

# Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council for Community Transportation

## MINUTES

February 2, 2016

**Present:** Michael Acerno, *Home Healthcare, Hospice, Community Services (HCS)*; Susan Ashworth, *Home Healthcare, Hospice Community Services (HCS)*; Ellen Avery, *Contoocook Valley Transportation Center (CVTC)*; Kathy Baird, *Monadnock RSVP*; Suzanne Bansley, *Cheshire County*; April Buzby, *Keene Housing*; Liz Chipman, *Keene Housing Kids Collaborative*; Karen Fabis, *American Red Cross-NH West Chapter (ARC)*; Bill Graff, *Monadnock at Home*; Kelly Steiner, *Monadnock United Way*.

SWRPC staff present were J.B. Mack, *Principal Planner*, and Liz Kelly, *Planning Technician*.

### I. Minutes December 8, 2015

The minutes of December 8, 2015 were approved by unanimous vote.

### II. Updates

J.B. Mack said that he would like to provide the Council with several updates. The MRCC bylaws have guidelines on what constitutes a quorum based on the number of members in good standing. J. B. Mack explained that seven members are currently in good standing, therefore, four members constitute a quorum for this meeting. J. B. Mack clarified that each agency has one voting member on the MRCC, but each agency can have alternate representatives vote in cases where members cannot attend. Currently, his list has Michael Acerno serving as the member and Susan Ashworth serving as the alternate member for HCS. For American Red Cross, his list has Karen Fabis serving as the member and Gary Welch and Bob Perry serving as alternate members. Karen Fabis clarified that only Gary Welch should be listed as an alternate member. J. B. Mack asked Suzanne Bansley if Chuck Weed should be a member or alternate member for Cheshire County. J. B. Mack recommended that Chuck Weed be considered a citizen member. Suzanne Bansley agreed. There was consensus among the MRCC that having Chuck Weed on as a citizen member made sense going forward.

#### a. Co-Treasurer's Reports

Suzanne Bansley distributed copies of the MRCC's FY 2016 and 2017 NH DOT 5310 Purchase of Service Report for the end of January 2016. Suzanne Bansley explained that grant reports, which include expenditures, current balances, number of volunteer in-kind hours, and trips requested/denied, are created monthly and can be requested by members of the MRCC at any time. Suzanne Bansley noted that the numbers for total trips denied are accurate and can be useful information in future program planning by transportation providers. Suzanne Bansley also mentioned that the 5310 POS contract has already exceeded its requirement for volunteer in-kind hours for FY 2016, but noted that American Red Cross has accounted for most of those in-kind hours.

Kelly Steiner asked if the MRCC can get a town-by-town breakdown of ride origins and destinations. The data may be helpful if the MRCC decides to proceed in speaking with towns about the vehicle registration excise tax. Suzanne Bansley and Ellen Avery stated that they can provide that information. J.B. Mack stated that staff will be analyzing this data in the coming months because it is part of a scope of

work in a two-year FTA 5305(e) grant that was awarded to SWRPC in July 2015. There's an opportunity to provide other members this information all at once. Suzanne Bansley reported she has all the American Red Cross reports and she can send them by email to J.B. Mack

Ellen Avery presented the MRCC's FY 2016 NH DOT 5310 Formula Report and said that volunteer hours are high and that ambulatory trips and trips denied are separate and distinct from previous grant reports. Ellen Avery explained that January was the first month CVTC provided trips for both CVTC clientele and American Red Cross clientele. 329 trips were requested and 284 were met region-wide. The unmet need for CVTC at the end of 2015 was over 15 percent and CVTC ended January with an unmet need of less than 7.5 percent. Ellen Avery said that former Red Cross drivers are now driving with CVTC. The transition has been fairly smooth, with only a few mishaps here and there.

**b. MRCC Allocation Subcommittee Report**

J.B. Mack said that the MRCC Allocation Subcommittee met on January 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss the process of reviewing new funds from the 5310 Formula Grant Program, which are funds targeting seniors and individuals with disabilities with transportation needs. J.B. Mack mentioned that the funding can be used to provide individuals from other population sectors' rides if they are sharing a ride with a senior or an individual with a disability. Suzanne Bansley mentioned that if you solely give a ride to someone who isn't a senior or individual with a disability, then it cannot technically be counted toward the grant.

