

# Monadnock Region Coordinating Council for Community Transportation

## MINUTES

September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**Present:** Michael Acerno, *Home Healthcare, Hospice Community Services (HCS)*; Susan Ashworth, *HCS*; Ellen Avery, *Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC)*; Suzanne Bansley, *Cheshire County*; Kathy Baird, *Monadnock RSVP*; April Buzby, *Keene Housing*; Linda Diluzio, *R.J. Diluzio Ambulance*; Bill Graff, *Monadnock At Home*; Sam Lafortune, *CVTC*; Leta Markham, *Southern New Hampshire Services*; Bob Perry, *Citizen*.

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

### I. Minutes of May 12, 2016

The minutes of May 12, 2016 were approved by unanimous vote.

### II. Presentation: Transportation Need and Demand in the Monadnock Region

J. B. Mack announced that SWRPC prepared a presentation about transportation need and demand in the Monadnock Region that incorporated an analysis of data collected by American Red Cross (ARC), Community Valley Transportation Company (CVTC), and Home, Healthcare, and Hospice Community Services (HCS) providing Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Purchase of Service (POS) rides for seniors and people with disabilities called the 5310 program. Bob Perry asked if the slides will be available online. J. B. Mack responded that they would be placed on the MRCC website.

J. B. Mack gave a brief summary of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5305(e) transit planning grant received by SWRPC, which will be used to draft a new Monadnock Region Coordinated Community Transportation Plan. He gave an overview of the project timeline and milestones. As the first phase of the project, SWRPC collected updated information about existing community transportation services operating in the Monadnock Region, which includes a mix of public and private fixed route and demand response services. Ellen Avery asked Leta Markham if the Greenville Falls Van services towns outside of Greenville. Ms. Markham responded that they also service Antrim, Peterborough, Jaffrey, Greenfield and other locations. Raul Gonzalez and Henry Underwood then presented information about an analysis of FTA 5310 POS rides offered by ARC, CVTC and HCS including information about popular trip origins, destinations and routes, as well as information about purposes of trips, reliance on volunteer drivers, and other assorted information.

Once the presentation ended, Mr. Mack asked if any MRCC members had follow-up questions on the data presented. He reiterated that the reason for collecting and analyzing this data is to use the results as a means to better strategize how to improve the region's community transportation system. The strategies would be incorporated into a new Monadnock Region Coordinated Community Transportation Plan. The data could also be used by providers as they seek grants/funding.

Bob Perry mentioned that this presentation was a good assessment of the transportation need that was met. However, what about the unmet need? J. B. Mack responded that he agreed with Mr. Perry, and that

currently the MRCC has very general information that it uses to understand unmet need, which it derives from census data documenting the number and proportion of seniors, people with disabilities, low income households, households without vehicles and other associated data to understand where vulnerable populations live. He explained that three agencies receiving FTA 5310 POS funds also collect some unmet need data, but the data is limited and the agencies are not necessarily collecting unmet need beyond seniors and people with disabilities. Raul Gonzalez said that obtaining more data on canceled or denied rides might help SWRPC assess unmet need better in the future. J. B. Mack added that, while all agencies report on unmet need, they don't provide any detailed information beyond number of rides denied.

April Buzby stated that the high amount of rides from Bennett Block in Keene was surprising to her, since there are only 14 units within the building, as opposed to Central Square Terrace which is directly across the street and holds 90 units. Raul Gonzalez said the data is based on the addresses that each agency uses to record trips. Susan Ashworth said that the data is somewhat skewed since it's just looking at services funded by the FTA 5310 POS funds only. This could explain why Bennett Block's ridership appeared larger than Central Square Terrace's ridership. Bennett Block is serviced by HCS' Sprinter Van (receives FTA 5310 funds), while Central Square Terrace is serviced primarily by the Friendly Bus (Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services funds).

Susan Ashworth also said that there is an opportunity to pool people who are going to the grocery stores at similar times and days. Linda Diluzio asked if any providers at the table offer wheelchair accommodations. Leta Markham, Ellen Avery and Susan Ashworth all responded that their transportation services provide wheelchair transport. Ms. Markham asked what the Coordinated Transportation Solutions (the broker being used by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services to book Medicaid rides) pays to providers for Medicaid trips. Michael Acerno responded that base rates for providing local trips in and around Keene are \$10 for ambulatory patients, \$24 for wheelchair transport patients.

J. B. Mack asked the three provider representatives what their take is on the peaks in ride requests during the morning. Does it represent typical medical appointment times? Are they popular volunteer drive times? Ellen Avery said that most of CVTC's trips are typically made by appointment and the morning time is when they happen to be scheduled most frequently.

Linda Diluzio asked if Market Basket is the only grocery store in the area that is serviced by community transportation. Michael Acerno said that transportation to Market Basket is the only store that's funded by FTA 5310 POS funds, however Keene's City Express goes to Price Chopper and Hannaford's using FTA 5311 funds. Raul Gonzalez said, based on the data analysis of FTA 5310 POS trips, Market Basket, Hannaford's, and Walmart in Rindge were also popular destinations.

