



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, June 24, 2020**

**Per RSA 91-A:2,III(b) the COAST Chair has declared the COVID-19 Outbreak an emergency and has waived the requirement that a quorum be physically present at the meeting**

**PRESENT:** Scott Bogle, Denis Hebert (arr 8:35), Valerie Labrie, Colin Lentz, Marty Pepin, Dave Sandmann, Michael Scala, Dennis Shanahan and Juliet Walker, Shelley Winters (arr 8:50)

**ABSENT:** Arthur Capello, Steve Fournier, Margaret Joyce, Dave Sharples, Maria Stowell, and Thomas Wright

**STAFF:** Rad Nichols, Crystal Dumont, Heather Hesse-Stromberg, Anne Rugg (arr. 8:44)

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30am. Mr. Nichols read the information regarding authorization to meet electronically pursuant to the Governor’s emergency order. Each member identified themselves, their location and whether anyone was in the room with them and listening contemporaneously.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Pepin made a motion to accept the minutes as presented and Mr. Shanahan seconded. All voted in favor by roll call.

- Mr. Bogle Yes
- Ms. Labrie Yes
- Mr. Lentz Yes
- Mr. Pepin Yes
- Mr. Sandmann Yes
- Mr. Shanahan Yes
- Ms. Walker Yes

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Employee Recognition**

Mr. Nichols recognized Crystal Dumont who reached 10 years of service with COAST on April 6. Ms. Dumont is our Community Transportation Supervisor and manages TripLink. She supervises 2 employees and has been a big part of making the coordination efforts successful. Mr. Nichols noted that he regularly hears wonderful things about her and her staff from customers. Mr. Sandmann appreciates the efforts of her and her staff.

Mr. Nichols recognized James “Gib” Hearn who reached 5 years in May. He is an CDL Operator, Driving Instructor and Fill-In Dispatch. He works many hours and has done a great job for the organization. Mr. Nichols also recognized Donald Carpenter who reached 5 years in June as a valuable Fixed Route Operator.

Finally, Mr. Nichols recognized Anne Rugg who has worked with COAST for almost 7 years as the commuteSMARTseacoast Manager. Ms. Rugg is retiring at the end of the month. She has done an incredible job bringing a program that was floundering into an award-winning program in year 1 and has grown it from there. She has incredible energy and has made the program truly successful. Mr. Nichols reported that COAST is transitioning day-to-day programming to the RPCs in our region. Ms. Walker noted that Anne is going to be missed. Ms. Walker noted we are so lucky for all the leadership Anne has shown in the community. Ms. Walker noted the success of She Rides and the reinvigoration of the seacoast bike riders' group. Ms. Rugg joined the meeting and stated that she has loved this job and that Mr. Nichols is the best manager she's ever had. Mr. Bogle thanked her for her energy, creativity, and the fun she brought to developing the TMA.

#### **IV. FINANCIAL REPORT APRIL FINANCIALS**

Mr. Nichols reported that in April we saw a negative in Fares and Contract revenue due to having to refund purchases of fare media that were not able to be used due to the suspension of services. This is the first time there's been a negative in this line in his time at COAST. Advertising revenue fell off as well. When hearing of our suspension, advertisers contacted ATA to either canceled contracts or ask for the terms of their contracts to change. Interest and Other income continue to be affected positively by scrap and bus sales. Local match continues to come in as expected. Mr. Nichols reported that in State assistance, COAST billed for the full amount for the year in March. We do not expect to bill again for that line. TMA and Coordination both came in under budget. For expenses, the Wage lines were above average due to paying hazard pay and paying employees on furlough. Fringe Benefits were down because we did not have a lot of people using their Paid Time Off (PTO). Materials expenses have also been high due to supplies purchased to keep our employees/passengers safe and facilities/vehicles clean due to COVID. The insurance rates are as expected. TMA didn't have to do as much purchasing for commuter challenges, so expenses are down. Coordination was impacted by COVID – rides were down.

