

**Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council
For Community Transportation**

Minutes

December 19, 2023

Present: Frank Dobisky, Chair, *Thomas Transportation*; Charlie Pratt, Vice Chair, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS)*; Mary Jensen, Secretary, *Keene Senior Center (KSC)*; Alberta Bronson, *The Lukas Community (TLC)*; Kathy Baird, *RSVP Volunteer Center (RSVP)*; David Meader, *Citizen Member*; Daniel Smith, *Keene Family YMCA*; Lisa Steadman, *Liberty Mutual*; Alison Welsh, *Cheshire County*.

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

Guests: Teri Palmer, *NH Statewide Mobility Manager*.

I. Welcome

Chair Dobisky called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and introductions were made.

II. Approval of November 21, 2023 Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of November 21, 2023.

Motion by Charlie Pratt, seconded by Lisa Steadman. Approved by unanimous vote.

III. Treasurer's Report

Terry Johnson presented the November financial reports. He recommended that the MRCC conduct a close review of the financial reports during the January MRCC meeting, so as to provide an opportunity to make any needed budget adjustments ahead of the expiration of NH Health and Human Services (NHDHHS) funding in May 2024 and the end of the first fiscal year for the current Section 5310 contract with the NH Department of Transportation.

Charlie Pratt discussed some changes that are coming for HCS starting on January 2, 2024. The City Express routes are changing to accommodate new stops including the Cheshire Medical Center clinic on Maple Avenue and to remove stops that do not have high ridership, such as Monadnock Marketplace.

Alison Welsh suggested reaching out to grocery stores to solicit funding to replace the loss of funding in the upcoming months. Terry Johnson explained that there is precedent for this with Hannaford which is currently funding organizations to support the needs of older adults, including improving access to food, and increasing opportunities for socialization. Hannaford funding can be used to support transportation services.

IV. Partner Updates

Teri Palmer shared that transit stakeholders throughout the state are working on a solution to the challenge volunteer driver programs (VDPs) are facing due to new IRS reporting requirements that went into effect in 2023. VDPs are now required to issue 1099s for drivers making over \$600 annually in mileage reimbursement. VDPS are concerned the new requirement will both hamper driver recruitment efforts and cause existing drivers to limit the number of miles they drive. She said that Minnesota and Vermont are also working on this issue as well.

Kathy Baird shared that she is hiring for RSVP and asked the committee to spread the word. The job posting is available on the Monadnock Family Services website.

Daniel Smith reported that he is looking for a bus for the YMCA that does not require a driver with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to operate. He explained that if his current bus requires any work, the lack of a CDL driver requires the YMCA to shut down programming because of inability to transport children to the facility. Teri Palmer said that she would send Daniel Smith information on several buses that she is aware of that might be available.

V. Mobility Manager Update

Terry Johnson shared an update regarding the State Coordinating Council's (SCC) plans for releasing bylaws for Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC). The MRCC provided input on a draft document presented by the SCC at its October meeting. The input was integrated into a final document that will be voted on at the January SCC meeting. Teri Palmer stated that the bylaws will then be implemented by each RCC over the first quarter of calendar year 2024, with Region-specific adjustments as may be appropriate.

Terry Johnson reported that SWRPC continues to work on the update to the MRCC Coordinated Plan with the goal of finishing it by the end of January 2024. He requested MRCC members to volunteer to review a final draft of the plan when it is complete. Chair Dobisky and Charlie Pratt stepped forward. Terry Johnson reported that the Monadnock Region Community Transportation Directory update is also expected to be completed by the end of January.

Terry Johnson reported that Transport NH is coordinating with a consultant to design a new statewide website on behalf of the SCC and NHDOT. The website is named "Keep NH Moving". Expected to go live in January, the website will include information about statewide community transportation activities, a statewide interactive transportation directory and dedicated pages for each RCC. Regional mobility managers have been tasked with providing content for their pages and administering their pages after the site goes live. The intent is that the regional pages will ultimately supplant current RCC websites. Mobility managers attended a training to learn how to populate content to the site.

