



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, November 15, 2023**

PRESENT: Kendra Amaral (virtual), Scott Bogle (8:45am arv.), Fred Butler (virtual, 8:38am arv.), Ben Fletcher (virtual), Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, Colin Lentz, Kristen Murphy, Joann Neumann (virtual), David Sandmann, Michael Scala, Dennis Shanahan, Peter Stith (virtual), Nick Taylor (virtual)

ABSENT: Sonke Dornblut, Robert Gibson, Michael Mates, Thomas Wright

GUESTS: Caroline Piper

STAFF: Rad Nichols, Margot Doering (virtual), Keith Dusinlleux, Michael Williams

I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 8:32am by Mr. Shanahan.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2023 meeting. Mr. Hebert made the motion to accept the minutes as drafted, and Mr. Sandbmann seconded the motion. There was no discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Flether	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Nichols recognized and thanked Mr. Dusinlleux, COAST's AM Dispatcher, for his 15 years of service at COAST. He spoke about the incredible impact Mr. Dusinlleux has on our operation and the magic he works on a daily basis. Mr. Nichols highlighted Mr. Dusinlleux's recognition for his excellence in service award at the NHTA's annual meeting this past year and read from his nomination.

Mr. Shanahan congratulated Mr. Dusinlleux on this achievement on behalf of the board of directors.

Mr. Shanahan noted a shift in the order of the agenda so that we could take advantage of the participation of our guest, Ms. Caroline Amport Piper.

VI. Discussion Item

COAST Messaging Updates (Caroline Amport Piper, MPP, Canoe Harbor Consulting)

Mr. Nichols introduced Ms. Amport Piper.

Our objective in updating COAST messaging is to expand and clarify COAST's key messages related to its nonprofit status, the value it brings to the region, and its relevance to key social issues.

The following messages are intended to capture the essence of the arguments and will be used as the basis of our messaging for a public awareness campaign in the coming months/year. The ultimate goal of the awareness campaign is to expand our audiences' understanding of the importance of COAST and how it contributes to the region while also clarifying people's understanding of our charitable status and how the organization is funded.

We are being intentionally strategic with this messaging update, particularly as we are asking for additional financial support from our traditional government sources, and as we expand our fundraising activities into the private philanthropic arena.

Clarifying/Highlighting Nonprofit Status

The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation, more commonly known as COAST, is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit charitable organization and an innovative leader in providing a broad range of public transportation services, connecting and coordinating a robust network of options for everyone.

COAST's mission is to champion and provide customer-focused public transportation with a commitment to excellence in safety and service.

COAST annual operating budget ranges between \$7.5 and \$8.0M. As a nonprofit, COAST's budget is funded through a blend of sources including federal, state, and local grants and appropriated funds, many of which require matches that COAST secures through charitable contributions from businesses, individuals, and foundations as well as revenues from customer fares, partnership agreements, and advertising.

Economic Driver/Contributor

COAST is a critical transportation resource and driver of the Seacoast economy.

Did you know that every dollar invested in COAST, whether by riders at the fare box or by the towns that COAST serves, generates approximately \$4.08 of activity in the local economy?*

**As found by a 2021 economic impact study conducted by the Strafford Regional and Rockingham Planning Commissions*

COAST's annual local economic impact is estimated at \$31 million currently. This figure includes COAST's direct, indirect, and induced effects on spending, as well as the economic impact of access provided by their services.

An investment in COAST is an investment in the economic growth of our region.

Social Justice—Equal access to opportunity

Everyone deserves access to opportunity. Since 1982, COAST has given over 16 million rides to people in the Greater Seacoast region, linking them to work, school, doctor appointments, shopping, and social events.

High housing prices and low vacancy rates in the rental market are increasing the distance between economic opportunity and the communities where people can afford to live. COAST is an essential service for connecting our Seacoast workforce, and the businesses that employ them.

Supporting Seniors

Operating in the second oldest state in the U.S., COAST plays a critical role in helping seniors to maintain their independence. By providing transportation options beyond driving, COAST keeps people connected to their communities and the services they rely on for support as they grow older.