COAST ended the month of April 5.6% under budget in revenues and 8.3% under in expenses. YTD, we have a gross gain through April of \$102K. Mr. Nichols noted that if we consider the local share of depreciation, had experienced a loss of \$20K to date.

Mr. Nichols reviewed the Balance sheet and noted that our current assets sit at just over \$1.3M and our liabilities are at \$404K so we have about 3.5 months of funds that could hold us over if we had no additional income coming in. COAST's Unrestricted Net Asset ratio is up to 15.9% and is still 13% under our goal.

#### **MAY FINANCIALS**

Mr. Nichols reported that on May 11 we had begun to resume Fixed Route Operations and Route 7 On Demand. We had additional collections, though small, on advertising on old contracts with money owed. Local match continues to come in as anticipated. We anticipate seeing a change after June, which is the start of some municipalities' fiscal years. We have drawn CARES funds but have not drawn any Emergency Relief Funds yet. Most of these funds have gone toward furlough pay or other expenses directly related to the impacts of COVID-19 on our operations. Wages were much lower and were likely impacted by the end of hazard pay when fixed route services resumed on 5/11. Because we had lower service in the month, we saw lower contract services costs. In addition, we saw lower materials costs because we had stocked up on COVID supplies in April.

YTD we are 6.5% under budget in revenues and 10.2% under in expenses – both have grown. We have a gross gain of just under \$158K. YTD, including the local share of depreciation, we now have a gross gain of \$17.5K.

Mr. Nichols presented the May Balance Sheet which shows our position has improved so we now have just over 4 months of liquid assets if we had no other revenues coming in. COAST's Unrestricted net assets are just over \$1M and our Net Asset Ratio is now up to 17.1%.

Ms. Labrie asked about the cash drop since April and AR general went up and what those are related to. Mr. Nichols reported that both are related to federal draws and the timing of those draws. Mr. Nichols added that because our grant amendment for the Emergency Relief Funds has not yet been approved, that is reflected in AR general. As soon as that gets approved, we will do a draw on that and those numbers will flip.

## **V. OLD BUSINESS**

### **Bus Shelters & Solar Lighting**

We have recently taken delivery of four new bus shelters for near term placement. Two will be installed in Portsmouth at Hanover Station and the new Senior Center and one will be installed at COAST's Administrative Offices at 6 Sumner Drive. Included in the shipment were solar lighting kits for all the shelters we have that are manufactured by Daytech and we have deployed throughout the system. These will help meet one of the top amenity priorities as expressed by our riders, to help improve lighting at bus stops. We will be installing these over the course of the summer and early fall as our mechanics have the time for this project. Will have now have 14 bus shelters with solar lighting capabilities.

### **Operations & Maintenance Facility Planning**

We have executed an agreement for a work scope to be undertaken by our engineering firm, CMA Engineers, to study the long-term feasibility of the site and facility needs at 42 Sumner Drive. Initial survey work will begin on June 19. The project is expected to be completed by December 2020. Mr. Nichols stopped by the office briefly yesterday and saw the survey crews doing their work. We will apply for grant funds to support this work. The goal is to move the Administrative offices back up to 42 which will save \$36K a year.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

### **Action Items**

#### **Action Item #1: Acceptance of Rochester Board Member Appointment**

The City of Rochester's primary representative, Mr. Jim Campbell, recently relocated to Virginia to continue his professional growth. Subsequently, City Manager Cox has informed us of his appointment of Michael Scala, Rochester's Director of Economic Development, as the City's new primary representative on the COAST Board of Directors.

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors accept Mr. Scala to represent the City of Rochester on the COAST Board of Directors.*

Ms. Walker made a motion to accept Mr. Scala to represent the City of Rochester on the COAST Board of Directors and Mr. Bogle seconded. All voted in favor by roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes

Ms. Labrie	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Pepin	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Walker	Yes

**Action Item #2: Statement on Racial Justice**

Mr. Sandmann noted that since the last meeting as a Board, there have been significant events related to racial justice occurring across our country and the world. We have a number of employees, and many passengers, who have, and continue to, experienced and suffer racial injustice in their lives.

