



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, May 26, 2021**

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: Arthur Capello (Arr. 9:05), Scott Bogle, Adam Causey (Arr. 8:40), Martin Dumont, Lauren Haley, Margaret Joyce, Valerie Labrie, Dave Sandmann, Michael Scala, Dennis Shanahan, Maria Stowell, Juliet Walker, and Shelley Winters (Dep. 9:00)

ABSENT: Sönke Dornblut, Denis Hebert, Colin Lentz, Dave Sharples, and Thomas Wright

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

I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 am. Each member identified themselves, stated their location, and whether anyone was in the room with them and listening contemporaneously.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Shanahan made a motion to accept the April 2021 minutes and Ms. Joyce seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken to accept the minutes.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Dumont	YES
Ms. Haley	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Ms. Stowell	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Doering reported that we have had three months of increases in fare revenues which is indicative of increases in ridership, and a slight increase in advertising revenues. She noted that maintenance expenses have been down as of late. She reported no significant changes on the balance sheet and noted that most things are running on, or around, budget and, if off, they've been off for several cycles for the same reasons they've been off for several cycles.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Economic Impact Study

The RPC and SRPC are jointly working on a study of COAST's impact on the Seacoast economy that should be completed sometime in late June. This will give us a qualitative analysis of COAST's economic impact in the region. They are using a tool produced by the American Public Transit Association and our specific data inputs to form the analysis.

Facility Planning & Financing

Since the presentation on this project last month, we have continued our focus on moving this project forward. Borings were taken in multiple locations on the property in early May. The results of those have yet to be reported. We have submitted a request to Senator Shaheen's office for Congressionally Directed Spending.

Staffing

Mr. Williams noted that we continue to have a quite a few openings and are struggling with staffing. Since raising our pay for key positions that need filling within the operation, we have had some new interest (9 new applicants total). We extended an offer to one FT CDL Operator who will start next week and a PT CDL Operator who will start mid-June. Current vacancies are for 5 FT CDL Operators, some PT CDL Operators, 2 Vehicle Cleaners, a Supervisor, and a few Non-CDL Operator positions. Mr. Williams shared that staff are tired and feeling the stress of being short-staffed.

Mr. Williams also reported that covering Saturdays has been a significant challenge, especially on holiday weekends. Because our pay week runs from Saturday through Friday, the availability of overtime during holidays week is significantly decreased. Mr. Williams observed that Saturdays of holiday weekends tend to have lower ridership.

Mr. Williams indicated that we are looking to reduce service on Saturday, July 3rd by interlining Routes 1 and 33 (each running every 2 hours) and interlining Routes 40 and 43 (cuts down 2 full shifts) to avoid a last-minute shutdown. Our trunk routes would continue to operate hourly. Though this might not be needed, this allows us to put this plan into place in advance in a thoughtful way, giving enough notice to passengers and allowing for a more predictable staffing plan.

Mr. Sandmann recommended that the Policy Committee draft a policy that staff can abbreviate service on holiday weekend Saturdays so it's in place if needed.

Triennial Review

Our kickoff meeting for our 2020 Triennial Review was held on Tuesday, May 25. As far as we know, to this point, we have one finding that has already been closed so it's going very well. It is expected that we'll close the Triennial mid-late June.

VI. New Business

Action Items

Action Item #1: COAST Safety Plan Revision 02

The Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) regulation (49 CFR Part 673). requires recipients and subrecipients of financial assistance under the Urbanized Area Formula Program (49 U.S.C. Section 5307) to establish a compliant Agency Safety Plan. The original compliance date was pushed out due to COVID, but COAST went ahead with putting the plan into effect on June 1, 2020 (Rev 01) after receiving Board approval.

Mr. Williams reported that we've always had safety as part of our policies and procedures. The FTA put out a new rule regarding a formal Safety Plan and the Board approved that plan last Spring, part of which requires that the Safety Plan be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Mr. Williams noted that our Safety Plan is working well, but we have added the practice of Operator refresher training every 1-2 months which has been added to the Plan. We have also updated our FY2020 performance for key safety statistics and FY2021 performance targets. Finally, Mr. Williams shared that we've had a really remarkably safe year over the past year (very low number of incidents).

Action Required: That the Board of Directors approve the COAST Safety Plan Revision 02.

Mr. Dumont made a motion to approve the COAST Safety Plan Revision 02 and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Bogle	YES
Mr. Causey	YES
Mr. Dumont	YES
Ms. Haley	YES
Ms. Joyce	YES
Ms. Labrie	YES
Mr. Sandmann	YES
Mr. Scala	YES
Mr. Shanahan	YES
Ms. Stowell	YES
Ms. Walker	YES

Committee Reports

Executive Committee –met on May 7 for an emergency meeting to approve entering a contract with the NHDOT for funds to support ACT and TripLink.

