

**Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council  
For Community Transportation**

**Minutes**

**March 21, 2023**

Present: Suzanne Bansley, Treasurer, *Cheshire County*; Frank Dobisky, *Thomas Transportation (TT)*; Mary Jensen, *Keene Senior Center (KSC)*; Sally Malay, *Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC)*; David Meader, *Citizen Member*; Lisa Steadman, *Citizen Member*; Alison Welsh, *Cheshire County*.

SWRPC Staff Present: Terry Johnson, *Senior Project Manager*; Rich Clough, *Office Support Specialist*.

Guests Present: Alice Cable, *Fall Mountain School District*; Andrew Harmon, *Citizen (remote)*; Tim LaBounty, *Diluzio Transportation*; Teri Palmer, *NH Statewide Mobility Manager*; Jennifer Robinson, *Cheshire County*.

**I. Welcome**

Terry Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

**II. Approval of February 21, 2023 Minutes**

**Motion: To approve the minutes of February 21, 2023.**

Motion by Frank Dobisky, seconded by Suzanne Bansley. Approved by unanimous vote with Alison Welch and Sally Malay abstaining.

**III. Treasurer's Report**

Suzanne Bansley submitted the February financial reports and noted that the accessible transportation figure had been included in the CVTC volunteer driver line and that a corrected report had been sent to NHDOT with the CVTC accessible transportation line having used \$300 for two rides.

**IV. Transportation Equity Project Funding and Contracts**

A draft NH Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS) Transportation Equity budget for June 2023-May 2024 was provided to the Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council (MRCC) in advance of the meeting and copies were made available during the meeting. Suzanne Bansley presented the draft budget showing projected Purchase of Service costs for HCS, CVTC, KSC, and KHKC. Also included in the budget were projected costs for SWRPC mobility management services and the CVTC Advancement Assistant position. Line-item budget estimates are based on two factors: 1) current average monthly expenditures fiscal year to date for the period June 1-February, 2023 and 2) projections of unspent funds that will remain as of May 31, 2023. The projected budget total is \$266,581.

Suzanne Bansley explained that new agreements will be executed between Cheshire County and all subcontractors for the period June 1, 2023-May 31, 2024. A motion on the overall budget was tabled since representatives of CVTC and HCS were not present. Suzanne Bansley recommended that the MRCC move forward with approval for Cheshire County to enter into a new agreement with SWRPC for mobility management services at the \$131,410 amount proposed in the budget. Teri Palmer asked why a new agreement was needed for mobility manager as the State Coordinating Council had previously approved funding through SFY25. Suzanne Bansley explained that Cheshire County could only enter

into a one-year agreement because at the time SFY24 agreements were executed it was uncertain if NHDHHS would be granted a one-year extension on its grant with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC approved the extension earlier this year. Discussion ensued and a motion was made.

**Motion: To authorize Cheshire County to execute a new agreement with Southwest Region Planning Commission in the amount of \$131,410 to provide mobility management services during the period June 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024.**

Motion by Lisa Steadman, seconded by Mary Jensen. Approved by unanimous vote.

Sally Malay asked how funding for the Community Transportation Collaborative (CTC) transportation service would be funded as there is not currently an item allocated for it in the SFY24 NHDHHS budget. The CTC would be a transportation service that serves multiple organizations interested in providing transportation for their clients. Suzanne Bansley replied that funds could be adjusted during the fiscal year to support the service. Terry Johnson said that, once the CTC work group is convened, it will take time to define a service model and for a transportation provider, such as Thomas Transportation, to purchase a vehicle and recruit additional personnel to operate the service. Frank Dobisky said it is difficult to find vans right now. Sally Malay asked if a proposal would be required to secure funds for the service. Terry Johnson replied that a proposal would be required as was the case for all currently funded Transportation Equity projects.

Lisa Steadman asked if CVTC has hired a new Advancement Assistant. Terry Johnson replied that the position is not yet vacant. Teri Palmer said that there is just over one year of CDC funding remaining and that the New Hampshire statewide mobility management model is being looked at nationally. The State Coordinating Council (SCC) and NH Department of Transportation (NH DOT) are highly interested in sustaining the statewide network and are actively seeking other funding sources.