Regional Connectivity—Social Services

COAST is an essential service provider, recognized as a critical partner by social services agencies across the Seacoast. By providing the transportation link between health, social and other support services, COAST ensures that everyone can access the opportunities they need to succeed.

Logo/Tagline Options

Using the existing COAST logo and color branding as a base, supplement (as we did with the 40th anniversary logo) with a tagline and descriptor:

COAST—Connecting People & Communities

An essential nonprofit resource

COAST—Transporting the People that Drive the Seacoast Economy

A nonprofit transportation resource for everyone

COAST—Transportation, Connection, Opportunity

A not-for-profit transportation resource for the Seacoast

COAST—Driving the Seacoast into the Future, One Ride at a Time

COAST—Live Free & Ride

A nonprofit community resource for the Seacoast

Ms. Amport Piper asked for the board's reactions to the messaging we have jointly developed, and for the purposes as outlined. There was significant discussion on the combination of a tagline and descriptor with the logo. There was general agreement with the direction of the messaging with suggestions for how to strengthen various elements.

IV. FINANCIALS

Ms. Doering commented how the end of year financials had settled out after all revenues and expenses had been accounted for. There was very little in total change, approximately \$10,000.

Thus far there have been no irregularities in what we have seen thus far in October.

There were no further questions for Ms. Doering.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Nichols shared old business updates.

New Frontrunner Low-floor Cutaway Minibuses

We continue to seek a meeting with the manufacturer and the dealer to see if we can find a solution to the range issue that was misrepresented.

Municipal Employee Pass Pilot

We have a meeting scheduled for November 16 with the City of Dover Human Resources Director. The city has expressed strong interest in this program. The purpose of the meeting will be to talk logistics and the next steps. Staff have also begun discussing upgrades to our fare media to improve their ability to wear over a longer time frame (6-12 months).

Mr. Sandmann encouraged the distribution of passes to board members so they can experience riding the bus and be better informed of the issues being discussed.

Charitable Gaming Participation

Staff have had promising conversations with the new casino operators coming to Rochester, G2-Gaming. They received all their permits and approvals last month and expect to begin construction at the end of the year. They are currently projecting to open operations by the end of Q2 in 2024. They have not set the methodology for allotments of gaming days to nonprofits yet, but it will be consistently applied to all nonprofits they work with. How many days a nonprofit receives (7-10) days will depend on how many nonprofits they end up working with. We have copies of the packet they would submit on our behalf to the NH Gaming Commission approximately 60 days out from our allotment of days being set. They will have media kits for all the nonprofits they work with for promotion of our gaming nights, although promotion is not required. The new casino will be located at the Lilac Mall, at which we have three fixed routes serve on a regular hourly basis.

NH CDFA Tax Credits

In October we had one firm, Office Interiors, purchase \$10,000 of available tax credits. We also expect another purchase of \$5,000 from Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital. I had reached out to

21 different area firms in October about this opportunity. There are a number that are still considering purchasing tax credits.

I have spoken with one firm so far this month. We have sold \$160,000 of our available tax credits and have \$257,000 remaining to be purchased. We have until March 31, 2024 to sell our remaining tax credits.

New Facility

Currently we are waiting for an administrative adjustment to the NH STIP so we can apply to the FTA for final design and construction funds already awarded to us. We had to request these funds to be moved into FFY24 due to delays in receiving our NEPA determination. Until these funds are secured on a grant our engineering firm's work is on hold due to their having completed preliminary design and all permitting except for the Alteration of Terrain permit through the state of New Hampshire.

On November 8, CMA Engineers submitted a proposed Amendment #1 to cover additional out of scope costs incurred by their Architectural and MEP subcontractors while securing City of Dover Planning Board approvals. The total additional budget requested for the amendment is \$4,212, which brings the total budget to \$506,212 for the preliminary design and permitting phase.

FY25 Projections & Municipal Funding Updates

We expect to update our operating projections for FY25 and beyond later this month and into early December – in preparation for a board discussion in December. Updates will be based on where we actually ended FY23 and changes in assumptions for FY24 based on our latest experiences. It is expected these will not have a large impact on the need for around a 25% overall increase in our FY25 municipal requests.

