

**CONNECT TRANSIT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
PROCEEDINGS OF FEBRUARY 27, 2018**

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held at the Connect Transit Board Room #135, 351 Wylie Drive, Normal, Illinois 61761 on February 27, 2018 at 4:30 p.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Mike McCurdy, Chairman  
John Thomas, Trustee  
Judy Buchanan, Trustee  
John Bowman, Trustee

TRUSTEES ABSENT: Ryan Whitehouse, Vice Chairman  
Jennifer McDade, Trustee  
Monica Bullington, Trustee

CITY MANAGERS: Steve Rasmussen - Interim City Manager, Town of Bloomington  
Mark Peterson, City Manager - Town of Normal  
Pam Reese, Asst. City Manager – Town of Normal

STAFF PRESENT: Isaac Thorne, General Manager  
Jill Bower, Executive Assistant

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike McCurdy at 4:30 p.m. and roll call was taken.

Before taking any public comments, Chairman McCurdy expressed the Board's congratulations to Ms. Pam Reese, the current *Assistant City Manager of the Town of Normal*, for her recent appointment to succeed Mr. Mark Peterson as the new *City Manager of the Town of Normal* upon his upcoming retirement this year.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Leon Kaeb was in attendance and requested a public comment to the Board of Trustees regarding the *Downtown Transfer Center* project. Mr. Kaeb expressed that he believed there was a very good opportunity for the *City of Bloomington* and *Connect Transit* to work together in a joint effort to have a new *Transfer Center* built for the downtown area. Mr. Kaeb further stated that it was his intention to make a public statement before the Board to ask that the Board at least engage this project for its feasibility.



## **CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Approval of *Minutes* of Previous Meeting of January 23, 2018.
2. Disbursements for Month of January, 2018
3. Financial Report for Month of January, 2018
4. Capital and Self Insurance Reserve Fund Balances for month of January, 2018
5. Monthly Statistical Report for month of January, 2018
6. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report

*Motion* was made by Trustee Judy Buchanan to approve the *Minutes* of the January 23, 2018 meeting, with the caveat that the final version of the *Minutes* (as revised) be sent to the Trustees before end of week. The *Motion* was seconded by Trustee John Thomas.

## **DISCUSSION**

In a short discussion with General Manager Isaac Thorne ("GM Thorne"), the Trustees requested an update regarding the current ridership in general, together with an update regarding the new Sunday bus routes. GM Thorne reported year-to-date ridership is up 7.6% with a future forecast of a 10% increase by the end of June, which would make this the third best year in ridership. He also reported that Sunday bus service which began in August of 2016, is doing very well with a year-to-date ridership of 28%. He stated that more people are using it and it keeps growing.

In response to an additional question regarding the new Eastview bus service, which is wholly funded by Eastview, Mr. Thorne reported that word is spreading about this new service and ridership is increasing with a current average between 12-24 people.

No other questions or comments were presented before the Board before voting on the *Consent Agenda*.

*Motion* was made by Trustee Judy Buchanan ("Trustee Buchanan") to approve the *Minutes* of the January 23, 2018 meeting, with the caveat that the final version of the *Minutes* (as revised) be sent to the Trustees before end of week. The *Motion* was seconded by Trustee John Thomas ("Trustee Thomas").

AYE: All

NAY: None

*Motion* carried that the *Consent Agenda of the January 23, 2018 Board Meeting* be approved with Trustee Buchanan's caveat noted.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Connect Transit Advisory Committee Update by Evelyn Johnson**

Evelyn Johnson, a native from New Orleans, Louisiana who is a current *Member* of the *Connect Transit Advisory Committee*, and has been on the *Committee* for three (3) years presented an encouraging and complimentary update from the *Committee* to the Board. She stated that Hurricane Katrina had brought her to Bloomington. She was accustomed to riding the bus in New Orleans as she did not own an automobile. When first arriving in Bloomington, she soon realized that some of the bus services she was accustomed to receiving in New Orleans, were either not available or the service was lacking in some specific areas. She set out each of those areas to the Board as follows:

- (i) **No Bus Stops.** People who lived in the flag-down areas where there were no bus stops had to flag a bus down in order to ride. I was not used to flagging down the bus so I was very happy to see flagging the bus down end.”
- (ii) **Frequency.** There was a one (1) hour frequency between the buses. I was anxious for the frequency to increase and now the wait is only about 10-15 minutes for many of us. It is not so bad in the summertime but in the winter when it is 2°-10° outside and you miss your bus, it is very significant.”
- (iii) **Sunday Service.** There was no Sunday bus service and I have just heard that ridership has now increased. Sunday service is a big deal to people.”

