Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council Community Transportation (MRCC)
Informal Notes from Tuesday, October 27, 2026, 9:00 a.m.
Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC)
37 Ashuelot Street, Keene, NH

Members Present: Erika Alusic-Bingham, Secretary, *Community Action Partnership of Hillsborough and Rockingham Counties;* Suzanne Bansley, *Cheshire County (alternate);* Kimberly Best, *SMART Ride (alternate);* Jolymn Paulsen, *Monadnock Family Services (MFS).*

Members Present Online: Allan Gillis, *Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC);* Sandra McDonald, *Citizen Member;* Kim Rumrill, *Keene Senior Center;* Scott Symonds, *SMART Ride LLC;* Alison Welsh, *Cheshire County Recovery Court.*

Members Absent: Charles Pratt, Chair, *Home Healthcare Hospice & Community Services*; Jamilla Pucciarello, Treasurer, *Cheshire County;* Michael (Mick) Blume, *Keene Family YMCA;* Alice Cable, *Fall Mountain Regional School District;* Beth Daniels, *Southwestern Community Services (SCS);* Sally Malay, *Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC);* David Meader, *Citizen Member;* Jim Yannizze, *Cedarcrest Center.*

Guests: Trisha Cheever-Wolfe, *Peterborough Planning Office;* Sam Dubuis, *Rogue Taxi;* Charles Lewis, *State Coordinating Council;* Teri Palmer, *Manchester Transit Authority (online);* Angelique Pandolph, *Easter Seals (online);* Candy Reed, *Sullivan County Mobility Manager (online);* Chris Weeks, *Monadnock Community Hospital (MCH).*

SWRPC Staff Present: Lisa Steadman, *Mobility Manager;* Chloe Gross, *Planner.*

I. Welcome and Introductions

No quorum was present, so these are informal notes rather than official minutes, and no official votes were taken. E. Alusic-Bingham, Secretary, facilitated the meeting in the absence of the Chair, C. Pratt, and called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Before beginning the agenda, the group reviewed attendance and determined that it did not have the six voting members present in person that are required for a quorum. A. Welsh asked whether Cheshire County had only one vote, since S. Bansley was also present. It was clarified that both could vote because they represent separate County departments.

Members discussed ways to reach a quorum. K. Rumrill said she did not have a car that day but could come if someone picked her up, and S. Dupuis offered to get her. A. Gillis noted that he was in Peterborough and would need 35 to 40 minutes to arrive. A. Welsh said she had a meeting at 10:00 a.m. and was not a good candidate to come in. It was noted that S. McDonald, who joined by phone, was not feeling well enough to attend in person. S. Symonds checked whether SMART Ride LLC had any vehicles available nearby. Members noted that bringing in one additional member would still leave the group short of six.

E. Alusic-Bingham said the situation highlighted the need for members to commit to attending in person. She acknowledged that Zoom has made participation easier but said that because MRCC is required to have a certain number of members in person, everyone needs to make that effort. She emphasized that her comment was not directed at any one person and that she has also attended virtually at times. She offered to give rides to anyone along her route from Antrim, noting that MRCC is a transportation group and should be able to solve this problem.

Members discussed whether the two items requiring a vote, the CARS Steering Committee recommendation and C. Weeks' nomination as a new member, were time sensitive. It was explained that without a quorum the group could share points of information but could not deliberate or vote under New Hampshire's open meeting law (RSA 91-A). Some members asked whether a roll call vote of in-person and online members could be taken now and confirmed by an in-person vote at a later meeting.

T. Palmer said that Region 5 is probably the only region that follows RSA 91-A to the letter and has long been the gold standard among the regions. She suggested that, given a unanimous decision, it might be acceptable to take votes from both online and in-person members so that the region's work could continue. A. Pandolph said that many RCCs take roll call votes when members are online, but that she was not certain whether they still require a quorum in the room.

E. Alusic-Bingham shared that another state commission she serves on recently changed its bylaws to allow virtual participation with cameras on, but that it still requires 35% of members in person, which for MRCC would be six people.

A member said they could not see a reason the CARS recommendation had to be decided immediately and that postponing C. Weeks' nomination until next month would not be a problem. E. Alusic-Bingham concluded that the votes could wait until next month, with the understanding that members need to attend in person at the next meeting, and that this would be recorded in the informal notes.

