

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
May 24, 2022, 4:30pm
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 6/28/22 Meeting

Trustees Present: Chairman Ryan Whitehouse
Trustee Judy Buchanan
Trustee Linda Foster
Trustee Tim McCue
Trustee Mandava Rao

City Managers Present: Bloomington Deputy City Manager Billy Tyus

Staff Present: David Braun, General Manager
Aubrey Staton, Interim Marketing Manager
Brady Lange, Procurement Director
Charlie Busse, Maintenance Manager
Germaine Walls, Interim HR Manager
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Shelly Perry, Operations Manager
Steve Stockton, IT Manager
Janice Crago, Board Clerk

Guest(s) Present: Keith Dobrolinsky, Assurance

Chairman Ryan Whitehouse called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.
Board Clerk, Janice Crago, recorded attendance via roll call.
Chairman Whitehouse read the Connect Transit Mission Statement and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Keith Farris spoke to the Board as a Connect Transit Bus Operator and shared his concerns regarding the ISU Redbird runs. Mr. Farris shared he has been a Connect employee for thirteen years and had hoped to speak at last month's meeting but was unable to due to trying to speak during the meeting and not during the Public Comment portion of the meeting, which brought him to tonight's meeting. Approximately 6 to 8 months ago Mr. Farris, along with other Operators gave input to Jared Simons, Operations Supervisor, regarding the ISU Redbird route. Mr. Farris feels the way the route is currently running is completely off, with buses running right behind each other in an inefficient way, leaving students behind or walking to class, and that he offered great solutions that were not used. Mr. Farris feels his solutions offer quality service and that quantity is not always the answer to fix a problem. He asked that the Board visit the route and see the room for improvement and feasibility of his ideas. Chairman Whitehouse thanked Mr. Farris for his comments.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of April 26, 2022, Regular Session Minutes
- b. Financial Information for April 2022
- c. Monthly Statistical Reports for April 2022

- d. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report
- e. Cornerstone – Illinois Weekly Update

Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda.

Trustee McCue motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

Discussion:

David Braun, General Manager, stated that the Income Statement reflects a noticeably high cost for Employee Recruiting and Testing, and Temp Help. Mr. Braun explained that Germaine Walls, Interim HR Manager, is a temporary position through a contracting agency and that is the driver for this cost but that conversely there is a reduction in Administrative Wages because that permanent position remains vacant. Mr. Braun shared he did not notice any other anomalies in the KPI's, that our ridership for the month of April was down compared to last year but that we are still up for the year by 17.6% for Fixed Route and 37% for Mobility.

Trustee Buchanan asked if Cornerstone or IPTA works with Connect on any pieces of legislation that are passed that will impact transit or is Mr. Braun expected to cull through that on his own?

Mr. Braun shared that he meets with Cornerstone monthly to review current legislation and reports, and that if anything comes up prior to the meeting they follow up sooner. IPTA also follows up with him in case Cornerstone has missed anything and alerts him to things he should follow up on as well.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None.

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Recommendation to authorize the General Manager to renew property and casualty insurance effective July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to renew property and casualty insurance effective July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

Discussion:

Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director, explained that Connect is renewing the property and casualty insurance from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. This renewal covers the following insurance coverage: workers' compensation, property, general liability, automotive liability, automotive comprehensive, umbrella liability, directors and officers liability and employment practices liability, fiduciary, cyber liability, and crime insurance. Connect will be switching the workers' compensation provider from United Heartland to Travelers. Connect will save \$72,289 in FY23 by switching to Travelers. Even with the switch to Travelers, Connect will receive a \$26,599.00 increase (from \$236,505 FY22 to \$263,104 FY23) in premium for the workers' compensation insurance renewal. The increase is due to an increased Experience Mod and an increase in salaries

for FY23. Connect will also receive an increase in the Property and Casualty Insurance renewal. The total increase is \$19,566 (from \$398,209 FY22 to \$417,775 FY23). The majority of this premium increase (\$13,855) is from the automotive liability and comprehensive coverage. This increase is due to the new electric buses we purchased and an overall increase in rates in the industry. Even though this is a significant increase, we feel this is a reasonable renewal. We will be working with Assurance to help with programs to mitigate our claims in the future. The total cost for this renewal \$680,879, a \$46,165 (7.3%) increase over FY22, will come from the FY23 Operating Budget.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if these new amounts are included in the FY23 budget?
Mr. Braun confirmed these exact numbers are reflected in the FY23 budget.

Chairman Whitehouse asked for confirmation that we are seeing an increase but by switching providers we are lowering the increase amount.
Mr. Kuebrich confirmed Chairman Whitehouse's statement.

Trustee Foster stated her satisfaction that we are able to lower the increase amount and wanted to know if we are able to get the same coverage or improve our coverage?
Keith Dobrolinsky, a representative from Traveler's Insurance, stated that the policy is identical to our previous policy. He elaborated to explain the rise in cost is due to the 12% increase in payroll and the increase in the experience modification number.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if our number is going up because of salaries?
Mr. Dobrolinsky explained the number is going up because of the frequency and severity of losses over the last three years, due to our losses we are seeing an increase. As those losses fall off our number will improve and the policy expense will improve.

