



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors  
Wednesday, June 26, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Kendra Amaral (virtual), Scott Bogle, Ben Fletcher (virtual – departed 9:05am), Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, Colin Lentz, Joann Neumann (virtual), Dennis Shanahan, Michael Scala, Nick Taylor, and David Tovey (virtual)

**ABSENT:** Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro, Sönke Dornblut, Michael Mates, Dave Sandmann, Thomas Wright

**STAFF:** Rad Nichols, Margot Doering, Phil Smith

**Guest:** Mr. LeRoy joined the meeting virtually at 9:00am.

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order at 8:35am.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Shanahan asked for a motion to approve the May 22, 2024 minutes which was made by Mr. Bogle and seconded by Mr. Lentz. There was no discussion and Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call.

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Abstain
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Abstain
Mr. Tovey	Yes

The motion passed.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Nichols introduced Phil Smith, COAST's Manager of Fleet and Facility Maintenance, who celebrated his 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with COAST on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Mr. Smith was also recently awarded the NHTA Excellence in Service Award as COAST's representative. Mr. Nichols said that Mr. Smith is invaluable and a pleasure to work with. He and his team can do amazing things with what they have, and what they don't have (a lift). They are known among NH transit organizations as wizards. They are unique in that they can replace diesel engines in house and their ability to trouble-shoot in a variety of areas. Mr. Smith and his team install camera systems,

radios, and GPS systems on our new vehicles. Often our Maintenance staff have to re-install things installed incorrectly by installers sent by some of our vendors. In addition, Mr. Smith and his staff are always in early in the winter to help clean off vehicles and prepare for operating in weather challenges. Mr. Smith noted that it has been a pleasure to work with everyone and expressed his gratitude to his staff.

At the annual NHTA/SCC meeting the SCC gave an award to someone who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Nichols presented Mr. Bogle with the SCC's Community Transportation Champion Award for his tremendous amount of work with ACT and COAST over the years, and for his willingness to help with so many projects over the years.

Mr. Nichols noted that COAST received a request from Karlee's Home Team to be added to the list of organizations eligible for the expanded free bus tickets, but they do not meet the requirement for working with unhoused individuals in the way we defined it and they do not have a program focused on recovery. The Willand Warming Shelter is included in our eligibility so, if Karlee's Home Team are awarded that contract again, they will be eligible.

#### **IV. FINANCIALS**

Ms. Doering noted that contract services for May were particularly low as we have not spent a lot on outsourced maintenance.

There was an increase in miscellaneous items mostly related to Coordination. In the past year or so, there has been enough other funding to cover COAST's contribution to TripLink. However, this year the grant funding did not suffice so COAST had to catch up and will be contributing monthly from here.

Advertising revenue is still low and the timing of advertisers paying their bill continues to impact when COAST receives its payments.

On the Balance Sheet, Ms. Doering noted that our savings is notable at this time with accounts in a variety of CDs and a money market account. Mr. Doering is working on the implementation of our cloud-based accounting system. This includes some reclassifications, adding categories, and collection of data for NTD reporting. This will allow for our NTD reporting to be more accurate. This will also allow for more detail on funding sources associated with costs. Ms. Doering is now working on establishing vendor information. The goal is to have this new system live on November 1, 2024.

#### **V. OLD BUSINESS**

##### **NHDOT FTA 5339(a)/CMAQ Bus & Bus Facilities Capital Grant Awards**

Mr. Nichols reported that we were notified by NHDOT on June 6 that we had been awarded \$1,410,387 of FTA 5339(a) and tentatively awarded \$1,593,750 of CMAQ funds (pending 10-Yr. Plan approval) for the replacement of 11 vehicles in our fleet. The 10-Yr. Plan has subsequently been approved with the CMAQ funds included and is just awaiting the Governor's signature. Vehicles include four (4) full size 35' buses, one (1) low floor minibus, and six (6) minibuses. These buses will be used on both our fixed routes and our demand response services.

In addition, there is also at least \$124,446 in state capital match associated with these vehicles that will be awarded based on the approved biennium request. The State typically

matches 7.5%, COAST matches 7.5% and the federal funding covers 85% of the costs associated with these vehicles.

Mr. Shanahan asked how long the process takes and Mr. Nichols noted that the traditional cutaways are usually a year from the date of order to the date of delivery, the Front-runners are usually around 18 months from date of order to delivery, and the 35' buses are generally 2 years from date of order to delivery.