A. Gillis apologized and explained that he had intended to attend in person, but there was a medical emergency at his morning Rotary meeting, and someone had to be taken by ambulance. Introductions and the other online members' statements of why remote attendance was necessary were skipped because the group was behind schedule and no official minutes were being taken.

S. Symonds asked whether postponing the votes would prevent him, A. Gillis, L. Steadman, or others from continuing to work on the CARS project. He noted that there is a lot of planning to do before logistics can be put in place, and that this is challenging when the work must be added to an already-running system. It was noted in response that, although unlikely, any work done before the next meeting could be undone at that meeting, so there is some risk.

L. Steadman then read the bylaws provision on the Executive Committee (see item II-c). E. Alusic-Bingham proposed that the group move through the agenda and take a nonbinding sense of the room on each vote item, which the Executive Committee would use to inform an official vote outside the meeting. MRCC would then ratify the Executive Committee's decisions at the next meeting. She said she wanted to run each item as though a vote were being held so that the Executive Committee would have a clear picture of what members wanted. T. Palmer said it sounded like a great plan and noted that the Region 7 RCC also has an Executive Committee that reports to its members for a vote. A. Pandolph agreed and said she would have recommended taking a consensus at this meeting followed by an official vote.

II. MRCC Housekeeping

a. Officer Election

Consensus: All in favor of selecting Scott Symonds as Vice Chair. No discussion. Executive Committee will vote to approve when they meet. MRCC will ratify the Executive Committee vote at next MRCC meeting.

b. New Member Introduction and/or Nomination

Chris Weeks' nomination will be approved next month.

Consensus: All in favor of approving Chris Weeks as a new MRCC member. No discussion. Executive Committee will vote to approve when they meet. MRCC will ratify the Executive Committee vote at next MRCC meeting.

c. Ratify Actions of the Executive Committee

As discussed under item I, L. Steadman read the bylaws provision on the Executive Committee: *"The Executive Committee shall possess and may exercise all the powers and functions of the MRCC in the management and direction of the affairs of the MRCC in all cases in which specific direction shall not have been given by the MRCC. All actions of the Executive Committee shall be reported to the MRCC at its next meeting and ratification by the MRCC is required."* The group agreed to take a consensus on each vote item, have the Executive Committee vote on those items separately, and ratify the Executive Committee's votes at the next MRCC meeting.

L. Steadman shared that the only Executive Committee action since the last meeting that would need ratification was its direction that she inform S. Symonds of the CARS Steering Committee's recommendation. She said she would not have done so without guidance from the Executive Committee.

E. Alusic-Bingham recommended that S. Symonds attend Executive Committee meetings as a guest until his election as Vice Chair is ratified. It was noted that the Executive Committee currently has three members and that S. Symonds would be invited to its meetings.

III. CARS Steering Committee Recommendation

E. Alusic-Bingham noted that the CARS Steering Committee recommendation was included in the meeting packet as item III and invited Steering Committee members to comment. K. Rumrill said the Steering Committee followed a process that helped members understand the project as a whole and hear from the different vendors. C. Weeks said the process was well organized and that the rubrics and evaluations helped clarify what the committee was looking for and made the decision easy. He added that the decision was clear throughout, and that after S. Symonds left his interview, someone remarked that he had a great answer for every question.

L. Steadman said that interviewing CTS was also a positive experience, because it showed the committee how CTS's business model works. She said it may offer some insight into why Medicaid transportation has not been going well for some riders, and that this insight may help address that problem. A. Welsh said that, as someone who has tried to work with CTS over many years, she was very happy with the committee's choice. E. Alusic-Bingham thanked the committee and said the written recommendation was very thorough and helpful for anyone who was not in the room.

S. Bansley asked what the partnership would be for, specifically. L. Steadman explained that it is an agreement to begin offering CARS-affiliated rides. Anyone whose trip falls into the proposed trip categories could receive a ride from the CARS provider after CVTC or another volunteer driver program is unable to fulfill it. The backup ride would be provided at an agreed-upon rate. S. Bansley asked who would fund it. L. Steadman responded that there is no solidified funding source yet, and that the use of Section 5310 ADA funds for the program would be discussed later in the agenda.

