

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
October 28, 2025, 4:30 p.m.
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 11/25/25 Meeting

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Board Chair Julie Hile 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 (4:33)
Vice Chair Judy Buchanan
Trustee Tyler Cravens
Secretary Linda Foster
Board Chair Julie Hile
Trustee Mandava Rao
Trustee Elicsha Sanders

Trustees Absent:

None

City Managers Present:

None

City Managers Absent:

City Manager Jeff Jurgens
City Manager Pam Reece

Staff Present:

David Braun, Managing Director
Brady Lange, Deputy Managing Director
Ashley Strupek, Procurement Manager
Brandon Miles, Rural Transit Coordinator
Charlie Busse, Maintenance Manager
Dave White, Safety & Training Coordinator, Interim Transp. Mgr.
Janice Crago, Board Clerk
Jeff Manil, Service Delivery Manager
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Stephanie Butler, HR Manager
Steve Stockton, IT Manager

Guest(s) Present:

Mark Peterson
David Calhoon, ATU 752
Mark Hodel, ATU 752
Charles Sylvester, ATU 752
Michael Johnson, ATU 752
Jen Johnson, ATU 752
Joni Dennie, ATU 752
Kay Lanter, ATU 752

Shelly Beutow, ATU 752
Tom O'Shea, ATU 752
Cal Boddie, ATU 752
Thalia Klunick, ATU 752
Malik Burrows, ATU 752
Linda Sutton, ATU 752
Larry Spence, ATU 752
Charisse Agnew, ATU 752
Sheronda Haymon, ATU 752
Sawyer Codding, ATU 752
Ted Carlock, ATU 752
Shanta Thomas, ATU 752
Christine Holt, ATU 752
Jerwon Hudson, ATU 752
Shawn Hill, ATU 752
David Elliot, ATU 752
Christy Gordon, ATU 752
Nick Ruybalid, ATU 752

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MISSION STATEMENT:

David Braun, Managing Director, led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance. Board Chair Hile read the Connect Transit Mission Statement.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Board Chair Hile reminded the Board and public attendees of the public comment procedure and called on Thalia Klunick.

Thalia Klunick, the ATU 752 President, stated she has worked at Connect Transit for 19 years and served as president since 2018. She explained she was there to ask for help in resolving the overdue contract negotiations. She shared the events that have taken place so far in reaching a contract, the lack of respect they feel as employees, and that the ATU feels the collaborative process to improve safety and service has broken down. Ms. Klunick asked the Board to help restore the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation, and make Connect safe, reliable, respectful, and a great place to work. She also shared her concerns over previous electric bus purchases and the location of the new transit center due to the incline of the street. Ms. Klunick thanked the Board for their time.

Mark Hodel, Financial Secretary Treasurer of the ATU 752 and Connect Transit employee, shared that he would like to address the issue of contract negotiations. He stated that Connect Transit's lawyer stated at their first meeting that they did not have a proposal to share and would only be responding to the ATU's proposals. He stated the Union presented 67 proposals during the first meeting, with most being dismissed as one big ask. The negotiations continued from there, with management making a counter proposal they felt ridiculous. On the second day, Connect's lawyer stated negotiations were at an impasse and that we should proceed to arbitration. Mr. Hodel stated the Union feels the lawyer is trying to drive a wedge in the relationship. He stated the contract expired four months ago and asked the Board to press Connect Transit management to take these negotiations seriously. Mr. Hodel thanked the Board for their time.

Board Chair Hile thanked Ms. Klunick and Mr. Holder for their comments.

Board Chair Hile recognized the passing of Microtransit Operator, Van Wilson, on October 21 and called for a moment of silence in his honor.

E. CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of Minutes for August 26, 2025 – Regular Session
- b. Approval of Minutes for October 1, 2025 – Special Meeting
- c. Approval of Financial Information for June 2025
- d. Approval of Financial Information for July 2025
- e. Approval of Financial Information for August 2025
- f. Monthly Statistical Reports for August 2025
- g. Monthly Statistical Reports for September 2025
- h. Cardinal Infrastructure; Federal Report
- i. Cornerstone; Illinois Weekly Update

Board Chair Hile called for a Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda.

Secretary Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao

Discussion:

Mr. Braun stated we are catching up with year-end due to invoices coming in late. He explained the financial report indicates labor is 70% of our budget and that we are under budget due to not having a labor contract in place. He stated once we have a contract in place the income statement will catch up. He stated the statistical reports are up to date through September with ridership down slightly in August but up 1.35% system wide in September with the return to school. Mr. Braun shared that ridership continues to grow on Mobility and FLEX at a higher rate than it does on fixed route, and efficiency decreased lightly.

The Cardinal Infrastructure report shares information about the government shutdown and how the FTA continues to be funded, which means we are still receiving our formula funding and grants we obtained prior, but we are not receiving information about future grants or grants we have applied for.

