



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, March 27, 2024**

PRESENT: Kendra Amaral (virtual), Scott Bogle, Fred Butler (virtual), Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro, Sonke Dornblut (virtual), Ben Fletcher (virtual), Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, Colin Lentz, Kristen Murphy, Joann Neumann (virtual), Michael Scala (virtual), Dennis Shanahan, 8:40am), Nick Taylor,

ABSENT: Michael Mates, David Sandmann, Thomas Wright

STAFF: Rad Nichols, Margot Doering, Michael Williams, Paula DeBlois

I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 8:35am by Mr. Shanahan. He then took attendance.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2024 meeting. Mr. Lentz made the motion to accept the minutes as drafted, and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion. There was no discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Abstain
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Ms. Amaral	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes

The motion passed unanimously with one abstention.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Nichols introduced COAST operator Ms. DeBlois and acknowledged her five years with COAST and the fact that she is a wonderful, reliable employee. Mr. Williams also spoken about DeBlois' positive contributions at COAST. Ms. Joyce asked what Ms. DeBlois does for COAST. Ms. DeBlois answer that she drives the cutaway buses.

VI. FINANCIALS

Ms. Doering presented January financials. She noted that fare revenues continue to be strong along with ridership. Advertising collections are currently low. State assistance will be behind budget for the rest of the year, because the NH allocation split between this year and next year

was different than anticipated. The federal reimbursement is higher than expected because CMAQ funding was spread over twelve months instead of tapering off. Ms. Doering stated that materials and supply expenses are high because of a rebuilt engine.

Mr. Hebert asked about the sale of old buses. Ms. Doering explained that in October 2023, three vehicles that were being retired were sold that went into other income and is why COAST is overbudget in that area.

Ms. Joyce asked if advertising is seasonal. Ms. Doering said she would have to talk to ATA, but she believes what has happened is many advertisers that bought ads after COVID paid up front, and because revenue is recognized when paid those revenues were already acknowledged. However, Ms. Doering said there is also some softness in sales. Mr. Nichols said advertising does ebb and flow traditionally, and this winter it seems to have ebbed more than in previous years. However, Mr. Nichols felt he has seen more ads going up recently. Ms. Doering added that space is available for advertising in bus shelters.

Mr. Nichols added that the engine rebuild was done in house, and that COAST benefits from having that expertise on staff.

There were no further questions for Ms. Doering.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Nichols shared old business updates.

FTA Appropriations

FTA Appropriations were announced for the first five months of the fiscal year on February 29th. If these amounts are proportional for the full year, COAST will receive approximately \$400,000 less 5307 funding than anticipated. This will negate the increased funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The census methodology for urbanized areas changed, resulting in lower population in the urbanized area in a way that negatively affected the formula amounts for COAST's service area.

Additionally, across the country there are more small urbanized areas than there used to be, so the funding is being spread over more recipients. COAST expects to receive full allocation figures this week. While this is not positive news, Mr. Nichols stated that COAST is positioning itself well with fundraising to make up some or all of this.

Mr. Taylor asked about the FTA apportionment funding decrease and how that affects the bigger picture. Mr. Nichols shared that COAST would use our currently significant 5307 funding reserves faster than planned. However, if nothing changed, COAST would need to make up for that federal loss at some point in the future. Mr. Shanahan pointed out that FY25 is a deficit year. Mr. Nichols clarified that while FY25 is a deficit year, that deficit is all on the local side. It is most impacted by communities not contributing the full ask.

Town Meeting Results

Exeter, Farmington, and Newington results were provided. Exeter level funded COAST, about 22 – 23% below the funding request. Farmington fully supported COAST. Newington supported at \$25,000 versus the \$36,000 ask. Mr. Nichols acknowledged that different communities have different challenges.

Mr. Hebert shared information about his town's budgeting, sharing that all departments in Newington were reduced, not just COAST. Ms. Joyce asked if COAST then changes the service levels when communities don't fully fund COAST. Mr. Nichols stated that this is something COAST will need to look at as funding from all communities is determined, but that it is a possibility.

Day It Forward Campaign Results

Mr. Nichols stated board members have seen the results already. He said February 29 was a good day with the stuff-a-bus campaign. He acknowledged Ms. Polychronis' work in making it happen, and said Gather was appreciative.

