

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
February 24, 2026, 4:30 p.m.
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 3/31/26 Meeting

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Secretary Foster called the meeting to order at 4:30p.m.

B. ROLL CALL:

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

Trustees Present:

Trustee Gina Bianchi
Vice Chair Judy Buchanan (Remote)
Trustee Tyler Cravens
Secretary Linda Foster
Trustee Mandava Rao
Trustee Elicssha Sanders

Trustees Absent:

Board Chair Julie Hile

City Managers Present:

City Manager Jeff Jurgens

City Managers Absent:

City Manager Pam Reece

Staff Present:

Brady Lange, Deputy Managing Director
Alex Giantamidis, Transit Planner
Ashley Strupek, Procurement Manager
Brandon Miles, Rural Coordinator
Charlie Busse, Maintenance Manager
Dave White, Safety and Training Director
Janice Crago, Board Clerk
Jared Simons, Interim Transportation Manager
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Stephanie Butler, Human Resources Manager
Steve Stockton, IT Manager

Guest(s) Present:

Brian Day, Town of Normal (for Pam Reece)
Scott Gaddy, Connect Transit
Brian Luckenbill, Connect Transit

Secretary Foster called for a motion to allow Vice Chair Buchanan to attend virtually.
Trustee Bianchi motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Discussion:

Secretary Foster explained that Vice Chair Buchanan was requesting to attend virtually for an approved reason.

Rollcall Vote:

AYE: Trustee Bianchi, Trustee Cravens, Secretary Foster, Trustee Rao, Trustee Sanders

NAY: None

Motion to allow Vice Chair Buchanan to attend virtually was **approved**.

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MISSION STATEMENT:

Trustee Bianchi led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Trustee Rao read the Connect Transit Mission Statement.

D. SAFETY MOMENT:

Dave White, Safety and Training Director, shared the importance of fatigue management.

Secretary Foster asked Mr. White to please share his safety moment tips with the staff because they will be of benefit to them as well.

E. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

F. CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of Financial Information for January 2026
- b. Monthly Statistical Report for January 2026

Secretary Foster called for a Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda.

Trustee Sanders motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Discussion:

Secretary Foster asked if Trustees had any questions regarding the motion on the floor.

Trustees had no comments or questions.

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

Rollcall Vote:

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

NAY: None

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

G. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **Authorize the Deputy Managing Director to execute a contract with KL2 Connects for the search for a Managing Director for a term of one year.**

Board Chair Hile called for a motion to execute a contract with KL2 Connects for the search for a Managing Director for a term of one year.

Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Sanders.

Discussion:

Ashley Strupek, Procurement Manager, explained Connect Transit has been operating without a permanent Managing Director since November 2025. During this time, leadership responsibilities have been fulfilled through interim management and redistribution of duties among existing executive staff to ensure continuity of operations and service delivery. While this approach has allowed the organization to maintain stability in the short term, the Board of Trustees recognizes the importance of securing a permanent Managing Director to provide long-term strategic leadership, organizational direction, and oversight of agency initiatives. To support a comprehensive and competitive recruitment process, the agency initiated a procurement to engage a qualified executive search firm with the expertise and resources necessary to identify, recruit, and evaluate highly qualified candidates for this critical leadership position.

At the direction of the Board of Trustees, Connect Transit released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for executive search services on December 22, 2025. The RFP was publicly advertised in accordance with the agency's procurement policy. A total of eight proposals were received.

An evaluation committee of three Trustees reviewed and independently scored each proposal based on the criteria outlined in the RFP. Proposals were evaluated in the following weighted categories:

- Performance Capability (30 points)
- Methodology, Deliverables, and Approach (25 points)
- Proposed Cost and Timeline (20 points)
- Relevant Experience and References (15 points)
- Understanding of Connect Transit (10 points)

Based on the evaluation results, KL2 Connects received the highest overall score of 89.2 out of 100 points and demonstrated the strongest overall proposal across all evaluation categories.

KL2 Connects is headquartered in North Carolina and has been providing executive search services for approximately 19 years, with a specialized focus in public sector and transit leadership recruitment. The firm has successfully placed more than 260 highly qualified executives across more than 65 public transit agencies nationwide. Their proposal reflected a comprehensive recruitment methodology, a strong understanding of Connect Transit's organizational needs, and a demonstrated track record of identifying and placing senior transit leadership positions similar in scope and responsibility to the Managing Director role.

Given the KL2 Connects' extensive transit industry experience, structured search process, and highest composite evaluation score, staff recommends award of the contract to KL2 Connects.

The total cost of this contract will be \$44,750, which will be funded by local funds.

Vice Chair Buchanan thanked Trustee Bianchi for her work in the evaluation process, and Ms. Strupek for her work in the procurement process.

Vice Chair Buchanan stated that the contract, if approved tonight, will be signed very quickly and the 12–15-week process will begin immediately.

Secretary Foster asked if there were any questions or comments.

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

Rollcall Vote:

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

NAY: None

The motion to authorize the Deputy Managing Director to execute a contract with KL2 Connects for the search for a Managing Director for a term of one year was **approved**.

b. FY27 Draft Budget - Informational.

Brady Lange, Deputy Managing Director, shared a detailed on-screen presentation of the draft FY27 budget available upon request through the Board Clerk.

