



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, September 23, 2020**

Per RSA 91-A:2,III(b) the COAST Chair has declared the COVID-19 Outbreak an emergency and has waived the requirement that a quorum be physically present at the meeting

**PRESENT:** Scott Bogle, Arthur Capello, Adam Causey, Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, Valerie Labrie, Colin Lentz, Marty Pepin, Dave Sandmann, Michael Scala, Dennis Shanahan, Dave Sharples, Maria Stowell, Juliet Walker, and Shelley Winters (non-voting)

**ABSENT:** Thomas Wright

**STAFF:** Rad Nichols, Michael Williams, and Heather Hesse-Stromberg

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order at 8:47am. Each member identified themselves, stated their location and whether anyone was in the room with them and listening contemporaneously.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Joyce made a motion to accept the August 2020 minutes as presented and Mr. Hebert seconded. All voted by roll call.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Capello	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	ABSTAIN
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Mr. Sharples	YES
Ms. Stowell	ABSTAIN
Ms. Walker	YES

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**IV. FINANCIAL REPORT**

**AUGUST FINANCIALS**

In August, Fares and Contract Revenue were the highest they've been since March; however, Advertising Revenue was down again. Based on projections by ATA Outdoor, we anticipate that Advertising Revenue will be up and down over the next several months.

Municipal Collections continue as expected, and Federal Assistance continues to be up as we have been granted flexibility through the 5307 Emergency Relief Program and CARES Act funds. The budget lines of Federal Assistance through Coordination Funding reflect lower expenses and higher federal participation as well.

Wages and Fringe Benefits were lower than they had been in July, and Contract Services were well below what they were in July. Materials and Supplies were significantly higher in August. Utilities are higher and reflect that we were finally billed for utilities at 6 Sumner. Coordination costs continue to be impacted by COVID, through reduced demand and associated expenses.

The August Income Statement reflects some significant impacts of COVID-19 (lower farebox, contract, and advertising revenue) and lower state and local assistance because we weren't operating service to the extent we would otherwise have been. The same is true for Coordination.

On the expense side, we are running under budget on every line except Insurance and Miscellaneous costs. Insurance came in over budget last year and higher Miscellaneous costs are the result of the new system launch and all the items that needed to be procured for implementation. COAST ended the month with a year-to-date gross gain of just over \$109K after factoring in local depreciation.

The Balance Sheet reflected current assets at \$1.65M and current liabilities at just over \$427K. Unrestricted net assets were \$1.13M, having grown by almost \$22K in August. Unrestricted assets remain well below our goal, however that has been improving.

## **V. OLD BUSINESS**

### **Vehicle Disposals**

We have recently disposed of seven (7) previously active vehicles in our fleet through online auction. They were: four (4) 2000 & 2001 vintage MCI coach buses and three (3) 2008 vintage 40' Gillig low-floor buses. All of the vehicles had served COAST for well beyond their 'useful life' as defined by the federal government. They were sold to multiple different buyers. The total sale value came to \$22,150. None of them sold for more than \$5,000, at which point we would have to restrict those funds to being used to help cover the Federal portion when reinvesting in new fleet vehicles.

### **Bus Shelter Solar Lighting Retrofits**

As of last week, all 14 new solar lighting kits ordered earlier this year had been installed in bus shelters across the system. From the exterior, the lighting is not very bright and is very much shielded. When someone is in the shelter the lighting is noticeable and it has improved passenger visibility for drivers. Unfortunately, the controls for the timers are not very 'smart' or as functional as we had thought. At this point, all timers have been set to automatically operate from dusk to dawn. Mr. Sandmann noted that lighting the shelters from dusk to dawn might help decrease vandalism.

### **On-Time Performance**

As expected, August on-time performance was better as operators settled into their routes. In August, every individual route was above 90%, and the system average was 95%. For Demand Response Services, August on-time performance was lower than our norm, at 90.1%. Of the just over 100 trips that were not on-time, nearly 87% of those were due to early arrivals. This is a very typical pattern when we find ourselves experiencing lower demand on these services overall.

