

**Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council
For Community Transportation**

Minutes

June 18, 2024

Present: Frank Dobisky, Chair, *Thomas Transportation*; Charlie Pratt, Vice Chair, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Service (HCS)*; Jennifer Robinson, Treasurer, *Cheshire County*; Erika Alusic-Bingham, *Southern New Hampshire Service (SNHS)*; Ellen Avery, *Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC)*; Kathy Baird (remote), *RSVP Volunteer Center*; Alberta Bronson, *The Lukas Community*; Mary Jensen, *Keene Senior Center (KSC)*; Sally Malay, *Keene Housing Kid's Collaborative (KHKC)*; David Meader, *Citizen Member*.

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

Guests: Teri Palmer, *Statewide Mobility Manager*.

I. Welcome

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

II. Approval of May 21, 2024 Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of May 21, 2024.

Motion by Vice Chair Pratt, seconded by David Meader. Approved by unanimous vote.

III. Treasurer's Report and FY 25 NHDOT Section 5310 Budget

Jennifer Robinson shared that she is still awaiting the Keene Senior Center invoice to finalize the May financial report. She also asked transportation providers to review their FY25 budget allocations prior to the July meeting which will request MRCC action on the FY 25 Section 5310 budget.

Terry Johnson explained that the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) will be providing a 10% increase in Section 5310 funding to the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) during FY 25. As a result, the MRCC will receive an increase of \$24,500 over the original budget of \$245,300. Jennifer Robinson explained that the projected FY 25 budget currently allocates funding to all transportation providers at the same levels as FY 24. She recommended that the increase in budget go towards funding SWRPC's mobility management services at the same level as FY 24. Terry Johnson explained that with projected FY 24 carry forward funds, the total MRCC FY 25 budget is projected to be approximately \$355,000. The MRCC will need to decide how to allocate these additional carryover funds. Ellen Avery asked whether all the funding would have to be spent during the next fiscal year because it will be the final year of the current funding cycle. Terry Johnson replied that this is the case. Ellen Avery asked if there will be increased funding during the following fiscal years. Teri Palmer indicated that there may be increased federal funds trickling down.

Terry Johnson shared that NHDOT requested the RCCs to communicate whether they will be accepting the 10% increase in funding by June 28th. Jennifer Robinson said she will inform NHDOT that the MRCC plans to accept the increase and that the MRCC will vote on the final FY 25 budget at its July meeting.

IV. Highlights from NHTA/SCC Annual Meeting

Sally Malay shared that she was very honored to be an award recipient at the New Hampshire Transit Association (NHTA)/State Coordinating Council (SCC) annual meeting and that she felt it was a group honor for the MRCC. Ellen Avery shared that she thinks the MRCC has a lot to be proud of and that the community transportation industry in the state is moving in a good direction. Vice Chair Pratt said that he was pleased to have conversations with New Hampshire House Representatives who attended the meeting. He was also pleased to see members of the Executive Council in attendance. He explained it is important that those serving in state government were exposed to the issues addressed at the annual meeting. He was happy to see government officials present throughout the entire meeting. Terry Johnson said there were presentations from representatives of the Federal Transit Administration and Center for Disease Control and Prevention. They indicated that New Hampshire is seen nationally as a model for successful innovation in community transportation.

Chair Dobisky asked for Teri Palmer's perspective on the conference. She shared that she appreciated its focus on community transportation. She agreed with Vice Chair Pratt that she was glad to see those involved in state and federal government staying for the full event. She said she appreciated that there was sufficient time for networking among attendees.

Ellen Avery asked Teri Palmer if she had any takeaways from the recent Community Transportation Association of America Conference. Teri Palmer explained that she thought the mobility manager forum should focus more heavily on what mobility managers throughout the country are doing to innovate and increase access to transportation systems.

V. Partner Updates

Alberta Bronson shared that her organization is adding more volunteer capacity and is also working on doing some repairs to their vans. Ellen Avery shared that she is officially planning on retiring in the fall and that she will share a job description with the group once it is finalized. She added that CVTC is very busy and has had a steady stream of new driver applicants. Vice Chair Pratt shared that the City Bus service is doing very well, and its ridership is up 18% from last year. He added that the Black Route is now busier than the Red Route and suggested this may be due to increased service to Market Basket. Ridership is up to levels not seen in decades. He explained that HCS is experiencing challenges keeping buses on the road with drivers requesting vacation over the summer as well as one driver retiring. The organization is working to fill the need.

