

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
April 26, 2022, 4:30pm
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 5/24/22 Meeting

Trustees Present: Trustee Linda Foster
Vice Chair Julie Hile
Trustee Tim McCue
Trustee Mandava Rao (4:35)
Trustee Barbara Singer
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

City Managers Present: City Manager Pam Reece, Normal
Deputy City Manager Billy Tyus, Bloomington (Remote)

Staff Present: David Braun, General Manager
Brady Lange, Procurement Director
Germaine Walls, Interim HR Manager
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Steve Stockton, IT Manager
Janice Crago, Board Clerk

Guest: Cheryl O'Connor, Enterprise

Chairman Ryan Whitehouse called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and read the Connect Transit Mission Statement.

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

Chairman Whitehouse led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and read the mission statement.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
There were no public comments.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of March 22, 2022, Annual Meeting Minutes
- b. Approval of March 22, 2022, Regular Session Minutes
- c. Approval of March 22, 2022, Executive Session Minutes
- d. Financial Information for March 2022
- e. Monthly Statistical Reports for March 2022
- f. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report
- g. Cornerstone – Illinois Weekly Update

Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda.
Trustee McCue motioned; seconded by Trustee Singer.

Discussion:

David Braun, General Manager, pointed out the April Income Statement reflects we are above budget due to Operating Revenue from fares and miscellaneous, and below where would expect to be in our YTD total Operating Cost budget. We are also significantly above in our Operating Assistance due to Debt Service distributions. Mr. Braun also pointed out that the Cardinal Infrastructure report provides a detailed response to our request for Microtransit vehicles.

Chairman Whitehouse noted that ridership has increased to pre-COVID rates, if not better, riders are coming back to Connect Transit.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee McCue, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None.

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. That the Resolution authorizing the application for a Public Transportation Capital Assistance Grant for paratransit vehicles under the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) general authority to make such Grants be adopted.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion authorizing the application for a Public Transportation Capital Assistance Grant for paratransit vehicles under the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) general authority to make such Grants be adopted.

Vice Chair Hile motioned; seconded by Trustee Singer.

Discussion:

Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director, stated this would give us four replacement vehicles for 2017 propane buses and two expansion buses as the Connect Mobility ridership continues to increase. The 2017 buses will be approximately seven years old when these buses arrive. We have used this program in the past to purchase the nine 2018 mobility buses and six of the 2020 mobility buses. Through the Federal Transit Administration and IDOT's Consolidated Vehicle Procurement Program, Connect Transit is eligible to apply for grant funding for the purchase of six (6) demand response vehicles. As part of the application process, Connect Transit must adopt a Resolution ensuring that Connect Transit is eligible to apply, and that the application's purpose is to offset capital costs of purchasing the vehicles. Staff recommends that the Board approve the application and adopt the Resolution for the purchase of six (6) demand response vehicles. Connect Transit will not have to contribute any funds for this project.

Trustee Foster stated that it is excellent that we don't have to use additional funds to purchase the buses and asked if these buses are the same size as what we are using now. Mr. Braun stated these will be replacing the propane buses, which are a little larger than the rest of our fleet and will provide a consistency in our fleet. He also shared the propane buses are a little more expensive to maintain so this purchase will cut down on maintenance expenses as well.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if this is a process that must be approved by the State.

Mr. Kuebrich stated we have to submit the application this week, it will go in front of the Governor, who will determine allocations of buses.

Vice Chair Hile thanked Mr. Kuebrich for being on top of this and getting Connect Transit in the queue.

Mr. Braun reminded the Board that Connect Mobility ridership is projected to increase by 10% over and above the 2019 numbers and this allows for an expansion as we continue to grow that program.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Recommendation authorizing the application for a Public Transportation Capital Assistance Grant for paratransit vehicles under the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) general authority to make such Grants be adopted was **approved**.

- b. Approve the Illinois State University Universal Access Contract for a three-year period from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to approve the ISU Universal Access Contract for a three-year period from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025.

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee McCue.

