

**CONNECT TRANSIT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING - JANUARY 22, 2019

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held at the Connect Transit Board Room #135, 351 Wylie Drive, Normal, Illinois 61761 on January 22, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.

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

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

STAFF PRESENT: General Manager Isaac Thorne
Jeff Holtke, Marketing Manager
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Cassie Mosier, Procurement Specialist
Martin Glaze, Interim Chief Operating Officer
Brandon Miles, Operations Supervisor
Shelly Snider, Operations Supervisor

Chairman Mike McCurdy called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Roll call was taken.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Mike McCurdy recognized Mr. Leon Kaeb for public comment.

Mr. Kaeb, a regular passenger of Connect Transit, stated that he was bothered by the lack of professionalism of some of the bus operators on the major routes and wanted to bring to the Board's attention that some of the drivers are oblivious to the speed of the bus. Mr. Kaeb also spoke about his observation that some of the operators do not know how to handle a bus or they try to handle the bus like they would operate a car and that a driver must have an awareness of what is happening with their passengers.

There were no additional public comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting of November 27, 2018
2. Disbursements for the Months of November and December 2018
3. Financial Reports for November and December 2018
4. Capital and Self Insurance Reserve Fund Balances for the Months of November and December 2018
5. Monthly Statistical Report for Months of November and December 2018

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

DISCUSSION

Trustee John Bowman directed the Board to the December 2018 Disbursement Report and inquired about the FMLA consulting charge fee of \$3,057.00.

Patrick Kuebrich, Connect's Finance Director reported that Connect is now out-sourcing FMLA reporting services. General Manager Thorne added that tracking the number of employees on FMLA and the nature and periods of time employees can be on FMLA are challenging to track. Connect contracted with an outside source to handle all FMLA tracking.

Trustee John Bowman directed the Board to another budget item regarding Downstate Operating Assistance disbursements from the State Comptrollers Office and inquired if the receipt of three (3) \$2M payments are for the first three (3) quarters of the DOAP Grant?

Director Kuebrich affirmed Trustee Bowman's question and stated that Connect is paid up through the end of February, by payment in advance.

Trustee John Bowman brought up another item from the financial disbursements to General Manager Thorne which was a charge by Blue Springs Toilet Services. General Manager Thorne stated that this charge was a rental fee for porta-potties for the temporary downtown transfer center at Roosevelt Street.

Chairman McCurdy asked General Manager Thorne to report to the Board on Connect's increase in ridership.

General Manager Thorne reported:

- Passenger trips increased in November (10.3% increase) and December (6.9%);
- Year-to-date through December, ridership decreased 8.5%;
- For the last seven (7) months ridership has increased from last year and 13-15 routes have increased ridership year-to-date in December;
- The largest percentage increases are the SILVER, AQUA, LIME, GOLD, GREEN, PINK and REDBIRD;
- The SILVER route is very impressive showing increases year over year since Connect split off the SILVER from the PURPLE.

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

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Recommendation for Property & Casualty Insurance Brokerage Services IFB 18-11

General Manager Thorne stated that Staff issued an RFP and received five (5) proposals. Connect has worked with *Assurance* since 2013. Recommendations will be forthcoming to the Board on renewal of property and casualty insurance service for FY2020. General Manager Thorne asked the Board to approve a five (5) year contract with *Assurance* not to exceed \$140,000 total. General Manager Thorne reminded the Board that *Assurance* should be meeting with Connect sometime in February to discuss strategies to reduce Connect's insurance premiums for the upcoming renewal.

There was no discussion and the Board voted on the *Recommendation*.

Trustee John Bowman moved to approve the *Recommendation for Property & Casualty Insurance Brokerage Services IFB 18-11*, seconded by Trustee Judy Buchanan.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried, and the *Recommendation for Employee Benefits Insurance Brokerage IFB 18-11* was approved by the Board.

