

**CONNECT TRANSIT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ADVOCACY COMMITTEE
PROCEEDINGS OF MAY 13, 2014**

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Advocacy Committee of Connect Transit was held at the Town of Normal, Uptown Station, 11 Uptown Circle, Normal, Illinois 61761 ó Union Pacific Room at 4:00 p.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Judy Buchanan, Chairman
 Mike McCurdy, Secretary
 Ryan Whitehouse

TRUSTEES ABSENT: Felicia Shaw
 John Thomas

STAFF PRESENT: Andrew Johnson, General Manager
 Julie Phillips, Executive Assistant ó Labor Relations

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 4:00 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Chairperson Buchanan opened the meeting by stating that the last Advocacy Committee Meeting had been held in December of 2013. Several efforts were discussed including hosting a legislative breakfast, a mini transportation summit, hosting local official ride-alongs, and crafting new advocacy messages around business partners and other stakeholder events. Since that time several advocacy efforts had been made including bus rides with local officials.

Secretary Mike McCurdy stated that since the December meeting a message had emerged regarding increasing local funding; in order to take advantage of State funding that would allow Connect Transit to increase frequency and/or services. Trustee Ryan Whitehouse agreed and questioned the amount of dedicated local funding needed in order for Connect Transit to take advantage of the State funding allotment. Andrew Johnson, General Manager responded that approximately \$325,000 in dedicated local funding would be needed.

Discussion centered on sales tax increases versus Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) increases. Trustee Whitehouse and Secretary McCurdy agreed that a sales tax increase would be more palatable and sustainable than an MFT increase. Both the Town of Normal and the City of Bloomington would need to be in agreement as well. Mr. Johnson stated that having the support of the businesses was crucial.

Trustee Whitehouse stated that a mini summit could be used to target the business community. Chairperson Judy Buchanan noted the importance of conveying the message of what and how area businesses would benefit from their increased support of Connect Transit. The dedication of an additional \$325,000 in local funding would allow Connect Transit to tap into an additional 1.6 million dollars of State funding to provide additional and increased services. Those additional and increased services would bring more customers to their businesses and provide employees with reliable transportation.

Mr. Johnson stated that a mini summit would be a very useful tool for increasing awareness and support for dedicated local funding but would require a lot of advanced work. Connect Transit staff were already focusing on building business support. Mr. Johnson mentioned the most recent Economic Development Council (EDC) brochure. Connect Transit is now featured as a local transportation service provider.

Secretary Mike McCurdy agreed. There would be a 12 to 18 month planning process for a successful summit. Chairperson Judy Buchanan questioned the deadline for utilizing the 1.6 million in State funding. Mr. Johnson replied that the appropriation is good for the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year, which ends in June of 2015.

Trustee Whitehouse questioned if Connect Transit had funds in its current budget to conduct a community wide campaign that lead up to a mini summit. Mr. Johnson responded that he believed that a community wide campaign would start as a grass roots campaign and that staff was currently in place to promote awareness. Secretary McCurdy questioned if Trustee Whitehouse was in favor of a support campaign or a public relations campaign. Trustee Whitehouse responded that he was in support of a public relations campaign. Mr. Johnson stated that it was important to have qualitative data for any campaign. The process was politically multi-faceted. Many use public transportation but everyone needs it. It was equally important to quantify why it is needed.

Trustee Whitehouse questioned if the EDC would partner with Connect Transit to mine quantitative data. Mr. Johnson replied that Connect Transit staff could approach the EDC about conducting the research. Secretary McCurdy stated that the data would help the community and would be complimentary to the existing Comprehensive Operational Analysis. Chairperson Buchanan summarized that a grass roots campaign would benefit from the information received from a quantitative data research analysis.

Secretary McCurdy and Chairperson Buchanan discussed additional local leader ride-alongs. City of Bloomington Mayor Terri Renner and Town of Normal Mayor Chris Koos were prepared to ride with Connect Transit Board and staff on Connect Transit buses.

Mr. Johnson noted that a communication had just been received that U.S. Congressman Rodney Davis would be holding a press conference at the Town of Normal Uptown Station on May 14, at 2:30 p.m. Congressman Davis would be announcing his support for and introduction of proposed legislation regarding how Federal transportation dollars were spent. Connect Transit Board and Staff was invited to attend.

Trustee Whitehouse stated that Congressman Davis had also previously committed to visiting Connect Transit in June. He would notify the Board and Staff when a date had been selected.

Chairperson Judy Buchanan directed General Manager Andrew Johnson to contact the EDC regarding conducting a quantitative data study. A possible recommendation would be forwarded to the Board in the future if a contract or expenditures were expected as a result of the collaboration with the EDC.

Secretary Mike McCurdy left the meeting at 4:59 p.m.

Mr. Johnson stated that he would be inviting the Bloomington City Council members to schedule ride-alongs.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Time: 5:08 p.m.

Mike McCurdy, Secretary