

**CONNECT TRANSIT BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING - JULY 24, 2018**

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 July 24, 2018, at 4:30 p.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Chairman Mike McCurdy
 Secretary John Bowman
 Trustee John Thomas
 Trustee Monica Bullington
 Trustee Judy Buchanan

TRUSTEES ABSENT: Vice Chairman Ryan Whitehouse
 Trustee Julie Hile

CITY MANAGER PRESENT: Bloomington City Manager, Tim Gleason,
 (Represented by Steve Rasmussen, Bloomington Assistant
 City Manager)

CITY MANAGER ABSENT: Town of Normal Manager, Pamela Reece

STAFF PRESENT: General Manager, Isaac Thorne
 Operations Manager, Martin Glaze
 Marketing Manager, Jeff Holtke
 Finance Director, Patrick Kuebrich
 Maintenance Manager, Brady Lange
 Procurement Specialist, Cassie Mosier

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike McCurdy at 4:30 p.m.

Before moving forward with the meeting, Chairman McCurdy asked the Board for a *Motion to Allow Steve Rasmussen, Bloomington Assistant City Manager to Participate as Representative of Bloomington City Manager, Tim Gleason*. Trustee Judy Buchanan moved to allow *Steve Rasmussen, Bloomington Assistant City Manager to Participate as Representative of Bloomington City Manager, Tim Gleason*, seconded by Trustee John Thomas.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried and the *Motion to Allow Steve Rasmussen, Bloomington Assistant City Manager to Participate as Representative of Bloomington City Manager, Tim Gleason* was approved.

Roll call was taken.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes of previous Regular Meeting of June 26, 2018
2. Disbursements for the Month of June 2018
3. Monthly Statistical Report for month of June 2018
4. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report

Trustee Judy Buchanan moved to approve the *Consent Agenda* of the June 26, 2018 Regular Board Meeting, seconded by Trustee Monica Bullington.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried and the *Consent Agenda* of the June 26, 2018 Regular Board Meeting was approved.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Recommendation for Heartland Community College Universal Access Agreement

General Manager Isaac Thorne stated that Heartland Community College has partnered with Connect by a *Universal Access Agreement* for students and employees over the last few years. The new Agreement will have a term of one (1) year, ending on June 30, 2019. The General Manager reported the new *Agreement* represents a seven percent (7%) increase over last year's *Agreement*. He then recommended that the Board approve the *Universal Access Agreement* with Heartland Community College.

Discussion

Trustee Judy Buchanan questioned if Heartland was the entity that had prior difficulty in verifying its student ID cards and if so, what has Heartland done to ensure that doesn't happen again?

General Manager Isaac Thorne explained that for the last few years Heartland has used stickers which their students obtain from the Library and then place on each individual student ID card. Heartland wants to modify this process by having its students "swipe" their student ID cards when riding the bus. The General Manager continued by stating that Heartland's student ID cards

currently have barcodes and Connect's GenFare boxes have difficulty reading them. Connect has been working with GenFare on the card-reading problem but it has not been able to adapt the GenFare boxes to read barcodes. The General Manager continued by stating that in the last conversation with Heartland, it was his understanding that Heartland will be converting their student ID cards over to a card-reader. The General Manager stated that once the card conversion is finalized, Connect will be able to identify the number of students riding the system from Heartland.

Trustee John Bowman moved to approve the *Recommendation for Heartland Community College Universal Access Agreement*, seconded by Trustee Judy Buchanan.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried and the *Recommendation for Heartland Community College Universal Access Agreement* was approved by the Board.

Recommendation for Bus Shelter Purchase

General Manager Isaac Thorne presented the *Recommendation for Bus Shelter Purchase* by asking for the Board's approval to purchase ten (10) Brasco Bus Shelters to be installed in the community which is a part of the *Three (3) Year Better Bus Stops Program*. He relayed the cost to purchase ten (10) shelters was \$90,000 which would be funded out of the local capital account.

Trustee Monica Bullington moved to approve the *Recommendation for Bus Shelter Purchase*, seconded by Trustee John Bowman.