The Cornerstone report shares what is happening at the veto session with the RTA fiscal cliff, which will affect downstate. We understand the House has been working on a funding package and a restructuring package. The restructuring package is going well; the funding package has not been settled yet. The Senate has yet to see the language so we are not sure if it will take place this week since there are only four days left in the veto session. If it does not make it in this session, it will go to regular session, and we will continue to push for the additional funding there.

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

Secretary Foster asked if we foresee any impact not signing the bill will have on us financially.

Mr. Braun stated our Illinois funds are stable for both rural and urban; that we might be a little more worried on the federal side without the reauthorization but that won't hit until 2027.

Board Chair Hile asked if there were any other questions or comments for Mr. Braun.

Trustees had no more comments or questions.

Board Chair Hile 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 Bianchi, Vice Chair Buchanan, Secretary Foster, Board Chair Hile, Trustee Rao, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Trustee Cravens

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

F. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Transit Center Update – Informational

Discussion:

Mr. Braun shared that between 2019 and 2020, Connect Transit was awarded a \$7 million grant from Rebuild Illinois Funding, a \$3 million grant from Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and an \$8 million Federal Bus and Bus Facilities grant for the purpose of building a transit center in Downtown Bloomington.

In mid-2021, the Farnsworth Group completed a site feasibility study and concluded that the former Pantagraph building, parking lot, and Pantagraph Printing building would meet the size and space needs for a transit center. In late 2021, CDM Smith began the required National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) study on the former Pantagraph site. CDM Smith had immediate concerns about the historic nature of the building, and the environmental remediation required (both known and unknown) due to the age of the building and its use. They anticipated a cost for required historic preservation, construction, and environmental remediation at \$40 million or more – significantly more than the \$18 million that was awarded to us.

In early 2022, the City of Bloomington suggested that we consider the aging Market Street parking deck property in a joint development to include parking and a transit center. We shifted CDM Smith's NEPA efforts to the new site, and it was determined to be a more reasonable site for the construction of a combined transit and parking facility. Some of the NEPA study remained valid, and the NEPA study concluded in mid-2023 and was approved by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in late 2023. Connect Transit prepared an RFP for Architectural and Engineering (A&E) Services, gained IDOT pre-bid concurrence, issued the RFP, accepted and evaluated proposals and gained IDOT pre-award concurrence by May 2024. The Board awarded the contract for A&E services in June 2024. During this time, the City of Bloomington changed its expectations concerning leasing the property versus purchasing, and the number of parking levels, if any, a few times.

We moved forward in summer 2024 with design work and held multiple workshops to consider all aspects of the facility, including accessibility, aesthetics, market analysis, parking, security,

sustainability, and downtown stakeholders. CDM Smith introduced the 30% design to our Board of Trustees in February 2025 and received the estimated cost of the project.

The costs of steel, concrete, and materials have increased in recent years at higher than inflationary rates, so we were not surprised that the estimate was more than we have available. The high cost prompted the City to modify its expectations again, and we are currently designing the transit center to be within our available funding, while still meeting our needs and maintaining a strong partnership with the City.

The draft Purchase Agreement between the City and Connect Transit for the land has been sent to the FTA for concurrence. They are ensuring that their long-term interests are being protected, and our funding is being used for transit purposes. The draft Lease Agreement is also being reviewed by the FTA to ensure it is fair to the transit system. We will be leasing a portion of the property back to the City to use for parking in exchange for maintenance of the parking lot and surrounding sidewalks and public spaces.

We have a meeting scheduled with our FTA Project Manager to discuss the agreements and update him on the project. The last time we did this, it took several months for concurrence. We will work with our FTA Project Manager and legislative consultant to urge the FTA to complete the approvals as soon as possible.

In the meantime, the City will be responsible for securing the deck and will continue to secure it for six months between closing and demolition. After six months, we will share responsibility for the cost of securement, and we will be fully responsible after a year.

We plan to have a 30% design plan by the end of this year. As you might recall, a 30% plan will show the final layout, structural engineering, and proposed amenities and aesthetic design. Between 30%-100%, CDM Smith will include the mechanicals, electrical, and minor modifications to the design. After that, CDM Smith will prepare construction documents and an RFP for construction. We will need to review and evaluate proposals and award the contractor prior to construction. The RFP will need IDOT's pre-issuance approval and pre-award concurrence. Brady Lange and I plan to meet with the Director of the Office of Intermodal Project Implementation, which reviews transit projects, to discuss our plans and timeline and ask them to approve it with urgency.

