

**CONNECT TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING – JANUARY 16, 2019**

The Connect Transit Advisory Committee meeting was held at the Connect Transit Board Room #135, 351 Wylie Drive, Normal, Illinois 61761 on January 16, 2019 at 4:15 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:        Emory Davis  
                                     Noha Shawki  
                                     Shirley Craig  
                                     Linda Foster – late arrival  
                                     Evelyn Johnson  
                                     Elaina VonQualen – late arrival  
                                     John Corey

MEMBERS ABSENT:        Wayne Layton

STAFF PRESENT:         General Manager, Isaac Thorne  
                                     Marketing Manager, Jeff Holtke  
                                     Finance Director Patrick Kuebrich  
                                     Community Outreach Coordinator Brendan O'Neill  
                                     Operations Manager Martin Glaze  
                                     Operations Supervisor Jared Simons

General Manager Isaac Thorne opened the meeting with rollcall. Members reviewed and approved the *Minutes* (with requested revisions) of the last meeting held on November 14, 2018 by Motion of Member Evelyn Johnson, seconded by Member John Corey.

**CTAC Member Comments/Suggestions**

Member John Corey required an update on the new bus stops. General Manager Thorne requested Martin Glaze, Connect's Operations Manager to update the Members on the new bus stops.

Manager Glaze stated that a new stop on the PURPLE route has been placed at Regency (both sides) so that people living on Regency in the apartment complexes could walk to the stop. Manager Glaze continued by stating that another new stop on the PURPLE route was also placed on the south side in front of the State Farm complex. Manager Glaze added that the

northern stop on the PURPLE route that ran in front of the Chase Bank has been moved further east in front of the State Farm sign.

Member Evelyn Johnson asked if the Community Bus voter registration event will be an on-going project.

General Manager Isaac Thorne stated that it is Connect's intention to have at least two (2) voter registration drives every year as long as we have an individual who is certified to handle the registration on the Community Bus and Manager Jeff Holtke added that the next proposed voter registration drive will be partnered with the History Museum on President's Day in February.

Member Johnson mentioned that if Connect parked the Connect Community Bus near Woodhill where there are family units around Woodhill, Connect may be able to reach people who are not yet registered to vote.

Member Shirley Craig stated that although there is nothing we as Members of CTAC can do, but due to the snow-covered sidewalks people are walking in the streets and it is very dangerous.

General Manager Thorne stated that he has discussed snow on the sidewalks near bus stops with the City and Town.

#### **Proposed FY 2020 Budget**

General Manager Thorne stated that the proposal will increase revenue hours for *Connect Mobility* by 6,000 hours. This increase is a reflection when cutting fixed route revenue hours by 1,000 hours.

General Manager Thorne continued by stating that for the last ten (10) years, CM ridership has increased in the community. As trips have increased, Connect has needed to increase CM revenue hours.

In order to keep up with the CM increase in trips, the proposed revenue plan adds more CM revenue hours. Fixed routes will see a slight decrease in revenue hours.

General Manager Thorne walked the Members through the "Revenue Proposal #1" with the assumption of a decrease in 1,000 fixed route revenue hours.

Connect is working with its insurance broker on strategies to reduce its insurance premiums for replacement value. Connect will also be putting in \$1.5M infrastructure project for

Connect's soon to be delivered electric buses. We want to make certain we are off-setting the cost to charge those buses with electricity through solar panels.

General Manager Thorne reminded the Members that this is a proposal that will go to the Board for approval, then community engagement and public hearing, on the revenue of a new fare structure and route adjustments.

Member Evelyn Johnson commented that the overall increases in expenses outweigh the overall benefits in the long run while the new buses will also have a positive impact on the environment.

Member John Corey inquired whether Connect was a large enough company for self-insurance.

General Manager Thorne stated that Connect has looked at self-insurance. While Connect does not have any revenue tied to property taxes, it cannot generate that revenue which proves to be a slight risk to self-insure. Connect is looking at different strategies such as a self-insurance fund where it can set aside small amounts of money each year but nothing like a large risk pool where you are self-insuring up to \$1M.

