



**Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, 10/26/2023**

**Attendees:**

In Person:

Michael Apfelberg, United Way of Greater Nashua (late arrival)  
Sara Ceaser, United Way of Greater Nashua  
Carol Brooks, SVTC Board Chair  
Janet Langdell, SVTC Mobility & Planning Manager

Remote:

Kerry Miller, NTS Mobility Manager  
Pat Murphy, Town of Merrimack Welfare Dept.  
Teri Palmer, Statewide Mobility Manager (late arrival)

**NRPC Staff:**

Donna Marceau, Mobility Manager  
Matt Waitkins, MPO Coordinator  
Kathy Kirby, Administrative/Communications Assistant

(For the record, Margaret Loret and Timothy Wyatt tried to gain access remotely but were unable to remote in.)

**1. Call to Order**

Marceau opened the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

**2. Introductions**

Introductions were done with in-person and remote participants.

**3. Review August 24, 2023 meeting minutes**

Marceau asked for any corrections to the August 24, 2023, meeting minutes.

Langdell: bottom of p. 1, first bullet, change "Nashua Transit Authority" to *Nashua Transit System*.

On p. 2, Item 5, bottom, the last sentence should say, *Working with Nashua Transit System on these efforts*.

**MINUTES ARE ADOPTED BY CONSENSUS.**

**4. Regional Transportation Provider Updates**

- NTS, Kerry Miller – Community Transportation Month celebrated the month with a free ride day; free reusable grocery bags were given away to on-demand and paratransit riders, and had some giveaways at the Transit Center, it worked out very well so we will continue next year. Applications are pouring in for on-demand rides and paratransit riders so we have a lot of new riders; we have had some training sessions as more people would like to ride the city bus. We met with folks from the city health dept regarding better outreach to non-English language-speaking people and connecting and communicating with them – it was a very productive discussion. I made a presentation to the Cultural Connections Committee about what we have in place to reach out to refugees and newcomers and let them know what is available to them already, including what we have in place for language interpretation. It was a good meeting.

- SVTC, Langdell: as part of Community Transportation Month, SVTC decided to give free rides to our residents for two days, concurrently with Nashua's free bag giveaway. The free days were not preannounced. Everyone got an envelope for two free tickets for another roundtrip. Everyone liked it – that is the feedback we received. Donations and fundraising support the free fare passes. Ridership has been steady. We are now averaging over 200 riders and five to seven new registrations per month.
- Caregivers NH: no one was in attendance from Caregivers.
- Gate City Bike Coop – no one from GCBC was in attendance.

## 5. SCC Update

Marceau stated that at the last meeting, there was a discussion about the bylaws. The SCC and the Bylaw Committee thought that the process would go smoothly and that everyone would just accept it, but there was some pushback (or conflict) about accepting them without having the bylaws go to the RCCs and have some discussion. Last Monday there was a call regarding what people thought about the bylaws and to solicit input.

Langdell offered that the Committee had questions themselves about whether the process was getting pushed a little too fast. However, the SCC leadership wanted to get this moving forward. She was not surprised that there were questions about the final step of bringing them up to the RCCs before a final vote was missing. But the bylaws are meant to be a template, with companion documentation to help explain or add that policy jump that does not need to be in the bylaws but needs to be written down somewhere. The input we have has been great. The subcommittee started at 8 a.m. yesterday and we reviewed one-third of the comments – a lot were repetitive. It looks like the RCCs may have had a meeting, members may have written down the same thing, and everyone submitted their comments. Many are productive, but some reflect a misunderstanding of what has already been agreed upon so there needs to be some re-education. At this point, it is doubtful that there will be a “final”. There are a couple of regions that thought that voting by email would be acceptable for them when they could not meet, but the RCC is covered by the RSA that covers this is 91A and we must follow it – it requires public participation.

Marceau thanked Langdell for the update and stated that we would not be doing anything on the bylaws during the meeting today.