We have applied for three additional grants to supplement the project. We applied for an IDOT Local Project Funding Opportunity – a highly competitive grant from IDOT to supplement highway, road and transit projects that were underfunded due to increases in materials and other costs. We applied for additional Federal Bus and Bus Facilities funding with the justification of additional expenses due to the cost of materials and other costs. Finally, Senator Durbin recommended Connect Transit for Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) funds for accessible features at the facility. We expect to hear about the funding before we finalize design and bid for construction. We anticipate awards of IDOT and federal funding by October or November, and the CDS funds with the federal budget, potentially late this year or early next.

Talking Points:

- The transit center project is moving forward at the Market Street Garage location.
- The project will include 85-95 parking spaces with the transit center, with 12 allocated for Connect Transit use.

- The transit center will include indoor and outdoor waiting areas for passengers, public restrooms, meeting rooms, and a security office for the Bloomington Police Department.
- We will have the funds needed to build the facility.
- We anticipate a spring 2026 groundbreaking and a fall 2027 opening.

Board Chair Hile thanked Mr. Braun for his detailed presentation.

Trustee Bianchi stated that Mr. Braun mentioned how to move things quicker and asked if he could give specific examples of what the Board can do to move things along.

Mr. Braun stated it is in the procurement process, establishing the type of construction we are going to have, manager at risk or a bid construction project. He explained they are still determining things like that, then we have an IDOT checklist to complete to move things along. He stated Procurement Manager, Ashley Strupek, has been doing a terrific job staying in touch with IDOT so they know we are compliant and submitting all the documentation for them to go through sooner. He explained IDOT has changed their entire way of issuing grants and approving procurements so we hope that these checklists will move things through faster.

Trustee Bianchi asked Mr. Braun where the transit center lies in his priorities on his desk.

Mr. Braun stated that it is a top priority but that with government projects, it is a hurry-up and wait situation. We have submitted what we need and now we must wait for more information because we cannot move forward without that information. Once we receive the information we can go to the City and then we have to wait for them to make any changes, if they have any. If the City does not have any changes, it will move along pretty quickly. He stated we hold weekly meetings with CDM Smith to stay on top of design and other issues that may come up with this facility and we still have a few stakeholder committee meetings to hold. Once those meetings are complete, things should move quickly. He confirmed that it is very much a priority but that there are waiting periods.

Vice Chair Buchanan explained she has also been interested in the purchase agreement with the City and understands we just have to wait on the federal and the state now. She asked for clarification on the fact that the property is called the Market Street Garage, but that entry is on Monroe Street, which is street level.

Mr. Braun confirmed the entry and exit for the buses will street level, there will be an elevator for access for people with disabilities, along with other ADA friendly accommodations that are not present now. He explained we have congressionally directed spending from Senator Durbin's office that we hope will be included in the budget, but that we have a backup plan for smaller scale accommodations if it is not included in the budget.

Board Chair Hile asked if there were any other questions or comments for Mr. Braun.

Trustees had no more comments or questions.

Board Chair Hile thanked Mr. Braun for the update again and asked that he place the transit center updates front and center on board agendas going forward.

b. Projects Update – Informational

Discussion:

Mr. Braun shared that in the previous four years, Connect Transit has been awarded several state and federal capital grants and staff has pursued and proposed several major initiatives. While not all initiatives moved forward as expected, many did and are nearly ready for implementation. The following items are the projects moving forward, their purpose, funding source, stage and next steps for implementation, and anticipated completion.

Training and Storage Facility

- **Purpose:** Develop an adequate training room to conduct internal training and communications more efficiently and be able to host regional and national trainings in Normal. Expand internal storage for vehicles as we add microtransit and expand Mobility services. Leverage facility to potentially partner with a local institution to develop a regional heavy-duty EV and diesel training program to create a mechanic pipeline and add lease revenue.
- **Funding Source:** State Rebuild Illinois Grant and Federal Bus and Bus Facilities Grant
- **Stage:**
 - The NEPA study for the property has been completed and a Categorical Exclusion (CE) was recommended. A CE means a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment...and...for which, therefore, neither an environmental assessment nor an environmental impact statement is required.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Identify space requirements and needs.
 - Identify potential community partners who might also use the facility.
 - Prepare RFQ for Design, Bid, Build, or Design, Build proposal.
 - Issue and evaluate proposals.
 - Award contract.
- **Estimated Completion:** Mid-2028.

Heavy-Duty Fixed Route Vehicles

- **Purpose:** Replace our aging fleet for a better passenger experience.
- **Funding Source:** State Rebuild Illinois Grant and Federal Bus and Bus Facilities Grant
- **Stage:**
 - Approved by Connect Transit Board of Trustees
 - Agreement with manufacturer for design and equipment installations
 - Awaiting IDOT Concurrence
- **Next Steps:**
 - Sign contract
 - On-site vehicle inspection prior to delivery
 - Delivery, upfit with CAD/AVL technology and fare collection equipment
 - Permitting and commissioning
- **Estimated Timeframe:**
 - Delivery by May 2026.
 - Operational by July 2026.

