



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors  
Wednesday, April 24, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Kendra Amaral (virtual), Scott Bogle, Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro, Ben Fletcher (virtual), Margaret Joyce, Colin Lentz, Kristen Murphy, Michael Scala, Nick Taylor, David Sandmann (virtual)

**ABSENT:** Sönke Dornblut, Denis Hebert, Michael Mates, Joann Neumann, Dennis Shanahan, Thomas Wright

**STAFF:** Rad Nichols, Margot Doering, Michael Williams

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order at 8:36am by Mr. Scala. He then took attendance.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Scala asked if a motion could be made to approve the minutes of the March 27, 2024 meeting. Ms. Joyce made the motion to accept the minutes as drafted, and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion. There was no discussion and Mr. Scala took the vote by roll call.

Ms. Amaral	Yes	
Mr. Bogle	Yes	
Mr. Fletcher	Yes	
Ms. Joyce	Yes	
Mr. Lentz	Yes	
Ms. Murphy	Yes	
Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro	Yes	
Mr. Sandmann		Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes	
Mr. Taylor	Yes	

The motion passed unanimously.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Nichols stated that all three employees COAST wished to recognize for their service were not able to attend in person. However, these were their milestones. Mr. Estabrook reached 15 years as a non-CDL driver, Ms. Tingle reached 10 years as a CDL driver, Ms. McDonnell has worked in our TripLink call center for 5 years.

**VI. FINANCIALS**

Ms. Doering presented March financials. Advertising collections were particularly high and some new contracts were signed. Parts and Materials dropped back to normal levels after the engine rebuild that occurred in February. We sold a fourth vehicle that was used by a Partner Agency which resulted in additional gain on sale. The Miscellaneous expense line item now contains the consultant fee for the major gifts campaign.

Ms. Doering was introduced to the implementation team at Multiview. Our “go live” date is scheduled for November 1. There will be parallel input in the two months prior to “go live.” SAGE will be the system of record through FYE 2024. Multiview will be the system of record for FY2025.

There were no further questions for Ms. Doering.

**V. OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Nichols gave updates on the old business items.

**2024 Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit of the Year Award**

Earlier this month, the GDCC officially announced their annual award winners. It is an honor to receive the wonderful recognition of our organization’s work from the GDCC. It is not possible without a talented team and a board that helps support a culture promoting success. Congratulations to all involved! The annual awards gala is on May 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Municipal Budgeting Progress**

Town meetings were held in Exeter, Farmington, and Newington on March 16. COAST funding approved was as follows:

<u>Town</u>	<u>Our Request</u>	<u>Approved</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Berwick	\$ 32,172	YTBD	
Dover	\$491,231	\$491,231	\$ -
Exeter	\$ 25,760	YTBD	
Farmington	\$ 33,806	\$ 33,806	\$ -
Kittery	\$ 36,094	YTBD	
Newington	\$ 36,823	\$ 25,000	-\$11,823
Newmarket	\$ 25,760	\$ 20,000	-\$ 5,760
Portsmouth	\$778,958	YTBD	
Rochester	\$256,508	YTBD	
Somersworth	\$177,778	\$106,995	-\$70,783

Exeter has approved \$20,000. Mr. Nichols made a presentation last week and will attend a Select Board meeting next week to talk about fully funding the request. A town meeting vote is not needed to increase the amount. Berwick is considering a level of \$29,000. Ms. Paradis-Catalano reported that Somersworth approved funding of \$106,995. All other towns are proceeding with approval for requested funding levels.

**Major Gifts Campaign**

We continue to work with our consultants to identify potential stakeholders to meet with, introduce our plans to, and seek input from, as we look to put together a campaign steering committee. Meetings have also been held with municipal leaders in Somersworth and Dover for that same purpose. A meeting in Rochester is scheduled.

Meetings with key stakeholders that may best be approached one on one are also currently being set up.

Campaign materials are well along and nearly ready to be shared as drafts to solicit input from stakeholders on their design, messaging, and overall impact.

To prepare for some types of donations and the establishment of an endowment, we have begun interviewing banks and investment advisors to serve in that capacity.