Ms. Walker asked if the buses wait at a stop when they arrive early. Mr. Williams noted that every route has stops that are designated as “time points” and when the bus gets to those stops it will wait until the time on the schedule to depart so they are predictable for our passengers.

### **Staffing**

We have recently made several offers to candidates for fixed route and demand response operator openings. We have 2 Fixed Route and 2 Demand Response candidates starting a class on October 5<sup>th</sup>. We will be fully staffed with operators when those new employees are released to drive independently.

The Governor’s latest Safer at Home regulations are a big challenge for us due to the quarantine required after travel outside New England. We have more employees than we anticipated traveling outside New England. Mr. Capello asked if negative tests will avoid quarantine and Ms. Hesse-Stromberg noted that testing will not remove the quarantine requirement.

One of our Mechanics will be moving internally within the organization and has accepted the position of Operations Supervisor. He will make the transition once we are able to fill his Mechanic position and the new person in that role has gotten their bearings.

### **Operations and Maintenance Facility Study**

Over the summer our engineering firm reviewed existing conditions at 42 Sumner Drive, completed a field survey, a geotechnical investigation, interviews, and operations observations. Phase 1 is on schedule and we should receive a draft facility needs assessment report soon.

### **6 Sumner Drive**

Renovations to the reception area at 6 Sumner Drive will begin on October 12 and should be completed by the end of October. The renovations will create a separate reception area for visitors, separating that space from the rest of the offices and creating a more secure site.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

### **Action Items**

#### **Action Item #1: Election of Officers for FY21**

Members of the Nominating Committee are Mr. Bogle, Ms. Labrie, Mr. Pepin, and Mr. Scala. After consulting with the current officers and reaching out to other members, the following slate of officers is being recommended for the coming year.

#### **Officer Nominees:**

- Chair: Dave Sandmann (At-Large)
- Vice-Chair: Juliet T.H. Walker (City of Portsmouth)
- Secretary: Dennis Shanahan (City of Dover)
- Treasurer: Arthur Capello (Town of Farmington)

**Executive Committee:**

Based on the By-Laws, the Executive Committee shall automatically consist of the following representatives: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Past-Officer, one member to be appointed by the Chair and the Executive Director (non-voting member).

With the proposed slate of officers, the Executive Committee would be comprised of the following members:

- Dave Sandmann (Chair)
- Juliet T.H. Walker (Vice Chair)
- Dennis Shanahan (Secretary)
- Arthur Capello (Treasurer)
- Scott Bogle (Past Officer)
- Open (Chair’s Appointee)
- Rad Nichols (Non-voting)

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors elect the FY2021 Board Officers and direct the Chairman take steps to fill the available Executive Committee seats if deemed necessary.*

Mr. Capello made a motion that the Board of Directors elect the FY2021 Board Officers and direct the Chairman to take steps to fill the available Executive Committee seats if deemed necessary and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion. All voted by roll call.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Capello	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Mr. Sharples	YES
Ms. Stowell	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

**Action Item #2:      Municipal Credits**

During our third quarter of FY20 (April-June), COAST was forced to shut down all fixed route services for approximately 6 weeks before phasing back services through the remainder of the quarter. At the same time, all demand response services, except for Route 7 On Demand, were maintained as essential services for our older adults and passengers with disabilities.

Despite this reduction in overall services, average expenses were only down 5.7% during the quarter. Furloughed staff were still paid, there were notable expenses related to the pandemic and supplying up for a return to providing fixed route service, some maintenance work that could be performed with an idle fleet was undertaken, and expenses related to the transition to our new system were incurred. Due to added flexibility in Federal Aid, COAST was able to

utilize those funds (Emergency Relief and Cares Act) to offset extraordinary pandemic-related expenses during the period.

After reviewing our financial position, considering what we can do for our communities and where we will need to be when we come out of this pandemic, staff is recommending COAST provide a credit back to our member communities equal to 8.5% of their annual contribution to COAST's general operation.

