

CONNECT TRANSIT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
January 12, 2013

The special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held at the Advocate BroMenn Medical Center, Tower Building, Conference Room 20, 1304 Franklin Avenue, Normal, Illinois on January 12, 2013 at 9:30 a.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Judy Buchanan, Chairman
John Thomas, Vice Chairman
John Bowman, Secretary
Mike McCurdy
Mary Caisley
Ryan Whitehouse
Bill Wilson

TRUSTEES ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Andrew Johnson, General Manager

CITY MANAGERS: Mark Peterson, Town of Normal

OTHERS PRESENT: Charles Smith, Rider

Ms. Judy Buchanan, Chairman, called the special meeting to order and asked the Trustees to look at the list of General Manager Goals which was passed out to everyone. This list was the result of the General Manager's review from the September Board meeting. Chairman Buchanan read down the list which included: transition into the proposed route restructuring, investment, technology, staff development, funding, planning, development of Board Manual (Chairman Buchanan may take on this task herself), Study Group, growing the system, reigning in labor costs, communication (internal & external), increasing visibility & community outreach, budget amendments (reducing & curtailing), and universal access. There may be more items the Trustees wish to put on the list as priorities.

Mr. John Bowman inquired if the Trustees are going to revise the mission statement. Chairman Buchanan responded yes, but not at this particular meeting. Perhaps a separate group will work on that and bring it back to the rest of the Board at a later date. Mr. Bowman continued an effective mission statement can truly guide much of what an organization does and frankly the mission statement we have now is more of a pretentious assertion than a mission statement.

Ms. Mary Caisley suggested that the group working on the new mission statement be given the supporting documents that went with the original statement. Mr. Andrew Johnson, General Manager, stated some of the staff was not completely on board with the strategic planning process at that time and his files may not be complete. If anyone has the complete copy of the records from that process he would appreciate seeing them. Mr. Johnson continued the strategic planning should be done with a facilitator and will take longer than a 2 hour meeting, possibly several days.

Mr. Mark Peterson, Town of Normal, thinks this is a good list of goals and suggested plagiarizing when attempting to write a Board Manual, copy from other manuals. Don't try to reinvent the wheel. The goal that states "continue to grow the system" would be better stated as "continue to improve system service quality". Mr. Johnson added the words effectiveness and efficiency are two words used often in Transit which might work better with this item description. Mr. Peterson continued talking about the goal to continue to work closer with city and community planners to ensure transit-friendly development and corporate outreach, which might include universal access, stating these are important issues.

Mr. Ryan Whitehouse added his priority would be the advocacy item, which should be a separate item.

Ms. Caisley would like to add the word "Board" to the item "communication internal & external". There was not Board meeting in December and Ms. Caisley thought it would have been beneficial to have had some communication and indication of what was going on with Transit from the General Manager during that time.

Mr. Mike McCurdy asked if the technology item would include revising the Transit web site. Mr. McCurdy added the current web site is awful and almost negligent because the maps of the routes aren't even on the web site. Mr. Johnson responded he was of the understanding the maps were on the web site and if that is not the case he will be sure someone gets them on the site soon. Mr. Peterson asked if someone was on staff who could work on the website. Mr. McCurdy stated a content management system should be established for monitoring and maintaining the web site. Perhaps it would be best to have a group of several people who can access, help maintain, and update the site, working on different sections, so one person is not saddled with the whole responsibility. Mr. Johnson stated we have gotten some quotes and done some ground work to get a new web site soon, hopefully by this summer. Mr. Johnson continued the bigger problem facing the Board will be once it is up and running how do we manage the content and maintain the site? It takes time and personnel and you have to have the right group of people who know what they are doing if you are spreading it out amongst a group in order to manage it, especially on the social media side. If you mismanage the social media side, it is almost worse than not having any social media at all. It will take some planning and time. Mr. McCurdy stated that could all fall under a marketing director position. Mr. Johnson added he was not going to ask for additional staff right

now, but if you look at systems that are doing it well, like Champaign-Urbana, they have three people who are working on the web site almost exclusively. It takes a great deal of time, but it pays off with big benefits. Mr. John Thomas stated one major person could be in charge of the site with several others trained to step in as needed. Mr. Johnson continued stating with all the technology flooding into this system over the last year, we will need some additional tech support to help us maintain everything.