### **Proposed Route Adjustments**

General Manager Thorne turned the floor over to Martin Glaze, Connect's Interim Chief Operations Manager to present the proposed route adjustments.

Manager Glaze began by stating that without additional streams of revenue Connect has to look at the service it is putting on the street. Connect looked at the lowest performing routes and how it can service as many people as possible but at the same time cut revenue hours to offset some of the costs and then reinvest any cuts to revenue hours as much as possible. What Connect looked at is the OLIVE route. The OLIVE route serves Orlando/Northbrook Estates which goes over onto Shelbourne, then down Beech and Ft. Jesse and out to OSF/Ft. Jesse. What staff has found is the majority of the ridership is going from the Orlando/Northbrook area to Walmart and back. The YELLOW runs by Orlando/Northbrook but does not go into Orlando/Northbrook

The RED and the LIME are two (2) of our top three (3) routes and Connect would like to double this service. Staff looked at the biggest ridership portions on these routes; (1) North end of the RED on College Avenue; and (2) the south end of the LIME on Market Street. The Downtown to Walmart on the LIME and uptown over to OSF/Ft Jesse continue to serve OSF on the RED.

General Manager Thorne added the RED EX would have 8 hours of peak service (15-min) between Uptown Station and Walmart and LIME EX would have 6 hours of peak service (15-min) between Downtown and Walmart. Connect and Staff wanted to ensure that one of the key stops would still be serviced which was OSF Medical Center. Connect and Staff tried to line up the hours the RED serves this specific area; the total amount of ridership; and the times people are getting onto the bus at OSF Medical Center.

Member Shirley Craig asked for clarification regarding the Expresses running not every 15 minutes but every 30 minutes because the regular bus runs every half hour. Member Craig also commented that a rider will have to know whether they are getting on a RED EX or RED to know whether it is a complete route.

In response General Manager Thorne stated that in conversations with Staff, do we call this a totally different route? In the past when we start a new route, people are totally confused so we wanted to stick with the LIME EX and RED EX to give them an understanding of where those routes are going.

Manager Glaze stated that Connect wanted to tie the new EX route to the route it will be mirroring. The naming will continue to be looked at and we will receive some feedback on the name at a later time.

Member Craig stated that she is pleased the RED will continue to serve OSF on Ft. Jesse.

Manager Glaze added that with this change, coming out of Uptown Station will be much easier to utilize.

Member Linda Foster inquired whether this change was due to the ridership survey data.

Manager Glaze responded by stating that financial necessity brought about what routes and hours the Staff looked at for a reduction. Regarding the survey data, Manager Glaze stated that one thing Staff found is that people living in the Northbrook area would take the OLIVE and get off at the Alumni Center and then jump on the YELLOW instead of walking.

General Manager Thorne stated that he and staff have looked at the YELLOW stops surrounding Northbrook Estates. Currently there are people now walking to Main Street or Raab Road from the Orlando area. One challenge we have always had with the Northbrook area and the YELLOW route, is there is no way for Connect to get close enough to the intersection of Main/Orlando due to the turn lanes. Staff is looking at moving this stop 100 feet North on Main Street to get the stop a little bit closer for people coming from Northbrook.

Member Shirley Craig inquired whether the sidewalks at the Orlando Apartments are typically shoveled?

General Manager Thorne said they are not typically shoveled and continued by stating that the snow-covered sidewalks were indeed a topic of conversation when route adjustments were last made. Such ordinances for residents and businesses in the Town of Normal do not exist.

Member Evelyn Johnson inquired when the discussed route changes would become effective?

General Manager Thorne replied that: (1) it would be proposed to the Board to make them aware of what Connect is proposing regarding the route changes; (2) community engagement meetings would take place; (3) public hearings would be held in March; and (4) the Board would vote on the recommendation at the end of March. An effective date would not take place until July.