Discussion:

Mr. Kuebrich, Finance Director, shared the Universal Access Agreement allows students, faculty, and staff of Illinois State University to ride Connect Transit fixed route buses free of charge upon swiping their valid identification card. Connect has been providing universal access to ISU since 2006. The contract amount will be divided into two services: the Redbird Express Service and the Universal Access Service. The estimated revenue from the service is \$595,678 for FY 2023. The total revenue of the Redbird Express Service will be determined by the FY 2022 fixed route hourly rate multiplied by the total Redbird Express Service hours. The total revenue of the Universal Access Service will be determined by the total number of unique ISU riders multiplied by the annual cost rate of \$42.00 per unique rider. The actual cost of the service will be trued-up after the audited financial statements have been completed for each fiscal year. Our goal was to negotiate a three-year contract with a funding model that clearly defines the distributed cost among dedicated service, and universal access. This will allow us to more easily adjust service levels and access without the need for additional negotiations. From July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2025, the estimated contract amount will be \$595,678 per year without adjustments (\$49,639.83 per month). This is an estimated 3.03% increase over the FY 2022 contract amount.

Mr. Braun explained that previously we had a flat fee with ISU, which was divided into twelve equal payments. It is unclear how they came up with that amount, but we decided to come up with a model that is understandable to both Boards and sustainable for both parties. This formula establishes a base of funding and annual increases as we move forward in this three-year contract. It recognizes the cost of the Redbird Express, which we run for them as a separate cost and establishes unique rider costs. It also agrees to wrap two of our buses with Redbird Express and free wi-fi

services on the buses. He shared he feels this is a fair contract, reflecting their actual ridership, our actual costs, and actual operating hours. It establishes a real partnership between both parties moving forward. [Mr. Braun then shared an onscreen presentation that explained the formula.]

Trustee Foster shared her appreciation to be able to advertise for ISU and asked if it gives others the opportunity to utilize the spaces to advertise as well. Mr. Braun shared these buses will be solely for the ISU advertisements, however, other organizations are able buy a wrap through Houck Transit Advertising. We are proposing to use our new electric buses for the ISU routes, giving the students a better service. Trustee Foster also shared her appreciation that ISU was still paying their contract payments during COVID and for Mr. Braun working through the contract negotiations with them.

City Manager Reese asked why the wi-fi is not already enabled on the buses since we already have that capability. Steve Stockton, IT Manager, explained due to previous bandwidth issues we were unable to enable the wi-fi. We now have routers and are fine tuning the bandwidth on the Redbird Express.

Chairman Whitehouse stated he has been wanting a contract for four years and is happy to now have a fair contract, and shared his appreciation to the team for making this happen.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Recommendation to authorize the General Manager to approve the ISU Universal Access Contract for a three-year period from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025, was **approved**.

- c. Authorize the General Manager to award a contract for coordinated vanpool services to Commute with Enterprise.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to award a contract for coordinated vanpool services to Commute with Enterprise.

Vice Chair Hile motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Discussion:

Brady Lange, Procurement Director, shared that approximately 35,000 people commute to Bloomington-Normal every day. A coordinated vanpool service can benefit large and small employers in our community by providing access to employees outside the area, reducing parking needs at their facility, and for some employers it eliminates the need to develop an internal vanpool program. A coordinated vanpool service also provides people that have fewer transportation options access to opportunity in the Bloomington-Normal area for work. Riders of the van pool service benefit also from decreased transportation costs while also experiencing less traffic-related stress. Sponsoring a coordinated vanpool program helps Connect Transit fulfill our mission by providing access to opportunity, strengthening our community and the economy by supporting local employers, and reducing the use of fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions. On January 17, 2022, Connect Transit released a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking proposals for vanpool coordination services. The RFP was advertised nationally and sent directly to various potential proposers. A

single proposal was received in response to the RFP. After receiving a single proposal and per Connect Transit's procurement policy, a price evaluation was completed to determine if the proposal was fair and reasonable. Three recent pricing proposals from other RFP responses were requested from the single proposer for comparison. Staff determined that the proposed price for services is competitive and similar to other proposal responses. Additionally, further evaluation was completed to determine if the Scope of Work contained in the RFP was limiting competition in any way. Nothing was identified as a limiting factor within the Scope of Work. As a result, Connect Transit has determined awarding a single proposer is acceptable in this case. Based on the evaluation of the analysis detailed above, staff is recommending that Commute with Enterprise be awarded the contract. Commute with Enterprise has been providing vanpool services for more than 40 years and has more than 12,000 vehicles in service in over 70 markets. Additionally, Commute with Enterprise has an existing local footprint with their vehicle rental business and is experienced in providing National Transit Database reporting that is required for public transportation providers.

