

# Monadnock Region Coordinating Council for Community Transportation

## MINUTES

May 12, 2016

**Present:** Michael Acerno, *Home Healthcare, Hospice Community Services (HCS)*; Susan Ashworth, *HCS*; Ellen Avery, *Contoocook Valley Transportation Center (CVTC)*; Suzanne Bansley, *Cheshire County*; April Buzby, *Keene Housing*; Harry Costick, *Disabled American Veterans (DAV)*; Karen Fabis, *American Red Cross-NH West Chapter (ARC)*; Bill Graff, *Monadnock At Home*; Tara Kessler, *City of Keene*, Kelly Steiner, *Monadnock United Way*; Gary Welch, *DAV*; and Bob Perry, *Citizen*.

Staff members present were J. B. Mack, *Principal Planner*; Raul Gonzalez, *Planner*; and Liz Kelly, *Planning Technician*

**Guests:** Bill Finn & Rebecca Harris, *State Coordinating Council for State Transportation (SCC)*

### I. Minutes of February 23, 2016

The minutes of February 23, 2016 were approved by unanimous vote. J.B. Mack mentioned that some names were mistakenly switched in the “present” and “guests” sections of the minutes and that SWRPC staff will correct that mistake.

### II. State Coordinating Council of Survey of Regional Coordinating Councils

Kelly Steiner welcomed Rebecca Harris from the State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation (SCC) to the MRCC meeting. Ms. Harris explained that she is attending the MRCC meeting to give a presentation and discuss results from the 2015 RCC survey that SCC distributed to all New Hampshire RCCs. She hopes to facilitate more dialogue with the state RCCs in regards to best practices, challenges, and strategies. The purpose of the survey was to learn the state of coordination across the regions, share regional successes and challenges, and find out how SCC can better support the RCCs. Ms. Harris explained that data from the survey and executive summary will help the SCC rewrite the State Coordinated Community Transportation Plan and can be used for other purposes such as their annual report. In addition, the data will be used to help the SCC engage agencies at the state and regional levels by demonstrating what coordinated transportation currently looks like in New Hampshire.

Ms. Harris proceeded by giving an overview of the survey results submitted by the NH RCCs. Eight of the nine Regional Coordinating Councils reported that coordination has progressed within their respective regions. Only one region has increased its membership and five regions have decreased their membership. RCCs in New Hampshire encourage participation through a number of methods including presentations, word of mouth, websites, social media, and opting to host meetings during flexible times.

Ms. Harris mentioned that all NH RCCs have seen participation beyond just 5310 funding recipients and regional planning commissions, although some have broader memberships than others. Most RCCs reported that the general public and agencies within their region are not aware of the RCCs’ work. The transportation directories are among the documents that increase the general public’s awareness of an RCC’s services. To engage the public, RCCs reported using a number of outreach methods to engage

stakeholders including presentations, social media, newsletters, speaking at gatherings, and developing reports for agency boards.

Ms. Harris showed what RCCs thought were positive outcomes from RCC coordination activities. Answers ranged from benefits of information sharing, new services being funded by 5310 grants, and learning how providers and regions operate. Negative coordination outcomes reported by RCCs included conflict over funding, inadequate funding, lack of interest, and limited capacity.

Common barriers and challenges that face RCCs include a lack of shared scheduling software for transportation providers to coordinate with, a lack of awareness of transportation needs in town, a lack of capacity to implement project ideas, insurance or regulatory barriers especially for vehicle sharing, and a shortage of paid and volunteer drivers. Ms. Harris also mentioned that many RCCs have come up against volunteer drivers who are not receiving appropriate background checks. RCCs find that SCC supports RCCs by providing 5310 funding, volunteer driver program forums, bringing partners to the table, sharing information on coordination models, and providing support to agencies working with the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS). BEAS provides Title IIIB funding.

