

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
June 28, 2022, 4:30pm
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 7/26/22 Meeting

Trustees Present: Secretary Judy Buchanan
Vice Chair Julie Hile (4:34)
Trustee Tim McCue (4:33)
Trustee Mandava Rao
Trustee Barbara Singer
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

City Managers Present: Town of Normal City Manager Pam Reece (4:33)
Bloomington Deputy City Manager Billy Tyus

Staff Present: David Braun, General Manager
Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager
Brady Lange, Procurement Director
Charlie Busse, Maintenance Manager
Dave White, Safety and Training Director
Jacob Smith, Transportation Planner
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Steve Stockton, IT Manager
Janice Crago, Board Clerk

Chairman Ryan Whitehouse called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

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

Chairman Whitehouse led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and read the Connect Transit Mission Statement

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Melissa Stuedemann spoke as a member of the community and rider of Connect Transit Mobility. Ms. Stuedemann stated she has been a rider of paratransit for a long time and has just recently moved to Pinecrest Apartments north of Fort Jesse, which is just east of Veteran’s Parkway. When she chooses to ride Fixed Route due to a spontaneous trip, she has to cross Fort Jesse, Greenbrier, or Veteran’s Parkway to reach a stop, which is very dangerous due to the speed limits or drivers not following the posted speed limits. Ms. Stuedemann is asking that Connect please consider having buses on the north side of Fort Jesse to service the entire apartment complex there, along with Sam’s. Ms. Stuedemann also asked that we please extend the hours of the Red route to 9:45pm. Chairman Whitehouse thanked Ms. Stuedemann for her comments and stated staff would look into her requests.

Chairman Whitehouse asked Board Clerk, Janice Crago, to read remaining public comments aloud. Mrs. Crago shared an email and letter received from Crystal Howard, CEO of the B-N Area Convention and Visitors Bureau expressing her gratitude for the shuttle service Connect provided during the Bloomington Gold Corvette Show. Mrs. Crago then shared a card Bloom Community School mailed to David Braun thanking Connect for bus passes allowing them to visit the Normal Library and lunch at the round-a-bout.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of May 24, 2022, Regular Session Minutes
- b. Financial Information for May 2022
- c. Monthly Statistical Reports for May 2022
- d. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report
- e. Cornerstone – Illinois Weekly Update

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

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Hile.

Discussion:

David Braun, General Manager, stated we are at 87.5% of our budget where we would normally expect to be at around 91% right now. This is approximately \$613,000 under budget and if we continue this trend, we will be under budget for the year. Mr. Braun gave commendations to the staff for being responsible in their spending and maximizing efficiency.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the small drop in ridership coincides with the colleges being on summer hours.

Mr. Braun confirmed the drop is due to colleges being on summer hours.

Trustee Hile noted that we are up almost 16% in ridership for year to date, which is very near pre-COVID data.

Mr. Braun stated those numbers are system wide, that on the Fixed Route side we are only up about 15% and on the Mobility side we are up over 30%.

Rollcall vote:

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

NAY: None.

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. To approve a five-year Universal Access Service Agreement with Heartland Community College for the term July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$96,000 per year, for a total of \$480,000 for the five-year period.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to approve a five-year Universal Access Service Agreement with Heartland Community College for the term July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$96,000 per year, for a total of \$480,000 for the five-year period.

Trustee McCue motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Discussion:

Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director, explained the Universal Access Agreement allows students, faculty, and staff of Heartland Community College to ride Connect Transit fixed route buses free of charge

upon displaying their valid school ID. Connect Transit will provide established and regularly publicized public transportation service to the Bloomington-Normal community. Heartland Community College will pay \$96,000.00 per year to Connect Transit based on an estimate of an average of 400 unique riders at \$20 per month in fiscal years 2023-2027. In addition, the proposed agreement with HCC will allow the option for the College to publicly market Heartland via an industry standard “visual wrap” should the College choose to pay for the materials. The standard monthly advertising cost would be waived should the College elect this option.