Medium-Duty Connect FLEX Vehicles

- **Purpose:** Expand popular FLEX service in areas that are difficult to serve with fixed route service.
- **Funding Source:** State Rebuild Illinois Grant and Federal Bus and Bus Facilities Grant
- **Stage:**
 - Approved by Connect Transit Board of Trustees.
 - Agreement with manufacturer for design and equipment installations.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Vehicle inspection after delivery.
 - Upfit with Wi-Fi Router, dispatch and communications technology and fare collection equipment.
 - Permitting and commissioning.
- **Estimated Timeframe:**
 - Delivery by May 2026.
 - Operational by July 2026.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) Systems

- **Purpose:** Update and improve operational management systems, including Human Resources, Finance, Operations and Maintenance. Improve data collection accuracy and functionality, reduce time needed to process payments and receivables and improve tracking.
- **Funding Source:** FTA 5307 Formula Funding and IDOT DOAP Debt Service
- **Stage:**
 - ERP RFP issued; proposals received and are currently being evaluated
- **Next Steps:**
 - Recommend ERP system and vendor and to the Connect Transit Board of Trustees.
 - Develop and issue RFP for EAM System; receive and evaluate proposals; prepare recommendations to the Connect Transit Board of Trustees and IDOT.
 - Sign contract with the vendor, if approved.
 - Vendor begins configuration.
- **Estimated Timeframe:**
 - Project complete by December 2026.

Fare Collection System Modernization

- **Purpose:** Reduce passenger confusion and improve passenger experience while improving vehicle reliability and reducing vehicle downtime.
- **Funding Source:** FTA 5307 Formula Funding and IDOT DOAP Debt Service
- **Stage:**
 - Fare collection system RFP issued; proposals received and evaluated; vendor recommendation made to the Connect Transit Board of Trustees and approved; awaiting IDOT concurrence.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Sign contract with the vendor.
 - Vendor orders equipment and begins configuration.
 - Staff coordinates with vendor to plan passenger education and expand pass distribution locations.
 - Vendor installs and tests equipment.
- **Estimated Timeframe:**

- Project complete by June 2026.

Administrative Office Roof Replacement

- **Purpose:** Replace aging residential roof system and reduce long-term costs.
- **Funding Source:** FTA 5307 Formula Funding and IDOT DOAP Debt Service.
- **Stage:**
 - RFP issued, proposals received and evaluated, awaiting IDOT concurrence.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Recommend roof replacement vendor to Connect Transit Board of Trustees.
 - Construction/replacement.
- **Estimated Timeframe:**
 - May 2026.

Safety and Security Improvements

- Radio System Replacement.
- On-Board Safety and Security Systems.
- On-Site Safety and Security Improvements.
- **Purpose:** Improve on-board communications and security for passenger and employee safety. Improve on-site security to improve employee safety and equipment security.
- **Funding Source:** Congressionally Directed Funding.
- **Stage:**
 - Radio system RFP issued, proposals received and evaluated, awaiting IDOT concurrence.
 - On-board safety and security equipment is currently being tested in a no-cost/low-cost trial to determine effectiveness of potential solutions.
 - On-site safety and security improvements are being tested and evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the solutions in a multi-facility setting to prepare for the transit center and training and storage facility.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Radio system recommendation to Board, and implementation.
 - RFP for on-board safety and security equipment to be developed, issued, evaluated and presented to IDOT for concurrence and Connect Transit Board of Trustees for approval.
 - RFP for on-site safety and security improvements to be developed, issued, evaluated and presented to IDOT for concurrence and Connect Transit Board of Trustees for approval.
- **Estimated Timeframe:**
 - Radio system recommended by January 2026; implemented by July 2026.
 - On-board safety and security equipment recommended by November 2026 and implemented by February 2027, if approved.
 - On-site safety and security improvements recommended by November 2026 and implemented by February 2027, if approved.

All projects have been budgeted, with grant funds or formula funds awarded or allocated to the projects.

Board Chair Hile asked the Board if they had any questions or comments for Mr. Braun.

Vice Chair Buchanan asked who we are doing the ERP and RFP project with and if there is an MOU on how the cost will be allocated.

Mr. Braun stated we are working with Rock Island, Champaign, and Rockford as part of a recommendation that was approved by the Board last year. The cost for our part will be brought to the Board when we get to that point of the ERP purchase.

Board Chair Hile asked where the training and storage facility will be located.

Mr. Braun stated it will be located on the seven acres we own to the west of our Wylie Drive property.

Board Chair Hile asked if the Board had any additional questions or comments for Mr. Braun.