Connect Transit is proposing to subsidize a portion of the service, and co-brand the service with Commute with Enterprise to demonstrate our participation in the service. The remaining cost of the service will be paid by the rider or the rider's employer if they choose to participate. In addition, the cost of the service can be offered as a pre-tax benefit as allowed by IRS Section 132, potentially saving commuters more money. Connect Transit staff is recommending the Board of Trustees approve the contract and commit to subsidizing each vehicle with \$500 per month, or \$6,000 annually, from operating funds. As a reminder, operating funds are provided at a rate of 65% from the State of Illinois with the remaining 35% being covered with FTA 5307 and local funds. It should be noted that Connect Transit anticipates additional STIC funding of over \$500,000 soon after putting 25 -30 vanpool vehicles in service by achieving the Passenger Miles per Capita STIC Performance Factor. [Mr. Braun shared an onscreen presentation further explaining the above details]

Trustee Singer asked if the vehicles will be ADA accessible. Cheryl O'Conner with Enterprise explained they evaluate what is needed to meet the needs to the ADA rider, provide the necessary vehicle or outfit a new vehicle and get it to the vanpool rider within a thirty-day window.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if we would receive an additional \$325 funding from the Downstate Operating Assistance Program (DOAP) funding per van guaranteed? Mr. Braun stated that yes, we would.

Cheryl O'Conner thanked the Board for the opportunity to partner with Connect Transit. They are actively working with local employers in the area and hope to establish a winning partnership going forward.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if it is Enterprise's responsibility to work with the local employers to see if they have an interest in participating in this program. Ms. O'Conner said it depends on how involved Connect wants to be, they can take on all or part of the efforts, and they are happy to take on all the responsibility if needed.

Chairman Whitehouse asked what the minimum rider threshold is for Connect Transit to be liable for the \$500 contribution each month. Ms. O'Conner stated the minimum ridership requirement falls under the IRS policy for commuter benefits, which says that the vehicle must

be at least 50% ridership; a seven passenger would need to have four riders. They would also not charge Connect for any vehicles not on the road.

Vice Chair Hile shared her enthusiasm for this program, the creative thinking going into it, and partnerships it will potentially establish in the community. She is also excited for the way this positions Connect Transit as a community economic development and jobs partner at a crucial time.

Trustee Rao asked if the program is only for bringing employees into the Bloomington-Normal area or could it be used to take others to Peoria or Springfield for example. Mr. Braun stated this program has been structured to bring employees into our area.

Trustee Foster asked if the riders of the vanpool would be allowed to ride the bus during other times at no cost. Mr. Braun explained the driver would have some privileges for using the van but that the riders would have no use of the van other than a rider and if they wanted to use the bus during lunch, they would have to pay the fare. One off stops on the way home would need to be arranged as a group between the riders.

City Manager Reese asked if this program is only available between public sector partners and Enterprise. Mr. Braun stated Enterprise could run the program on their own. Ms. Reese asked Connect Transit's role in this. Mr. Braun stated any employer could take on the program but that with Connect Transit doing this the reach is expanded to include multiple employers in one vanpool.

Ms. O'Conner emphasized we are providing this service as a public service to be able to get the additional funding, to reach additional employers for one vanpool, and to get our name in the community in another way.

Deputy City Manager Tyus asked for other communities where this program is being used. Ms. O'Conner stated this program is being used by over 80 public sector contracts in both urban and rural areas such as Los Angeles and San Diego, Fort Worth and Austin, Michigan and Nebraska, Ann Arbor, and Little Rock. Mr. Tyus asked for clarification that three other people would need to use the van every day, in addition to the driver. Ms. O'Conner confirmed yes, three other regular daily riders would need to share the ride with the driver daily. Mr. Tyus asked at what number of vans would STIC funding kick in. Mr. Braun stated that, at 30 vehicles, the passenger miles would be high enough to achieve the next level of STIC funding.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if an employer decides to pay the entire contribution, would Connect still be eligible to receive the larger STIC funding? Ms. O'Conner stated Connect does have to be financially involved to be eligible for the additional funding and to be considered a public vanpool.

Vice Chair Hile emphasized the real need for talent in the community and the desire to find a way to contribute to the solution.

Deputy City Manager Tyus agreed with Vice Chair Hile and wanted to know what amount Connect will be contributing before we access the additional funding. Mr. Braun stated it depends on the number of miles but anticipates it would be approximately 30 vans, which would be \$180,000 per year to access the additional funding.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Recommendation to authorize the General Manager to award a contract for coordinated vanpool services to Commute with Enterprise was **approved**.