### **Public Relations and Awareness Campaign**

After pulling together all the information we had for our quarterly email digest for the end of March (which had the highest open rate so far of 50%), we realized we needed to transition to a more frequent communications strategy. We now have a strategy for single topic emails in between our quarterly news digests. The first of our single topic emails – ‘Doing the Work’ – was on how we connect seniors and support independence. These emails highlighting our work will be scheduled for distribution once every two weeks.

Our public awareness campaign in our bus shelters was fully launched by mid-April. We are excited to continue to weave the campaign throughout our ongoing messaging.

After some delays with materials, we are close to being able to mount our new alternate logo on our buses and at our facilities to replace the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary logos.

In March we released two press releases which enjoyed broad coverage by local media. We also expect to have released two press releases by the end of April.

A new presentation deck is being developed for broad use across the region to introduce COAST, our services, programs and encourage advocacy and investment in public and community transportation.

We have updated all our bus schedules recently, some with minor timing tweaks to help with on-time performance, and they have been sent to the printers for production. With all the ongoing on again off again service suspensions, it has been some time since this has been done and should be very appreciated by our current and future riders.

### **Upcoming Compliance Reviews**

As of April 15, we had submitted all requested information as part of the 5310 Lead Agency Compliance Review. Like the FTA’s Triennial Review, we also have this year, this too will have a desk review and an in-person on-site component to the review.

Our Triennial Review with the FTA is currently in desk review, the joint entrance conference has occurred, and staff has begun to receive training on OTrak, the FTA’s new data management platform for their reviews. Our on-site review is still set for late July.

### **Recent Philanthropic Grant Awards/Pledges**

The following have recently been received or are in the process of being received by COAST in support of programs and projects we are working on.

- Greater Rochester Community Health Foundation (\$10,000) – in support of ACT and Triplink operations.
- Kennebunk Savings Bank Foundation (\$1,000) – in support of COAST’s transition to a new financial software platform.
- Wentworth Douglass Hospital Foundation (\$10,000) – in support of ACT and Triplink operations.
- Relyco (\$10,000) – pledge for NH CDFA tax credits in support of our new facility.

All of these will be included in our “Fueling COAST” eblast next month.

### **FTA Grants**

After a few starts and stops it appears we might get past the pre-submittal review of our latest grants with the FTA. These grants are for final design and construction of our new facility, as well as another light-duty low floor minibus.

### **commuteSMART Seacoast TMA CMAQ Project**

STIP amendment #4 which was recently approved by the FHWA and FTA specifically called out the removal of our CMAQ project for the TMA due to eligibility concerns. It has also been removed from the subsequent STIP amendment #5 which is nearing submittal to the Federal agencies for approval. Unfortunately, despite months of opportunity to, this was just recently raised as a question, and staff had never been contacted on this until mid-April. This could cause a lapse in TMA activities which we have been limping along in a much diminished capacity in-between grants. This would affect staff positions and the big May 2025 commuteSMART event. We hope to get this determination reversed in the near future.

### **HB 2024**

The 10-Year Transportation Plan has passed over to the Senate and a hearing was held on April 16 in the Senate Transportation Committee. As Chair of the NHTA, Mr. Nichols submitted written testimony and support in lieu of being able to attend in person. The Plan continues to have all the beneficial amendments made by the Governor for enhanced community transportation funding and for promoting alternative commuting.

### **Statewide Advocacy**

We are beginning to prepare for the next 2-year budget to be considered by the state legislature. The NHTA has submitted input to the NHDOT on additional state operating support we are seeking. A new updated educational piece for legislators is also in development. This year’s joint NHTA and SCC Annual Meeting is also being designed to share information with, and seek input from, key legislators, as well as to recognize them for their past efforts.

### **Seacoast Impact Collaborative**

Late last fall a group of social service agencies based primarily in the Portsmouth and eastern Rockingham County regions came together to discuss how, through working more closely as a coalition, we might be able to better serve our customers. We have now had a second meeting, following a meeting of resource staff from the 14 agencies involved, and are beginning to coalesce around a couple of areas and micro-collaborations that are already bearing fruit. We are seeking to produce a better model for comprehensive service delivery that uses our scarce resources more effectively. This is a goal with a long-term horizon and is being approached as such. COAST’s participation is key as we are a critically important “connector” for all involved.

