



Additional Fee

to ride some COAST services in Somersworth

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dover, NH – At their June meeting, the Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) Board of Directors voted to authorize an additional \$0.50 fee on passengers boarding COAST buses in Somersworth. The additional fee will be charged starting August 1, 2015 and will apply only to passengers boarding COAST routes 1, 2 and ADA vehicles within the City. The fee is being charged to help COAST close a revenue gap in their operating budget. The gap resulted from the city only being able to level fund COAST services, now for a third year in a row.

COAST recognized that the organization and the City have been longstanding partners in the provision of critically important public transit services within the community. COAST Executive Director, Rad Nichols, stated, “we appreciate the position the City is in with the budget, particularly in light of the School budget and the State continuing to push down financial responsibilities to local communities. As an organization however, we have to generate the revenues necessary to support our operations, or adjust the services we offer.”

Annually there are approximately 55,000 passenger boardings in Somersworth on COAST vehicles. In the last 3+ years ridership within the City has grown by over 40%. Without the extra fee, the fares to board range from free to \$3.00, depending on age or a disability and the service being used. The strong use of the COAST system in Somersworth supports continuing service at the current levels.

Nichols added, “The City is investing heavily and positively in the downtown. We want to be an integral part in helping attract and transport residents, employees and visitors to a newly re-energized Somersworth in the future.”

When discussing the options that are available to the organization for addressing the revenue gap, the board did identify the Council’s recent passage of an ordinance to allow for bus shelter advertising within Somersworth as an important step in allowing COAST to diversify their revenue streams and not rely upon local communities as heavily for funding. This was critical in the decision to reduce the proposed extra fee by 50%, or \$0.50. Annual net revenue estimates for bus shelter advertising in Somersworth equal roughly half the gap between COAST’s requested contribution and what was ultimately passed in the city’s budget.

Attached to the vote to charge the extra fee was the creation of a new committee of the COAST Board of Directors, targeting involvement of Somersworth city staff and businesses to proactively build relationships and understanding of COAST operations, assess service provision in the city and evaluate the short-term impacts of the additional fee. “We listened carefully to the statements made by

Councilors during the recent budget process and will be undertaking new efforts based on that feedback,” said Nichols.

“We hope that this is a very temporary measure,” said Nichols. “Ultimately, we want to continue to partner with the City and be an important piece of their overall transportation infrastructure into a very promising future.”

The additional \$0.50 fee will be charged over and above how a passenger otherwise pays for their fare to ride (i.e., monthly pass, punch ticket, drop ticket, ADA ticket, cash, etc.).

No additional fee will be charged to board the Clipper Connection Route 100 bus in Somersworth because Clipper Connection services are not funded through municipal contributions.

The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) has provided public transit service to the Seacoast New Hampshire region since 1982. Over that time, over 13 million passengers have ridden COAST buses. COAST is a public, non-profit regional public transit system with the mission of promoting and/or providing public mass transit services in Southeastern New Hampshire. COAST relies primarily on passenger fares, federal grants, local government support and advertising revenues to support its services.

Riding public transit is one of the best ways to support more convenient, green, and affordable alternatives to driving your car. To find out more about the COAST system and its work to improve public transportation in Southeastern New Hampshire, visit www.coastbus.org or call 603-743-5777.