As an organization, we may want to consider releasing a statement on racial justice externally.

**Action Required:** *The COAST Board of Directors consider drafting and releasing a statement on racial justice.*

Mr. Sandmann noted that collectively we spend a lot of time glossing over these issues and it is actions that count. Mr. Sandmann would like to put out a statement to the public on racial justice on behalf of the organization.

Mr. Shanahan expressed that he felt it was a good introductory statement, but that the follow-up will be what makes it impactful. Mr. Shanahan is happy to be part of the group to formulate such a statement. Mr. Shanahan and Mr. Sandmann will draft something and put it out to the Board for approval. Once approved it will be released to the public.

Mr. Bogle stated that the statement is a good start but that we need to think about what those next steps are and how would we do the listening structure and who we will engage. He noted it would be good to have a sense of that when we release this. Mr. Sandmann recognized that we will need a mechanism to make this work.

Mr. Pepin noted that it is too bad that we have to go through this at this stage and a shame we haven't come very far. He is all in favor of doing whatever we need to do to make everyone feel equal and part of the American Dream and to show that we care.

Mr. Sandmann noted that, unless there is serious objection to the statement Mr. Sandmann and Mr. Shanahan put out, that is the statement that would be released.

**Action Item #3: Joy Riding Policy**

Given changes to the design of the system using our previous Ride Through policy would allow someone to ride on our bus for up to 4 hours. To avoid that, a proposal to change the ride-through policy to the following Joy-Riding Policy is up for consideration:

Proposed Policy

Joy riding (riding the bus without a destination) is not permitted on COAST buses. Customers without a destination will be asked by the operator to leave the bus.

Guidance for enforcement would be provided to operators as follows:

### Joy Riding Enforcement:

1. If a customer is riding the bus who you suspect of joy riding, you may ask them, "What is your destination today?"
2. If they have a destination, they are permitted to ride to that destination. If the destination they indicate is not direct, (or you've already passed it), help them understand the most direct way to get there and guide them to that bus. If they do not get off at the destination they said they were going to, you may tell them they are at their destination, and to have a nice day. If they say they want to keep riding, they should politely be told that this is the destination they had indicated, and that if they wanted to go somewhere else they would need to board another bus—and pay another fare—to travel to that destination.
3. If the customer says they do not have a destination, politely inform them that all COAST customers must have a destination, and that they need to choose one or get off at the next major stop.
4. As with all policies, please use discretion in enforcement to avoid unsafe confrontations. If the confrontation appears to be heading in an unsafe direction, please call dispatch for assistance and stop confronting the customer.

**Action Required:** *The COAST Board of Directors consider adopting the proposed Joy Riding Policy.*

Mr. Bogle asked what the disruption caused by this is if they aren't breaking any rules. Mr. Bogle noted that this is often a way for older adults to increase their social contact. Mr. Nichols stated that we have people who get on the bus to ride around to stay cool or stay warm for as long as they can. Sometimes this is no issue at all (with no breaking of other rules), although they should be paying again at some point. Other times these riders can be quite problematic. Mr. Nichols noted that we are trying to set some parameters around how to use the system and what is otherwise acceptable.

Mr. Lentz asked if someone be able to keep paying and keep riding? Mr. Nichols indicated that they would, but that that makes it a challenge for drivers to keep track of when people get on which can be difficult based on time of day and number of passengers.

Mr. Hebert asked if these are homeless people? Mr. Nichols noted that it is not always known. Mr. Hebert asked what we do when we discover they have been riding on the bus and we need them to get off the bus and the bus is not in their area? Mr. Nichols noted they would have to catch the next bus back to their origin. Mr. Hebert noted that with COVID going on this is the only means for people to get out. He wondered if this a service we are providing to a few people that allows them to get out and be less isolated? Mr. Nichols noted that we would want to be very careful about making assumptions about someone's housing status and trip purpose. The focus is riding without a purpose and this is simply another tool for operators to use if the situation turns challenging and is impacting other riders' experiences.