Chair Dobisky thanked Terry Johnson for his Keene Sentinel Letter to the Editor to raise attention for the Transit System Design project public meeting on June 19th. Chair Dobisky invited MRCC members to join the session if they are available.

Erika Alusic-Bingham shared that she is looking for an additional \$3,327 for transportation for SHNS' summer activities. She asked the group to pass along any opportunities for which they may be aware. Ellen Avery asked if Erika Alusic-Bingham receives funding from the Monadnock United Way. Erica Alusic-Bingham explained that her organization is ineligible. Sally Malay suggested requesting funding from the Town of Peterborough. Erica Alusic-Bingham explained that SNHS has an existing strong relationship with

the Town and asking for additional assistance may put a strain on that relationship. Ellen Avery asked how many unique children SNHS serves each summer. Erika Alusic-Bingham said she maintains an active roster of 45 children. Sally Malay asked who SNHS uses for bus services. Erica Alusic-Bingham said they utilize First Student and Student Transportation of America. Sally Malay asked if SNHS has considered creating a separate 501c3. Erica Alusic-Bingham explained that because the summer programs she offers are so different from SNHS' typical services, she is unsure that a separate 501c3 could be sustained if she were to retire.

Teri Palmer asked whether the MRCC would be eligible to provide the remaining funding SNHS needs to support transportation to summer activities. Jennifer Robinson explained that transportation for youth would be an ineligible activity under the Section 5310 funding Cheshire County receives. Chair Dobisky added that since the program serves children in Hillsborough County, Cheshire County may be unwilling to fund the program through other sources. Ellen Avery volunteered that she would reach out to Hillsborough County to see if they had any funds which could be used. Kathy Baird suggested reaching out to the Kiwanis Club since their mission is focused on providing for children. She added that the Rotary Club may also be worth asking. Ellen Avery asked what would happen if the funding was found and Erika Alusic-Bingham explained that her services would likely receive less supplies or funding for other aspects of the program from the SNHS main office.

Sally Malay shared that the KHKC Board has approved transportation funding for the next fiscal year. KHKC also heard from Senator Shaheen's office that the organization was nominated for Congressional Designated Spending during the next fiscal year. Additionally, KHKC is working with Thomas Transportation to identify solutions to avoid the need for an adult passenger to accompany children in vehicles. These include the addition of a camera and GPS system within vehicles.

Kathy Baird shared that RSVP is undergoing program changes to adapt to a reduction in State Medicaid funding which significantly impacts operations of parent organization, Monadnock Family Services (MFS). Additionally, RSVP will likely be temporarily moving back to its former location at 64 Main Street in Keene. Eventually, RSVP will move to MFS' new main location at Avon Street in Keene. Terry Johnson asked whether the move to MFS' main location will improve RSVP program accessibility with the nearby City Express bus stop. Kathy Baird explained that, due to the structure of RSVP's programs, she does not expect that to be the case.

VI. Mobility Manager Update

Terry Johnson reiterated Chair Dobisky's invitation to MRCC members to attend the June 19th Transit System Design project public meeting. He said the meeting will provide an opportunity for the public to weigh-in on goals for evaluating proposed transit system governance models. He explained that the project Advisory Task Force has already offered input on the goals. Terry Johnson added that SWRPC continues to work with the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation to advance Complete Streets policy and infrastructure development in Monadnock Region municipalities. He said that the region has made great progress over the years in this area. He said that the State Coordinating Council and Mobility Management Network promote bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation in addition to community transportation options. Terry Johnson invited Jason Cooper, who provides Complete Streets assistance to communities, to provide additional information. Jason Cooper elaborated on current projects in which

SWRPC is involved. Terry Johnson encouraged MRCC members who are aware of municipalities that might benefit from the Complete Streets program to let Jason Cooper know.

VII. Next Meeting

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

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Cooper
Planner