To start the process, the Board was being asked to approve the purchase of 2 of the vehicles (a Front-runner and a minibus) as part of this Board Meeting. The additional minibuses will be purchased next, and we are exploring our options to piggyback on other awards for the 35' buses. We can either pursue Gillig or New Flyer vehicles and we are exploring the costs associated with each. We anticipate no issues with obtaining the Governor's signature on the 10-Year Plan.

### **ACT Funding Update**

Mr. Nichols reported that additional funds included in the 10-Yr. Plan for RCCs as a result of advocacy efforts last fall during the GACIT process are resulting in a 10% increase in 5310 funding for all Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) across the state. For COAST and ACT this means a \$44,900 increase in these federal funds. These funds are intended to be targeted for expanded service to demonstrate the importance of financial support to increasing access to services.

### **Beth Israel Lahey Health Grant Opportunity**

Mr. Nichols shared that on June 14, the Beth Israel Lahey Health Community Relations Office advised COAST to apply for a \$90,000 grant to support expanded transportation needs in the Exeter area. Beth Israel purchased Exeter Hospital. With two weeks to apply and no commitment to future funding Mr. Nichols and Mr. Donald have been working to identify impactful one-time or pilot projects that could be implemented between September 2024 and September 2025 and, if necessary, rolled back with minimal negative customer impacts if future funding was not secured. The potential projects identified as of 6/21 included: needed common application and website upgrades (the platform currently used is reaching the end of its life), local match (7.5%) on four small cutaway bus replacements, and an extra day of Route 7 On Demand service. The application is due on July 1. It is hoped that the proposed variety of projects will be of interest to them.

### **NH Gives**

Mr. Nichols reported that COAST participated in NH Gives again this year and once again set a \$5,000 fundraising goal, plus created a separate campaign to raise funds for our recently expanded free bus ticket program.

We received five (5) donations for the bus ticket program, raising \$1,000 total toward the program. We received 17 donations under our general campaign, raising \$5,200 in support of our ongoing operations. Thank you to the many board members and staff who contributed again this year.

### **NH CDFA Tax Credits**

Mr. Nichols reported that we hit the end of the SFY24 pledge window in Mid-May with \$237,000 of tax credits remaining. The one big pledge we had been working on for

approximately \$100,000 did not materialize. We have applied for consideration to carry some/all unsold SFY24 tax credits into SFY25 and are waiting to hear whether our request is approved.

The marketing of tax credits is challenged by lower business profits and enterprise taxes being collected at the state level.

Mr. Scala noted that, in his experience, there have been organizations who reached their capacity and pass along the information to those trying to meet their goals. Mr. Nichols indicated that there has been no discussion of that, and no one has reached out. Mr. Scala suggested reaching out to CDFA to see if anyone is looking to purchase CDFA Tax Credits.

### **Joint NHTA/SCC Annual Conference and Awards Luncheon**

Mr. Nichols shared that the Joint NH Transit Association (NHTA) and Statewide Coordinating Council for Community Transportation (SCC) Annual Conference and Awards Luncheon held on June 7 was a tremendous success. The theme of the day was "Celebrating our Successes" and there were many to recognize.

### **2024 commuteSMART Seacoast B2B Challenge**

Mr. Nichols reported that the B2B Challenge was a big success. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, the 2024 commuteSMART Seacoast B2B Commuter Challenge held its annual awards ceremony at Loaded Question Brewing in Portsmouth. Mr. Bogle MC'd the event.

### **Marketing Campaign Update**

Mr. Nichols noted that we have received a really good response to our new strategy of putting out a single topic email every couple of weeks. There have been very good open rates and we have received positive feedback. Mr. Nichols reported that he has also been more active on LinkedIn. These strategies help us educate people in our region, as well as across the state, about public transportation and increases COAST's visibility.

### **CMAQ Funding for commuteSMART Staff Person**

Mr. Nichols reported that he has been having conversations with FTA about this person and it seems to be moving in a positive direction. Mr. Nichols is going to provide information to FTA that they will forward to FHWA.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **Action Item #1: Low Floor Minibus Purchase Approval**

As discussed earlier in the meeting, Mr. Nichols reported that COAST's Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan calls for the incorporation of one more low floor non-CDL vehicle next fall as an ongoing part of our transition towards running more fixed route service in non-CDL vehicles. The transition overall has reduced COAST's reliance on CDL operators and reduced costs of vehicle operation on these routes through lower maintenance and better fuel efficiency.

This vehicle will be funded through the 5339(a) funds just awarded to COAST by the NHDOT, state capital match, and COAST held funds.

