



DRAFT Minutes of the Board of Directors Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Members Present: Jim Wiggin – Chairman, Jon Frederick – Vice Chair, Scott Bogle, Cynthia Copeland, Carol Gulla, Richard Hayes, Tom Morgan (late arrival)

COAST Staff Present: Rad Nichols, Jeremy LaRose, Jenn Knox

Proxy: Kenn Ortmann

I. Call to Order

Mr. Wiggin called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM.

II. Public Comment

Mr. Nichols stated that there was no public comment.

III. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Frederick made the motion to approve the minutes of June 24, 2009, and Ms. Gulla seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. Financial Report

Mr. Nichols stated that there was no financial report to present at this time.

V. Action Items

- **Closed Caption Digital Recorder Television System [ARRA]**

Mr. Nichols stated that COAST had received bids from 4 companies. While there was some variation among the products, all of them would meet COAST's needs. The system would include cameras at the main entrance that could capture appropriate details of the vehicles entering the yard. There would also be a camera showing people walking into the main doorway. Mr. Wiggin asked if the cameras would be able to see anyone between parked buses. Mr. Nichols said that cameras would offer a view of the parking lot, but they would not be able to see between buses. Mr. Bogle asked if COAST has had mischief at its facility after hours. Mr. Nichols stated not currently, however COAST has had a plow stolen, which is why Steve Wells had the front gate installed. The camera system was recommended as part of the voluntary FTA Safety and Security Review COAST participated in last summer. Mr. Bogle asked how many days of data the 500KB system would provide. Mr. Nichols stated that he believed the system could record close to a week's worth of data. Mr. Frederick asked if there were any annual maintenance costs associated with the system. Mr. Nichols said the system is all-digital, and he had not identified any ongoing maintenance costs. Mr. Frederick asked about warranties. Mr. Nichols responded that the recommended system from One Source Security comes with a one-year

warranty on parts and labor. Mr. Wiggin asked whether there was an extended warranty option. Mr. Nichols said he could inquire about this.

Ms. Copeland stated that she would like to see written confirmation that the DBE process was followed. Mr. Nichols stated that the procurement was completed in accordance with COAST's procurement procedures. Ms. Copeland made the motion to approve the procurement of a CCTV system for a price not to exceed \$5,085, and Mr. Bogle seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The inclusion of Mr. Ortmann's proxy provided the additional vote needed for a quorum. Mr. Nichols added after the vote that the FTA does not participate in extended warranties, which means that if COAST wanted to purchase one it would have to be funded 100% with local match.

- **Expanded Marketing Campaign**

For discussion purposes, Mr. Frederick made the motion to endorse the solicitation of marketing and design firms, and Ms. Gulla seconded. Mr. Nichols stated that the biggest piece of the proposed marketing campaign is a significant website update, including the trip-planning feature Google Transit. The theme of the overall campaign will be "Take Another Look," and it will use material gathered from passengers to help sell COAST service. Mr. Nichols added that he went to a photo shoot this week for a vinyl bus wrap featuring regular passengers. Jane Marlow-Cutter at Alternate Transit Advertising (ATA) suggested that the passengers' enthusiastic responses could be great marketing material. Mr. Nichols stated that COAST has roughly \$100,000 available for marketing through a CMAQ grant that was awarded in 2001. Mr. Bogle asked whether COAST was still planning on featuring some notable faces on the bus wrap. Mr. Nichols replied that COAST determined that it would be too political. Ms. Copeland stated she felt this procurement presented an opportunity to contract with a DBE firm. Mr. Nichols added that the firm we are working with regarding the vinyl wrapped bus, ATA, is a DBE. The vote was passed unanimously.

Mr. Morgan entered the meeting.

- **ARRA – Use of Funds in Support of Operations**

Mr. Frederick made the motion to endorse the use of \$325,500 in ARRA funds to support operations, and Ms. Gulla seconded. Mr. Wiggin read Mr. Ortmann's statement against the approval of this item. Mr. Ortmann felt that the communities involved should be asked for an expression of their support before COAST starts additional service that these communities would have to pay for down the road. Mr. Wiggin stated that he agreed 150%. Mr. Nichols asked whether the Board would reconsider the wording of this action item. He said that stimulus funds are similar to CMAQ funds in that they would allow COAST to get service off the ground. When the funding runs out, the project will be a success or a failure.

