



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, October 26, 2022**

PRESENT: Kendra Amaral (virtual), Scott Bogle, Fred Butler (virtual), Ben Fletcher (virtual), Lauren Haley (virtual), Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, Colin Lentz, Dave Sandmann, Mike Scala (virtual), Dennis Shanahan, Nick Taylor

ABSENT: Sönke Dornblut, Thomas Wright

STAFF: Rad Nichols, Margot Doering

I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 9:30am by Mr. Shanahan.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the minutes of the September 28, 2022 meeting. Mr. Sandmann made the motion to accept the minutes as drafted, and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion. There was no discussion and Mr. Shanahan undertook the vote by roll call.

Ms. Amaral	Abstain
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Ms. Haley	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Abstain
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes

The motion passed.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Shanahan asked for any public comment and Mr. Nichols introduced Ms. Anderson, a COAST CDL Operator, who is retiring on November 11 after 16 years and two months at COAST in her role. While at COAST Ms. Anderson has also served as a driving instructor, having helped train nearly every operator now on staff, and was a member of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee in 2017. He noted how much Ms. Anderson contributed to COAST, that she was simply a great person, and that she would be a true loss to the organization. Mr. Williams commented that Ms. Anderson is everything Mr. Nichols had described, was a great employee to work with, and added that she had also trained him on routes and given him driving pointers when he had first arrived at COAST.

Ms. Anderson stated that she had truly enjoyed working with everyone at COAST and that it had been a great organization to work for. She appreciated her customers and would miss them.

On behalf of the COAST Board Mr. Shanahan thanked Ms. Anderson for her contributions at COAST and wished her the very best in retirement.

IV. Financial Report

Ms. Doering gave the financial report. Trendwise there was not much news. The year end followed previous trends.

A fuel bill missed in August caused a restatement of the financials, which when corrected resulted in the materials and supplies line being much closer to normal for the month.

On the balance sheet inventory has been updated for year end. Accrued expenses have yet to be updated, but will soon.

We are looking at our banking relationships and reviewing opportunities to possibly save costs.

Mr. Nichols noted that transit advertising sales and collections had set all-time records in FY22, a fantastic improvement after our experiences in FY20 and FY21.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Nichols gave brief updates on several old business items.

Staffing

To be fully staffed, COAST needs an additional:

- 6 full time CDL Operators
- 4 part time CDL Operators

Fixed Route Service Resumption

On Monday, October 24, nearly all weekday afternoon runs on Routes 1 and 33 were once again resumed. With this change, hourly service has returned throughout the overwhelming majority of weekday service days.

Those resumptions also allowed for a return of the last Route 34 outbound run just before 8pm.

Fixed Route Technology Transition

We remain very excited about the transition to our new fixed route technology provider; however, we continue to experience unexpected hurdles as we try to go live with their product. We have been forced to escalate our issues above the implementation manager at this point to attempt to get faster resolutions.

HealthTrust Insurance Rate Update

This year, based on our census count of eligible employees, COAST was moved to the small employer pool (<50) vs. the large employer pool (>50) where we had been for several years.

The results were a 22.5% decrease in our health insurance plan costs, a 1.5% increase in our dental plan costs, and all other plan costs (STD, LTD, and Life) were held constant to last year's rates.

The result of this dramatic decrease in anticipated costs is an ability to now offer affordable healthcare plan options for 2-person and family coverage for our operators in CY23, something we have been working at trying to achieve for years. This could be as important, if not more important to our recruiting efforts, as the budgeted pay increases that were approved in the FY23 operating budget.

Property & Liability Insurance Renewals

Renewals came in \$38,000 lower than budgeted in FY23. This was only possible as a result of our continued excellent experience with claims over the past few years.

Fiscal Year End

We have been working on all the tasks related to wrapping up FY22 and kicking off FY23 as we launched our new fiscal year on October 1. The onsite portion of our annual audit has been scheduled for December 6-8.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #1: Acceptance of New Somersworth Appointee, Councilor Robert Gibson

Mr. Shanahan asked for a motion to accept Councilor Gibson as Somersworth’s representative on the COAST board of Directors. Mr. Hebert made the motion, seconded by Mr. Sandmann.

Mr. Nichols related that on October 4 we were notified by City Manager Belmore that a new City Council Representative for COAST had been appointed to fill former board member Dumont’s seat. As a reminder, Mr. Dumont had to step down from the Somersworth Council, and as a representative to COAST, because of his move to Rochester.