### **III. Discussion Regarding Uniform Transportation Data Collection**

J. B. Mack mentioned that the MRCC Executive Committee met a few times earlier this year to talk about how to best track unmet need and that Suzanne Bansley had volunteered to put together a ride tracking sheet that incorporates some ideas of how to gather more information as well as to gather information more consistently across community transportation agencies.

Bill Graff asked if there is more opportunity to cluster rides, especially if we group rides that show up as one individual trip. Ellen Avery mentioned that CVTC does try to coordinate carpooling, especially to places like the Bond Wellness Center which houses a number of specialty doctors that many people in the region travel to. J. B. Mack suggested that if the data collection among agencies is improved, MRCC could potentially contact an organization like Bond Wellness to show trip patterns and then discuss if they would

be willing to coordinate scheduling appointments so that carpooling is a more viable option for transportation service providers.

J. B. Mack projected the ride tracking sheet on the wall. He explained that one issue with creating a more uniform data collection method is that all agencies currently track their rides in different ways with different software programs. He suggested that HCS and CVTC, which have their own specialized trip tracking software, may possibly need to talk to their software developers to see if they can customize their software to incorporate new data fields and reports. J. B. Mack proceeded to go through the various data fields/categories to explain the purpose of collecting the data and how the data could be valuable to the MRCC. Bob Perry asked how much of this data collection is required from the State. Suzanne Bansley said that NH DOT only requires total dollars, total number of requested rides, total number of trips denied, unmet need (difference between the two), and how invoicing is calculated. She said they also only want providers to track rides that are being reimbursed which doesn't portray a full picture of rides provided or unmet need. J. B. Mack added that collecting data uniformly would be voluntary if the MRCC deems it to be beneficial.

On the "Denial Response" field that documents agency's response to an unmet need call (referral, outsourcing, etc), Ellen Avery mentioned that CVTC doesn't own its own vehicles and so they outsource to, for example, Merit Care if someone calls needing wheelchair transport services, but CVTC pays for it. Would that be considered a met or unmet need? What is the difference between a referral and an outsourced ride and does that constitute a met or unmet need? J. B. Mack said that "referred" means that an agency is just referring a person to another provider by providing them contact information of the agency, whereas "outsourced" means an agency coordinates and pays for the individual's ride given by a different provider. Suzanne Bansley explained that collecting this data would allow the RCC to see gaps within providers. Data would allow us to cross-reference and the MRCC could determine what is the real unmet need. Susan Ashworth mentioned that it seemed like a lot of work to track this additional information. Ellen Avery asked if Medicaid rides would be included under this category as well. Bob Perry mentioned that he could see how ridership information could be useful for organizations like Monadnock United Way. He also asked how cumbersome the data entry would be for agencies. Michael Acerno said that none of his dispatchers would want to fill out extra information for clientele who were being referred to another agency. Bob Perry said that he could see how that would be quite a bit more clerical work on the agency end. Susan Ashworth also mentioned that the difference in software also makes it challenging, especially if double data entry is required. Ellen Avery said that Gary Welch who represents Disabled American Veterans uses Microsoft Excel and Outlook to input data which takes even longer to input into the computer. She said that some fields might be more valuable than others. Ellen Avery mentioned that more people are getting serviced by Medicaid and it would be nice to see that relationship.

Bob Perry said that he would like to keep the topic open until the MRCC can hear Gary Welch's comments on uniform data collection. Kathy Baird said that, in terms of funding, she thought it could be advantageous to track veteran ridership since there is money out there for veteran services. J. B. Mack suggested that the issue is complicated and the MRCC is clearly not ready to make any final decisions. He suggested that a data subcommittee be formed to investigate the data collection question further and determine the value versus burden of improving data collection consistency and of collecting new data. The data subcommittee could bring back recommendations to the larger MRCC for their consideration.

Suzanne Bansley stated that the group could always determine whether to include the new "Trips Denied" fields later. She asked if the group could consider adding the "Ride Purpose" fields now and potentially table deciding on the "Trips Denied" fields for a later date. She mentioned that maybe we need to be more sensitive to the consumers anyway. Many people do not want to give more information to an agency that

had to deny a ride from them. Ellen Avery said that she would like to form a small subcommittee to talk about potential changes to data collection methods before making any decisions.