S. Bansley commented that a vote at this time would not help with procurement later. Under a federal grant, any contract must go through a fair and open competition that begins after the funder gives notice to proceed. The program therefore could not be covered with Section 5310 funds without that process, even with this vote. She explained that Cheshire County could not directly sponsor the program under Section 5310 because SMART Ride LLC is a for-profit company. It would have to go through a nonprofit by way of a service provider agreement, which would also require a fair and open competition. She noted that the outcome could still be SMART Ride LLC, but the process would be required regardless.

S. Bansley added that she had planned to share under Finances that the $1,000 ADA line could be redefined to allow CVTC to begin handing off additional rides to SMART Ride LLC or another vendor. That process would be more relaxed because it would use service rate agreements. Service rates would need to be collected from at least three parties, with at least two agreements, and SMART Ride LLC could be one of them. She said she would need clarification on the requirements, possibly from T. Palmer, and that the vote on the recommendation would have no relationship to those service rate agreements.

A member asked whether the procurement process would be unnecessary if the CARS program were funded by something other than Section 5310, Section 5311, or other Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds. S. Bansley said that federal funds of any type would require it, and that private funding generally would not. However, because Cheshire County is a local government, it is required to use fair and open competition regardless of the funding source. She said the path of least resistance would be private funding with no municipal sponsorship.

T. Palmer said she thought the group had agreed not to vote that day, and it was clarified that the group was not voting. S. Symonds said he was curious why this had not come up in the previous six months. T. Palmer asked whether there was a grant for the CARS program. L. Steadman responded that there is no funding source other than the small amount of Section 5310 funds that was theoretically moved over. A member said the recommendation might be premature given what is known about funding.

E. Alusic-Bingham said the Steering Committee's clear recommendation means its work is not wasted and the group knows where it wants to go once funding is known, but that the process cannot be a no-compete and other providers must be able to bid. She said a meeting should be held among the SWRPC transit team, S. Symonds, S. Bansley, and CVTC, to clarify the guidelines and parameters and find a path forward. It was confirmed that K. Rumrill and S. Symonds would be included in that conversation. The group agreed to hold the CARS Steering Committee recommendation until the next meeting.

IV. State-Level Updates

a. State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2027 FTA Section 5310 Capital Program Grants

L. Steadman introduced the topic by referencing a memo included in the meeting packet, which outlined that the solicitation was issued October 17, applications are due by 3:00 p.m. on January 21, 2027, and the funding pot is $441,358. She explained that the FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities capital program funds physical items, such as vehicles and bus stops, and that MRCC-affiliated providers may apply. MRCC most recently supported an application from Monadnock Adult Care Center (MACC) for two 12-passenger small cutaway buses in March. MACC is a program of Monadnock Family Services and the two buses were valued at $270,000. L. Steadman said she had asked the program manager for an update on when the vehicles would be delivered. J. Paulsen said she was also waiting for more information. L. Steadman noted that items funded through the Section 5310 capital program typically take over a year to be delivered.

L. Steadman said that any organization affiliated with MRCC that wishes to apply is welcome to do so, such as Cedarcrest Center or SMART Ride LLC through CVTC. MRCC would need to review the application and provide a letter of support before it could move forward. Letter-of-support approval may take two meetings: November and December or possibly January with advance approval. A member asked whether these were the same kinds of projects that S. Malay used to apply for. It was clarified that those projects were funded with COVID-era money through the NH Department of Health and Human Services.

It was reported that Fred Butler has been promoted within the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). T. Palmer said he has started his new position and is still trying to keep up with his other work. She noted that the NHDOT team often wears two or three hats and that he would attend the upcoming Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) meeting. She said his former position is posted on the NHDOT website and is not affected by the hiring freeze, and she encouraged members to share it with anyone interested in working in Concord.

When asked about the statewide mobility manager search, T. Palmer said she had asked Fred Butler about it a week or two earlier. The search remains with RLS, and he was hoping to get an update soon. L. Steadman explained that RLS is the firm contracted to provide statewide mobility management and other transportation-related services in New Hampshire, including reviewing Title VI compliance plans. T. Palmer explained that the name comes from the initials of the firm's founder.