RCCs recommended a number of improvements the SCC could work on to better support future coordination efforts including technical assistance improvements such as strategic planning, data collection, and information sharing forums. Other improvement needs that SCC could potentially address were items like advocacy, helping locate funding for equipment, assisting in developing partnerships with stakeholders, politicians, and organizations, and working with state and federal officials to remove funding silos and other restrictive rules.

RCCs reported utilizing nontraditional sources of funding for various projects including pooling in-kind matching, bank funding, appeals to towns and county, volunteer driver time as soft match, Monadnock United Way funding, and contributions from grocery store destinations. J. B. Mack asked which regions have been successful in getting contributions from grocery stores. Ms. Harris said that Region 8 (greater Manchester area) has been successful with this method. Ms. Harris said that Tim White of Southern NH Planning Commission would be a good resource. Ms. Harris said that, unfortunately, many RCCs were seeing reduced funding and having to cut back on services.

Some takeaways reported by RCCs in providing coordination services through 5310 funding include the acknowledgement that it's a great way to fund transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, but the need usually goes beyond those groups. The report also learned that rural programs get less money but tend to experience a greater cost per trip because trips tend to be longer distances. Ms. Harris also noted that groups not receiving 5310 funds tend to drop out of the RCC.

Ms. Harris described the best practices outlined by RCCs for using 5310 Purchase of Service (POS) or Formula funds. Those practices included using the funds for projects that aren't already covered by other programs (Medicaid), watching expenditures and having a triage policy so funds don't run out early, engaging a broad spectrum of groups and people, keeping good data which will help with funders, and utilizing regional planning commission staff. Other hurdles and barriers RCCs identified included late reimbursements, silos, municipalities struggling to provide matching funds, and that high demand for services exceeds funding or capacity.

After her presentation, Ms. Harris requested feedback and thoughts from MRCC members regarding the survey data and the upcoming coordination plan update. She will take them back to the full SCC. Ellen Avery suggested that the SCC have a quarterly newsletter to keep RCCs up to date with coordinated transportation activities. Ms. Avery said she was not sure if she has even seen the annual report. Bill Finn said that the report should be on the SCC website.

Kelly Steiner asked Ms. Harris to consider location when identifying RCC best practices since best practices may differ depending on if the transportation is in a rural or urban locale. Ms. Steiner also mentioned that the best practices listed in the powerpoint presentation were general and having more detail would be helpful. Ms. Harris reported that they were currently evaluating and analyzing those practices as they sift through the survey results.

Ms. Harris closed her presentation by explaining that they would be presenting survey results to all RCCs and hope to receive comments and feedback from RCC members. J. B. Mack encouraged the group to read the full survey analysis and send him comments by e-mail. Kelly Steiner urged MRCC members to review the plan and send comments before the end of June so that J.B. Mack may compile and send them to Rebecca Harris for review at the July SCC meeting.

J. B. Mack asked Ms. Harris if there were updates on the SCC's intent to apply for the recently announced Federal Transit Administration (FTA) "Rides to Wellness" Grant. Ms. Harris said she did not have that information, but those updates would be in the next round of SCC meeting minutes.

### **III. Updates**

J. B. Mack reported that the public comment period expired last month for the *Addendum to the Coordinated Plan for Southwest New Hampshire* (Plan). No comments were submitted during the period. He reminded the Committee that at the February MRCC meeting, the Committee voted to automatically endorse the Plan, if there was no substantive feedback on the Plan during the public comment period. He will update the Plan on the MRCC website so that it no longer shows as a draft plan.

J. B. Mack also gave an update on the Monadnock Region FTA 5310 Formula funding proposal for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2017. He reminded the Committee that at their February meeting they approved the MRCC Allocation Subcommittee's recommendation to endorse the allocation of \$33,342 of the \$52,395 Formula Funds to CVTC, which would be used to support a full time CVTC Volunteer Driver Program Coordinator position. The motion also provided the MRCC Allocation Subcommittee the latitude to meet with and negotiate with CVTC on the remaining aspects of a scope of work to provide mobility management services on behalf of Regions 5 and 6. He noted that CVTC and the MRCC Allocation Subcommittee reached a resolution and approved the use of \$19,053 for the CVTC Executive Director to meet with towns in Cheshire County and host a meeting with legislators to educate them about transportation need and the role of the MRCC in addressing this need. CVTC will be working with the MRCC to refine the details of how this educational program will be rolled out. SWRPC and CVTC have already submitted the application and NHDOT has responded that the funding will be available starting July 1, 2016 when the next fiscal year begins.

