

Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council for Community Transportation

January 29, 2015

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Michael Acerno, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS)*; Susan Ashworth, *HCS*; Ellen Avery, *Contoocook Valley Transportation Company (CVTC)*; Kathy Baird, *Monadnock RSVP*; Shawn Ballard, *Monadnock United Way (MUW)*; Suzanne Bansley, *Cheshire County*; Bill Graf, *Monadnock at Home*; Sam Lafortune, *CVTC*; Bob Perry, *American Red Cross (ARC)*; Kelly Steiner, *MUW*; Gary Welch, *ARC*.

SWRPC staff present was Tara Germond, *Senior Planner*.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Kelly Steiner called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. and introductions were made.

II. Minutes of October 15, 2014

The minutes from the October 15, 2014 meeting, which was a joint meeting with the Monadnock Region Transportation Management Association, were approved by unanimous vote.

III. Letters of Support

a. SWRPC FTA 5305e Grant Proposal

Tara Germond noted that SWRPC is intending to apply for FTA 5305e Statewide Transportation Planning and Research funding from the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) to update the Region's Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. She explained that this document needs to be updated every four years. In order to be eligible for FTA 5310 funding, a transportation project or service must be identified within this document. Tara Germond distributed a letter of support for MRCC members to sign if they were in support of the application.

b. HCS FTA 5311 Grant Proposal

Susan Ashworth explained that HCS is applying for FTA Section 5311 Non-Urbanized Formula operating and capital assistance. The funds will continue the operation of the City Express in Keene and the Para Express complimentary paratransit service, which are both essential services for many in the community to access activities key to daily living. She requested that MRCC members sign a letter of support if they were in support of the grant proposal.

IV. Updates

a. FTA 5310 Purchase of Service Funding

Suzanne Bansley provided an update on the FTA 5310 Purchase of Service (POS) grant for state fiscal year (SFY) 2015. She noted that as of the end of December, there was \$43,162 or 38% remaining of the \$114,849 awarded to the MRCC Region for 5310 POS. ARC and CVTC have allocated the 1,914 volunteer driver hours needed to support the grant's local match requirement. During this time period, a total of 4,123

trips were provided by ARC, CVTC, and HCS for persons with disabilities or individuals over the age of 60.

b. FTA 5310 Formula Funding

Ellen Avery provided an update on the FTA 5310 Formula Fund grant. She noted that CVTC has been relying entirely on POS funding to support operational costs, which is primarily gas mileage reimbursement for volunteers, for the past six months. CVTC has been utilizing the Formula Fund grant for SFY 2015, which totaled \$48,612, to support administration and overhead costs as well as driver training and background checks.

V. FTA 5310 Funding for SFY 2016 & 2017

Kelly Steiner explained that the goal of this agenda item will be to vote on which providers will receive FTA 5310 POS funding for SFY 2016 and 2017, and FTA 5310 Formula Funding for SFY 2016. She stated that each provider seeking funds will have the opportunity to present their request before the MRCC. Members will have the opportunity to ask questions of each provider. Providers seeking funds will be asked to physically absent themselves from the discussion while the remaining MRCC stakeholders vote on how funds will be distributed.

Tara Germond provided an overview of the funding available to the MRCC Region for the 5310 POS and Formula Fund grants for SFY 2016 and 2017. Of the 5310 POS funds available to the Region there are \$96,291 for SFY 2016 and 2017, respectively. There is a 20% local match requirement. The total POS funding available statewide for distribution in SFY 2016 and SFY 2017 is \$1,834,563, which is comprised of \$1,600,000 of Federal Highway Surface Transportation Program transfer funds and \$234,563 of carry over 5310 POS funds that regions did not expend in their SFY 2014-2015 contracts. This funding was allocated by RCC region according to a formula based on regional populations of residents over 65 and those between the ages of 5-64 with disabilities, using Census data. The MRCC Region was allocated a base amount of \$40,000, plus a proportional amount based on elderly and disability population at the rate of \$2.07 per person for disability population and \$4.00 per person for elderly population.

