



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, April 26, 2023**

PRESENT: Scott Bogle, Fred Butler (virtual/8:39a), Mark Davie (8:37a), Sönke Dornblut (virtual/8:36a), Ben Fletcher (virtual/8:35a), Robert Gibson, Lauren Haley (virtual), Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, David Sandmann (virtual), Dennis Shanahan, Nick Taylor, Kay Wright

ABSENT: Michael Mates, Kristen Murphy, Thomas Wright

STAFF: Rad Nichols, Margot Doering, Heather Hesse-Stromberg (virtual)

I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 8:33am by Mr. Shanahan.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2022 meeting. Mr. Gibson made the motion to accept the minutes as drafted, and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion. There was no discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Gibson	Yes
Ms. Haley	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Abstain
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes

The motion passed unanimously with one abstention.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment to share.

VI. FINANCIALS

Ms. Doering noted given the full agenda she would be brief. She highlighted that there had been no notable changes to the typical trends we had previously been experiencing.

She did note that we had just used the last of the CARES funds we had been awarded and have begun using ARPA funds now instead, which should help carry us before running out in the third quarter of 2024.

Mr. Hebert asked if the expectation was that communities were then going to be asked to make up the difference. Mr. Nichols noted that conversations on the latest projections on our funding gap, and how we may address it had begun internally. Mr. Hebert stressed the importance of giving municipalities as much time as possible. Mr. Shanahan added that the projections we

were looking at could not likely be made up by communities alone and thus other options would have to be part of the discussion. Mr. Nichols also stressed that increased state funding was still something we were actively advocating for, and we will not have a firm understanding of until the state budget is approved.

There were no further questions for Ms. Doering.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Nichols went over the old business updates.

Staffing Update

There are currently four full time non-CDL positions open (out of thirteen total). We have applicants who may fill them, but we are waiting on updated information. We are also in need of a vehicle cleaner and would gladly hire more part time CDL operators. However, we are fully staffed for full time CDL operators.

Passio Implementation Update

Passio replaced hardware on five buses in their latest attempt to solve some GPS tracking issues. These replacements seem to have improved some features a little, not affected others, and made one the destination sign integration break. However, this is likely correctable with some configuration. We are still waiting on Passio to send a technician to finish hardware installation on the remaining buses to enable destination sign integration and exterior announcements. There have been no improvements with our other outstanding issues (late voice stop announcements, no external announcements, slow GPS tracking for internal purposes, non-functioning public relation codes for external LED signs). However, the system is much better than it was several months ago, and the public facing GPS tracking appears to be reasonably accurate most of the time.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #1: 2023-2026 Title VI Program Update

Ms. Hesse-Stromberg presented that COAST has updated its Title VI Program for 2023-2026 and that it is ready for Board Approval (a requirement of the regulations). The draft Program has been reviewed by RLS Associates, a contractor engaged by NHDOT to assist with development of DOT's subrecipients' Title VI programs.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that recipients of federal funding under the FTA ensure that:

- The benefits of its bus service are shared equitably throughout the service area;
- The level and quality of bus services are sufficient to provide equal access to all riders in its service area;
- No one is precluded from participating in COAST's service planning and development process;
- Decisions regarding service changes or facility locations are made without regard to race, color, or national origin and that the development and urban renewal not disproportionately burden the community's minority and low-income populations; and
- A program is in place for correcting any discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional.

The program has several required elements. Two major elements are a Public Participation Plan, which specifies how the public will be provided with the opportunity to participate in COAST's decision making and planning. The other is a determination of the population served by COAST with limited English proficiency. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is defined by the Census Bureau as speaking English "less than very well." If Action Item #1 enough people in COAST's Service area are LEP, COAST is required to provide vital documents in the languages they speak. This analysis was conducted using 2021 5-Year estimates and it was determined that no populations in our service area reach the level for which translated documents would be required.

Finally, Fixed Route transit providers are required to set System-Wide Service Standards (including vehicle load, vehicle headway, on-time performance, and service availability) and System-Wide Service Policies (including a policy on distribution of transit amenities and vehicle assignments) which have been updated.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors approve the 2023-2026 Title VI Program Update.*

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the 2023-2026 Title VI Program Update. Mr. Sandmann made the motion to approve the 2023-2026 Title VI Program Update, and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion.

Ms. Joyce asked about the interpreter services we use and how we pay for that. Ms. Hesse-Stromberg responded that Language Line had always been our interpreter service and that we pay for those services on a pay as you go basis.

There was no further discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Davie	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Mr. Gibson	Yes
Ms. Haley	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #2: CommuteSMART Seacoast MOU

Mr. Nichols explained that COAST currently has just over \$31,000 of CMAQ Transportation Demand Management (TDM) funds that have carried over from the CommuteSMART TMA. We currently draw just under \$100 per month to support and maintain the TMA's website.

To assist the RPCs in their effort to maintain the functionality of the TMA until the next round of CMAQ funds are awarded (FY25), an MOU has been developed to reimburse the RPCs for those activities in the interim.

The MOU outlines how COAST will partially fund this role using available funds granted to it for these purposes, the scope of services and a maximum compensation level of \$26,000 for direct

and indirect costs. The services provided by the RPCs will continue for as long as there is funding to support the activities of the TMA.

The main activity will be support for the annual B2B Commuter Challenge, along with general employer and business community outreach.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors approve the CommuteSMART Seacoast MOU with the Rockingham and Strafford Regional Planning Commissions.*

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the CommuteSMART Seacoast MOU with the Rockingham and Strafford Regional Planning Commissions. Ms. Joyce made the motion to approve the CommuteSMART Seacoast MOU with the Rockingham and Strafford Regional Planning Commissions, and Mr. Taylor seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Mr. Bogle	Abstain
Mr. Davie	Abstain
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Mr. Gibson	Yes
Ms. Haley	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes

The motion passed unanimously with two abstentions.

