

**Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council
For Community Transportation**

Minutes

April 18, 2023

Present: Ellen Avery, Chair, *Community Volunteer Transportation Corporation (CTVC)*; Michael Acerno alternate for Vice Chair, Charlie Pratt, *Home Health Care, Hospice & Community Services (HCS)*; Suzanne Bansley, Treasurer, *Cheshire County*; Kathy Baird, *Monadnock RSVP Volunteer Center (RSVP)*; Robert Diluzio Jr., *Diluzio Ambulance (DA)*; Frank Dobisky, *Thomas Transportation (TT)*; Mary Jensen, *Keene Senior Center (KSC)*; Sally Malay, *Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC)*; Meghan Marcucci, *Keene Family YMCA*; David Meader, *Citizen Member*; Chuck Weed, *Citizen Member*; Alison Welsh (remote), *Cheshire County*.

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

Guests Present: Erika Alusic-Bingham, *Southern New Hampshire Services (SNHS)*; Tim LaBounty, *Diluzio Transportation (DT)*; Teri Palmer, *NH Statewide Mobility Manager*; Alexa Plewa (remote), *Cheshire Children's Museum (CCM)*; Jennifer Robinson, *Cheshire County*.

I. Welcome

Chair Avery called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

II. Approval of March 21, 2023 Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of March 21, 2023.

Motion by Frank Dobisky, seconded by David Meader. Approved by unanimous vote.

III. Partner Updates

Kathy Baird announced there will be a volunteer fair on Tuesday, May 16th from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. at Keene Ice. There are still a few slots left for non-profit organizations to exhibit. Chair Avery said that CVTC has an administrative assistant position open and to send any candidates her way. Erika Alusic-Bingham said that SNHS has three part-time, 25 hours per week, positions open for candidates interested in working with youth. She asked those who have student connections at Antioch University or Keene State College to contact her. Positions are available for those interested in working during the summer only or year-round.

Teri Palmer provided an update on state-level mobility management activities. Because volunteer drivers have been difficult to find, the Neighbor Helping Neighbor program is being promoted at community events and has been yielding new drivers. She also relayed a message from Fred Butler at the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) about reporting performance measures to the State Coordinating Council. Two performance measures that are currently required to be reported on a monthly basis are the number of new rider applications and the number of referrals of riders to other agencies. Any transportation provider that receives Section 5310 funding for on-demand services is required to report this data to mobility managers.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Suzanne Bansley said that the March financial reports were distributed prior to the meeting. She reported that funding levels for both the NH Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS) and NHDOT

contracts remain stable and that contracted organizations are spending those funds down. She reminded the MRCC that NHDHHS extended their funding for an additional year through May 2024. The total funding amount remains unchanged. Suzanne Bansley stated that NHDHHS funds have been used to address shortfalls in NHDOT funding during the current fiscal year.

Chuck Weed asked Chair Avery what the current level of unmet rides is for CVTC. Chair Avery replied that there were 45 unmet trips during March 2023. Financial reporting shows that there have been 665 unmet rides during SFY23 to date. That represents 10.7% of total trips provided during March and 18% of trips year-to-date. Chuck Weed stated the high rate of unmet trips is likely a result of a shortage of volunteer drivers. Chair Avery said that recruitment efforts are yielding new drivers. Chuck Weed asked where CVTC was getting drivers from and Chair Avery responded they are coming from all over. Terry Johnson pointed out that CVTC's unmet need has decreased steadily during the current fiscal year. Chair Avery said that unmet need is averaging around 14% which is an improvement over the 20% average during the COVID pandemic. Suzanne Bansley said there are other issues that contribute to unmet need trips such as trip requests for times outside hours of operations.

Chuck Weed asked if there have been any systematic attempts to work with human resources departments of each of the major employers in the region to see if employees that are approaching retirement can be recruited as volunteer drivers. He believes the State should be doing the same. Teri Palmer replied that a state-level effort is underway to seek approval to include inserts in mailings to retirees promoting volunteer driver opportunities. Chair Avery said there is also a statewide recruitment campaign being conducted with the support of the NH Alliance for Healthy Aging (NHAHA) which appears to be having an impact on increasing the number of drivers. Teri Palmer said that ongoing outreach efforts by the mobility manager should help as well. Erika Alusic-Bingham asked if a map of volunteer driver programs exists and Chair Avery responded there is one which is hosted on the NHAHA website and can be accessed at: <https://nhaha.info/volunteer-driver-initiative/>. She said the map is broken down by county. Advertising is ongoing on NHPR. She reported that there are over 24 volunteer driver programs and approximately 700 volunteer drivers in the state.

