



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
Minutes of the Annual Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, November 18, 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, Arthur Capello, Adam Causey, Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, Valerie Labrie, Colin Lentz, Marty Pepin, Dave Sandmann, Michael Scala, Dennis Shanahan, Juliet Walker, and Shelley Winters

**ABSENT:** Dave Sharples, Maria Stowell, and Thomas Wright

**STAFF:** Rad Nichols, Michael Williams, Margot Doering

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order at 8:31am. Each member identified themselves, stated their location and whether anyone was in the room with them and listening contemporaneously.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Capello made a motion to accept the October 2020 minutes as presented and Mr. Pepin seconded the motion. All voted in favor by Roll Call vote.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Capello	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

**IV. FINANCIAL REPORT**

Because we are early in November, the October financials are not yet ready. However, Mr. Nichols introduced the new Director of Finance, Margot Doering, who started on November 16. Ms. Doering comes to us with a wealth of experience. She is the principal of her own consulting firm, Cerulean Consulting, which has been in place since 2014. Through her consulting work

she supports CFOs, conducts business analytics and budgeting, and provides consultation to senior management.

From 2004-2013 she was General Manager and Owner of Martin Hill Inn in Portsmouth and from 1986-2004 she was with Bank of Boston/Bank of America where she held a variety of positions ending her career as a Vice President.

Ms. Doering is very active volunteering in the region and is currently sitting on the Board of Piscataqua Savings Bank. We were very impressed with Margot's straightforward, well-grounded, principled style and personality and feel very lucky to have her as our first Director of Finance.

Ms. Doering noted that she has looked at numerous CFO postings around the region over the years and COAST was the only one she applied for because public transportation is near and dear to her heart. Having lived and worked in the Boston area for so many years, she knows how important a good public transportation system can be. In addition, when she saw the COAST values, she felt that it was a match with how she lives her life and how she likes her work environment to be. Seeing that the communities are very involved in making COAST what it is was a strong factor in her decision as well. She is doing a lot of homework and reading, and Mr. Ruzinsky has been working through the tasks with her. She looks forward to participating in future meetings. Mr. Sandmann welcomed Ms. Doering on behalf of the Board.

## **V. OLD BUSINESS**

### **6 Sumner Drive Renovations**

Renovations to the reception area at 6 Sumner Drive have been completed except for the installation of the sliding glass partition window and a punch list walk through. The renovations are creating a separate reception area for visitors with controlled access to the rest of the offices. The City did their final inspection earlier this week.

### **42 Sumner Drive Facility Study**

The final Facility Needs Assessment was forwarded by CMA Engineers on November 12. The final document fully incorporated staff input provided on the draft. A copy of the report was distributed prior to the meeting.

### **Triennial Review**

COAST's triennial review will be held virtually in CY21, after having been postponed since spring 2020. Staff is currently preparing responses to a second request for information as the format of the review has been altered due to the pandemic.

### **Mask Ordinance**

Ms. Joyce asked how the City of Dover's proposed Mask Ordinance will impact COAST. She reported that several Chamber members were concerned that it puts a lot of liability on store owners. Mr. Nichols noted that, now that we have a requirement of masks on our vehicles, when communities adopt a similar stance it helps with the promotion of wearing masks on our vehicles. Mr. Williams reported that there have only been one or two incidents of passengers addressing, or being rude to, other passengers but nothing that has escalated.

Mr. Shanahan noted that a variety of input on the proposed Mask Ordinance has been received and as expected, the response is split.

Mr. Scala noted that the discussions in Rochester are around making masks mandatory in public buildings and public spaces with a recommendation that masks be worn in other places but with no mandate.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

### **Action Items**

#### **Action Item #1: January 2021 Service Schedule Changes**

Mr. Williams reported that we are looking to make some adjustment to the schedule for some of our routes, driven mostly by the shifts in the Shipyard schedule, as well as a desire for earlier am service from Rochester south on NH108.