Trustee Buchanan stated the proposal states an increase in salaries does factor into the policy increase and asked for confirmation.
Mr. Dobrolinsky stated he noted a 12% year over year increase in payroll and that did factor into the policy amount.

Trustee Buchanan noted that Mr. Dobrolinsky stated Travelers would be willing to come in and work with more aggressively with Connect than our former carrier had to help lower our experience ratio and wanted to know if this is something that had not been done before?
Mr. Dobrolinsky stated that our former carrier did come in when our ratio was much higher and worked with us to bring that ratio down to a lower number, but we do still have unforeseen and uncontrollable losses, which cause the ration to remain elevated. He feels that Travelers will do a good job proactively helping us lower our ratio.

Rolcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse
NAY: None

Recommendation to authorize the General Manager to renew property and casualty insurance effective July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 was **approved**.

- b. Recommendation that the contract with Connect Transit’s current healthcare insurance provider, Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), be approved for a contract term of July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion that Connect Transit’s current healthcare insurance provider, Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), be approved for a contract term of July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023.

Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

Discussion:

Germaine Walls, Interim HR Manager, explained the current health insurance policy with BCBS is set to renew July 1, 2022. Employees will maintain the choice of three (3) plans: MPP83436, MPP938C, or MPEQ1Z0720 with no changes made to any of the plans. The total cost increase will be 9.5% from the 2021 – 2022 renewal. This renewal is after a two-year, fixed fee contract with no increase, making the average increase over the past 2-years only 4.75%. There will be no increase to our Life/AD&D or FMLA benefits from the 2021 – 2022 renewal. There will be no increase in our Dental, Vision & LTD premium cost and a 27.4% Increase in the Short-Term Disability (STD) premium. This STD increase is due to usage from COVID claims. Our vision insurance has a 4-year rate lock until 7/1/2026.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if there is a reason we could not get a rate lock this time?
Mrs. Walls stated it is because of the cost of claims submitted over the last policy term.

Trustee Foster applauded the efforts in keeping cost increases to a minimum for both the employee and the employer.

Trustee Rao asked if the deductibles remain the same for all 3 plans?
Mrs. Walls confirmed the deductibles remain the same for all plans, that nothing has changed in any of the plans.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if the employees will be seeing an increase in the amount they pay for their portion of the insurance?
Mr. Braun stated we are in negotiations to determine the employee costs.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Recommendation to approve the current healthcare insurance provider, BCBS, for a contract term of July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2022 was **approved**.

- c. Recommendation that the FY23 Operating and Capital Budget be adopted.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to adopt the FY23 Operating and Capital Budget.

Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.

Discussion:

Chairman Whitehouse reminded the Board that the FY23 budget was introduced to everyone at the April 26, 2022 and that he hoped everyone had taken the time to meet with David Braun, General

Manager or Pat Kuebrich, Finance Kuebrich to go over the budget in depth. Chairman Whitehouse also shared that the Budget Committee representatives Vice Chair Hile and Trustee Singer are both comfortable with this budget recommendation as presented.

Pat Kuebrich stated our draft FY23 Budget was presented for your review and consideration at the Connect Transit Board of Trustees April meeting, and the final budget will be presented at the Connect Transit Board of Trustees' May meeting and will be posted on our website for public review at a later date. The FY23 budget includes 118,974 revenue hours for fixed route service (up 10.1% from FY22) and 36,334 revenue hours for Connect Mobility (up 7% from FY22). This budget includes new services to West Bloomington-Normal beginning in the first quarter of FY23, and new demand responsive Microtransit service beginning in fourth quarter of FY23.

Mr. Braun, General Manager, shared the updated FY23 Operating Budget presentation with the Board, outlining the differences since the April presentation. [Presentation emailed to Board after the meeting]

Chairman Whitehouse asked if the increase of rides is due to new routes or peak service increasing?

Mr. Braun stated it is based on last year's budgeted amount and increase in service.

Mr. Kuebrich shared the next steps are that we submit the budget to Illinois Department of Transportation for review and approval, and he also prepares the Government Finance Officers Association document.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the FY23 budget had been presented to the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal councils?

Chairman Whitehouse stated the budget has been presented to both City Managers and both councils, with no negative feedback from either side. He also complimented Mr. Braun for the thoroughly detailed budget.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Recommendation to adopt the FY23 Operating and Capital Budget was **approved**.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Chairman Whitehouse thanked the Trustees for attending the Councils where David Braun presented the FY23 budget. He also thanked LIFE-CIL for meeting with our staff to provide training on sensitivity and communicating to people with disabilities. Many members of the Connect Transit staff attended and hope to continue to meet on a regular basis to make our system better for everyone. Chairman Whitehouse shared a thank you to Joe Isaia for attending the Town of Normal Council meeting and showing a culture of safety and professionalism.

Chairman Whitehouse concluded by asking if anyone had any comments on the City of Bloomington or Town of Normal council meetings?

