

**CONNECT TRANSIT BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES– SEPTEMBER 24, 2019**

**351 Wylie Drive – Board Room #135  
Normal, Illinois 61761**

The September regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held at 4:30 p.m. in the Board Room of Connect Transit located at 351 Wylie Drive, Normal, Illinois 61761.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Chairman Mike McCurdy  
Vice Chairman Ryan Whitehouse  
Secretary Monica Bullington  
Trustee Judy Buchanan  
Trustee Julie Hile (via telephone conference)

TRUSTEES ABSENT: Trustee John Bowman

CITY MANAGERS: Town of Normal Manager Pam Reece  
Bloomington City Manager Tim Gleason

STAFF PRESENT: General Manager, Isaac Thorne  
Martin Glaze, Chief Operations Officer  
Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director  
Shelly Perry, Operations Manager  
Cassie Mosier, Procurement Manager  
Brady Lange, Maintenance Manager  
Jeff Holtke, Marketing Manager  
Steve Stockton, IT Manager  
Jill Bower, Board Clerk

The monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was called to order by Chairman Mike McCurdy at 4:30 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Chairman McCurdy asked for a *Motion* to allow Trustee Hile to participate in Meeting via telephone conference; *Motion* made by Trustee Buchanan, seconded by Trustee Bullington.

AYE: All  
NAY: None

Motion carried, and Trustee Hile was approved by the Board to participate in the Board Meeting via telephone conference.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Donna Boelen spoke to the Board as a resident of the Town of Bloomington. She stated that Bloomington's Ward 2 is a food desert and 75% of the students who attend Cedar Ridge School qualify for a free lunch signifying there is a population of low-income families living in that area. She stated that this area is in the outer periphery of Bloomington and she understands that it is expensive to run bus service to that area. Continuing her comment, she stated that ever since the transit service was removed, there are people that are walking down the shoulder of Veteran's Parkway and that is unacceptable to her as these people are trying to get to work. She stated she had been following the Working Group that was organized and both the Town of Normal and City of Bloomington brought forward a Resolution in order to prevent Connect Transit's budget from being pulled. Ms. Boelen stated that it was her understanding that the Board would not be moving forward with changes until the Working Group brought its recommendations to the Town and City. She is hearing frustration from people who are in the Working Group that the Members of the Working Group will not be heard and that the Working Group's final recommendations will not be accepted. Her concern was the Agenda item tonight related to the purchase of electric buses reinforces the concept that Connect will not accept or that the Board is not valuing the work that the Working Group is doing.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Approval of Minutes of August 27, 2019 Board Meeting
2. Disbursements for the month of August 2019
3. Capital and Self Insurance Reserve Fund Balances for month of August 2019
4. Monthly Statistical Report for month of August 2019
5. Cardinal Infrastructure Federal Report

Chairman McCurdy called for a *Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda*. Trustee Buchanan so moved with a request to revise and/or clarify language in paragraph 1 of page 5 of the *Minutes*, seconded by Trustee Bullington.

AYE: All  
NAY: None

The Board approved the *Consent Agenda* and *Minutes*, as amended.

**NEW BUSINESS**

*Recommendation for Award of Fuel Supplier*

General Manager Thorne asked the Board to authorize and award a contract for a term of five (5) years to Ken's Oil for the supply and delivery of fuel and reported that Connect had received three (3) proposals (Evergreen FS, Ken's Oil and Petroleum Traders). Connect has contracted for a fuel supplier or vendor since 2012.

Chairman McCurdy asked the Board for a *Motion of Recommendation for Award of Fuel Supplier*. Trustee Buchanan moved to approve the *Recommendation*, seconded by Trustee Hile.

**DISCUSSION**

In response to a question, General Manager Thorne stated that seventy-five percent (75%) of Connect's fuel is by contract. In the past Connect has contracted for fuel to ensure that budget numbers will be met, contracting in the futures market for fuel supply over a 12-month period so that locked-in prices benefit Connect in receiving much lower prices for its fuel. Brady Lange, Connect's Maintenance Manager, stated that Ken's Oil is out of Champaign and is Connect's current supplier of lubricants and oil filters and Connect has been doing business with Ken's Oil for 2-3 years.

AYE: All.

NAY: None.

The *Recommendation for Award of Fuel Supplier* was approved by the Board.