Trustees had no more comments or questions.

c. Recommendation for Snow Removal Contract – Roll Call Vote

Board Chair Hile called for a motion to authorize the Managing Director to execute a contract with Blunier Builders for Snow Removal and Salting for a term of three years with two one-year options. This contract will be contingent upon IDOT approval.

Secretary Foster motioned; seconded by Vice Chair Buchanan.

Discussion:

Mr. Braun passed the floor to Ashley Strupek, Procurement Manager.

Ms. Strupek explained that every year the Maintenance Department obtains quotes for snow removal and salting. After reviewing that process, the Procurement and Maintenance Departments discussed putting snow removal out for bid to see if we could get a three-year contract. Signing a three-year contract, instead of going out for quotes each year, locks in rates for snow removal and salt, which can help save costs for Connect Transit.

On August 11, 2025, Connect Transit issued an Invitation for Bid (IFB) seeking bids for snow removal and salting at our Wylie Drive facility. Connect Transit received one bid in response to the IFB.

The evaluation process for an IFB is based on the lowest price and responsiveness of bid documentation. Since there was only one bid, the Procurement Department reached out to the potential bidder's list to determine why they didn't bid on the project. There were three vendors on the potential bidder's list and two sent letters stating why they didn't bid on the project. Blunier Builders was the only bidder, and they were deemed responsive and responsible, thereby eligible for award.

Blunier Builders has served commercial clients in the area for 23 years. Their team is equipped with modern plow trucks, loaders, and salting equipment, along with highly trained staff who are on call 24/7 during winter weather events.

As in past years, Connect Transit will utilize operating funds for this contract, and the expense was included in our FY26 budget.

Blunier Builders provided a price list, for which we have budgeted an estimated \$30,000 for snow removal and salting services. Due to the unknown amount of snowfall for the season, we are unable to provide an exact amount.

Board Chair Hile asked if the Trustees had any questions.

Secretary Foster asked who we used for this service in the past.

Ms. Strupek stated that last year we used Blunier Builders, in prior years we used Reinhart, Bella's Landscaping, and LKM. Blunier was the only company to respond.

Trustee Rao asked to confirm that there was only one bid.

Ms. Strupek confirmed that we only received one bid, and that Reinhart and Bellas submitted letters stating why they couldn't bid this year.

Vice Chair Buchanan asked how the quote this year compares to last year.

Ms. Strupek stated there is a slight increase but that we are locking in the price for three years.

Board Chair Hile asked if there is something Connect Transit is doing to only receive one bid.

Ms. Strupek stated that due to it being issued as a bid there was more paperwork, which is why one agency did not submit. The other company stated they would not be able to compete with other quotes.

Trustee Sanders asked if we had any issues with Bluniers in the past.

Ms. Strupek stated we did not have any issues.

Board Chair Hile asked the Board if they had any more questions or comments.

Trustees had no more comments or questions.

Board Chair Hile 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 Bianchi, Vice Chair Buchanan, Trustee Cravens, Secretary Foster, Board Chair Hile, Trustee Rao, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

Motion to authorize the Managing Director to execute a contract with Blunier Builders for Snow Removal and Salting for a term of three years with two one-year options. This contract will be contingent upon IDOT approval was **approved**.

d. Fare and Fare Policy Change - Proposal

Discussion:

Mr. Braun stated this is a proposal staff would like the Board to consider, and if Trustees agree with the proposal staff will begin public engagement sessions.

Requested Action: Consider the changes to Connect Transit's fare and fare policy as outlined in the memo below and authorize staff to proceed to the next step involving public engagement.

Connect Transit staff proposed a new fare collection system that would modernize our fare collection, improve convenience for our passengers, and reduce our operating costs. The proposal was approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2025 and concurred by IDOT in September 2025. We anticipate the implementation of the system to be completed by July 2026. With the modernization of the fare collection system comes the need to modify some fares and fare policies to improve consistency, reduce cost to Connect Transit, and align with current industry practices.

As a recipient of Federal Section 5307 funding, we are required to offer public engagement sessions to explain the fare change and document input prior to formalizing our recommendation to the Board of Trustees. We plan to conduct engagement sessions in early November and bring our final recommendation to the Board at its November meeting.

The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal that establishes the governance of Connect Transit requires the following:

“ The Board shall take the following actions prior to implementing a rate change: (a) send written correspondence to the managers and mayors of both the City and Town of the proposed rate change at the time the public hearings are scheduled on the proposed rate change; (b) ensure the rate change is necessary for the overall betterment of the System and in furtherance of the goals and objectives of the City and Town; (c) follow all applicable laws; and (d) provide notice and an opportunity for users of the System to be heard regarding any impacts of the proposed rate change. The notice required under this subsection shall be given: (i) at least ten (10) days in advance of any public hearing on the proposed rate change; and (ii) in as many multiple formats as deemed reasonable by the General Manager to ensure the public, including specifically the users of the system, are aware of the proposed route changes.”