Kelly Steiner asked how "disabled" is being defined in this context. Suzanne Bansley said that she assumed it would be the ADA definition but doesn't know for sure. The group agreed a clear definition should be established as MRCC begins to create its vision in the coming months. It might play into how vision is developed and what resources MRCC may choose to pursue. Suzanne Bansley and Michael Acerno spoke about accessible transit disability and what that looks like. Susan Ashworth said that clarity is important and J.B. Mack said that we can talk to NH DOT to get clarification.

Suzanne Bansley asked J.B. Mack about Formula Funds and if they are 5310 funds. J.B. Mack explained the three 5310 grants that NH DOT administers: Formula funds, Purchase of Service funds, and Capital funding. J.B. Mack went on to explain that the MRCC Allocation Subcommittee had agreed to develop an MRCC application, which was sent out to all MRCC members. J.B. Mack mentioned that there is scoring criteria associated with the grant and that the grant has an aggressive timeline in order to meet NH DOT's schedule for sending contracts to the NH Executive Council. The MRCC Allocation Subcommittee has asked that applications be submitted by February 19, 2016.

J.B. Mack reported that Rhett Lamb, a member of Allocation Subcommittee, has asked if Tara Kessler can replace him on the Subcommittee due to his busy schedule. J.B. Mack noted that the group would need to vote on changing the Allocation Subcommittee slate and requested the group's input.

**Motion: To approve Tara Kessler as replacement for Rhett Lamb on the Allocation Subcommittee.**

Motion by Michael Acerno, seconded by Ellen Avery. Approved by unanimous vote.

### **c. Community Transportation Directory**

J.B. Mack explained that SWRPC applied for and received a two-year grant to conduct several transportation activities which are designed to lead to an updated Coordinated Plan for Southwest New Hampshire. The 5305(e) grant is a two-year scope of work. In the first year, the grant's primary focus is updating the community transportation directory and developing a map that shows existing transportation routes and service areas. J.B. Mack mentioned that Liz Kelly has started updating the directory.

Liz Kelly noted that she has contacted just under half of the listed transportation services thus far. They've mostly been providers that classify themselves as Dial-A-Ride, Human Service Agency, Medical, and Private Hire/Taxi. Most of them have had some changes to their services including days/time of operation, geographical range that they service, and other changes. Liz Kelly and J.B. Mack had met about the directory and are looking into ways it can be more user-friendly in terms of layout and how the content is organized. J.B. Mack mentioned that SWRPC wants the MRCC's input on other ideas for how the directory could be updated. Should other transportation services be added? Should the format of the document change? Should the directory include all taxi services, inner city buses, or Amtrak?

Suzanne Bansley asked where the directory is located. J.B. Mack responded that it's on the MRCC website, the MAST website, and there are also hard copies. Suzanne Bansley said that it might benefit tourism if we include Amtrak and airplane services in the directory. Ellen Avery mentioned that there is a map made by DOT that shows all New England Transit routes. Ellen Avery said that it could be useful to show how Monadnock Region transportation fits within our New England system. Suzanne Bansley mentioned that we could include the directory on other web platforms such as the Chamber of Commerce website and all of the town's websites. An online database could be easily updated. Karen Fabis agreed and mentioned that it is a good referral document for when people call for rides, but aren't eligible. She stated that her agency uses it frequently. Kelly Steiner mentioned that it might be worth having a conversation with Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce and other initiatives to see if they're doing any similar projects and to try to coordinate efforts with them. Suzanne Bansley said having pedestrian and bicycle transportation details could also be useful such as a list of bike pathways, rail trails, and bicycle rental opportunities.

J.B. Mack mentioned that we could expand the audience of the document to target the general population as well as human service agencies, and that is for the MRCC to decide. Ellen Avery mentioned that she liked that the document was organized by both agency type and town. Though it's redundant, both sections are helpful.

