

**CONNECT TRANSIT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PROCEEDINGS OF NOVEMBER 22, 2016**

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 November 22, 2016 at 4:30 p.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Mike McCurdy, Vice-Chairman
 Ryan Whitehouse, Secretary
 Lauren Lacy
 John Bowman
 John Thomas

TRUSTEES ABSENT: Judy Buchanan
 Jennifer McDade

CITY MANAGERS: Town of Normal Manager, Mark Peterson

STAFF PRESENT: Andrew Johnson, General Manager
 Julie Beer, Executive Assistant
 Isaac Thorne, Chief Operating Officer
 Melissa Chrisman, Marketing and Business Development Manager
 Jeff Douglas, Maintenance Department Manager

The meeting was called to order by the Vice Chairman at 4:30 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy opened the meeting, noting one individual that wished to speak during the public comment portion of the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Glen Ludwig addressed the Board. He stated he is a 75 year old retired individual from an agribusiness career. He was concerned for Connect Transit as a citizen and taxpayer, however, he did not use the system. He was most concerned about Connect Transit's business model – it is grossly dependent on government funding; addicted to taxpayer dollars. He believed there should be no surprise that it has not received funding from the State of Illinois. There is risk in trying to be cheap transportation for everyone. He questioned why senior citizens use the system for free. He stated his concern regarding items appearing on the meeting's Consent Agenda. There are items on the Consent Agenda that need serious consideration.

Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy stated the Board generally does not interact with speakers during Public Comment, as it is an opportunity for the Board to hear from the public. However, Connect Transit staff and Board shared his concern regarding the State of Illinois budget impasse and the lack of funding to Connect Transit. The State of Illinois is statutorily obligated to fund Downstate transit systems and should uphold its legal obligations to same.

RECOGNITION OF BILL WILSON, FORMER TRUSTEE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Vice Chairman McCurdy noted Bill Wilson, former Trustee and Chairman of the Board present for the meeting. He thanked him for his service and presented him with a plaque.

Bill Wilson addressed the Board. He appreciated the opportunity to speak. It had been his pleasure to serve on the Connect Transit Board of Trustees. He is very proud of the system and its outstanding employees. He appreciated his opportunity to serve.

Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy thanked Mr. Wilson for his service to the Connect Transit Board. He noted that the newest appointee by the City of Bloomington was present for the meeting. He welcomed Lauren Lacy and requested that Ms. Lacy introduce herself.

Lauren Lacy addressed the Board. She stated she had moved to Bloomington three (3) years ago. One of the first things that she did upon moving to the community was research public transit. The two (2) previous communities where she had resided had wonderful public transit systems. She believes that public transportation is a valuable community asset. She stated there are a lot of visitors to the McLean County Museum, where she works, who inquire about public transportation within the community. She has witnessed the amazing transformations of Connect Transit over the last three (3) years that she has lived in the community. She is very happy to serve the Connect Transit Board.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting of October 17, 2016
2. Disbursements for Months of September, and October, 2016
3. Financial Report for Months of September, and October, 2016
4. Capital and Self Insurance Reserve Fund Balances for Months of September, and October, 2016
5. Monthly Statistical Report for Months of September, and October, 2016

Trustee John Bowman noted his confusion regarding the ridership numbers. He requested that future ridership reports be adjusted to show Sunday service separately.

Secretary Ryan Whitehouse noted that gasoline is cheap, and questioned its impact on the decline of ridership. Andrew Johnson, General Manager responded that low gas prices have had an impact as well as Illinois State University (ISU) campus housing changes. He noted there has been a decline in ridership since April 2015 and has been a nationwide trend.

Mark Peterson, Town of Normal Manager stated his belief that there must be additional causes for such a dramatic decline in ridership other than gas prices and ISU campus housing changes. He found the dramatic decrease troubling. He suggested additional investigation into ridership decline.

Andrew Johnson, General Manager responded there are numerous causes, low gas prices, unemployment decline, etc. Isaac Thorne, Chief Operating Officer (COO) agreed, noting

numerous studies that show when gas prices fall below \$3 per gallon, public transportation use declines, and when gas prices rise above \$3, public transportation use explodes. There are a number of additional variables that impact ridership, such as abundant free parking.

Trustee John Bowman questioned ongoing outreach efforts to ISU students living in campus housing. Andrew Johnson, General Manager responded that Connect Transit staff have been, and will continue its outreach efforts. He noted that loss of ISU student ridership constitutes the bulk of the ridership decline. Staff has been working closely with ISU to determine the cause of student ridership decline. It may be impossible to determine the cause without hiring a dedicated firm to conduct a study.

Mark Peterson, Town of Normal Manager stated it is a troubling trend and suggested that Connect Transit watch these trends closely and take proactive measures to determine the causes of declining ridership.

Trustee Lauren Lacy questioned outreach measures to individuals who do not use electronic media such as computers and smart phones. Mr. Johnson responded there are many, including visits to a number of facilities and riding buses. Customer Service Representatives have been hired and Dispatchers assist customers by phone.

Melissa Chrisman, Marketing and Business Development Manager stated Connect Transit staff have conducted fifteen (15) public education sessions recently. Additionally, a new traveler/trainer program will be launched in 2017.

Trustee John Bowman questioned if it were possible to analyze ISU student usage by route. Mr. Johnson affirmed.

