



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, January 22, 2020**

- PRESENT:** Jim Campbell, Arthur Capello, Margaret Joyce, Valerie Labrie, Colin Lentz, Marty Pepin, Dave Sandmann, Dennis Shanahan, Juliet Walker (arr. 8:32), Thomas Wright
- ABSENT:** Scott Bogle, Steve Fournier, Denis Hebert, Dave Sharples, Maria Stowell, Shelley Winters
- GUEST:** Liz Goldman, Dover resident
- STAFF:** Rad Nichols, Michael Williams, Heather Hesse-Stromberg

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Sandmann called the meeting to order at 8:30AM.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Pepin made a motion to accept the minutes as presented and Mr. Campbell seconded. All voted in favor except Mr. Wright who recused himself.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No Public Comment.

**IV. FINANCIAL REPORT**

Mr. Nichols presented the financials through November of 2019. November was another month in which COAST saw a gross gain of just over \$5,000. However, with local depreciation factored in it COAST experienced a loss of \$12,000. Farebox, contract revenue and advertising revenues were all up for November. In addition, Interest and Other Revenue was an increase due to the sale of a retired asset.

Wages were lower in November than in October, so wages year to date are under budget by 3%. Mr. Nichols reported that he hopes to see that gap continue to grow in December's financials because the January 1 wage increases will certainly impact that line. Fringe benefits is dramatically higher in November reflecting COAST's PTO buyback for employees with a balance over 120 hours. Contract Services and Planning expenses are over budget due to annual invoices paid in October, but we anticipate these will level off. Materials and Supplies is lower and most likely reflects the timing of fuel drops. We have not received utility bills for 6 Sumner since September, so we anticipate an increase there in the coming month. The change in the insurance line is due to the new insurance rates going into effect November 1, 2019. The increase in TMA expenses is due to a significant pre-buy in October for the Spring business to business (B2B) challenge. Coordination reflects a slow down in one of their programs.

Overall, year to date COAST is 2% under budget on revenue and 3.3% under budget on expenses. When local depreciation is factored in, we ended November with a \$20,291 loss. Mr. Nichols noted that he is now using a Quick Ratio which measures liquid assets against liabilities. In November we had a quick ratio of 3.16. The total of available funds were \$856,508 at the end of the month and are used for local match, monthly cash flow and future capital purchases.

## **V. OLD BUSINESS**

### **Triennial Review**

COAST asked for, and received, an extension for the submission of Triennial documents since the original date (Dec. 20) was when we were also preparing for our annual audit, and continuing COA projects, among other time-sensitive projects. All documents were submitted by the deadline (January 8, 2020) and we have subsequently had one initial phone call with our reviewer and multiple email interactions. The on-site portion of our review has been scheduled for June 2-3, 2020. It is anticipated that there will be significant communications back and forth between now and the on-site review, as the process for the leadup to the on-site review has changed significantly. We anticipate that we will be able to answer most of our reviewer's questions prior to the site visit so all that needs to happen in June are the parts of the Triennial that can only happen on site. Mr. Nichols noted that the Triennial is the FTA's review of COAST's compliance with FTA regulations and COAST's spending of federal funding. He reminded members that in 2017 COAST had no findings. Only around 10% of transit properties end a Triennial with no findings. We hope to repeat that achievement again in 2020.

### **Facility Needs & Site Assessment**

With the bulk of the COA Planning process behind us, staff is once again turning our attention to our near and long-term facility needs. After scoping a task relative to the work, we will be engaging our A&E firm, CMA, to proceed with work.

### **TNCs & Micro-transit in New Hampshire**

Staff have attended multiple meetings in the State relative to the increasing prevalence of transportation network companies (TNC) (e.g., Uber, Lyft) and potential new micro-transit operations in the state. The NH Transportation Council, on which Mr. Nichols sits, is actively reviewing whether such operators in the State should be providing data on their operations (they currently do not). Mr. Lentz added that the TNCs are trying to attract part of the demand response market (medical, non-emergency transportation) and are private, for-profit businesses. Ms. Walker stressed the importance of the difference between TNCs and micro-transit. She noted that micro-transit is a shared ride service that has been successful in other parts of the country where partnerships with local public transportation has been established. She urged that COAST consider partnering with micro-transit to perform last mile trip that help people get to areas that COAST doesn't serve. She noted that Portsmouth is looking into it, but a major concern has been the fear of cannibalizing COAST's service. Mr. Nichols stated COAST is open to working with micro-transit companies for last mile service.

## **VI. New Business**

### **Action Items**

#### **Action Item #1: Acceptance of New Board Member**

An invitation to join the COAST Board was recently extended to Ms. Margaret Joyce, President of the Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Joyce enthusiastically accepted our offer to join the Board in this capacity.

