



Greater Nashua Regional Coordination Council (RCC7)

APPROVED Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 26, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

Attendees:

In Person:

Janet Langdell, Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative
Carol Brooks, Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative
Jessica Blanchette, Bridges
Sun Puhle, H.E.A.R.T.S.
James Wilkie, Caregivers
Rocky Morelli, Opportunity Networks
Angelique Pandolph, Easter Seals NH
Margaret Loret, City of Nashua resident
Camille Correa, Nashua Transit System
Kerry Miller, Nashua Transit System
Lori Lorman, Nashua Transit System
Louise Woodworth, Nashua Transit System
Cindy Bluestein, guest
Cheryl Devonne, guest
John Devonne, guest
Mike Devonne, guest

Remote:

Teri Palmer, NH Statewide Mobility Manager, RLS Associates
Elisia Geyer, Nashua Soup Kitchen
John Eriquezzo, Meals on Wheels
Nonyem Egbuonu, Emmaus Institute
Pat Murphy, Town of Merrimack

NRPC Staff:

Matt Waitkins, MPO Coordinator
Kathy Kirby, Administrative Assistant
Donna Marceau, Regional Mobility Manager
- RCC7

1. Call to Order & Introductions

Langdell called the meeting to order at 10:00. Introductions were made by the attendees.

2. Approval of August 2024 meeting minutes

The August minutes had one edit: p. 3, second paragraph, second sentence. Add the word *not* in front of the word "collected".

Jon Eriquezzo made a motion to accept the minutes as edited. Kerry seconded.

THAT the August 2024 RCC7 draft meeting minutes be approved as edited.

Approved unanimously.

The Executive Committee meetings for the foreseeable future will be on the second Friday after our RCC meetings at 9 a.m.

3. NH Community Transportation Month – Planning updates & Kickoff!

RCC7 celebrates Community Transportation Month - Lori Lorman, NTS was honored as the inaugural Greater Nashua Region Transportation Hero. Miller read a proclamation declaring Lori Lorman as the Greater Nashua Region Community Transportation Hero. For 40 years, Lorman has dedicated herself to the Nashua Transit System. She has held many positions at NTS, including her current position as Operations Coordinator. She works collaboratively with community partners, the whole RCC, and the NTS team. She cares about our passengers and is a true champion of public transportation. Palmer would like to honor Lorman at NHDOT next week and asked if she could attend.

Palmer gave an update on the statewide celebration of Community Transportation Month. The first week is a *Week Without Driving*. All of the mayors, the Transportation Committee, the Ways and Means Committee, and GACIT – anyone who is involved in funding transportation - were asked to try to think about what would happen during the Week Without Driving. If they could not car share, or couldn't take public transportation, send us stories as to why. Palmer has heard from some people who said they wish they could participate, but I have to get my kids to school, and my wife has to do this, etc. Those are the stories Palmer wants to hear as well – why couldn't you participate? Palmer also stated if you can participate, let her know how you participated – did you carpool, etc. Her office is going to compile the stories and perhaps have them posted in a blog on their website. NHDOT employees received information about a *Week Without Driving*.

Correa gave an update on NTS's plans to celebrate Community Transportation Month:

- CommuteSmart's Buses, Bikes & Brooms will be promoted by NTS
- NTS Staff Appreciation – opportunities for NTS riders to thank NTS staff for their hard work via comments left in comment boxes. Loyal passengers will also be recognized. Internally, staff who have reached longevity increments will be recognized.
- Free ride day for fixed route and paratransit service
- Talking Transit gives people the opportunity to talk with staff and earn prizes.
- We will have a Celebrate 40 Years at NTS event.
- Public Health will be hosting two listening sessions on October 23. NTS wants to hear from people who use transit and don't use transit.
- KerryMiller will be at the Cultural Connections Committee for an NTS information session and travel training.
- Mayor Donchess put together his first NTS Proclamation that in the future, September will be Transportation Month in the City of Nashua.

Langdell gave an update on Souhegan Valley Collaborative's plans to celebrate Community Transportation Month:

- Not only is October Community Transportation Month, but it is also SVTC's 16th anniversary. We are having a Free Fare Month, and we were able to do this through fundraising.

Palmer reminded everyone that the Spring and Fall CommuteSmart NH challenges are great but CommuteSmart would like to see year-round participation in the program. Participants can still earn points and earn prizes. If you are planning on doing anything related to the Buses, Bikes, & Brooms Challenge, or October Transportation Month, please share that information with Palmer. It will be posted on the *Keep New Hampshire Moving website*.

Egbuonu requested a tall bus for on-demand trips. She will be connecting with Correa to make arrangements.

The Statewide Volunteer Driver Network survey results are in. Langdell will share the results in a separate email. Overall, rides are increasing – demand, the number of rides, and the number of drivers are increasing too.

