



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, October 25, 2023**

PRESENT: Scott Bogle, Robert Gibson, Colin Lentz, David Sandmann, Michael Scala, Dennis Shanahan, Nick Taylor, Fred Butler (virtual), Ben Fletcher (virtual), Kristen Murphy (virtual), Kendra Amaral (virtual), Joann Neumann (virtual, 9:07am)

ABSENT: Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, Sonke Dornblut, Thomas Wright, Michael Mates

STAFF: Rad Nichols, Margot Doering, Michael Williams

I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 8:30am by Mr. Shanahan.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the minutes of the September 27, 2023 meeting. Mr. Lentz 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. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Gibson	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Abstain
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes

The motion passed unanimously with one abstention.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment to share.

VI. FINANCIALS

Ms. Doering noted there was nothing significantly unique about September or year-end financials. Staff are in the process of ensuring all FY23 expenses are turned in for year end and for final grant draws for the year.

Ms. Doering noted expenses were under budget, but that was partly due to lower levels of service being provided. The maintenance department reduced expenses by cannibalizing retired vehicles prior to disposition. Due to lower expenses, reimbursements were also lower. Ms. Doering noted the balance sheets have been partially updated but are not complete for the year. Additionally, COAST is watching for a potential government shutdown and will put

ourselves in the best liquidity position possible in advance. However, the FTA's grant management system is closed and the timing of its opening is still unclear.

There were no further questions for Ms. Doering.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Nichols shared old business updates.

Frontrunner Update

These vehicles were delivered during the September board meeting. All four have arrived, though they arrived 13 months after the order instead of the hoped for 9 months. Drivers and passengers like them. They are operating on routes 40, 42, 43, and 44. The current issue is that the dealer certified they had a 340-mile range, and we are experiencing significantly less: around 216 – 260 miles. We had a vehicle run out of fuel at 216 miles. The dealer owes COAST post-delivery paperwork, and we have requested a meeting between the dealer and the manufacturer to see if an engineering solution is possible. We are holding the payment for these vehicles while this is outstanding. FTA has been notified.

We still like the buses and have reached out to other transit agencies to cross-reference the performance we are getting with what they are getting. Operational solutions involving swapping buses or mid-day fueling add operating cost.

Mr. Gibson asked if there is concern about their performance in the winter. Mr. Nichols said yes, the range will likely be further reduced when the vehicles have a greater heating load. Mr. Williams shared that we have an operating system in place that is working, and we are waiting to see the impacts of winter on the range to see if further adjustments are needed. Additionally, FTA requires COAST to sign off on whether the vehicles meet bid specifications, and at the moment we cannot sign that they do.

Return of Suspended Service

COAST removed additional service suspensions on October 16, and are on track to remove all weekday suspensions on October 28th. The last remaining service suspensions are on Saturdays. We hope to remove those in January.

GACIT Hearings

Between Mr. Nichols and Mr. Donald, COAST attended multiple GACIT hearings in our service area and varied remarks at those hearings. COAST will also submit written comments. Support for public transit was a theme at the GACIT hearings. Overall, attendance seemed quieter than previous rounds.

Mr. Bogle shared there were few people in Salem and Kingston, with high attendance in Greenland for an issue in Newcastle. Mr. Lentz shared that he heard consistent support for public transit.

Mr. Nichols shared that Durham, Rochester, and Dover meetings were all accessible via public transit.

Health Care Renewals

Rates for 2024 came in higher than anticipated, particularly for medical which had a 15.6% increase. This was the largest component. Other components were smaller increases or were decreases. COAST budgeted for a 10% increase. It appears COAST will be able to stay under budget based on the new rates, but this is still being evaluated. Any overage would not be significant.

Property and Liability Insurance Renewals

These were received and most will renew over an 11-month period so the coverage period will start matching with the fiscal year. COAST is seeing a 10.7% increase over the 11-month period compared to what we paid last year over 12 months. Auto is the main component of that, mostly driven by our current larger than normal fleet size. The fleet size will shrink as we dispose of retired vehicles. This will reduce the cost impact of this increase. Mr. Williams noted all vehicles had been sold, but not yet picked up.