Shortly before COAST implemented its new service design, the Shipyard instituted a new schedule. Since our new service was implemented at the end of June, we have seen a significant drop in Shipyard ridership, due in part to COVID, but mostly due to the fact that many workers need to be at the Shipyard prior to our first run. Mr. Williams noted that we did a survey of Shipyard riders, including people who are no longer riding, and the feedback was that people would resume riding if the schedules lined up. We are proposing shifting the schedule, so the first run arrives at the shipyard 30 minutes earlier.

These changes have allowed us to put into place some things that other riders have also been asking for, including earlier am service down NH108 from Rochester.

It is important to note that if the Shipyard were to go back to their prior schedule, we would not be able to change back easily. However, the Shipyard has indicated that a transition back to the previous schedule is not likely.

Implementing these changes will increase annual driver hours by just over 88 hours, or 1 hour and 42 minutes weekly, but creates cleaner work blocks that are easier to work with. In addition, it allows us to remove some exceptions in our published route schedules that have led to some confusion.

The summary of the proposed service schedule changes appears below. If approved by the Board, we would look to implement these changes in mid-January.

#### **Route Changes**

- Earlier Route 14S departure (5:09am) – connection to PNSY at 6:05am
- Earlier Route 13S departure (5:30am) – connection to PNSY at 6:05am
- Additional early Route 12 S run (5:56am)
- Route 34 gets affected by this:
  - Earliest inbound time shifts slightly to 5:17am (bringing it in line with clockface schedule)
  - Addition of 8:17am run (no more mid-morning exception)
  - Loss of last run (8:17pm to 8:42pm)
- Route 43 express changes – no longer has a connection with Route 14 at Dover Park & Ride. Instead, it connects at 6:30am at the DTC with the new early Route 12S, and then runs express to Shattuck / FRM and does an inbound 43. It then becomes 14N and stays on that cycle after leaving Hanover Station at 7pm.

- Route 44 adds two later runs (by the otherwise idle Route 42 vehicle) inbound to Gate 1, but not including Portsmouth City Hall. This does not affect hours or cost.
- Route 100 shifts earlier by 30 minutes in both AM and PM.

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors review and approve the proposed changes to the service schedule.*

Mr. Bogle made a motion to approve the service changes as presented by Mr. Williams and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion. All voted in favor by Roll Call Vote.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Capello	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

Mr. Capello left the meeting at 8:58am.

**Action Item #2: Gillig Purchase Order Authorization for next four (4) Heavy Duty Buses**

We have piggybacked on the Dayton, OH Gillig contract that is set to expire this winter. After identifying the specifications in that bid package that COAST needs for our operating environment, we have received a pricing quote for these vehicles.

Of note, the base price and PPI (Producer Price Index) are both higher than originally anticipated when we applied for our 5339 grant a few years back. Both have increased faster than our capital plan has trended in terms of annual price increases. The grant award we received and have obligated was for a total cost of \$1,900,000. Of that total project cost, NHDOT is providing \$190,000 of matching state funds and COAST had planned on providing the other \$190,000 out of our held funds.

The current pricing of each bus as specified is \$512,396, for a total project cost of \$2,049,584. This is \$149,584 (7.9%) higher than anticipated, and our 5339 grant award for this procurement. The portion of these additional costs that COAST would need to cover with our available held funds would be 20% or an additional \$29,917.

Mr. Nichols noted we have an older grant with more than enough available funds in a scope that could be used to cover some of the items specified on the buses (e.g., the headsigns and controller, and the surveillance system). These two items total \$108,452 of the \$149,584 higher than anticipated costs. Using these funds to cover these elements of the procurement would in effect reduce the unanticipated "cost overage" to \$41,132. This can be covered in our next FTA grant, likely to be written and awarded in mid-2021.

The anticipated delivery date of these buses would be in the first quarter of CY2022.

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors authorize the Executive Director to enter into a purchase order with Gillig Corporation for four (4) new 35' heavy duty buses as specified, for a total of \$2,049,584.*

Mr. Bogle asked if NHDOT has the additional funds to cover the increase in their portion. Mr. Nichols noted that this is a conversation he needs to have with NHDOT.