Discussion

Bloomington Assistant City Manager, Steve Rasmussen, asked if locations for the new shelters had been identified. General Manager Isaac Thorne answered by stating that in the March 27, 2018 Regular Board Meeting, the Board reviewed and approved the *Three (3) Year Better Bus Stops Program*. The General Manager stated that this *Program* identified all of the proposed locations where Connect will place shelters, ADA landing pads and benches, over a three (3) year period beginning FY 2019.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried and the *Recommendation for Bus Shelter Purchase* was approved by the Board.

Recommendation for Bench and Solar Lights Purchase

General Manager Isaac Thorne presented the *Recommendation for Bench and Solar Lights Purchase* which includes the purchase of up to ten (10) semi-seats and urban solar lights. He stated that the cost of this purchase for approval by the Board is \$16,693. Funding would be provided by the local capital account and if approved, the benches will be installed at bus stops as identified on the *Three (3) Year Better Bus Stops Program*.

Trustee John Bowman moved to approve the *Recommendation for Bench and Solar Lights Purchase*, seconded by Trustee Judy Buchanan.

Discussion

The Board briefly discussed the solar lights and benches and inquired regarding the security of the benches after placement. The General Manager stated that the bench seats would all be heavily mounted to the main pole on which the solar light is attached. He added that the solar lights are automatic and that prior to considering this purchase, staff contacted another transit system who purchased the same type of equipment and received a positive response.

Chairman McCurdy added that the solar lights will have 10 lumen lights which will provide better lighting of the entire pad and provide increased security of riders at the stop.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried and the *Recommendation for Bench and Solar Lights Purchase* was approved by the Board.

Approval of Bus and Bus Facility Grant - Connect Transit Board of Trustees
Letter of Support

General Manager Isaac Thorne presented the *Approval of Bus and Bus Facility Grant - Connect Transit Board of Trustees Letter of Support*. He stated that Staff is preparing a federal *Bus and Bus Facility Grant Application* to apply for electric buses, the Downtown Transfer Center, and Bus Shelters. The General Manager stated that the request is for \$12.4M and noted to the Board that Connect will receive its funding request in total. General Manager Thorne added that Connect is also requesting ten (10) electric buses and twenty-five (25) bus shelters in the *Application* which is due August 6, 2018, noting to the Board that this year's Grant will continue until 2020. General Manager Thorne added that this Grant is expected to be awarded in late fall and more than likely granted before the next election. He reminded the Board that this Grant is a continuing program and part of the *Bus and Bus Facility Grant* Connect won last year under Low or No Emission Grant.

Chairman Mike McCurdy asked the Trustees if they had all reviewed the *Letter of Support* and if there were any edits. No edits were requested and there was no further discussion.

Trustee Judy Buchanan made the Motion for *Approval of Bus and Bus Facility Grant - Connect Transit Board of Trustees - Letter of Support*, seconded by Trustee Monica Bullington.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried and the *Approval of Bus and Bus Facility Grant - Connect Transit Board of Trustees Letter of Support* was approved by the Board.

Recommendation of Marketing and Communications Plan

General Manager Isaac Thorne presented the *Recommendation of Marketing and Communications Plan* to the Board and stated that the focus of this year's *Marketing and Communications Plan* is to ensure all riders are aware of the freedom and flexibility afforded by the fixed route system which is one of Connect's objectives in its Strategic Plan. General Manager Thorne continued by stating that staff will continue to use *#GetConnected* and social media in its advertising campaign but would expand its reach by creating videos on various topics to use as teaching tools for potential customers showing them how easy it is to use the bus network. General Manager Thorne continued by stating that a training program would be initiated to assist first-time bus riders with pre-planning and riding the bus. The General Manager asked the Board to approve this Plan with the cost being \$51,375.00. Connect's Marketing Manager, Jeff Holtke, was in attendance to answer questions during discussion.

