

Connect Transit Board of Trustees
October 25, 2022, 4:30pm
351 Wylie Drive, Normal, IL 61761 – Board Room
Regular Session Minutes – Approved at 11 /22/22 Meeting

Trustees Present: Trustee Judy Buchanan (after motion to attend “By other means”)
Trustee Linda Foster (4:32)
Vice Chair Judy Hile
Secretary Tim McCue
Trustee Mandava Rao
Trustee Barbara Singer (after motion to attend “By other means”)
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

City Managers Present: Bloomington Deputy City Manager Billy Tyus
Normal Town Manager Pam Reece

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 (virtually)
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
Shelly Perry, Operations Manager
Steve Stockton, IT Manager

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 Trustees Judy Buchanan and Barbara Singer to attend virtually due to reason one – personal illness, as stated in the by-laws.

Vice Chair Hile motioned; seconded by Secretary McCue.

Discussion:
There was no discussion.

Rollcall vote:
AYE: Vice Chair Hile, Secretary McCue, Trustee Rao, Chairman Whitehouse
NAY: None.

Motion to approve Trustees Judy Buchanan and Barbara Singer to attend virtually due to reason one – personal illness, 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:

None

CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of September 27, 2022, Regular Session Minutes
- b. Financial Information for September 2022
- c. Monthly Statistical Reports for September 2022
- d. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report
- e. 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, explained the financial report shows a large expense to Midwest Bus Corporation for \$175,000 for the driver barriers because they are now complete. All of our buses are equipped with a secure barrier that includes a fan for driver comfort, but most importantly the barrier for their safety. The Performance Report reflects ridership is up, but we expect that trend will not continue since we have reduced frequency due to the current Operator shortage. The largest increase is in Connect Mobility ridership hours of service, is due to a couple of reasons; the need is there and one fare for all makes it more convenient. He noted that Connect Mobility is expensive service to operate, and we have to commit Operators to those hours so we will need to monitor the service and budget appropriately in the coming fiscal year.

Trustee Buchanan asked if the increased revenue in advertising is due to advertisers paying in advance, and if we are likely to see that type of revenue in the remaining quarters? Mr. Braun explained the revenue we see in the report is based on a guaranteed rate paid monthly by our current advertising contract. Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager, added that \$21,000 of the increase is due to a one-year contract with Chestnut Health System being paid up front and that we won't see that again each month.

Chairman Whitehouse asked why farebox recovery went down by 10%, if it was because of students and the Universal Access Agreement? Mr. Braun stated he would look into the reason and bring it back to the Board.

Rollcall vote:

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

NAY: None

Consent Agenda was **approved**.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **To authorize the General Manager to establish the “Star Pass” program that will allow zero-fare rides to all Veterans and active military personnel.**

Chairman Whitehouse called for a motion to authorize the General Manager to establish the “Star Pass” program that will allow zero-fare rides to all Veterans and active military personnel.

Chairman Whitehouse motioned; seconded by Secretary McCue.

Discussion:

Mr. Braun shared that this pass is something many transit systems have done over the years, and it is a great way for Connect to recognize the hard work Veterans have done for our freedoms. Mr. Braun then passed the presentation to Aubrey Staton, Marketing Manager.

Ms. Staton explained Veteran's Day is celebrated on November 11 each year. This year, Connect Transit would like to further celebrate by introducing the Star Pass program. The program is a demonstration of Connect Transit's mission to provide access to opportunity, strengthen & enrich people's lives in our community, and is our way of saying, "Thank you for your service," to the men and women who have served to protect our freedom. The Star Pass provides qualified active U.S. military and U.S. military Veterans with free, unlimited rides on all Connect Transit provided transportation services.

To further show Connect Transit's commitment to supporting our community's Veterans, Connect Transit is planning to meet Veterans where they are on Veteran's Day. The community bus will be outfitted as a mobile pass unit and travel to locations like the VA and VFW. This will serve as an educational opportunity as well, to inform the public about this new program.

Ms. Staton included a copy of the pass in the presentation, which was included in the meeting packet as posted.

The estimated financial impact is minimal.

Chairman Whitehouse shared his enthusiasm for the pass and the history of our Board caring for our Veterans. He is proud to be a part of this program and getting Veterans where they need to be, getting them the help they need, and that we are going to them to offer the passes.

Trustee Foster agreed with Chairman Whitehouse and shared that anything we can do to recognize Veterans for the things they've given so we can celebrate our freedoms. She asked if the pass is a memento or a real pass. Ms. Staton explained the pass is just like our other passes but designed to give them recognition when they show and swipe it.

Mr. Braun stated that if any agency would like us to come out to their facility or event to help Veterans apply for and receive this pass, we would be happy to so this pass is accessible for all Veterans to utilize. We streamlined and simplified the application to the basics and are also happy to assist in filling out the application if needed.

Trustee Foster asked if we would have anything on the buses to say thank you to the Veterans. Mr. Braun and Ms. Staton both agreed they would look into that.

Rollcall vote:

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

NAY: None

The motion to authorize the General Manager to establish the “Star Pass” program that will allow zero-fare rides to all Veterans and active military personnel was **approved**.

b. Resuming Zero-Fare System on Election Days – Informational Item

Discussion:

Mr. Braun explained that prior to COVID-19, Connect Transit operated at zero-fare on Election Days to increase opportunity for those in our community to express their right to vote. Research from 2021 says that the lack of personal transportation can correlate to a drop in voter turnout by 20%. While it can't be for certain that lack of transportation is the sole reason for not voting, we hope to lower the barrier that transportation causes.