**Recommendation for Award of Downtown Bloomington Transfer Center Study RFP 19-03**

General Manager Thorne asked the Board to authorize an award of a contract with *Farnsworth Group*, pending IDOT Pre-Award Concurrence. Continuing, the General Manager stated that Connect Transit was awarded an *IDOT Technical Studies Grant* in 2018 to perform a *Feasibility and Site Analysis for a Downtown Transfer Center* location. This Study is the first step in determining a suitable location for the Downtown Transfer Center. Continuing, General Manager Thorne stated that Connect has maintained a transfer point in Downtown Bloomington since 1972 and the Board has prioritized bus stop infrastructure, including a Downtown Transfer Center in Downtown Bloomington, in the strategic planning process. Connect received four (4) proposals from the following vendors: Farnsworth, Wendel, SRF, and TranSystems. The proposals were evaluated based on qualifications and experience, cost, references, methodology and staff experience. Farnsworth will complete 16 tasks that have been outlined under the scope of work in the RFP and this Study must be completed to determine the location of a future transfer center with certain requirements met to be eligible for federal funding. The total cost of the *Downtown Transfer Center Study* will be completely funded by the *IDOT Technical Studies Grant* awarded to Connect Transit in 2018 and will not exceed \$244,700.

Chairman Mike McCurdy asked the Board for a *Motion to Approve Recommendation for Award of Downtown Bloomington Transfer Center Study RFP 19-03*. Trustee Whitehouse moved to approve, seconded by Judy Buchanan.

**DISCUSSION**

In response to a Trustee's question, General Manager Thorne stated the total amount awarded by IDOT to Connect Transit to perform this Study was \$250,000, adding that there are at least 3-4 and could be more sites. Site locations will not be disclosed at this point in time but there will be a public input process as part of the required 16 tasks as part of the study Farnsworth will be completing under the

FTA requirements in determining the final site location and there will be many entities involved, including the community at large, with multiple meetings at different locations talking about the different sites Connect will be considering.

Trustee Whitehouse commented expressing optimism with the fact that Connect has been awarded grant money and is able to move forward toward finding a suitable location that will meet the needs of all of the partners, Connect, the ridership, the City of Bloomington. Trustee Whitehouse said that it is long overdue and was excited that this project is moving forward. Trustee Whitehouse clarified that the grant money awarded for the Downtown Transfer Center Study was money awarded for this Study and cannot be used for something else as others in the community may think there is a better use of this money than this Study.

Responding to a Trustee's question, General Manager Thorne stated that the timeline on the Study is 6-12 months with no deadline for use of the grant money awarded for the Study.

Chairman McCurdy also expressed his optimism in being able to move forward with the Study as a Downtown Transfer Center will provide shelter out of the elements for 1800-2000 passengers a day at the Downtown stop alone.

AYE: All.  
NAY: None.

The Motion carried and the *Recommendation for Award of Downtown Bloomington Transfer Center Study RFP 19-03* was approved by the Board.

*Recommendation for Battery Electric Buses RFP 19-05*

General Manager Thorne prefaced to the Board that the Recommendation presented to award a contract for a term of five (5) years with Proterra for the delivery of battery-electric buses will be contingent upon the FTA Buy America Audit and Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Pre-Award Concurrence; that a contract will not be signed until the approval of these requirements have been met. In response to a question presented by a Trustee, General Manager Thorne stated this process is one Connect has been through and is the same as in 2015 when awarded the diesel fueled buses.

**PRESENTATION**

Chief Operations Officer, Martin Glaze, then presented the *Battery Electric Bus Award Recommendation*. Representatives from the recommended manufacturer, Proterra, were also in attendance to answer any questions.

Funding:

- Award of Low or No Emissions Grant: \$1.45 M
- Bus and Bus Facilities Grant: \$6 M

- IDOT Debt Services: 65% of total capital cost
- Local Capital: ZERO

#### Proposed Project Scope:

- 12-17 Battery Electric Buses
- Replacing
  - 10 – 2003 New Flyer 40' Diesel Buses – 16-yrs old (average useful life of 14 yrs.)
    - Ten (10) buses will actually be 20-year old buses when replaced
  - 2 – 2008 Gillig 30' Diesel Buses
  - 1 – 2010 Gillig 35' Diesel Bus
  - 4 – 2011 Gillig 35' Diesel Buses
- Initial phase of a long-term shift to zero-emission buses
- Reduce public transit's impact on local air quality
- Reduce overall operating costs
- Proposed Model: *Proterra Catalyst E2 35' Bus*

