

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
March 31, 2026, 4:30 p.m.
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 4/28/26 Meeting

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Board Chair Hile 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
Trustee Tyler Cravens
Secretary Linda Foster
Board Chair Julie Hile
Trustee Mandava Rao
Trustee Elicssha Sanders

Trustees Absent:

None

City Managers Present:

City Manager Jeff Jurgens
City Manager Pam Reece

City Managers Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Brady Lange, Deputy Managing Director
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:

Hannah Cullerton, Lauterbach & Amen, LLP

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MISSION STATEMENT:

Secretary Foster led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.
Trustee Cravens read the Connect Transit Mission Statement.

D. SAFETY MOMENT:

Dave White, Safety and Training Director, shared the importance of a first aid kit. Mr. White also shared the location for the tornado shelters on site.

E. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

F. CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of Regular Session Minutes for January 27, 2026.
- b. Approval of Regular Session Minutes for February 24, 2026.
- c. Approval of Financial Information for February 2026.
- d. Monthly Statistical Report for February 2026.

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

Vice Chair Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Sanders.

Discussion:

Board Chair Hile asked if Trustees had any questions regarding the motion on the floor.

Trustees had no comments or questions.

Board Chair Hile 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, Board Chair Hile

NAY: None

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

G. NEW BUSINESS:

a. FY 25 Audit Results – Informational

Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director, introduced Hannah Cullerton from Lauterbach & Amen so she could give an on-screen presentation. The presentation is available by request through the Board Clerk.

Connect Transit received a clean FY25 audit and will be receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting again.

Ms. Cullerton thanked the Finance Department for their work in the audit.

Secretary Foster asked about the recommendations Ms. Cullerton mentioned.

Trustee Cravens clarified that the security awareness recommendation wasn't a specific recommendation for IT to do, just something we should continue to monitor. He stated the net position policy recommendation was an important one and asked Mr. Kuebrich when we would be bringing that to the Board.

Mr. Kuebrich stated he would be looking at the guidelines and hopes to bring it forward in the next few months.

Mr. Lange stated that regarding IT security awareness, we have already been focused on that and have started doing independent audits and policy updates accordingly.

Board Chair Hile thanked Ms. Cullerton for her time and thorough presentation.

b. Recommendation for Adoption of Fare Policy Adjustments – Roll Call Vote

Board Chair Hile called for a motion to adopt the recommended fare policy adjustments to support the Umo Fare Collection Systems.

Trustee Bianchi motioned; seconded by Vice Chair Buchanan.

Discussion:

Brady Lange, Deputy Managing Director, explained that Connect Transit staff proposed a new fare collection system that will modernize our fare collection, improve convenience, and reduce maintenance 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 in the summer of 2026.

The new fare collection system offers features that will improve the convenience of riding the bus and simplify the boarding process, encouraging additional ridership. The system will provide passengers with the ability to:

- **Pay using nearly any method** — the Umo app, credit/debit cards, Apple Pay, Google Pay, Connect Transit smartcards, or cash, giving riders maximum flexibility.
- **Load or manage their account online**, including adding value from a computer or phone and enabling automatic reloads for seamless travel.
- **Experience faster, simpler boarding** through contactless tap-to-pay technology, reducing wait times and improving the rider experience.
- **Access more fare options**, including discounted fares for eligible riders (e.g., student discount programs), and benefit from consistent fare structures across services.

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.

Proposed Changes:

- Cash Fare:
 - Current Policy:
 - Change cards are printed from the farebox if riders do not pay with exact change.
 - New Policy:
 - Exact fare only.
 - No change will be provided.
 - Passengers will not enjoy other benefits, such as transfers and fare capping.
 - New systems do not have printing capabilities which increase complexity, cost, and needed maintenance.
- Paper Passes / Fare Capping:
 - Current Policy:
 - Paper passes are offered for one ride, one-day, seven-day, and 30-days at Connect Transit offices and various retail locations throughout the community.
 - Passes are ordered from farebox vendor and printed on special paper.
 - New Policy:

- Paper passes will no longer be offered and will instead be replaced by fare capping.
- Fare capping will cap payments for riders that use the same payment method each time at a maximum of \$3 per day, \$10 per calendar week, and \$40 per calendar month.
- Once a rider has paid enough to reach the limit, they will continue to tap or scan their desired payment method but will not be charged additional fare.
- Fare capping applies to fixed route and Connect Flex; only the calendar month fare capping applies to Connect Mobility.
- Connect Flex Fare:
 - Current Policy:
 - Riders pay \$1 on board the vehicles with cash only.
 - Visual validation applies to paper passes.
 - New Policy:
 - One-Ride fare increases to \$1.25 to bring fare in-line with the rest of the system.
 - Validators will be installed on vehicles so all payment methods will need to be tapped or scanned for validation.
 - Cash will still be accepted on board the vehicles but will also be exact fare only.
 - Cash payments will not enjoy other benefits such as transfers and fare capping.
- Jr./Sr. High Student Fare:
 - Current Policy:
 - No special rate is available.
 - New Policy:
 - Junior and Senior High School students who have visited a Connect Transit office to obtain a proper Connect Discount ID will be able to ride for \$0.50 per ride.
 - Similarly, the YouthBuild Universal access agreement will be adjusted to \$0.50 per ride.
 - All student riders will still participate in the benefits of transfers and fare capping.
- Pass Replacements / Lost Cards:
 - Current Policy:
 - If staff can confirm a rider's purchase of a paper pass, we will typically provide a replacement for the time left on the pass for no charge.
 - Staff are only able to confirm purchase of passes that are purchased at Connect Transit offices.
 - New Policy:
 - Lost cards will be replaced at no charge for the first lost card; replacement cards will cost \$5 each after the first free replacement.
 - Remaining value will be restored to the new card only if staff can identify the rider's account.
 - If no account is created, value cannot be restored.
 - Using the Umo app will eliminate any chance of losing a card with stored value and is the easiest way to pay.