He added that Phase 2 service enhancements have been a goal of the Board for some time, but coming up with the required local match had always been the major obstacle. He stated that starting weekend service on Rt 1 and increasing weekend service on Rt 2 would require an additional \$18,000 to \$22,000 a year in local match. This cost represents about \$3,000 for each of the six communities

served. The additional cost could be phased in slowly over the first three years. Mr. Nichols added that increased weekend service has been the number one request of passengers for many years now.

Ms. Gulla asked whether we could continue the project if one of the communities chose not to participate. Mr. Nichols stated that he would not ask the Board to move forward with Phase 2 without complete buy-in from the communities.

Ms. Copeland stated that the best way to move forward with such projects is to phase them in so that those involved do not suddenly get hit with the whole amount three years in. She added that the conversation would take place at the technical advisory committees for Strafford and Rockingham counties, so the communities would have input in that context.

Mr. Frederick asked which of the projects on COAST's ARRA project list would have to take a back seat if COAST moved ahead with Phase 2 using ARRA funds. Mr. Nichols stated that the mid-life vehicle overhauls and some facility improvements would take a backseat, and the savings from other ARRA-funded projects would make up the difference.

Mr. Hayes stated that he would support the action item because it made sense. It was a way to begin offering service that everyone has wanted for years, and with no strings attached. Mr. Wiggin stated that Mr. Ortmann may have changed his mind had he been at the meeting to participate in the discussion.

Mr. Frederick stated that he would like the opportunity to speak with those involved with the budget in the City of Portsmouth before authorizing the Executive Director to spend any ARRA funds on Phase 2. He asked whether this item had to be decided today. Mr. Nichols stated that he had planned to include Phase 2 as an option to supplement the base budget at the August meeting, but it could always be added later as an amendment to the operating budget.

Mr. Hayes said that he understood Mr. Wiggin's and Mr. Frederick's positions, but he felt that no action taken today would impact the towns. COAST would have an opportunity to prove the need for the service improvements before asking for the communities' buy-in, and in the meantime, it would offer service that many of our riders would greatly appreciate. Mr. Nichols added that COAST would set standards with communities beforehand so that success could be measured.

Mr. Nichols explained that one option for how to treat this money was to treat it similar to CMAQ. Federal funding could be phased back from 100% to approximately 60% over a three year period. If the project was not deemed successful it would no longer be supported. Additionally, he felt that there must be consensus among the communities that would receive this added service that they would commit to funding a successful service into the future.

Mr. LaRose added that this was a rare opportunity for a "if you build it, they will come" moment in public transit. Dover and Portsmouth are leading the state in weekday service, but many Dover residents are not in the city during the week because they work elsewhere. Adding Saturday service would allow them to use

the service within their community. In addition, this expansion would happen in conjunction with a sustained marketing campaign, all at zero to very low costs to the communities themselves. Mr. LaRose commented that this is the sort of opportunity that is usually reserved for private businesses, not public transit providers.

The motion passed with 7 directors supporting the motion and Mr. Ortmann opposing it.

VI. Discussion Items

- **Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Strategies**

Mr. Nichols said that the base budget he expects to present to the Board will be revenue and expense neutral, but there will be some shifting between line items. For example, the FY2009 budget allowed for fuel at almost \$4.00 per gallon. Using the state bid, fuel will not go above \$2.65 per gallon through September 2010. Mr. Nichols added that year to date, COAST has spent an average of \$1.90 per gallon for fuel.

Mr. Nichols would also like to implement a 1.5% cost of living increase for employees, so that COAST can remain competitive in terms of employee retention and hiring. COAST's starting wage is significantly less than the starting wages at C&J and school bus operators. Mr. Nichols added that COAST's benefits package and work hours are superior to these companies, but that may not be immediately appreciated by operators looking for work.