Ms. Johnson stated that she depends on *Connect Transit*, cabs, and *Faith in Action* to get her where she needs to go in the winter months. In the summer months *Connect Transit* takes care of her transportation needs. She said that she can reach them on the phone, write a letter or attend one of the public meetings where she can express her opinions and views. She further stated that being on a *Community Advisory Committee* is definitely not a waste of time. While serving on the *Committee*, her experience has been that whatever the *Committee* suggests and what it may be complaining about are immediately heard and if at all possible, corrected.

She closed her update to the *Board* to state that what she found in *Connect's* current management personnel, “the people who are running things, are tough and experienced, but real gems”. She complimented *Connect's* personnel and staff as a team of qualified, courteous and competent people to answer the community's questions. She urged *Connect* to keep on doing what it is doing. She is very happy to be on the *Connect Transit*

*Advisory Committee* and encouraged *Connect* to continue looking for ways to improve and most of all, continue to listen to the suggestions when they are given.

### **DISCUSSION**

Following Ms. Johnson's update of the *Connect Transit Advisory Committee*, the Board discussed some of the current issues presented by *Connect* to *CTAC* regarding *Connect's Facilities Guide*. A 5-year plan of infrastructure improvements such as shelters, benches and widening is currently under consideration in discussions with *CTAC*

#### **Recommendation for Customer Satisfaction and Rider On-Board Survey RFP 17-09**

GM Thorne took the floor by recommending that the Board move forward with the implementation of the *Rider's Survey* and *Customer Service Survey* which has been discussed in prior meetings and is included in *Connect Transit's Strategic Plan*. GM Thorne further stated that upon completion, these surveys will allow us to view current travel patterns and other socially demographic characteristics to better plan for a new *Downtown Transfer Station*. He further stated that this type of information can also be valuable to *Connect's "short-range transportation plan"* and would also help in the review of any restructuring. These types of surveys will help establish a baseline as we move forward. Very important and beneficial feedback will be gathered from riders from the *Rider's Survey* once it is completed.

### **DISCUSSION**

The Board had a number of questions regarding the process and features of the surveys. GM Thorne explained that the *Rider's Survey* is an "electronic" survey which is performed with an electronic tablet which is taken by a paid surveyor who must "physically" interact on a "one-on-one" basis with each rider who takes the survey. The surveyor will enter the data from each survey obtained into an electronic tablet and the tablet itself will have GPS capabilities. The required number of one-on-one surveys which must be performed is 1,000, keeping in mind that the surveys will be carried out in this way over the course of all of *Connect's* routes. The *Rider's Survey* and the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* are to be performed simultaneously. ETC will assist in the development of the specific questions and the proposed plan is to begin these surveys by the end of March.

The total of \$63,400 as shown on the proposed budget is a three (3) year projection of the cost of the *Rider's Survey* and the *Customer Satisfaction Survey*.

Chairman Mike McCurdy ("Chairman McCurdy") stated at the conclusion of discussion that he would open the floor to entertain a *Motion*. Trustee Buchanan moved that the Board approve and proceed with the *Recommendation* for the *Customer Satisfaction and Rider On-Board Survey RFP 17-09*, the *Motion* was seconded by Trustee Thomas.

AYE: All

NAY: None

*Motion* carried that the Board of Trustees approve and proceed with the *Recommendation* to move forward with the *Customer Satisfaction and Rider On-Board Survey RFP 17-09*.

*Recommendation of Radio Services RFP 17-10*

GM Thorne stated that for the last five (5) years *Connect Transit* entered into a *Radio Service Contract* with *Clear Talk* which has recently expired. A new RFP has now been issued. *Supreme Radio* came in with the lowest cost for the RFP. *Connect* owns its entire mobile and hand-held radios, so *Connect* will not lease those devices from this company and *Connect* will only lease the tower space. In further discussion by the Board regarding other options of communication the Board determined and agreed that this form of communication is far more economical for *Connect*.

Trustee Bowman moved that the Board approve the *Recommendation of Radio Services RFP 17-10*, and the *Motion* was seconded by Trustee Buchanan.

AYE: All

NAY: None

The *Motion* carried and the Board of Trustees approved the *Recommendation of Radio Services RFP 17-10*.

Preliminary Fiscal Year 2019 Operating and Capital Budget Proposal  
(Discussion Only)

GM Thorne presented the Board with a preliminary budget for fiscal year 2019 and stated that the 2019 budget includes the same number of revenue hours for a fixed route and demand response that was included in the 2018 budget. The goal is to have the FY 2019 budget approved by the Board no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> as the fiscal year begins July 1. The budget must be approved by the State of Illinois prior to June 30, 2018.