Spirit of NH Awards – there will be Volunteer Driver Program recognition so volunteer driver program leaders are encouraged to attend the October award ceremony.

4. NHDOT 5310 RCC Funding

5310 RCC FY24 and FY25 Budget Corrections – Action Item

Langdell explained that the state has three “pockets” of money (FTA/NHDOT Term): Contracted Services, Mobility Management, and Regional Mobility Management. We have been discussing the \$2,229.14 overage. NHDOT stated there will be no carryovers into the next year. Therefore, a motion needed to be made and a vote taken to move \$2,229.14 from the Contracted Services line, which has some carryover in it to pay for this and FY24. Then a motion should be made for the State FY25 budget to move \$2,229.14 from Regional Mobility Management allocation back to Contracted Services. This requires a vote.

John Eriquezzo made the motion. James seconded.

THAT RCC7 reallocate \$2,229.14 of FY24 Contracted Services 5310 RCC funding to the Regional Mobility Manager funding.

A roll call vote was taken. Unanimous vote.

John Eriquezzo made the motion. James seconded.

THAT RCC7 reallocate \$2,229.14 of FY25 Regional Mobility Manager 5310 RCC funding to the Contracted Services funding.

A roll call vote was taken. Unanimous vote.

NHDOT will receive these minutes.

- **RCC7 FY25 Priorities and 5310 RCC FY25 additional 10% Funding – Possible Action Item**

Waitkins stated that the NHDOT has provided a one-time opportunity to increase the RCC 5310 funding by 10% (\$23,200) in FY25. During past meetings, there were discussions about ways to spend this money, including:

- (1) A wheelchair transportation program: NRPC is in the process of developing this program. NRPC has received numerous requests for wheelchair-accessible rides from residents who have limited finances, no insurance coverage for these rides, and no access to wheelchair-accessible community transportation services. Matching funds: the NRPC Foundation will provide \$2,500 towards the 20% local match, thereby leveraging \$10,000 of the 5310 funding. Total funding would be \$12,500.
- (2) A voucher program for taxi/Uber/Lyft vouchers: NRPC is in the process of developing this program to assist those who do not have community transportation options. The RMM receives calls for rides that do not fall within the available community transportation options. This would be a complementary option (to fill in the gaps) that will not undermine the services we already provide, but support them and be able to extend when there is for instance, a medical need, and offer that person an affordable transportation option. There will be a local match. Matching funds to be determined.
- (3) Volunteer Driver Program to the Peterborough Area: collaboration with the Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC) to provide transportation to services in Peterborough and the Monadnock Region. People in the Wilton/Lyndborough area in particular area will benefit. The LCTP identified the need for service options to critical destinations in Peterborough, including the Monadnock Community Hospital, and other destinations. Matching funds to be determined.
- (4) Bus Pass Purchase and Distribution Program: of the four options, only the Bus Pass Purchase and Distribution Program is not eligible for 5310 funding. Also, there is an option, if the demand/need happens, to allocate the funds to Merrimack and SVTC for funding rides. There were also discussions related to out-of-network transportation for medical appointments. These are all complementary services (what we can't do) to what we already do.

Initial Funding Summary: of the first three programs presented, only the wheelchair transportation program has \$2,500 available matching funds, \$10,000 5310 funding leveraged, with \$13,200 remaining unallocated funds. Palmer stated no funding for administration services.

Waitkins stated we received yesterday an amended contract from DOT for \$23,200 in additional funding. Brooks asked if the banks are looking for a specific timeline or quarterly progress report. Marceau stated that St. Mary's Bank has requested that they be informed when the requests come in.

Waitkins stated that he recommends we send a memo to NHDOT outlining the four projects.

Palmer stated that NHDOT would accept the slide shared today as a planned use of the additional funding.

Langdell represents sending a letter to NHDOT saying we are confident we can get match money.

Murphy asked if this does not include any administration dollars, how will this be administered? Langdell stated there are already administration dollars. This money received will go towards services. Murphy asked if we need to be specific regarding allocations to the programs we have discussed. Langdell stated we are not in a position to do that at this time. Murphy asked if we are eliminating funding for existing services from our member agencies. Langdell stated no. Palmer stated the RCC has to vote on the allocation and report the vote to NHDOT. We will not get to keep any of the allocated money at the end of the two-year cycle so the allocated money must be spent. Langdell asked if the RCC7 would be supportive of following these initiatives to see if we can develop one or more of them in the coming fiscal year.

Murphy motioned. Kerry seconded.

THAT RCC7 supports following these initiatives to see if we can develop one or more of them in the coming fiscal year.