Lisa Steadman mentioned that none of the Transportation Equity projects that have been funded to-date specifically address the needs of people with disabilities. She sees the possibility of microtransit as presented in the SWRPC Microtransit Feasibility and Fixed Route Transit Feasibility Study as a good fit for addressing these needs. She asked if Transportation Equity funds could be used to jump-start microtransit services in the Region and if a fiscal sponsor would be needed to manage the funds. Andrew Harmon said that substantially more funds than are available through the Transportation Equity program would be needed to support microtransit. Terry Johnson said that a different transit operating model than the current HCS-operated model will also be needed to institute microtransit. He mentioned that SWRPC was recently awarded a 5305e grant from the Federal Transit Administration through NH DOT to evaluate potential transit operating models for the Region that would include microtransit.

Lisa Steadman initiated discussion about the CVTC Advancement Assistant position that is being supported with Transportation Equity funds. She recommended asking Ellen Avery at the April meeting about the productivity of the position and plans for sustaining it after the funds have been spent. Terry Johnson said Ellen Avery presented data during the December 2022 meeting showing increases in both drivers and ridership. He said that Ellen Avery is seeking additional funds to support the position. Teri Palmer said there is also an ongoing statewide volunteer driver recruitment initiative supported by the NH Alliance for Healthy Aging in which CVTC is involved.

## **V. Microtransit Feasibility and Fixed Route Transit Study: Next Steps for MRCC**

Terry Johnson presented an overview of the results of the SWRPC Microtransit Feasibility and Fixed Route Transit Feasibility Study which was completed in December 2022. The purpose of the Study is to examine opportunities to improve and expand transit service in the Greater Keene area and other

communities in Southwest NH. The Study examines opportunities to expand existing fixed-route transit services operated by HCS as well as adding microtransit to the mix.

Terry Johnson said the Study was conducted in partnership with HCS. Via, a consulting firm that specializes in providing technical assistance on transit operations matters and transit service feasibility was brought in as a partner in the Study. Via is recognized nationally and globally as experts in microtransit, but also is well equipped to analyze fixed route bus systems like HCS' City Express. The Study includes an existing conditions analysis; development and assessment of service alternatives; recommendations for expanding services in Greater Keene; recommendations for expanding services to the Eastern Monadnock area, Winchester and Brattleboro, VT; and an implementation plan. A final report is available on the SWRPC website.

Terry Johnson said that, at the end of the Study, SWRPC met with the HCS Board of Directors and leadership to discuss HCS' interests in implementing expanded transit services based on the Study's recommendations. The Board indicated that HCS is not inclined to do so at this time, mainly because providing transportation for the general population does not directly align with their mission and the specific population it serves. The Board did indicate that HCS is open to participating in efforts to adopt a different operating model for transit and community transportation in the Region that would better serve the needs of the general population. HCS would also like to see more financial commitment from large organizations and municipalities to help meet the match requirements required of federal funding for transportation. Terry Johnson said the Study includes recommendations for operating models to consider as well as recommended funding sources for transit services and operations. He described the various operating models and reiterated that SWRPC has secured funding to explore them. He said the MRCC as well as an advisory work group of key stakeholders will be engaged in the project. The grant project is scheduled to begin in July 2023.

Discussion ensued regarding the need to find ongoing funding to support transit alternatives and operating models. Terry Johnson said a statewide public transportation coalition is leading advocacy efforts to secure \$1.75 million per year in the State budget for the SFY24-25 biennium. NH provides approximately one fortieth of the median per capita state investment in transit nationally and ranks last among New England states. Teri Palmer said there is federal funding out there. She is currently supporting the City of Claremont by helping them find funding for a community transportation project and has identified a number of potential sources.

## **VI. Partner Updates**

Partner updates were tabled due to a shortage of time.

## **VII. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for April 18, 2023.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Clough  
Office Support Specialist