### **IT Cost Savings Measure**

In early April, COAST moved the serving of all our data to the cloud. Our local server had reached the end of its useful life and moving to the cloud avoided all costs related to its costly replacement.

Mr. Scala asked about the charitable gaming initiative. On the advice of legal counsel and accountant, this will not be pursued.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **Action Item #1: Expansion of Free Ticket Availability**

Everyone deserves access to opportunity. COAST connects low-income families and individuals living with disabilities, who are not able to afford or operate a personal vehicle, with the economic, social, and medical supports they need to contribute and thrive—often times in neighboring towns. COAST is the common thread that runs throughout the region and is recognized as a critical partner by human service and medical organizations across the Seacoast.

COAST lowers the economic barrier for low-income riders in two ways:

Single Ride Tickets are sold in bulk quantities to 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. Each Single Ride Ticket costs \$1.50 (the equivalent of the base cash fare to ride the bus). COAST offers a 50% discount for these tickets (\$0.75) to all tax-exempt nonprofit organizations.

Additional discounts are given to all homeless shelters that provide emergency shelter services in COAST's service area, as well as all municipal Welfare/Emergency Service Departments located in COAST member communities. After the maximum of 1,000 (per calendar year) donated Single Ride Tickets has been reached, qualifying shelters and municipalities are permitted to purchase Single Ride Tickets at an increased discounted rate of 60% off full fare value (\$0.60 per single ride vs. \$1.50).

Underwriting of tickets to at risk populations has averaged 5,000 tickets being distributed annually over the past five years and has cost COAST \$7,500 in lost revenue per year, but we are committed to ensuring access for the region's most vulnerable residents.

One of the most frequent requests we have received lately is from area agencies that are working with vulnerable populations and need help with the costs associated with providing access to their services, which are helping raise their clients up out of crisis.

Based on the discussion at last month's meeting, staff identified a list of area homeless-focused and addiction recovery programs to be included in an expanded free and discounted ticket program. These are all nonprofits with a physical presence in the region.

Staff would like the board to consider (1) expanding the availability of free tickets to these area nonprofit organizations, and (2) expanding, to 3,000, the number of free tickets we will donate annually to a qualifying agency.

Ms. Joyce asked if there would be a limit on the number of agencies. Mr. Nichols responded that the agencies would be limited to the ones on the list provided, agencies that have addiction recovery programs or work with the homeless population. Karlee's Home Team was called out as missing from the list. They were not included in the Strafford County listing that Mr. Nichols used to create the list.

Mr. Sandmann motioned, seconded by Mr. Bogle. Mr. Taylor Nick spoke in support of the motion and mentioned a possible source of funding.

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

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Murphy	Yes
Ms. Paradis-Catanzaro	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Nicols stepped out for a moment. Ms. Doering took this opportunity to expound a little on the discussions with our banking partners about managing a future endowment. The key points being that not all commercial banks have this capacity and that the relationship with the investment advisor is likely the most important deciding factor. The investment advisor is the person who will assist with setting investment parameters, staying within those guidelines and making presentations to the Board about the endowment and its performance. There were some questions about fee structures and minimum size.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Discussion Item #1: 2020 Census Impacts and FY24 FTA 5307 Apportionments**

Mr. Nichols explained the full impact of the 2020 Census became apparent as the full apportionments for FY24 were announced on April 4. Unfortunately, due to changes in how the Census Bureau measures hops and jumps, 2020 urban area determinations generally shrank most urban areas (including our two areas), and frequently broke off populated chunks from what had been urbanized in 2010 (including our two areas). At the same time there was also more urban areas growth nationwide than funding growth. So, there are comparatively more urban areas to split up the slower growing pie amongst.