This memo has been sent to the City Managers, as ex-officio Board Members, and will be sent to the Mayor's upon the Board's concurrence. Public engagement dates and locations will be shared once they are established.

The new fare collection system offers features that will improve the convenience of riding the bus and will remove some of the mystery about how to ride. The system will provide the ability:

- To pay with a credit card, Apple Pay, Google Pay or payment app, in addition to Connect Transit issued cards or cash, allowing people to pay with nearly anything they have in their pocket.
- For passengers to load cards from their own computer, through an account-based system, without having to go to a sales partner or our office to purchase passes.

- To expand our fare card distribution network to employers, non-profits, government agencies, social service providers, as well as convenience and grocery stores, making it easier for passengers to add fares to their cards at locations that are close to them and during hours that are more fitting to their lives, if they do not want to set-up an account or have the ability to self-load the card.
- For some fare distribution partners to print their own tickets or issue cards to their employees or clients as an incentive or benefit.
- For us to issue special event fares and paper “tokens”.

The recommended changes to our fare and fare policy are outlined below for your consideration.

Proposed Fare Change

Proposal: Increase Connect FLEX single ride fare from \$1.00 to \$1.25 for consistency between modes with the implementation of the new fare collection system.

- Justification:
 - One fare for all
 - Reduce confusion between modes
 - Premium on-demand service
- Estimated Impact:
 - 10% initial loss in ridership based on fare elasticity studies

Proposal: Create a \$0.50 single ride student fare for students with an ID from a public or private Junior High School or High School to encourage transit use among younger residents.

- Justification:
 - Provides a life skill and develops lifelong transit users.
 - Promotes involvement in after school programs when school bussing is not available.
 - Not a substitute for Yellow School Bus
- Estimated Impact:
 - Unknown

Proposed Policy Changes

Policy	Current	Proposed
Change Issuance Policy	Change cards are printed by the farebox and issued by the driver when someone deposits more than \$1.25.	Exact fare only.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We currently spend over \$90,000 per year on farebox maintenance and special paper with magnetic strips (\$0.075 per piece= 6% of fare) that allow us to offer change cards. ○ Issuing change cards slows down boardings and impacts on-time performance. ○ We are one of three remaining systems in Illinois that offer change, as shown in the table below. ○ Will encourage riders to use a pre-paid card, phone app or other digital payment device. ○ 25% of cash paying passengers (80,600/322,400) and 3.8% of our total passengers (80,600/2.2 million) use the change card they were issued. ○ Additional investment would need to be made in the new fare collection system to allow the continued printing of transfers, which would add capital and operating expenses. 		

Policy	Current	Proposed
Transfer Policy	Transfers are printed by the farebox and issued at the request of passengers.	Replace transfers with fare capping* for non-cash riders and pay per ride for cash riders. * See explanation below.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Justification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We currently spend over \$90,000 per year on farebox maintenance and special paper with magnetic strips (\$0.075 per piece = 6% of fare) that allow us to offer transfers cards. Issuing transfers slows down boardings and effects on-time performance. Transfers and transfer abuse are major sources of fare disputes between riders and Operators. 36% of cash paying passengers (116,600/322,400) and 5.5% of our total passengers (116,600/2.2 million) use transfers. The new pass system and fare capping will encourage people to use a pass, app, or form of payment other than cash. Additional investment would need to be made in the new fare collection system to allow the continued printing of transfers, which would add capital and operating expenses. 		

Policy	Current	Proposed
Pass Policy	Paper passes with magnetic strips are sold at the Connect Transit office, grocery store partners and Heartland Parking and are good for a specified period of time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$3.00 = One-day Pass \$10.00 = Seven-day Pass \$40.00 = 30-day Pass 	Replace all passes with a single plastic card and allow credit card use or web/app-based account that automatically caps fares at specific amounts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No one would pay more than \$3.00 per day* No one would pay more than \$10 per seven days* No one would pay more than \$40 per 30 days* * When using the same payment method.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Justification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the new card and digital payment acceptance, magnetic-strip paper passes will be obsolete. We spend nearly \$30,000 a year on pre-printed special paper passes with magnetic strips. People do not always have \$3, \$10 or \$40 for a pass. 0.7% of riders use a one-day pass, 4.1% of riders use a seven-day pass, and 11% of riders use a 30-day pass. 		

Policy	Current	Proposed
Pass replacement policy	Lost passes are replaced with the existing remaining value added, when possible, but we are typically unable to restore value.	Lost cards will be replaced at no cost for first two cards, but at \$5/card thereafter. The card will reflect the remaining value when possible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Justification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plastic cards will cost us about \$3 per card after our initial order of 20,000. Charging to replace the card offers an incentive to keep track of the card. 		