Mr. Gibson is currently representing Ward 3 on the Somersworth City Council. His committee seats as a Councilor also include Economic Development, Finance, and the Joint Commission of City Council and School Board.

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

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Ms. Haley	Temporarily disconnected from meeting
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes

The motion passed.

Action Item #2: 5339(a) Grant Application Support and Approval

Mr. Shanahan asked for a motion for the Board of Directors to express support and approval for the submittal of a 5339(a) grant to the NHDOT as described. Mr. Bogle made the motion, seconded by Mr. Lentz.

Mr. Nichols explained that on September 27 the NHDOT announced the SFY23 5339(a) grant round. Grant applications are due by November 14.

COAST intends to apply for the following capital equipment in line with our latest five year capital spending plan.

- Three (3) replacement demand response accessible minivans at a total estimated cost of \$68,500 per unit, 85% of which would be grant funded.
- One (1) replacement fixed route low floor minibus (non-CDL) at a total estimated cost of \$200,025, 85% of which would be grant funded.
- Four (4) replacement demand response small cutaway buses at a total estimated cost of \$513,500, 85% of which would be grant funded.

In all cases it is expected that that the non-Federal match would be comprised of a mix of state capital match funds (7.5%) and COAST held reserves (7.5%).

Total grant funds being applied for are \$781,171, with expected state capital match and COAST match of \$68,927 each.

It is strongly recommended that we include letters of support for our specific projects included in our grant application. This is particularly influential if there are funding constraints for vehicles and equipment. I will forward sample language your community or organization could use should you like. We will need your community's or organization's letters of support by November 4.

Mr. Butler confirmed that the grant application should be considered favorably as long as it followed COAST's Transit Asset Management Plan.

Mr. Hebert inquired where funds would need to come from to purchase these vehicles if the grant was not successful. Mr. Nichols clarified the federal funds would need to likely come from our 5307 grant funds and local match would come from reserves.

There was no further discussion and Mr. Shanahan undertook the vote.

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Ms. Haley	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes

Mr. Taylor Yes
Mr. Shanahan Yes

The vote was unanimous.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Nichols gave a quick update on Committee activities.

- Executive Committee – did not meet.
- Nominating Committee – did not meet.
- Board Development Committee – outreach to fill open positions on the board is ongoing.
- Policy Committee – did not meet.
- Legislative Committee – has scheduled a meeting for Friday, October 28 at COAST Administrative Office to discuss the formation of a statewide transit coalition and potential new legislation.
- Finance Committee – met on Monday, October 24 (2:30pm, Rochester City Hall Annex, 2nd floor Conference Room).

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discussion Item #1: Discussion Item #1: Facility Project Update

Mr. Nichols shared that earlier in the week he had shared a new OneDrive folder created for the purpose of the board members being able to view plans and other documents related to our facility project going forward. In the folder are the latest 30%-60% design drawings that were supplied to us by CMA earlier this month. He encouraged members to take some time to review the plans. Members related that they were having issues accessing the folder.

The engineers expressed in a conversation earlier this week that they were having difficulty updating the cost estimates with a strong sense of accuracy in the current environment. Their recommendation was to work with a potential future bidder to price the project (non-binding) as it currently is designed (at a potential cost of \$4,000). Mr. Nichols expressed concern about such an arrangement.

In terms of our schedule for the project, we have seen a slight bit of slippage as complications with the marine clay on the property set back design plans by a few weeks. We otherwise remain on track for the project.

In speaking with Senator Shaheen's staff recently, our congressionally directed spending request (\$2M through HUD-EDI) is on hold as a FY23 budget is negotiated beyond the continuing resolution which currently is set to expire in mid-December. Negotiations on the budget will likely not begin in earnest until after the mid-term elections.

We are actively marketing our CDFA tax credits and have sold 10% (\$10,000) of the credits available in SFY22. Most of our outreach to date has been with vendors we have direct relationships with. We are now expanding our reach to additional area private businesses. We now have \$90,000 in SFY22 credits for sale through March 2023, and will have another \$317,000 for sale between July 1, 2023 and March 2024. Tax credits offer private businesses

the opportunity to make pledges to well-vetted, worthy, community-based projects like ours for pennies on the dollar.