Fare policy adjustments will be effective upon rollout of new fare collection equipment, currently anticipated this summer. Fares will be reviewed annually for impact on ridership changes and revenue. If fare changes are deemed necessary by staff and the Operations and Planning Committee, recommendations will be brought to the Board of Trustees for approval.

Secretary Foster asked what happens if a rider does not have exact change for their fare.

Mr. Lange explained that there will not be change given to riders who do not have exact change, but that there will be a grace period to educate riders of the new policy. He stated that this policy puts us in line with other peer agencies throughout the state.

Secretary Foster asked if there will be an opportunity for riders to learn the new system and be trained by a live person.

Mr. Lange stated that if the Board approves the policy, part of the marketing plan includes targeted in person training.

Board Chair Hile asked if the Messaging and Marketing Committee will be engaged in the discussion of the new system roll out.

Mr. Lange confirmed they will be part of the discussion.

Board Chair Hile asked that we take the opportunity to remind the community that Connect Transit is alive and well, offer great fares and a great new boarding process when we are out marketing the new system.

Pam Reece, City Manager, asked if we will consider going mobile to the schools to offer the student passes.

Mr. Lange stated that in the future we do hope to be able to go to the schools in the future and discussions are under way because we recognize it may not be convenient for students to come here to receive their pass.

Ms. Reece suggested we also consider attending Uptown Normal and Downtown Bloomington events once we are mobile.

Board Chair Hile asked if there were any questions or comments.

Board Chair Hile 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, Board Chair Hile

NAY: None

The motion to adopt the recommended fare policy adjustments to support the Umo Fare Collection Systems was **approved**.

c. Recommendation for FY27 Operating Budget – Roll Call Vote.

Board Chair Hile called for a motion to adopt the FY27 Operating Budget as presented.

Trustee Sanders motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Discussion:

Patrick Kuebrich, Finance Director, stated that Connect Transit staff presented a draft FY27 budget for review and consideration at the Connect Transit Board of Trustees meeting in February.

The total FY27 Operating Budget reflects year-over-year increases driven by labor costs, insurance, maintenance, and technology investments. The budget aligns projected expenses with available state, federal, and local funding sources. It also reflects targeted restoration of fixed-route peak service, efficiency gains in Connect Mobility, planned adjustments to microtransit service areas, and potential service expansion.

Operating assistance projections incorporate recent state legislation that raises DOAP reimbursement from 65% to 80%, maintains near-term local operating support at current levels, and allows rebalancing of federal 5307 funds.

The total proposed Operating Budget for FY27 is \$27,632,170.

Board Chair Hile asked if there were any questions or comments.

Secretary Foster shared her appreciation for the informational sessions ahead of the meeting, they provided a deep understanding of the budget.

Trustee Bianchi agreed with Secretary Foster, stating that it was helpful to understand each of the line items.

The rest of the Trustees agreed with Secretary Foster and Trustee Bianchi.

Board Chair Hile thanked the Trustees for their time in reviewing the budget ahead of time.

Board Chair Hile 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, Board Chair Hile

NAY: None

The motion to adopt the FY27 Operating Budget as presented was **approved**.

d. Recommendation for Approval of the FY27-FY31 Transportation Improvement Program – Roll Call Vote

Board Chair Hile called for a motion to approve the FY27-FY31 Transportation Improvement Program as presented.

Secretary Foster motioned; seconded by Vice Chair Buchanan.

Discussion:

Patrick Kuebrich, Finance Director, stated that a draft of the FY27–FY31 TIP was presented to committees throughout March as part of the annual capital planning cycle. The TIP is updated annually and outlines all transit capital projects eligible for state and federal funding within the

Bloomington–Normal Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The complete TIP is compiled by staff at McLean County Regional Planning and is developed in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the City of Bloomington, the Town of Normal, and the Central Illinois Regional Airport.

Connect Transit utilizes the TIP as a framework for its capital planning and decision-making processes. The FY27–FY31 TIP covers facility upgrades, bus replacements, and various infrastructure improvements. TIP approval by the Board of Trustees does not guarantee funding or specific project approval; each project will be evaluated and approved individually by the Board of Trustees. Including items in the TIP helps Connect Transit pursue federal and state funds, reducing local capital reliance and ensuring eligibility for grant awards.