Mr. Bowman commented he would really like to see some mechanism set in place that would report to the Board just how well the new technology is functioning. The Trustees have approved a great deal of spending for technology over the past year and some of it is not working at all, for example the automated voice announcing on the buses that was supposed to be installed in September is still not working. Mr. McCurdy stated he just heard from a rider on the Yellow "G" that it was working great and they were happy to hear it. Mr. Johnson added it is working, but not perfectly, due to some geo-fencing issues that need to be worked out. It is getting better, but it has taken much longer than we initially thought it would take to get all the errors worked out. Mr. Thomas asked if that problem is route based. Does one route work and another route not? Or is it a problem on every route? Mr. Bowman stated he has not been on a bus yet where it has been working. It appeared only to work on about every fifth stop and it was so garbled that it was not understandable. Mr. Johnson stated perhaps not all the drivers are turning the system on due to some of these issues. Mr. Johnson continued that staff is riding various buses and routes to see if the system is working and what problems there are with it. Mr. Bowman restated if the Trustees are approving all these expenditures they need to get reports on how well it is working, some feedback mechanism is needed.

Mr. Peterson inquired if "secret shoppers or riders" are ever used to report back to management on how well the system is running. Mr. McCurdy rides constantly and he is certain not all the drivers know he is a Trustee. Mr. McCurdy stated he sits back and quietly observes and reports to Mr. Johnson any concerns he witnesses. Chairman Buchanan added that if any Trustee observes any problems or spectacular occurrences she hopes that information would be emailed or relayed somehow to Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson stated we are now in a position with our safety and training and operations departments to begin sending out some "secret riders", whereas six months ago that was not possible. All the data collecting is only as good as what you end up doing with it. We are slowly getting to the point where we are going to be able to do something and apply all the information we are gathering.

Chairman Buchanan stated the above mentioned items are the priorities and we are adding advocacy to the list. Chairman Buchanan asked the Trustees if those are indeed the items we wish our General Manager to direct his attention first. Some of the items are in the works and some will just happen anyway. Whether we make it a priority or not, union negotiations will happen. Mr. Peterson added having it on the list acknowledges it is happening and is a time and manpower consuming issue. Mr. Bill Wilson commented all the priorities are excellent and do not necessarily need to be

prioritized. Mr. Ryan Whitehouse stated he is confident Mr. Johnson will or already has prioritized these items.

Mr. Bowman commented for the overall health of the system, it would be helpful if the Trustees had an updated work flow chart of all the reporting relationships within the system and what the main responsibilities and duties are for each position. We know Mr. Johnson is the General Manager, but beyond that it would be helpful to know who has what responsibility for different areas and issues. Mr. Bowman stated it would help him to understand how the system is functioning. We can then better evaluate the effectiveness of the function and where accountability would lie if there is an issue or problem. Mr. Whitehouse agreed and added the Chamber of Commerce has a flow chart and it is very helpful. The chart lists what is the hierarchy, who reports to whom, and what are the responsibilities. Mr. McCurdy stated that if he has an issue or question he just goes to Mr. Johnson. Mr. Bowman stated the federal regulators that we are going to be reporting to regularly are going to require this chart of us. Mr. Johnson agrees that it is good for the Trustees to know what the primary responsibilities and duties are of the departments. Mr. Johnson stated we are required to have a comprehensive organizational work flow chart and he will be glad to add an explanation of responsibilities and essential duties of each department to the chart for the Trustees. Mr. Peterson agrees with Mr. Bowman that we should know how the system works and agrees with Mr. McCurdy that if we have a problem or issue, we should go directly to Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson stated many of the items on the list of goals will be done regardless. The other items are all good and are workable and realistic. Hopefully, the communication will be such throughout the year that none of these items mentioned will come as a year-end surprise. Mr. Johnson stated the list looks fine and definitely obtainable. Mr. Johnson commented all of the items are realistic, although subject to some interpretation. Mr. Johnson believes the Trustees have not over estimated or underestimated that the system is capable of achieving with these goals.

Mr. Peterson acknowledged the labor relations item will take a considerable amount of time this year and the Board needs to realize that fact. Mr. Peterson continued some of the goals are general and not very specific, but are important enough that they need to remain on the list. Perhaps over time more specific issues will arise, but for now this is a good list.

Mr. Wilson inquired if we are looking for direction on the route restructuring. Mr. Johnson stated that is already moving right along, although he would be very hesitant to put a specific date deadline on it. The goal is to have the route restructuring in place by the time the universities begin fall semester. Mr. Johnson suggested if the Trustees wanted to add an item in the goals referring to "continue working towards accomplishing the timeline for the route restructuring" that would be fine. The route restructuring is one of the most important things we are working on and probably one of the most time consuming items. Chairman Buchanan mentioned the listening sessions and asked

how the planning is coming along. Mr. Johnson responded staff is working on finding locations for the sessions. Mr. Wilson stated he realizes a great deal of energy is behind it and he just doesn't want the route restructuring to fall by the wayside.

Mr. Peterson asked if there were any other items or initiatives he is working on that need to be included in the list. Mr. Johnson stated he is currently working with a national organization sitting on the committee for the Reauthorization of Transportation Bill Task Force representing our system. Mr. Johnson is one of five members nationally on the committee representing small operators. It is not taking up the majority of time, but it is an important item with regards to what he is doing. Mr. Johnson suggested that could be on the list.

