



Greater Nashua Regional Coordination Council (RC77)

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 22, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

Attendees:

In Person:

George Barrett, Opportunity Networks
Sara Cesar, Greater Nashua United Way
Janet Langdell, SVTC Mobility & Planning Manager
Max Morelli, Opportunity Networks
Rocky Morelli, Opportunity Networks
Teri Palmer, Mobility Manager, State of NH, RLS Associates
Don Paré, Gate City Bike Co-op
Dawn Schneider, Nashua ServiceLink

Remote:

Janice Pack, Town of Wilton
Kerry Miller, Nashua Transit System
Nonyem Egbuonu, Emmaus Institute

NRPC Staff:

Donna Marceau, Mobility Manager
Kathy Kirby, Administrative/Communications Assistant
Matt Waitkins, MPO Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Marceau opened the meeting at 10:03 a.m.

2. Introductions and Community Updates

Introductions occurred with in-person and remote participants.

3. Review/Approve January 25, 2024, edited meeting minutes.

Marceau asked for any corrections to the January 25, 2024, meeting minutes.
Postponed until the March meeting pending a quorum.

4. Opportunity Networks Proposal – *Action Item*

Rocky Morelli of Opportunity Networks is looking for 5310 Capital funds for a van. Their clients are adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities who typically need a supervisor and another caregiver to meet their needs. They provide day services only. Many clients live with their families or in residential homes. Opportunity Networks schedules Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. with plans customized to all clients to help them become independent and develop autonomy, participate in their communities. They promote employment (part-time, supported, or whatever meets their needs), and they work with the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation to support individuals and employers. They work with the Bureau of Developmental Services for Medicaid

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funding. They are a community participation service. NH state institutions were closed in the late 1980's and residents were sent back into their communities. Workshops opened in those communities. Given the unique needs and interests of their clients, Opportunity Networks gives health and wellness education to their clients. Additionally, they partner with community locations (Crossfit, Zumba, music schools, and hiking (partnered with the Nature Conservancy for trail projects). They help clients with communication, nutrition, technology skills, and many other things depending upon clients' needs. They have a Nashua office (Networks); and Amherst (Souhegan Valley Resources) – these were merged and called Opportunity Networks (ON). The third office in Bedford is open. There is a long waitlist for their services. The workforce shortage has helped place more of their clients. Hoping to service 20+ more families with vocational services. We go active in the community. It is required by Medicaid that our clients work within the community. We have staff use their own vehicles. We must have the resources of handicapped transportation. We go out in small groups, mostly. Our state funding allows for us to pay mileage and maintenance on vehicles, but does not allow for capital purchases or depreciate equipment. When the vehicles fully depreciate, we must find the funds. If we want to be good at what we do, this is the most important part of our services. We drive into the western communities of the region (Wilton, Lyndeborough, etc.). We have three handicap-accessible vans. But one of them is at the point where it should no longer be in service. We are looking to add another van. We have not come to this group (RCC7) in the past. The available transportation services are not sufficient to meet the needs of our client as door-to-door pickup and outlying areas cannot be reached by existing transit at this time.

Langdell stated that part of the challenge of SVTC when we looked at getting vehicles was astronomical in costs. We needed handicapped service vehicles. We partnered with Nashua Transit Service which had the capacity to extend their paratransit service out to folks in our area so that we could get something going in our area. Flexibility is what is needed. Originally, we were just providing emergency medical service. We have expanded since then. We have given rides to people going to ON. We gave a ride to an ON client in Mt Vernon who needed to get to and from work. We were able to get him to and from work, but it is an internal, during-the-day, flexibility that is needed to get this going. SVTC and all transit providers have limited budgets. The email you provided shows that purchasing services from a subcontractor would be more expensive than providing the services in-house.

Palmer asked if Rocky Morelli was familiar with the folks at Able New Hampshire. Rocky Morelli said yes. Palmer stated she would contact Lisa and send an invitation to ON because the problem you are facing is a statewide problem. Barrett stated that we need to bring services and support to some of our more independent clients because all of them do not drive. Palmer stated the 5310 funding is closed for this year. We would like to get you for the next capital round. There are things such as a Title VI Plan. Langdell said that Fred stated in the original meeting that they could apply by 2/14/24 for 5310 funds. Rocky Morelli believes they did, and Palmer will follow up with Fred just to make sure. Palmer stated that they have one transit agency that is waiting for 5 buses. If you are looking for a transit van or wheelchair minivan for small groups, that would be easier to acquire funds as opposed to a bus. Rocky Morelli stated that ON wants a wheelchair-accessible minivan. ON has a converted passenger van and two converted Dodge Caravans with ramps; not power lifts. They like the smaller ones.

