



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
DRAFT Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, June 19, 2019**

Present: Scott Bogle, Arthur Capello, Valerie Labrie, Colin Lentz, David Sandmann, David Sharples, Juliet Walker, and Thomas Wright

Absent: Jim Campbell, Steve Fournier, Denis Hebert, Martin Pepin, Dennis Shanahan, Maria Stowell and Shelley Winters

Staff: Rad Nichols and Michael Williams

I. Call to Order

Chairman Sandmann called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

II. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Bogle motioned for approval of the May 20th minutes. Mr. Lentz seconded. Mr. Wright and Mr. Capello abstained and everyone else voted in favor.

III. Public Comment

Mr. Nichols recognized staff members for reaching employment milestones recently. Phil Smith for 15 years of service with COAST and Paul Estabrook for 10 years of service with COAST.

Mr. Sandmann distributed updated contact lists for Board of Directors members.

IV. Financial Report

Mr. Nichols presented the report on the April 2019 financials. May closed with a small loss. Strafford County billings would have assisted, had they come in during May. We remain significantly under budget for the year and significantly under budget in advertising revenues. Our Accountant has been researching this situation to better understand the trend. We continue to suffer from a slow Q4 in 2018 and Q1 and now Q2 in 2019. Mr. Lentz asked how advertisements were sold, and Mr. Nichols explained the methodology and that a trend towards shorter advertising campaigns has affected sales and the effort required by our sales firm. Mr. Capello asked if our ad agency is doing their job, to which Mr. Nichols said we have no reason to believe they are not, and that all transit agencies in the state are in a similar situation. Mr. Bogle asked if there is a trend toward online ad sales which has hurt us. Mr. Nichols explained that the marketing metrics now in use are unfavorable to the way transit advertising works. Mr. Wright raised the possibility of marijuana sales and stores going in in Berwick, and how COAST would react if they wanted to advertise on our vehicles. Mr. Nichols and Mr. Sandmann both stated our policy would prohibit that because at a minimum that form of advertising would be considered controversial.

On the expense side, contract services were up significantly due to legal fees incurred for our pending unfair labor practice complaint.

Mr. Nichols walked through the income statement, balance sheet, and unrestricted net asset ratio information. Mr. Sandmann asked about the building status and the needed repairs. Mr. Nichols explained the updated SPCC plan was completed by the engineers and that we needed to meet with them again to discuss strategies for repairing the building and setting ourselves up to take advantage of future grant opportunities for facility improvement or replacement.

VI. Old Business

Tufts Health Plan Foundation Grant Award

Mr. Nichols informed the board of the Tuft Foundations grant award for ACT & TripLink funding (\$43.5k) Mr. Lentz pointed out the competitiveness of the Tuft Foundations grant based on the number of applicants.

NH Budget Update

The potential for funding from the state operating budget to support TripLink activities (approx. \$35k) continues to be included in the budget to be considered for approval by the Governor.

Exeter Hospital Grant Award

Mr. Nichols also informed the board of a \$5,000 grant award from Exeter Hospital in support of ACT & TripLink. Mr. Nichols expressed hopes of continued strong funding through this and similar opportunities for ACT and TripLink.

VII. New Business

Action Items

Action Item #1: Revision to Single Ride Drop Ticket Policy

A small, yet important, was suggested to the Single Ride Drop Ticket Policy. It will allow for a clarification that bulk sales of these tickets are meant for local businesses, organizations, and municipalities (with a physical store/office presence in the region) for distribution to the clients/customers/students/benefactors of their services.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors accept the revision to the Single Ride Drop Ticket Policy*

Ms. Walker motioned to accept the proposed revision of the Single Ride Drop Ticket Policy, and Mr. Capello seconded her motion. The motion passed unanimously without further discussion.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee –

A brief summary of the emergency Executive Committee meeting held on June 13, regarding the bus operator shortage, was given by Chairman Sandmann. Mr. Nichols presented the memo given to staff on the reason for and content of pay increases for hourly staff positions. Mr. Nichols explained the scale and reason for lost CDL operators, the result of service suspension, and our concerns about an aging workforce which may lead to further retirees or unplanned absences moving forward.