Major Gifts Campaign

Mr. Nichols shared he is continuing to set up the infrastructure needed for the campaign, including the action items that will be presented this meeting. He is meeting weekly with the consultants, and an organizational meeting was held on February 29th. The current effort is to identify stakeholders to potentially join a steering committee. High quality marketing materials are also being developed. This is a \$7 million campaign. This is not something COAST has done before, and COAST is working to set up a successful fundraising future.

Public Relations and Awareness Campaign

New campaign materials are in shelters in Farmington, thanking them for their community support. Expansion of these materials is planned for other communities. A Quarter 1 update email is also in development. Because of how much material is in the update, work is being done to increase their frequency and make the emails more consumable.

Municipal Bus Pass Pilot Program

This is going well in Dover. Work has begun to expand in Rochester.

5310 Lead Agency Compliance Review

COAST has been selected for this review this year. A questionnaire for this will be submitted in April to NHDOT.

Facility Update

Limited movement on the facility this month. Some discussions have started with COAST's engineering firm but nothing concrete yet.

Capital Plan

Updated 5-year capital plan has been submitted to NHDOT. This took into account the capital spending update which is up for vote at this meeting. Adjustments were based on trends observed over the past several months. Staff do not feel we can reduce the heavy-duty bus fleet by as much as originally hoped. While the Frontrunners are working on certain routes, they may not be able to be expanded to as many routes as originally hoped.

New Accounting Software

Ms. Doering shared that she had signed a three-year contract with a company called Multiview out of Ottawa, Canada, though they have operations in the United States as well. They were the best selection of five competitors.

COAST hopes this software will give better access for Mr. Nichols and Mr. Williams to financial information, as well as integrate operating statistics to better inform decisions without needing to manually combine data from multiple sources in Excel. The chart of accounts will be updated to

the current Federal chart of accounts, which will make NTD and other reporting easier. Finally, the way Multiview software tags accounts, and allows them to be combined, is more flexible than other software options available. Mr. Nichols shared that this software should be a very positive step up for COAST.

Donor Management Software

COAST plans to invest in software to assist with donor management. Our consultants have recommended an affordable option.

There was no further discussion on old business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #1: Gift Acceptance Recording Policy & Procedures

Mr. Nichols explained these are policies and procedures that need to be in place to launch the Major Gift Campaign. They define how gifts will be recorded and ensure we are properly recognizing donors. There were a few minor edits made to the Policies just prior to the meeting. Anything related to trusts was removed from the Policies and Procedures, because the decision was made to only accept trust related gifts on a case-by-case basis. However, dealing with trusts is unlikely.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors adopt Gift Acceptance and Recording Policies and Procedures.*

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the Gift Acceptance and Recording Policies and Procedures. Ms. Joyce made the motion and Mr. Bogle seconded. Mr. Shanahan then asked if there was any discussion.

Ms. Joyce asked if the consulting firm helped with the policies. Mr. Nichols affirmed that they did. He stated they are customized for COAST. Mr. Shanahan asked if the online attendees were all set with the edits made, as they didn't have access to paper copies in the room. Mr. Dornblut replied that they were all set.

There was no further discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Ms. Amaral	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #2: In Kind Gift Policies & Procedures

Mr. Nichols introduced policies for in kind gifts.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors adopt In Kind Gift Policies and Procedures.*

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the In Kind Gift Policies and Procedures. Mr. Lentz made the motion to approve and Mr. Hebert seconded the motion.

Ms. Joyce expressed it was good to see this policy in detail, as some charitable donations can be attempted that may not be of value to the organization.

There was no further discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Ms. Amaral	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #3: Naming & Recognition Policies & Procedures

Mr. Nichols acknowledged that some donors may like having buildings, rooms, etc. named after them in recognition of their gift. He noted this policy does not dictate how COAST would handle that on any one campaign. That will come in a management plan for a specific campaign, but this is a general policy around the possibility.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors adopt Naming and Recognition Policies and Procedures.*

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the Naming & Recognition Policies and Procedures. Mr. Dornblut made the motion to approve and Mr. Hebert seconded the motion.