Waitkins stated that he and Marceau got together and went through the bylaws with comments. There are some relatively minor comments. The part about the RCC duties is quite extensive in the bylaws. We just proposed that the language needs to be clarified. Langdell requested Waitkins send his questions to her, to respond, and to help this region. Waitkins stated that with bylaws review takes a lot of work and time. Langdell reviewed the process, stating it starts with taking an existing set that serves as a good template. Originally, we were instructed to start with regional bylaws. Maybe this will work. What needs to be understood is that the government sector's documentation process is different from the corporate sector. Marceau thanked Langdell for her service and stated the SCC meeting was about getting good performance measures. They are still trying to straighten out what they are asking for and how to get it to people. Langdell asked the question because the last SCC meeting was not recorded so updates were not available by the recording.

## 6. Regional Mobility Manager Update

Marceau had her busiest months yet.

- Visited businesses and asked for items for the Nashua Transit raffles, and received items
- Online outreach to human resources departments in the state. Labornet and Atty. Jim Reidy were very helpful here.
- Attended the Walk to School event that included students, parents, district personnel, teachers, the mayor, and other community human services organizations including the United Way. The event had great participation.
- Attended the Continuation Of Care announcement for Commute Smart for NH and helped spread the word about the program.
- NTS Transit Center Remodel Open House – many attended, including representatives from the NTS and FTA. They distributed a new bus route (distributed at this meeting by Marceau and included in these minutes). No stop at the former Christmas Tree Shop. A new route was added to ride to the Manchester Airport. Tickets are cash fare on the bus or tickets in advance are purchased through the MTA. Ticket prices are \$5. Nashua Transit Center does not sell tickets or have information regarding the airport service.
- Leadership Academy For Public Health Transportation Forum - the next step is to try to get them to do something with the RCC which Marceau keeps advocating. Langdell stated the forum's purpose was to seek information at the event and wanted to review the outcome to see where they are going next before doing anything with RCC. Jane Goodman is pulling the information together. Langdell stated it is very city-focused – not a lot of emphasis on the greater Nashua public health area. Marceau stated that she hopes they will come to an upcoming RCC meeting. Langdell stated the notes and all the information gathered at the forum can help with the upcoming locally coordinated transportation plan at a minimum or a list of contacts to follow up with.
- Attended the Public Equity Meeting at Nashua City Hall. She gave them a report of her activity.
- Secured a speaker from the NH DMV for immigrants and newcomers to the Nashua region. The topic was how to get a driver's license. Miller did an excellent job. Marceau asked Don Pare from the Gate City Bike Coop to speak but John Burkitt spoke
- Area Libraries Tour – went to Hudson to recruit more volunteer drivers. Made a good connection there.
- Trying to go to more elderly events. Went to the Coliseum on Coliseum Drive to distribute information about transportation services. There were people there who really needed the paratransit service. Miller was praised. Went to the Adult Learning Center. The Hillsborough transportation model is being discussed and tomorrow we will have a Zoom about it too.
- GACIT – did not attend as it was discussed with Waitkins stated it was not appropriate for Marceau to go. Waitkins gave an update on the highlights of the GACIT meeting: NRPC was given five minutes to speak, thus NRPC advocated for the air quality projects, and the projects that were not adopted in the first round. Camille Corea (NTS) was there to talk about transit and CMAQ funding. Langdell stated we should rethink that. There is no reason why Marceau should not have gone and advocated for senior funding transit. Langdell could not attend that night. That is where we need to make sure that our leadership in Concord knows the success we have had, that the funding is helpful, and should continue to fund it. This reflects the need to do some work around the regional ability manager's role. NRPC is the lead agency, but that role should be a bit more separate from that umbrella. Waitkins agreed with Langdell and said he should have offered earlier to bring something forward for the GACIT meeting. Langdell that this should be August 2024 work for the RCC mobility manager (presently Marceau). Teri Palmer stated that many mobility managers were

able to participate in the prior GACIT meetings and reminded everyone that written comments are being accepted by the GACIT committee into November. It has been a learning curve. Waitkins stated we should task Marceau with putting together some comments. Langdell asked if there is a boilerplate for the GACIT meeting that came out of this. Palmer stated if she had the same panel, she changed my message a bit, as most likely others did as well. She is going to provide written comments that summarize everything she said at the meeting. The message from just about everyone was, "Thank you for the funding you provided, but we need more." Waitkins agreed that we should provide written comments.

