

**Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council  
For Community Transportation**

**Minutes**

January 16, 2024

Present: Frank Dobisky, Chair, *Thomas Transportation*; Charlie Pratt (remote), Vice Chair, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS)*; Jennifer Robinson, Treasurer, *Cheshire County*; David Meader, *Citizen Member*; Erica Alusic-Bingham (remote), *Southern New Hampshire Services SNHS*; Ellen Avery (remote), *Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC)*, Alberta Bronson (remote), *The Lukas Community (TLC)*; Alice Cable (remote), *SAU 60*; Sallay Malay (remote), *Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC)*; *Cheshire County*; Lisa Steadman (remote), *Liberty Mutual*; Alison Welsh, (remote) *Cheshire County*.

SWRPC Staff Present: Terry Johnson, *Senior Project Manager*; Jason Cooper, *Planner*.

Guests: Teri Palmer (remote), *NH Statewide Mobility Manager*.

**I. Welcome**

Chair Dobisky called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and introductions were made.

**II. Approval of December 19, 2023 Minutes**

Approval of the December 19, 2023 minutes was deferred to the next meeting as a quorum was not physically present.

**III. Treasurer's Report / Transportation Equity Projects/Budget Discussion**

Terry Johnson said that the MRCC is halfway through its current fiscal year and that current NH Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS) funding for the MRCC expires at the end of May 2024. He noted that having a budget discussion will help the MRCC make financial decisions in advance of the expiration of these funds. He also described communications that Cheshire County received from the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) requesting the amount of potential excess funds that could be available for reallocation to state-level activities.

Jennifer Robinson described the current financial picture broadly. Terry Johnson provided supplementary information regarding the financial status of NHDOT Section 5310 funding. Chair Dobisky asked whether NHDHHS funding could be used to support anticipated budget shortages in Section 5310 line items. Teri Palmer replied that statewide policies may restrict such activities.

Sallay Malay shared that Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC) is anticipating that approximately \$10,000 in NHDHHS funding will remain unspent for their project by the end of May 2024. She asked whether other organizations may have a need for this funding. Teri Palmer provided insight on other regions with similar issues. She said some projects are more successful than anticipated and could use more funding, while others are spending less than was budgeted. These regions have opted to move funds between these projects. Teri Palmer reported that she has requested information on any restrictions on use of NHDHHS funds before they expire. She has not yet received specific guidance. Lisa Steadman suggested that KHKC consider signing an agreement to hold the \$10,000 in reserve for use after May 2024. Suzanne Bansley said that would not be permissible under the terms of the grant.

Terry Johnson recommended that an ad hoc committee be formed to discuss use of NHDHHS funds through May 2024. He suggested the committee meet for the purpose of identifying spending recommendations and

[https://orgswrpc.sharepoint.com/sites/SWRPCFileShare/Shared Documents/Data/Transportation/UPWP 2024-2025/500\\_TechAssistance/505\\_RCC/Meetings/MRCC/MRCC 2024-1-16/MRCC Minutes 2024-1-16 draft.docx](https://orgswrpc.sharepoint.com/sites/SWRPCFileShare/Shared Documents/Data/Transportation/UPWP 2024-2025/500_TechAssistance/505_RCC/Meetings/MRCC/MRCC 2024-1-16/MRCC Minutes 2024-1-16 draft.docx)  
reporting to the MRCC during its February 2024 meeting. Ellen Avery, Jennifer Robinson, Lisa Steadman, Sally Malay, Chair Dobisky, and Vice Chair Pratt volunteered to join the committee. Others also demonstrated interest, so Terry Johnson said that he would send a meeting invitation to the MRCC at large.