Motion by Trustee John Bowman, Seconded by Trustee John Thomas that the Consent Agenda be approved..

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Presentation of FY 2016 Audit – CliftonLarsonAllen

Hope Wheeler, CliftonLarsonAllen addressed the Board. A Power Point Presentation had been created. She provided the Board with a brief overview of the Connect Transit audit. Ms. Wheeler noted that there were no significant findings and there were no audit adjustments.

Motion by Trustee John Thomas, seconded by Trustee Lauren Lacy to accept the FY 2016 Audit.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Universal Access Agreement - YouthBuild

Andrew Johnson, General Manager introduced this item. The Universal Access Agreement with YouthBuild is renewing for another year. It has been a very successful partnership. Staff recommends that the Board approve the renewal.

Motion by Trustee John Thomas, seconded by Secretary Ryan Whitehouse that the Universal Access Agreement with YouthBuild be approved at a rate of \$.90 per ride for a total of 9,600 rides from December 1, 2016 to November 30, 2017, for a total agreement of \$8,640.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Universal Access Agreement - Town of Normal

Andrew Johnson, General Manager introduced this item. As with the YouthBuild agreement, this is a renewal agreement with the Town of Normal. It too, has been a popular program and successful partnership. Staff recommends that the Board approve the renewal.

Motion by Secretary Ryan Whitehouse, seconded by Trustee John Bowman that the Universal Access Agreement with the Town of Normal for employee ridership be approved at the rate of \$1 per ride from December 1, 2016 to November 30, 2017.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Andrew Johnson, General Manager stated Connect Transit's staff's main focus as of late has been when it would receive funding from the State of Illinois. He did not have any firm news regarding same, however, through the Illinois Public Transportation Association (IPTA), contact with the Illinois Comptroller's office, it looked favorable that some funds would be received in December.

He commended all of Connect Transit's employees for remaining calm during this unusual and uncomfortable situation.

Mr. Johnson stated the Maintenance Department had some exciting news that would be shared with the Board. He requested that Jeff Douglas, Maintenance Department Manager explain.

Mr. Douglas addressed the Board. He stated the Maintenance Department encourages education and training for its Mechanics, which includes the Automotive Safety Excellence (ASE) certification program. Recently, one of Connect Transit's employees received his ASE Master's Certification in record time. It is a very difficult course, which this new employee completed in two-weeks. There are approximately 3300 ASE Masters certified mechanics worldwide, with only 823 in the United States. This is a major accomplishment. He congratulated Mr. Brett Knisley for his accomplishment.

Mr. Johnson informed the Board that a member of the Connect Transit family, a serviceman, Mr. James Turner had passed away unexpectedly. He requested that everyone remember Mr. Turner and his family in their thoughts and prayers. He sent his condolences to Mr. Turner's family.

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS

Secretary Ryan Whitehouse questioned bus service hours to Eastland Mall during the holidays. He heard from some riders that they are unable to work later shifts at the mall during extended holiday hours. He questioned if it would be possible to extend the operating hours during the holiday season. Andrew Johnson, General Manager responded under current financial conditions it would not be possible, however, if the Board chose to adjust the operating hours in the future, when funding is more stable, they could vote to make that change.

Secretary Whitehouse requested that Mr. Johnson describe the current service to Eastland Mall. Mr. Johnson responded that the service is the same as it has always been, however, the service ends one hour earlier, at 9 p.m. It used to operate until 10 p.m.

Secretary Whitehouse noted his concern for the Eastland Mall employees. He believed these individuals needed the bus service to return home from their shifts at the various stores. He would like to revisit this route in the future for possible adjustments.

Isaac Thorne, Chief Operating Officer noted that in order to extend the hours for Eastland Mall, the hours for all routes would need to be extended. The routes from the Eastland Mall go directly to the transfer stations only.

Secretary Whitehouse questioned the progress with serving the Walmart stores. He noted his preference that Connect Transit buses enter their parking lots to pick up and drop off passengers.

Mr. Thorne responded the Bloomington Walmart requested that Connect Transit discontinue service in their parking lot, and the Normal Walmart has suggested that the bus travel behind their store, however, it is not feasible for Connect Transit to do so.

Andrew Johnson, General Manager stated that staff and Walmart management have been discussing a compromise. Mr. Thorne noted that Walmart Corporate Offices preferred that buses did not enter their parking lots.

Trustee John Thomas stated this is a design level issue. These developments did not consider public transit or foot traffic during their design phases. He agreed that Connect Transit should work with these existing companies to accommodate their customers, but it should be the business's responsibility to pay for any modifications. Additionally, it is important that the business community be educated to plan public transit/foot traffic friendly facilities.

Trustee John Bowman stated he had received a request from a rider to add a bus stop on both sides of the libraries.

Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy congratulated Connect Transit staff for receiving a clean audit.

Mr. Johnson reminded the Board about the upcoming "Stuff the Bus" event. This is the fourteenth (14th) year that Connect Transit, the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 752 and the Children's Home + Aid have partnered to raise funds and supplies for the crisis nursery. The Board would be provided with the dates, times and locations of the event.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Trustee John Bowman, Seconded by Trustee John Thomas to adjourn to Executive Session.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Time: 5:48 p.m.

Motion by Trustee John Bowman, seconded by Trustee Lauren Lacy to return to Regular Session.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Time: 5:52 p.m.

Julie Beer, Executive Assistant