April Buzby said that it sounded like CVTC's system is relatively easy to modify. She asked if HCS' system would be easy to modify as well? Michael Acerno said that it depends. HCS does a lot of data collection but some customization would have to be worked out by the software company that they use to track rides. April Buzby asked if reports have to come from HCS. Could the report be created by someone else if they had access to data fields? Both April Buzby and Suzanne Bansley have experience in creating such reports and offered to help write them for the three agencies if they could be given the data. J. B. Mack mentioned that the MRCC could always track certain data on an annual or semiannual basis rather than a monthly basis. Susan Ashworth stated that having a small group to talk this through would be helpful. Suzanne Bansley reiterated that she would like the group to consider adding the "Ride purpose" field today. J. B. Mack said that, since Gary isn't here, it makes sense to table a discussion about adding any new data collection. He asked for volunteers to form a small sub-committee. April Buzby, Bob Perry, Ellen Avery, and Michael Acerno volunteered. He added that SWRPC can offer staff support for this as well and SWRPC will get in touch with Gary Welch to see if he will join the proposed data subcommittee.

#### **IV. Co-Treasurer's Reports**

J. B. Mack requested brief reports on FTA 5310 POS and Mobility Management funds. Ellen Avery and Suzanne Bansley asked the group to read through the reports and send them any follow up questions.

#### **V. Other Business**

J. B. Mack announced that there will be a series of meetings coming up that the State Coordinating Council and the NHDOT are hosting to gather feedback for a new Statewide Coordinated Plan. In addition to the meeting times and dates that he has already communicated to the MRCC, there will be a meeting in Newport, NH. Ellen Avery mentioned that the Newport meeting will be Wednesday October 5<sup>th</sup>, at 5 pm. J. B. Mack said that NHDOT also wants to have a conference call with a few ambassadors of the MRCC. He and Kelly Steiner will be attending the call and he asked if anyone else wanted to participate. Michael Acerno and Ellen Avery volunteered to join the conference call. J. B. Mack said the State's consultant wanted to arrange a call for as early as next week and will coordinate with MRCC members about this over email correspondence.

J. B. Mack mentioned that there were many other additional items that could have been put on the agenda for today, but a more effective way to get through topics and issues might be to encourage subcommittees get together to discuss the issues. He said that one such issue is in regard to the mobility management funds that CVTC was awarded. Ellen Avery would like to work with MRCC members to develop a plan to reach out to towns and conduct a state legislator breakfast meeting to educate the towns and legislators about regional transportation need, demand and challenges. He said that a subcommittee could be formed to talk about this issue. The MRCC agreed to form an outreach subcommittee to look at this issue. J. B. Mack said that SWRPC would volunteer to work with Ellen Avery on this. Are there any other volunteers for the outreach subcommittee? Bob Perry said he may be willing. J. B. Mack said he will send out a follow up email to see if any other volunteers would like to participate in the subcommittee.

J. B. Mack also mentioned that Ellen Avery had expressed that she wanted to talk to the group about a model that CVTC created to predict the number of rides it would provide after taking over the American Red Cross volunteer driver program. J. B. Mack explained that he spoke with the MRCC Executive Committee about this request and the recommendation from them was that Ellen meet with the allocation

subcommittee about this and report results of the meeting at next MRCC meeting. There was consensus from the MRCC to proceed with this recommendation.

## **VI. Partner Updates**

Bob Perry announced that another non-profit transportation agency has been formed called Veterans Enabling Transportation (VET). This new agency will be operating out of Keene and focusing on much of the former ARC clientele. The agency will concentrate primarily on veterans at first but plans to expand to other clientele sometime in the future. Bob Perry explained that he is the President and Chairman of the Board and said that VET will be contemplating joining the MRCC at some point. They may be putting in for FTA 5310 POS funding in the future. He mentioned that they are in the very early stages as a non-profit and have not hit the road yet. Ellen Avery mentioned that there was a Volunteer Driver Program Summit this Friday in Concord with all volunteer driver programs in the state, in case Mr. Perry might be interested in attending. J. B. Mack asked how VET might fit in with DAV's services. Bob Perry responded that DAV only transports clientele to the White River Junction VA Center. VET would bring clientele to VA hospitals out of the region such as Manchester, and possibly Boston or Jamaica Plains. They already have one donated vehicle. He added that he should have more information at the next MRCC meeting. Michael Acerno cautioned Mr. Perry about using 5310 POS funding to service just one group (like veterans). He mentioned that that was frowned upon. Bob Perry said that they will be expanding to include other groups of people eventually. Suzanne Bansley asked if VET would be working closely with DAV. Bob Perry said that they would be. Ellen Avery asked what VET's service area would be. Mr. Perry said that they would mostly service residents of Cheshire County.

April Buzby reported that Keene Housing has hired their Resident Service Coordinator that's dedicated to the senior/disabled population and that she will be reaching out to other transportation providers around the table. Michael Acerno mentioned that HCS has three new buses that will be arriving soon. Kathy Baird mentioned that Monadnock RSVP was getting many requests for door to door transport rides. Since they are based on an ongoing companionship model, they do not accommodate random door to door requests. She mentioned that they are referring people to other providers at the table.

## **VII. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

## **VIII. Next Meeting**

After checking in with the progress made by the data, outreach and allocation subcommittees, Mr. Mack will send an email with the next meeting date.

## **IX. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Kelly  
Planning Technician