Erica Alusic-Bingham described how her program is unable to find transportation for some of her students and whether she could partner with KHKC to use the \$10,000 to help develop a new project. Lisa Steadman stated that she thought that children were eligible to ride a bus to wherever the parents said they should go. Erica Alusic-Bingham responded that the school bus cannot fit all the children that want to ride on the specific route. She asked Chair Dobisky if Thomas Transportation would be able to provide transportation for students to the program as needed and he responded that it would be something to explore. Erica Alusic-Bingham asked whether it would be appropriate for her to submit a proposal for a new transportation project to cover her program's need before June. Terry Johnson replied that it would be appropriate.

Alice Cable said that SAU 60 is experiencing serious challenges regarding the lack of drivers and asked whether there might be ability to use excess funding to support driver recruitment. Terry Johnson responded that there is precedent for this within the MRCC and statewide.

Ellen Avery suggested that Erica Alusic-Bingham explore whether Peterborough Recreation Department may have availability to provide transportation. Erica Alusic-Bingham responded that the agency does not have enough drivers. Vice Chair Pratt said that HCS does not have availability to help either. Teri Palmer shared that the lack of drivers is once again becoming a statewide concern that needs to be addressed.

Jennifer Robinson asked whether the MRCC holds the position that there will not be excess NHDHHS funding available to support state-level activities. There was consensus among MRCC members that the MRCC will find a use for the remaining NHDHHS funds. Jennifer Robinson and Terry Johnson concurred that this position will be considered when responding to NHDOT.

#### **IV. Partner Updates**

Vice Chair Pratt shared that HCS has launched its new City Express routes. He reported that overall ridership is up 15% since the new routes have been put into effect. He shared that ridership for the two routes is roughly equal now and that beforehand the figures were roughly 60/40. Vice Chair Pratt also reported that Shopping Shuttles ridership to Market Basket is up by 150%. Terry Johnson asked whether HCS has gotten feedback about the route changes. Vice Chair Pratt responded that he has heard only good things thus far.

Sally Malay reported that KHKC is experiencing challenges finding a second paid adult to accompany youth during transportation trips. Teri Palmer suggested using surplus KHKC funding to fulfill this requirement. Sally Malay asked Chair Dobisky whether Thomas Transportation may have capacity to fill this requirement. He said he will look into it.

Teri Palmer shared her excitement regarding new apartments on Route 12 near Keene. Terry Johnson reported that construction is nearing completion of an affordable housing development on Route 10 in West Swanzey. He said that Swanzey's proposal for improvements to Route 10 along the busy corridor where the apartments are located has been selected as the top priority project for Southwest NH in the 2025-2034 NH 10-Year Transportation Improvement Plan update process. The improvements will include infrastructure to slow traffic and make it safer for bicyclists and pedestrians to access businesses and housing located along the corridor, and to cross Route 10.

Ellen Avery provided an update on the IRS rules requiring volunteer drivers to pay taxes on mileage reimbursement amounts exceeding \$600 annually. She shared that, for the first time, CVTC will be issuing 1099 tax forms to 31 drivers. CVTC has already lost one driver over the issue. Ellen Avery shared that federal legislation has been drafted to address the issue and that there will likely be advocacy efforts to

show support for the legislation. Ellen Avery said that, of the 31 drivers that will receive 1099 forms, their taxable income ranges from \$600 to over \$5,000. She said that, so far, it appears that most CVTC drivers are willing to continue their role despite this new challenge.

Lisa Steadman shared that the Monadnock School District will be renegotiating its contract with their bus provider next year.

#### **V. Mobility Manager Update**

Terry Johnson provided an update regarding the State Coordinating Council (SCC) draft bylaws for Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC). The SCC considered comments from RCCs in its development of the final version which was adopted at its December 2023 meeting. The SCC now has distributed the approved bylaws to the RCCs. Each RCC will have until the end of March to adopt the bylaws as written or provide amendments to the SCC.

Terry Johnson provided an update on efforts to develop the statewide Keep NH Moving website. The website will provide a page for each RCC and a transportation navigator for users. Terry Johnson said that the current MRCC website will remain active until it is determined that the Keep NH Moving website meets Region 5 needs.

#### **VI. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

#### **VII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:29 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jason Cooper, Planner