Mr. Bogle noted that this also creates a less-controversial basis to eject someone who is causing a problem.

Ms. Winters noted that this is a common policy and when it is not spelled out it leaves the driver in a tough position. In most systems if someone rides a full route and does not get off the bus, they are not using it for its intended purpose (it is an origin to destination service). Ms. Winters expressed that the policy as written is fair.

Mr. Shanahan noted that as long as it is fairly applied and that #4 above is the key.

Mr. Lentz made a motion to adopt the Joy Riding Policy but noted that, with COVID-19, people shouldn't be using the bus to just ride around because it's taking a seat from someone who might need it for an essential purpose. Mr. Pepin seconded the motion. All voted in favor by roll call.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Labrie	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Pepin	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Walker	Yes

**Action Item #4: Establish the Nominating Committee**

In accordance with Article XII, Section 2 of the COAST By-Laws, a Nominating Committee of up to five (5) representatives shall be appointed by the Chairperson at least sixty (60) days in advance of the organization's Annual Meeting.

The Nominating Committee may nominate one (1) or more candidate(s) for each office and position(s) open on the Executive Committee as stated in Article XII, Section 1, of the Bylaws.

The Annual Report of the Committee must be recommended by a majority of the members of the Nominating Committee present and voting and shall be electronically mailed, or sent by regular mail if an email address is not available, to all voting Directors no less than thirty (30) days in advance of the Annual Meeting.

Directors are privileged to nominate and vote for any officer of the organization whether or not he/she is nominated by the Nominating Committee.

The current Officers are:

Chairperson	Mr. Dave Sandmann
Vice-Chairperson	Ms. Juliet Walker
Treasurer	Mr. Arthur Capello
Secretary	Mr. Dennis Shanahan

The current Executive Committee consists of:

Mr. Dave Sandmann  
Ms. Juliet Walker  
Mr. Arthur Capello  
Mr. Dennis Shanahan  
Past Chairperson: Mr. Scott Bogle  
Chairman's Appointee: intentionally vacant  
Rad Nichols (non-voting)

**Action Required:** *That the Chairperson shall appoint a Nominating Committee of up to five (5) representatives to:*

1. *Nominate a slate of Officers to be voted on at the September 2020 Board of Directors' Annual meeting.*
2. *Develop a slate of appointments to the Executive Committee, if necessary, to be voted on at the September 2020 Board of Directors' Annual meeting.*

Mr. Bogle agreed to be the Chair. Mr. Scala, Mr. Pepin and Ms. Labrie volunteered to be on the Nominating Committee.

### **Committee Reports**

**Executive Committee** – held a meeting on June 10, 2020, at which among other things the rejuvenation of Committee meetings and work was discussed.

**Board Development Committee** – did not meet.

**Policy Committee** – did not meet.

**Legislative Committee** – did not meet.

Mr. Nichols noted that all of these Committees will try to meet in July. Mr. Sandmann noted that we have to get back on track.

### **Discussion Items**

#### **Discussion Item #1: Service Resumption Overview**

We have resumed fixed route services over three phases since May 11. Each phase has been enabled by operators returning to work. We still have approximately 7 operators out due to Coronavirus concerns. Given the continued dynamic situation and need to be reliable for our riders, we are being careful to not increase service to a point where a small change in staffing would result in us having to cut back again.

Phase 1: starting May 11 we resumed most fixed routes to either a weekday or Saturday level of service.

Phase 2: starting May 26 we resumed full Route 1 and Route 33 weekday service.

Phase 3: starting June 1 we resumed Route 41cc and increased the frequency of services on Routes 40 & 41.