Mr. Nichols also noted that a single claim with a sizeable reserve was driving some of these impacts. Compared to the FY24 budget, COAST anticipates an overage of approximately \$10,000 - \$12,000 in this line. Mr. Nichols met with the carrier about options and feels there are some to pursue prior to renewal next year. These could include some self-insurance and potentially joining some risk pools.

Free Rides for Elections and Veterans Day

Mr. Nichols said COAST will offer free rides to the polls on election day like we have in the past. We will also offer free rides to veterans and their families on Veterans Day, as we have historically done.

There was no further discussion on old business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #1: Transit Asset Management Plan Update

Mr. Williams presented COAST's update for the Transit Asset Management Plan. This is an annual update, though FTA only requires an update every five years. Changes include:

- Updates to current asset conditions and needs assessments. This has included growing our demand response fleet back to where it was pre-pandemic, in response to ridership growth.
- Maintenance requirements for the new Frontrunner vehicles and the pressure washer.
- Update to performance measures and targets.
- Update to 5-year capital plan.

Mr. Nichols noted we pushed out some vehicle replacements as a result of us changing our position on the useful life of some vehicle types.

Mr. Shanahan asked if this update changed our predicted deficits for FY25 and beyond, and whether most of these funds will come through grants.

Mr. Nichols replied that it might have a minor additional impact due to cost escalations. Additionally, the funds would come through grants, with the hope that 10% would come through the State and the remaining 10% would be COAST's responsibility.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors approve the November 1, 2023 Transit Asset Management Plan.*

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the Transit Asset Management Plan Update. Mr. Lentz made the motion to approve the Transit Asset Management Plan Update, and Mr. Taylor seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Gibson	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #2: Safety Plan Update

Mr. Williams explained the Safety Plan is a mandatory annual update which we last updated in April 2023. However, we were doing a November update to align the Safety Plan's annual renewal with the fiscal year. This provides more timely performance data and target setting. No other changes, besides the performance data and targets, were made to this update.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors approve the November 1, 2023 Safety Plan update.*

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the Safety Plan Update. Mr. Bogle made the motion to approve the Safety Plan Update, and Mr. Sandmann seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Gibson	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #3: Video Recording Policy Update

Mr. Nichols noted that COAST has been asked by operators for better support given challenging customer behavior on the buses. In response, we have installed real time video feeds that COAST dispatch can access to better assist operators. The Video Recording Policy has been updated to include the real-time video feed component. The policy outlines parameters when we would access this feed.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors approve the proposed Video Recording and Viewing Policy.*

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the Video Recording Policy Update. Mr. Sandmann made the motion to approve the Video Recording Policy Update, and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Gibson	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discussion Item #1: Employee Passes for Contributing Municipality Employees

Mr. Nichols shared that he was inspired by an idea from SEPTA in Philadelphia that COAST could potentially provide free transit passes for member municipalities' employees and maybe other partners for relatively low cost in terms of implementation and lost revenues. It is likely not too many municipal employees are currently using the transit system but could be incentivized to try.

Mr. Nichols suggested working with HR departments in the communities to manage this as an employee benefit. Mr. Nichols suggested this could apply to City employees and school staff. This could also be a nice way to recognize the large contribution municipalities are making to COAST.

Mr. Scala said he felt this was a great idea. Mr. Sandmann concurred. Mr. Shanahan expressed he felt the idea aligned with COAST's goals and asked if a municipality would be piloted.

Mr. Nichols suggested we would pilot the program with a municipality between January 1st and June 30th, and then implement for June 30 and beyond with other municipalities. He suggested working with the City of Dover for the pilot and invited a second municipality to join the pilot.

Ms. Amaral expressed Kittery would like to be part of this program once COAST expanded services in Kittery, though no municipal facilities are currently serviced by COAST.

Mr. Nichols stated COAST would move ahead with this idea.

Discussion Item #2: Participation in Charitable Gaming

Mr. Nichols expressed one idea for diversifying COAST's revenue streams and reducing reliance on municipalities is participation in charitable gaming. He has talked to other non-profits, including the Dover Children's Home and Mr. Taylor with the Workforce Housing Coalition about how this works and the potential. Both agreed this program is well managed, has appropriate regulation and auditing, and is reputable.