Staff was increased in the operating budget in two (2) main areas; (i) fuel; and (ii) group insurance. Connect is expecting to receive the renewals in April or May for group health insurance. The last seven (7) years a major concern for Connect has been the rising cost of group health insurance. As part of the budget discussion for FY 2019, Connect is exploring the addition of a *Connect Mobility "No-Show" Policy* and provide later service hours Monday through Saturday. The Staff is in discussions regarding the addition of two (2) extra hours to all of our routes. The Governor's proposal is to keep the budget at sixty-five percent (65%) but cut the ten percent (10%) increase each year. Beyond the FY 2019 budget, nearly 100% of our *Federal Funds* are allocated by year five (5). Connect is exploring new ways to increase the amount of Federal share used for operating but it will take a combination of new or additional revenue.

In response to Trustee Bowman's request for an explanation regarding the proposed budget decrease in advertising, GM Thorne stated that Connect over-estimated UBER displays advertising revenue. Connect had to work with the *City of Bloomington* as a partner in passing the *Ordinance*, but Connect is also waiting on the additional UBER displays in order to have the LED screens mounted on the back of the remaining buses. Connect will not be meeting the revenue that was projected. Therefore, Connect's budget decreased the allocation for advertising going forward. UBER desires to contract with Connect for five (5) years as UBER is funding all of the costs for the LED screens. In addition, UBER wants to be certain it is getting its money back and that it is hitting the 50/50 revenue which was in the *Contract*. UBER wanted \$25,000 per year and it wants to hit that number first before they move on for five (5) more years.

During this discussion, Connect Transit's Marketing Manager, Jeff Holtke, informed the Board that Connect has sixty (60) total ads and UBER wanted 75% sold and at that time, UBER would then add five (5) more.

GM Thorne explained that before Connect issued the RFP, this budget was compiled. Connect assumed it would have the LED screens on all of the buses. Since UBER is funding the LED screens, Connect had to back off that revenue projection for this year. Connect is trying to make up by putting in an RFP to have the buses wrapped and are hoping to bring in an additional \$50,000-\$100,000.

Questions were raised by the Board regarding any current discussion related to future increases in the passenger fares. GM Thorne stated that going beyond the 2019 budget, we want to look at passenger fares and consider whether Connect needs to increase those moving forward.

GM Thorne further added that ISU revenue is expected and that this revenue is built-in at \$10,000. The *ISU Contract* is up at the end of 2019 and Connect will be starting negotiations on the new *Contract* later this fall or possibly in January of 2019.

Trustee Buchanan asked for an explanation regarding the jump in the other contract fares. GM Thorne responded that Connect is assuming that number to include *Medicaid* revenue through the State of Illinois. *Medicaid* will pay a \$12.85 base for *Connect Mobility* rides, plus mileage. We are estimating \$100,000 in additional revenue for *Connect Mobility* services of which Connect needed approval. Connect is just finishing up that process with the State and it has proven to be a very lengthy process. Connect applied for *Medicaid* funding and did not know how long that process would take but expect to obtain approval in the next few months. The numbers are usually one-third (1/3) of your customers are approved for it and that is how Connect came up with \$100,000 of revenue.

Connect Transit's Martin Glaze, the Operations Manager, stated the \$100,000 would be all *Medicaid*. Connect is strictly going through the State. Connect has many riders that are utilizing para-transit and have *Medicaid* but we are not receiving any payment because we are waiting on the approved for those. By submitting an *Application* with the State to be approved would bring in the \$100,000 of revenue as shown on the proposed budget.

GM Thorne added that this program, once Connect is approved by the State, would lower the cost per ride for some riders. The passenger would not pay us \$2, but Connect would receive that fee from the *State Medicaid Program*. Essentially the customer would receive a free ride and Connect would receive reimbursement from the State.

The "No-Show Policy" was briefly discussed by the Board. GM Thorne stated that according to the FTA there is a fee *Connect Transit* could collect. Connect would have the option to collect the fee or Connect could say it is not going to collect a fee, but Connect will suspend you from riding the bus for a 1 or 2 week period. We have about 300 "no-shows" per month. We are reaching out to *Life-CIL* as our partner for *ADA* eligibility to have this discussion. For many years we shied away from putting in force a "No-Show Policy" because the *Federal Transit Administration* (FTA) frowned upon it. When the FTA performs its triennial reviews, they will look and make the determination of whether or not the organization is acting fairly or unfairly. The FTA can assess some funding or it could take some funding away or they could just tell Connect that it needs to "re-do" its *Policy*. Currently a lot of agencies are using this type of *No-Show Policy* and the FTA is approving them. In addition, Connect would have to ask for public participation and obtain the local public's feedback and this is something Connect can look at putting in place in 2019.