J. B. Mack mentioned that he sent an announcement to the MRCC about a new FTA grant program called "Rides to Wellness" to see if there was interest among MRCC members in that funding. He noted that he heard that the SCC is interested in applying for the funding on behalf of the State, but has not heard the details. J. B. Mack also mentioned he sent information about a FTA 5310 Capital grant opportunity, which is intended to pay for transportation-related infrastructure, such as vans, scheduling software or other needs used to serve seniors or people with disabilities. The grant application is due by June 13<sup>th</sup> and the MRCC could provide a support letter for MRCC members that are interested in applying.

Ellen Avery distributed CVTC's FTA 5310 Formula Fund Report. The report tracks volunteer hours, cash match, trips provided, trips denied, accessible trips, and total trips. She reported that CVTC will likely run out of mobility management money in June but will continue efforts and services regardless.

Ms. Avery noted that there will be some money left over in accessible transportation, however. J. B. Mack observed that there were many more volunteer hours than originally budgeted, to which Ms. Avery replied that that pattern has been consistent.

Ms. Avery explained that starting the next fiscal year, the formula funds will support only mobility management and the purchase of service funds will be used for only rides. Suzanne Bansley asked for clarification on how mobility management funds will be spent. Ellen Avery said that the funds would go towards CVTC's expansion efforts including bringing the rest of the towns up to speed on service information. Ms. Avery said she would also be promoting the RCC to the towns as well. J. B. Mack clarified that approximately \$33,000 is intended to pay for a full time volunteer coordinator and approximately \$19,000 would be used toward educating towns about transportation need and promoting the RCC.

Suzanne Bansley passed around the FTA 5310 Purchase of Service (POS) budget. The current balance is just shy of \$15,000. CVTC's budget has increased since taking over Red Cross services in the eastern part of the region. Red Cross is decreasing expenditures and rides provided overall. Ms. Bansley provided projections for the amount of funds that will be left over at the end of the fiscal year. The first projection was based on an average of spending from January through April. Ms. Bansley said she predicted about \$4,500 will be left to reallocate based on past expenditures. However, if HCS spends the rest of its budget, this will impact the amount of money left to reallocate. Ms. Bansley also noted that since CVTC is expected to increase its spending, she doesn't anticipate any substantial surplus funds at the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Bansley mentioned that she would like to discuss next year's funding and would like to vote on how to reallocate funds if there is leftover money. J. B. Mack stated that this matter is scheduled to be addressed in the next agenda item.

Michael Acerno passed around three months' worth of SCC meeting minutes to the group. Mr. Acerno also noted that he had seen a decline in the number of rides HCS has been providing during the last month and that they may have about \$500 leftover from their funds.

Ellen Avery told the group about CVTC's new hire. This employee will attract new volunteer drivers, promote the CVTC mission, and will analyze SCC data to identify ridership density. This will help CVTC prioritize towns and connect with them as they take over more of the Red Cross's service areas. The employee will work 20 hours per week until the end of July.