V. Old Business

a. Greater Keene Service Update

Because J.B. Mack was absent, L. Steadman gave the update. She reported that the Greater Keene Service transition partners, HCS, SWRPC, and Southwestern Community Services (SCS), have been meeting online every week on Mondays, and bring in guests as needed. Recently they met with the project's transit consultant, Steadman Hill Consulting, and with representatives of a marketing firm, Communicators Group. Together they developed a plan for a press release, which will be issued in about a week and includes quotes from HCS, SCS, and SWRPC. Bus drivers will also hand out a slip of paper to riders that begins to explain the upcoming changes. L. Steadman said things feel on track and that the partners are starting to build a timeline of all the factors to consider in the transition.

S. McDonald asked for more clarification on what private funding for the Greater Keene Service would look like and what steps would be needed to secure it. L. Steadman responded that the current plan is to use the existing FTA Section 5310 and 5311 budgets and Title IIIB funds from the Bureau of Aging and Adult Services, which together are enough to transition the service exactly as it exists now. Additional funding sources will be needed to expand into microtransit. The partners have looked at congressionally directed spending and other grant programs, but until now there had been no entity able to apply. SCS will now be the applicant for many of those funding sources in the next round.

b. Mobility Manager Work Plan

L. Steadman displayed the Mobility Manager Work Plan on screen for information. She explained that it reflects the input members gave at the September meeting, in the format members requested. There were no questions. It was briefly asked whether a vote was needed, and it was confirmed that the work plan had already been approved at the September meeting.

c. Community Transportation Month Activity

L. Steadman welcomed everyone to Community Transportation Month and noted that the group was in week four, Volunteer Driver Week. She reported the following activities: she distributed "NH Celebrates Community Transportation" buttons to stakeholder organizations; she brought cider and donuts to HCS and SMART Ride LLC for Staff Appreciation Week; HCS held a team dinner during Staff Appreciation Week; and she facilitated a statewide lunch & learn entitled "Community Transportation Month: Here's What You Should Know!" through the New Hampshire Transportation Equity Task Force. SWRPC highlighted its Expand Transportation Options recommendation in its regional plan at its Fall Meeting, which led to good conversation. SWRPC, the Mobility Manager, and HCS have been posting on social media, and HCS advertised and offered free rides during Passenger Appreciation Week. CVTC is planning to host appreciation breakfasts, and K. Rumrill explained that The Hub 50+ is planning an in-house appreciation for its volunteer drivers.

L. Steadman reported that Community Transportation Month signs approved at the September meeting were not ordered. The Executive Committee had weighed in on this between meetings. Because the signs would have been purchased with federal funds, they came with conditions, including a statement at the bottom that the program is an accessible ride service. That disclosure did not make sense on a sign thanking volunteer drivers, staff, or transit professionals. After a delay and her absence for a grant workshop, there was not enough time to order them. She said there is pre-approval to spend $250 on signs for the next appreciation event once the group decides what they should look like.

S. Bansley clarified that a new request would need a separate approval. She explained that no approval had actually been given: the funder had requested more information and had questions, and that information was not received in time. Any approval would have applied only to those specific signs, for that purpose, at that time. Any marketing materials paid for with federal funds must be approved in advance every time they are used, even if they are the same as before, because the required disclosures and logos vary case by case. She added that Cheshire County sends nearly all of its marketing materials to the funder for approval, because it has been reprimanded about three times for marketing mishaps. Members indicated that they understood that the group would need to reapply purchase signs next year.

S. Symonds asked what would happen if a private company donated the funds. It was noted in response that this would be fine. Private donors can set their own conditions on how the funds are used, and the signs could carry the donor's logo without the accessible-service tagline. It was noted that the amount in question was $250.

VI. New Business

a. Associate-Level Membership

L. Steadman explained that MRCC members can consider an associate-level membership, which may serve people who want to be involved in MRCC, attend meetings, and be copied on discussions, but who cannot commit to being in-person voting members. Associate members would be added to a mailing list and given behind-the-scenes access, but would not vote or count toward quorum. This would make it easier for MRCC to reach a quorum in the room. For example, if five of 16 members were associates, the number required in person would be lower. She said the idea came from J.B. Mack, who was concerned that as MRCC continues to attract interested people, more of them may be unable to attend in person, making quorum increasingly difficult to reach. She added that some people join for a specific topic and later find it harder to make time for meetings. She noted that the Executive Committee has not yet discussed the idea.