This credit would only be issued to communities/partners who made full contributions to COAST's general operations based on the funding formula in COAST's FY20. In total, COAST would be returning \$69,326 to our member communities and partners.

This crediting of funds reflects our commitment to our member communities as critically important partners, during an incredibly challenging time, and because we incurred lower expenses.

Community/Partner	MFF Credit	Rte. 33 Credit	PST Credit	Total
Berwick	\$ 1,700			\$ 1,700
Dover	\$ 19,209	\$ 2,128		\$ 21,337
Exeter	\$ 1,700			\$ 1,700
Farmington	\$ 2,577			\$ 2,577
Newington	\$ 2,910			\$ 2,910
Newmarket	\$ 1,700			\$ 1,700
Portsmouth	\$ 10,101		\$ 11,135	\$ 21,236
Rochester	\$ 11,904			\$ 11,904
Somersworth	\$ -			\$ -
Strafford County		\$ 4,262		\$ 4,262
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 51,801</b>	<b>\$ 6,390</b>	<b>\$ 11,135</b>	<b>\$ 69,326</b>

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors vote on the recommendation to credit funds back to our member communities/partners.*

Mr. Shanahan thanked Mr. Nichols for putting this together and asked if the credit will be applied by check or by a credit applied to the next funding request. Mr. Nichols noted it will be discussed separately with each community so each can determine what will work best for them.

Ms. Walker asked if Mr. Nichols is planning to send out letters of notification to the leaders of the towns and cities. Mr. Nichols indicated that he will be reaching out to each community's leader(s) and will copy the appropriate board members on those notifications. Ms. Walker noted that she thinks this is a good gesture which will have varying impacts on different communities. She hopes this pays itself back to us in the future, knowing that this is a challenging situation for everyone, and COAST may very well be in a difficult financial situation down the road. She pointed out that, in some ways, keeping these monies on reserve for COAST would be a wise decision not knowing what the future holds. Mr. Nichols noted that we're always trying to achieve a balance, and this is something we can do to help with the balance between donor communities and COAST's needs.

Mr. Capello made a motion to approve the recommended total of \$69,326 in credits going back to COAST's communities/partners and Mr. Shanahan seconded the motion. All voted by roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Capello	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Mr. Sharples	YES
Ms. Stowell	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

**Action Item #3: FY21 Board Meeting Calendar**

The draft FY2020 COAST Board meeting schedule can be found below. With a few exceptions (noted with an '\*'), the schedule follows the previously agreed upon schedule of the fourth Wednesday of every month at 8:30am. Meetings will be held in the Conference Room at COAST's Administrative Offices at 6 Sumner Drive in Dover, NH. Alternatively, during the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings will be held via Zoom.

October 28, 2020

November 18, 2020\*

December 16, 2020\*

January 27, 2021

February 24, 2021

March 24, 2021

April 28, 2021

May 26, 2021

June 23, 2021

July 28, 2021

August 25, 2021

September 22, 2021

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors review and approve the proposed FY21 meeting calendar.*

Ms. Walker made a motion to approve the proposed FY21 meeting calendar which was seconded by Mr. Bogle. All voted by roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	YES
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Mr. Capello	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Mr. Sharples	YES
Ms. Stowell	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

**Action Item #4: FY21 Operating Budget**

Mr. Nichols presented the DRAFT FY21 Operating Budget which is based on a combination of FY19/FY20 actuals or FY19/FY20 budgets, depending on how much COVID impacted each line-item, and then anticipated adjustments were applied to those figures. The total base FY21 Operating Budget is projected to be \$6,102,769 compared to FY20's Operating Budget of \$6,519,258. This represents an overall budget decrease of \$416,489 or 6.4%.

Expense growth rate factors ranged from 1%-10% over previous projections or actuals using a base inflationary rate of 2%. The budget also includes several expenses that were budgeted in FY20 but were pushed off to FY21 due to COVID, as well as new costs associated with safe operations during the pandemic.

