

**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, March 25, 2009**

Members Present: Jim Wiggin – Chairman, Jon Frederick – Vice Chair, Cynthia Copeland – Secretary/Treasurer, Scott Bogle, Carol Gulla, Richard Hayes, Dan Merhalski, Tom Morgan, Kenn Ortmann

COAST Staff Present: Rad Nichols, Jenn Knox, Jeremy LaRose, Diann Kelley, Newell Whitford

Members Absent: Kit Morgan, Chris Sterndale, Maria Stowell, Keith Trefethen, Sylvia von Aulock

Others Present: Bob Ruzinsky

I. Call to Order

Mr. Wiggin called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM without a quorum. By the time the meeting reached the action item, a quorum was reached.

II. Public Comment

Mr. Nichols stated that there were no public comments to be discussed.

III. Employee Introduction

Mr. Nichols introduced Diann Kelley. Ms. Kelley has been working part-time as a utility cleaner since November 21, 2006. Ms. Kelley's responsibilities include fueling the buses, checking the fluids, cleaning the inside and outside of buses, plugging them in, and generally making sure they are ready to go for the morning. Mr. Ortmann asked if certain kinds of materials or designs make the buses easier to clean. Ms. Kelley said that multicolored seats, such as those in 101 and 103, do not show stains as much as solid-colored seats. She said the design of the seats in the new 08 series buses make the floor much easier to clean. Mr. Wiggin asked how many people work in the washbay at a time. Mr. LaRose responded that COAST currently has five utility cleaners and one detailer. Usually there are two people working each night. During the winter, there may be three working each night to keep up with the heavy sand and salt accumulations in and on the buses. Mr. LaRose added that it is a pleasure to see how clean the buses are, especially considering that there had been some quality problems with the work done in washbay when he first came to COAST. Mr. Nichols added that transit systems like Concord do not invest in cleaning staff, and as a result potential advertisers are put off by their dirty vehicles. The directors thanked Ms. Kelley for her hard work, and she left the meeting.

Prior to discussing the minutes and voting a headcount was taken and it was determined that a quorum was present.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2009 meeting, and Mr. Frederick seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

V. Financial Report

Mr. Ruzinsky presented the financial report for February 2009. Mr. Ruzinsky stated that COAST looks greatly underbudget right now. He noted however that the FastTrans routes started later than originally anticipated, and are being phased in rather than being started all at once. Also, money allotted to coordination has not been spent yet. Mr. Ruzinsky stated that fuel prices have also been much lower than expected. It will not be a problem if fuel prices climb back up this summer, but in that case we would end up with a lower profit figure. Mr. Frederick asked what happens to any leftover money. Mr. Ruzinsky stated that COAST does not operate on a fund system, so the extra money would just sit in our bank account and go into equity. Mr. Frederick asked if it could be put aside as a fuel reserve. Mr. Ruzinsky said this arrangement was possible, but he cautioned that it may leave COAST in an inflexible position. In the past, COAST had designated funds for a capital reserve, and if funds were needed for a different purpose, it required a vote from the Board to release them. Mr. Nichols added that COAST does dip into our equity reserve occasionally for meeting cashflow purposes.

Ms. Copeland asked about the slow advertising revenues. Mr. Nichols explained that an uptick in sales is expected as we enter spring. He also explained that COAST has a number of freshly painted buses that we cannot put ads on due to the paint having not yet cured. This explains why there has not been any advertising on the 08 series buses yet. Mr. Nichols discussed the national phenomenon of advertising and marketing departments being pulled back to national corporate offices vs. being handled locally. Mr. Ruzinsky added that COAST had seen 4 to 5 years of double-digit advertising growth before this recent decline. Mr. Nichols reiterated that we are aggressively pursuing concepts and leads for advertising.

VI. Action Items

- **American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) Projects and Certifications**

Mr. Nichols stated that COAST will receive about \$3.25 million in federal stimulus money, which is significantly more than the \$1.7 million allocated to the region in the federal register. In light of the additional funds, Mr. Nichols presented an expanded list of Ready-to-Go projects. The additional projects include additional facility repairs, shop equipment, and vehicles. Mr. Nichols is also interested in procuring solar-lit bus stop posts.

At night these would let operators know that a passenger was waiting at a stop, and they would increase safety for passengers waiting by the side of the road. They would also provide an opportunity for posting route information. Mr. Ortmann asked whether COAST had considered any projects that would reduce operating costs in the long term. Mr. Nichols said that he was looking into a photovoltaic array for the facility, but did not yet have a sense of the cost involved. Replacing 21-year-old buses was a higher priority, since COAST's customers would see a benefit. Mr. Ruzinsky added that there will be additional money available for green projects, and that COAST can apply for those funds once the rules come out. Mr. Nichols added that it may be hard to get some of those projects under contract in the time frame specified.