Mr. Braun shared that this is not an increase in our previous years’ agreement, it is the same we were receiving pre-COVID because 50% of their classes are now online and their ridership has dropped from an average of 400 a month to 200 a month. They are continuing to pay for the average of 400, even though they are currently averaging 200 right now.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if we will review their ridership on a yearly basis or just agreeing to 400 riders a month? Mr. Braun stated that we agreed to 400 a month because they are barely reaching 200 riders right now and HCC didn’t want the extra work of reviewing each year. Internally we will track the numbers for our own knowledge.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse
NAY: None

The recommendation motion to approve a five-year Universal Access Service Agreement with Heartland Community College for the term July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$96,000 per year, for a total of \$480,000 for the five-year period was **approved**.

- b. To approve David Braun, General Manager, be added as an additional authorized signatory for all Connect Transit bank accounts.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to approve David Braun, General Manager, be added as an additional authorized signatory for all Connect Transit bank accounts.

Vice Chair Hile motioned; seconded by Trustee Buchanan.

Discussion:

Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director, explained Connect Transit must have two (2) signatures on each written check. Currently Connect signatories are Shelly Perry, Operations Manager, Dave White, Safety and Training Director, and Steve Stockton, IT Manager. Staff recommends four (4) bank account signatories, David Braun, General Manager, Dave White, Safety and Training Director, Steven Stockton, IT Manager, and Shelly Perry, Operations Manager, to cover when staff are out of the office. Having these staff as signatories offers sufficient security through separation of duties to avoid a conflict of having procurement or finance be involved in a purchase from beginning to end.

Rollcall vote:

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Vice Chair Hile, Trustee McCue, Trustee Rao, Trustee Singer, Chairman Whitehouse
NAY: None

Recommendation to approve David Braun, General Manager, be added as an additional authorized signatory for all Connect Transit bank accounts was **approved**.

- c. Recommendation to dissolve and discontinue the Connect Transit Advisory Committee (CTAC) and replace it with the Connect Transit Ambassadors (CTA), as proposed by staff.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to dissolve and discontinue the Connect Transit Advisory Committee (CTAC) and replace it with the Connect Transit Ambassadors (CTA), as proposed by staff.

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Vice Chair Hile.

Discussion:

David Braun, General Manager, explained we would like to disband the current CTAC and create a new passenger advocacy group, a group who can help us get our message across. Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager explained this proposal establishes a group of Ambassadors that will participate in getting the message of Connect Transit to the public, through education, engagement, and participating in events that are sponsored by Connect Transit or in which we are involved. The composition of the group of 8-12 people will be similar to the former CTAC group. Potential members will express their interest through an online survey and will be interviewed by staff prior to recommending them to the Board. The “Rules of Engagement” describes the group, how members are selected and their responsibilities. Rather than creating another group, we propose to disband and discontinue the CTAC and replace it with the Connect Transit Ambassadors (CTA). Ms. Staton will take ownership of the group and act as the liaison between the group and staff. Judy Buchanan will be the Board Liaison on the group who will convey the group’s activities to the Board as needed. We have budgeted \$2,200 for FY23 for logo apparel and meetings for this group.

Vice Chair Hile expressed her pleasure with this new group.

Ms. Staton shared the revised Rules of Engagement.

Trustee Buchanan stated Aubrey Staton has done a great job putting this together and that we want a group that reflects today’s environment, very positive and so there have been some revisions to the Rules of Engagement. The intent to the Rules remain the same, but some of the language has been updated.

Mr. Braun stated the recommendation is to create the group, and not specific to the language of the Rules of Engagement.

Ms. Staton shared the social media information she will be using to solicit interest from community members and to direct to them to our website to apply.

Chairman Whitehouse asked why the members will serve a ten-month term? Ms. Staton stated that due to meeting in odd numbered months and the application and interview process it is a true ten-month term.

Chairman Whitehouse shared a concern on the length of the term due to the time it will take to train the Ambassadors, because it takes time to truly learn and that we may want to

consider a longer term for them. Trustee Buchanan offered she is also fine with updating the length of the term.