Committee Reports

Mr. Shanahan gave an overview of recent committee activities.

Executive Committee – met on April 11 to initiate discussions on the fiscal picture beyond FY24 and has scheduled an emergency meeting on April 24 for the purpose of approving a grant agreement with the NHDOT for FTA 5310 funds.

Board Development Committee – nothing to report.

Policy Committee – did not meet.

Legislative Committee – more information to be provided in the discussion item on the Statewide Public Transportation Coalition update

Finance Committee – met on Monday, April 24 (2:30pm, Rochester City Hall Annex, 2nd floor Conference Room).

Discussion Items

Discussion Item #1: Spring Rider Survey – Preliminary Results

Mr. Nichols presented the preliminary results of the spring rider survey.

Overview

- Survey conducted on fixed routes April 3 – April 11, 2023.
- Survey conducted on demand response April 3 – April 14, 2023.
- Survey was available on all COAST vehicles in paper format with pencils provided. There was no electronic option.
- Except where noted, results are shown with both modes combined.
- In many cases, respondents checked more than one box. Each answer is represented separately.
- Many respondents did not answer every question. Percentages are based on number of answers received, not the total number of respondents.
- Survey Response Rates were estimated at 35% on fixed route and 66% on demand response services.

Mr. Nichols then went through the responses to each question asked in the survey.

Discussion Item #2: New Facility Update

Mr. Nichols referred to the latest information available on cost estimates we had received earlier in the month. He also mentioned that the permitting process has begun with the City of Dover.

He added we are currently waiting for an authorization from the FTA to submit our categorical exclusion (CE) from NEPA. We cannot apply for additional funds to support final design and construction or move ahead with contracts for those services until such time as we have the CE in hand. We are also awaiting some of these funds to also be listed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which is in the process of being amended. The CE from NEPA has the potential to cause a delay for our project at this point.

We continue to work with the NHDOT on information they have requested in support of our request for state financial support to serve as match for our new facility construction. Match for the Federal funds that have been awarded continues to be a hurdle that we are struggling with.

There were questions around just how much local match still needed to be raised to move ahead with the project. Staff were encouraged to use value engineering and consider other options for reducing costs while still getting what is truly needed.

Discussion Item #3: Statewide Public Transportation Coalition Update

Mr. Nichols stated that the SFY24-25 budget bill (HB1) approved by the House included a total of \$2.283M for public transit operations over the next biennium. This represents nearly 4.7x increase over the current budget for this funding line.

While a tremendous success, it is less than half of what we had requested as providers and a Coalition. In the Senate, we had hoped to build upon the momentum we gained in the House and move closer to our request (\$5.5M over the biennium). Again, while a large number compared to what we are used to discussing, we have repeatedly been told that this figure will not break the state budget. And it has such tremendous potential to have a significant human impact for our state.

There have recently been some concerns expressed about what might happen if the Senate supported a funding level above what was approved in the House, causing the Committee of Conference to take up a discussion that could go the wrong way and jeopardize all our success to date. That has subsequently been confirmed as a valid concern in a recent discussion with a key Senator.

So, it is now readily apparent that; (1) there is a very real potential threat to the level of state funding in the budget that has been approved by the House (\$602,495 in SFY24 and \$1,680,794 in SFY25), and (2) pushing for funding beyond that level may unnecessarily put a target on the funds the House has already budgeted.

As such, the strategy has shifted to advocate for the funding level approved by the House, while honestly acknowledging the overall need for state operating funds is much higher (\$2,750,000 annually - at a minimum). We are no longer planning on putting out a broad appeal for support through a statewide Op-ed campaign.

There was some discussion around not letting up on advocacy efforts despite this shift in strategy.

Mr. Nichols stressed that advocacy and outreach to Senators is still needed. He encouraged board members and other key members of our communities to reach out to your Senator to let them know how important the increase passed by the House is to our operation and region. Members were also encouraged to reach back out to House Representatives you have been in touch with to thank them for their support to date and to ask for their support should this funding come up for discussion in the Committee of Conference.

There was conversation around how the Committee of Conference membership was set.

Mr. Nichols also mentioned he had met with the Business and Industry Association and Chamber of Commerce representatives from across the state on Monday, April 24 to discuss increased operating funding for public transportation.

VII. Community Updates/Information Items

NH Gives

Mr. Nichols explained that for the first time COAST has joined NH Gives for their early June campaign. NH Gives is an initiative of the NH Center for Nonprofits and is a powerful, statewide 24-hour online fundraising event that is designed to build community, connect donors to local nonprofits and generate excitement about the nonprofit sector.

NH Gives appears to be a great way to enter the field of fundraising and boost our fundraising efforts in an entirely different arena. It provides eligible nonprofits the opportunity to reach potential new donors and provides the type of visibility that only a state-wide effort of this type can generate.

Staff are currently working on our NH Gives page and expect to have it ready soon.

This year's 24-hour campaign is on June 6-7.

Ms. Joyce acknowledged she would not be able to attend the next meeting, however requested that an action item be added to the agenda to establish a board member funded match challenge during the upcoming campaign.

Ridership

Mr. Nichols went over ridership in March.

- Overall ridership in March totaled 23,924 (the second highest of any month since March 2020). This was up 19.7% from the previous month. Ridership was 1.9% lower than in March 2022.
- Fixed route ridership totalled 22,108, up 20.2% from the previous month. Ridership was 2.4% lower than in March 2022.
- Demand response ridership March totalled 1,816, up 13.9% from the previous month. Ridership was a 5.6% increase over March 2022.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Shanahan adjourned the meeting, without objection, at 10:13am.

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Joyce, Secretary