

**Connect Transit Board of Trustees**  
**September 27, 2022, 4:30pm**  
**351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room**  
**Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 10/25/22 Meeting**

**Trustees Present:**

Trustee Judy Buchanan  
Trustee Linda Foster (4:31)  
Vice Chair Judy Hile (after motion to attend “By other means”)  
Secretary Tim McCue  
Trustee Mandava Rao  
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

**City Managers Present:**

Bloomington Deputy City Manager Billy Tyus

**Staff Present:**

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

**Guest(s) Present:**

Jennifer Schmid, Senior Brand Director, Dovetail  
Scott Leisler, President/Chief Creative Officer, Dovetail  
Lauren Pruter, Bus Rider

Chairman Ryan Whitehouse called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.  
Board Clerk, Janice Crago, recorded attendance via roll call.

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to approve Vice Chair Julie Hile to attend virtually due to reason two – employment purposes, as stated in the by-laws.**

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

**Discussion:**

There was no discussion.

**Rollcall vote:**

AYE: Trustee Buchanan, Secretary McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse  
NAY: None.

Motion to approve Vice Chair Julie Hile to attend virtually due to reason two – employment purposes, as stated in the by-laws was **approved**.

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Lauren Pruter, regular rider of public transportation during her childhood and young adult years shared her concern with one of our current ads. Ms. Pruter has fond memories of her experiences riding public transportation; it was affordable and accessible for everyone she knew. During her commute she sat next to white collar workers, blue collar workers, single moms, and elderly, all on the same bus. She feels public transportation is a way to combat climate change, and create safer, more pedestrian friendly cities. When used by everybody, public transportation can unite people of all socioeconomic backgrounds, by being on the bus we get to know the people in our community. In reading the local Pantagraph Plus she was disappointed to find our recent ad featuring a local restauranter, Rob Dobski. His quote says "If it wasn't for the bus, my tables wouldn't get bussed." Ms. Pruter feels his quote is implying Connect Transit, paid for with our taxes, is a subsidy for his payroll and readers will think the bus system is or isn't for someone like them, further dividing the have and the have nots in our diverse community. She clarified that this isn't about Rob Dobski specifically, but more about the message being conveyed to the reader. By this ad featuring a non-rider, Connect Transit is saying the bus is for the working class but not for the people who write our pay checks. Her concern is the ad perpetuates the idea that there is a class of people who ride the bus and a class of people who do not. Ms. Pruter asks that Connect Transit run ads that feature people who do ride our buses, feature community members that materially support Connect Transit and have a stake in a city services. She further asks that we do not feature businesses owners that think the bus is for other people, but not for themselves. She stated the future where we save our planet is the future where we all rely on public transit. She requested that we discontinue running this damaging ad and to review and discontinue ads that do not reflect the mission of creating an inclusive transportation system. Chairman Whitehouse thanked Ms. Pruter for her comments.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

- a. Approval of August 23, 2022, Regular Session Minutes
- b. Financial Information for July 2022
- c. Financial Information for August 2022
- d. Monthly Statistical Reports for August 2022
- e. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report
- f. Cornerstone – Illinois Weekly Update

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

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

**Discussion:**

David Braun, General Manager, stated the financial reports are very early in the fiscal year and there is nothing unusual at this time. In the Fixed Route report, ridership numbers are up 45.16% from the prior month because ISU is back in session. The Connect Mobility report reflects ridership is up 39.7% year to date, just in the first two months of the fiscal year. Mr. Braun will be discussing how these numbers are affecting our labor shortage later in the meeting. The Cornerstone report shows they are discussing our Transit Center needs with local manufacturer and the Governor's office, with the hopes that they will support the Transit Center funding being released by a unique part of the State budget.

Chairman Whitehouse asked if the increase in Connect Mobility is due to a larger need for the service, the one rate for all, or both? Mr. Braun stated he believes it is a combination of

the two because the need continues to grow as the area continues to age, and as people move into the area. The one rate for all also significantly dropped the rate for many, as opposed to a zone rate.

Vice Chair Hile asked to go on record that Mayor Koos is on record as one of the nominees for the Amtrak Board, as noted in the Cardinal Infrastructure report. She stated she is looking forward to the discussion on Connect Mobility, and that we are getting to it early.

**Rollcall vote:**

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

NAY: None

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. To authorize the General Manager to award a contract for strategic messaging consultation services to Dovetail.