To view differences in our two UZAs between 2010 and 2020 you can use the FTA Census map link below and turn on and off the layers for the different Census years for Urban areas under the FTA Administrative Boundaries layer -

(<https://usdot.maps.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=5287ba87422448c7a97e5d60cc5e4f7b>)

### **Portsmouth UZA**

The Portsmouth urban area's population grew nearly 8% from 2010 to 2020, but most of that growth was in Maine, where the urban area now extends to Kennebunkport. In New Hampshire, Exeter/Stratham was removed from the Portsmouth area, as its previously qualifying "jump" that connected the two no longer meets Census' criterion. As a result, Exeter/Stratham (and their population and land area) now are part of what is used to calculate New Hampshire's Section 5311 apportionment. Overall, Portsmouth's 5307 apportionment is slated to increase 1.7%, but the New Hampshire portion reduces, while the Maine portion more than doubles.

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>Dif.</u>
New Hampshire	\$1,114,020	\$888,101	-\$225,919
Maine	\$242,428	\$532,676	+\$290,248

It is important to note that 5307 rules dictate that Route 7 On Demand rides that do not originate or end in Newmarket, but rather stay wholly in Exeter or Stratham are now ineligible for funding under that program. We have reached out to NHDOT to raise this issue. The Route 7 On Demand service costs just over \$100,000 and funding for this will need to come from 5311 funds currently allocated to the State. Our assumption is that we can continue to fund these trips with 5307 funds until we begin to use funds from the FFY24 5307 allocation, which we don't project needing to do until fall 2025.

#### Dover Rochester UZA

The Dover-Rochester urban area's population decreased nearly 18% from 2010 to 2020, mainly because of former parts in NH and ME being broken off, again because their "jumps" exceeded the 2020 criteria. Those areas that broke off are now factored into their states' 5311 apportionments. The Dover-Rochester area's 5307 funding drops down 20%, though.

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>Dif.</u>
New Hampshire	\$1,407,246	\$1,221,434	-\$185,812
Maine	\$ 136,941	\$ 58,061	-\$ 78,880

In NH the net impact is \$411,731 less in 5307 funding for the region. This is the exact opposite direction we had wanted and needed our 5307 funding to go in since we already expend federal funds at a higher rate than the funds come in.

Typically, we have split the ME portion of the 5307 allocations with York County Community Action Committee (YCCAC) at 33%/67%. Given the way the urban area in Maine has grown, that may change. There have been no discussions with SMRPC or YCCAC yet. This may provide an opportunity for Kittery to expand service in town.

Ms. Joyce asked if this was the result of population numbers or the way the zones are defined. Mr. Nichols responded that it was the latter. A further discussion of how the State might shift 5311 funds to COAST occurred. The effect of fixed route versus demand response between zones and how it determines which funds are used followed. COAST does not receive any 5311 funding at this time. Those funds come with additional reporting to the State.

The total effect of these changes to COAST's funding wipes out the gains in funding made by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Mr. Bogle and Mr. Nichols are communicating with CTAA to see what the ramifications are nationwide and to reach out to our NH federal delegation to be sure they are aware of the issue. Discussions will occur with NHDOT to see if there are other federal funds that might be accessed to support out operations.

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

Ridership continues to be incredibly strong, at just under 30K for the month up 23% from March 2023. This was down from February 2024, which was an anomaly and had more service days as well. Fixed Route average weekday ridership was down 4% from February, but still the 3<sup>rd</sup>

highest for the year. Demand Response increased from last year with minor decreases from last month.

**Other**

Mr. Lentz commented that the draft campaign materials look good. Regarding the free ticket program, he asked if it could be added as a component of the major gifts campaign. Mr. Nichols responded that it could be considered but might do well being separately pitched to an interested funder. Ms. Doering pointed out that that program could be called out during NH Gives June fundraiser to help donors connect with COAST's mission.

Ms. Joyce gave out information regarding the awards dinner on May 9. The Chamber is also hosting the Mental Health Wellness & Recovery in the Workplace Summit on May 21. The keynote speaker faced addiction challenges and later formed a company to help people in recovery find employment.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The next Board Meeting will be on May 22, 2024. Mr. Scala adjourned the meeting, without objection, at 9:3 am.

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Joyce, Secretary