

**Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council
For Community Transportation**

Minutes

May 20, 2025

Present: Frank Dobisky, Chair, *Thomas Transportation*; Charles Pratt, Vice Chair, *Home Healthcare, Hospice & Community Services (HCS)*; Jennifer Robinson (remote), Treasurer, *Cheshire County*; Erika Alusic-Bingham, *Community Action Partnership Hillsborough and Rockingham Counties (CAPHR)*; Sally Malay, *Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC)*; David Meader, *Citizen Member*; Lisa Steadman (remote), *ABLE NH*; Charles Weed, *Citizen Member*; Alison Welsh, *Cheshire County*.

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

Guests: Jeff Donald (remote), *Region 10 Mobility Manager*; Stephen Falbel (remote), *Steadman Hill Consulting*; Teri Palmer, *Statewide Mobility Manager*; Stacy Wilbur (remote), *Monadnock Peer Support (MPS)*.

I. Welcome

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

II. Approval of April 15, 2025 Minutes

Chair Dobisky asked if those in attendance had an opportunity to review the April 2025 meeting minutes and if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Chair Dobisky asked for a motion to approve the April 15, 2025 meeting minutes.

Motion: To approve the minutes of April 15, 2025.

Motion by Erika Alusic-Bingham, seconded by David Meader. Approved by unanimous roll call vote with Vice Chair Pratt abstaining.

III. Treasurer's Report

Jennifer Robinson shared that the current budget is being drawn down as predicted and that, if a final revision is necessary, that could be accomplished at the June or July meeting. Terry Johnson shared that SWRPC may have surplus mobility management funds and that there is a possibility they could be repurposed to meet funding shortfalls for transportation providers.

IV. "Next Generation" Transit Project Update / Discussion

"Next Generation" Transit Project consultant, Stephen Falbel, presented results from assessment activities to identify possible operators and governance models for the service. He explained that the project included survey distributions to municipalities and institutions which helped inform this stage of work. Terry Johnson provided additional project background. He explained that the goal is to establish a Greater Keene

microtransit service, with increased hours of operation over existing transit services, and a regionwide critical care medical rides service in 2027.

Terry provided information about conversations between SWRPC and current transit provider, HCS, regarding HCS's role in the "Next Generation" transit system. He said a possible scenario would entail a transfer of HCS transit system assets to a new provider to aid in the establishment of the new system. He explained that HCS expressed it is not likely to take on the operation of microtransit services for the general population. Additionally, Terry shared that SWRPC approached the Cheshire County Commissioners in March about sponsoring the "Next Generation" system and experienced strong pushback from a Commissioner due to concerns that the transit system would not initially serve the entire county which would be unfair to taxpayers, and that the county has limited staff capacity to manage the system. He said SWRPC will continue its outreach to the County and will be meeting with the County Delegation in August.

SWRPC and Stephen Falbel met with the MOOver Board in April to discuss MOOver as a candidate to operate the transit system. They expressed interest but MOOver will want to do its due diligence to better understand expectations for the operator of the "Next Generation" system as well as gather details about the existing system. Regarding the latter, SWRPC will coordinate and facilitate a meeting between MOOver and HCS, as well as meetings with regional providers, HCS, CVTC, and SmartRide. Following discussion of the MOOver's recent service cuts in its current service area, Charles Weed asked how much funding the MOOver lost from the State of Vermont. Stephen Falbel shared that he believes the figure is around \$150,000. He further explained that the MOOver's overall annual operating budget is greater than \$6,000,000, although some of that funding comes from Medicaid, ski resorts, and other entities. Charles Weed shared that he sees the MOOver's vehicles frequently in the Monadnock Region and is impressed with their level of services.

Terry Johnson shared that SWRPC met with Southwestern Community Services (SCS) senior leadership in April and they expressed interest in serving as the transit system sponsor. Terry explained that there is some concern that SCS currently operates transit services and a volunteer driver program in Sullivan County and that it could be challenging for SCS to expand its services to an additional region. Further discussion will be necessary. As with MOOver, SWRPC will coordinate a meeting between HCS and SCS as well as any other providers SCS wishes to meet with. SWRPC conducted additional outreach to Marlborough and Swanzey selectboards, and City of Keene staff. All stakeholders expressed that they would likely be willing to support transit services and outlined further steps for SWRPC to take with respect to the town budgeting cycles. There was consensus among the municipalities that they are not in a position to directly manage the system but that they do want to provide input on services.