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to award a contract for strategic messaging consultation services to Dovetail.**

Trustee Buchanan motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

**Discussion:**

David Braun, General Manager, stated that we would like a focused messaging that is all inclusive, includes people who are using our bus, and people who will support our bus that will likely never use our bus. He went on to explain that getting a consistent message out is something we need to do, but that don't have the expertise on staff to accomplish. He asked Brady Lange, Procurement Director, to further explain the recommendation.

Mr. Lange explained the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit system rebranded as Connect Transit in 2012, which captured many of the key values of the transit system's benefits in a visual guide that included logos and external communication templates. Since that time, the Board received a recommendation from the Connect to the Future (CttF) group to develop and execute a "MyConnect" Community Education and Engagement program described as a "Best-practices-based community campaign educating all riders about the benefits of public transportation: the Connect community... economic development, environmental justice, equity, affordability, Bloomington/Normal pride and connection." The purpose is meant to "Engage community partners, build public confidence in Connect, and increase ridership." Since the recommendation was made, Connect Transit has hired a new General Manager, as well as a new Marketing Manager, who will benefit from being involved in the development of brand messaging and community outreach.

The experienced Messaging Consultant will provide the program as recommended by the CttF group, and the resulting message will act as an enhancement to our brand and positioning in the community.

On August 10, 2022, Connect Transit issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking proposals for consultation services centered around building out Connect Transit's brand with a strategic messaging campaign. The Scope of Work provided in the RFP defined required qualifications of proposers, project requirements, and key deliverables. Connect Transit received six (6) proposals in response to the RFP. The evaluation team reviewed each written proposal and conducted interviews with each of the proposers to give them an opportunity to highlight details of their proposal and explain their proposed development process, as well as answer questions from the evaluation team. After the proposal review and interview, the evaluators rated the proposers on the criteria listed in score summary below. The evaluation criteria provided higher consideration to responses to specific questions asked in the RFP, the proposers approach to the Scope of Work, the interview presentation, references received, and proposed price/value. Based on the evaluation data, staff is recommending that Dovetail be awarded the contract. Dovetail is a "Brand Reimagination Agency" based in St. Louis and has a long history of exceptional performance in similar contracts. Dovetail has completed similar work for other transit agencies, such as Metro (St. Louis), IndyGo (Indianapolis), and WeGo Public Transit (Nashville), as well as many other nationally recognized brands. Dovetail has engaged a subconsultant that has done research work for other organizations in the Bloomington-Normal market. Dovetail uses a four step "REV Process" approach which allows them to uncover the truths and insights that make our brand unique and valuable.

Dovetail will complete this project for a cost not to exceed \$150,000 of which up to \$120,000 (80%) will be funded by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307 annual capital and operating allocation and up to \$30,000 (20%) will be funded with local capital funds.

Chairman Whitehouse asked what the time period for this will be. Mr. Lange stated it will be over twelve months but is somewhat flexible.

Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager, explained that Mr. Lange mentioned our brand often, and she wanted to clarify that while we do have a very strong visual presence with our logo, colors, and bus designs, these are only our face, but we have nothing behind the face. This recommendation will give us the backing behind the face, allow us to build the background, and the why of what we are doing. Ms. Staton went through a presentation on screen to further explain why the recommendation went to Dovetail.

Scott Leisler, President, and Chief Creative Officer of Dovetail expressed his excitement in beginning this process and articulating Connect's "why" to the community. He thanked us for our vote of confidence. Jennifer Schmid, Senior Brand Director of Dovetail, shared her happiness in being nearby and meeting everyone in person.

Trustee Buchanan shared that she had the opportunity to participate in most of the interviews and she was pleased that we had a wide variety. One of the things that brought Dovetail to the top of the selection was their concept of value and trying to make sure our community and riders understand the value of public transportation as riders and supporters.

Trustee Foster shared that she appreciates the efforts everyone, including staff and community members, have put into making this happen and getting to this point.

Secretary McCue asked if Leadership had put thought into what the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) might be. Mr. Braun stated we first need the messaging, then to put that

messaging out. Ms. Staton stated Scott and Jennifer with Dovetail will be helpful in setting these KPI's because they have worked with other transportation agencies. Some of our KPI's will be increasing ridership, increasing social media following but these might not be the most important KPI's to measure. Scott explained they will initially be looking at perception issues, where people place us, opinions, etc. After they develop the messaging strategy they will ask another group of similar people the same questions to see where we are. It's not an immediate process, it's a slow process. Their partner, Creative Entourage, will help with the pre and post assessment. The communication plan and tactics used for Connect Transit can be tracked and optimized daily, depending on what type of media is running and where those messages are appearing. We can set and adjust the KPI's throughout the process and set them up at the end of the process to ensure we are in a place to measure our success once the campaign is complete. Mr. Braun explained that our KPI's will be very specific to our needs and the number of ways we can get our message to the community and engaging with the community.