Recommendation for Award of Ecolane App

General Manager Thorne stated that Ecolane has been a software provider for Connect since 2011. Last year Ecolane released a mobile app that allowed customers to make and cancel trips and also provides GPS tracking when the rider is the next pick-up. This app will increase efficiency, reduce no-shows, reduce phone calls and improve customer service. General Manager Thorne asked the Board to approve a five (5) year contract not to exceed \$23,994.

DISCUSSION

Trustee Buchanan asked whether Connect will have any additional costs by accepting credit cards?

General Manager Thorne responded by stating Connect will not be paying any of the transaction fees and credit card information will not be housed by Connect but by a third party. General Manager Thorne continued to state that because we are discussing a mobile ticketing app, Connect is uncertain at this point whether it will utilize Ecolane's technology or Genfare's technology.

There was no further discussion.

Trustee Judy Buchanan moved to approve the *Recommendation for Award of Ecolane App*, seconded by Trustee Monica Bullington.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried, and the *Recommendation for Award of Ecolane App* was approved by the Board.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

FY 2019 Strategic Plan Update

General Manager Thorne began his update to the Board by stating that Connect is about half-way through its fiscal year.

- 1) Design or adjust proposed system routes to ensure alignment with the performance towards transit objectives.

Connect is working with McLean County Regional Planning ("MCRP") on a short-range transit plan. MCRP will present the proposed short-range transit plan to the Board in March. Once that proposal is made it will be in draft form and Connect will go out into the public for community engagement sessions. After community engagement there may be adjustments to the final report and the Board will have an opportunity to read over that and approve.

- 2) Explore fare restructuring.

Staff presented a new fare restructure proposal to the Board during the Work Session and will wait to see the final draft in March and what will be approved by the Board.

- 3) Build a Downtown Transfer Center.

This will be an on-going plan or goal until the structure is built. Connect Transit Staff and the General Manager have met with the City of Bloomington Staff to determine several potential locations that can be reviewed for the study. Connect Staff has prepared the necessary documents for IDOT in compliance with the *Grant Accountability and Transparency Act* ("GATA") and is waiting for the Contract to be approved. The General Manager received an email last Friday from IDOT stating that their Chief Counsel is reviewing the Contract (for funds and site analysis) and are hoping to have that back this week. Connect applied for these funds before GATA was implemented. General Manager Thorne confirmed that IDOT has \$250,000 for Connect, but that the agency needs to review more information due to the GATA. Connect has completed everything for compliance with GATA and is now in the hands of IDOT Chief Counsel for review in hopes that the Board will be able to approve the Contract at February's Board Meeting. The next step after the Board's approval is to send our proposal back to IDOT; IDOT reviews and then Connect can issue the RFP to perform the Site Analysis/Alternative Sites Review. Possibly Connect would be able to issue the RFP in early March or the first or second week of April. After Connect issues the RFP, it could take 4-6 months to get started. Connect's State Lobbyist is working on our behalf to move this project along as quickly as possible.

- 4) Examine All Existing Revenue Sources for Stability and Growth Potential and Research New Alternative Revenue Streams for Operations and Capital.

The Board of Trustees created the *Ad Hoc Budget Committee* to review existing revenue sources to begin the process and research for new revenue streams. The Board approved the advertising revenue contract for Connect Mobility vehicles which will provide up to \$50,000 in advertising revenue.

General Manager Thorne stated that after the Board approved the Contract with Kleen Zone for the CM buses, Connect received a phone call from Window World – which it had been working with as far back as August of 2016. Connect was pushing a “fixed route wrap” and Window World decided they wanted to advertise on CM vehicles because CM vehicles go everywhere in the community. We worked through the issues and Kleen Zone is now onboard. Kleen Zone is meeting with Connect together with the sign company they want to use for advertising.

Staff has also successfully implemented Medicaid. Staff believes Medicaid could conservatively bring in \$100,000-\$150,000 next year. More people want to be involved in Medicaid. The Medicaid issues Connect was encountering that were reported at the last Board Meeting have been resolved. However, Connect would still like to see some legislative changes to the program. Connect did work with our legislative lobbyist, Will Cousineau, on this issue.