Under the Inflation Reduction Act, there are several new programs designed to help fund or offset the costs of incorporating green-house gas reducing elements into projects like ours. For example, the photovoltaic solar capabilities we are looking to incorporate will be eligible for a 30% direct payment back to COAST from the Federal Government. There may also be other stackable rebates that we could qualify for. We continue to participate in meetings to learn about the other benefits contained within the Act that could help to fund those green-house gas reducing elements that our project is targeting to utilize.

This fall the Federal Government announced the latest round of the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program for Transit and Transit-Oriented Development. The program is designed to close funding gaps with low-cost, long-term financing and speed the delivery of infrastructure projects, which saves taxpayer dollars and improves transportation systems in communities. Projects must be at least \$10 million in size and may borrow up to 49 percent of eligible project costs. Projects must comply with applicable federal regulations and policies associated with federal funding programs. TIFIA has favorable terms including low interest rates (Treasury rate), interest does not accrue until proceeds are drawn, flexible amortization, up to 35 year repayment period, deferrable for five years after substantial project completion and no pre-payment penalty. Staff is meeting with the program to see, if needed, this is a potential resource for our project.

In terms of overall funding, assuming our CDS request is included in the final federal FY23 budget, and based on current project estimates, we have \$620,000 (4.2%) of funding remaining to be raised.

Members asked about timing of the IRA grant opportunities and programs. Mr. Nichols said that was not yet clear as those details are still being worked out.

Mr. Hebert asked about whether moving off-site had been considered and whether there would be additional costs related to our staying on-site. Mr. Nichols noted that we were open to options either way.

Mr. Hebert discussed the idea of additive bid items when we go out to bid, and concern over additional costs for an updated cost estimate. Mr. Nichols noted that timing may prove consequential for our project and a delay may not be a bad option.

Mr. Sandmann did not support the idea of paying a potential bidder for a cost estimate that may ultimately not have any teeth in it.

There was back and forth discussion around the timing of when we bid our project.

Mr. Shanahan stated that we may need to wait to see what the next estimates we receive lead us to decide, whether it be value engineering, additive building, or getting an independent cost estimate.

Ms. Doering noted that when a contractor develops a price when bidding vs. providing an independent cost estimate, it should remove some of the volatility of bid prices that are being seen across the region due to any number of factors.

Mr. Williams wondered if the potential future bidder would be barred from bidding in the end. Mr. Nichols remarked that was a question that we needed to put to the FTA. Mr. Bogle highlighted to also check with HUD.

The consensus was to not give the engineers the go ahead to spend an additional \$4,000 to have a potential bidder provide a high confidence cost estimate.

Mr. Hebert asked two questions to be posed to our engineering firm: (1) Does the fuel bay force explosion proofing in the building, and (2) is the facility designed for full accessibility.

VI. COMMUNITY UPDATES/INFORMATION ITEMS

Ridership

- Overall ridership in September totaled 22,177. This was down 2.7% from August, partially due to fewer operating days in the month, but 3.5% above ridership achieved in September 2021. For the FY, ridership totaled 261,778, up 7.6% from FY21.
- Fixed route ridership totalled 20,315, down 3.5% from August. That said, ridership was up by 2.2% from September 2021. A reminder, we are currently providing significantly less fixed route service when making comparisons to the same months of the previous year. Average weekday ridership in September was the second highest since the pandemic began, only eclipsed by July 2022. We did reinstate limited Saturday services mid-month, and ridership has been slow to return initially.
- After previously peaking at 1,838 in June, demand response ridership in September totaled 1,862 for the month. This represented a new peak ridership in a month since the beginning of the pandemic, and a 19.3% increase over ridership in September 2021.

Mr. Fletcher noted that the ridership trends largely match the travel trends the City is seeing through their parking numbers.

Mr. Taylor asked if issues on the bus had settled down at all. Mr. Williams stated that the issues we experienced over the summer seemed to have been declining, although still present.

Community/Member Updates

Ms. Joyce thanked COAST for the service provided for the Apple Harvest Festival.

Mr. Bogle asked if any communities were planning to apply for CMAQ funds in the upcoming round.

Mr. Taylor highlighted the upcoming Housing Summit.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Shanahan adjourned the meeting, without objection, at 9:46am.

Respectfully submitted by Margaret Joyce, Secretary