- Since the last RCC meeting, Marceau has had seven new requests for help.
- Meeting in Milford in November and the FTA review (Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration certification review of NRPA).
- Went to the "Healthy Aging" event hosted by the United Way. She brought up mobility management and appreciated the talk.

## **7. Community Transportation App by Sara Siskavich (NRPC)**

(Note: a short discussion ensued before the presentation about the duplication of apps various area agencies have created, and how their work could possibly be leveraged among themselves to create an optimized app.)

Siskavich gave a demo of the app she and Tyrell Borowitz created. The origins came from the Volunteer Driver Study from last fiscal year. It was in the scope of work to put together something for driver resources. It evolved into a more complex exercise. We took the directory information that is on the NRPC website in PDF format and culled from it the core elements that are offered across the board and tried to make it into something more interactive and easier to traverse. The outcome is not a trip planner, unlike other state apps. Langdell commented that this is similar to the NH Alliance for Healthy Aging website and the Southern NH Planning website about other services that are available through the towns. Siskavich agreed, but stated it is through the lens of where you are coming from (origin) and what are our region's resources. Siskavich explained in her demo it is a one-page dashboard instead of searching through more than one. It contains the map of the regional towns so a user can click on the town of origin. Then select from a list of organizations that are service providers that appear in the middle column. The third column provides the details of the organization's specific services. The bottom left corner of the third column has additional resources. Langdell asked if a disclaimer can be added that says that this is not an exhaustive list. Siskavich said it can be included and she would be interested in knowing what else is missing from the RCC. Langdell asked about phone app access. Siskavich said that it is not optimal, but accessible. Langdell asked about updating. Siskavich said that if the updates to the data can be presented in an Excel document, that would be appreciated as it is labor intensive. Apfelberg thinks the app is great and asked if it is possible to add a user opt-in to be a volunteer driver. Langdell stated we should look at the work that is being done by the NH Alliance for Healthy Aging on their volunteer driver recruitment page and perhaps incorporate it. Siskavich stated that can be looked into as a link. Palmer stated this is amazing and will assist transportation managers during a phone conversation at their fingertips, and agreed with the comment to put the NH AHA resources in the NRPC app. Siskavich stated the link is public-facing, is live now, and can be circulated. Siskavich will give it to Marceau to circulate. Palmer asked if it is possible to add or separate Mobility Management from Transportation. Palmer suggested that the Community Transportation page on the NRPC website include the work or replace the NRPC's Community Transportation Resources page. Langdell mentioned that the Greater Nashua Region Coordinating Council (RCC7) page needs to be updated as it is outdated. Siskavich agreed to circulate the link to Marceau to distribute it to her connections. Langdell asked it to be circulated to all NRPC members to ask who is not on this list that needs to be, via Marceau.

**8. Other Transportation Issues or Concerns**

Pat Murphy, Merrimack reported homelessness is on the increase and the cases are complex. Doing some case management for housing, but there are special concerns with the elderly and mental health. There is a lot of demand for and concern around requesting on-demand rides exceeding the budget, especially the next fiscal year budget. She has been talking to Camille Correa about this.

**9. Adjournment**

At 11:13 a.m., a motion to adjourn by consensus.

**Volunteer Driver Subcommittee Discussion**

Waitkins stated the VDP Feasibility study was funded through 5305E DOT funding through Fred Butler's group and was pleased with the study. Palmer stated that the 5310 Capital Contract should be hitting the streets in the next couple of weeks for van funding.