- d. Authorize the staff to continue the planning and public involvement process for a service expansion to West Bloomington/Normal.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the staff to continue the planning and public involvement process for a service expansion to West Bloomington/Normal.

Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

Discussion:

Mr. Braun shared that the West Bloomington-Normal area is ripe for development and as the public transit provider in the area we need to adapt to serve our community as it continues to grow. Rivian, located in west Normal, currently employs just over five thousand (5,000) people in our community and the surrounding areas, and within the next year they expect to employ approximately six thousand (6,000) people. Currently, we do not serve their location, with the closest stop at Wylie Dr. & Hovey. The distance from that stop to the Rivian employee entrance is approximately 1.82 miles. Connect Transit and Rivian have been working together over the past few months to develop a transportation solution for those in our community who work at their facility. The route will also serve existing businesses along Rivian Motorway and West Market Street, including OSF Prompt Care, Walmart, Tractor Supply, Blain's Farm and Fleet and other employers along Rivian Motorway, and West Market Street. The proposed route will start and end at both Connect Transit Transfer Centers, utilizing West College Avenue and then proceed down Rivian Motorway to West Market Street, serve the Bloomington Walmart, then continue down Market Street to the Downtown Transfer area. This alignment will serve existing businesses and open parcels available for future development. We see this route as a necessary part of the infrastructure to facilitate growth in this area. Due to duplication of service from the downtown transfer area to Walmart on West Market Street, we propose to discontinue the Lime Express that also serves the same alignment. Currently, the Lime Express only runs Monday through Friday. This new route will expand service along that corridor on weekends. The proposed service will run during peak employment hours at Rivian and other employers in the area, including OSF Prompt Care and businesses along Rivian Motorway, and West Market Street. These times may change slightly as we continue to develop the route and through our public involvement process. We propose that the route run with 30-minute frequency M-F 5:00-8:30am and 2:30-7:30pm, Saturday 6:00-8:30am and 2:30-7:00pm, Sunday 6:00-8:30am and 2:30-6:30pm. We propose to start the service in mid-late summer 2022, after we conduct the public involvement process, lease additional buses, and include necessary on-board equipment including a farebox, automatic passenger counter in GPS.

The total cost of providing this service is estimated to be \$1.03 million per year, of which 65% will be covered by the Illinois Downstate Operating Program and the rest from Federal Grants or local sources. [More details provided in meeting packet]

Chairman Whitehouse pointed out this not just a route for Rivian, this route gives access to healthcare.

Trustee Foster asked for clarification on the times, which Mr. Braun provided. Mr. Braun stated the hours cover Rivian's peak hours and do not run all day; the regular Lime route will continue to run all day.

Mr. Braun stated at this time this is only a request to move forward with the planning and public involvement process, not to make actual changes. If approved by the Board, we will come back later with the comments collected from the public and make the official request to make the route changes.

City Manager Reese asked how we will publicize the public input process. Mr. Braun stated we would publicize through Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, press releases, public notices and hold a series of the sessions throughout the area over a two-week period. Ms. Reese stated the City will help publicize and share the information widely.

Vice Chair Hile would like to see Connect use the Community Bus to get into the neighborhoods to garner input from the businesses, thinking outside the box.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Foster, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Recommendation to authorize the staff to continue the planning and public involvement process for a service expansion to West Bloomington/Normal was **approved**.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Chairman Whitehouse shared that the committee appointments had been finalized as follows:

Community Outreach: Trustee Buchanan

Finance: Vice Chair Hile and Trustee Singer

Personnel: Trustee Foster

Planning and Operations: Trustee McCue and Trustee Rao

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:

Good News:

David Braun, General Manager, shared his appreciation for Chairman Whitehouse and Pat Kuebrich being at the Bloomington City Council presentation. Mr. Braun felt the presentation went well with great questions asked by the Council and spurred interest in what we are doing. He shared he had presented to the McLean County Regional Planning Commission on how we intend to incorporate transit into the long-range transit plan for the county. Connect has also been in the news with Mr. Braun giving interviews with WMBD, WJBC, WGLT and ISU TV-10 on the recent lifting of the mask mandate and the change in scope on the Transit Center.

Recruiting:

Mr. Braun stated we have been actively recruiting for many positions. We currently have openings for one Custodian, two Maintenance Supervisors, one Procurement Assistant, three Service Technicians, and one Transportation Planner. In addition to recruiting, we have hired one Customer Service Representative, two Dispatchers, one Mechanic, and two Operations Supervisors.