#### **IV. SFY 2016-2017 5310 Purchase of Service (POS) Grant**

J. B. Mack distributed a handout (attached) illustrating the MRCC Allocation Subcommittee's recommendations for the distribution of SFY 2017 FTA 5310 POS funds. He explained that the SFY 2016-17 5310 POS funding is a 2-year FTA grant administered by Cheshire County, starting July 1, 2015 and ending June 30, 2017. Originally, the MRCC endorsed an allocation of the available funds to three agencies including CVTC, American Red Cross, and HCS. Since the American Red Cross' services are concluding, the budget will need to be modified. During a previous meeting in November 2015, the MRCC developed an arrangement to begin shifting the SFY 2016 FTA 5310 POS funding to CVTC, enabling CVTC to take responsibility of American Red Cross rides in the eastern Monadnock region. Mr. Mack noted that the MRCC is fast approaching SFY 2017 and the handout shows recommendations for how the grant money could be redistributed. Mr. Mack described what information was included in the handout including the contents of each table. He explained how the MRCC Allocation Subcommittee examined transportation agencies funding requests, past performance and past spending information. Mr. Mack reminded the group that the subcommittee is advisory and that their recommendation is advisory only.

J. B. Mack reported that the sub-committee is recommending \$35,055 be allocated to CVTC (CVTC's original request was \$63,532), \$27,925 to HCS, and \$14,904 to the DAV. DAV, as an agency, would be a new MRCC FTA 5310 POS contractor under this recommendation. The organization proposes providing rides to disabled veterans that are 60 years of age or older or have a disability. Although they are a new agency to the MRCC, the two managers operating this service are very familiar with the MRCC or FTA 5310 POS funds. The DAV service would be run by Gary Welch (formerly of American Red Cross) and Harry Costick (formerly of HCS). Since veterans were a large group of American Red Cross' clientele, the DAV's proposal would be to step in to fill that niche.

J. B. Mack noted that the total amount of funding available for SFY 2017 FTA 5310 POS transportation services is \$91,477, which leaves a balance of \$13,593. The MRCC Allocation Subcommittee is recommending that the balance be divided evenly between the three agencies in case the agencies exceed their trip goals and budgets. In addition the budget is recommended to be a resource to address rides that are currently considered "unmet need" rides. For example, if CVTC or DAV, which currently do not have accessible vehicles, need to subcontract with an agency to provide an accessible ride, this funding would be used for that purpose. Similarly, if a CVTC volunteer driver cannot be found to provide a requested ride, the funding could be used to contract with a predetermined subcontracting transportation provider that could. In the case of the DAV, if it received a veteran ride request to a medical facility far away, such as Boston, this funding could be used to purchase a ride for that person. In the case of all agencies, which do not offer weekend or evening trips, this funding could potentially be used for important weekend or evening trips. Ellen Avery asked if DAV have an accessible vehicle. Gary Welch responded that they did not. Kelly Steiner said that the subcommittee recommended carrying over any leftover 2016 funds and splitting them evenly into the reserve accounts for meeting unmet need or exceeding trip goals to the next fiscal year's funding as well.

Suzanne Bansley reminded the group that, according to federal guidelines, a proposal has to specify where all of the funds are going. In this case, the \$13,593 amount would be divided evenly plus carry forward any leftover SFY 2016 funds. Ms. Bansley explained that under this proposal, she would create a report next year with two account lines for each provider. One line would track the regular budget information and the other line would track agencies exceeding trip goals or addressing unmet needs based on the reports given to her by transportation service providers. Ms. Bansley noted that, technically, funds could be used interchangeably between agencies. However, in order to shift funds between providers, they would need to reconvene as a group to make that decision.

Ellen Avery asked why the extra money isn't distributed to the three providers evenly from the start (i.e. why isn't it just added to their allocations to begin with). Suzanne Bansley said there is value to have that information separated in the report. The quality of the expenditure data is important because it can be used for seeking funding and for the RCC's own analytical purposes. It will give the RCC more quantitative and qualitative information on measuring unmet needs and will be useful for future planning.

J.B. Mack said that an agency who could not meet a need could refer the client to another agency or bring in additional transportation resources to fulfill unmet needs. For example, they could set up a taxi voucher system. Suzanne Bansley said that the agencies could arrange to purchase taxi vouchers from a local taxi company as an example. However, Cheshire County would not reimburse the taxi company directly. The individual providers would do this, and then report their expenditures along with other rides they've provided in their monthly reports to Cheshire County.