The price is the same as the Frontrunner placed on order most recently. The hope is that we will receive the vehicle next fall (2025).

**Action Requested:** *That the Board of Directors authorize the Executive Director to enter a contract with MODEL 1 for a Frontrunner Minibus at a not to exceed price of \$214,555.*

Ms. Joyce made the motion which was seconded by Mr. Lentz.

A vote was taken by roll call.

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Mr. Tovey	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

**Action Item #2: Demand Response Minibus Purchase Approval**

Mr. Nichols reported that, in accordance with our Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan, we are pursuing the replacement of one (1) additional small cutaway bus with a like vehicle (seating for 8 ambulatory customers & 2 customers w/mobility devices). This style vehicle is operated on our advance reservation demand response services like ADA, Route 7 On Demand, Portsmouth Senior Transportation, etc.

This vehicle is currently available to procure through a new State of New Hampshire contract with Coach & Equipment. This is how we have typically been procuring these vehicles in the last few years, including the last three ordered in January. We are also familiar and satisfied with Coach & Equipment as a supplier of these vehicles. This vehicle would be procured at the same agreed upon contract price as in January.

**Action Requested:** *The COAST Board of Directors approve a cutaway bus procurement contract with Coach & Equipment for one replacement minibus at a price not to exceed \$128,273.*

Moved by Mr. Bogle and seconded by Mr. Lentz.

Mr. Scala asked if this was part of the rotation of vehicles versus adding to fleet. Mr. Hebert asked about how we dispose of vehicles and what happens to the money. Mr. Nichols noted the vehicle was being purchased as a replacement and that we use an online auction to dispose of vehicles, which has worked very well for us, and the money received goes into our operating budget. Mr. Hebert asked what we typically receive for a vehicle and Ms.

Doering noted it varies by the age and type of vehicle. Mr. Lentz asked if people were purchasing these for scrap or if they were keeping them rolling. Mr. Nichols indicated that often people keep them rolling. He also noted that the timing and who sees it impacts how well we do. Sometimes these vehicles are also picked for parts we can use prior to selling them.

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Fletcher	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Taylor	Yes
Mr. Tovey	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Lentz asked if one of these older vehicles could be donated or refurbished for use to support seniors who are isolated and in communities we don't currently serve. Mr. Nichols indicated that maintenance doesn't normally talk with Mr. Donald (ACT) when getting rid of vehicles. Mr. Hebert noted it was a good idea to approach the communities funding COAST to see if they could use the vehicles; perhaps a right of first refusal. Mr. Nichols noted there are FTA rules regarding the disposal of vehicles and committed to look into this further.

### **Action Item #3: Nominating Committee Establishment**

Mr. Nichols noted that, in accordance with Article XII, Section 2 of the COAST By-Laws, a Nominating Committee of up to five (5) representatives shall be appointed by the Chairperson at least sixty (60) days in advance of the organization's Annual Meeting.

**Action Required:** *That the Chairperson shall appoint a Nominating Committee of up to five (5) representatives to:*

- 1. Nominate a slate of Officers to be voted on at the September 2024 Board of Directors' Annual meeting.*
- 2. Develop a slate of appointments to the Executive Committee, if necessary, to be voted on at the September 2024 Board of Directors' Annual meeting.*

Mr. Bogle, Ms. Joyce, and Mr. Lentz volunteered to serve on the Nominating Committee and were appointed without objection by Mr. Shanahan.

Mr. Nichols confirmed that the nominations would be made at the July Board Meeting.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Discussion Item #1: Major Gifts Campaign Updates**

#### **Event Planning & Stakeholder Engagement**

Mr. Nichols recounted that at the last meeting we discussed a pivot in our approach, to include multiple large gala type events to flip the donor pyramid over, starting with a large group of prospects, all inspired and educated at once – allowing for strategic engagement and solicitation focused on higher potential donors.

During the meeting there was concern expressed about whether there were sufficient staff resources and volunteers to pull off such events. After the meeting, this concern was discussed at length with others who have experience holding such events and the concern was validated.

Mr. Nichols shared that we are looking to go forward with smaller events that are more intimate and allow for more meaningful connections with specific people in attendance. Mr. Nichols noted it will take longer to reach those we want to reach and there will be more of these events needed to reach our goals.

Mr. Nichols noted that a conceptual plan was included in the Board Packet. Mr. LeRoy was in attendance to speak to this plan. Mr. Nichols asked if the Board would be willing to help us advance this plan. The thought is to begin in Dover. Mr. LeRoy noted that these aren't mutually exclusive or either/or propositions. This process is about building relationships and that starting small is the way to begin and, perhaps down the road, a larger event is appropriate. Mr. LeRoy noted that Mr. April and Mr. Nichols have done a wonderful job with the campaign and building a strong foundation for this project.