Alison Welsh announced a NH Judicial Branch Request for Proposals (RfP) for transportation providers to provide transportation for Drug Court participants to Drug Courts, mental health and family treatment services. She shared the RfP with Terry Johnson who will distribute it among MRCC members and transportation providers. Terry Johnson will also coordinate a meeting for Teri Palmer, Alison Welsh and he to discuss the opportunity.

V. NH Department of Health and Human Services Transportation Equity Budget

Chair Avery opened discussion on the NHDHHS draft budget for the period June 2023 through May 2024. She noted that the draft budget includes both NHDHHS and NHDOT budgets for SFY24. Suzanne Bansley said the budget discussion is a continuation of the discussion from the March MRCC meeting at which the MRCC approved the NHDOT budget and authorized Cheshire County to execute a new Mobility Management agreement with SWRPC. She noted that the draft NHDHHS budget shows an unallocated amount of \$19,413 that can be allocated as determined by the MRCC during the upcoming year. She said the budget numbers are estimates of amounts that will remain for each line item at the end of May 2023 when current subcontractor agreements end. The projected amounts are based on current fiscal year spending levels and will be re-allocated to new contracts effective June 1, 2023. She said that NHDHHS funding has produced more than 2,700 transportation trips through March 2023. Terry Johnson reported that, when combined with NHDOT Section 5310 funded trips, this represents a 70% increase in the total number of trips provided during the period July 2022 through March 2023 compared to the same period during the prior fiscal year. Michael Acerno, who drives the HCS Winchester Shopping Shuttle, reported that increased funding from NHDHHS has contributed significantly to increased ridership. He said riders

have told him they could not easily afford to go shopping without the availability of the Winchester Shopping Shuttle.

Suzanne Bansley said it is not necessary that the MRCC approve transportation provider budgets during today's meeting, but it does need to authorize Cheshire County to execute new agreements with them effective June 1, 2023. Terry Johnson advised that the MRCC could approve the draft budget as presented and make revisions during the upcoming contract year as needed. He also suggested that the unallocated \$19,413 amount could be utilized during the upcoming year as a reserve fund to support any budget deficits experienced by current transportation providers. Suzanne Bansley concurred. Chair Avery suggested that the reserve funds could also be utilized by transportation providers to advertise and promote their services. She suggested providers could do a group buy with an advertiser. She further suggested that CVTC could use advertising to promote their services to riders and recruit volunteer drivers and HCS could promote shopping trips through advertising in the Monadnock Shopper. Frank Dobisky said the radio station he is involved with airs PSAs from non-profits at no cost. He said he has been helping the Community Kitchen to run PSAs and would be willing to help other non-profits as well. Teri Palmer reported that other regions use NHDHHS funds to develop brochures that list transportation services, include information about the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC) and provide mobility managers' contact information. The brochures are distributed at outreach events and posted at places commonly visited by community members. Chair Avery said CVTC could carve out some of its advancement assistant's time to support the MRCC with advertising.

Teri Palmer recommended setting the reserve amount aside for updating the MRCC transportation directory and coordinated plan, or as incentives for volunteer drivers. Terry Johnson informed the MRCC that both of these activities are already included in SWRPC's mobility management work plan. She said three regions used funding to establish car repair voucher programs in partnership with Chambers of Commerce. They are working with local businesses on contributions to keep the programs sustainable.

Suzanne Bansley asked Sally Malay how much funding KHKC will need for the upcoming year and if the draft budget amount will be enough. Sally Malay responded it is difficult to predict, however, KHKC costs will decrease as they will not be providing transportation during the summer months. She said KHKC plans to continue operating transportation services through the end of the school year after which it will pause services until the beginning of the next school year. She said their current county agreement expires at the end of May, before the end of the school year. She asked if the MRCC can approve the new transportation provider agreements even if the budget is not fully approved during today's meeting. Suzanne Bansley replied in the affirmative. Sally Malay reported that ridership has increased steadily over the months and, as a result, costs have decreased from \$45 to \$19 per trip.