Ellen Avery asked how we should promote this tool. Kelly Steiner said that we can create a strategy to disseminate the information most effectively. All MRCC members made a commitment to link the directory to their websites. J.B. Mack stated that he would send an email with a link to the directory to MRCC members. When he does that, he will ask for their input on the current document (what you like about the directory, what you would change, etc.).

Kelly Steiner asked what the timeline is and J.B. Mack said that June 30<sup>th</sup> is the deadline but noted that collecting data was the first priority. After that it would be important to focus on the layout. Kelly Steiner said that once the directory is closer to completion, the MRCC can assist J.B. Mack and Liz Kelly in coming up with a dissemination plan. J.B. Mack said that he would like future meetings to focus largely on the 5305(e) grant once the visioning discussion and grants are wrapping up.

#### **d. Coordinated Plan**

J.B. Mack said that an update of the Coordinated Community Transportation Plan for Southwest New Hampshire is part of the scope of work for the 5305(e) grant previously mentioned. The SWRPC scope of work has it working with the MRCC to create an update to the plan by June 30, 2017. However, since NH DOT requires a Coordinated Plan update every five years (and the last update was in 2011), J.B. Mack recommended a minor update this year. J. B. Mack explained that the MRCC will need to meet at the end of the month to vote on Formula funds. As part of that meeting, he recommended that the MRCC vote for an update to the Coordinated Plan. The Coordinated Plan is important for MRCC from a technical perspective since it is used to justify and support FTA grant applications. J.B. Mack suggested that the preliminary update be a basic scan of the current document and that he can work with lead agencies to make sure the Plan is consistent with grants for which they expect to apply for before June 30, 2017. J. B. Mack noted that since the group is interested in expanding the MRCC membership, he recommends that all known transportation providers should be included regardless if they're currently active MRCC members or not.

#### **e. Other Updates**

Kelly Steiner asked for other updates. Michael Acerno announced that he represents the MRCC at State Coordinating Council (SCC) meetings and provided an update. Michael Acerno passed out a document outlining the scope of services for a Request for Proposals for a Statewide Transportation Services Plan that is going out to bid to consultants. J.B. Mack provided context to some of the newer MRCC members by stating that there are nine regional coordinating councils in New Hampshire that are overseen by the SCC. The SCC's membership includes representatives from state agencies and other groups interested in community transportation. The SCC provides guidance to the RCCs on how to encourage community transportation coordination in New Hampshire. Michael Acerno said that NH DOT, the Governor, and the Department of Education all have representatives at the table. Michael Acerno also mentioned the FAST ACT passed in December and he's been trying to get involved in the conversation of where that money's going and how it will be spent.

J.B. Mack mentioned that NH DOT advised that MRCC provide input at the SCC level as to how future 5310 funds are used. In the future, the 5310 Formula fund might be used for mobility management only. Today there is more flexibility in how the 5310 Formula funds are used since it can include purchase of service contracts as well. He recommended that Michael Acerno report back on any SCC discussions about the use of 5310 Formula funds. Ellen Avery asked if it was a year ago that this cycle of 5310 money became available. She said that the more urban areas with larger populations get most of this money and rural communities get the short end of the stick. Ellen Avery said she spoke to Shelly Winters at NH DOT last year about the distribution of funds and methodology. Ellen Avery said she recalled Shelly Winters had said that 2017-2019 are the years where MRCC could impact fund distribution. Michael Acerno stated that there is money set aside for rural communities by the FAST Act. Liz Chipman asked if mileage can be put ahead of population in deciding who funds are given to, since many who live in the Monadnock Region have to travel lengthy distances. J.B. Mack said that currently the 5310 funds are based on US Census numbers of people ages 60 or above as well as the number of people documented with a disability.

Susan Ashworth stated that the group needs to be careful when looking into the ramifications of recommending funding policy changes. She mentioned that regional transportation providers are currently petitioning the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services to go back to its policy of reimbursing per trip. A reimbursement policy change last year, which reimburses by mileage has made it extremely difficult to provide rides. The change added more administrative overhead and doesn't accomplish what it was intended to do. Susan Ashworth said that it was devastating to programs that are just running elderly transportation like Keene's Friendly Bus. Kelly Steiner said that the MRCC should strategically think about what we want to be advocating.