Tara Germond explained how 5310 POS funds were distributed among transportation providers in the MRCC Region in SFY 2015. Of the \$114,849 available, 47% (\$53,979) went to ARC for volunteer driver services at a fixed cost per trip of \$15; 29% (\$33,306) went to HCS to support a Sprinter Van trip to the Upper Valley and demand response service around Keene as needed at a fixed hourly rate of \$65; 19% (\$21,821) went to CVTC for volunteer driver gas mileage reimbursement at a rate of \$0.45 / mile with \$1,000 set aside for accessible vehicle transportation; and, 5% (\$5,742) went to Cheshire County for the administration costs incurred in their role as lead agency for the grant.

If the MRCC were to allocate SFY 2016 and 2017 funding in the same manner as it did in SFY 2015: \$45,257 would go to ARC; \$27,294 would go to HCS; \$17,295 would go to CVTC; and \$4,815 would go to Cheshire County for each year.

Kelly Steiner asked if there were any other proposals for 5310 POS funding. No other providers expressed interest in being considered for 5310 POS funding.

Gary Welch stated that ARC will expend their remaining 5310 POS funds from SFY 2015 by the end of February 2015. He noted that each year the number of rides provided by ARC's volunteer drivers continues to rise and there is a concern that there will not be enough funding to sustain this program into the future. He stated that ARC currently receives 47% of 5310 POS funds; however, they provide approximately 60% of the total rides provided by ARC, CVTC and HCS. He stated that ARC will be seeking consideration

from the MRCC for \$20,000 of 5310 Formula Funds for SFY 2016. Kathy Baird questioned what was considered a ride. Gary Welch explained that any one-way trip is considered a ride. Kelly Steiner asked if ARC is seeking other sources of funding to support their transportation program. Gary Welch responded that the program is supported by 5310 POS funding and charitable donations. However, the finances for ARC in New Hampshire are administered at the state level. Susan Ashworth noted that HCS only reports to Cheshire County on the total rides given that are funded by 5310 POS. If they were to report on all of the rides given by their agency, including those given by the City Express, Friendly Bus and ParaExpress, the count would be significantly higher. Gary Welch responded that ARC only reports on the rides given to seniors and persons with disabilities. They anticipate giving 9,000 rides for SFY 2015.

Tara Germond provided a presentation on the 5310 Formula Fund grant. She noted that there is \$52,395 available to the MRCC Region for SFY 2016 and 2017, respectively. However, the Region would only be applying for SFY 2016 funds. In SFY 2014 and 2015, there was \$48,612 of these funds available to the Region for each year. CVTC was the sole recipient of these funds in both years. There is a 20% match requirement, for which in-kind (e.g. volunteer hours) can be used to match operating expenses.

Ellen Avery described her proposal for SFY 2016 5310 Formula Funds. She stated that CVTC is seeking \$52,395 to support gas mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers (at a rate of \$0.45 / mile), volunteer driver training and background checks, CVTC's Volunteer Driver Program Coordinator salary, and a portion of CVTC's Executive Director salary. With these funds, CVTC would be able to enhance its mobility management activities and increase opportunities for collaboration with other organizations and transportation providers. CVTC would leverage this funding with funding from the Monadnock United Way and a number of private grants. Ellen Avery stated that CVTC has worked hard to diversify its income stream. CVTC's annual operating budget of approximately \$109,000, is comprised largely of grants (64%) and public support (36%). She noted that 100% of towns in their service area provide support to the program.

Gary Welch explained that ARC's transportation program for FY 2016 will cost approximately \$78,760. He noted that the proposed 5310 POS allocations for SFY 2016 will cover only 57% of this budget, and that it is unlikely the national ARC will continue to support this program if it runs at a loss. He stated that ARC is not seeking to cut other agencies funding, however, they need to seek these funds in order to sustain support for their transportation program. Even with the requested \$20,000, ARC will still be at a loss of \$13,500 for FY 2016. Gary Welch noted that ARC would use the requested funds for mileage reimbursement in the amount of \$0.41/mile. However, they would prefer to use the funds for purchasing trips at a fixed costs of \$15.00, if DOT would allow for in-kind match to support this expense.

Gary Welch asked if Cheshire County would be willing to serve as lead agency for the 5310 Formula Fund grant. Suzanne Bansley noted that the County would be willing, if the MRCC is interested in having them serve in this role. Kathy Baird asked what the implications would be if CVTC or Cheshire County were to serve as the lead agency. Ellen Avery stated that the lead agency would be able to receive up to 5% of funds to support the administration of the grant. In addition, they would be responsible for compiling reports and sharing them with DOT. Suzanne Bansley responded that it would become the responsibility of the lead agency for the terms and conditions of the grant to be met.