Vice Chair Hile thanked the staff for their efforts in bringing this to the table and her pleasure that it is a Midwest company. She asked if their KPI's and references speak to improved perception and ridership. Scott explained that most companies have KPI's that are specific to their company, and metrics like sales and visits to websites. He explained that our KPI's will need to be long-term KPI's and that we will need to do our messaging first before we can tie it back to a specific KPI. Vice Chair Hile asked what the timeline will look like. Scott said that once the messaging is out there, it can take anywhere from 4-10 times for someone to see a message before it begins to resonate, which is a standard in advertising. The timeline also depends on the media type, which could change that number. In Connect's specific category of industry, the actual experience riders are having with transit will play into the KPI so they will have to find a way to tell that story, by possibly using actual riders in the messaging campaign.

Vice Chair Hile asked how their processes contribute to the creation of transit advocates, people who are really willing to endorse and encourage others to get on the bus. Ms. Staton stated that one of the deliverables in the RFP is a stakeholder list, identifying key people in the community for research purposes and to recruit as advocates.

Vice Chair Hile went on to state that ten years is a long time between branding efforts, and she would appreciate getting an understanding on the cadence on the timing of the brand refreshes out of this because we are a very different brand than we were ten years ago.

Chairman Whitehouse shared that private industries spend this amount of money on messaging campaigns all the time and that we are often encouraged to run like a private business. Chairman Whitehouse went on to say that there is a possibility that the more our image is out there and the more ridership we have, that there is a possibility that more funding may come into our system. Mr. Whitehouse stated that after our celebration this morning, all the funding we are earning, the wonderful things we are doing, and hearing Ms. Reese say we are of the best systems in the state, he is further convinced we need to tell our story so our community knows the facts, not the myths, and that we are doing a wonderful job with taxpayer money. Mr. Whitehouse agreed with Vice Chair Hile in that he appreciates Dovetail is a Midwest company, because they have an understanding of the

temperature and vibe of the area. He ended by sharing he supports this recommendation and knows this is the first step in being committed for the long haul.

**Rollcall vote:**

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

NAY: None

The motion to authorize the General Manager to award a contract for strategic messaging consultation services to Dovetail was **approved**.

- b. To authorize the General Manager to award a three-year contract to supply uniforms for Connect Transit's Customer Service Representatives, Dispatch staff, and Bus Operators to Galls, LLC.

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to award a three-year contract to supply uniforms for Connect Transit's Customer Service Representatives, Dispatch staff, and Bus Operators to Galls, LLC.**

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Secretary McCue.

**Discussion:**

Brady Lange, Procurement Director, stated Connect Transit provides an annual uniform allowance to Customer Service Representatives, Dispatch staff, and Bus Operators, which is negotiated as part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Minerva Promotions has been providing uniforms since the last Request for Proposals (RFP) that was issued in 2016, which has now expired.

On August 17, 2022, Connect Transit released a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking proposals to supply uniforms for Customer Service Representatives, Dispatch staff, and Bus Operators. The Scope of Work in the RFP provided a detailed analysis of necessary uniform products, range of sizes, colors, and branding to remain consistent with the current uniform program. The RFP also defined how orders and deliveries should take place, as well as established how sample and/or substitution items must be provided.

Connect Transit received three (3) proposals in response to the RFP. Staff evaluated each proposal based on proposed approach to the Scope of Work, proposed timeline of delivery, and cost proposal.

Based on the evaluation data, staff is recommending that Galls, LLC be awarded the contract. Galls, LLC has been in business since 1967 and is based in Lexington, KY. They have a distribution network of more than 100 locations that services 800+ contracts and over one million individuals with uniforms throughout the United States. Galls, LLC contracts with all types of businesses, but focuses on public sector contracts and supplies many police departments and transit agencies, including many in Illinois.

The resulting three (3) year contract will be a fixed price contract but also allows the contractor to request a price increase or decrease every 180 days, not to exceed the Consumer Price Index for Apparel. This contract also provides two (2) single year contract extension options.

Galls, LLC will work with Connect Transit staff to configure all eligible employees in their customized online ordering system. This will allow employees to choose the uniform items they prefer at any time. Their reporting and tracking systems will reduce time commitments of Connect Transit staff spent on the uniform program by automating many of the processes that are currently completed manually.