The Board continued to discuss ways *Connect Transit* could or should be looking at to obtain additional revenue for operations. Chairman McCurdy encouraged the *Board of Trustees* and *Ex-Officios* to think about an *ad-hoc Budget Committee* to entertain ways to increase revenue in 2020-2022. The main goal of this *Committee* would be to (i) examine revenue options; (ii) look at what other communities are doing; and (iii) to closely examine *Connect's* level of service as well.

Mark Peterson, *City Manager of the Town of Normal* ("Ex-Officio Peterson") believed that to focus of discussion would need to be on additional revenue. He further stated that other systems are out there performing creative programs to create additional revenue. He continued to state that discussion needs to be expanded into the community and the municipalities also need to be involved.

Chairman McCurdy added that with each of the *Ex-Officios* on this *Committee*, each would be able to answer questions that the Board would not have the immediate answers for. Following the "*Open Meetings Act*", those meetings would be open to the public.

Steve Rasmussen, *Interim City Manager of the Town of Bloomington* ("Ex-Officio Rasmussen") then openly volunteered to participate in the *ad hoc Committee*, and Pam Reese, *Asst. City Manager of the Town of Normal* was also in agreement to sit on this *Committee*.

Chairman McCurdy then brought up the question of whether or not staff has weighed the benefits of running the buses later hours over time frequency. GM Thorne commented that later service hours is something that he has discussed with CTAC on multiple occasions.

## **GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

### **EDC One Voice Trip**

GM Thorne, Trustee John Bowman, and Pam Reese will be participating in the "One Voice" trip. Connect will be talking to the USDOT about the *Downtown Transfer Center Project* and asking questions how this much needed project can be successful.

### **Facilities Guide – Bus Stop Improvements**

GM Thorne reported he has been in several meetings with CTAC to talk about the *Bus Stop Improvement Plan*. He further stated that Connect is prioritizing a list for the next five (5) years. A difficult issue we face is some of the areas that Connect would like to place a shelter, we have to work with the individual owners of the property through an *Easement Agreement*. Connect may not be able to finalize all of the proposed shelters the first year, but it will be working closely with the *City* and *Town* as well, in determining where new shelters will be placed.

### **Delivery of New Buses**

GM Thorne stated that some of the Staff of Connect has been traveling to Alabama over the last five (5) weeks. Connect should begin receiving new buses in a couple of weeks. All ten (10) buses should be arriving by the end of March. While in Alabama, the Connect Staff has been inspecting the buses, making certain what we put into this scope of work is in agreement with our RFP that Connect issued with *New Flyer*. Road tests, checking the paint, etc., are all being performed before delivery. The newly acquired buses should be in service by the end of April or first week of May. At that time, all of our "405" numbered buses will then be retired.

## **TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS**

Trustee Buchanan asked for a short update for the Board on last night's *Work Session*.

GM Thorne commented that it was great meeting. We viewed the presentation of the program, spaces and exceptional designs and had some good questions. GM Thorne stated that with the *Feasibility Study* in mind, Connect can work with the *Council* and *City Staff* to have them tell us what the designated sites would be so that we could move on to the *Feasibility Study*. The *Feasibility Study* will take approximately six (6) months; and 3-5 years to find funding. GM Thorne believes we can begin having discussions with Staff and

move forward. It would take Connect 3-4 months to determine; (i) what sites to consider (both City-owned and County-owned will be considered); (ii) perform the scope of work required; and (iii) finally have the *Feasibility Study* issued.

A question during discussion was raised regarding the replacement of a "*Planner*". Connect has been looking for this replacement for approximately twelve (12) months without any success in finding a good-fit and suitable candidate. Connect is in the process of talking to the *McLean County Regional Planning Commission* and possibly partnering with them through a joint *Service Agreement*.

Chairman McCurdy discussed one (1) additional item regarding this year's *Trustee Officer Elections*. According to the Board's *By-Laws*, elections occur in March. Chairman McCurdy went on to explain that what was done in the past was to hold elections and then carry-over the current slate of Officers for a second year. He proposed that process for this year rather than go through the election process. However, it was noted that the Board still needs to elect a *Secretary*. Mike McCurdy would continue as *Board Chair*, Ryan Whitehouse would continue as *Vice Chair* and the Board would elect a new *Secretary*. The election for *Board Secretary* would be held in March. In 2019, the Board would then open it up for full elections.

Chairman McCurdy asked for any other comments or discussion.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

A *Motion* was made to adjourn the Board Meeting by Trustee Thomas and was seconded by Trustee Bowman.

AYE: All

NAY: None

*Motion* carried.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.