Apfelberg stated medical and specialized elderly transport is available, but broad community funding that is available on demand or short notice does not exist and there is a real need. A more flexible taxi service, Uber, or Lyft service scheduled on an as-needed basis (perhaps even same day), in conjunction with a ready pool of volunteer drivers who can take the call and drive. There is a lot of complexity to this and it is not easy. Palmer asked Apfelberg if he is set in stone on a *volunteer* provider program. But Apfelberg stated he is looking to fill transportation gaps and is not married to anything or anything at all. Palmer was thinking if all regional transportation providers could partner, and talk about funding for micro transit (what Apfelberg described, but in zones across a region), and take someone to jump in with both feet and take the program and run with. A zone is set up, drivers are hired, pick up people at their door, bring people into where transit systems exist, and transit systems can finish the ride. Wheelchair-accessible vans are used in most microtransits. It is cheaper than buying a cutaway. It operates like an Uber – a single trip, multi-stop trip, and a regularly scheduled trip can be requested. Palmer explained the growth of a pilot project in Windsor, VT as an example. Transit vans were used. Since everyone has a little bit of funding, the money can be directed to this system. Langdell stated Nashua Transit applied for a sandlot grant for a pilot program but they did not get the funding. Nevertheless, Nashua may be a resource regarding federal grant funding and technology (central dispatch). Palmer stated sustainability funding has to be considered as well, including at the state level. Langdell stated Southwest just finished a look at micro transit in that area and they would be a good contact. Also, taxi services may be an option for filling the ride gaps. Apfelberg brought up Ride United, the model being agencies provide clients with a code for payment (like a debit card) for a Lyft ride. Can be single-use or multi-use. United Way's Microsoft grant is used to do some research on options to fill the gap. A discussion ensued about the intricate challenges that need to be considered in filling the ride gaps, i.e., trip length of time, street/road conditions, i.e. width, surface, etc. Palmer stated Ellen Avery in Keene gave an excellent presentation on this issue at GACIT. Volunteer driver programs are trying to fill the gaps and don't have enough funding. All states around us are trying to fix this too, but instead, more funding is going towards community transit. Apfelberg offered to name a new committee the Mobility Gap Subcommittee. Available resources include VIA. They did the Monadnock transit study and did an incredible job. When it came to the nuts and bolts and the money, VIA stated over a million dollars and Monadnock had only a few hundred thousand dollars in their operating budget. Just remember, that most of these models are about technology. Waitkins stated VIA came in and presented to NRPC. They also stated the cost would be \$1.2 million per year to fund a volunteer, on-demand driver program.

Langdell stated we should have a conversation with Nashua Transit which has some wheels on the ground to offer, that might help, but it may be going into the weeds. Apfelberg stated he thinks from the perspective of the need that citizens have and fix the unmet need. Langdell suggested the members keep a log of unmet needs by municipalities, including looking at past logs. Apfelberg stated there are sometimes barriers to using existing resources that should be investigated like the two grocery bag limit that exists in Nashua. It was fixed by distributing compliant grocery bags to riders who needed them. Palmer stated that zones can be set up based on the user's needs, i.e., hospitals. It does need to start with NTS and see what they are planning and the potential to collaborate. Apfelberg stated he would like to know what NTS is not doing too. He has tried to work with NTS on discounted bus passes and got nowhere. Apfelberg would like to see a white paper on anecdotal experiences. He gave an example of a young man who has a job and needs to get back and forth to work every day. Marceau stated that NH does not have sufficient funds to pay for microtransit. Most agreed that you don't need a big organization that will spearhead this. Palmer stated that the funding is needed for existing transit systems.

NEXT STEP: Apfelberg asked if we could continue the discussion after our upcoming meetings. In the meantime, he suggested that all collect stories, i.e. what the needs are, and what was done or not done to provide the caller with a ride. Apfelberg offered to collect the stories. The stories can be woven into a narrative about what is being done and how the current needs are met. Langdell offered to touch base with Terry Johnson, get his information, and look for a report from NTS. Apfelberg asked Langdell to reach out to NTS to participate in committee discussions. Palmer will connect with Camille Correa at NTS and discuss where NTS is with their investigation in micro transit. Subcommittee meetings will be held immediately after the monthly RCC meetings.

**From Zoom chat:**

37:41 Miller: Tell Janet thanks for clarifying whether the October SCC meeting was recorded or not. I appreciate that, since I was asked and wasn't sure whether it was. It normally is recorded, I think.

39:09 Miller: The Zoom is frozen.

39:17 Palmer: did we just lose them? They are back!

1:16:50 Palmer: I love it! The more information and resources out there for our regions the better!!

**Next Meeting:**

Thursday, November 30, 2023 (or December? TBD)

*Respectfully submitted by Kathy Kirby, NRPC Administrative/Communications Assistant.*