Kelly Steiner suggested that the MRCC vote first on 5310 Formula Funds and then on 5310 POS. She asked if there were any additional questions of CVTC or ARC. Hearing none, she asked the representatives present to absent themselves from the room. Bill Graf stated that as he is a volunteer driver for ARC, he felt concerned that he might have a conflict of interest. He absented himself from the room.

Group members discussed the proposals heard from CVTC and ARC for 5310 Formula Funds. Kelly Steiner noted that ARC was offered MUW funding to support their transportation and emergency relief efforts in the last calendar year; however, they declined this funding. She noted that ARC had suggested that it would be easier for the organization to raise the funds through donations. Kelly Steiner explained that in some instances, receiving MUW funds may limit the organization's ability to independently solicit funds from local businesses.

Susan Ashworth noted that ARC's NH West Chapter is the only one in the state that provides transportation service. She also noted that the towns in CVTC's service area are currently underserved in terms of public transportation. She questioned the viability of both organizations if they were to not receive the requested amount of funding, as well as the impact that the loss of these services would have on the communities that currently rely on them. Suzanne Bansley noted that Gary Welch mentioned the ARC would continue to provide rides if they did not receive the funding; however, the national ARC may no longer support this program if it continued to operate at a loss.

Susan Ashworth questioned whether ARC should be diversifying their funding. She noted that CVTC has sought and secured other funds. Kathy Baird questioned how much support from either the state or national ARC is provided to the NH West Chapter's transportation program. Suzanne Bansley stated that the group should evaluate the organizations based on the services they provide, and that the question of what other funding they receive should be evaluated separately.

Susan Ashworth asked Tara Germond to explain the purpose of the Formula Funds. Tara Germond responded that these funds were initially intended by DOT to support the activities of a Regional Transportation Coordinator (RTC). While DOT understands that most regions would be unable to fully support an RTC with the amount of funding available, they encourage the Region's to use the funds for mobility management activities. Kelly Steiner noted that she feels mileage reimbursement or purchasing trips should be funded with the 5310 POS grant and that the Formula Funds should be used to enhance mobility management activities in the Region. Suzanne Bansley asked if mobility management could be part-time. Tara Germond responded that there is no concrete definition of mobility management and that it could be a part-time position. Kelly Steiner noted that mobility management is not currently a component of ARC's proposal and is a portion of the proposal shared by CVTC. Susan Ashworth noted that CVTC may be in a position to do more mobility management with the Formula Funds than they are currently. Kelly Steiner stated that it will be important for the organization(s) that receive Formula Funds to share information and reports with the full MRCC on their progress, similar to the 5310 POS updates.

Michael Acerno asked the group to share their thoughts on whether to grant all or some of ARC's request. Kelly Steiner asked Suzanne Bansley if all recipients of the 5310 POS funds for SFY 2015 will draw down their funds. Suzanne Bansley responded that it appears that CVTC will have approximately \$2,000 remaining if they continue to provide their average monthly rides.

A few additional questions of CVTC and ARC were raised by group members. Representatives from ARC and CVTC returned to the room to answer these additional questions. Tara Germond asked Ellen Avery what impact the loss of \$20,000 of 5310 Formula Funds would have on the viability of the organization. Ellen Avery responded that the loss would compel CVTC to seek these funds from other sources and seek increased level of support from communities. She added that CVTC would most likely need to decrease their mileage reimbursement rate from \$0.45/mile to \$0.41/mile. Kathy Baird asked if CVTC might lose volunteers if they decreased this rate. Ellen Avery noted that it might have an impact on the number of volunteers that are willing to drive long distance trips.

Tara Germond asked Gary Welch what the ARC mileage reimbursement rate would be if they received Formula Funds. Gary Welch responded that it would be the Medicaid rate of \$0.41 / mile.

Tara Germond asked Ellen Avery to describe the mobility management activities of CVTC. Ellen Avery responded that CVTC works to cultivate new volunteer drivers, and works with existing transportation providers in the Region including coordination with ARC and promoting the HCS Sprinter Van trip to the Upper Valley. Recently, they partnered with ARC and Monadnock Developmental Services to provide transportation to two women attending Project Search.