Mr. Nichols noted the policy also recognizes situations where a name may need to be changed due to circumstances. Ms. Joyce noted she would be opposed to buses being named. Mr. Nichols noted the policy does leave the door open to naming buses.

Mr. Hebert asked if naming is limited to donors, or if COAST could name something after outstanding individuals COAST chose to recognize. Mr. Nichols said the policy allowed naming to recognize service and was not limited to donors.

Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro expressed appreciation that the provision to change a name if someone compromised public trust was present and was well expressed.

There was no further discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Ms. Amaral	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #4: FY24-28 Capital Spending Plan Update

Mr. Nichols introduced the capital spending plan update. The plan decreases how many low floor minibuses will be purchased by two, adds one high floor minibus, one additional minivan, and two additional heavy duty low floor buses.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors adopt the updated FY24-28 Capital Spending Plan.*

Mr. Shanahan asked if a motion could be made to approve the update to the FY24-28 Capital Spending Plan. Mr. Bogle made the motion to approve and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion.

Ms. Joyce asked if there were financial implications to the change in fleet composition. Mr. Nichols stated this is a higher dollar amount overall, but COAST would pursue 5339 funding for the vehicles, and would not plan to use 5307 funding for these purchases.

Mr. Bogle asked if the large purchase of approximately \$3.5 million in FY26 for heavy duty buses can be accommodated with 5339 funding. Mr. Nichols said it could be if COAST pursues nationally competitive funding.

Mr. Shanahan asked what staffing changes may be needed due to the projected shift from Frontrunners to Gilligs. Mr. Williams replied that it may shift the future numbers of CDL and non-CDL operators, but will not have an immediate impact. It will simply result in less of a future transition than previously thought.

There was no further discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes

Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Ms. Amaral	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discussion Item #1: Expansion of Free & Discounted Ticket Programs

Mr. Nichols explained that COAST currently has programs to allow non-profit agencies to purchase single ride tickets at a 50% discount if they are physically located in the region. COAST also has free ticket programs to local housing shelters and municipalities through their welfare departments. COAST distributes approximately 5,000 free tickets a year. COAST has received feedback from non-profits working in the homeless and addiction recovery space that it is challenging to find and afford COAST tickets at the volumes they would like to use.

COAST is proposing that agencies that work directly with homeless individuals and addiction recovery programs be included in the free ticket programs. Additionally, the number of free tickets those entities receive could be increased beyond the current 1,000 ticket limit.

This would expand the program to an additional 15,000 tickets to distribute across the region. Ultimately, COAST would pursue funding to cover the cost of expanding the program. Mr. Nichols noted this isn't revenue COAST would likely be losing as many of these individuals are not currently riding due to the lack of a ticket. Mr. Nichols has discussed this with the NH Charitable Foundation. Other foundations may also be options for supporting these programs.

Mr. Nichols asked if the board was okay with expanding these programs in this way.

Ms. Neumann asked if COAST can track how many of the distributed tickets are actually used. She stated these programs are popular and appreciated, but wasn't sure if they are being used. Mr. Nichols answered that COAST knows how many tickets go out, and how many come back, but there is not a direct correlation because there is no way to differentiate between sold tickets and tickets given out in the free or discount ticket programs.

Ms. Doering noted COAST could potentially mark these tickets in some way, but wouldn't want any changes made that would make it visible on the bus that this user had received a free or discounted ticket. Ms. Doering also noted that when the ticket color changed, some organizations exchanged old tickets.

Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro asked if COAST has considered other state funding to support this expansion. Mr. Nichols said this was a possibility, but not something that has been looked into. Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro said this may be eligible under opioid abatement funding.

Mr. Dornblut asked how the municipal pass works. He suggested a different type of ticket, like a pass, may be better than individual ride tickets. Mr. Nichols noted COAST would need to do more research on that idea. Mr. Nichols expressed that the municipal pass is a high value item that isn't tied to an individual. Mr. Dornblut suggested some kind of eligibility-based pass may be worth considering.

Mr. Taylor noted the proposal is a good idea and that using this as a fundraising opportunity is a compelling argument. Ms. Joyce referenced some businesses she knows where this type of opportunity may fit their mission.