C. Weeks asked whether current members could be moved from regular membership to associate membership, which would make the 35% in-person requirement easier to achieve. L. Steadman responded that they could, if they wanted to be moved. E. Alusic-Bingham asked whether a written description could be prepared so that members have more information and time to consider it. L. Steadman agreed that it could be included at the next meeting. E. Alusic-Bingham said the idea was worth the additional time, because some people find it hard to get to meetings but do not want to stop participating or prevent the group from voting.

VII. Finances

J. Pucciarello was not present to give the financial update. S. Bansley said she did not have anything prepared but could pull up the information and provide a summary, so the item was moved to after Partner Updates. S. Bansley later

reviewed the numbers for the group. (See also S. Bansley's comments on redefining the $1,000 ADA line under item III.)

IX. Partner Updates

This item was taken before the Mobility Manager Update. K. Rumrill reported that the Hub 50+ holds a monthly social. The November 19 social will include a pie tasting. Homemade pies can be ordered by November 13. Most pies, such as apple, pumpkin, and blueberry, are $20, and pecan is $22. All pie pickups will be on November 19 at 1:30 p.m. She said the event gives volunteers a chance to get together with the center's members. L. Steadman asked K. Rumrill to send the information so that it can be shared with the group. K. Rumrill agreed.

T. Cheever-Wolfe introduced herself as the Energy and Community Planner for the Town of Peterborough. She has a background in transportation planning, and transportation came up as a top community need during the recent master plan process. She noted that Peterborough is fortunate to have SMART Ride LLC and SweenFleetz in town, and that she hopes to continue building relationships and stay informed about what is happening in the region. She confirmed that she is interested in becoming a member.

S. Dupuis introduced herself as the owner of Rogue Taxi. She said she has worked in and out of the taxi industry for years. Recently she has been helping school bus companies get drivers on the road by providing training necessary for compliance, including helping an HCS driver obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL). She will also be helping a provider in Vermont get more drivers licensed, and she is interested in seeing what MRCC does and is interested in helping out.

K. Best introduced herself as Deputy Director of Operations at SMART Ride LLC.

VIII. Mobility Manager Update

This item was taken after Partner Updates. L. Steadman reported that she has added several listings to the Keep NH Moving website: Rogue Taxi, The Hub 50+ Cheshire Village at Home, with K. Rumrill's help, A&O Transportation, which provides large buses for special events, and Safe Travel Transportation, whose owner visited MRCC last December. She has also been trying to get Future In Sight, which provides transportation for people with low vision, to appear under the Monadnock Region. It is a statewide service but currently appears under only one region.

L. Steadman reported that in September she attended 29 meetings and three outreach events. She gave presentations to the Keene Lions Club, the Keene Eastside Neighbors group, and the SWRPC Board of Directors. The presentations updated these groups on the two arms of the NextGen Transit Project, CARS and the Greater Keene Service.

L. Steadman reported on a transit grants training she attended in Boston. She learned grant-writing skills and new data sources, and learned about funds set aside for tribal governments and potential partnerships with the tribal governments in New Hampshire. She met Sandy Thorpe of Rural Community Transportation in northern Vermont, which operates microtransit, and learned how its system tracks vehicles and assigns drivers, routes, and passengers. She also met the two people responsible for the Community Rides grant program, who invited participants to submit applications and receive thorough feedback. She said this would be good practice, because detailed feedback from funders is often hard to obtain.

L. Steadman also met Robin Phillips of the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP). R. Phillips invited the Transportation Equity Task Force, which L. Steadman works with, to review RTAP's *Problem Passengers* publication, which also covers how to interact with people with disabilities. L. Steadman noted that people with disabilities are not necessarily problem passengers but may present more complex situations, which employees may prepare for. RTAP will ask the task force for feedback when the publication is due for an update. L. Steadman then began to share a story about an Antrim resident who had called her. He had been referred by Charlie as result of the new mobility manager referral process approved by MRCC in the late summer. The resident was a wheelchair user who needed to move from one home to another. The Antrim Fire Department agreed to help.

X. Minutes of September 22, 2026 Meeting

Minutes of September meeting will be approved next month.

XI. Next Meeting: November 24, 2026

The next MRCC meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 24, 2026**, at 9:00 a.m. which is the week of Thanksgiving. L. Steadman asked whether the group would like to move the November meeting to November 17, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

Consensus: All in favor of moving next MRCC meeting to November 17, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. No absences to note yet.

XIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 a.m.