Discussion

Trustee Judy Buchanan asked for the dollar amount that was spent last year on Marketing. Connect's Marketing Manager, Jeff Holtke, responded that the approximate amount spent last year was around \$67,000.00. Trustee Buchanan also inquired how Connect will begin to market for new riders. Mr. Holtke stated that the bus training program in early stages that Connect is calling the "Best Buddy" system. Mr. Holtke stated that when customers call Connect's Customer Service Representatives and have questions and/or seem hesitant about riding or when Connect is at a Community Event and discover that these individuals have never ridden the bus before, Connect would offer individuals assistance. Mr. Holtke added that Connect will develop a step-by-step program teaching; such as, how to get on the bus; how to pay for a fare; and so on. Connect would offer to assist them by riding the bus with them; showing them how to pull the rope to stop the bus; and continue step-by-step with them to alleviate the fear of how to ride the bus. Mr. Holtke stated the early focus will be on extended service hours for the routes and Connect will push the program on social media and encourage its partners in promoting the program as well.

Trustee John Thomas asked Mr. Holtke to comment on the radio stations included in the proposed *Plan*.

Mr. Holtke responded that some radio stations were already in place prior to this proposed Plan and Connect has built good relationships with several area radio stations. Mr. Holtke added that one new opportunity would be the Arena providing on-site signage which would help promote Connect's late-night service at sporting and various other events so that attendees of Arena events would be aware that after any event they would have the opportunity to ride the bus to get back uptown after dark.

General Manager, Isaac Thorne, stated that Grossinger Motors Arena contacted Connect to inquire about ridership numbers during events. General Manager Thorne stated that Connect saw a small increase in ridership on Front Street during Arena events.

Mr. Holtke added that under this Plan, Connect could advertise its late-night service on selected routes on the Arena concourse sign and catch some ridership when attendees enter an event at the Arena.

Chairman Mike McCurdy stated he would abstain on the vote of the *Recommendation* even though WGLT is a non-profit organization and he does not profit personally.

Trustee John Thomas moved for the *Recommendation of Marketing and Communications Plan*, seconded by Trustee Judy Buchanan.

AYE: Secretary John Thomas
Trustee John Bowman
Trustee Monica Bullington
Trustee Judy Buchanan

NAY: None.

ABSTAINED: Chairman Mike McCurdy

Motion carried and the *Recommendation of Marketing and Communications Plan* was approved by the Board.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

FY 2018 Ridership Summary

General Manager Isaac Thorne turned the floor over to Connect's Operations Manager, Martin Glaze, to present the results of the FY 2018 Ridership Summary.

Mr. Glaze explained the Summary provided detailed information from Connect's fixed routes and *Connect Mobility*, with a focus on major impacts; reduction of service; implementation of new programs; together with ridership and efficiency numbers. In short, the Summary in whole revealed:

- Fixed route on-time performance was 94.7%
 - Increase of 2% over FY 2017
- Fixed route revenue hours were down 1.2%
 - July 2017 increased by 10.6%
 - August 2017 increased by 4.0%
 - September 2017 decreased by 4.2%
 - Eliminated trippers; eliminated Teal route mid-month, added peak Yellow versus new bus network
 - October 2017 through June 2018 decreased on average 6.6% per month
- Fixed route boardings per revenue hour increased 3.6%
 - July 2017 decreased by 23.1%
 - August 2017 increased by 3.9%
 - September 2017 increased by 23.4%
 - October 2017 through June 2018 increased on average 5.1% per month
- *Connect Mobility* on-time performance 97.6%
 - Increase of 1.6% over FY2017
- *Connect Mobility* revenue hours increased by 8.4%
 - July 2017 to September 2017 decreased on average by 0.5% per month
 - Medivan service by YWCA ended in July
 - Premium service added in September 2017
 - October 2017 to June 2018 increase on average of 12.6% per month
 - Added 4 propane buses, increased peak *Mobility* buses from 13 to 15
- *Connect Mobility* boardings per revenue hour decreased 1.6%
 - July 2017 to September 2017 increased on average of 7.5% per month
 - October 2017 to June 2018 decreased on average 4.8% per month

Mr. Glaze further elaborated on the results by stating the increase shown in efficiency solidified the changes *Connect* put in place during this period were positive moves. He continued by stating that *Connect Mobility's* on-time performance was 98%, an increase of 1.6% and revenue hours increased overall. He stated one reason for this increase was the result of the YWCA ending its *Medivan Program*. The riders who were eligible for paratransit came from *Medivan* to *Connect*. He stated another reason was the addition of Premium Service in September 2017 which extended its service area by longer trips. He continued by stating that the October – June, the increase on average was 12% and that the revenue increases were attributed to an increase of ridership and the addition of Premium Service.