Teri Palmer advised the MRCC to be thinking about sustainability of the current transportation services that are receiving funding. NHDHHS funding will expire at the end of May 2024. While she is hoping that more NHDHHS funding will become available, the MRCC and other RCCs should be looking for other opportunities. Terry Johnson said that the NH Public Transportation Coalition is advocating for increased operations funding for transit and community transportation in the State budget for the SFY24-25 biennium. The House included increased funding in its budget which it passed and has crossed over to the Senate. Chair Avery asked if people should write letters to their Senators. Terry Johnson said he will share Senate contacts and NH Public Transportation Coalition talking points with the MRCC. He will keep the MRCC apprised of the status of the funding as the budget process plays out.

Erika-Alusic Bingham asked if the MRCC is open to accepting new transportation project proposals. Terry Johnson responded that, while the funding opportunity is not being actively promoted, it has not been discontinued. Erika Alusic-Bingham said that if enough of a reserve exists at the beginning of the new contract year, she would like to submit a proposal for approximately \$3,000 to offset expenses for the SNHS summer youth transportation program. The transportation service makes two round-trips per week to the

NH Seacoast for youth served by SNHS. Two stops along the route are at low-income apartment developments.

Terry Johnson advised that, if there are no disagreements with the budget as presented, that the MRCC conduct a vote on both the budget and provider contracts and monitor expenditures during the upcoming fiscal year.

Motion: To approve the July 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024 NH Department of Health and Human Services budget as presented and authorize Cheshire County to execute new agreements with the Community Volunteer Transportation Company; Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services; and Keene Housing Kids Collaborative.

Motion by Suzanne Bansley, seconded by Michael Acerno. Approved by unanimous vote.

VI. Community Transportation Collaborative Work Group Report Out

Terry Johnson provided a history of how the work group was established and its purpose. The work group was launched as a result of previous MRCC discussions about the challenges KHKC has been experiencing with its transportation program. The purpose of the work group is to explore establishing a Community Transportation Collaborative (CTC) to partner on a cost-effective community transportation service that is shared by and serves multiple organizations. During the first meeting, the group discussed potential operating models, action steps for establishing the CTC, and identified other stakeholders to invite to the workgroup.

To date, two potential operating models have been discussed. The first would involve enlisting one or more transportation providers, such as Thomas Transportation, to provide transportation services for multiple agencies. The second would involve identifying unused/underutilized vehicles in the region that could be shared on a schedule to include both weekday and weekend access to meet the needs of different organizations. The second scenario would require an organization to serve as a central dispatcher for booking vehicles. Suzanne Bansley indicated that Cheshire County may be willing to serve as fiscal agent for whatever model is developed.

The group identified the following potential challenges to establishing a shared transportation model: lack of operational funding to support transportation for youth, workforce and adults under age 60; finding an appropriate organization to serve as a hub to coordinate scheduling of vehicles; need to secure capital funding for vehicle purchase if a transportation provider is contracted; and the time it will take to conduct a regionwide vehicle inventory. Terry Johnson will be taking the lead on conducting an inventory of underutilized vehicles.

Teri Palmer reported that she is looking for case studies for the work group to review as it considers models to implement. She said one of the models Terry Johnson described is like a one call - one click model. Region 10 is doing a program that is like a one call - one click model with an operations center that agencies feed information into. For example, one dispatcher takes calls from riders from any agency. If the rider needs a volunteer driver, the dispatcher books a ride with a volunteer driver program. If a rider needs to get to the grocery store, the dispatcher books a ride with a shopping shuttle service. Michael Acerno recommended looking at large national trucking companies that use central dispatching systems for examples. Robert Diluzio said that Diluzio Ambulance is working with hospitals on developing a system that operates in similar fashion for transporting patients to and from multiple hospitals.

Frank Dobisky reported that he asked Thomas Transportation owners if they would consider operating a transportation service that serves multiple organizations. They said they are currently not prepared to make a commitment but would be interested in exploring the opportunity.

Terry Johnson said the work group is looking for additional participants. The next work group meeting is scheduled for May 12th. Robert Diluzio and Chair Avery volunteered to join the group. Terry Johnson will send them the May meeting invitation.

VII. Mobility Manager Update

Update was tabled due to a lack of time.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2023.

IX. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Clough
Office Support Specialist