated the Board on the *Connect To the Future Working Group*. Trustee Buchanan stated the 13 volunteer workers of the Working Group met in June for an organizational meeting and in July and August the Group began its working sessions and are meeting every 3rd Saturday of the month from 9:00 a.m. to noon. In addition to the 13 members, also included in the smaller study groups are subject matter experts from our community, business leaders and public servants, which also enhance the discussion. Trustee Buchanan stated that in the July meeting, the Working Group put together key topics for the Group. Continuing, Trustee Buchanan stated that the Working Group as a whole agreed on four (4) group topics: Ridership/Access; Integration of Public

Transit into Land Use and Development; Sustainable funding; and connecting to the future with Connect Transit as an economic partner in the community. Trustee Buchanan stated the Working Groups are working very closely with the facilitators in managing the discussion and moving us forward and a representative of Smart Growth America are in each of the four focus groups. Focus Groups will come back at the September and October meetings and begin to share what information they are reviewing. There are a number of things each group is examining and information is being gathered from similar systems across the country as well as regional. We are anticipating that in October the Working Group will have draft recommendations from the smaller groups and the Working Group will discuss and review.

Chairman McCurdy inquired of the Town of Normal Manager, Pam Reece, regarding the process of permitting in the Town of Normal and how it will proceed with permitting land use and the interest in transportation.

Pam Reece, Town of Normal Manager, stated the initial steps – far in advance before plans are submitted – sitting down with each developer at weekly meetings talking about priorities in terms of access to transit.

Chairman McCurdy commented that it is evaluation time for the General Manager and that he would be sending out evaluation forms to the Trustees with a deadline to return to him for discussion at the next Board Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Mike McCurdy entertained a *Motion for Adjournment*.

Trustee Monica Bullington moved to adjourn, seconded by Trustee John Bowman.

AYE: All
NAY: None

Motion carried, and the Board of Trustees adjourned the August regular monthly meeting at 5:20 p.m.


Secretary Monica Bullington


Jill Bower – Board Clerk

