



ConnectOne Bancorp (CNOB)

Updated December 12th, 2024 by Nikolaos Sismanis

Key Metrics

Current Price:	\$26	5 Year CAGR Estimate:	9.8%	Market Cap:	\$1.01 B
Fair Value Price:	\$27	5 Year Growth Estimate:	7.0%	Ex-Dividend Date:	02/14/2025 ¹
% Fair Value:	98%	5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:	0.4%	Dividend Payment Date:	03/03/2025
Dividend Yield:	2.7%	5 Year Price Target	\$38	Years Of Dividend Growth:	6
Dividend Risk Score:	D	Retirement Suitability Score:	D	Rating:	Hold

Overview & Current Events

ConnectOne Bancorp is a modern financial services company operating primarily through its subsidiary, ConnectOne Bank, which serves small to mid-sized businesses and individuals in the New York metropolitan area and South Florida. The bank has placed strong focus on efficiency and emphasizes personalized client service and a range of products, like deposits, loans, and cash management services. It generally operates with a "branch-lite" model backed by technology. Still, its network includes branches in New Jersey, New York City, Long Island, and the Hudson Valley, with a business hub in West Palm Beach. At the end of its most recent quarter, the bank had about \$7.6 billion in deposits. It currently trades at a market cap of \$1.01 billion.

On October 24th, 2024, ConnectOne Bancorp reported its Q3 results for the period ending September 30th, 2024. For the quarter, net income was \$15.7 million, down from \$19.9 million last year. This result included \$0.7 million in merger and restructuring pre-tax expenses. EPS came in at \$0.41 compared to \$0.51 last year. Return on average assets was 0.70% versus 0.88% in Q3 2023. We believe the bank has an EPS power of \$2.23, which we have included in our estimates. Still, GAAP EPS should be close to \$1.71 this year.

Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
EPS	\$0.80	\$1.37	\$1.02	\$1.35	\$1.87	\$2.08	\$1.80	\$3.24	\$3.03	\$2.08	\$1.71	\$3.13
DPS	\$0.30	\$0.30	\$0.30	\$0.30	\$0.30	\$0.36	\$0.36	\$0.48	\$0.62	\$0.68	\$0.72	\$1.01
Shares²	23.0	29.9	30.4	31.9	32.1	35.2	39.5	39.6	39.3	38.8	38.3	40.0

ConnectOne Bancorp's EPS has fluctuated notably over the past decade, highlighting the various economic cycles, and interest rate dynamics. The acquisition of Union Center National Bank in 2015 significantly expanded the bank's scale and customer base, contributing to a rise in EPS to \$1.37. This acquisition also spread revenue streams and reinforced its position in key New Jersey markets, despite integration costs. In 2016, EPS fell to \$1.02 due to compressed net interest margins due to a low-interest-rate environment, as well as continued integration expenses from prior acquisitions. Still, steady organic growth and improved efficiencies drove EPS back up to \$1.35 in 2017. In 2018, EPS increased to \$1.87, buoyed by strong loan growth, disciplined expense management, and the benefits of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which reduced the corporate tax rate.

The acquisition of Bancorp of New Jersey in 2019 further solidified the bank's footprint in northern New Jersey, boosting EPS to \$2.08. This acquisition integrated smoothly and added new markets to the bank's footprint, supporting both loan and deposit growth. However, in 2020, EPS declined to \$1.80 as the COVID-19 pandemic created economic uncertainty, leading to increased provisions for loan losses and margin compression due to the Federal Reserve's rate cuts. A robust economic recovery in 2021 helped EPS rebound to \$3.24, supported by strong loan demand, lower credit loss provisions, and growth in fee-based income. The bank's cost discipline and its ability to capture opportunities in a favorable credit environment were key drivers of this performance. Still, in 2022, EPS declined to \$3.03 due to competitive pressures and

¹ Estimated dates based on past dividend dates.

² Share count is in millions.

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early signs of slowing loan growth due to rising economic uncertainty. By 2023, EPS fell to \$2.08 as higher interest rates and slowing economic activity pressured loan growth and increased funding costs. Moving forward, we believe the company can grow its EPS at rate of 7% per annum from our EPS power of \$2.23. We have applied the same growth rate expectation to the dividend, which the company has raised for six consecutive years.

Valuation Analysis

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Now	2029
Avg. P/E	22.1	14.0	17.9	16.8	13.4	10.6	10.4	7.5	9.5	10.1	11.8	12.0
Avg. Yld.	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.3%	1.2%	1.6%	1.9%	2.0%	2.2%	3.2%	2.7%	2.7%

ConnectOne Bancorp's valuation has hovered at levels that are more or less similar to those of its industry peers. Once earnings stabilized in 2015, the P/E compressed to 14.0 and fluctuated between 16.8 and 13.4 from 2016 to 2018 as tax reform and moderate growth balanced investor expectations. The ratio then declined to 10.6 in 2019 and 10.4 in 2020, as economic uncertainties, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, weighed on bank valuations despite solid results. performance. A sharp drop to 7.5 in 2021 was due to peak EPS driven by loan growth and lower provisions, compressing the multiple. The recovery in 2022 and 2023 indicates more normalized earnings and continued market confidence in the bank's growth potential. At roughly 12 times earnings today, we believe the stock is somewhat fairly valued.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