Trustee Buchanan stated she felt the meeting was very positive, with very good questions asked. She noted prior meetings had been very adversarial and this meeting was not adversarial in any way.

Trustee McCue feels the council is very pleased to see we are starting to serve previously underserved populations and that is a credit to David Braun and his staff.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:

David Braun introduced Aubrey Staton, current Interim Marketing Manager. Aubrey has been working with us as an intern and will join us as our Marketing Manager on June 13.

Chairman Whitehouse welcomed Aubrey and noted how much cooler our Instagram page is looking already.

Recruiting and Training:

Mr. Braun noted we are still working to fill numerous positions. Germaine Walls, HR Manager, is doing a wonderful job with searches and scheduling interviews but many times people are just not showing up for the interview or their first day of work. This no-show phenomenon is happening across the country and it's a challenge we are struggling with. At this time, we are recruiting for 1 Custodian, 2 Dispatchers, 2 Maintenance Supervisors, 1 Procurement Assistant, 3 Service Technicians, and 1 Transportation Planner. In addition, we have hired 2 Bus Operators, 1 Customer Service Representative, and 1 Service Technician.

One Bus Operator from the 3/28/22 class has resigned, the remaining 3 are in service on their own now. A new class of 2 Bus Operators began on 5/9/22 and are expected to begin Route Familiarization Training by the end of May. Six CPR/AED classes have been conducted with an 80% passing rate. Personnel that do not pass will be rescheduled for additional one-on-one training. Classes of safety-sensitive personnel completed Substance Abuse Training, and Dave White has implemented Toolbox Talks with Maintenance. The most recent Toolbox Talk session discussed documentation and disposal of drugs and drug paraphernalia found onboard buses.

Public Engagement Sessions:

Mr. Braun shared we will be hosting public engagement sessions for the new West Bloomington Normal route on Monday, June 6, Sunday, June 12, Wednesday, June 15 (private for Rivian employees) and Saturday, June 18.

Outreach and Education:

Mr. Braun stated he presented the FY23 budget to the Town of Normal and shared the vanpool presentation with the Manufacturer's Council of the Chamber of Commerce. He also shared that Connect participated in the Twin Cities Showcase and that we will be redeveloping the CTAC as a new Ambassador group with more information to come at our next Board meeting.

HR Efforts:

Mr. Braun noted that Germaine Walls, HR Manager, has done a great job keeping the cost of healthcare benefits down but in also opening up some retirement options for our employees. We will be adding in a 401a and Roth IRA option this year, as well as an online portal for benefits enrollment that will replace our paper enrollment system.

COVID and Vaccination Update:

Mr. Braun shared there have been no changes to our COVID status since our last meeting, we are still standing at 95 employees having shared their vaccination record.

Operations:

Mr. Braun stated we resumed Peak Service on 5/8/22 and will be updating our Riders' Guide. Shelly Perry, Operations Manager, stated that we would like to include other McLean county public transportation providers in our next Riders' Guide to allow a better customer service experience for our riders when we are not the provider they need. These additional services may include MarcFirst, Agency for Aging, Faith in Action, among others in the area. We may sell some advertising within the Riders' Guide to help offset the cost of printing the guide. We don't plan to make a profit but hope to cut down on the cost of the guide.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. (ILCS 120/2(c)(1) – Personnel Matters

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to adjourn Regular Session and move into an Executive Session.

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded Trustee McCue

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Motion carried, and the Board of Trustees adjourned Regular Session and moved into Executive Session at 5:20 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION RE-OPENED:

Chairman Whitehouse called Regular Session back to order at 5:53pm and Board Clerk, Janice Crago took attendance via roll call.

Trustees Present:

Chairman Ryan Whitehouse
Trustee Judy Buchanan
Trustee Linda Foster
Trustee Tim McCue
Trustee Mandava Rao

City Managers Present:

Bloomington Deputy City Manager Billy Tyus

Staff Present:

David Braun, General Manager
Aubrey Staton, Interim Marketing Manager
Brady Lange, Procurement Director
Charlie Busse, Maintenance Manager
Germaine Walls, Interim HR Manager
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Shelly Perry, Operations Manager
Steve Stockton, IT Manager
Janice Crago, Board Clerk

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS:

Trustee Foster shared her excitement at the good press Connect has been receiving in the paper recently and she is thankful to hear about the public engagement sessions coming up. She shared her appreciation that we are recognizing public comments and wants to make sure we are listening to what they say and follow up on their input and went on to thank our Operators for their continued support and service during COVID's resurgences.

Trustee Rao thanked David Braun meeting with him individually to thoroughly explain the detailed FY23 budget.

Trustee Buchanan shared her enthusiasm for working with Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager on this new Ambassador program and telling the Connect story.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Adjourn.


Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee McCue.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Trustee Foster, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse

NAY: None

Motion to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting was **approved**; meeting adjourned at 6:00p.m.


Trustee Judy Buchanan, Board Secretary


Janice Crago, Board Clerk

[SEAL]