Terry Johnson reminded the MRCC of the current transit operating model study SWRPC is undertaking. He said SWRPC has released a request for proposals for a qualified transit consultant and has recruited stakeholders to participate on a project advisory task force. Several MRCC members have volunteered. A task force kick-off meeting will be held in January 2024.

Terry Johnson additionally highlighted a Bank of America (BoA) funding opportunity that may be relevant to the MRCC. Providing community transportation services will be an eligible activity. BoA will be releasing two separate requests for proposals during 2024. Suzanne Bansley has expressed interest in working with MRCC members to prepare an application if there is interest. Daniel Smith shared interest in applying for funding on behalf of the YMCA.

VI. MRCC Outreach Strategies Discussion

Terry Johnson informed the MRCC that SWRPC is compiling input on strategic priorities solicited during the November MRCC meeting for inclusion in the Coordinated Plan update. He reported that during the discussion Ellen Avery suggested that, as part of overall MRCC outreach efforts, there should be a greater emphasis on joint advertising of transportation services provided in the Region. She indicated that advertising costs are expensive and that an economy of scale could be achieved through joint purchasing by transportation providers. She highlighted the success of the October Community Transportation Month campaign that transportation providers participated in. Terry Johnson then solicited input from the MRCC on potential education, outreach and advocacy tactics to increase public participation and understanding of community transportation. He asked the MRCC to focus discussion on two MRCC mobility management

work plan activities: 1) conduct coordinated outreach across the transportation network, and 2) engage input and participation from transit-dependent populations.

Chair Dobisky shared that radio stations are required by the FCC to broadcast public service announcements of nonprofit organizations and suggested that MRCC members could take advantage of this policy. Charlie Pratt shared that any efforts to broaden the ridership would be beneficial. Teri Palmer suggested that more coordination with Keene State College (KSC) would provide an important market to tap into. She also stressed the importance of having KSC participate in transportation efforts regionally. Terry Johnson said that SWRPC is recruiting KSC to participate in the transit operating model task force.

Chair Dobisky suggested that marketing efforts could utilize the stories and perspectives of current riders. Charlie Pratt shared that HCS has published several press releases publicizing their new routes and that they plan to conduct more efforts in the coming weeks.

Terry Johnson requested recommendations of other transportation stakeholders that should be at the MRCC table for involvement in strengthening the overall transportation network. Alberta Bronson suggested that independent living facilities could be interested partners. Charlie Pratt added that many of the facilities have their own transportation services, however, the services may not be sufficient to meet the needs of their clients. Mary Jensen suggested that medical facilities, such as the dialysis center in Keene, could be good partners to work with. Teri Palmer added that there are plans to engage these facilities statewide, but that engaging with them individually might be useful as well.

Mary Jensen recommended reaching out to ServiceLink Resource Centers as they may have resources to contribute to transit efforts. Teri Palmer praised the relationship that the MRCC has with the regional public health network and affirmed that such efforts are important to sustain. She also shared that there may be a renewed effort to implement the statewide transit needs assessment which could provide additional data on the market for transportation services. Terry Johnson suggested that there could be additional efforts made to target public officials and that such actions could spur increased attention by means of funding.

Mary Jensen shared her view that getting more younger riders would be an important pathway to increasing ridership and funding. Teri Palmer explained that this relates to statewide efforts to destigmatize public transit and that the service is not just for older riders. Charlie Pratt explained that, recently, HCS changed their marketing to separate advertising for the Friendly Bus from advertising for the City Express to try and change public perception of transit services. Daniel Smith explained that in other communities he's found success changing perception by engaging children from a younger age and increasing generational familiarity.

Teri Palmer shared that she will be conducting a session on travel training for mobility managers in January 2024. She said that travel training helps new riders gain familiarity and comfort with using community transportation services.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 16, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:21 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jason Cooper, Planner