Mr. Glaze stated that in October, *Connect* added four (4) propane buses allowing it to place more vehicles on the street. He said the increase of vehicles would explain the decrease in efficiency. Overall boardings per hour were down for the year attributed to the increase of buses on the street.

He said from July - September before the increase of buses, the numbers revealed that Connect was more efficient and after obtaining the new buses the numbers decreased.

General Manager Isaac Thorne reminded the Board that under ADA regulation, Connect has 60 minutes to pick up passengers and drop them off at their destination. He added that before Connect obtained additional buses in October, it was difficult to stay within the ADA regulation. Mr. Glaze added that the average trip time was close to 25 minutes.

The floor was then opened for any questions or comments regarding the results of the Ridership Summary.

Discussion

Chairman Mike McCurdy asked if either Mr. Glaze or General Manager Thorne could place Connect's numbers into context with national trends or peer institutions in Illinois or similar-sized agencies across the country with regard to ridership.

General Manager Isaac Thorne responded that in terms of ridership, July-May as referenced in the Board Packet information, according to the *National Transit Database*, Connect was up to speed. He said that on a national level, peer agency ridership is down 3.44% and on a regional level, regional agency ridership was down 3.33%. He said that after comparing those numbers, Connect was up 1% overall year-to-date. He further stated that out of the top 50 agencies in the U.S., two (2) agencies are flat ridership and the other two (2) have increased in ridership. Nationally, all other agencies showed decreases in ridership.

Chairman Mike McCurdy asked the Mr. Glaze how the certification from LifeCil has progressed and how that will affect ridership with *Connect Mobility* usage.

Mr. Glaze stated that an RFP is currently in place and that contract will end in September. He said Connect reviewed the work performed by LifeCil and overall it did a very good job processing applications and performing in-person certifications. Mr. Glaze continued by stating that one thing Connect would have liked to have seen happen was more personalized service from LifeCil such as, the opportunity for riders to actually go out onto the buses and train, but Connect did not see that materialize. Mr. Glaze continued to state that he believes that type of personalization could be added by Connect through a marketing campaign. He stated that Connect will never know the reasons a *Connect Mobility* rider did not reapply and that he believes Connect is more dedicated with the service that it is providing because it can add a personal touch. He stated that Connect now has a better understanding of what its rider's needs are by the information LifeCil provided to Connect.

Chairman Mike McCurdy added that Connect can now make a decision on whether the rider belongs on fixed routes or if the customer belongs on a *Connect Mobility* bus. He added that fixed routes are more cost-effective for the system.

General Manager Isaac Thorne added that Connect had hoped when LifeCil took this project over and people obtained their certification, that more riders would see that a fixed route would be an option. He stated that he realized there are those that must ride *Connect Mobility* but Connect was wanting more people to look at fixed route transit and had hoped a transition would occur because the cost of riding *Connect Mobility* is \$35/trip and fixed route is \$4.26. Connect believes there is more to be done to help people in the community to transition from *Connect Mobility* to fixed routes which is one reason why Connect desires to work on this objective in-house.

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS

Chairman Mike McCurdy stated that the Board needed to identify which Trustees have not completed the *Open Meetings Act* training. Chairman McCurdy also stated that prior to the next meeting, the Board should expect some materials from him regarding the yearly evaluation and goal-setting.

ADJOURNMENT


Trustee Judy Buchanan moved to adjourn Regular Session, seconded by Trustee John Bowman.

AYE: All

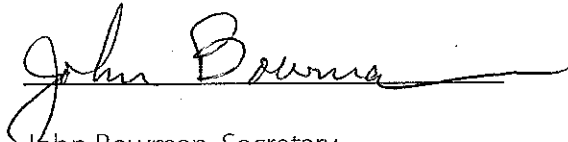
NAY: None

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.



Jill Bower, Board Clerk, Board Clerk



John Bowman, Secretary