#### Battery Electric Bus Overview (BEB):

- Deployments Globally: 425,000 BEB's (421,000 in China alone)
- Deployments Nationally: 300 BEB's on the road at the end of 2018
- Deployment Growth: National deployments to increase to 5,000 by 2025
- Illinois Agencies with Existing Deployments:
  - MetroLINK (Quad Cities) – 8 Proterra Catalyst E2 buses
  - CTA (Chicago) – Testing BEB's since 2014 and ordered 45 Proterra Catalyst E2 buses in 2018
- Major Historical Challenges for Battery Electric Buses:
  - Capital Cost – declining
  - Range Limitations – increasing
  - Availability and Reliability – approaching diesel buses
  - Extreme Weather Limitations – still a concern but has vastly improved

#### Why Battery Electric Buses?

- Fuel Price Stability (FTA Research)
  - Natural gas - average change in natural gas prices over last 16 yrs.: 300%
  - Gasoline and diesel: 200%
  - Electricity: 3.5%
- Efficiencies – fuel costs and maintenance costs considerably less to maintain
- Significant CO2 Reduction

#### Why Proterra?

- Over 9 million service miles for buses already in service
- Over 50 million pounds of CO2 emissions avoided
- Leading innovation on battery research and development
- Purpose built battery electric bus – built bus around batteries
- Engineering expertise from leading EV innovators such as TESLA, Ford & GM
- Provides industry best total cost of ownership providing lowest operating costs
- Industry leading performance providing highest MPGe, lowest weight and most engine torque
- Customer-centric design which provides a clean, quiet and safe ride

- Exceptional infrastructure consultation and design assistance
- More than 750 buses sold to 100+ customers across 42 states

Technical Specifications:

- Battery Size: 440kwh (largest battery among all bus bidders)
- Battery Location: Underbody of bus – promotes stability on the road
- Expected Range: 150-204 miles operating range
- Body Design: Carbon-fiber-reinforced unibody structure offering exceptional strength while remaining light weight and rust-resistant
- Drivetrain: High efficiency motor/transmission (5x efficiency of diesel)
- Regenerative Braking: Efficient operator can drive with minimal use of brakes (while regenerating energy to the batteries)

Charging Specifications & Infrastructure

- Proterra works closely with customer to recommend the appropriate charging solution for fleets and facilities planning for scale as the demand for charging increases

Mr. Glaze stated that Connect Transit was awarded a *Low or No Emissions Grant* of \$1.45M in 2018 which is a discretionary Grant that does require application and later that year, Connect received a *Bus and Bus Facilities Grant* of an additional \$6M. Using both funds received from the awarded Grants, Connect will also be able to use *IDOT Debt Services* to leverage additional funds overall for 65% of the capital cost; meaning that \$7.45M gets closer to \$21M; thus, making the local capital for this project zero. This project will be paid for by state and federal funds. Mr. Glaze stated that the proposed manufacturer is *Proterra* and Connect is currently looking at the *Proterra Catalyst E2 35' Electric Bus*.

**DISCUSSION**

Responding to a Trustee’s question regarding the range of the bus on a charge, Mr. Glaze stated that Connect has six (6) buses having a route over 200 miles, the other eight (8) bus routes are less than 200 miles.

A Proterra representative, Mike Hennessey, stated that Proterra had just completed a multi-million-dollar project with Michelin exhibiting an increase of 7% efficiency which would give the electric bus approximately 30 more miles and that Proterra is constantly working on new technologies to reduce the weight of the bus.

Mr. Glaze continued by stating that there will be a lot of computer aspects that can be monitored here at base. There will be a need for driver training to get our drivers up to speed on how to drive an electric bus. In response to a Trustee’s question regarding additional training for the electric buses, Mr. Glaze stated that it is more about the “driving style” on an electric bus as compared to diesel. The electric buses offer a “regenerative braking system” meaning the bus slows itself down and captures the inertia turning it back into energy thereby prolonging the life of the brake pads and shoes. The electric buses have computer monitoring to see the efficiencies and driver patterns and habits of each individual driver. The chargers Connect is contemplating (125kw) which will charge 2 buses sequentially 3-hours each. In response to the question whether the current diesel buses will be able to continue to

run for another 2 years, General Manager Thorne stated that the 10 used buses acquired from Champaign are highly tapping into the maintenance parts budget and these buses continue to fail as they are very old and are at a high mileage. Responding to Trustee Bullington's question about the weight of the buses, Mr. Glaze stated that Proterra is the "lightest" battery-electric bus manufactured and the 35' of course, is lighter in weight than the 40'. Trustee Buchanan asked about "start-up" costs for infrastructure to which General Manager Thorne responded that bids for infrastructure were sent out earlier in the year but Connect paused after talking with other transit agencies, recommendations came in that we find a manufacturer first; have that manufacturer work with the electrical engineers to ensure that a proper infrastructure is in place. If the Board approves the recommendation, Connect will move forward in working with Proterra and the electrical engineers to come up with a plan for the infrastructure, keeping in mind that capital cost is already paid for through the Federal Grant, Bus and Bus Facilities Grant, together with state funding.

