

**Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council  
For Community Transportation**

**Minutes**

May 21, 2024

Present: Frank Dobisky, Chair, *Thomas Transportation*; Jennifer Robinson, Treasurer, *Cheshire County*; Ellen Avery, *Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC)*; Alberta Bronson, *The Lukas Community*; Mary Jensen, *Keene Senior Center (KSC)*; Sally Malay, *Keene Housing Kid's Collaborative (KHKC)*; David Meader, *Citizen Member*; Lisa Steadman, *Able NH*.

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

**I. Welcome**

Chair Dobisky called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and introductions were made.

**II. Approval of April 16, 2024 Minutes**

**Motion: To approve the minutes of April 16, 2024.**

Motion by Ellen Avery, seconded by David Meader. Approved by unanimous vote.

**III. Treasurer's Report**

Jennifer Robinson explained that she distributed the regular monthly report and the projected spend down of the NH Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS) funding for May. Terry Johnson added that according to the projected spend down there should be a significant amount of NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) funds rolled forward into the FY2025 budget. Ellen Avery asked how the spend down of NHDHHS funds came to fruition and Terry Johnson replied that he had the initial idea and worked with staff from Cheshire County, NHDOT and NHDHHS to make it a reality. Ellen Avery thanked Terry Johnson for these efforts and expressed her gratitude on behalf of the organizations whose operations will be able to proceed smoothly with sustained funding.

**IV. FY25 Budget Discussion and Long-Term Sustainability Efforts**

Terry Johnson explained that KHKC is still looking for funding sources for its operations and asked Sally Malay to provide an update on the organization's efforts. Sally Malay explained that they have requested direct congressional funding but will not hear back regarding this request until next calendar year. Terry Johnson explained that he has had conversations with NH Senator Fenton who is looking into the issue and will communicate his findings.

Chair Dobisky explained that Terry Johnson, Ellen Avery, Sally Malay, and he attended a meeting for SWRPC's Transit Design Project Advisory Task Force on May 20th. Terry Johnson shared that a key objective of the transit study is to identify and help prepare a lead organization to manage or sponsor expanding transit services in the region. Lisa Steadman asked for more information about the composition of the Task Force. Terry Johnson explained that the Task Force is comprised of transportation providers,

human service agencies, colleges, representatives of municipalities that may play a role in managing the system, and other stakeholders who have an interest in improving transit and community transportation services in the region. Lisa Steadman asked which ridership groups will be represented on the new transit system's governing Board and if the Board will include individuals with disabilities. Terry Johnson explained that ideally individuals with disabilities and other transit dependent populations would have a voice in the operations of the transit system. Lisa Steadman asked for clarification on whether the Board of the potential managing entity would be formed from the Advisory Task Force. Terry Johnson explained that is a possibility. He further explained that efforts are already underway to identify and engage local champions who may be involved in managing and funding the transit system. Some of those may come from the Task Force.

At the Advisory Task Force meeting on May 20<sup>th</sup>, the group voted on a set of priority goals for evaluating the multiple operating models that have been proposed. Terry Johnson shared the goals and solicited feedback from the MRCC. Lisa Steadman and Chair Dobisky shared that it is important for a regional system to focus on regional needs rather than those focused on the City of Keene. David Meader agreed that development of a regional system is the utmost priority. Lisa Steadman suggested having SWRPC Commissioners represent towns for the new transit system to minimize the potential political involvement with members of select boards. Ellen Avery emphasized the need for a regional perspective because while the City of Keene has the greatest population, it inherently does not have the greatest need because there are many towns with no services. She suggested that a new system should be launched in a part of the region that does not include Keene to illustrate the system's commitment to serving the region at large.

Todd Horner asked Terry Johnson whether there was discussion at the Advisory Task Force meeting about bringing private stakeholders together to help develop a new transit system. Todd Horner suggested bringing these entities to the table to minimize siloing efforts within the broader region and to maximize existing investment into the transportation system. Sustainable funding for a regional transit model will be difficult to achieve if there are a host of different organizations financing siloed services that cater to very specific user groups. It will be extremely challenging to make the numbers work without municipalities and organizations opting into a shared service rather than funding their own vehicles, drivers, etc. Rather than towns/organizations sharing their own vehicles with one another, it would be more effective for them to invest financially in a general purpose, regional model. An inventory or entitles with current transportation services and resources would serve as the basis of a prospect list, organizations who might be willing to buy into the new system rather than continuing to fund their own.

Lisa Steadman suggested that Monadnock Family Services should be included among the entities participating in the regional model because they have several buses which sit idle since they have no drivers. Todd Horner suggested that a possible pilot program could allow towns to invest in an organization that pools resources to fund municipal vehicles such as parks and recreation buses. Chair Dobisky suggested that there could be new efforts to inventory existing vehicles within the region which could be pooled for a new entity. Todd Horner explained that liability could be a serious concern. Chair Dobisky recommended developing an umbrella organization to house the different uses of the vehicles. Lisa Steadman cautioned that this may be difficult to facilitate from an insurer's point of view.

Chair Dobisky emphasized that NHDOT's participation on the Advisory Task Force will continue to be critical. Ellen Avery asked whether the participation of other transit entities from the state and beyond would be worth pursuing, and Terry Johnson agreed that the input of other stakeholders is key.

## **V. Partner Updates**

Ellen Avery shared that the New Hampshire Transit Association (NHTA)/State Coordinating Council (SCC) statewide meeting is on June 7<sup>th</sup> in Concord. She expressed that she would be happy to help MRCC members register if they are interested in attending. Sally Malay shared that KHKC ridership is going down which is typical at this time of year with the school year winding down. She expressed that the organization will continue to pursue finding new funding solutions. Alberta Bronson shared that The Lukas Community has a new executive director and office manager. Todd Horner explained that he's working to visit all the communities in the Monadnock Region to better understand the needs of planning boards and other stakeholders. Lisa Steadman shared that Able NH's Transportation Equity Committee is meeting regularly and is currently focused on ensuring that the Keep NH Moving website is accessible among other goals. Jason Cooper shared that SWPRC is currently working with the towns of Alstead, Antrim, and Temple to develop Complete Streets policies.

## **VI. Mobility Manager Update**

Terry Johnson shared that the SCC is focused on continuing to search for funding sources that can be used for the RCCs. Ellen Avery, who chairs the SCC Sustainability Committee, agreed that the search initially focused on low hanging fruit and that there may be potential for funds from the Endowment for Health. Terry Johnson shared that with the NHTA/SCC statewide meeting approaching, there are awards which will be distributed to recognize stakeholders throughout the state. Terry Johnson shared that Sally Malay has been nominated for her work in pioneering youth transportation in our region.

## **VII. Next Meeting**

The next MRCC meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:14 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Cooper  
Planner