Proposed FY27 Budget:

	FY 2027 Budget	FY 27 Rural Budget	FY 2026 Budget	% Difference
Labor & Benefits	\$ 16,719,408.57	\$ 1,053,005.31	\$ 14,366,804.74	16.38%
Health Insurance	\$ 3,734,593.73	\$ 137,458.74	\$ 2,742,530.64	36.17%
Fuel, Lubricants & Tires	\$ 2,162,766.34	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 1,834,230.00	17.91%
Bus Repair & Maintenance	\$ 1,480,406.45	\$ 66,268.27	\$ 1,017,108.22	45.55%
P & C Insurance	\$ 810,000.00	\$ 29,813.57	\$ 750,000.00	8.00%
Professional Services	\$ 1,108,000.00	\$ -	\$ 413,815.00	167.75%
Technology	\$ 868,279.25	\$ 31,958.65	\$ 600,092.99	44.69%
Utilities	\$ 158,780.00	\$ 5,844.20	\$ 137,277.41	15.66%
Misc	\$ 589,935.00	\$ 6,121.25	\$ 494,168.00	19.38%
	\$ 27,632,169.35	\$ 1,420,469.99*	\$ 22,356,027.00	23.60%

* Included in FY 27 total budget.

Future Actions:

- Further budget discussions with all Trustees.
- Staff to review final budget and fine-tune based on feedback.
- Finance Committee to review final budget.
- Board to vote on final budget at its March 31, 2026, meeting.
- Submit to State of Illinois on or about April 1, 2026.

Trustee Bianchi asked why the rural service is included this year and not last year's budget?

Mr. Lange stated it was very new to us last year and was not included in our ERP system at the time. Now it is in our ERP system and makes sense to have it in the budget, especially with it being one appropriation from IDOT.

Brian Day asked how the 30% insurance cost increase compares to our average.

Mr. Lange stated that over the years it has varied and that last year we were able to avoid a 37% increase by implementing the Non-Stop program. Mr. Lange stated that in a routine year we experience approximately a 10% increase. He explained that every 5-10 years we experience a large increase and that we will be looking into options because this type of increase year after year is not sustainable.

Secretary Foster asked why there was such an increase.

Mr. Lange explained that healthcare in general had become more expensive but that there were unusually high-cost claims as well.

Secretary Foster thanked Mr. Lange for meeting with Trustees to fully explain the details of the budget so they have a full understanding.

Mr. Lange reminded Trustees that the budget includes hours and miles funding for route improvements, but that it doesn't guarantee any changes. Any changes will come to the Board for approval.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Messaging and Marketing Committee:

Vice Chair Buchanan thanked Mark Huffman, Marketing Manager, for his eagerness to find solutions to the issues our riders face. She stated that Trustees would find a handout at their seats for them to share within the community as needed, it is a great way to start conversations.

Vice Chair Buchanan reminded Trustees of the upcoming engagement sessions and encouraged them to sign up and attend one in support of the new fare collection system.

Finance Committee:

Trustee Cravens stated they reviewed the January financials and FY27 budget.

Operations and Planning Committee:

Trustee Bianchi stated they discussed some peak service plans, Syncromatics updates, how to use the Connect Transit app, microtransit zones, and fare policy changes that may be coming.

I: BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT:

Vice Chair Buchanan thanked Trustee Sanders for her efforts on behalf of ARC and partnership with Connect Transit.

Vice Chair Buchanan thanked the Trustees on behalf of herself and Board Chair Hile for their commitment to Connect Transit and the work they are doing to effectuate the mission.

J: DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Transit Center Update:

- Design Progress Report
 - 60% Design continues – due in early March.
 - Several meetings with City staff to review site designs, landscaping, etc.

- Upcoming
 - FTA has asked several questions about property agreements and final edits are being made.
 - DT stakeholder meeting to share updates is scheduled for mid-March.
 - 60% design review will be conducted in late March.

Other Updates:

- Legislation
 - CT Team has been working with Cornerstone, Representative Chung, and Senator Koehler to file HB 4225 and SB 3149 that will allow the usage of eMirrors on public transit vehicles.
- Fare Collection
 - We have scheduled engagement sessions for new fare collection systems
 - Thursday, March 5, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m., ISU Alumni Center
 - Friday, March 6, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., YWCA
 - Thursday, March 12, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., Bloomington Public Library
- Upcoming:
 - Over the next month we will begin discussing the Capital Budget with Trustees for a final recommendation at the March meeting.
- Congratulations!
 - Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
 - Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for FY25
 - Earned every year since 2016

K: TRUSTEE COMMENTS:

Trustee Rao thanked Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director, for the finance reports, stating he appreciated the hard work that goes into them.

Trustee Sanders shared her appreciation for the tables that are included in the various reports.

Secretary Foster gave kudos to everyone in the organization, acknowledging their hard work and everything they give to the community.

L: EXECUTIVE SESSION:

No Executive Session was held.

M. ADJOURNMENT:

Secretary Foster called for a Motion to Adjourn.

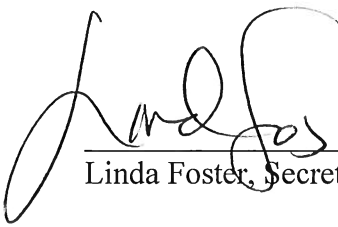
Trustee Bianchi motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Rollcall Vote:

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

NAY: None

Meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

 3-31-2026
Linda Foster, Secretary / Date

 3-31-26
Janice Crago, Board Clerk / Date

[CONNECT TRANSIT SEAL]