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors accept Ms. Joyce to represent an Area Chamber of Commerce on the COAST Board of Directors.*

Ms. Joyce shared that she has been with Greater Dover Chamber for a year. Prior to joining the Chamber, she worked with the NH Department of Safety and the NH Department of Economic Development. She has lived in NH for over 30 years and supports COAST knowing how transit impacts so many other things (labor market, economic development).

Mr. Capello made a motion to accept Ms. Joyce to represent an area Chamber of Commerce and Mr. Pepin seconded. All voted in favor and enthusiastically welcomed Ms. Joyce to the Board.

**Action Item #2: Draft 2019 Audit Approval**

The Draft Audited Financial Statements & Supplemental Statements for COAST's FY2019 were sent out for review prior to the meeting. Mr. Nichols reported that COAST had another clean audit and were, again, determined to be a low-risk auditee.

Mr. Nichols indicated that the auditors noted that we are using FTA accrual standards instead of non-profit gap accounting practices and they believe we should be using non-profit gap accounting practices. Under FTA accrual standards, grants are only counted as revenue when the funds are received. Under non-profit gap accounting practices, grants are counted as revenue upon receipt of the award letter. Ms. Labrie suggested that we get a letter from our banking institution in place to protect anything over \$500,000.

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors accept the 2019 Audit Reports and 2018 Form 990, prior to submittal to the IRS and Federal Audit Clearinghouse.*

Mr. Wright voted to accept the 2019 Audit Reports and 2018 Form 990 prior to submittal to the IRS and Federal Audit Clearinghouse and Ms. Labrie seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Capello thanked the staff for their hard work on this and acknowledging how challenging and time-consuming it is to go through an audit. Mr. Sandmann noted that special thanks go to Ms. Polychronis and Ms. Hesse-Stromberg for their work filling in for the Bookkeeper.

**Action Item #3: Authorization to Submit SFY21 5310 Grant to NHDOT in Support of ACT**

An annual process, and serving as the region's lead agency, COAST staff is currently in the process of developing their SFY21 grant application to the NHDOT for 5310 funds to support ACT activities and TripLink operations. We will be applying for the total amount of FTA 5310 funds available, \$325,384. In addition to non-USDOT matching funds provided by agencies participating in TripLink, hospital and foundation grants, and non-cash match raised through volunteer time, COAST will also be providing non-USDOT matching funds of up to \$59,683.

Mr. Nichols noted that these funds help support the transportation needs of the clients of Rockingham Nutrition Meals On Wheels, Ready Rides (volunteer driver program), Community Rides (which provides door to door transportation to medical appointments to many who fall through all the cracks of eligibility for other services), TripLink, and the Community Transportation Manager's work.

**Action Required:** *The COAST Board of Directors approve the submittal of the SFY21 5310 grant application to the NHDOT in support of ACT.*

Mr. Capello made a motion to approve the submittal of the SFY21 5310 grant application to the NHDOT in support of ACT and Mr. Shanahan seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

### **Committee Reports**

**Executive Committee** – did not meet.

**Board Development Committee** – did not meet but Mr. Sandmann is looking to put a meeting together before the next Board meeting in March. Mr. Nichols noted that the makeup of the Board may change based on the system changes coming at the end of June.

**Policy Committee** – did not meet but Mr. Sandmann noted there are several policies due for review so this committee will need to meet.

**Legislative Committee** – did not meet but Mr. Sandmann noted that this committee will meet before the next Board meeting with Dave attending by phone.

Mr. Nichols noted that the next scheduled Board meeting is March 25, 2020 and that there will be no February meeting. However, if something comes out of the COA that requires Board action, an Executive Committee will be called. Ms. Walker stated that the regional planning commissions (RPC) are trying to organize a group to look at continuing the TMA activities. Mr. Bogle is looking to schedule a meeting and will let the whole board know when that meeting is so everyone can participate.

### **Discussion Item #1: New System Launch Preparations Update**

#### **GTFS Feed**

COAST's Google Transit Feed (GTFS) drives the website and the data there relative to any of our bus routes, drives Remix, and is a major component of our public facing schedule information. A major effort, the complete feed has been rewritten and updated by Mr. Schreier – all that remains is bus stops not yet approved. There are some elements that are still awaiting final approvals (bus stops and route colors), but this major element of our preparations is essentially done (well ahead of schedule).

#### **Schedule Brochures**

The new system has several more routes and staff have been reconsidering how to produce printed schedule information for our customers. Given the larger number of fixed routes we will be operating, the size of the single brochure was an immediate concern as was the cost of printing such a brochure. We have also seen trends in the calls we receive relative to misunderstanding the printed schedules. We hope to address the confusion with any new schedules.

We are planning on producing a separate printed piece for each bus route (or combination of bus routes in the case of Routes 12, 13 & 14). One side of the printed piece (likely a folded piece) will contain specific route information (map, schedule (days, span of service each day and timepoint schedule after the hour), fares, any unique features of that route), the other side will contain systemwide information. We anticipate that this will be a more cost-efficient way to present this information.