Tara Germond asked Ellen Avery to share information on how much, if any, of the 5310 POS funds they will have leftover at the end of SFY 2015. Ellen Avery responded that she anticipates there will be approximately \$4,000 of the funds left over if they do not spend more money on accessible trips.

Tara Germond asked Ellen Avery to share information on how much of the Formula Funds received by CVTC goes to mileage reimbursement. Ellen Avery responded that there was \$6,200 dedicated to mileage reimbursement in SFY 2015. In SFY 2016, CVTC is requesting \$5,200 for mileage reimbursement.

Having answered the additional questions posed by group members, the providers seeking 5310 Formula Funds absented themselves from the room.

Susan Ashworth stated that she feels pulling \$20,000 out of CVTC's funding would have too negative an impact on the organization in this upcoming year. Kathy Baird stated that ARC significantly surpasses CVTC in the number of rides provided to the Region. Suzanne Bansley noted that if you compare the total amount of 5310 funding allocated to the MRCC Region in SFY 2015, from both Formula Funds and POS, it amounts to \$163,461. Of this amount, CVTC received 43% of the funds (\$70,433.31), ARC received 33% (\$53,979), and HCS received 20% (\$33,306.2). However, between July and December of 2014, ARC provided 63% of the rides to elderly and persons with disabilities in the Region, CVTC provided 21% of the rides, and HCS provided 16% of the rides. Group members agreed that it is important to sustain all services, and that ARC should receive some portion of their request based on the transportation services they provide to the Region for the elderly and persons with disabilities. However, they also recognized the importance of utilizing the 5310 Formula Funds for mobility management purposes. It was noted that the 5310 POS is a two year grant application; whereas, the Formula Fund grant application is for SFY 2016 only. If ARC's request for funding came entirely from the 5310 POS, instead of Formula Funds, it would leave CVTC vulnerable to greater loss of funds in SFY 2017, when organizations will be asked to reapply for Formula Funds. If the request was divided between the two funding sources, it would have less of an impact on CVTC in the long term.

Susan Ashworth and Michael Acerno absented themselves from the room as the discussion began to focus on the allocation of 5310 POS funds.

Group members discussed the importance of having a lead agency for the Formula Funds that does not purchase service from itself. They asked Suzanne Bansley if Cheshire County might consider serving as lead agency for the Formula Fund grant. Suzanne Bansley noted that the County would be open to taking on this role; however, it would be difficult for them to meet the deadlines imposed by DOT for developing a grant application. Tara Germond offered her assistance in pulling the grant application together.

Group members discussed various portions of ARC's request for \$20,000. They decided that \$12,000 of the request should be granted, with \$6,000 coming from 5310 POS and \$6,000 coming from Formula funds. CVTC would receive the remainder of the Formula Funds, and would receive \$6,000 less in 5310 POS funds.

Motion: To allocate the \$52,395 of FTA 5310 Formula Funds available to the MRCC Region for SFY 2016 as follows: \$6,000 ARC, \$43,775 to CVTC, and \$2,620 to Cheshire County. Cheshire County will serve as lead agency for the grant and SWRPC will work with the County to develop the grant application.

Motion made by Suzanne Bansley, seconded by Kathy Baird.

Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Motion: To allocate the \$192,582 of FTA 5310 POS Funds available to the MRCC Region for SFY 2016 and SFY 2017 as follows: \$102,514 to ARC, \$24,590.58 to CVTC, \$55,849 to HCS, and \$9,629 to Cheshire County, who will serve as lead agency.

Motion made by Suzanne Bansley, seconded by Kathy Baird.

Motion approved by unanimous vote.

The providers that were absent from the room returned. Tara Germond read the motions to these providers.

VI. Southwest Region Coordinated Plan Addendum

Due to time constraints, the group decided to post-pone discussion on this item until the next meeting.

VII. Other Items

Kelly Steiner suggested the formation of a subcommittee to examine and review the MRCC process for allocating funding. Suzanne Bansley noted that she would be interested in serving on this subcommittee. Tara Germond will share information on this subcommittee with the larger group via email following the meeting.

IX. Next Meeting

Tara Germond will coordinate the next meeting date and time with group members.

X. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tara Germond, *Senior Planner*