A roll call vote was taken. Unanimous vote

- **NHDOT 5310 RCC FY25-FY26 distribution methodology – *Information Item***

Waitkins stated that the NHDOT is seeking RCC input regarding how to best distribute FTA Section 5310 RCC funding for the upcoming SFY26-27 biennium solicitation. Current distribution methodology: FTA 5310 funds are distributed by FTA and NHDOT according to the population of seniors (65+) and individuals with disabilities under 65. It has been some years since they updated this methodology. Census numbers have changed. They are considering alternative approaches. This may significantly impact all regional apportionments. Additionally, the next round of funding will incorporate Census 2020 figures, which will also impact the regional funding apportionments.

Langdell stated according to what the RCC Chairs and lead agencies have been told, NHDOT is working under the assumption that it costs more to provide services in the more rural part of the state. We asked NHDOT for the data to substantiate this. She and Waitkins stated they had not seen anything from them. That said, the input they are asking for from us is to weigh in on four scenarios they are considering. We need to determine which is best for our region. It is somewhat confusing, but they do want our input.

Approach 1 – keep it the same. FTA does it this way. Urban areas are favored. Morelli asked if there is data on the demand by age group. Palmer provided age and some data statistics to the attendees. Waitkins requested the information. Pandolph stated that there is some consideration of the true usefulness/efficacy of this data as miles are not counted. Palmer stated even though RCCs are sending in what they think would be best, it is still up to NHDOT on what will be used. Discussion ensued including questioning how is this different from what is already done within regions, and how the dollar amount allocated will not only change but *how* it is allocated to the RCC may change too based upon the RCC-designated amount for Administration/Mobility Management.

Approach 2 – Set aside an amount for administration/Mobility Management. This approach would lock the RCC into a specific amount of funding for admin/regional mobility management, regardless of how much total funding is apportioned to the region. This approach means that the DOT would be making sure that there were admin/mobility management monies included in the budgets, at least to start with. It is not a straight formula funding allocation.

Approach #3 – Set aside for land area and road miles. Population and land area/land miles are added to the calculations, whereby a nominal amount is set aside for lane miles/land area. No set aside for admin/mobility management.

Approach #4 – Set aside for both lane miles and land area, AND admin/mobility management. This would favor rural RCCs as they have more lane miles and land area.

The question was asked: which distribution methodology works best for the Nashua RCC?

Waitkins recommended Approach 1 because it tends to favor regions like RCC7, and Approach 4 Langdell stated that may be true for the Coast and Manchester, but in our region, our region has decreased funds because they do not count the money already allocated to Nashua.

Morelli stated that it sounds like the groundwork is being laid for a decrease in urban area funding. Correa asked about the leftover redistribution of money. Palmer and Langdell stated after two years monies leftover are distributed to those regions that are falling behind. Langdell asked in the past three cycles, have all the regions used all of their allocated money? Palmer asked Correa to ask this question at next Thursday's meeting and Correa agreed to ask it. Palmer stated there would be some shifts in 5310 funding, but nothing catastrophic. But there will come a time when more innovative regions looking to expand services will receive the funding for those new services. Waitkins agreed to put this information together to weigh in on these scenarios, along with data on our services showing how we have been increasing our services. We want the funding that keeps us whole – whatever that is.

5. RCC7 Executive Committee Meeting update with SCC 8/1/24 update

Palmer stated that Chuck is working hard to increase communication between the SCC and the RCCs. SCC meeting minutes should be attached to the RCC's meeting agendas so that everyone knows what is happening at the State level and can ask questions at the RCC meetings. We want to make sure that everyone gets a copy. Langdell suggested that this should be a separate email so as not to be buried in the packets.

Marceau gave an update on her activities. She attended a two-day workshop hosted by Hillsborough County, "Judicial Sequential Intercept Modal Mapping," discussing what resources about transportation options to prevent criminal recidivism. She will be working within a group that includes people from Southern NH Medical Center going forward as their focus is medical and most of her calls involve the need for medical appointment transportation. She received 25 requests for help since the last RCC meeting and presented outcomes. Reminder: October is Community Transportation Month and there are several other transportation-related happenings in October.

Loret contacted the five largest hospitals in Boston. The hospital staff she connected with could not supply her with numbers over the phone, but they requested an official letter from the mayor's office or NRPC, to release the number of patients in NH hospitals with NH addresses, looking for transportation to Boston hospitals. The NH hospitals need only supply only those numbers. She stated that Joslin Diabetes Center has a Londonderry location and their patients can also access services in Boston. Nonnie suggested expanding the NH-Boston transportation service to non-patient senior residents if and when it becomes available. There is a need among our area seniors to establish social connections to promote health and well-being that may take them beyond our Nashua area. More passengers would help decrease passenger costs. It would be wonderful to include in our deliberations here. Invite someone from the senior center here. Brenda Carrier is on the Cultural Connections Committee, and I'm sure she would be delighted to come here. Donna will be following up with Marguerite.

The meeting adjourned at 11:56 a.m. The next meeting will be Thursday, October 24 at 10:00 a.m.