

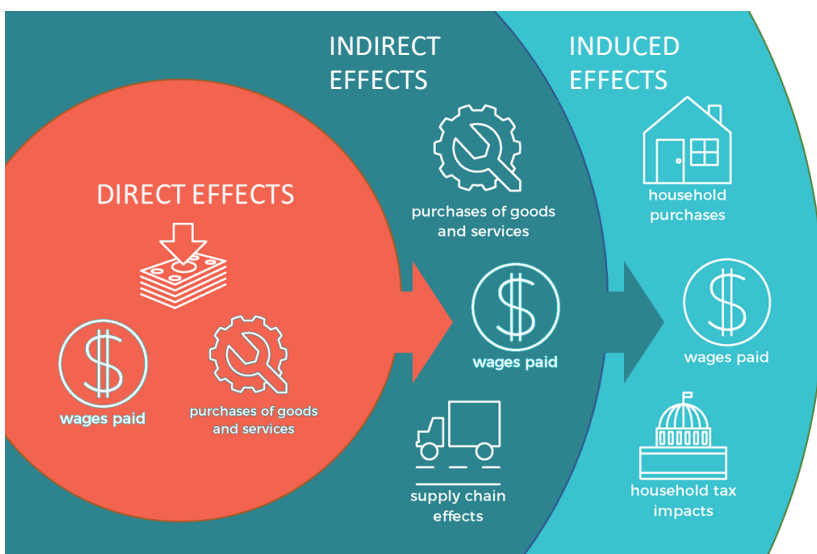
# Economic Impacts of COAST Transit Service in the Seacoast

COAST is the regional public transportation provider serving the Seacoast communities of Portsmouth, Dover, Rochester, Somersworth, Farmington, and Newington New Hampshire; and Berwick, South Berwick, Eliot and Kittery Maine. COAST also offers limited public door to door service in Exeter and Newmarket. COAST provides Seacoast residents with critical access to jobs, medical care, education and training, grocery shopping and other basic life needs. COAST services also provide area employers access to an expanded labor pool, particularly given challenges with housing affordability in employment centers like Portsmouth and Dover.

What's the economic benefit of these services to the Seacoast economy? A recently completed economic impact analysis by the Rockingham Planning Commission and Strafford Regional Planning Commission calculated the total economic impact of COAST services at \$24.89 million for FY2019 as compared to COAST's annual operating budget of \$6.1million. This represents a return of \$4.08 for every public dollar invested. The study also conducted an extensive series of interviews with major employers, service sector employers, developers, and other professionals in health care, education, housing and social services to gain a broader understanding of transit's role in the region, its strengths and its limitations.

## Regional Economic Impacts from COAST Spending on Operations

Using an IMPLAN based economic model the study analyzed COAST's service and market areas and how spending on transit operations and maintenance ripples out and recirculates in the economy through local vendors, their employees and household spending. As transit buses aren't manufactured in New Hampshire, capital expenditures were excluded.



**DIRECT EFFECTS = \$7.23M**

Direct spending by COAST on operations and maintenance including employee wages and purchase of goods and services

**INDIRECT EFFECTS = \$3.78M**

COAST contractors in turn spend revenue from COAST contracts on wages, goods and services from other local business sectors

**INDUCED EFFECTS = \$3.28M**

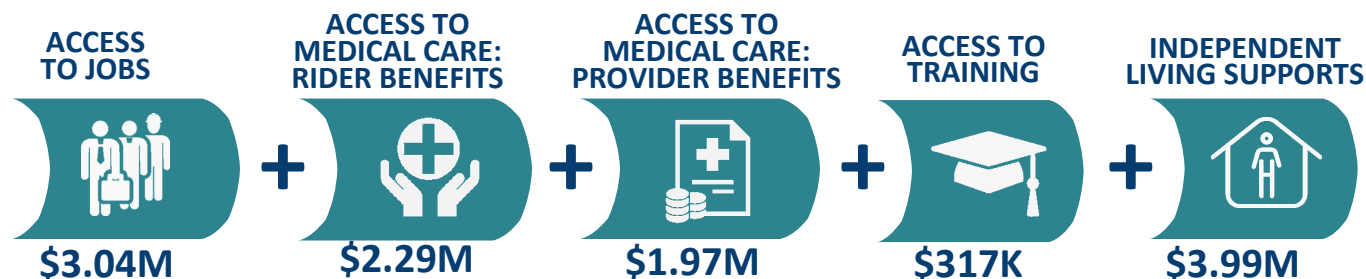
Spending by employees of COAST and COAST contractors on goods and services, recirculating within the regional economy.

**REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COAST SPENDING = \$14.28M**

## Regional Economic Impacts of Access Provided by COAST Services

Beyond impacts of COAST spending through its operations and maintenance budgets, COAST transit services have an economic impact on the region by virtue of providing riders with access to employment, medical care and other services; and by providing businesses with access to customers and employees. To estimate these access impacts the planning commissions used a nationally accepted methodology from the Transit Cooperative Research Program, a program of the National Academies of Science and the Federal Transit Administration.

The TCRP methodology addresses a range of different trip types for which people ride public transit, whether fixed route service for the public at large or demand response services for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Travel frequency by trip purpose was derived from COAST rider survey data. By far the most common trip purposes for riders of COAST fixed routes is commuting to work. For riders of COAST’s demand response service the most frequent purpose is accessing medical care. Other common purposes include accessing education and training and accessing groceries and other basic life needs that allow individuals to lived independently with dignity. An additional consideration is the benefit transit provides to medical practices in reducing losses from missed appointments.



**REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ACCESS PROVIDED BY COAST = \$11.62M**

### *Understanding COAST In the Regional Economy - Stakeholder Interviews*

The qualitative element of the study focused on a series of interviews with over 20 leaders in the region representing major employers, service sector employers, healthcare providers, private developers, municipal economic development directors, providers of job training, housing, senior services and other social services. Interviewees were asked how important a role they saw transit playing in the region, how COAST service was viewed and used in their field, and what they perceived to be its strengths and limitations.

### *Summary of Study Findings*

- **COAST Services Support Upwards of \$24.9 Million in Economic Activity in the Region.** This includes a valuation of access to employment, medical care, training, and basic life needs provided by COAST service; and also jobs and economic activity resulting from COAST spending on its operations. Income earned by COAST’s employees, COAST’s vendors and their employees is re-spent throughout the regional economy. Public money invested in transit not only supports improved access, it also returns locally in the form of additional jobs and income.
- **Transit Provides Access to Employment.** Commuting to work is the most common trip purpose for COAST. COAST commuters are largely in service sector jobs, though COAST also has a successful collaboration with the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. The Shipyard faces significant parking and congestion constraints that make transit access an important option for employees and facility managers.
- **Transit Provides Labor Pool Access and Helps Mitigate Workforce Housing Shortages in the Region.** Service sector employers in Portsmouth noted that most of their workforce is priced out of housing in Portsmouth or Dover and commutes from Somersworth, Rochester and outlying communities. They observed that transit provides an important option for workers but also for their businesses in accessing an adequate labor pool.
- **COAST Transit is Critical in Supporting Access to Healthcare and Independent Living.** This is especially the case for older adults and people with disabilities. The importance of this access will grow in the coming decade as the 65+ population in the region is projected to nearly double. AARP estimates that 1 in 5 Americans over 65 don’t drive. New Hampshire’s strategy for managing long term care costs for an aging population focuses on aging in place, but this is only viable if non-driving seniors can access medical care, groceries, and basic social contact.
- **Funding Limits COAST’s Ability to Expand Service to Meet Growing Needs.** Meeting transportation needs of a growing senior population and improving employment access with extended hours and more frequent buses will require resources that don’t currently exist. While federal COVID relief legislation has provided short term assistance, federal transit funds have not kept pace with inflation over the past two decades, and New Hampshire provides very little state funding for transit operations (less than 10% of the national median state investment).