For another update, J.B. Mack stated that NH DOT has alerted the RCCs about a new grant opportunity. The grant, which stems from the U.S. Administration for Community Living and is managed in partnership with FTA, has announced the availability of Inclusive Planning Impact Grants. The planning grants are for engaging seniors and individuals with disabilities in the transportation coordination process and involve them in how the coordinated transportation system is designed. There are three focus areas of this federal grant: access to healthcare, access to jobs, and/or integration into the community. J.B. Mack said that eight communities in the country are expected to be awarded funds up to \$86,000 each. Only non-profits and government agencies can apply. The deadline is March 18, 2016 and J.B. Mack said he expects it to be very competitive. Kelly Steiner asked if the state is looking into the application process and J.B. Mack said that they are and have advised that if any regional coordinating councils want to apply to let them know. Kelly Steiner said that the MRCC could participate if New Hampshire applies, but the deadline is too soon to do anything independently. Ellen Avery asked Michael Acerno if the SCC has mentioned this and Michael Acerno didn't know but will find out more at the next SCC meeting later this week.

Kelly Steiner talked about a grant called the Strengthening Families Workplace Imitative Grant through the U.S. Department of Labor. The focus of the grant is to increase opportunity to link low-income families to job training and part of that is providing transit. The state is pursuing the grant in partnership with community colleges who are taking the lead. Kelly Steiner noted she might ask for input from the MRCC at a later date. The application is due by March 16, 2016.

Kathy Baird announced that Monadnock R.S.V.P hired a coordinator for Peterborough named Joel Green who's currently managing the Merrimack Service link. April Buzby said that Keene Housing is close to hiring a Residential Services Coordinator for the elderly disabled population.

### **III. MRCC Vision Discussion**

J. B. Mack announced that Jane Lapointe, the independent facilitator retained for the MRCC's visioning discussion, was unable to attend the meeting today, so the visioning discussion has been postponed. Kelly Steiner reminded the group that it is important to think broadly aside from grants during the visioning process to determine how we really see our transportation network taking shape. J.B. Mack said that the MRCC could do visioning as part of its late February meeting if they get through a vote on the Coordinated Plan update and 5310 Formula Grant quickly. Kelly Steiner suggested we set aside an hour or two during that meeting for visioning.

#### **IV. Town Outreach**

J. B. Mack announced that at the previous meeting, the MRCC requested that the agenda include a discussion about motor vehicle excise fees allowed by NH RSA 261:153. These funds can be used for a range of transportation projects including road and bridge repair, parking lot maintenance, public transit, and pedestrian and bicycle projects. Michael Acerno said that a new legislative bill, HB 1119, would allow towns to raise funds for transportation by increasing vehicle registration fees up to \$10 per vehicle. Currently the maximum amount that can be collected per vehicle is \$5. J. B. Mack said that he learned earlier in the day that the bill was found by a house committee as “inexpedient to legislate.”

J.B. Mack mentioned the Upper Valley Transportation Management Authority works on transportation issues and conducted a statewide survey on how the motor vehicle excise fees are being used currently. Among the towns that answered the survey, 32 percent didn’t know about the option. Almost all towns use the funds for road and bridge projects, although some towns utilized the funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects. Lebanon was the only town who reported back that they set aside funds for public transit. Some towns in Cheshire County have instated the fee already, including Keene and Swanzey. Ellen Avery said the Town of Jaffrey decided not to instate the fee. Kelly Steiner mentioned that Cheshire County After-School Network wants a representative to come to MRCC meetings because of their concerns with transportation options for after-school programs. Kelly Steiner mentioned that the MRCC should build this consideration into future town outreach as well as the Coordinated Plan.

Susan Ashworth suggested that the MRCC do more research to see how much money is really being collected through this fee. J.B. Mack said he believes he can get motor vehicle registration data and present this information to the Council at a future meeting.

#### **V. Next Meeting**

Kelly Steiner asked if there are any other updates and if we should do the visioning session in February. The MRCC decided to meet next on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. A business meeting would begin at 1:00 p.m., followed a visioning session.

#### **VI. Public Comment**

There were no members of the general public present.

#### **VII. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Kelly  
Planning Technician