Mr. Hebert asked if COAST's fare was unreasonable and stated it may not be unrealistic for all individuals to pay the fare to ride the bus. He expressed that costs everywhere are going up, but COAST seems to give away more. Mr. Nichols replied that the organizations that receive free tickets today are emergency shelters and City welfare departments. He noted it is not a long list. Mr. Hebert expressed concern about over-expanding the program. Mr. Nichols noted the organizations working with the riders who would be targeted by an expanded program are telling COAST they don't have the resources to buy the tickets they need in the quantities they need. Mr. Nichols noted he believes it is more important that COAST generate more ridership than that we get the fares, especially since it is likely that without these tickets these individuals are not riding and not paying any fare.

Ms. Joyce asked about advertising revenue relative to ridership. Mr. Nichols noted advertisers generally are not interested in the riders on the bus but are paying for advertising to be visible to others outside the bus.

Mr. Hebert asked if COAST would pursue funding prior to expanding the program. Mr. Nichols said any approach was an option. COAST could wait to expand until funding is in hand or set a goal and pursue that funding while the program is expanded. Ms. Joyce noted private foundations are less complicated to raise funding from than government-based grants. Mr. Taylor noted fundraising efforts could be around not just the cost of the ticket, but the management and administrative costs around the program as well.

Mr. Nichols also noted that a grant covering this program could be used to match federal funding, while fares cannot.

Mr. Shanahan asked what the next step would be. Mr. Nichols stated the goal today was the discussion, and no further action is needed at this time. He also noted additional research could be done prior to bringing it as an action item. Mr. Hebert asked what the figure is that would be needed. Mr. Hebert also noted that not everyone using some of these programs has financial need. He asked if we need to provide them with free tickets. He said he would like to see information to ensure we are helping society but not giving free tickets to people who don't need them.

Mr. Dornblut noted a free ride program is worth the consideration and there is not an increased cost to an additional person on the bus, because it is running anyway.

Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro agreed and said the program felt like a win-win to her due to the amount of opportunity for increased funding, increased ridership, and to fill the need.

Mr. Williams responded to Mr. Hebert's point about the financial need of individuals receiving the free tickets. He noted that COAST historically has distributed tickets to organizations who

then apply the discretion on who needs the tickets and that COAST does not make eligibility determinations directly. He stated he knows many of these organizations don't give the tickets to all their clients, or they may charge some of their clients for the tickets, based on their need. However, they are better equipped to make these determinations with individuals than COAST is.

Mr. Hebert agreed that COAST should not administer an eligibility-based decision on individuals receiving tickets.

There was no further discussion on this item.

VII. Community Updates/Information Items

Committee Reports

Mr. Shanahan gave an overview of recent committee activities, noting there was nothing to share.

Executive Committee – nothing to report

Board Development Committee – nothing to report.

Policy Committee – nothing to report.

Legislative Committee – nothing to report.

Finance Committee – nothing to report.

Ridership Update

Mr. Nichols shared a ridership report, stating COAST ridership grew 52.5% compared to February 2023. He noted this is significant.

Other

Mr. Hebert asked if COAST is involved in the PNSY parking shuttle. Mr. Nichols noted COAST is not currently involved in operating it, but has had meetings with the PNSY and Kittery about potential future COAST involvement. However, at this time, the PNSY has let us know that because COAST doesn't run coach buses they are not interested in working with COAST.

Ms. Amaral noted that Kittery and COAST currently have the attention of Maine DOT, and she plans to continue pursuing options with the state. Mr. Nichols noted COAST looks forward to working with Kittery on how to expand service in the community.

Mr. Lentz asked the status of charitable gaming. Mr. Nichols noted that after conversations with COAST's attorney and accountant, he was advised to not pursue this with the Secretary of State's office any further.

Ms. Joyce shared that COAST has been selected as the Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce Non-Profit of the Year. Mr. Nichols thanked Ms. Joyce and stated that COAST is honored.

Mr. Nichols shared that COAST received an extension for the CDFA Tax Credits until the middle of May.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Shanahan adjourned the meeting, without objection, at 9:55 am.

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Joyce, Secretary