Mr. Nichols stressed that these small gatherings will be for identifying stakeholders, *not* for solicitation. Mr. LeRoy noted that these people can become great ambassadors for COAST as a nonprofit. Mr. Nichols asked Board members to consider how they fit in to help engage stakeholders in their communities.

Mr. Bogle noted that these would be meetings that allow us to educate attendees and to determine who is not present but should be involved so we build our circle. The goal is to get advice versus funding at this point.

Mr. Nichols asked if anyone had any questions or concerns about the Conceptual Plan shared. Ms. Joyce noted the importance of a really strong presentation and the attractiveness of the location. She noted that perhaps we could use our trolleys to shuttle people to a location.

Mr. LeRoy shared that when we host a gala down the road the attendee list will be shared with Board members who will be asked to identify people they will focus on. Mr. LeRoy also noted how helpful it is to attend other organizations' events and start to build relationships. Perhaps Board members should have business cards with COAST's mission on the back that they can hand out at events. The only restriction to the number of attendees we can invite is what the location can hold.

The next step will be for Mr. Shanahan and Ms. Joyce to meet with Mr. Nichols and the consultants to begin to put a plan into place.

Mr. LeRoy noted that they will put together some talking points to help guide board members on what's most important at this time.

### Internal Campaign

Mr. Nichols noted that grant applications are often asking about Board member contributions/support of the organization. Mr. Nichols acknowledged that we are not a typical board given our members are often appointed by a community or agency rather than joining as individuals.

We find that the expectation is that there is 100% board contributions. The question often comes as "is your leadership fully on board and in full support of the campaign"? Mr. LeRoy noted that it is impactful to have the board contribute. He also noted that it is most impactful when every staff person makes a donation to the organization. Another option is to have board members contribute to a project that they put their name on (the new building offers many opportunities for naming).

Mr. Nichols noted that in addition to building areas to name, there are programs that could be named (for example, the Board of Directors' Free Ticket Program).

Ms. Joyce suggested the Board do something to support the employees (funding the break room for example). She shared that she has strong feelings about Board giving and that what matters is that people give something. She noted that there are many people, herself included, who cannot afford to contribute much, but that giving *something* is the key.

Mr. Nichols noted that COAST staff have a strong culture of giving and we intend to ask if employees would be willing to contribute, perhaps through a payroll deduction per pay period. Ms. Joyce stressed that finding something that's meaningful to staff would be a great idea; Mr. Nichols shared that programs that allow for discounted fares for passengers would be attractive to many staff.

Mr. LeRoy noted that there will be a pledge opportunity as part of the campaign and that pledging over years can really add up. He also noted that even the organizations people assume would get large donations (for example, Ivy League schools) do not get full or high staff support, and that a goal of 100% support by board and staff would be a very impressive and unique achievement.

Mr. Scala had to leave but noted that he supports these efforts.

### **Committee Reports**

There are no committee meetings to report on.

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

Ridership in May was up 8.1% from April and up 25.2% from May of 2023. Fixed Route ridership was up to about 84% of 2019 numbers (though recognizing we're a different system now). Mr. Nichols notes that this number climbs every month and is confident it will continue to



grow. Several routes have seen significant increases in ridership. Demand Response ridership is up but not as significantly as Fixed Route ridership. Demand Response ridership has become more efficient in how it is scheduled.

Mr. Lentz asked about the impact of eliminating the Clipper Connection. Mr. Nichols noted a significant loss in ridership but noted that we had already been losing ridership at the time it was eliminated. Mr. Nichols is pleased to see the ridership on Route 100 coming back and noted there are other COAST routes also bringing some people to the Shipyard.

#### **Update from Town of Kittery**

Ms. Amaral shared that the Shipyard has been running a Park-n-Ride shuttle through C&J as part of their Gate to Bridge reconstruction project which has had significant ridership. It looks like this shuttle will run through at least March of next year and that the Shipyard will likely make that a permanent shuttle. JLUS has received funding to continue. The micro-transit part bringing workers from Sanford is happening through York County Community Action.

Mr. Taylor noted the upcoming Workforce Housing Coalition's networking event coming up at The Brook and that all are welcome to attend.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The next Board Meeting will be on July 24, 2024. Mr. Shanahan adjourned the meeting, without objection, at 10:10am.

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Joyce, Secretary