### Website Update

We have begun working with our website design firm to discuss just what updates we will be able to do on our own vs. relying on their staff. While we will need their help with the updated system map page, it is hoped that most of the work will be able to be handled by our own staff to keep costs down.

### Destination Signs/Announcements

We have recreated our databases for these programs and received a quote relative to the cost to reprogram our destination signs and annunciation systems. This process will cost between \$6,000 and \$8,000.

### Fleet Makeup vs. Needs

As we have redesigned the system, our fleet makeup will not initially match our fleet needs. For example, we currently have five (5) trolleys and will only have two trolley routes. At the same time, we will have fewer spare vehicles in the fleet. Ultimately, over the next 2+years COAST will need to operate trolleys on routes that we currently use buses on. In order to do so, we will need to de-brand some of the trolleys so that they are not Portsmouth-Pease specific. The de-branded trolleys would most likely end up being utilized on Routes 1 and 33 (local routes) due to their comfort level. Mr. Nichols reminded the board that many of the trolleys we have were purchased with ARRA funds (100% FTA funds).

### Training

We have been preparing for how to most efficiently train our staff on the new system, to both answer basic questions (or redirect folks to where they can find the information) and learn the intricacies of the new routes and how they are driven. We will offer a variety of different training techniques/opportunities to assist them with getting up to speed.

### New Bus Stop Locations

We have received approvals for all new bus stops locations in all jurisdictions except for Pease and Kittery. In both cases, these will be handled by their staff and we do not expect any issues with final approvals.

### Bus Stops

In preparation for implementing the new system, COAST staff are working to redesign our bus stop signage to display the new service information. There are several key points we will need community input on, and we will reach out to the communities to gain their input. Mr. Nichols noted that the goal is to not put as much information on the signs as we do today. This will help reduce ongoing costs associated with changes.

Finally, while not related to this design process, we want to clarify expectations around the cleanliness of our bus stops which is an important issue for us. The cleanliness of our bus stops impacts the attractiveness of the service for potential customers, the general atmosphere of the community, and advertisers' willingness to purchase advertising in COAST's shelters. The unfortunate reality is that some people litter. Mr. Williams noted we do not have resources to clean the stops and we rely on the communities to clean up the shelters as they would anywhere along the road. Mr. Williams stated COAST does have garbage cans on the buses to encourage people to throw things away in the bus versus leaving trash at the shelter. Ms. Walker asked about the bus shelter agreement developed a couple of years ago and Mr. Nichols indicated that that has been used with new shelter installs but not on previously existing shelters.

Ms. Walker expressed concern about how challenging it will be for communities with remote bus shelters to keep them clean. Mr. Nichols reported that we get complaints from riders regarding the condition of the shelters. Mr. Capello asked to be notified if there's an issue so he can address it and Mr. Wright and Mr. Pepin indicated the same. Mr. Williams asked members to let him know who we should be contacting. Ms. Walker suggested COAST send out a formal request to each community about who to contact and that should get updated every year.

Mr. Shanahan asked whether we need a proactive system or a robust reactive system to respond to these issues. Mr. Sandmann suggested a reactive to start and then, if the issue continues, more proactive. Ms. Walker suggested that in communities that allow COAST advertising and receive a credit from the revenues, there should be another agreement that speaks to the extra effort they need to make to ensure the cleanliness of shelters with advertising.

#### 6 Sumner

With bus service right to our administrative offices, staff have begun to discuss modifications that will need to be made to the lobby area, given the potential for much more frequent and longer visits at the office for our passengers. We will likely engage our A&E firm to help us handle these concerns.

### **VII. Community Updates/Information Items**

#### Warming Center Transportation

Staff is working with the Integrated Delivery Network (IDN) on strategies to provide service for individuals looking to get to the local warming centers in the Tri-City area (Dover, Rochester and Somersworth). Mr. Williams noted that if someone tells the driver they are going to the warming shelter they will ride for free and receive a ticket from the shelter for departure the next day.

#### Portsmouth Senior Center

Staff received a tour of the new Senior Center on Cottage Street. During the site walk the location and details for a new bus shelter were discussed, as well as how the trolley that will service the new location will travel by or through the site. Mr. Nichols indicated we are working on determining the size of the shelter. Ms. Walker noted that Portsmouth is about to start construction on new road between Bartlett and Route 1 By-Pass (parallel to Cottage).

#### Ridership

December 2019 was down 4.2% from December 2018. Multiple routes showed strong growth, Route 1 (+10.2%), Route 7OD (+52.8%), Route 33 (+22.6%) and the Clipper Connection routes to the PNSY also did well compared with December 2018 (+23.3%). Mr. Nichols attributes the increase in Clipper Connection ridership to a recent hiring push at the Shipyard and that a lot of people who have been working off site are now back.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Pepin made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Mr. Lentz. All voted in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 9:32.