We may not be able to return to full-service levels prior to our new system launch on June 29 due to staff out for COVID. Mr. Nichols noted we continue to see a nice climb to ridership week over week. Last week we were at 45% of our pre-COVID average weekly ridership. This is very good compared to what a lot of systems are seeing throughout the country.

#### **Discussion Item #2: New System Financing Review**

Mr. Nichols provided a refresher for the Board since we last discussed this topic at our January meeting and there have been significant changes in events since that date.

Mr. Nichols noted the following general budgeting assumptions:

- Expenses will grow at 5% annually.
- Fare Revenues will grow at 2% in FY22 and 2.5% annually thereafter.
- Federal 5307 Funds will grow by 2.1% annually.
- Federal 5307 Large Urban Funds awarded through NHDOT will be used in the 1<sup>st</sup> three years.
- Federal CMAQ Funds will be drawn as follows: \$1.2M, \$1.2M, \$600K, \$400K, \$200K.
- Other and Partner local match will grow 5% annually.

- Municipal match will grow by 10% annually (on average) between FY21 and FY25.
- State of NH funding will stay constant at \$34,783.
- Current share of local depreciation is \$227K annually.
- Federal CARES Act funds will be used to close any funding gaps that are present (min. of \$2.9M)

Mr. Nichols noted that at the Executive Committee Meeting earlier this month we talked about long-term financing for the system and some things have changed since that discussion. Mr. Nichols noted that CARES Act funds can be used at 100%, to the extent that we draw those down early in this process, we may not have them available to close gaps we know we have in our budgets in later years. He stressed that we need to be very careful and prudent in how we draw down federal dollars. CARES Funds should help us get through the first 5 years of our new system, if all the other revenue sources are in place.

Ms. Labrie asked about the Municipal match growth of 10% which seems high. Mr. Nichols noted that it varies by community depending on our formula and we have had years higher than that in certain communities. In any conversations with communities this year, we have been able to show what we are bringing to the table with improvements to our system and our overall value. All communities, but Somersworth, have passed the new financial requests thus far.

Mr. Bogle noted that communities were spared for many years from the increasing costs of ADA services because COAST was able to rely on CMAQ funds to fill that gap. We now have to go back to the communities whose residents are using those services. This is an important role for the Legislative Committee.

### **Discussion Item #3: New System Launch**

We are in the final stretch. Bus stop signs are going up, the schedules arrived Monday and are going out, staff training is nearly complete, and the Website will go live on Sunday.

A press release will be going out later today and we are using social media to educate people about the new system and how to use it. We have had an increase in calls and questions and have a number of people who can take calls in the office to handle the increased call volume. In addition, we now have the option of texting for people with questions.

## **VII. COMMUNITY UPDATES/INFORMATION ITEMS**

Ridership numbers were presented.

Ms. Labrie noted that the new system launch is really exciting, and she wishes everyone good luck.

Ms. Walker noted that the City of Portsmouth is still looking to use a portion of their streets for outdoor dining. All streets used by COAST will be kept open so it will not be interfering with any stops but may cause delays because roads will be narrower. Another area of impact is that they are looking to get rid of one of the lanes approaching Islington St.

Ms. Winters noted that NHDOT does have a pending request from COAST to use remaining CMAQ balances for Rt. 2, 40 and 41 and a small commuteSMART balance. The request is at the Commissioner's office. NHDOT is looking at all CARES funds that came to NH and CMAQ globally. She hopes to get something back in the next few weeks. Ms. Winters noted that there is



still a commitment for CMAQ and Boston UZA funds to be transferred year by year to COAST to support the new system design. Ms. Winters noted that the award letter said we still needed to enter a MOU for the previously awarded CMAQ and 5307 large urban funds that will ultimately need to go to Governor and Council with performance measures and reporting requirements.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Pepin made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Hebert seconded the motion. All voted in favor by roll call.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Labrie	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Pepin	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Walker	Yes

The meeting was adjourned at 9:53am.