Agenda Item III

Date: October 27, 2026
To: Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council for Community Transportation
From: Staff
RE: CARS Steering Committee Recommendation

Background

On October 9th, 2026, the CARS Steering Committee met to interview two entities that provided Statements of Interest in response to the CARS RfQ. SMART Ride LLC, owned by Scott Symonds, is a locally operated non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) provider serving Southwestern New Hampshire and Southeastern Vermont. CTS is a transportation management and coordination organization operating transportation programs throughout the United States. Both entities were invited to interview in person with the Steering Committee. SMART Ride LLC interviewed in person, and CTS interviewed by Zoom.

After conducting the two interviews, the committee set aside one hour to deliberate and, in that time, unanimously passed a motion to recommend SMART Ride LLC as transportation provider and regional implementation partner for CARS-affiliated services. Furthermore, the Steering Committee supports the idea that MRCC should begin to work with CVTC and SMART Ride LLC immediately to take relevant steps toward operationalizing the program so that it is ready for pilot or launch when funding is secured.

The Steering Committee respectfully submits this recommendation based on scoring tabulation and thorough deliberation. SMART Ride LLC scored a total of 89 points out of 90, and CTS scored a total of 39 out of 90 in the scoring rubric used throughout the vetting process. The scoring can be found in the shared CARS Steering Committee Work Product folder located at:
https://orgswrpc.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/SWRPCFileShare/IQCEBeJ86mGyRr4c-CNuCTpIASGNGOIuoYO54d4KoGGSgO0?e=adtGNY.

The following discussion points were primary factors contributing to the recommendation:

Alignment with mission - MRCC's mission is to 'actively lead and engage the Monadnock Region in building an innovative, coordinated and resilient transportation network'. Its purpose, as defined by RSA 239-B:3 is to 'facilitate coordinated community transportation in their region — ensuring different providers (public transit, private shuttles, volunteer drivers, etc.) work together to meet local mobility needs.' This scope speaks of local collaboration at its core. The Committee sees that this opportunity to partner with an existing local entity aligns with the coordinated spirit of the project, and is a step toward the same system communicating and working together. Because buy local and hire local are strong values of the community, the Committee feels collaborating with a local small business will have will have better optics than engaging with an out-of-state corporation. By investing in a local business, which in turn invests in this community, the project can support and strengthen the local economy.

Reputation- SMART Ride LLC is a local, trusted organization with a reputation for an elevated level of service, reliability and proven scalability. Scott is on the board of Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Accreditation Commission (NEMTAC), and The Transportation Alliance (TTA), which is the nation's leading trade association representing private passenger transportation operators. His credibility is bolstered by the fact that he is also certified to deliver many professional transportation and safety training courses. CTS presently serves Medicaid members throughout the region, and riders report experiences that cause them to have unfavorable impressions of the organization. The Steering Committee feels these pre-existing impressions would make it challenging to encourage a positive reception of proposed partnership with CTS.

Level of Partnership – SMART Ride LLC is an MRCC member that has operated in this region over the past several years and has attained a strong understanding of the needs of community members, the goals of the overall NextGen project, and its intended impact to the region. The Committee anticipates that the implementation of the project with a fellow MRCC member will facilitate a simplified and natural transition. Further, seeking new sources of revenue for the CARS program will be an important aspect of ensuring the program's sustainability. Fundraising efforts will benefit from the partnership of the entity providing the service. SMART Ride LLC has expressed its willingness to work with MRCC in identifying funding sources, and Scott has been sharing grant opportunities regularly since joining MRCC. Conversely, CTS has clarified that its model proposes only one source of payment- direct invoicing of the sponsoring agency. The agency would be responsible for seeking the funding sources with which it pays the invoices.

Relationships- SMART Ride LLC has preexisting relationships with local medical providers and with other nonprofits in the region. These relationships will be an advantage, as trust is a key factor in efficiently implementing any new project. By providing the service with the same familiar set of employees and vehicles, passengers can trust the service and get to know their drivers over time. This consistent experience will contribute to the success of the program.

Proposed Operating format- The two entities propose very different approaches, represented below:

	SMART Ride LLC	**CTS**
General	Owner-operated (+) Direct influence over operations	Broker model (+) Larger network
Vehicles	Owned (+) MRCC could partner with the organization to ensure the fleet is sufficient for the needs of the region and jointly author grant applications	Contractor-Owned (-) No inventory list
Vehicle Inspection	Conducted annually by vendors in the Monadnock Region and overseen by Scott	Representatives will conduct spot checks on the contractor-owned vehicle fleet (-) Only a portion of vehicles are inspected each year
Drivers	Employees	Independent contractor pool
Background checking	Conducted annually	Contractors must pass background checks before joining the CTS network
Local Representation	Headquartered in Keene, NH	Two representatives on the ground in NH (-) Local representatives are not living in the Monadnock Region and are responsible for the entire State of NH
Rider Registration	Will seek ways to integrate its software (Bambi) with the systems of referring VDPs (+) A smooth handoff will not require passengers to re-register as users on a secondary platform	Eligibility list maintained by the program sponsor (-) It is unclear whether MRCC, the Mobility Manager, or Cheshire County have the capacity to maintain this list
Dispatch	Ride requests will be communicated directly from participating VDPs and a SMART Ride vehicle and employee will be deployed	Ride requests will be communicated directly from participating VDPs, CTS will enter ride into their driver portal, and a contracted vendor will be assigned to provide the service

Communication of changes and troubleshooting	On-call representative with after-hours call routing	Program manager or her designee will handle inquiries at a dedicated phone line (-) Customers will tend to call the driver, adding a layer of complexity and uncertainty when challenges arise (-) Reliability hinges on a single person at any given time
Feedback Loop	Call SMART Ride LLC main phone line	Call dedicated phone line and follow phone tree to speak with a service representative
Lead Time Required	Generally, 48 hours with on-demand availability in urgent situations	48 Business Hours (-) Hospital rides home are often on-demand trips, so satisfying this trip purpose would be difficult
Level of Assistance	Hand-to-Hand (+) Customers with mobility challenges, anxiety, or cognitive disabilities may require assistance unloading equipment and getting from the curb to their appointment, particularly at large facilities	Curb-to-Curb

The committee thanks MRCC for ensuring that this vetting process was inclusive and representatives of the entities most impacted by the proposed service.

Recommendation

Accept the recommendation of the CARS Steering Committee and determine the group's approach to supporting CVTC and SMART Ride LLC as they seek to design policies and workflows necessary for implementation.