5) Heighten Awareness About Placement of Land Use Requiring High Levels of Service and the Necessity of Mobility Options; the Value of Sidewalks, Shelters and Other Amenities.

Staff conducted an accessibility review to prioritize and improve pedestrian connections, bus pads, shelters and signage. The Board approved a three (3) year *Better Bus Stops Campaign* for installing bus stop shelters and benches. Staff has met with City and Town engineering departments to discuss bus stop improvements. Connect will be issuing a procurement for engineering services to review 130 bus stop locations to help determine the total improvement costs and education for a timeline for implementation. General Manager Thorne reminded the Board that Connect is uncertain when it would be able to complete these items. Connect took its list and stated the stops it wants to prioritize right now. However, working with the City and Town this was not realistic. The better option is to work with the City and Town to figure out when each are performing road and sidewalk improvements which would be the most efficient and best time to install Connect’s bus stops, shelters and benches.

Connect has taken a step back to re-evaluate its priorities and decided to issue an RFP for engineering services for the 130 bus stop improvement locations. This may take longer than originally planned and may be a 4-5-year plan. Connect has run into issues if the sidewalk is non-ADA compliant. Connect cannot know the “cost” of each improvement until it knows the extent of the work to be done by the City or Town. Before Connect can state that “these are the stops we can do”, it wants to have an engineer examine the ADA compliance issues on each of the stops before it can actually prioritize. After this is done, Connect can go to the City and Town and state with specificity “these are the areas where we think we can improve this year.”

6) Ensure all riders are aware of freedom flexibility afforded to them by fixed routes. Through the first half of FY2018 Connect’s Marketing Staff has recorded and created several videos for distribution on various social media platforms. These videos are:

- Using a Bike Rack on Fixed Routes;
- McLean County History;
- Working for a Living Exhibit;
- “Why Such Large Buses”. (This video features a time-lapse of a typical day on a Connect Transit bus.); and
- The Farebox

Staff has also created a more in-depth "Farebox" video to help educate riders on various types of fares. We are formalizing our training program for fixed route in June of 2019. Connect's Safety/Training Director, Dave White, has been working on this training program and what we are hoping to do is to invite a group of individuals to educate them on how to ride the bus and after training accompany the trainees onto the bus and ride with them. The CM aspect of this program is that training individuals that have disabilities on how to ride the bus as well; placing an effort into converting them from CM riders to fixed route riders.

- 7) Economic Impact Study. General Manager Thorne stated he has reached out to The Stevenson Center and spoke with Dr. Frank Beck regarding the time-frame of our scope of work. Dr. Beck believes that this is something he can do by the end of August or October 2019. Connect is hoping that something will be ready for the Board in the next meeting for approval, so this Study can begin. This Study will be very beneficial to what we are attempting to convey to the community.
- 8) Quarterly Ridership Letters to Businesses. Connect Staff sent letters out to businesses regarding passenger trip data at bus stops located near their business. A letter will go out every quarter to inform business managers and/or owners ridership data from the bus stop closest to each business. The letter is being used to bring awareness to both owners and/or managers regarding the number of potential employees or customers who use transit for access to their businesses. We have received two (2) responses from businesses from the first quarter mailout. We believe this will be a positive aspect to educate business owners of the number of people using bus stops located near their businesses.
- 9) Invitation for Bid ("IFB"). Going back to 2013 and 2014 Connect applied for IDOT money and received the official "word" of the award. Connect received \$3M for buses; \$18,000 for building improvements; and another \$12,000 for maintenance equipment. Connect issued an IFB for an "Access Control System" which is a system for basic proximity switches for interior doors. We received the bids and of the two (2) bidders, the lowest was \$22,000. IDOT will pay \$18,000 and Connect will come up with \$4,000 from local capital. When initiating an IFB or RFP with IDOT, and you are using IDOT money, the procurement solicitation documentation must be sent to IDOT for approval for anything over \$10,000. Then the IFB or RFP is issued to vendors and returned to us in the form of a quote or bid. Then those must be sent in to IDOT for approval and confirmation of whom you can award. Connect has done all the above and the General Manager informed the Board that the "Access Control System" will be installed within the next 2-3-week period. This system will add additional security and we will be moving away from using hard keys to proximity switches, giving a time stamp on who is entering a room or office. The General Manager is anxious to obtain this security protection on the server room.