Service projections for fixed route services include all services launched on June 29, 2020 and a reduced special event shuttle scheduled in Portsmouth. Service levels and ridership for each demand response service are projected differently because each were impacted differently by the pandemic. There continues to be a very successful partnership with Portsmouth for COAST managing and operating their Senior Transportation program.

Revenue adjustments are conservative because we are anticipating a slow increase in ridership over the course of FY21. Our projection is that we will go back to an overall average of 75% of pre-pandemic rider levels by the end of the budget year. Advertising revenue is based on ATA's latest projections. Interest and other income are projected to increase by \$2,000 due to anticipated dispositions.

We do not anticipate any state funding from NH as operating funds for SFY21 are currently frozen and are not expected to be released. We are currently working with Kittery to raise funds from the State of Maine (approx. \$32,500). Federal funding will include a mix of 5307 small urban, large urban and CMAQ funds, which are all expense driven.

On the expense side, wage projections were based on FY20 actuals and filling all vacant staff positions. A wage adjustment of 1% is included, though some will be higher due to annual step increases. For fringe benefits, we expect another larger increase in health insurance costs for FY21. We are significantly under budget for FY20, so we are projecting a 10% increase over the FY20 budgeted figure. Contract services are based on FY20 actuals with adjustments for anticipated costs based on experience.

Materials and supplies are projected based on FY20 actuals, but much of our major vehicle work budgeted in FY20 did not occur and was pushed into FY21. We also have higher costs now for PPE and cleaning/sanitizing. We are projecting a 4.5% increase in insurance costs over FY20. For non-auto related insurance coverage costs, we anticipate a 5% increase in costs over FY20. Auto-related coverage costs were projected using FY20 actuals with adjustments for a reduced fleet size in FY21.

Miscellaneous expenses are projected based on FY20 actuals with adjustments based on the pandemic experience. Planning and Marketing expenses will be reduced by approximately 50% due to the completion of the Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA). ACT/Coordination projections are based on the approved ACT budget and represent a 3.8% increase to the program.

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors approve the FY21 Operating Budget.*

Mr. Bogle made a motion to approve the FY21 Operating Budget and Ms. Labrie seconded the motion.

Ms. Walker noted that, at one point, we talked about setting aside a portion of the budget each year for expected capital expenses and asked if we are doing that. Mr. Nichols noted that municipal funding requests include funding for capital expenses. Ms. Walker asked if there is a line item in the budget for capital expenses and Mr. Nichols stated there is not, but that there is a separate capital expenditure budget, and he will bring that information to the October meeting.

All voted by roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Capello	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Mr. Sharples	YES
Ms. Stowell	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

**Action Item #5: Proposed Bylaws Revision**

Mr. Nichols presented the Bylaws revision which preserves Exeter and Newmarket's seat on the board as voting members even though they no longer receive fixed route services.

Based on a review of the Bylaws of the organization, the Board Development Committee identified the need for an edit based on how services have been reconfigured. The amendment

recognizes that not all communities that receive service and make direct contributions to COAST, receive fixed route services (e.g., Exeter and Newmarket).

The proposed revision is outlined below.

**ARTICLE VI – BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall hold office for an unlimited number of two year terms, subject to the intervention of resignation or removal. All appointments must be confirmed by a majority vote of those members present and voting at a meeting.

Section 2. Voting Members. The Board of Directors shall be selected and appointed by the agencies or entities listed below. Each entity may have one representative and one or more alternate(s) who will serve in the event of the representative’s absence. Each entity will have one vote. The following agencies or entities will be represented:

- One appointed representative from every city or town receiving ~~fixed-route services~~ and making a direct financial contribution to COAST;

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors approve the Bylaws revision as proposed.*

Mr. Capello made a motion to approve the Bylaws revision as proposed and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion.

Mr. Bogle asked if we need to revise our Bylaws to reflect virtual meetings during the pandemic and if we anticipate continuing virtual meetings to the extent permissible when Governor’s orders go away. Mr. Sandmann noted we can not vote on that today, but we may want to look at that as a long-term option for the Board or Executive Committee. This will be looked at for a future meeting.