Chairman Whitehouse clarified this recommendation is to move forward with the group, not to fine tune the details of the group.

Vice Chair Hile agreed that the length of term might be a challenge and encouraged considering two-year terms and staggering the terms.

Ms. Staton said there had been much discussion about length of term and that they are happy to revisit the term length. Mr. Braun concurred that they can revisit term length, especially considering some of the Ambassadors may be students who graduate.

Rollcall vote:

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

NAY: None

Recommendation to dissolve and discontinue the Connect Transit Advisory Committee (CTAC) and replace it with the Connect Transit Ambassadors (CTA), as proposed by staff was **approved**.

- d. Approve the results of the labor negotiations as negotiated by Connect Transit management and ratified by ATU Local 752 members.

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion Approve the results of the labor negotiations as negotiated by Connect Transit management and ratified by ATU Local 752 members.

Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Singer.

Discussion:

David Braun, General Manager, explained approximately 80% of the Connect Transit work force is represented by Local 752 of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU). The current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with the ATU Local 752 was originally ratified by the Union and approved by the Board of Trustees in 2017. It was a three-year agreement that expired on June 30, 2020. However, a one-year extension of that agreement was negotiated in 2020 due to COVID and meeting concerns and extended again in 2021 to allow for the permanent General Manager to be hired. In 2020 there was a 1.5% wage increase, in 2021 there was a 3% wage increase. We went into this negotiation knowing there were many things that needed to be changed and held eight individual meetings, focused less on negotiations and more on education on the things Connect wants to do in the future, such as Microtransit, workforce training and development, and the vision of Connect Transit based on our strategic plan. Discussions were very cordial and any disagreements remained very professional. Among the significant changes is that the Microtransit Driver wage will remain at 60% of the top Operator wage without pay progression because it does not require a special skill set, they will drive a smaller vehicle with fewer riders, it does not require a CDL, and opens a possible career path into Bus Operator position. We were also able to add a Maintenance Foreman position, which will aid in the development of our Maintenance staff through training and testing development. We successfully eliminated the \$1,200 HSA deductible offset due to increased cost of HSA plan premiums, established consistent employee/employer contributions for all benefit selections, and a three-year pay increase schedule. The net change in total economics

(all increases, and deductions reflected in pay and benefits together) equals a 3.9% increase in the cost of total represented payroll or \$288,699.57 in FY23. This increase is reflected in the FY23 budget. Mr. Braun stated the reason for this successful negotiation is solely because of the relationship the staff has built with the Union, without that he feels we could have had a much more challenging negotiation and thanked the staff for their work.

Rollcall vote:

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

NAY: None

Recommendation to approve the results of the labor negotiations as negotiated by Connect Transit management and ratified by ATU Local 752 members was **approved**.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Chairman Whitehouse shared the APTA conference is in Seattle, WA from October 9-12, 2022 and shared the summary of the conference. He asked that interested Trustees please let Mrs. Crago know if they are interested by July 15, 2022.

Mr. Braun stated there is also a specific Board members APTA conference in Salt Lake City, July 30 – August 2. He asked that if any Trustees wish to attend this meeting, please let Janice Crago know as soon as possible so we can get you registered. Vice Chair Hile encouraged Trustees to attend, if possible, it is a very worthwhile investment of time.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:

David Braun, General Manager, reintroduced Aubrey Staton, former Interim Marketing Manager who is now our full time Marketing Manager. Mr. Braun then introduced and welcomed Jacob Smith, Transportation Planner, who will report to Mr. Braun due to the nature of his work. Mr. Braun also shared we finally have a new Procurement Assistant, Ash Gaines, who reports to Brady Lange, Procurement Director.

Mr. Braun shared Bloomington City Council approved \$145,000 towards development of a new sidewalk on IAA Drive as part of our Better Bus Stops Campaign. Brady Lange, Procurement Director, shared this began years ago and the City recognized the importance of a sidewalk in this area so we will be putting in two shelters and a crosswalk, making the area much safer and rider friendly.