DISCUSSION

City of Bloomington's Manager, Tim Gleason, commented that the City of Bloomington has construction season 2019 coming up and sidewalk planning and road repairs come to him. He stated that he didn't really want to wait for a study and asked who did he need to commit his staff to for the areas that are identified for improvement?

General Manager Thorne responded that Connect has given the list to both City Staff and Town Staff; however, they came back with a lot of ADA issues with current sidewalks that would have cost Connect additional money for which we did not know until Connect gave them its list of locations for improved bus

stops. General Manager Thorne stated that Connect can give him a copy of the list his staff has and then added that the one area Connect is definitely looking at is Market Street.

Chairman Mike McCurdy asked what is the circumference of the area for businesses receiving the quarterly letters? How far from that bus stop do you go? Is there a follow-up at some point about approaching that business to recommend advertising at the bus shelter near its business?

General Manager Thorne stated that the list of businesses Connect is using for its quarterly letters came from the McLean County Chamber of Commerce's member/business address list. He added that the nearest bus stop was used to compile the data for the quarterly letters. There are two (2) components of reaching out to local businesses which are: (1) advertising on the nearest bus stop shelter; and (2) if several riders are employees of that business, Connect would have the opportunity to suggest the Universal Access Agreement. In addition, General Manager Thorne stated that possibly a conversation could be had with the Chamber to set up a Universal Access Agreement with the entire Chamber, which he plans to speak to the Board about next week.

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS

Trustee Monica Bullington asked about the protocol on clearing the bus stops when it snows. She relayed that she has seen riders waiting for a bus in the street, not only for the riders' safety but the perception of the community that our riders are standing in the street.

Chairman McCurdy commented by stating that he has been impressed at how quickly the Town and City's Public Works Department have been able to handle the snow. Sharing his experience, Chairman McCurdy said that a Town of Normal experience was when he got off the bus and tried to walk home, he had to walk in the street all the way home because the plows had pushed the snow up against the sidewalk entrances. Even though the homeowner cleared their sidewalk, there was no way for him as a pedestrian to access the sidewalk without climbing over a tall wall of snow. He continued by stating that he doesn't know what the solution is but knows that some communities pile the snow in the intersection and pick it up later which sounds cost-prohibitive. Maybe there is no solution, but we need to at least think about what we can do. Chairman McCurdy added that he can climb the snow mounds but many of our riders are not able to do that. The City and Town spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to make the sidewalks ADA compliant and those individuals with mobility issues have the most problem with all the snow, they are the least able to assess the sidewalks. It is worth talking about what do you do with all the snow.

General Manager Thorne stated that what Connect is trying to do is prioritize shelter locations and getting those cleared out and putting salt down. General Manager Thorne stated that in a conversation he had with CTAC last week about the same issue, is the shelters are getting cleared out, but the sidewalk has 1-2 feet of snow and at the end of the sidewalk, 4 feet of snow piled up. People are still having to walk in the streets to access the shelter location. Snow is still an issue and Connect is working out an improvement program to prioritize the shelters. The main issue is our riders and how are they going to get to the shelter?

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business or discussion, Chairman Mike McCurdy asked the Board for a *Motion to Adjourn*.

Trustee Monica Bullington moved to adjourn, seconded by Trustee Julie Hile.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried and the Board of Trustees adjourned at 5:10 p.m.



Jill Bower – Board Clerk



Secretary - John Bowman