Rocky Morelli stated that we came to make (to this meeting) you all aware of our needs and hope that by advocating for precedents, you can get a sense of what is needed. Langdell said we need to look at how we coordinate transportation – are we thinking out of the box? Are we making alternate connections? We are thinking about providing more flexibility – instead of one agency

getting funding for their clients only. ON has presented the best case for why this is the best alternative for this population. We just do not have those in our region. We have room for the development and growth of alternative models. Palmer to Langdell – it looks like you already had that conversation with Fred – how can we coordinate your efforts with our efforts? I know NTS cannot do everything. Langdell stated yes, this is great, but questioned if there is a possibility of somehow working with Gateways and The PLUS Company because they have voiced concerns about transportation as well. The PLUS Company has vehicles, but they do not have the staff. Rocky Morelli stated that they (The PLUS Company) are in Nashua, but they probably service people from some of the outlying communities. Barrett asked Langdell about the application process - what are the steps after that? Langdell – they (application paperwork) are reviewed by NHDOT. Once they start reviewing them, they will ask you for information. Palmer - Once it is through the GNC and is approved, they will send you a reward letter. Rocky Morelli stated our service population is growing, especially autism services. We would like to get out ahead of it. The results are astonishing. Families can only do so much so having a program for them is important. Langdell – I recollect that for the last 20 years, NRPC has only requested funding for Southern NH Services for their vehicle replacement, and Nashua Transit for smaller vans to service the rural areas. NTS got the funding. We are not going after this funding regularly for this region. It would be nice to get a piece of the funding to help these people in that part of Region 7. Palmer stated your region is allotted \$100,000 of 5310 capital and if it is not used it will end up flowing into regular operational funding. 5310 funding is for older adults and disabilities. 5310 operational funding is 2-year funding – operational funding for services. 5339 – is for capital assets. It is broader in what it can be used for, i.e., shelter, software, buildings, and signs. Miller thanked Langdell for all the information she provided. Langdell – we do not have a quorum, but we can send a letter of consensus if that is the way this group feels. Palmer stated that you mentioned you (ON) have a third office (in Bedford) and we could include them as well. Langdell stated the vehicle is primarily going to be used in our region. Palmer stated future expansion possibilities exist. She has been working with Reuben Hampton who works with Medicaid funding for transportation to service clients like yours and we are advocating for more Medicaid funding. There was an increase in Medicaid funding but none of it went to transportation. Tom O’Connor is advocating for that. Even 2-3% can be put toward transportation? Rocky Morelli stated that Medicaid clients have an active lifestyle by using our services, requiring more Medicaid funding, keeping their clients out of the medical system, and using more healthcare facilities which are far more expensive services. Clients accessing our services also enhance the whole community, i.e., build relationships, and enhance connections. Langdell – there is an incredible difference in hourly costs between operating transit services and what ON does concerning providing transportation services. Rocky Morelli added it is more efficient and still less costly even when you factor in the cost of paying drivers. Langdell stated It is far less than half.

Marceau asked for consensus; who is on board. Everyone in attendance is on board providing 100% consensus among the meeting attendees. Next steps: Langdell will draft the letter (Waitkins will be on it as well). Langdell thanked Marceau for the draft copy. A copy will be sent to ON, and then be sent up to Fred. Next month’s RCC7 agenda will have an approval of the letter. Donna thanked the ON reps for what they do for their clients and the community. Rocky Morelli stated he would be interested in joining RCC7 meetings in the future. Don asked for Opportunity Networks’ address: 116 Parameter Rd, Units A-D, Manchester. Phone: (603) 889-0796. The onsite manager is Nick.

5. Vote to Adopt the Draft RCC by-laws (attached) – Action Item

Since there is no quorum at this meeting, Langdell asked if anyone looked at the bylaws, and had any more questions/concerns. Waitkins stated he did not have any concerns. There is enough

flexibility in the bylaws. No one who is not at this meeting sent in any correspondence expressing concerns. Waitkins stated he spoke with someone who is not at this meeting, and they were made aware that we were going to talk about the bylaws today. Palmer stated the regions are saying these are the bylaws. These are what the SCC approved. Amendments can be made “down the line” at other meetings and the SCC is informed about the region’s amendment, putting it in their bylaws. Palmer questioned if there is a true approval process. Langdell stated they removed the word “approval” from the bylaws, the entire process is so brand new. Palmer stated there is a region that is submitting amendments for the March SCC meeting so we will all learn together (what is the amendment process). Waitkins - amendments can be made at meetings according to Article 10. SCC does not have to approve them now. Any RCC can amend its bylaws at any time. Langdell stated that we need to do a lot of outreaches to get enough people here to have a quorum. There is a memorandum of understanding (in the packet), a contact sheet, and a conflict-of-interest form so we will have those prepared and ready for the next meeting. Palmer stated there should be a spot for alternatives (on the MOU). Langdell stated we will be working on it. Langdell and Marceau will coordinate for next month.