Annual Audit

The onsite portion of our annual audit has been scheduled for December 4-6 this year. We have begun working on compiling the data that our auditors have asked us to have ready prior to and during their visit.

Fundraising Consultants

Conversations with consultants and firms have been going well, with a variety of perspectives and approaches being discussed. The Executive Committee will be meeting with one firm to discuss with them whether they would be a good fit for COAST.

There was no further discussion on old business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #1: Potential Service Adjustments

Mr. Williams discussed potential service adjustments to consider.

Since the 2020 fixed route service changes, COAST has not operated, by design, an 8:30am run of Route 1 and Route 33. This is when our drivers currently take their breaks and was done to reduce the costs associated with running these runs using a break driver. This system has

worked to reduce costs, but COAST continues to get daily calls from customers asking about these runs. Their absence causes inconvenience and confusion for many customers. Linked to adding the new Route 1 and 33 runs is splitting another block of operator work into three vs. two shifts each day. This allows us to accommodate the need for a break on Route 1 after adding in the new Route 1 and 33 runs at 8:30am.

COAST operators have requested more 10-hour / 4-day work weeks to increase how many operators are able to have consecutive days off (currently, ten full time operators have their two days off not in a row). We could largely accommodate their request by rearranging how our shifts are built but, to do this, we would need to add back in the 8:30am run of Route 1 and 33. This would be a positive improvement for COAST customers and might allow the creation of more favorable work schedules for operators.

<u>Weekly Hrs.</u>	<u>Description</u>
~ 12 hrs.	Additional Route 1/33 runs
4 hrs. 50 mins.	Splitting block 442 into 3 vs. 2 daily blocks of work
2 hrs. 45 mins.	Providing a fuel break for block 442 due to vehicle range issues
~ 30 mins.	Inefficiencies created with new shift cutting

All of this comes with an estimated cost of \$79,700 in additional operating expenses from mid-January (our next operator pick) through the end of the year. If we find we do not need to provide a fuel break for operator block 442, the estimated cost for these adjustments could be reduced to \$68,800. The costs are broken down as follows:

<u>Est. Costs</u>	<u>Description</u>
\$66,800	Additional Route 1/33 runs/splitting block 442 into 3 vs. 2 daily blocks
\$10,900	Providing a fuel break for block 442 due to vehicle range issues
\$ 2,000	Inefficiencies created with new shift cutting

Staff are presenting this option to the board for consideration. If the board supported the addition of these runs, COAST staff would present the revised work schedules to full-time operators for consideration. While the idea of four 10-hour days may appear attractive in the abstract (and we have a few of those shifts now), we want operators to be able to see in detail what these schedules would look like before making a final decision. COAST staff would not be ready to guarantee the addition of these runs until we had finished going through this schedule feedback process.

It is important to note that if we wanted to return to the current scheduling framework (more eight hour, 5-day weeks), we would need to remove the 8:30am runs or potentially incur additional costs to maintain them.

Action Requested: *To be determined based on discussion.*

There was discussion around the number of hours employees can drive in a day. Mr. Williams responded that the limit is 10 hours. The shifts we have created would range between 9-10 hours.

Board members asked questions about operator fatigue, additional costs, whether drivers would really like shifts with up to 10 hours of driving, and the desire to increase the number of work weeks with two consecutive days off.

With the input received, no action was taken on this topic.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discussion Item #2: FY23 Annual Impact Report

Mr. Nichols presented the FY23 Impact Report, which could not be displayed to remote participants due to technical difficulties.

Committee Reports

There was nothing to report in terms of Committee activities.

VII. Community Updates/Information Items

Ridership

- Overall ridership in October totaled 30,698. This was up 10.3% from September, and up 33.0% over October 2022.
- Fixed route ridership totalled 28,387, up 10.6% from September, and up by 34.8% over October 2022. Average weekday ridership increased 1.6% over September.
- Demand response ridership in October totaled 2,311 for the month. This represented a 6.6% increase from September, and a 14.6% increase over ridership in October 2022. Average weekday ridership increased 2.7% over September.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Shanahan adjourned the meeting, without objection, at 10:24am.

Respectfully submitted by Margaret Joyce, Secretary