The total price of this contract will be up to \$75,000 over the term of the base period of three years, which is funded by operating funds.

Mr. Braun explained that our uniforms are negotiated in our Collective Bargaining Agreement, but they are also very important for our image. It is important for our employees to look similar; it shows they are part of a team, and shows a professional, consistent image to our customers. While our uniforms are more relaxed, they are still professional in appearance and this contract will help us reflect that while adhering to the contract.

**Rollcall vote:**

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

NAY: None

Recommendation to authorize the General Manager to award a three-year contract to supply uniforms for Connect Transit's Customer Service Representatives, Dispatch staff, and Bus Operators to Galls, LLC was **approved**.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

Nothing reported

**GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:**

Mr. Braun, General Manager, started by congratulating Pat Kuebrich and LeeAnn Biddle, of the Finance Department, on receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for our FY21 audit from the Government Finance Officers Association. Pat Kuebrich also received the Award of Financial Achievement.

**Employee Development:**

Mr. Braun shared that Bus Operator class #4 is scheduled for CDL testing on 9/30/22, and two other classes are scheduled to begin at Connect Transit before the year ends. These classes are very important to strengthening our workforce and critical in solving our labor shortage. Our regular CPR/AED training has been put on hold due to the high volume of overtime in Operations. Our IT Manager and Data Management Specialist attended Security+ Training to help upgrade our security. Mr. Braun shared that development for our employees continues through Connecteam and other platforms as it remains a high priority.

**Connect in the Community:**

Mr. Braun stated that we've been active with the community by meeting with the former Connect to the Future group to update them on what we've been doing to meet some of their recommendations, Stuff the Bus kickoff; ISU and IWU events, IPTA conference, Day of the Dozer, St. Jude shuttle, Kiwanis Club presentation, Electric Bus and Charging Infrastructure Celebration, NAACP Gala, and meeting with Senator Koehler.



**West Bloomington-Normal Route:**

Mr. Braun shared that the new route will now start on Sunday, October 9, 2022, instead of Sunday, October 2, 2022, as originally planned because Rivian will be closed for inventory and ridership would be very low that week. He also explained that the route has been renamed the Sapphire route due to the negative connotation of Cobalt, how it is mined, and its effect on emerging countries.

**Recruiting:**

Mr. Braun stated we have filled several positions, including two Bus Operators, one Maintenance Supervisor, and two Maintenance Mechanics. However, we still have numerous Bus Operator and Mechanic positions open. As a result of the numerous openings and some unexpected long-term absences, we are examining the frequency of some routes and the possibility of reducing some service so we can maintain the level of service we promised the community. Mr. Braun promised to notify the Board, the public, and the media when we determine which routes will be affected. We will try to focus on the routes the changes will have the least impact on so riders will have the option to ride at an earlier or later time.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

No Executive Session was held.

**TRUSTEE COMMENTS:**

Trustee Foster expressed her appreciation for the Electric Bus and Charging Infrastructure Celebration event this morning, and the opportunity to let Connect Transit shine. She also thanked Connect Transit for supporting the NAACP Gala by purchasing a table and attending the event.

Trustee Rao shared that he enjoyed the morning's celebration event, Congressman Davis's speech, and the information shared there. He thanked the staff for putting the event together.

Billy Tyus stated his appreciation of Chairman Whitehouse sharing the \$52 million grant amount because it is important for the community to hear that number.

Trustee Buchanan stated the energy at the event was incredible and the event itself was stellar, thanking everyone in the room. She commented the wrapped buses looked wonderful.

Vice Chair Hile stated she was proud to serve on the Board and that she is very excited about the agency leadership and staff, the positive focus with the team, but also that it is flowing out into the community.

Chairman Whitehouse thanked Shelly Perry, Operations Manager, and David Braun, General Manager, for assisting in offering the shuttle for the St. Jude shuttle. He also thanked the entire staff for their hard work for the celebration this morning, he was proud of the celebration and the opportunity to tell the Connect Transit story. The event was important to him because we were able to recognize partnerships and friends who helped us get where we are.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Adjourn.**

Trustee Rao motioned; seconded by Trustee Foster.




**Rollcall vote:**

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

NAY: None

Motion to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting was **approved**; meeting adjourned at 5:40p.m.

  
Trustee Tim McCue, Board Secretary

  
Janice Crago, Board Clerk

[SEAL]