Tara Kessler noted that having a sufficient amount of money available for accessible transportation is already a federal grant requirement. These accounts would be used for meeting that obligation, but the account could be used for other ride requests that the agency is not equipped to provide as well. She clarified that the recommendation provided by the subcommittee considered what agencies requested,

how all agencies reported they charge for rides, and their historical and projected ridership. CVTC's decrease from its original request was based on what it considered a reasonable number of rides the agency could provide at the rate at which it is charging trips and the figure it gave for average trip length. She noted the 4,500 trip goal figure for CVTC exceeds all of the rides that CVTC, ARC and HCS will give this fiscal year (CVTC's estimated trip figure was that it would provide 8,155 trips in SFY 2017). J. B. Mack told the group that he contacted all three agencies including CVTC ahead of time to explain the subcommittee's recommendation.

Ellen Avery said that CVTC doesn't feel the subcommittee had enough information about CVTC's plans when making their recommendation. She said she would like the MRCC to consider tabling the POS decision until CVTC can go over all projections and present them to the subcommittee, especially if there is skepticism on CVTC's numbers.

Kelly Steiner asked if there are any other comments from the group. April Buzby asked for clarification if the recommendation from the MRCC Allocation Subcommittee is to allocate the full amount of funds available. She also understands that accessible services have to be included. She added that it is her understanding that the MRCC has to fully allocate all of the funds to a designated group. Ms. Bansley said that, although the RCC wants to do its best to allocate it the right way the first time around, an amendment can always be written if the RCC finds funds need to be moved from one agency to another at a later date.

Harry Costick asked how the number of trips and average miles were determined by CVTC, which led into a conversation about how the CVTC budget was determined. J. B. Mack explained that CVTC's initial request for funding was \$63,532 based on 41 cents per mile rate driving 154,956 projected miles driven in 1 year. The average trip distance cited by CVTC was 19 miles. Karen Fabis mentioned that ARC rides are included in the numbers as well as long distance trips. Bob Perry asked if ARC' veteran trips were or were not worked into that number. J. B. Mack said that the ARC' veteran trips are worked into the number, and there were approximately 600 veteran trips in SFY 2015 as a reference. J. B. Mack explained that if the MRCC decides to commit funding to the DAV, it would in effect subtract those rides from the CVTC estimate. In regard to CVTC's allocation of funds, Tara Kessler said that the subcommittee did some reverse calculation to determine the appropriate amount of funds for CVTC. Ellen Avery mentioned again that she would like the subcommittee to review the projections before a decision is made.

Susan Ashworth asked what the grant constraints are. Suzanne Bansley said that the RCC has flexibility regarding timing. Ms. Bansley recommended that the RCC meet in September so that data from the transportation service providers for July and August will be available for review. Ms. Bansley also said that the RCC can discuss DAV's progress and any other issues with the funding such as there not being enough set aside for CVTC. Kelly Steiner reminded the group that if they don't make any decision today, DAV would not be able to access any of the funds come July 1, 2016.

**Motion: To table decision for all purchase of service funding until CVTC can share projection detail with the sub-committee regarding their funding request.**

Motion by Ellen Avery, seconded by Bill Graff. Kelly Steiner asked for comments.

Michael Acerno stated that he wants to come to a full decision today and doesn't want to delay making a decision past July 1, 2016. Susan Ashworth asked if the motion could be amended to include a time-frame. Ellen Avery asked if the whole group had to be present to discuss CVTC and allocation subcommittee's recommendations. J. B. Mack said that the subcommittee could be the ones to meet and refine the recommendation if the MRCC votes to give them this responsibility.

