



## **Minutes of the Board of Directors Wednesday, September 23, 2009**

**Members Present:** Jon Frederick – Vice Chair, Cynthia Copeland – Secretary/Treasurer, Kenn Ortmann, Sylvia Von Aulock

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

### **I. Call to Order**

Mr. Frederick called the meeting to order at 8:40 AM with four members present. Mr. Nichols commented that he had not heard from any Board members saying they would not be able to attend the meeting.

With no quorum present, no business decisions were able to be made during the meeting.

### **IV. Financial Report**

Mr. Nichols stated that the July financials were distributed in the Board packets, and he handed out August financials at the meeting. He noted that COAST was still under budget due to the open coordination position and low fuel prices. Mr. Nichols added that having a second-shift mechanic this year allowed COAST to save money by doing more complicated repairs in-house.

### **II. Public Comment**

Mr. LaRose passed around a letter written to COAST from a Portsmouth resident, and COAST's response to it. There was no discussion.

Mr. Morgan joined the meeting.

### **V. Discussion Items**

- **FY09 Year in Review**  
Mr. Nichols gave a presentation about COAST's achievements in human resources, operations, maintenance, safety and finances during FY09. There was limited discussion.
- **Spaulding Turnpike Express**  
Mr. Nichols explained that COAST was awarded a \$640,000 grant in 2001 for service on the Spaulding Turnpike between Exit 14 and Exit 9 with 30-minute headways during the peak morning and evening commute periods. At the time, it was assumed that COAST could generate enough local match using municipal contributions, advertising revenue, and corporate sponsorship. Since then, the

estimated total cost of the project rose to \$2.6 million. COAST does not have a mechanism to raise the local match needed.

The final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the record of decision for the Little Bay Bridge project involved expanding this proposed service by adding more runs earlier and later in the day. Mr. Nichols explained that this service would be different than any other COAST route because it would be almost 100% commuter-based. While the route would stop only in Rochester, Dover, Newington and Portsmouth, residents of surrounding communities (such as Strafford and Nottingham) would likely access the route using a regional Park and Ride. Under these circumstances Rochester, Dover, Newington and Portsmouth may be reluctant to bear the financial burden of the route, yet given COAST current structure there would be no way to generate local match from the towns where the route does not stop. Local match prospects are further complicated by the fact that the Spaulding Turnpike is a limited-access road, which means that the service would go through a community (Somersworth) without actually stopping there.

Mr. Nichols relayed a conversation he had with Christopher Morgan, the NHDOT Bureau of Rail and Transit Administrator. Mr. Morgan had indicated that there may only be enough CMAQ money for one of the two possible bus alternative projects described in the EIS and involving COAST. The first option would be adding service on Route 2 and the trolley to create half-hour headways during peak periods on weekdays. Together with additional service on Wildcat Transit's Route 4, these service expansions make up Bus Alternative #3 in the EIS. The second option would be fully funding the original COAST Spaulding Express service and additional runs as proposed in the EIS.

Mr. Nichols stated that if forced to make a decision between one alternative or the other he would recommend Bus Alternative #3, since it would give our passengers much more flexibility, and there is not enough funding for the original level of Spaulding Express service anyway.

Ms. Copeland expressed her frustration with the situation. She said that the DOT took the region's existing CMAQ projects and integrated them into the Little Bay Bridge project. Now it wants to count other measures, such as the Dover Park and Ride, toward compliance with the EIS. That is not how the record of decision or the EIS read. Ms. Copeland said she understands Mr. Nichols' recommendation for COAST, but feels that it is unfortunate that we would have to give up the Spaulding Express project due to the DOT's funding issues.

Mr. Nichols stated that he does not feel the additional service on the Spaulding Express, as outlined in the EIS, would be necessary. The original plans included 3 round trips in the morning and 4 round trips in the afternoon, scheduled according to the common shifts at Pease.

Mr. Nichols added that COAST has been waiting for the next CMAQ round for months. He said that COAST will not need to make a decision about which CMAQ project to pursue until the CMAQ round is finally announced.

- **RSA Chapter 91-A Amendments**

Mr. Nichols explained some changes to the State of New Hampshire's rules for public meetings. A quorum now needs to be physically present at the meeting. Members can still participate via teleconference and vote via proxy, but they cannot be counted toward the quorum. Ms. Copeland said that if a town hasn't appointed a representative, that town does not have to be counted in the calculations of what constitutes a quorum. Mr. Nichols stated that this may be true if the quorum requirement is a percentage of membership, but in COAST's case it is a fixed number (seven). Mr. Morgan suggested changing the quorum requirement in the by-laws to a lower number, such as five. Mr. Ortmann added that this would give a lot of power to a relatively small group, but it may be the only way to ensure that business can be conducted at meetings. Mr. Nichols stated that the by-laws require a vote by 2/3 of the members, at a meeting at which there is a quorum. There was some discussion about reaching out to the remaining communities to encourage them to appoint a representative to the Board.

#### **VI. Action Items**

- Note: a quorum was not attained and as such the action items for the meeting could not be acted upon.
- Mr. Ortmann asked if COAST will encounter any problems waiting until the next meeting to proceed with Action Item #3, the maintenance equipment procurement. Mr. Nichols said that he didn't think so.

#### **VII. Information Items**

Mr. Nichols said that he had nothing to add to the information items. Ms. Copeland asked how recruitment was going for the coordination position. Mr. Nichols replied that he has received four additional resumes and met with one walk-in candidate. The position was advertised in NHTA, Foster's, and multiple APA sites. The position is grant-funded for two years.

#### **VIII. Old Business**

Mr. Nichols stated that the bus stop posts with schedule information and solar lighting that COAST had been interested in purchasing with ARRA funds turned out to be more expensive than expected at \$1700 to \$1800 each. He said that he did not feel they would be a wise investment. He distributed a scaled-down image of the new bus stop signs that staff developed for FastTrans. The signs have the schedule information printed on them, so passengers will be able to tell which buses pick up at the stop and when. Mr. LaRose added that updates would simply be printed on styrene and placed over the existing information. Mr. Nichols felt that switching all the stop signs to this style would be a much better investment.

Mr. Nichols stated that the new bus shelters have all been delivered, and staff is in the process of contacting the communities about the most appropriate locations for installation. Mr. Ortmann asked whether COAST puts up bus stop signs using our own posts or existing posts. Mr. Nichols said that it depends on how long the stop has been there and which community it is in, since towns have different protocols about utility poles. Mr. LaRose added that the new FastTrans stop signs have gone up in

cooperation with Dover's traffic and safety sergeant.

**IX. New Business**

Mr. Ortmann asked whether COAST had a contingency plan if a large portion of our staff were infected with swine flu. Mr. Nichols said that COAST does, and if we did not have enough staff to operate at full levels on the street, we would scale back services. Mr. Nichols added that COAST would ramp up its bus cleaning efforts, but there is only so much that can be done to prevent the spread of disease. Mr. Nichols said that COAST is putting swine flu notices and hand sanitizer on the buses. Mr. LaRose added that at the operator meeting a few weekends ago, all the operators were encouraged to stay home if they felt sick. Ms. Copeland added that swine flu is particularly contagious, and that it is possible to spread the disease before developing symptoms.

Ms. Copeland congratulated the entire staff on a tremendous job in a very challenging environment.

**X. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 AM.