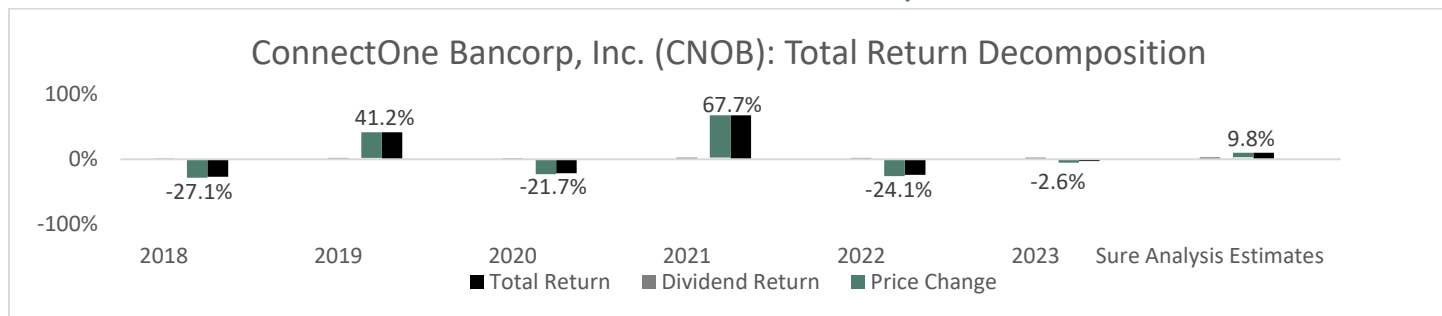
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
Payout	38%	22%	29%	22%	16%	17%	20%	15%	20%	33%	32%	32%

ConnectOne Bancorp's competitive advantages lie in its "branch-lite" model, leveraging technology to deliver efficient, personalized banking services while keeping operational costs low. This model, combined with its focus on serving small to mid-sized businesses, positions it well against larger competitors, which often lack the same localized focus. However, the bank operates in a highly competitive industry, facing pressure from both larger national players with resources and smaller regional banks with niche market penetration. Moreover, you should consider the banking industry's inherent susceptibility to economic downturns poses challenges, as recessions often lead to tighter credit conditions and higher loan losses. Nevertheless, it's worth noting that the bank remained profitable during the Great Financial Crisis while its earnings surge during the pandemic. Its common equity ratio and common equity Tier 1 risk-based ratio also stand at a healthy 11.71% and 12.79%, respectively, as well. We believe ConnectOne's dividend is safe today.

Final Thoughts & Recommendation

ConnectOne is another regional bank with decent prospects. Its earnings have been impacted by fluctuations in rates and slowing loan growth in recent years. However, its focus on small to mid-sized businesses positions it well for steady long-term value creation. We see annualized returns of 9.8% over the medium-term, driven by our growth estimate of 7%, the starting dividend yield of 2.7%, and a tiny tailwind from a valuation adjustment. Shares earn a hold rating.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Revenue	87	126	140	153	163	194	252	278	315	269
SG&A Exp.	24	34	39	44	48	57	70	68	86	99
D&A Exp.	2	3	4	4	4	4	7	6	6	6
Net Profit	19	41	31	43	60	73	71	130	125	87
Net Margin	21.4%	32.8%	22.2%	28.2%	37.1%	37.8%	28.2%	46.9%	39.7%	32.3%
Free Cash Flow	23	42	47	128	87	59	79	199	173	85
Income Tax	9	20	12	25	11	21	19	45	46	30

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Assets	3,449	4,016	4,426	5,108	5,462	6,174	7,547	8,129	9,645	9,856
Cash & Equivalents	127	201	200	150	172	201	304	266	268	243
Total Liab.	12	13	13	15	18	21	35	34	46	49
Accounts Payable	3,002	3,539	3,895	4,543	4,848	5,443	6,632	7,005	8,466	8,639
Long-Term Debt	501	726	531	725	729	629	629	621	1,011	1,013
Total Equity	435	466	531	565	614	731	915	1,013	1,068	1,106
LTD/E Ratio	1.12	1.52	1.00	1.28	1.19	0.86	0.69	0.55	0.86	0.83

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Return on Assets	0.7%	1.1%	0.7%	0.9%	1.1%	1.3%	1.0%	1.7%	1.4%	0.9%
Return on Equity	6.0%	8.9%	6.2%	7.9%	10.2%	10.9%	8.7%	12.8%	10.9%	7.3%
ROIC	3.0%	3.8%	2.7%	3.7%	4.6%	5.4%	4.9%	7.9%	6.4%	3.9%
Shares Out.	23.0	29.9	30.4	31.9	32.1	35.2	39.5	39.6	39.3	38.8
Revenue/Share	3.70	4.16	4.56	4.75	5.03	5.51	6.37	6.97	7.99	6.91
FCF/Share	0.99	1.40	1.53	3.99	2.69	1.68	1.99	5.00	4.39	2.19

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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