Mr. Nichols said this had the potential to cover a quarter of the budget deficit with ten days of gaming throughout the year. He noted this is a mechanism created by the State to fund non-profits.

Mr. Taylor shared his positive experiences with the Workforce Housing Coalition and The Brook. He noted it has been a good partnership with no strings attached. He expressed it would be a good option.

Mr. Scala agreed that this was a great idea, and noted there is a casino coming to Rochester. He agreed the program is highly regulated and reputable. Mr. Scala also noted the minimum has increased, and that the revenue potential is significant.

Ms. Neumann agreed the program was a positive benefit to Greater Seacoast Community Health, and noted there is some paperwork and fingerprinting involved. She expressed that they had struggled with promotion of the program, but noted they gave some exposure to The Brook. She noted Brook staff had encouraged them to hold events there, though they had not. She said to expect that kind of relationship.

Mr. Bogle discussed his experience on the board of Great Bay Rowing, who has received this funding. He noted they had been asked whether they would be willing to partner in various ways. He said it appears the level of engagement may affect the value of the days issued.

Mr. Scala noted there are good days and bad days.

Mr. Nichols asked how the board would feel about allocating advertising space on the buses for the venue. Ms. Neumann noted it is not required. Mr. Nichols noted we may be precluded by state law from doing this. Mr. Taylor noted we probably cannot offer items of material value to get priority.

Mr. Shanahan stated the consensus was to move forward with investigating this, and to come back with a structured plan.

Mr. Bogle asked Ms. Neumann to share what promotion she has done. She noted listings in their annual report and on the back of their vehicles, which are available to all corporate sponsors. Mr. Taylor noted they also put them in their report.

Mr. Scala noted the stigma associated with charitable gaming has faded. Mr. Shanahan noted that there is an advantage that this is a fixed base of operations, instead of an outside organization only coming in for a few days.

Ms. Neumann noted their revenue grew from about \$20,000 to now close to \$100,000. She noted this isn't guaranteed, but the revenue can be significant.

VII. Community Updates/Information Items

Committee Reports

Mr. Shanahan gave an overview of recent committee activities.

Executive Committee – nothing to report

Board Development Committee – nothing to report.

Policy Committee – did not meet.

Legislative Committee – continues to meet

Finance Committee – met on Monday, October 23 (2:30pm, Rochester City Hall Annex, 2nd floor Conference Room).

Mr. Scala asked when COAST would make another push for funding in the State budget. Mr. Nichols discussed the timing, which would likely lead to another push next fall.

Ridership

Mr. Nichols went over ridership in September, noting it was positive and in line with, or above projected.

Other Items

Mr. Nichols noted he has been discussing with a consultant the need to bring on a fundraising professional to assist with closing COAST's revenue gap, as well as raising funding for the new facility. He has created a position summary for a fundraising contractor between now and next December, with the potential to transition this or another individual to a staff position. He anticipates this to be an 80-hour a month position. This was discussed at the finance committee meeting, and he is starting to network for a potential person to fill this position.

Mr. Shanahan spoke in favor of this direction. Mr. Nichols said he would share the position summary with the board after the meeting.

Mr. Sandmann asked about the status on the new facility. Mr. Nichols shared that the City of Dover has given all permitting authorizations. The Alteration of Terrain permit application needs to be submitted to the State. COAST will then move to final design. However, COAST first

needs to put our federal funding on a grant, which cannot happen until the grant portal is open and a STIP amendment is made to put the funds on the correct fiscal year. Mr. Nichols also shared that COAST's NEPA categorical exclusion was approved. Mr. Nichols said COAST is on track for a fall 2024 bid and a FY 2025 construction start. He also noted fundraising for the project has stalled, though there are a few potential options. Finally, Mr. Nichols noted bid pricing for other regional projects have come in higher than expected, and that may affect this project as well.

Mr. Scala raised the issue of the COAST bus shelter which was destroyed in Rochester due to a vehicular accident not involving a COAST vehicle. Mr. Nichols shared that COAST has a spare shelter with which to replace the destroyed shelter.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Shanahan adjourned the meeting, without objection, at 9:41am.