

**CONNECT TRANSIT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ADVOCACY COMMITTEE
PROCEEDINGS OF MAY 26, 2015**

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Advocacy Committee of Connect Transit was held at Uptown Station, 4th Floor, Room 409, Normal, IL on May 26, 2015 at 3:00 p.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Mike McCurdy, Vice Chairman
 Judy Buchanan
 Ryan Whitehouse

TRUSTEES ABSENT: John Thomas

STAFF PRESENT: Andrew Johnson, General Manager
 Julie Phillips, Executive Assistant – Labor Relations

The meeting was called to order by the Vice Chairman at 3:10 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Andrew Johnson, General Manager informed the Committee that the State of Illinois Legislature had advanced a budget to the Governor. It was \$4 Billion out of balance. It did not appear that there were any cuts or changes to public transit funding. He was concerned that any forthcoming cuts or changes would leave very little time for Connect Transit to respond. He believed that the Committee should focus its discussion on how to monitor the situation and determine when to approach State Legislators.

Trustee Ryan Whitehouse stated that approaching Legislators should begin immediately. Connect Transit needs to let it be known what effect any funding cuts or changes would have on its ability to provide service. The approach should include full press coverage, social media, and email. The newly created Community Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) could be utilized to craft tweets, etc.

Trustee Judy Buchanan agreed and stated that in addition, the Board of Trustees should reach out to the Legislators with impact bullet points.

Trustee Ryan Whitehouse stated that a very impactful tool is a 10 to 30 second video of a Connect Transit customer stating what public transit means to them. Mr. Johnson responded that Connect Transit has several such videos that were taken during the recent Stand Up for Transportation Day on April 9, 2015.

Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy noted the importance of sending a consistent message. In addition a formal letter should be sent from Andrew Johnson, Connect Transit's General Manager. Trustee Whitehouse agreed, but noted that life stories were more impactful than making factual statements.

Trustee Whitehouse stated that all of the Legislators use Twitter. Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy requested that samples of Tweets and messages for Facebook be crafted and sent to the Board of Trustees and the CTAC members to use.

Andrew Johnson, General Manager stated that the Illinois Public Transportation Association has hired a lobbyist to promote public transportation funding.

Trustee Judy Buchanan stated that phone calls could be made by those that did not have access to social media outlets. Mr. Johnson agreed. He noted that these messages should also be known at the Federal level. Trustee Ryan Whitehouse agreed. He stated that the Republican attitude toward the gas tax is changing.

Connect Transit should prepare to invite the Democratic and Republican candidates to visit the Connect Transit facility after the special election. The special election would be held on July 7, 2015. He suggested sending an invitation on July 8, 2015. Mr. Johnson that Federal funding was just as important as State funding.

Mr. Johnson stated that a gas tax is not a long term, sustainable solution; however it gives a little breathing room now. A gas tax would provide funding for a few years while a long term solution is worked out at the Federal level.

Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy restated that after the primary election, Connect Transit would invite both the Democratic and Republican candidates, individually, to the Connect Transit facility to hear its story. Trustee Ryan Whitehouse agreed and noted that the primary election would be held on July 7, 2015.

Andrew Johnson, General Manager stated that Connect Transit has had many customers approach bus drivers and inquire about the impact of State's budget to Connect Transit's service. The answer has been that while the State's budget is uncertain there were no plans of cutting service. The customer is the biggest advocate for public transportation. The customer is directed to Connect Transit's website which provides information concerning the State's budget and how to contact their Legislators.

Mr. Johnson stated that in regard to local funding, the Town of Normal was looking at additional funding for Connect Transit, however, Bloomington would not. It may be time to look at a referendum to create a transit district. Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy questioned the need for a definitive answer from Bloomington regarding a dedicated portion of sales tax to Connect Transit. Mr. Johnson responded that it was time to call for that question.

Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy suggested scheduling an appointment with both the Town of Normal and the City of Bloomington to discuss a dedicated portion of sales tax for Connect Transit. If no support was given then Connect Transit should proceed with a referendum. Mr. Johnson stated that he would contact both municipalities as soon as possible. Vice Chairman McCurdy stated that he would be willing to schedule ride alongs with the elected officials of both municipalities. Mr. Johnson suggested waiting until June.

Mr. Johnson stated that regarding the TIGER Grant support, the City of Bloomington had withdrawn their application and would be adopting a resolution in support of Connect Transit's application. Trustee Ryan Whitehouse noted that he would be speaking to the Bloomington City Council later in the evening about the recent "One Voice" trip to Washington DC. Mr. Johnson stated that the TIGER Grant application for the funding of a new transfer center project in Downtown Bloomington was a true partnership between Connect Transit and McLean County. In addition to a new transfer center, the project would serve several purposes by providing added detention space for inmates with mental health issues and a separate unit for women. If awarded the grant, there was an anticipated completion date of late 2017, early 2018. Trustee Judy Buchanan questioned the timing of the TIGER Grant award in the previous year. Mr. Johnson responded that it was around September or October.

Mr. Johnson stated that he would begin working on the sample Tweets and messages for Facebook as soon as possible and would forward those on to the Board and to the CTAC members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Time: 4:09 p.m.

Mike McCurdy, Vice Chairman