Mr. Lentz asked about overtime, and Mr. Williams confirmed overtime in June is higher than it was in May.

Mr. Bogle recommended staff focus recruitment on young retirees, perhaps through Senior Health or Retirement Fairs. Mr. Nichols shared that we have a new and comprehensive advertising effort. Mr. Williams shared that we have discussed focusing on young retirees in our advertising pushes and that job fairs have proven to be unfruitful to attend. Mr. Williams also said we had not attended any of the type recommended by Mr. Bogle, and that was a potential opportunity to pursue.

Discussion Items

Discussion Item #1: COA Progress Updates

Mr. Nichols explained that staff have completed six public forums, attended by 48 attendees. We have also met with Dover, Rochester, PNSY, Pease, Kittery, and Portsmouth, and these meetings led to some adjustments in the version of the proposal brought to the public. Mr. Nichols cited the broad support we have heard for the proposal overall and acknowledged a few individuals have not supported it because of how it affected their individual needs. Staff will be working through the summer on how to address the public feedback.

Mr. Nichols cited questions raised about fares, and staff's plans to complete a fare analysis over the summer. Mr. Nichols also informed the board that staff had met with Sen. Watters who expressed support, as well as the NHDOT and the urban transit systems in NH. Mr. Nichols expressed that it was yet unclear what direction NHDOT would go with many of the questions raised at the most recent meeting, and that we continue to seek to bring all funding partners along at the same time over the course of the summer.

Mr. Nichols provided five scenarios for community funding through the current municipal funding formula, based on varying potential levels of support that could be realized with the NHDOT as a partner.

Mr. Nichols expressed that our region needs a campaign for the conceptual plan supported by the cities and towns in the region in order to be successful in launching it. He expressed that this proposal is responsive to the community's expressed needs, including the economic development needs that have been expressed. Mr. Nichols expressed that it does not appear as though our region is where it needs to be in terms of community support for this plan to be successful. He requested the cities work through their channels to realize this support.

Mr. Capello asked for a draft letter to have the town selectman sign. Mr. Sandmann agreed. Mr. Nichols said he would provide this.

Mr. Nichols also said he had reached out to Senator Hassen's staff, Councilors Volinsky and Prescott, and Senator Fuller Clark to present and discuss the plan. He stated staff had already met with Senators Watters and Gray, and Congressman Pappas.

Mr. Nichols said if the conceptual plan is launched using CMAQ funding, we anticipate this funding to end in three years, at which time the communities or another funding source will need to fill that future funding gap.

Mr. Nichols explained the fare analysis COAST plans to undertake to understand the impact of the proposed system on fares and any changes to fare media and transfer policy needed. Mr. Nichols explained the timeline for the rest of the COA.

Ms. Walker asked when the Municipal Funding Formula requests would go out. Mr. Nichols stated that it was hard to say because it depended on when NHDOT makes some decisions. He expressed a need for communities to be involved in order to help that process, perhaps attending a meeting in July or August.

Ms. Walker asked if the Pease Development Authority was firm on not raising their contribution. Mr. Nichols said they appeared favorable to potentially doing that at the community meeting. Ms. Walker suggested outreach to the Pease Development Authority board.

Mr. Bogle said NHDOT seemed to be waiting to see if FAST Act rescission would happen, as well as the capital corridor legislation, before making funding decisions.

Mr. Sandmann suggested board members should contact their representatives in Concord, and Mr. Nichols said he would put together talking points for this.

Mr. Bogle asked if the municipal representatives present were seeing the same labor wage pressures. Mr. Capello, Mr. Wright, Ms. Walker all stated their municipalities were experiencing the same wage pressure and difficulty attracting applicants.

VIII. Community Updates/Information Items

Ridership & Financial Performance

Mr. Nichols presented the ridership report, which was found to be missing some route ridership counts for May. Mr. Nichols said he would distribute the updated report.

No other comments.

IX. Adjournment

Mr. Sharples motioned to adjourn. Mr. Lentz seconded. The vote was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 9:39 AM.