Chairman Whitehouse expressed his gratitude to the City of Bloomington for making this happen and looks forward to seeing the riders safe there.

Mr. Braun stated the City recognizes the need for safety in the crosswalk and will work towards drawing attention to the crosswalk in some way, ensuring the safety of pedestrians of all abilities while using the crosswalk.

Strategic Plan:

Mr. Braun shared the Leadership Team had met with Kristen Joyner, retreat facilitator, to prioritize actions and begin developing action plans. Priorities were based on current activities towards the

goal, as well as the ability to impact the goal within a 3–5-year period. Mr. Braun said the presentation with the priorities listed would be shared via email tomorrow.

Vice Chair Hile asked if Mr. Braun would please speak to the public art component. Mr. Braun stated we have not moved forward on that at this time. There is great opportunity Uptown, and as we develop our Downtown Transit Center there are some opportunities for public art as well, but we have not engaged our shelters. When we catch up on other projects, we will talk about this.

Mr. Braun shared we are looking at our Transit Center as part of the “Modern facilities that provide a wider community need” goal. We have spoken with the Post Office and will speak with advocates for people with disabilities and healthcare providers and will use their input to influence the design in order to make the site more accessible for all. As part of the “State of the art Admin and Maintenance facility for better connection of staff” goal we are also planning to add a small vehicle facility on property that will allow for storage of smaller vehicles and include a larger training/meeting/community meeting space room and will continue to work on existing facility upgrades. Those upgrades include sidewalk and landscaping, roof replacement, LED lighting upgrade, restrooms refresh, and an interior paint refresh. Mr. Braun shared one of our strategic goals is to redesign the system for speed. As part of that we are planning a Fixed Route analysis and Microtransit zone study in early fall 2022 with a phased implementation in late spring 2023. Finally, if awarded some of the funding we have applied for we will be required to use 5% for workforce development, which we would use towards our goal of a partnership with Rivian and/or a college Maintenance Electric technology transit-based certification program. We are also speaking with YouthBuild about an apprenticeship program for Bus Operators and Mechanics.

McLean County Long Range Transportation Plan (MCLRTP):

Mr. Braun shared he is on the Steering Committee for the MCLRTP and a common theme in the discussions has been Connect Transit. There was a recent Public Transit Focus Group specific to what Connect Transit does and not many people attended. Following the Public Transit Focus Group there was a Health and Social Services Focus Group that discussed access to health and medical care through transit, and Meals on Wheels and grocery delivery done by public transit providers during COVID and possibly considering doing this as part of our Microtransit service since it won't be a service booked 100% of the time. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Focus Group also mentioned public transit as part of encouraging biking and walking to work by using our bus bike racks. In addition, the Commerce and Freight Focus Group mentioned public transit as part of getting people to and from work, off the roads to improve transportation in the community, and having Connect be more attractive via quicker routes.

West Bloomington-Normal Route:

Mr. Braun shared we held 5 public engagement sessions with 5 people attending in total. Comments centered around extending the hours on weekends, Rivian subsidizing the fares, starting buses at Rivian in the mornings, and running later on weekday evenings. Mr. Braun shared we will make whatever accommodations to the route we can and bring those to the Board when we have them ready.

Recruiting:

Mr. Braun shared we continue to recruit and currently need ten Bus Operators, 1 Custodian, 1 Dispatcher, 1 Maintenance Supervisor, 2 Mechanics, and 3 Service Technicians. Mr. Braun shared

we are happy to announce we have filled the positions for 1 Customer Service Representative, 1 Dispatcher, 1 Maintenance Supervisor, 1 Marketing Manager, 1 Procurement Assistant, and 1 Transportation Planner.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

No Executive Session was held.

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS:

No Trustee comments

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Adjourn.


Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Singer.

Rollcall vote:

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

NAY: None

Motion to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting was **approved**; meeting adjourned at 5:20p.m.


Trustee Tim McCue, Board Secretary


Janice Crago, Board Clerk

[SEAL]