Charles Weed expressed that it might make sense for Cheshire Medical Center and other medical providers to consider geography in their scheduling of appointments to increase the number of shared trips that would be possible. For example, trying to group Jaffrey residents into Wednesday appointments would help streamline the transit services needed to serve residents. Stephen Falbel agreed and said that agencies in Vermont have pursued this strategy but without success.

Stephen Falbel explained that several other alternative options exist, including the development of a Specially Designated Entity through the legislature. SWRPC and Stephen Falbel met with Senator Fenton to discuss this possibility, and he expressed that he would be in support of this option if legislative support is needed. A Joint Powers Agreement would allow Cheshire County to share responsibility with other municipalities; however, it may not be a likely option as it would not address the concerns of the Commissioner at the March 2025 meeting. Lastly, the formation of a new non-profit entity could be another valid option, however, there are many other questions which would need to be answered.

Chair Dobisky asked Stephen Falbel about the expected timeline for choosing a sponsor. Stephen explained that it may take up to 9 months for a final choice to be made. Stephen provided an overview of the implementation plan which will guide the next phase of work to start up the “Next Generation” system. Erika Alusic-Bingham asked whether the next 5305(e) grant will fully fund the implementation activities presented by Stephen. Terry Johnson explained that the funding will cover the costs for SWRPC and the consultant, however, the new sponsor will incur costs for its role in implementation activities.

V. MRCC Officers Slate

Chair Dobisky referenced the FY26-27 MRCC officers slate that was included with the meeting packet indicating the following:

- Chair, Frank Dobisky, Thomas Transportation
- Vice Chair, Charlie Pratt, HCS
- Treasurer, Jennifer Robinson, Cheshire County
- Secretary, Lisa Steadman, ABLE NH

Motion: To approve the officers slate for the Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council for the two-year term July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2027.

Motion by Erika Alusic-Bingham, seconded by Sally Malay. Approved by unanimous roll call vote with Chair Dobisky, Vice Chair Pratt, Jennifer Robinson, and Lisa Steadman abstaining.

VI. Partner Updates

Teri Palmer shared that the statewide community needs assessment is moving along and that a draft survey should be arriving in the next couple of weeks. She reminded the group that the assessment is targeting older adults, individuals with disabilities, and veterans. Vice Chair Pratt asked how the survey will be distributed, and Teri explained there will be several strategies utilized. She also announced that the NH Transit Association-State Coordinating Council annual meeting is scheduled for June 13 at the Grappone Center in Concord. Teri additionally shared that ABLE NH is continuing to host “Lunch and Learn” webinars throughout the summer, and their attendance continues to grow.

Sally Malay asked whether anyone has utilized Lyft or Uber in the Monadnock Region as KHKC is continuing to look for transportation for their families. There were no responses. She explained that it could be an option to help meet the needs of their clients. One of their clients currently utilizes the apps. Sally shared she will investigate these services further and will report back to the group.

Charles Weed suggested that there should be a resource, such as a clearinghouse for drivers to post when they have the ability to take additional riders to a specific destination. He asked whether there are any tests or certifications which could be pursued for drivers to certify they are physically fit to drive. Chair Dobisky shared that Thomas Transportation requires this certification for their drivers and that this could be something that should be pursued by other transit entities in the region.

Vice Chair Pratt shared that HCS is seeing their rides increase across the board. Teri Palmer shared that Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC) has 13 new drivers in training in Weare and New Boston.

VII. Mobility Manager Update

Terry Johnson shared that a “Community Conversation” event is scheduled for June 25 in Peterborough to discuss community transportation options. He will be one of the featured speakers. He explained that the “Community Conversations” have a history of successful implementation of the ideas that are generated. Teri Palmer said she will plan to attend. Terry also shared that he is planning to retire at the end of August 2025. He added that he is in discussion with SWRPC management about continuing with SWRPC after he retires in a capacity yet to be defined. That may involve continued support for Region 5 mobility manager activities.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next MRCC meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. It was discussed that the July meeting will likely be cancelled to give the MRCC a break during the summer.

IX. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Cooper, Planner