Board Development Committee – finalized the Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire via email. Only 5 have been received and all were encouraged to submit the Questionnaire.

Legislative Committee – did not meet.

Policy Committee – did not meet.

Finance Committee – Met on Monday, May 24th.

Discussion Items

Discussion Item #1: Five-Year Operations & Capital Needs Projections (FY22-26)

Ms. Doering sent the materials for the discussion out prior to the meeting and guided the Board through the process of making operations and capital need projections.

She noted that for operations revenues, the first factor to consider is anything we can confirm (fare revenue and advertising revenue), local match, and sources of funding using historical data.

The operations expense projections mostly focus on operator wages and fringe benefits increasing faster than inflation, and other expense lines mirroring inflation.

Looking at grant funding and COAST's larger sources of funding show we expect a large drop off in these revenues after FY25. This is because CMAQ funding expires after FY2024 and CARES Act funding in FY2025. The result, in FY2026 there is a significant deficit in federal funds and cash projections.

The Capital Plan was reviewed, and Mr. Nichols noted that it shows only the facility design in this plan. The actual construction of the facility is not included, so any facility improvement included in the Capital Plan is to our existing facility.

Ms. Labrie asked how the ending balance of federal funds can be negative. Mr. Nichols shared that this assessment shows that we would have a shortage of federal funds against our projected expenses at that point, and that we will need to make up that gap with local funds. He stated that ultimately, the goal in putting this together is to show the need for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to our UZA, the need for state funding, and the need for increases in other local funds. He reminded Board members that the last time we did an assessment like this it was part of the COA, and we had shown, at that time, an annual increase to the communities of 10% but in this projection, we have been using 5%. He also noted that we will continue to track and refine projections as more data is available to us, and we'll report out to the Board on how we are tracking.

Mr. Bogle noted that this is something we knew was coming due to dramatic increases in ADA costs, wage expenses, insurance costs increasing, and CARES and ARPA have allowed us to push this off. Mr. Nichols noted that we've pushed this off by close to two years and that the last time we did this assessment it was pre-pandemic.

Ms. Doering noted that we are seeing an increase in ridership and fare collections with numbers being the highest they've been since the pandemic started. Mr. Sandmann asked how we're doing with Advertising collections and Mr. Nichols noted that advertising collections are always running behind, but that we are seeing an increase in advertising sales recently. He indicated that we would end the year behind, but that things are bouncing back. He reminded Board members that ridership is not part of an advertiser's decision on placement of ads because they are more interested in the number of people who will see the outside of the buses and shelter advertisements.

VII. Community Updates/Information Items

Ridership

Ridership data was provided showing that, with the current trend of COVID-19 in the region improving, the vaccination rate climbing, and better weather, we have experienced nice ridership gains in March and April. Mr. Nichols reminded Board members that we fixed route services were suspended for April of 2020 so we couldn't help but improve on last year's fixed route ridership this April.

Mr. Nichols shared that 47% of our staff are fully vaccinated and, by June 7th, 50% of our staff will be fully vaccinated. He noted that we still have the CDC/TSA mask mandate for public conveyances in place through September 13th. He shared that it is getting more challenging to discuss masking up with riders given all the other loosening of mask mandates.

Mr. Dumont asked if having an on-site vaccination clinic would help us get staff vaccinated and Mr. Williams noted that, given the large variety in our schedules, a clinic would have to be open for many hours and would likely only see a small turnout.

Mr. Scala asked about the bus shelter at the Rochester Public Library, the glass of which has recently been busted out again. He asked whether it is time to remove the shelter and Mr. Williams noted that it at least provides a roof and that it is a very well-used shelter. He also noted that there are two advertising slots that are in a high traffic area. Mr. Scala noted that the Rochester Police Dept said they will keep an eye on it especially at night. Mr. Williams shared that, if the old Friendly's is ever occupied, we can look at possibly getting a camera on that building to monitor the bus stop and shelter.

Ms. Joyce shared that the Cocheco Arts Festival is going ahead business as usual this summer starting in July and that Apple Harvest Day will be held on October 2nd.

Mr. Causey shared that he continues to be in the midst of the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) with the Shipyard in the hopes of getting more Shipyarders to take transit to reduce traffic and single-use occupancy vehicles.

Mr. Bogle shared that there had been several bills he was tracking to extend public agencies ability to meet remotely after the Governor's Emergency Order expires. Yesterday, he learned that they have passed a study committee but didn't extend the opportunity for continued remote meeting.

Mr. Scala shared that Rochester will be holding its fireworks this year on July 3.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Sandmann adjourned the meeting at 9:26 am.