Trustee Buchanan stated that it appears that the FTA is encouraging communities with transit to look at this as an alternative for buses and asked about the sustainability/lifespan of each of the electric buses. Mr. Glaze stated that the lifespan is about the same as diesel – about 12 years – although the FTA is asking transit agencies to keep the buses for 14 years. General Manager Thorne stated that Connect was extremely fortunate to secure \$7.45M in discretionary grants as there is only \$400M for funding, but bus and bus facility requests for funding come in to the FTA nationally with applications totaling over \$1B in requests for funding.

Trustee Whitehouse commented that Connect's *Strategic Plan* states our intention to cut down emissions to protect our local environment. He stated his support for the *Recommendation*, also stating that he does not believe that moving forward with the planning for electric buses negates any of the Working Group's work.

In response to a question from Pam Reece, Town of Normal City Manager, General Manager Thorne stated that this *Recommendation* is for the Board to vote to approve the Contract. However, Connect is not ready to purchase electric buses. We must wait for IDOT Pre-Award concurrence and the completion of the Buy America Audit. There would be discussions in pre-production meetings with Proterra to determine the final total cost of the electric bus from the base-bid price. Staff would then come back to the Board and make a *Recommendation* on the first purchase (4 buses). Connect's plan is to buy 4 electric buses each year starting in February-March of 2020. In response to a question from Trustee Whitehouse, General Manager Thorne stated that once Connect is ready to purchase, Proterra can produce 4 electric buses in a period of 12-14 months, depending on the configuration of the buses. In response to questions regarding the reliability of the current buses being replaced, General Manager Thorne stated there may be a scenario whereby Connect will have to call upon Champaign and ask if there are any used buses Connect can buy from them, as it has done before.

Pam Reece, Town of Normal City Manager, wanted to confirm that this is a 5-year contract so Connect is anticipating a group of buses each year for 5 years? General Manager Thorne confirmed that Connect has funding for 12 and it would plan to buy 4 buses each year starting in 2020 for the next three (3) years, adding there is an opportunity for additional funding each year.

Trustee Hile added reasons why she also supports the *Recommendation*; electric is easier to maintain and more cost-effective; all externally funded; Lo/No Emission Grants are highly sought after and very competitive in the transit industry. Regarding sustainability, she added that it is good to see that Connect is able to work in parallel with some of the deliberations of the Working Group without coming into conflict. She stated that regarding the Downtown Transfer Study, she is glad that we are proceeding with fact-finding and resource-gathering with is respectful to what the Working Group is doing.

Trustee Buchanan questioned whether or not we could anticipate the 35' buses might be more successful in navigating areas around the City and Town? General Manager Thorne stated that assumption would depend on the area. He believed that serving those areas would be more for Connect Mobility or a cut-away bus for certain areas of the community that are not as densely populated as the current areas Connect is serving.

In response to Chairman McCurdy's question regarding 35' buses limiting the flexibility for Connect in terms of where they can be utilized as some of the routes have a longer daily mileage than the range would allow for the 35' buses and whether those routes are some that have the highest daily boardings where Connect would need a 40' bus, Mr. Glaze responded that of the 6 routes that go over 200 miles, 5 of the routes are heavily utilized so if the 35' buses were on those routes, he would expect standing during the peak usage. Continuing, Mr. Glaze stated that had been analyzed and 35' buses would not be able to be used on the Redbird Express routes and 8 routes that are under the 200 miles would probably run into standing capacity at some point during the day; however, ten (10) 35' buses would do fine, pointing out to not confuse the fact that the 35' electric does weigh a little bit more than the diesel but Proterra produces the lightest model of the 35' electric buses.

Chairman McCurdy stated that he also supports this *Recommendation* and that as a Trustee, one of the responsibilities is to ensure the financial health of the system by not buying diesel buses, saving \$500,000 per bus and that Connect would not be subjected to the variable fuel markets and the additional \$250,000 savings over the life of the electric bus in terms of fuel, fluids and maintenance – capital cost and operating cost combined, adding that no matter where Connect goes, if it is able to find the income to serve low ridership areas that are currently not being served, we still need buses to run as the fleet is aging.

