



Sets Ridership Record, but Local Transit Jeopardized by State Funding

Provides over 101,000 rides during last quarter of 2009

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Dover, NH – Record numbers of local residents and visitors are using public transit according to recent ridership reports of the Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST). During the last quarter of calendar year 2009 COAST provided over 101,000 trips on the regional public transit system, setting a new quarterly record for patronage.

Rad Nichols, COAST Executive Director, made a statement, "Ridership appears to be bouncing back after a dip during the first three quarters of 2009, when COAST saw ridership impacts due to area workers being laid off, furloughed, or having their hours cut back." Nichols also attributed the increase to COAST's ongoing "Take A Closer Look at COAST" campaign, encouraging people who usually do not take the bus to give it a try.

Using the bus to go to work, do shopping, go out to eat, or just get out of the house is easy and economical. As COAST has begun to demonstrate with the "Take A Closer Look" campaign, there is a large and friendly community that rides the bus. COAST maintains reliable, modern, and



clean vehicles driven by professionally trained and friendly operators.

The continued success and growth of COAST and public transit statewide in New Hampshire is indicative of the growing importance of this and other alternative modes of transportation to our residents and local

businesses. At public planning forums and hearings over the last few years, public transportation is consistently and strongly supported as one of the highest priorities of local officials, business leaders and members of the general public.

The challenge however, is to translate this locally or regionally-driven desire for improved community transportation into action by the State Legislature. Last year the limited amount of State funding to support public transit operations throughout the State was cut approximately 75%, now totaling just over \$55,000 per year and shared among 10 transit providers. New Hampshire ranks among the lowest nationally for State funding of public transportation.

Nichols continued, "More troubling, recent statutes and bills seem to be systematically rolling back financing options for public transportation. Our State's administration and elected officials need to be focused on solutions to financing public transportation and mobility options, not actively supporting and erecting more barriers. The stimulus funds being used to prop up the State's lack of financial commitment will soon be gone."

Public transit providers in NH provide an essential service for thousands of the State's residents. Without community-based public transportation options, many of our State's residents have extremely limited or no access to employment opportunities, healthcare and basic services. Public transit also provides an option for individuals interested in reducing congestion and choosing a more sustainable and affordable transportation alternative to their private automobile. Public transit is an important part of a healthy, vibrant and environmentally conscientious community.

COAST buses and trolleys serve and connect eleven communities in the Seacoast, including Rochester, Somersworth, Dover, Portsmouth, Farmington, Newington, Greenland, Stratham, Newmarket, Exeter, Berwick, ME and the Pease Tradeport. Bus routes operate through the heart of each of these communities. During peak commuting periods most buses operate hourly, and stops are conveniently located approximately every ¼-mile along the bus routes.

The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) has provided public transit service to the Seacoast New Hampshire region since 1982. Over 10 million passengers have boarded COAST buses. COAST is a public, non-profit transit system that relies primarily on federal and local government support to operate.

For complete information on routes, schedules, and service, visit our website at www.coastbus.org. If you've never used the bus before, feel free to call our dispatcher for help getting started. It's best to call between 8:30am and 4:00pm, Monday through Friday. Call 603-743-5777 extension 103 (TDD: 1-800-735-2964). See you on the bus!