

MINUTES
New Hampshire State Commission on Aging
Monday, September 21, 2020 10:00 a.m.-noon
Held via Video Teleconference

Present: Rep. Polly Campion, Chair; Ken Berlin, Vice Chair; Roberta Berner, Clerk; Rep. James MacKay; Wendi Aultman, DHHS; Patrick Herlihy, DOT; Susan Buxton, Long-Term Care Ombudsman; Sunny Mulligan Shea, DOJ; Lynn Lippitt, NH Housing Finance Authority; Richard Lavers, DES; Elizabeth Bielecki, Director of DMV, DOS; Appointed by the Governor: Carol Stamatakis, Kristi St. Laurent, Rev. Susan Nolan, Susan Denopoulos Abrami, Susan Ruka, Suzanne Demers, Daniel Marcek; Rebecca Sky, Executive Director.

Absent: Sen. Ruth Ward; Janet Weeks, DOL; Harry Viens; Kathy Baldrige; Susan Emerson; John Kennedy.

Guest Presenters: Scott Bogle, Senior Transportation Planner, Rockingham Planning Commission; Fred Roberge, Vice President of Transportation, Easter Seals, and Chair of State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation.

Guests: 24 members of the public (John Wilson, Jon Eriquezzo, Cheryl Steinberg, Carol Currier, Heather Carroll, Jennifer Rabalais, Joan Marcoux, Arnold Newman, Darlene Cray, Kathleen Hoey, Beth Todgham, Mary Roberge, Gail Smuda, Kimberly Blakemore, Kathie Kaluzynski, Nancy Rollins, Gene Patnode, Delores Perrotta, Janice McDermott, Laura Davie, Anne Diefendorf, Brooke Belander, Bev Cotton).

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Approval of Minutes

Chair Polly Campion called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. provided an overview of the agenda, welcomed the Commission and guests and read “A Checklist To Ensure Meetings Are Compliant With The Right-to-Know Law During The State Of Emergency.” The State of Emergency has been declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A requirement of such compliance is to take a roll call attendance. When each member answers, he or she also must state whether there is anyone else in the room during the meeting. Clerk Roberta Berner called the roll, also asking that the members of the public and presenters attending the teleconference identify themselves. The following attendees noted that a family member might pass through the room during the meeting, since they were attending from home: Commission members Wendi Aultman, Susan Buxton, Susan Denopoulos Abrami, and Kristi St. Laurent.

Minutes from the August meeting were sent out to Commission members with the agenda for review prior to the September meeting.

Rep. MacKay made a motion, seconded by Susan Denopoulos Abrami, to approve the August minutes. By roll call vote, the following members approved the motion: Chair Campion, Ken Berlin, Roberta Berner, Rep. MacKay, Wendi Aultman, Patrick Herlihy, Susan Buxton, Sunny Mulligan Shea, Lynn Lippitt, Carol Stamatakis, Elizabeth Bielecki, Susan Denopoulos Abrami, Daniel Marcek, Rev. Susan Nolan, Suzanne Demers and Susan Ruka. Richard Lavers abstained from the vote. The motion to approve the August minutes was approved by 16 members.

II. Snapshot of Transit Systems and Needs in New Hampshire

Chair Campion introduced the topic, noting that access to transportation and housing rose to the top of the needs in the State Plan on Aging. They were identified as priorities for focus by the Commission through its strategic planning process and the resulting Task Forces, Aging in Community of Choice and Age Friendly State.

Chair Campion introduced a panel of transportation experts to present the topic:

- Patrick Herlihy, Commission member and Director of Aeronautics, Rail and Transit at the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH-DOT);
- Fred Roberge, Vice President of Transportation for Easter Seals and Chair of the State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation (SCC);
- Scott Bogle, Senior Transportation Planner, Rockingham Planning Commission.

The panel members presented the slide show, “Who Needs Transportation? A Snapshot of Transit Need in New Hampshire,” to provide an overview of the issues regarding transportation access for older adults and those with disabilities in New Hampshire. The PowerPoint presentation is available as an attachment to these minutes.

Highlights of the presentation included the following points:

- New Hampshire has 11 urban and rural public transit systems that serve 34 out of 244 communities in the state. Several dozen nonprofit organizations and volunteer driver programs also provide transportation, covering 197 communities.
- The population over age 65 in New Hampshire is projected to increase from 220,672 individuals in 2015 to 408,522 in 2040. Based on an estimate from AARP the state will have approximately 75,000 non-driving older adults by 2030. Based on a Census-based model from the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), non-driving older adults and adults with disabilities will need a minimum of more than three million rides by 2040 in order to access basic goods and services, including medical care. This minimum is based on an assumption of roughly two round-trips per month per person (yet, the average American takes 1,230 trips per year according to the National Household Transportation Survey).
- State transportation providers currently provide approximately 800,000 trips per year for older adults and those with disabilities, meeting an estimated 42% of need per the CTAA model. The current system’s barriers include limited geographic coverage, limited service hours and days, limited allowable trip purposes, a shortage of volunteer (and paid) drivers, lack of information reaching those who need it, and limited resources to expand the system.
- Funding for transportation in the state primarily comes from federal sources, which must be matched locally. In most other states, state funding makes up a significant share of non-federal match. Federal CARES funding boosted current funding for transportation in New Hampshire, but none of the funding is intended to go to programs explicitly for older adults and those with disabilities.
- The panel cited the State Plan on Aging and its goal of advancing age-friendly communities through supporting transportation options that connect older adults to healthcare, daily activities, and community involvement. Panelists stressed the importance of having NH-DHHS representation on the SCC.