The changes outlined will save over \$90,000 in materials costs and maintenance expenses. It may also produce a slight increase in revenue from FLEX fares and the new transfer policy. Revenue gains could be absorbed if passengers shift from cash to a card system.

Board Chair Hile asked if the Board had any questions or comments for Mr. Braun.

Secretary Foster shared that she has heard a little bit about this and that she is excited about it. She asked what agencies would have to do in order to be able to print the passes or would we have to give them something to print.

Mr. Braun stated they would just load the information from the computer and the first time the card is tapped on our farebox or collection system, the amount would be synced to that card; there is no separate machine required for printing. He shared we do intend to sell preloaded cards at some locations so people can just get their first card, then they can reload it as needed.

Secretary Foster asked if riders with paper passes would lose their balances.

Mr. Braun stated we are phasing out the paper passes so that no one loses their balance.

Trustee Foster asked where the public engagement sessions will be held.

Mr. Braun stated they will be held at different locations across Bloomington and Normal in both the daytime and evening.

Vice Chair Buchanan asked if we know about experiences of other systems who are using the same system.

Mr. Braun said we had opportunities to visit other agencies that are using the system and gain insight into their experiences, which has shown us this is a little more than a plug and play software.

Trustee Foster asked if we would have a way for the public to give input if they were unable to attend an engagement session.

Mr. Braun stated we will have a website for them to give feedback.

Board Chair Hile said she appreciates the acknowledgement that it is a complex system and asked how the rollout has gone so far.

Mr. Braun stated we have heard that the adoption rate is very high, very quickly, which is a positive thing. The adoption rate for our current app was not that great and still is not that high. Umo, the vendor, has several marketing plans that they will help us with. Umo has provided us with an account manager, an engagement manager, and a project manager to help us implement this new collection system. A few systems had some kinks but those were worked out quickly and overall, we are hearing positive things.

Board Chair Hile suggested that we are very clear with what the rollout strategy looks like as we are going through the public engagement sessions, so riders have a heads up, education is important for understanding.

Board Chair Hile asked if there will be kiosks in the transit center or where cards will be available for purchase.

Mr. Braun stated that Heartland Parking and the grocery stores sell passes, which we hope to continue. We hope to add non-profits and government agencies as well.

Board Chair Hile shared her appreciation for maintaining the commitment to the one fare for all policy and urged staff to get the public engagement sessions just right. The sessions don't have to be town hall type, but to be serious about hearing from our constituents and getting out to folks so they aren't surprised.

F. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Messaging and Marketing Committee:

Vice Chair Buchanan stated they held a meeting and confirmed the title of the committee as "Messaging and Marketing Committee" since there had been several names used. They also identified and defined their role, as established in the handbook.

- Review marketing and messaging implementation plans.
- Identify target groups to optimize marketing efforts.
- Assist with identifying Board outreach opportunities.
- Assist with establishing Ambassador group.

Trustee Foster stated there is an opportunity to be more inclusive, especially with businesses and different organizations to get them on board by supporting their efforts. She stated they plan targeted outreach to those places.

Operations and Planning Committee:

Trustee Bianchi stated the committee met a few weeks ago and spoke about the transit center and fare policy proposal, which prompted an idea that speaks to Trustee Foster's idea for inclusivity.

Trustee Bianchi suggested there is an opportunity to partner with other entities in the community to seek sponsors to pay for fare cards to give to the less fortunate constituents, the younger population, The Promise Council, etc. She stated there has to be a way we can work together in the community to get better service to the community. She recalled that this had come up before and asked for expansion on that conversation.

Mr. Braun stated he had mentioned a sort of central clearing house where one foundation collects the funds to purchase passes and then distributes as needed. He agreed there is an opportunity here that could be worked out and help provide better service to the community.

Trustee Bianchi confirmed there is an opportunity to do something good here and asked that we consider pursuing it.

Mr. Braun stated it would be a great opportunity for a university to take on.

Trustee Sanders stated she would like to find a way for the younger people to hear more about the possible changes coming so they are informed and aware, and how it benefits parents as well.

H. BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT:

Board Chair Hile:

- Acknowledged the loss of Van Wilson and his loss to the team.
- Welcomed Tyler Cravens to the Board as a new Trustee.
- Thanked Ms. Strupek for her procurement report and for being on top of details.
- Reminded staff that she would like to see a transit center report monthly.
- Shared her interest in seeing a Messaging and Marketing Committee report every month.
- Asked Trustees to be prepared to find time on their calendars outside of the monthly meetings to work on the strategic plan and 2026 initiatives.

I. MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

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

Promotion:

Congratulations to Julie Holts on her promotion to Service Delivery Supervisor.

Ridership Gains:

- Blue Route = + 32.3%
- Purple Route = + 21.7%
- Yellow = + 55.3%

Mr. Braun stated he would do a deeper ridership report in January.