The TIP details planned funding sources—FTA 5307/5339, IDOT capital programs, local capital, and earmarks—and notes where discretionary funds may be needed.

There is no specific financial impact associated with approving this plan, as approval does not pertain to any individual project. Rather, it authorizes the overall direction and priorities, with specific financial commitments to be determined as individual projects are presented for approval in the future.

Mr. Lange reinforced that by approving this plan, it does not approve each of the projects; it just allows us to seek grant opportunities for the projects that are not currently funded and that all projects will still be brought to the Board for approval.

Board Chair Hile stated that she appreciates the five-year plan and that it will be beneficial when we are revising the strategic plan in the coming months.

Vice Chair Buchanan stated she appreciates the transparency.

Board Chair Hile asked if there were any questions or comments.

Board Chair Hile 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:

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

NAY: None

The motion to approve the FY27-FY31 Transportation Improvement Program as presented was **approved**.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Messaging and Marketing Committee:

Vice Chair Buchanan stated they will begin meeting with the Bloomington and Normal Council members in May. She shared they will be scheduling the Trustee bus ride for some time in the summer and looks forward to doing that with the Board.

Finance Committee:

Trustee Rao shared they reviewed the monthly financials; income and expenditures are on track. He stated they reviewed the budget and prepared for today's presentation and thanked Mr. Kuebrich for his work and efforts in the FY25 audit.

Operations and Planning Committee:

Trustee Sanders stated they discussed the Flex zone adjustment, researching the return of peak services, and demoed the system the Transit Planner uses in pulling all the route planning together. She stated the fare policy recommendation was discussed at length as well.

Trustee Bianchi shared her appreciation for the time and effort that goes into the committee meetings because it allows them to truly understand the organization and what goes into it on a day-to-day basis.

I: BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT:

Board Chair shared several updates.

- There has been strong progress in the Managing Director recruitment process.
 - Thank you to Trustees who met with KL2 Connects.
 - The title will be changed to CEO.
 - The advertising brochure will be posted soon, with the salary range of \$173k-\$192k.
 - The first candidate filtering process will be scheduled for the end of April, please watch for a calendar invite.
 - Following reviews and meetings will depend on what comes out of the end of April meeting.
 - The on-site interviews for the final two-three candidates would likely take place in May.
 - Final decision in early June.
 - KL2 is preparing sample interview questions and customized scoring.
- Thank you to Mr. Lange and staff for the public engagement activities for the upcoming fare collection system.
- Thank you to Mr. Jurgens for the Downtown Transit Center partnership.
- Happy Easter to those who observe.

J: DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Lange shared the following report:

- Design Progress Report
 - 60% Design is complete.
 - 60% "Page-Turn" with various design disciplines is scheduled for early April.
 - Next Steps: Technology design, bus routing, signage discussion.
- DT Stakeholders
 - We have been meeting with several DT business owners and stakeholders to share updated renderings and seek feedback.
- City of Bloomington Coordination

- We anticipate final FTA approval of property agreements very soon.
- Legislation
 - eMirrors legislation continues to move forward.
- Fare Collection Implementation
 - Continued direct engagement with various organizations to streamline rollout.
 - Meeting with all universal access organizations to discuss next steps for their specific organizations.
- ERP/EAM Implementation
 - Our tenant software is being deployed on Tyler's servers; Planning sessions with department heads begin in early April.
- Upcoming
 - Anticipating delivery of 13 Gillig buses in late April or May. Upon delivery, Maintenance staff will prepare them for service.

K: TRUSTEE COMMENTS:

Mr. Jurgens shared his appreciation for Mr. Lange holding one off stakeholder meetings with local businesses near the transit center and how excited they are about the renderings.

Trustee Sanders thanked the Marketing Team for their presentation and information shared at ARC, stating she looks forward to scheduling another one now that there is a bus stop near them. She also shared her pleasure with our Dispatch team's handling of last-minute transportation problems that come up with the visitors to ARC and getting them taken care of so promptly.

Secretary Foster shared her appreciation for the engagement sessions.

Trustee Bianchi asked if we will issuing a press release or social media post for the new incoming buses.

Mr. Lange stated we will likely do a social media post.

L: EXECUTIVE SESSION:

No Executive Session was held.

M. ADJOURNMENT:

Board Chair Hile called for a motion to adjourn.

Trustee Bianchi motioned; seconded by Secretary Foster.

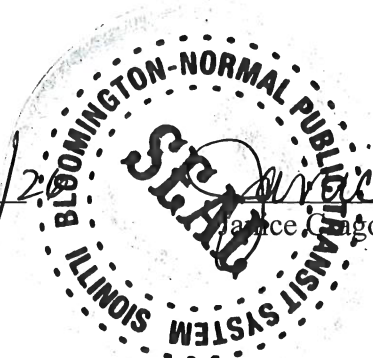
Rollcall Vote:

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

NAY: None

Meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

 Linda Foster, Secretary / Date



 Arice Crago, Board Clerk / Date

[CONNECT TRANSIT SEAL]