Training:

Mr. Braun shared that our employees had been active in trainings across the organization. One Operations Supervisor attended Intro to Paratransit Operations; Seven Mechanics attended Amerex Fire Suppression for Electric Buses; All employees are rotating through Sexual Harassment and Workplace Harassment over the course of the year; All Bus Operators began CPR/AED trainings and will be certified in the administration and use of AED over the year; and a new Bus Operator class began 3/28/22. Mr. Braun shared that holding these trainings makes the employees' jobs more satisfying but also makes our system more efficient and effective.

COVID:

Mr. Braun stated that TSA is no longer enforcing masks on public transportation so our headers and signage regarding masks have all been removed. 95 employees (70%) have shared their vaccination records, we are still accepting records.

FY23 Budget:

Mr. Braun shared the FY23 draft budget onscreen presentation with the Board, explaining we still do not have the cost for benefits and we have not settled the labor agreement. Over the next month we will continue to develop the budget, fill in the costs, and present the final budget for a vote at the May meeting. Mr. Braun stated he asked the staff to start with a zero-based budget and build from there for all FY23 proposed projects, staff positions and vehicles needed to run proposed projects, trainings, agency needs including operations, benefits, committees, marketing and outreach needs, maintenance costs, facility upgrades, and IT upgrades and replacements, etc. [Full presentation was emailed to the Trustees immediately following the meeting] Mr. Braun reminded the Board the staff will continue to fine tune the costs, fill in the missing costs, seek input from the Budget Committee on the final draft before coming to the Board in May with a final draft outlining the changes made, planning for a vote on the budget.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if we have been working with Career Link to utilize the federal subsidies available for training. Mr. Braun confirmed we have utilized their funds for much of the Maintenance trainings.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if Mr. Braun would be available to everyone individually to go over the draft budget. Mr. Braun confirmed he is available to go over the draft budget with anyone who would like that meeting, the budget has much more detail than he could get into in the time this meeting allows, and an individual meeting would allow that detail.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if there were any comments from the Budget Committee. Vice Chair Hile encouraged Trustees to have the individual budget review meeting with Mr. Braun, because it is extremely enlightening, educational, and transparent. Ms. Hile also shared her enthusiasm for the process reflecting Connect expanding the full range of knowledge, skill, and ability from the team, ensuring we have numbers up front from the experts who do this work, and establishes shared ownership within the team. Ms. Hile thanked Mr. Braun for continuing his work towards getting the right staff in the right seats in

this organization, it is a sure-footed path in the right direction. Trustee Singer expressed her pleasure that the pay inequity issues are being addressed in this budget and for Mr. Braun taking the time to explain the draft budget in detail.

Chairman Whitehouse stated that in previous years a budget fit on one sheet and congratulated Mr. Braun and his staff for the hard work they have given on this transparent, in depth budget.

Trustee Foster thanked Mr. Braun and his team for the detailed information and recognized the hard work that goes into it because the level of detail he has provided allows them to be good stewards in the community.

City Manager Reece asked if Mr. Braun would share the budget presentation with her and the Board, and if she could share it with the City Council. Mr. Braun said he would share the presentation with the entire Board and agreed she could share with the City Council.

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS:

Vice Chair Hile stated this meeting feels like it has been about partnerships, counting outreach to new riders, successful negotiations with ISU, laying groundwork with new businesses, and deepening connections within the Connect team and the Board and she appreciates this. Vice Chair Hile also encouraged Trustees to attend the APTA Transit Board Members Seminars in Salt Lake City and asked if the Board could start receiving pre-COVID comparison summaries in the data package.

Trustee Foster stated she is pleased that things we have been working on are coming to fruition and expressed her thanks to Mr. Braun and Chairman Whitehouse for leading them in the right direction. She also expressed her appreciation for the training being given to the Connect team and allowing them to pursue whatever opportunities available to them.

Trustee Rao expressed his appreciation for the efforts going into the community and into the draft budget.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

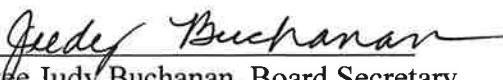
No Executive Session was held.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Adjourn.

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Vice Chair Hile.

Motion to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting was **approved by consensus**; meeting adjourned at 6:27p.m.


Trustee Judy Buchanan, Board Secretary


Janice Crago, Board Clerk

[SEAL]