**Ellen Avery withdrew her original motion.**

Ellen Avery considered amending her motion to include a July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for making a POS funding decision before July 1, 2016. Suzanne Bansley said that there is not a rush for a July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline but a final decision should definitely be made by August 1<sup>st</sup>. Michael Acerno said he would accept August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for CVTC, but that we should not table a decision being made entirely, to which Suzanne Bansley agreed. Karen Fabis asked if the RCC could decide on how to allocate the \$13,593 balance at a later date. Ms. Bansley said a decision on how to spend all the funds has to be made. Ms. Bansley offered another suggestion for reducing the balance by half and providing CVTC more funding for now. Ellen Avery said she wouldn't feel right accepting that without providing the full projection details to show how that money would be used by CVTC. Kelly Steiner reminded people that the balance is meant for agencies that exceed their expected trip results as well as for accessible trips or other "unmet need" trips. Ms. Bansley said that this would be a compromise to take a vote now since it's highly unlikely that CVTC would overdraw its funds in the first two months of the fiscal year. Ms. Bansley said that in September an amendment could be created once looking over CVTC data and how the 2017 fiscal year funds were currently being spent by the agencies.

*Tara Kessler exited room.*

**Motion: To postpone the vote by MRCC for distributing purchase of service grant funding no later than August 1<sup>st</sup> so CVTC can provide more detail on budget projections.**

Motion by Ellen Avery, seconded by Bill Graff. Motion lost.

**Motion: To accept the recommendation by the MRCC Allocation Subcommittee to allocate \$91,477 of available FTA 5310 POS funds for Region 5 and 6 to three vendors. The recommendation is to award CVTC \$35,055 with the goal of CVTC providing 85,500 miles of service and 4,500 trips at \$.41 cents a mile. HCS to be awarded \$27,925 with the goal of HCS providing 430 hours of service at \$65.00 per hour. DAV to be awarded \$14,904 with the goal of DAV providing 33,120 miles of service and 480 trips at \$.45 miles per trip. The remaining \$13,593 POS funds and any carryover FTA 5310 POS funds from SFY 2016 will be divided evenly between CVTC, HCS and DAV. This funding will go into a separate account for each agency, which they will use as a resource if they exceed their service delivery goals, or it will be used as a resource to address existing trips that would otherwise be categorized as "unmet need" because of the agency's inability to provide a requested eligible ride.**

Motion by Michael Acerno, seconded by April Buzby. The motion was approved by majority vote, with Ellen Avery voting against it.

Suzanne Bansley would like the RCC to get together in September with the intention of re-evaluating the budget and potentially making an amendment.

**V. FTA 5305e Planning Grant**

Liz Kelly gave a presentation on the Community Transportation Directory update process, which is included in the scope of work for the 5305e grant that was awarded to SWRPC. She described what is being updated in the directory including existing transportation services, adding new services, expanding the user-base of the directory, and organizing the content so that it's graphically pleasing and easy to use. In recent discussion about the directory, it was noted that there is interest in including other transportation services such as intercity bus, rail, and airport shuttle services as well as targeting a wider user-base. She

emphasized that the directory would still be a primary resource for social service agencies and their clientele.

Liz Kelly asked if the RCC thought the definition of community transportation needed to be modified to reflect the wider user-base of the directory. April Buzby thought the current definition was wordy. Ellen Avery noted that the definition should maintain integrity with the Community Transportation Association of America's definition. Liz Kelly showed the group a potential outline for the updated directory that included an alphabetical listing of the services in the back of the directory and new service sections. She also showed a potential template for the directory pages that is slightly altered compared to the original version. Graphic symbols are included, information is consolidated, and a written description of services replaces some of the columns on the page. Ellen Avery said to make sure that the symbols were an appropriate size and scale to the page size. It was also noted that most agencies access the directory online.

Liz Kelly will send the powerpoint presentation to the MRCC members to review and requested feedback be sent to her or J.B. Mack within the next week or two.

Raul Gonzalez provided a quick update on ridership data collection activities and how that data will be utilized. MRCC members are excited to see data once compiled. Kelly Steiner asked that the youth gap be reflected in the data. She also thought that bringing Jane Lapointe of HumanKind Consulting into this conversation would be useful.

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

No public comments were made.

#### **VII. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be scheduled by doodle poll for a date in September 2016.

#### **VIII. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Kelly  
Planning Technician