

**Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council
For Community Transportation**

Minutes

September 19, 2023

Present: Frank Dobisky, Chair, *Thomas Transportation (TT)*; Charlie Pratt, Vice Chair, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS)*; Jennifer Robinson, Treasurer, *Cheshire County (CC)*; Mary Jensen, Secretary, *Keene Senior Center (KSC)*; Ellen Avery, *Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC)*; Erika Alusic-Bingham, *Southern NH Services (SNHS)*; Kathy Baird, *Monadnock RSVP Volunteer Center (RSVP)*; Alberta Bronson, *The Lukas Community (TLC)*; Sally Malay, *Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC)*; David Meader, *Citizen member*; Dan Smith, *Keene Family YMCA*.

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

Guests: Alice Cable, *Fall Mountain School District (SAU 60)*; Teri Palmer, *NH Statewide Mobility Manager* (remote).

I. Welcome

Chair Dobisky called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and introductions were made.

II. Approval of August 15, 2023 Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of August 15, 2023.

Motion by Ellen Avery, seconded by David Meader. Approved by unanimous vote.

III. Partner Updates

Chair Dobisky invited members to provide updates. Teri Palmer reported that October will be Community Transportation Month and that several organizations around the state are offering incentives and participating in events to increase awareness for the campaign. She noted that she will share a press release and provide information and templates for flyers and notices to the regional mobility managers. She reported that one such incentive is from Commute Smart NH which is offering the chance for people to register and record energy saving travel to receive free gift cards.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Jennifer Robinson presented the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) Enhanced Mobility financial report for the month of August 2023. She noted that NHDOT instituted a different formula for calculating administration costs that increases the amount from 5% to 10%. She noted that this will provide additional funds for indirect expenses for transportation providers.

Motion: To designate unallocated NHDOT funds to CVTC and the Keene Senior Center to be used towards indirect expenses.

Motion by Kathy Baird, seconded by Dan Smith. Approved by unanimous vote with Ellen Avery abstaining.

Mary Jensen of KSC arrived.

V. KHKC Youth Transportation Project Discussion

Terry Johnson informed the MRCC of the need to continue exploring funding and operating model options to sustain the KHKC youth transportation program. He noted that currently available funds for the program will expire in May 2024. He reminded the MRCC that KHKC launched the youth transportation program as a pilot. He said that the MRCC Community Transportation Collaborative workgroup has been discussing potential options and that no viable options have been identified to-date. Terry Johnson said that it will be beneficial to hear MRCC's thoughts and ideas, which is the purpose of today's discussion. He asked Sally Malay to provide a status update on the project.

Sally Malay said the pilot program was officially launched during the Fall of 2022. She reported that KHKC has been working with Thomas Transportation to provide rides, structuring the program to accommodate KHKC's requirement that children be accompanied by a designated adult. This created a challenge to building ridership. Sally Malay said that KHKC has experienced success in overcoming that challenge and has increased ridership over time. KHKC initially planned to suspend the program during the Summer due to expected challenges with scheduling. She reported that, when funding was extended into the current fiscal year, it provided the needed funding to continue rides during the Summer.

Sally Malay noted that, over the course of the program, KHKC and Thomas Transportation have found measures to create a more cost-effective structure. She reported that KHKC had recently reached out to the staff of the KSC program, Cheshire Village at Home (CVaH), to "buy time". CVaH administers KSC's volunteer transportation program (VDP). A discussion has been initiated on the possibility of KHKC and CVaH integrating their transportation services. The steering committee expressed openness to the concept.

Terry Johnson asked about the KHKC Board's plans for assessing the impact of the youth transportation program. Sally Malay replied that an impact study is scheduled to assess the cost-effectiveness of the program.

The following points emerged during general discussion:

- Chair Dobisky noted that the biggest issue is finding more drivers and that it would be great to partner with the Monadnock Radio Group on driver recruitment efforts.
- Alice Cable asked what is happening around Commercial Driver's License certification programs and efforts to meet the demand for drivers. Teri Palmer responded that the nearest is Advanced Transit in the Concord/Manchester area. Teri Palmer noted that the process for candidates is to review a study book, secure a permit and have transit companies continue with training for new drivers.
- Alberta Bronson suggested checking with local school bus companies for available drivers.
- Dan Smith reported that the Keene Family YMCA had given-up on using its bus as they couldn't keep drivers. The YMCA endeavors to provide rides for program participants having the staff transport them in a van owned by the YMCA.
- Teri Palmer said she will look into the possibility of transit agencies paying for driver training which will give drivers the opportunity to move into better paying positions.
- Terry Johnson noted that the transit operating and governance model planning study SWRPC is currently conducting will provide an opportunity to examine where youth transportation fits in.
- Teri Palmer noted that youth transportation should be a priority for any consultant that will be brought on for the project.
- Erika Alusic-Bingham voiced the idea of establishing a youth transportation coalition to address the issue.

- Ellen Avery inquired about what support the Monadnock United Way (MUW) may be able to provide.
- Terry Johnson reported that he met with MUW a few months ago to provide an update on MRCC activities and efforts to improve the region's community transportation system and inquire about the possibility of funding. They responded that, while community transportation does not directly fit under their primary funding priorities, there may be an avenue for doing so. The MRCC would need to make a strong case. The MUW is interested in receiving progress updates.
- Kathy Baird said that the MUW has three priority funding buckets and it is challenging to secure funding for initiatives that do not directly align.
- Teri Palmer noted that the Monadnock Region has made more progress than any other region in the State in advancing youth transportation. She will continue to search for funding opportunities.
- Terry Johnson suggested that the NH Children's Health Foundation could be a potential funding source.
- Erika Alusic-Bingham said that one of the biggest challenges continues to be getting kids home from after school programs.
- Sally Malay said that a challenge for KHKC clients is the required seven-day window to schedule rides. Often, parents and guardians do not know that far in advance which programs their children may be attending.

There was consensus that, other than continued efforts to identify funding, the MRCC will wait on further action until more information is available from KHKC about the outcomes of their conversations with CVaH and the results of the KHKC Board's youth transportation program assessment.

VI. Mobility Manager Update

Terry Johnson provided an update on transportation events in the region including the upcoming Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) hearings. He said hearings are scheduled in Keene on September 25th and Jaffrey on October 17th. He said that he is developing speaking points expressing the need to continue funding for the Regional Coordinating Councils and the community transportation activities on which they have made considerable progress during the past two years. Charlie Pratt will be representing HCS at the Keene hearing and one focus will be on the additional Section 5311 operations funding that is needed. Ellen Avery will be representing CVTC and discussing the successes and continuing needs of VDPs. Alice Cable recommended that MRCC successes should be highlighted. Terry Johnson said that will be a key part of the presentations. Teri Palmer stated that she will testify at the Claremont hearing providing information about the State Coordinating Council, results of the NH Department of Health and Human Services funding, transportation initiatives happening around the state, and to thank GACIT members for their support.

Terry Johnson stated that SWRPC is working on updating the MRCC Community Transportation Directory which was last updated in 2016. Jason Cooper reported on the effort. He said the update includes determining the next iteration of the directory as a more effective online resource. Ellen Avery noted that the State Coordinating Council is putting together a website which will have links to all Regional Coordinating Council directories and other pertinent information.

Chair Dobisky thanked everyone for their hard work and for attending today's meeting.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2023.

VIII. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Clough
Office Support Specialist