General Manager Thorne then turned over the floor to Jeff Holtke, Connect's Marketing Manager for an update on its marketing projects. Manager Holtke reported that the Coloring Contest had a total of 86 participants. The first prize winners are now featured on the sides of the buses. Second and third place winners out of each age group are now displayed on the inside of the buses. Connect was able to award nine (9) winners. An effort will be made to try to run this contest again in 8-10 months to keep people involved and tailoring the event to different groups or organizations. The artwork was posted on Connect's Facebook page for one week – getting 1,000 likes on the album. First prize went to those entries who had 100 likes. The contest was a great success and Connect looks to build on that success going forward. An upcoming event is planned on President's Day in February to be held at the History Museum with the possibility of having another voter registration day. Staff had the Community Bus out on Halloween at six (6) different spots and again at Christmas. Staff took it to the Miller Park Zoo for two (2) days and decorated it with Christmas lights, presents, and Christmas Trees. People would come on and receive a prize to obtain exposure to Connect Transit and its Community Bus.

Brendan O'Neill, Connect's Community Outreach Coordinator, presented to the Members that the next event in which Connect Transit is participating in with the Community Bus will be called "A Night in the Car" which will be sponsored by Home Sweet Home Ministries ("HSHM"). This will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> year HSHM will be hosting this event to increase the public's awareness of the City's and Town's homeless in our area.

Coordinator O'Neill continued by reporting that the bus was recently taken to ISU for the International Student Orientation for incoming students for this semester. Around 150 students

came through the bus and had already started using Connect Transit and had downloaded our app.

Near the end of February Coordinator O'Neill reported that the Children's Discovery Museum is holding a "Meet the Community" night with the Police Department, Fire Department and Connect Transit, to talk about what each entity does and how each helps the community.

Member Evelyn Johnson commented that the more Connect Transit gets involved in the community, especially when it involves kids and that will in turn involve the parents.

Coordinator O'Neill stated that teachers have asked Connect to speak to an adult living class or something similar.

Member Evelyn Johnson asked if Connect has talked to the Cornbelters about promotions? She mentioned different places like Woodhill who would have people interested if they knew they could get from where they are to the games.

General Manager Thorne stated that in the past Connect has taken a bus out at to the Cornbelters at the entrance where people could talk to us about Connect Transit services and would tour the bus, but we haven't done that for a few years.

Member Johnson asked that Connect to revisit the Cornbelters about what CT could do to promote an event with them.

### **Proposed Fare Structure**

General Manager Thorne began to explain the new fare structure and reminded the Members that this is a proposal that will be presented to the Board. One thing that Connect has not done in twelve (12) years is an increase in the fares. Connect did have a slight increase in the 30-day pass and the CM pass back in 2016. Connect is now proposing an initial increase of 25 cents on the fixed route one-way fares which would bring the fare from \$1.00 to \$1.25. Thirty (30) day passes for fixed route would increase from 32 to 36 dollars. CM one-way fare would increase from \$2.00 to \$2.50 and premium now at \$3.00 and \$4.00 would increase to \$3.50 and \$4.50. Anyone who qualifies for CM, they can ride fixed route for free. This is an effort to try to get more CM users to try fixed route transit. The CM 30-day pass would increase from \$65 to \$70. In the past when we did route re-structures, a lot of people did not give us comments until the re-structure was about to begin. Connect is trying to get our riders to come to us earlier to let us know what they think about the fare increase and also the route proposals. Connect wants our riders to know that we have to increase the fares but Connect

also wants their feedback. This also outlines what would happen in FYs 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 and give our customers information on the fare increases taking place over four years.

General Manager Thorne stated that the increase in fares is proposed to go into effect in July. After this is proposed to the Board this month, we will immediately be going out to perform community engagement.

Member Shirley Craig stated the fare increase is off-set a little bit with the fare cap.

Member John Corey asked how far off we are with fares in comparison to other transit locations our size?

General Manager stated that Rockford is at \$1.50; Springfield is at \$1.25; Champaign is at \$1.00. These are the closest transit agencies for a comparison.

### **Community Engagement/Public Hearings**

One we get this proposal to the Board we would start community engagement – 6-8 community engagement sessions leading up to March and also having the Public Hearing sometime in March.

General Manager Thorne announced the next meeting for CTAC would be on March 20, 2019 at 4:15 pm.

### **Adjournment**

Member Evelyn Johnson moved to adjourn, seconded by Member John Corey.

The Members voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:11 p.m.