Connect Transit believes that transportation should not be a barrier to access polling places. As a result, this year will resume our offer of zero-fare rides across the entire system on November 8, 2022.

This will result in the loss of one day worth of fares.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Chairman Whitehouse stated he attended the APTA conference with Connect staff and Trustee Buchanan and he walked away knowing that we are facing the same issues other transit systems are facing. Other systems are facing the same driver shortages and hiring issues we are and it's nice to confirm that we are doing all the right things and his trust in the staff is validated. He also enjoyed spending time with the staff, solidifying connections with Proterra, and he enjoyed returning to Bloomington-Normal.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:

Sapphire Route:

Mr. Braun stated the Sapphire Route served 1,300 customers between October 10 and October 31, 2022, with an average of 110 each weekday and a weekend average of 99.5. It currently outperforms the Tan, Gold, Blue, Brown, Orange, and Red Express, with more stops requested. The first few weeks have proven to be successful, and we will continue to monitor the ridership numbers to see if we need to expand or modify the service.

Connect in the Community:

Mr. Braun shared that we've been quite active in the community, building relationships so people are comfortable getting on and being around the bus. We've been to Stuff the Bus, Miller Park Zoo Spooktacular, Eastland Suites Trunk or Treat, Children's Home & Aid Safety Fair.

Industry Participation:

Mr. Braun and several staff attended APTA's TRANSform Conference in Seattle, WA in October. The general themes addressed employee, vehicle, and supply shortages, and validated the work we are already doing here. However, there is a huge challenge in having a significant investment in public transit by the Administration but having difficulty spending it due to said shortages. Mr. Braun shared he was elected to represent the Small Operations Committee on the APTA CEO Coordinating Council, which means he will be attending all of the Small Operations Committee meetings and report the results back to the CEO Council so they can make decisions on how to best address the small system issues.

Employee Development:

Mr. Braun stated we continue to hold employee development for our employees, to help them grow and succeed in their roles. In that, we have two trainees completing their CDL's from the October 3, 2022 class, and two have been moved to the November 7, 2022 class; Dave White, Safety & Training Director, attended TSI SMS Safety Assurance Training, which counts towards his FTA certification; Carrie Bailey, Operations Supervisor, completed Crisis Communications for Transit Managers and Transitioning from Frontline Employee to Frontline Supervisor trainings.

Recruiting:

Mr. Braun shared that we have filled two Bus Operator positions and one Custodian position, but we do still have several positions open. He reminded the Board that we did increase the starting wage for Bus Operators, Mechanics, and Service Technicians to make those positions more competitive in the current job market. We currently have positions open for Bus Operator, Dispatcher, Mechanic, and Service Technician.

Chairman Whitehouse asked that of the numbers for the Sapphire Route, how many of them are actually going to Rivian. Jacob Smith, Transportation Planner, stated that just under 20% are ending their destination at Rivian at this time in these first few weeks. Mr. Smith stated he could provide better data after the route has been in service for a longer period of time. Chairman Whitehouse said he would appreciate that information at the next Board meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. ILCS 120/2(c)(1) – Personnel Matters
- b. ILCS 120/2(c)(5) – Property Acquisition

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

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Vice Chair Hile

Rollcall vote:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried, and the Board of Trustees adjourned Regular Session and moved into Executive Session at 4:53 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:

Trustee Judy Buchanan (virtually)
Trustee Linda Foster
Vice Chair Judy Hile
Secretary Tim McCue
Trustee Mandava Rao
Trustee Barbara Singer (virtually)
Chairman Ryan Whitehouse

City Managers Present:

Bloomington Deputy City Manager Billy Tyus
Normal Town Manager Pam Reece

Staff Present:

David Braun, General Manager
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Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
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TRUSTEE COMMENTS:

Trustee Buchanan shared her pleasure at attending the APTA meeting and hearing from other attendees the importance of telling our story, that we are moving in the right direction. She felt very gratified that we are doing the right things and making great decisions as an agency and encourages everyone to attend when possible.

Trustee McCue stated he enjoyed hearing the positive feedback from the conference and that we are on the cutting edge. He also shared that he would love to hear from our attendees next month on take aways from the conference of things other systems are doing that might have potential for Connect.

Trustee Foster thanked Mr. Braun for his work and the work his staff is doing and reminded everyone Veteran’s Day is coming, along with Election Day.

Vice Chair Hile shared he appreciation for the zero fare for the Veterans and voters and thanked Mr. Braun for taking the initiative to get that done. She also commented on the staff and the energy felt among them, stating it was clear to see they enjoy working together and it is a pleasure to come to a place where people produce the kind of results that the Trustees get to review on a regular basis. Vice Chair Hile encouraged Trustees to try to attend the next APTA conference in 2023, perhaps even watching for the dates and location to be posted as soon as possible.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Whitehouse called for a Motion to Adjourn.

Trustee Foster motioned; seconded by Trustee Rao.

Motion to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting was **approved unanimously**; meeting adjourned at 6:03p.m.



Trustee Tim McCue, Board Secretary



Janice Crago, Board Clerk

[SEAL]