The budget will also include a full year of FastTrans at full levels. In addition, the budget will also include a full year of coordination and a full-time manager of coordination. Implementation of both of these projects will be budget neutral, although will increase the bottom line.

Recent funding changes at COAST include, receipt of approximately \$150,000 in 5317 New Freedom funding. The United Way contribution, however, is being reduced from \$6,500 per year to \$2,400.

Mr. Nichols said it would be a challenge to keep a 0% increase, but that would be his goal going in.

Mr. Nichols said that he would make an initial budget presentation at the August 12 meeting, and would schedule a budget work session for early September if the Board wished. Mr. Frederick commented that the work session last year was very helpful. Mr. Nichols said that this meeting could take place the week of Labor Day.

VII. Old Business

Mr. Nichols stated that he had no old business to discuss. Ms. Copeland mentioned that staff should contact Diane Hardy in Newmarket about the bus shelter near the mill. She also asked for an update about FastTrans.

Mr. LaRose explained that COAST would be making some moderate changes in Route 33. For example, there had been a miscommunication about what time a major program at the Department of Corrections ended. The route will be adjusted so that the last bus doesn't leave before that program finishes. Along with these changes to Route 33, Phase 3 of FastTrans involves the implementation of Route 35. This route will run down Route 108, starting with the area near the Madbury line and the new Hannaford. Then the bus will go up Locust Street to the Dover Transportation Center, past Wentworth-Douglass Hospital to Shaw's, and continue on to the C&J and the new Wentworth-Douglass facility at Member's Way. At peak periods, there would be bus service up Central Ave every 20 minutes, between Route 2, Wildcat Route 3, and Route 35. Mr. LaRose commented that no other community has this level of bus service in New Hampshire other than UNH. COAST routes are generally planned so that several buses arrive at the same time to facilitate connections, but Route 35 will be offset. This will allow riders to take the bus to Shaw's, shop for half an hour, and take the bus home again, for example, without waiting too long for the return bus.

VIII. New Business

Ms. Copeland stated that the CMAQ applications are coming out the first week in August, and letters of intent are due after Labor Day.

Mr. Nichols asked the Board to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Information items were handled first.

IX. Information Items

- **Town of Newington**

Mr. Nichols stated that he met with the Newington Planning Board on July 13. The planning board expressed its support for funding COAST, but a motion to incorporate COAST into the planning board's budget died on the floor. COAST was advised that the planning board did not have much influence with the Board of Selectmen. COAST expects to be invited for a work session in the early fall. Mr. Nichols said that he hopes some changes within the town, such as the Little Bay Bridge project, will help COAST's efforts in Newington. Mr. Wiggin thanked Mr. Morgan for arranging this meeting. Mr. Frederick said he was surprised that the planning board focused on the lack of direct benefit to Newington residents, considering that the bus directly benefits their major source of tax revenue. Mr. Bogle asked whether the Selectmen's representative to the planning board was at the meeting. Mr. Morgan said that he was not, which was usually the case. Mr. Frederick added that the planning board had focused on applying blame regarding the point at which Newington had stopped funding COAST in the past, rather than moving forward.

- **Bus Stop Shelters**

Mr. Nichols stated that COAST applied for an earmark through Jeanne Shaheen's office related to Spaulding Express service. It was an opportunity to tell the senator about the lack of local match to fund this service. Ms. Copeland emphasized that the local match is a challenge because the service would not directly benefit any community, and since it is a mandated federal requirement, local communities should not have to pay for it. The state even bought into the service in its Environmental Impact Statement for the Spaulding Turnpike expansion project. Although COAST does not expect anything to come of the request, it will take any opportunity to move this discussion forward.

- **Ridership Update**

There was no comment about the ridership update.

Executive Session

Mr. Frederick made the motion to enter into an executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Mr. Bogle seconded the motion. Mr. Wiggin took a roll-call vote, and the motion passed unanimously at 10:21 AM.

Mr. Frederick made the motion to leave executive session at 10:29 AM. Mr. Morgan seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Morgan made the motion to seal the minutes of the executive session until August 12. Ms. Gulla seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Frederick made the motion to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Morgan seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 AM.