Community Outreach:

- Trunk or Treats
 - Colene Hoose
 - Sugar Creek
 - OSF College Avenue
 - Miller Park Zoo Hullabaloo
 - Fighting Irish Football
- ISU Open House prospective freshmen and their families x 2
- Lifelong Access Career Fair
- ISU Football Games x 4
- Heartland Community College Wellness Fair
- Day of Play
- Heartland CC Fall Fair
- Festival ISU
- IWU Fest
- Labor Day Parade
- SILC Meeting Springfield
- ISU Football Game
- Expand FLEX to Meadows Meeting
- YouthBuild Breakfast

Internal Outreach:

- September & October Employee Birthday and Work Anniversary Celebrations
- Drive for the Cure Shirts
- 10-4 Appreciation Day (Dispatchers)
- 10-8 Appreciation Day (CSRs)

Professional Development:

- IPTA Annual Conference
 - Champaign, IL
 - September 29 – October 1, 2025
 - David Braun, Brady Lange, Pat Kuebrich, Ashley Strupek, Alex Giantamidis, Carrie Bailey, Jeff Mancil, Charlie Busse, Carly Harvey, Mark Huffman, Brandon Miles, Steve Stockton, Evan Hamner

Recruiting:

- Positions Filled
 - Bus Operator (4)
 - Dispatcher (1)
 - Mechanic (1)
 - Service Delivery Supervisor (1)
- Positions Open
 - Dispatcher (1)
 - Service Technician (2)
 - Transportation Manager (1)
 - Transportation Supervisor (1)

Board Chair Hile asked about the retention rate for Bus Operators.

Mr. Braun shared getting through the training is tough due to testing, and then the new operator schedule is very rough. He stated we are trying to find a better schedule, but it is a challenge.

Board Chair Hile asked about Dispatchers and Mechanics.

Mr. Braun stated that the Dispatcher position is a challenging position that did not have the support they needed in the past, but we have put changes into place that should help. He explained that the Mechanics position is usually a stable one.

J. TRUSTEE COMMENTS:

Trustee Cravens shared that he is glad to be here but wishes it were under different circumstances, thanked the mayor and council for appointing him to the Board. He looks forward to learning more.

Secretary Foster shared her pleasure attending the Trunk or Treating event at Sugar Creek.

Mr. Braun stated there was an APTA booklet and documents left at their seats and encouraged them to read them when they had time. If the Trustees do not have APTA accounts, please reach out to the Board Clerk.

Board Chair Hile encouraged Trustees to review the APTA meetings calendar and attend where and when they can.

Reminders:

Various RSVPs and responses due by noon Friday, 10/31/25.

K. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. (5 ILCS 120/2.06) (d) – Review of Closed Session Minutes
- b. (5 ILCS 120/2) (c) (5) – Property Acquisition
- c. (5 ILCS 120/2) (c) (1) – Personnel Matters

Board Chair Hile called for a motion to adjourn Regular Session and move into an Executive Session.

Vice Chair Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Sanders.

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Trustee Bianchi, Vice Chair Buchanan, Trustee Cravens, Secretary Foster, Board Chair Hile, Trustee Rao, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

Motion to execute adjourn Regular Session and move into Executive Session in the Administrative Conference Room was **approved at 6:06 p.m.**

REGULAR SESSION RE-OPENED:

Board Chair Hile called Regular Session back to order at 8:57 p.m. in the Board Room and Board Clerk, Janice Crago, took attendance via roll call.

Trustees Present: Trustee Gina Bianchi
Vice Chair Buchanan
Trustee Tyler Cravens
Secretary Linda Foster
Board Chair Julie Hile
Trustee Mandava Rao
Trustee Elicssha Sanders

Trustees Absent: None

City Managers Present: None

City Managers Absent: City Manager Jeff Jurgens
City Manager Pam Reece

Staff Present: David Braun, Managing Director
Janice Crago, Board Clerk
Steve Stockton, IT Manager

L. ADJOURNMENT:

Board Chair Hile called for a Motion to Adjourn.

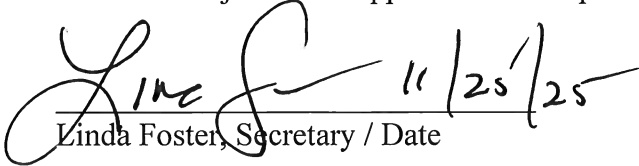
Vice Chair Hile motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Trustee Bianchi, Vice Chair Buchanan, Trustee Cravens, Secretary Foster, Board Chair Hile, Trustee Rao, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

Motion to adjourn was approved at 8:58 p.m.


Linda Foster, Secretary / Date 11/25/25


Janice Crago, Board Clerk / Date 11-25-25

[CONNECT TRANSIT SEAL]