Mr. Nichols stated that one day he would like to see a separate facility for maintenance, since the building still has problems with exhaust fumes. Mr. Wiggin commented that the scrubbers may not be working as advertised. Mr. Nichols responded that there are other issues with airflow in the building. The whole fleet could run in the yard without anyone inside being able to smell the exhaust, but people in the building can smell the fumes from a bus that is idling in the garage for just a few minutes. Mr. Wiggin asked if it would be prudent to do an energy efficiency study. Mr. Nichols stated that potentially, yes. His research into the photovoltaic array suggested that we should invest in the envelope of the facility first. Mr. Ruzinsky added that COAST currently spends about \$60,000 a year on utilities, and that figure will never go down to zero. The money saved from the increased fuel economy of new buses may be more than the money saved through insulating the entire building. Mr. Merhalski congratulated Mr. Nichols on getting COAST so much stimulus money, and echoed Mr. Ortmann's concern about long-term cost reduction. Mr. Nichols mentioned that \$300,000 of the ARRA funds will be allocated to preventative maintenance.

Mr. Hayes asked whether the twelve new bus shelters would replace existing shelters or be added to stops where we currently do not have shelters. Mr. Nichols said that if they replace old shelters, it would be COAST's intention to have the old ones relocated. Mr. LaRose stated that last summer COAST did some rehab work on its existing shelters, and now they are in decent shape. COAST is planning on doing the same this summer. Currently there are between 12 and 20 shelters in the COAST system. Ms. Copeland added that there are 2 rounds of funding, Organizations that do well in Round 1 are more likely to get funding in Round 2.

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to endorse the list of Ready-to-Go projects. Ms. Gulla seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Ruzinsky left the meeting.

VII. Discussion Items

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Service at COAST**
Mr. Whitford came in. Ms. Knox, Mr. Whitford, and Mr. Nichols presented a slideshow about COAST's ADA paratransit program, in follow-up to the discussion at the last meeting. Specifically, they explained the application and scheduling processes, the limitations placed on public transit providers, and the increase in demand and individual ride costs over time.

Mr. LaRose stated that COAST would try to be more active with planning boards and developers so that accessibility is considered before construction projects.

Mr. Hayes added that Strafford CAP used to be a contractor for COAST's ADA service, and it became unprofitable. Mr. Ortmann asked for a letter from COAST to the planning boards, asking that COAST be involved before site reviews or subdivisions. Mr. Nichols stated that this was done 4 or 5 years ago, and can be done again. Mr. Whitford let the meeting.

VIII. Information Items

- **NH STIP/ TIP Amendment #1**
Mr. Nichols explained that (S)TIP stands for (State) Transportation Improvement projects, which is the 4-year list of projects that will be funded. He had nothing to add to this information item.
- **NH Proposed State Budget Cuts/ Call to Action**
Mr. Nichols stated that COAST received coverage from local newspapers and Channel 9 relative to the governor's proposed budget cuts. Mr. Merhalski added that Farmington had drafted a letter of support, but did not approve COAST's position on the House bills under consideration.
- **Town of Newington**
Mr. Nichols stated that despite the shocking manner in which the meeting began, he had a better than expected dialogue with the Town of Newington at their recent selectboard meeting. COAST expects that our funding request will at a minimum be put on a warrant article for the next Town Meeting. Newington expressed interest in service to Town Hall off the Spaulding Turnpike. Mr. Wiggin asked Mr. Nichols to hold off on the employee introductions at the next meeting so they can fit in a conversation with Tom Morgan about Newington.
- **Recently Filed Federal Reports**
Mr. Nichols mentioned that COAST had filed two annual reports: one for

the National Transit Database and one for its drug and alcohol program.

- **Ridership Update**

Mr. Nichols commented that ridership declined in February 2009 versus February 2008. There were fewer days in February this year, which accounts for about half the difference. Very cold weather and poor economic conditions may also have contributed to the decline. Route 7, however, has picked up some new regular riders.

IX. Old Business

Mr. Nichols stated that there was no old business.

X. New Business

Mr. Nichols stated that COAST's biennial ridership survey will take place from April 28 through 30th this year. He invited all the directors to volunteer 2 to 4 hours of their time to help collect surveys on board the bus. Mr. Hayes commented that last time he got motion sick, so he cannot volunteer this year.

Mr. Nichols added that he expects to have contracts for buses for approval at the next board meeting. He was able to piggyback onto another contract in California.

XI. Adjournment

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to adjourn, and Mr. Frederick seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 AM.