Ms. Winters noted that she passed this information along to Fred Butler, the Public Transportation Administrator managing the capital budget funds for public transit, and he will look into that and get in touch with Rad directly.

Mr. Bogle shared that he thought there was an 85% share as long as the vehicles are ADA accessible. Mr. Nichols noted that that is true, but that he used an 80% portion to be more attractive in the competitive grant application process.

Mr. Nichols noted that payment is due within 30 days of delivery, so we have time to move funds where we need them to help us pay for these items.

Mr. Sandmann requested a motion that the Board authorize the purchase of 4 heavy duty buses as specified with the proviso that funding is available. Mr. Pepin made that motion and Mr. Lentz seconded it. All voted in favor by Roll Call vote.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

### **Committee Reports**

**Executive Committee** – did not meet.

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

**Legislative Committee** – actively reaching out to successful candidates for state office, including providing them with our FY20 Impact Report. Mr. Nichols reported that he heard from Ms. Stevens, the new Executive Councilor-elect from District 3, who is interested in speaking with us further. Mr. Nichols is waiting for her to provide dates she would be available to meet and is hoping a couple of members of the Legislative Committee can participate in that meeting.

**Policy Committee** – met yesterday and will have a report as part of the December Board meeting.

**Finance Committee** – Mr. Sandmann entertained volunteers to serve on a Finance Committee with Ms. Doering. Members were asked to submit their names to Mr. Nichols or to Mr.

Sandmann directly. Mr. Sandmann noted that he will make sure all members are invited to participate to capture those not in attendance.

## **Discussion Items**

### **Policy Committee Recommendations for Virtual Meetings**

Mr. Nichols noted that we are looking to allow for Virtual Meetings, if acceptable under 91-A, and shared the language. This would apply to COAST's Bylaws as well as to how we conduct public hearings/forums. Bylaws changes would be voted on at the December meeting.

Ms. Walker wondered why we're changing our bylaws for a specific emergency (and specific Emergency Order) rather than making it more general and noted that she would like to see this as an option going forward if we can do this. Mr. Nichols noted that we will run this by our Corporate Counsel. Mr. Sandmann agreed that he would like to see this as an option going forward. Mr. Bogle noted that he is aware that Russell Dean, Town Manager of Exeter, is working with his legislative representation to propose a change to 91-A to allow for virtual meetings. Mr. Scala agreed that COAST should have that ability to hold virtual meetings as dictated by the State in our bylaws, but that it should not for a specific Executive order or COVID. Mr. Sandmann noted that we will make that amendment at the December meeting and Mr. Nichols indicated that he would come up with alternate language between now and then and will send it out.

Mr. Nichols noted that we would also like to have the option of virtual meetings for Public Hearings and Public Forums given we know that a transportation barrier exists and that allowing for virtual meetings has led to higher participation. The Board would vote on that in December as well.

### **Ridership**

Ridership data was provided. Mr. Nichols reported that we continue to gain a little bit every month and we are doing better in terms of demand response ridership getting back to pre-pandemic numbers. He shared that he anticipates we will see another decline in ridership with this second wave of the pandemic in the region.

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

Ms. Walker thanked Mr. Nichols and Mr. Williams for their participation in the City Council meeting's Public Comment portion of the meeting.

Mr. Pepin welcomed Ms. Doering and looks forward to meeting her in person. He reported that the Somersworth Traffic Signal Prioritization (TSP) proposal went before the Planning Board and was denied. Somersworth is updating all of their traffic lights so perhaps they want that to be completed first and then the TSP proposal can be made again.

Mr. Scala and Mr. Hebert welcomed Ms. Doering.

Ms. Joyce asked Mr. Nichols and Mr. Williams if either attended the recent virtual job fair. Neither attended because, with the exception of needing a Mechanic, we are fully staffed.

Ms. Winters noted that NHDOT will be presenting its Agency Operating Budget for SFY 2022-2023 on Thursday, Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>. The Transit Budget includes \$200,000 for state operating match (COAST's portion received last year was \$35k).

**VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Pepin wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving! Mr. Sandmann also wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and declared the meeting adjourned at 9:24am.