Mr. Glaze added that regarding noise level, the electric buses as compared to diesel, exhibit almost no noise. In response to a question from Trustee Hile regarding safety, Mr. Hennessey from Proterra stated that the inside is as quiet as outside of the bus and instead of hearing the roar of a diesel engine, you hear the hum of the electric motor which is a pretty good size and it does make noise but is much quieter and a different sound.

There was no further discussion.

Chairman McCurdy asked for a Motion, Trustee Whitehouse moved to approve the *Recommendation for Battery Electric Buses RFP 19-05*, seconded by Trustee Buchanan.

AYE: All.  
NAY: None.

The Motion carried and the *Recommendation for Battery Electric Buses RFP 19-05* was approved by the Board.

## **GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

### **Bus and Bus Facilities Grant Application**

General Manager Thorne reported on the Bus and Bus Facilities Grant submitted in June for \$500,000 for the Better Bus Stops Campaign, Connect is hoping to leverage the \$500,000 for an additional \$900,00 of state funding for a total of \$1.4M to apply to the Better Bus Stops Campaign. He added that Connect should receive word on that submission hopefully by the second week of October whether Connect was successful on the grant application.

## **TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS**

Trustee Buchanan updated the Board on the *Connect to the Future Working Group*. She noted that she values the work of the *Working Group* and they will be heard and listened to and was optimistic that there will be some action taken. She is very optimistic that when the Group is before both the City and Town Councils that the work that has been done will be valued and is optimistic there will be some action taken – short-term and long-term. The Members of the focus groups have been working hard and getting ready to transfer a lot of data collected, working to some recommendations. The Working Group will be meeting three (3) more times between now and the end of the year. The focus areas of the focus groups are:

- Ridership & Access
- Integration of Public Transit into Land Use and Development
- Sustainable Funding
- Connecting as an Economic Partner

Continuing, Trustee Buchanan stated that the *Working Group* had developed a final draft of their goals subject to revisions and all recommendations will be considered through the lens of the following goals:

- Access – Provide access to jobs and services (including the transit reliant and low-income resident), connecting residents to their everyday needs via a convenient and reliable system
- Grow Ridership – Become the mobility provider of choice
- Affordability – Provide affordable service for households of all income levels
- Safety – Provide an overall safe riding experience that will ensure safe access to transit stops
- Outreach & Community Engagement – Initiate and continue on-going and effective communication with all stakeholders as well use of a marketing plan.

Trustee Whitehouse stated that Connect Transit was a sponsor of the *Communities We Care – St. Jude Run* and provided a Connect Mobility bus to assist with volunteers and safety on the course. He stated his thanks to Connect Transit for its involvement in sponsoring this important event.

Chairman McCurdy brought to the Board for discussion the procedural steps for revisions to the *Minutes* and how Trustees should get that information to the Board Clerk for revisions.

Trustee Buchanan shared that the Board has some very good discussions but specifically; the *Minutes* are to be a record of all actions taken by the Board. Further stating (i) whether the *Minutes* need to identify each individual in discussions; and (ii) if there are revisions, they need to be routed to the Board Secretary and Board Clerk in advance of the meeting so that the Trustees have a final copy in advance of approval.

Chairman McCurdy said that any requested revisions by a Trustee should be forwarded to all the Board Members and the Board Clerk, adding that the recording is held electronically as a permanent record. Secretary Bullington added that if the recording of each meeting is accessible, she would be in agreement with the *Minutes* not identifying each speaker in discussions. Chairman McCurdy stated that the consensus of the Board then is the procedure for requested revisions to the *Minutes* be forwarded to the Secretary with copies to the Board Clerk and all Trustees and going forward, this procedure would be followed.

Chairman McCurdy stated that the Board is not prepared to hold *Executive Session* on personnel matters and asked for a Motion to postpone the *Executive Session*, so moved by Trustee Bullington, seconded by Trustee Buchanan.

AYE: All.  
NAY: None.

The Motion carried and the *Executive Session* was postponed to the Board's next monthly meeting in October.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chairman Mike McCurdy entertained a *Motion for Adjournment*.

Trustee Monica Bullington moved to adjourn, seconded by Trustee Ryan Whitehouse.

AYE: All  
NAY: None

Motion carried, and the Board of Trustees adjourned the September regular monthly meeting at 5:35 p.m.

  
Secretary Monica Bullington

  
Jill Bower – Board Clerk