- The SCC was created through RSA 239 that took effect July 1, 2007. The goal of the SCC and Regional Coordinating Councils for Community Transportation (RCCs) is to improve transportation coordination and collaboration throughout the state, improving access to transportation, ensuring efficient and effective use of existing resources, and developing new resources to support transportation. The RCCs and SCCs have seen some increase in service for older adults and adults with disabilities, improved information sharing, and greater awareness of regional needs. One hope is that transportation will be seen as a part of state infrastructure rather than as a “welfare”-type program. The SCC is recommending a statewide mobility manager and expanded mobility management networks at the regional level.
- The presentation briefly addressed the effects of the pandemic on public transportation and older adults, noting options including “micro-transit” and ride-sharing models. Demand-response public transit service has been growing steadily, serving those with disabilities, while ridership on most fixed-route public transit systems has declined over the past six years as gas prices have fallen and has shown a precipitous decline since March 2020 due to COVID19.
- Volunteer driver programs on average meet a small proportion of the need for transportation (on average 4%). The cost for the volunteer driver programs to grow to meet even 10% of the need would be an estimated \$2.3 million. With the pandemic, the programs have had increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers.

In conclusion, the panelists suggested ways that the Commission might engage with the issue—highlighting the transportation needs of New Hampshire’s older population, supporting transportation coordination work, and identifying cost-neutral policy changes. The state ranks near the bottom for spending on public transportation, but the panel suggested that the Commission not “give up on new state investment.”

III. Brief Updates on Commission Task Forces by Interim Chairs

A. Aging in Community of Choice – Lynn Lippitt

The Task Force met in mid-September and determined that a priority was to assess currently available services and determine the gaps in services. Today’s presentation was very helpful toward addressing that priority.

B. Age-Friendly State — Sunny Mulligan Shea

The Task Force intends to learn how the age-friendly model is working in specific communities in the region. The group would like to learn more about the home-share model and has decided that addressing exploitation and abuse of older adults must be included in its agenda.

C. COVID-19 Emerging Needs – Susan Buxton

The Task Force is focusing on the dual issues of ageism and social isolation, in both the community and in long-term care settings, that have come to the fore this spring and summer during the pandemic. At the August Commission meeting, an issue brief on social isolation in long-term care during COVID-19 was formally adopted for public dissemination. Susan Buxton updated the Commission about the dissemination of the issue brief. It has been shared with the NH Division of Public Health’s

COVID-19 Task Force, NH-DHHS Commissioner Lori Shibinette, the NH Health Care Association, NH Association of Residential Care Homes, LeadingAge of Maine and NH, the federal Administration on Community Living, the federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), the National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs to be used during a conference call with the Center for Disease Control and CMS. She was asked to submit it in writing and it was well received, helping to inform discussion and guidance regarding visitation in long-term care. A major guidance document has included the concept of visitation for an essential support person. In mid-September, CMS issued additional guidance regarding visitation, particularly after rapid testing.

Susan mentioned that New Hampshire is way ahead of many other states in its testing capacity for long-term care workers, especially asymptomatic staff.

CMS is now mandating that facilities allow visitation in long-term care facilities located in communities in which the transmission is below 5%. All of New Hampshire meets this criterion.

Chair Polly Campion acknowledged the work of this Task Force, and especially that of Susan Buxton, in taking action that has resulted in some real change during very challenging times.

D. Operational Infrastructure – Ken Berlin

Ken shared the Task Force’s work-plan template that outlines establishing Commission Task Forces, identifying interim Task Force chairs, and having each Task Force create a three-year work-plan. The Task Force also has the priority of filling vacancies within the Commission and developing a description of the role of Commission members. Another priority is to ensure that an Annual Report is prepared for Commission approval in October and delivered to the Governor and Legislature in November.

IV. **Public Input**

Chair Campion invited public input and noted that members of the public are welcome to contact her and Executive Director Rebecca Sky regarding participation and input.

John Wilson expressed strong concern that older adults are de-valued in our culture and that is an issue that underlies everything. He said that the way COVID-19 has had such a huge impact on the nursing home population is a prime example, adding that we should have been treating this like an apartment building on fire and filled with smoke.

V. **Adjournment**

Chair Campion declared the meeting adjourned at 11:55. The next meeting of the Commission will take place on Monday, October 19, 2020 from 10 a.m. to noon via Zoom.