All voted by roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Capello	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Mr. Sharples	YES
Ms. Stowell	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

**Committee Reports**

**Executive Committee** – has not met since the last meeting on June 10.

**Board Development Committee** – has not met since the last meeting on August 13 but recommended the bylaw change.

**Legislative Committee** – The Committee congratulated everyone who won in primary races and got good responses back. Mr. Nichols made a presentation at the Women in Transportation Seminar and will be presenting at the NH Transportation Council meeting on Friday. The Committee is working on questions for candidate forums and any opportunities to participate in those forums.

**Policy Committee** – is holding off on meeting at the moment. There are no policies in imminent need of review.

### **Discussion Items - NONE**

## **VII. Community Updates/Information Items**

### **Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) on Buses**

Staff have been reviewing options for in-vehicle air treatment strategies to improve IAQ and reduce COVID-19 transmission risks on the buses. For our heavy-duty buses, we will be purchasing dual polarity ion air enrichment devices, which require minimal ongoing maintenance and have lower life cycle costs than other options available. The total cost to outfit the fleet, including a new wiring harness supplied by our vehicle manufacturer, will be roughly \$72k.

### **Permanent Operator Barriers**

Our temporary solution for creating a barrier between operators and passengers at the point of entry into the buses has proven effective, but cumbersome for use on an ongoing, every stop basis. Now that there are more options available for permanent operator barriers and the supply chain is catching up to demand, staff is investigating permanent operator barriers that may be deployed in our various fleet vehicles and must be deployed in order to operate the vehicle. We will likely opt to purchase a single barrier type for each vehicle type, so we can test and ensure the barrier selected is what we want to commit to deploying across the fleet of that vehicle type.

Mr. Nichols noted that Emergency Relief funding that was flexed as part of regular 5307 allocation and regular CARES Act funding will be available to help with these expenses. Ms. Joyce asked if the barriers are solely for COVID. Mr. Nichols noted that historically they've been implemented for driver safety across the industry (drivers have been spit on or punched - though this is more common in larger urban environments). Mr. Nichols reported that we have had assaults of our operators, though rare, but the trend is not the direction we want to be heading in. Traditionally the higher costs of more permanent barriers have precluded their use by COAST, but COVID has changed the dynamic.

### **Ridership**

Weekly fixed route ridership seemed to level off over most of August, but during the week of August 31 we saw a noticeable jump. We also saw an 18% jump in ridership on Tuesday, September 8 for the statewide primary (free rides to the polls). In fact, between September 8 and 11, and for the third straight week in a row, we saw the highest average weekday ridership

since mid-March. Monthly Demand Response Ridership has also been recovering, and in August was 63.4% of the previous FYTD average.

Our desire is for ridership on all services to continue to grow by >2% each week. However, that growth depends on any number of outside events that we cannot predict nor control.

Ms. Winters expressed her thanks to everyone and thanks to Rad for doing a great job communicating with NHDOT on what's happening at COAST. She noted he has been sharing really helpful data and that he did an excellent job with the presentation at the Women in Transit Seminar.

Ms. Walker wants us to continue to think about ways our service can be conscious of equity in transportation. Following up on lighting of bus shelters, she noted we don't have enough shelters or safe and accessible routes to our bus stops, and she would like to see those built up over the next couple of years. She would like to see COAST develop a plan of high priority locations where safety of passengers is of high concern. Mr. Nichols noted that RPC is working on a project to identify accessibility challenges. Some of the work is looking to identify folks who are limited to using only Demand Response services now, but maybe could use Fixed Route services in the future with better sidewalk infrastructure. COAST fully supports the development of such plans to increase safe and accessible routes to our bus stops.

**VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Capello made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion. All voted in favor by Roll Call vote.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Capello	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Hebert	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Lentz	YES
Mr. Pepin	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Mr. Sharples	YES
Ms. Stowell	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

The meeting was adjourned at 9:56am.