6. Regional Transportation Provider Updates

Kerry Miller, NTS – went to Hunt Community and gave an overview of services. Age 60+ can ride the city bus for free (they liked that). Conducted a travel training session with a ride on the bus; another is going to be scheduled for the spring. We held an hour-long event at Nashua Public Library for new city residents on how to use the city bus system. Travel training with a client from the PLUS Company. The client liked it and will be using the city bus. Same with Steppingstones clients - one of the best travel training sessions I ever had. Our communication person did a logo rebrand, so we have a new logo now. Donna (Marceau) and I collaborated on a write-up for the Nashua-based Continuum of Care. They have a toolkit that lists different organizations for getting services, and we are included, so I hope they utilize and reach out to us. Langdell requested a small line item stating that services are available to Hudson and Merrimack residents. Marceau stated if you (Langdell) want to send me something else, we will send it in. Egbuonu stated she was impressed with what was just described. She had the seniors pass when she was more mobile. Miller stated that she is signed up for paratransit service and a letter was sent to her. If you did not receive it, Miller stated she would send it again. Egbuonu appreciates it.

Janet Langdell, SVTC – In January we hit our 45,000 rides, a young woman who lost her ability to drive due to health problems is very appreciative of our services. We received two unsolicited grants recently.

Don Paré, Gate City Bike Co-op – Marceau, John Burkitt and I had a call with RISE which provides over 100 courses to seniors. RISE asked us to give a remote-based bicyclist workshop. It went very well – there was a sense of empowerment that increased among the attendees. Since the move outside the center of town, we are not holding on to our bikes. We have built, and continue to build, different connections abroad and swap bikes – they need our bikes, and we need their bikes. We are setting up three bike racks at the transitional housing at Spring Street, the Library, and the St. Patick’s gym.

7. SCC Update

Marceau went to the meeting on February 1. They are focused on setting objectives, governance,

comprehensive review, and the annual report, that many of us present are working on. Everyone is working hard on the Keep NH Moving website. There will be a new chair at some point as the current chair is stepping down. Palmer stated we had the public hearing for the 10-year plan. \$2.2 million was added by the governor for community transportation. Commissioner Cass stated the need for more transit funding, especially mobility management. None of the representatives asked what mobility management was. We went to lunch and the public hearing was very well attended. I was second to speak and defined mobility management and then the questions started. The chair asked for written testimony and he said that is a particularly good sign. We are looking for an SCC Chair (as Donna stated), but we are also looking for members (as allowed by the RSA), i.e., from DOE, etc. Please bring it to my attention. We are working on the annual report; and sending a draft to the SCC leadership team. We need to get the annual report done to move on to other things. The NHTA annual meeting is in June. The agenda will be amazing. Mobility managers had their meeting. Keep NH Moving website will be live in mid-March. March 18 meeting – we will have a special guest, Judy Shandley will be joining us from the National Center of Mobility Management.

8. Regional Mobility Manager Update

Marceau met with folks from the Conservation Law Foundation and GSOP. She visited the Hunt Community with Palmer and RISE with Don. There have been 13 requests for information, which is an increase. We had 5-day-per-week transport back and forth to Boston from a cancer patient in Milford. There are a lot of people in our region who need transportation to Boston hospitals but cannot meet every patient's needs which are dictated by hospital restrictions as well as service restrictions. I will be at the United Way event next Friday in Milford. I attended Empty Bowls and at the Noche Fuego event here at 30 Temple Street, I talked to someone from Enterprise Bank who is funding social services.

9. Update of NTS and LCTP Plans

Waitkins stated gave an update to the long-term transportation plan and the NTS comprehensive plan update is happening concurrently. We are developing a steering committee, which met. The purpose of the meeting was to get information from NTS used to model the future ridership. NRPC staff (Ryan) updated the demographic data from the most recent US census information. There is a Steering Committee tomorrow – public outreach is the focus. We surveyed the public, passengers, and other stakeholders in the past. Waitkins will send information about the Steering Committee to Cesar and Schneider. The meeting is tomorrow here at NRPC at 9:00 a.m. The locally coordinated plan must be adopted by the RCC and the MPO – the goal is to be adopted by the March 2025 Commission meeting.

10. Other Transportation Issues or Concerns

Sara Cesar, United Way, is looking forward to Langdell and Marceau being at the March 1 talk at the Milford Library about transportation. We are working on Digital Equity – we are in the research phase – looking at the digital needs within the region of the underserved population – do they have broadband, know how to use it, etc. If you know of any other groups that are focused on digital equity, let us know, and we will reach out to them to join us.

Dawn Schnieder, Nashua ServiceLink, stated she could use some more assistance with transportation to Boston for medical appointments. Dawn stated she would reach out to Marceau

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to discuss caller needs. It is a common assumption that Medicare does not cover any transportation (however, Medicare Advantage does) and the funds to pay for the transportation is an issue.

Marceau asked the attendees if they had any other comments and there were none.

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 11:45 a.m. All in approval.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 28, 2024

Respectfully submitted by Kathy Kirby, Administrative & Communications Assistant