Mr. McCurdy inquired if the universal access item should be made more specific stating maintaining and further developing the agreements we already have and efforts to secure new universal access agreements. Mr. Johnson responded we do wish to get more access agreements. We have received express interests from other companies and we are still pursuing Illinois Wesleyan University. Mr. Johnson stated we definitely want to expand our universal access partners.

Mr. Johnson stated a big part of what we are doing now is working on getting new rolling stock and fleet vehicles into the system. We are busy seeking the financing for that project. Currently, the State will cover 75% of the cost on those new buses. We are in the first step requesting money from the State. Mr. Johnson commented we are in a very good position for the funding and are leveraging federal dollars against it. In the instructions it states doing so would give priority to an application. We are in a good position and have been talking with our elected officials at the State level to be sure they are ready to submit a letter stating their opinions when the time comes for that assistance.

Ms. Caisley asked about our quarterly payments from IDOT. Mr. Johnson replied we are two quarters behind, which is pretty typical for the State. Mr. Johnson stated it is a testament to the conservative nature of this organization that we have reserve funds to take care of this situation and get us through. Mr. Johnson continued staff has been working through the State Association and also individually keeping in touch with our administrative contacts at IDOT and FTA and making sure they are aware of what is happening with this process.

Chairman Buchanan asked Mr. Johnson to make a summary of the meeting and list of goals so it can be put in the next Board Packet.

Chairman Buchanan inquired of Mr. Johnson how the extra things are handled at other transits comparable to us with a similar size Board. Perhaps breaking up and organizing into committees would help accomplish more. This Board may try to move in that direction and in the meantime, Chairman Buchanan may ask individuals to assist and provide direction with several tasks such as the Board Manual. Formal committees

may be the direction we need to go in order to tackle some of these other issues. Committees can come forth with recommendations and may allow the Board to cover more territory and not have such lengthy Board meetings.

Mr. Bowman inquired if the seven recommended goals, with the addition of advocacy, are the priorities the Board and Mr. Johnson are to focus on and put the bulk of attention on. Mr. Bowman inquired if there are measurable deliverables that can be tied to these goals that we can use to assess the progress and performance, because these are rather broad and ambiguous items.

Mr. Whitehouse mentioned if the Board can get together for a strategic plan then the Trustees would determine the objectives and tactics on how to meet each goal. Chairman Buchanan believes these goals are more operational and would not be part of the strategic plan. Mr. McCurdy agreed they would be outside of the strategic plan, as they are more immediate. Mr. Whitehouse stated he was thinking advocacy would be in the strategic plan. Other Trustees agreed some of the goals would be both immediate and on-going for the strategic plan.

Mr. Thomas added a strategic plan is organizing planning for the next five years. These goals are more specific to this year. Mr. McCurdy agreed with Mr. Thomas that these are broad priorities and perhaps having some sub goals under them might be a good idea. For instance under universal access agreements, have increase revenue to existing contracts, bring in three more corporation contracts, make five more contacts, and get Illinois Wesleyan University on board. Mr. McCurdy continued that for advocacy we could list all the legislators and try to get them all here for a bus ride. This way there are some measurable marks in the goals.

Mr. Bowman continued it is important to have some things to look to otherwise it becomes very subjective. Mr. Peterson stated some of them are very straight forward for example the labor negotiations and Study Group. The other items perhaps we should add a few bullet points below the goal to indicate measurable items. The Trustees decided they would like Mr. Johnson to add some measurable indicators, which are steps in accomplishing the goal, below the goal item.

Mr. McCurdy asked what the difference is between outreach and advocacy. Mr. Whitehouse is referring to political advocacy. Mr. Whitehouse stated this should be in the strategic plan with multiple tactics on how the goal is going to be accomplished. Mr. Johnson stated political advocacy is more aggressive. The outreach is referring to community outreach, such as participation in a community activity. Anything to get the public involved and interested in Transit. Mr. McCurdy stated we need to distinguish the two into political advocacy and community outreach.

Ms. Caisley suggests we need to think about investigating having the Transit pursue servicing outside the corporate city limits in future years. This needs to be investigated.

Adjournment

Chairman Buchanan thanked everyone for coming and giving up their Saturday morning. Chairman Buchanan stated this has been a very productive and valuable meeting and suggested the Trustees may wish to schedule another special meeting to continue the discussion and discuss similar new topics. Mr. McCurdy suggested the Board not let too much time go by before scheduling another special meeting so we keep the topics fresh.

On a motion by Mr. Thomas, and a second by Mr. McCurdy, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

John M. Bowman, Secretary