



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
DRAFT Minutes of the Board of Directors  
Wednesday, January 22, 2025**

**PRESENT:** Kendra Amaral (virtual), Scott Bogle, Fred Butler (virtual, joined at 9:10am), Arthur Capello, Sean Clancy, Sonke Dornblut (virtual, joined at 9:07am), Emily Ham, Margaret Joyce, Colin Lentz, Dave Sandmann (virtual), Cortney Sawyer, Dennis Shanahan, David Tovey (virtual)

**ABSENT:** Denis Hebert, Michael Mates, Joann Newmann, Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro, Michael Scala

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

**GUESTS:** David Lemay, resident of Rochester

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 8:36am with a quorum present.

**II. ACTION ITEM ACCEPTING NEW BOARD MEMBER**

**Action Item #1: Acceptance of New Board Member, Emily Ham**

Mr. Taylor, of the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast, has resigned his position on the COAST Board of Directors as he has transitioned to a new professional role. His seat was an at-large seat that the COAST board had intended to fill with a housing representative from the region.

The Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast has recently hired their new Executive Director, Ms. Ham, who is interested in filling our available seat on the COAST board as her role focuses on issues at the intersection of housing and transportation.

Ms. Ham is a public administration professional with expertise in housing, transportation, and community development. Previously, as Community Engagement Manager at the Greater Portland Council of Governments, Ms. Ham led engagement efforts for transportation initiatives like Safe Streets, Vision Zero, and Rapid Transit, and oversaw the Mobility for All Program to improve transportation access for underserved communities.

Prior to moving back to the east coast, Ms. Ham spent four years in California working to advance policies, programs, and practices that support affordable housing choices near public transit. She also conducted Fair Housing Assessments for a number of California municipalities. Ms. Ham remains dedicated to creating policies that promote equitable, sustainable housing and transportation solutions.

**Action Requested:** *The COAST board of directors accept Ms. Ham as an at-large representative for housing on the COAST board of directors.*

Mr. Capello made the motion to accept Ms. Ham as an at-large representative for housing on the COAST board of directors which was seconded by Mr. Bogle. There was no discussion. Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call:

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Ms. Sawyer	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Tovey	Yes

The motion passed unanimously, and Ms. Ham was welcomed to the Board.

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Capello made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2024 board meeting which was seconded by Mr. Lentz. There were no comments, questions, or revisions. Mr. Shanahan took the vote by roll call:

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Ms. Ham	Abstain
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Ms. Sawyer	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Tovey	Yes

The minutes were approved.

### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Nichols reported that he had forgotten to get a list of milestone anniversaries for staff in 2025 and will do so prior to the next meeting. No other public comments.

### **V. FINANCIALS**

Ms. Doering brought to attention some items of interest.

- Interest and other income – much higher than normal – long-term CDs matured and a \$15,000 grant from NH Charitable Foundation is currently resting there. Staff has a meeting scheduled with our accountant next week to set up policies and procedures for capturing these kinds of funds going forward.
- Small jump in utilities because we finally received the bill from our landlord for our administrative offices at 6 Sumner.
- Finished opening a new account with Piscataqua Savings Bank for holding donated endowment funds.

Ms. Doering will be creating new accounting policies and procedures in 2025 driven mostly by our new accounting software. The transition to Multiview is complete and the company has been wonderful to work with. Ms. Doering is helping improve their new system by providing feedback as she learns it. She notes the amount of reporting we'll be able to get and the different ways we can pull different information from Multiview will be a significant improvement over Sage. Ms. Doering is the only person with a full license. Mr. Williams and Mr. Nichols have limited licenses so they can create reports and upload invoices to pay bills more seamlessly. Mr. Nichols is now able to approve invoices electronically, which will help with processing accounts payable more efficiently and quickly.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

### **Facility Final Design**

Mr. Nichols reported that just before the holidays an agreement was executed for the final design of our new facility. A meeting is being scheduled in early February to move the process along.

### **Fundraising Update**

#### **Learn & Engage Events**

Mr. Nichols reported that he is looking to schedule our third and fourth "Learn & Engage" events in March and April at this point. He continues to follow up and engage with attendees from the first two events we held.

#### **One-on-One Meetings**

Mr. Nichols noted he is in the process of scheduling meetings to seek donations and develop our network of potential donors. There has been a particular focus on banks as early leaders who can help us to seed our campaign. If any board members have connections that could help us get in to talk with M&T Bank, Merrimack Valley Savings Bank, Newburyport Bank, or Service Credit Union that would be much appreciated. Mr. Nichols reported that he will be meeting with Lighthouse Credit Union tomorrow.

#### **Staffing Support**

Mr. Nichols reported that he is working with the NH Charitable Foundation to secure funding to "support capacity building to implement a comprehensive development plan that will accelerate the progress of our first-ever capital campaign and enhance our overall fundraising capacity." It seems likely that COAST will receive a first year of funding, with the potential for a second year to follow. If awarded, COAST expects to hire a part-time Development Coordinator. Ideally this position would transition to a full-time Development role given sufficient success in our fundraising efforts down the road.

#### **Grants/Donations**

Over the holidays COAST received five separate donations to our capital campaign, the total contributions were \$13,200. Two of the donations were anonymous, and all but \$1,000 was targeted at our new facility fund. The largest donation was through a surprise end-of-year grant for \$10,000, awarded by Novocure of Portsmouth.

### **commuteSMART Seacoast**

COAST has submitted an updated application, per new FHWA guidance, and the ball is now in the court of the FHWA to determine that it is eligible for funding through the CMAQ program. A special thanks to Mr. Bogle and Mr. Lentz who did most of the heavy lifting on updating the

application and running a new air quality analysis using the tools required by FHWA. We await a response.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

### Action Items

#### **Action Item #1: SFY2025 NHDOT 5339(a) Grant Application Approval**

On December 4 the NHDOT announced the SFY25 5339(a) grant round. Grant applications are due today for capital equipment in line with our latest five-year capital spending plan. We will be requesting:

- Two (2) fixed route 35' low floor HD transit buses (CDL replacements) at a total estimated cost of \$1,280,000, 85% of which would be grant funded. Expected delivery within 18-24 months of ordering. These vehicles are in our Capital Spending Schedule for FY26.
- One (1) demand response small cutaway bus (non-CDL replacements) at a total estimated cost of \$150,109, 85% of which would be grant funded. Expected delivery within 12-18 months of ordering. This vehicle is in our Capital Spending Schedule for FY27.
- Two (2) bus shelters with bench/solar powered lighting and ad boxes (expansions) at a total estimated cost of \$23,900, 80% of which would be grant funded. Expected delivery within 24 months of ordering. These bus shelters are in our Capital Spending Schedule for FY25.

In the case of vehicles, it is expected the non-Federal match would be comprised of a mix of state capital match funds (7.5%) and COAST held reserves (7.5%). For the bus shelters, the non-federal mix would be 20% and come from COAST held reserves.

Total grant funds being applied for are \$1,454,009, with an expected state capital match of \$107,258 and a commitment from COAST to provide \$112,038 of matching funds.

**Action Requested:** *The COAST Board of Directors approve the submission of COAST's SFY2025 funding request of the NHDOT under the FTA 5339(a) Program and authorize the Executive Director, Mr. Nichols, to act on behalf of the organization, in submitting the application.*

Ms. Joyce made a motion to approve the submission of COAST's SFY2025 funding request of the NHDOT under the FTA 5339(a) Program and to authorize Mr. Nichols to act on behalf of the organization in submitting the application and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion.

Ms. Joyce asked if the bus shelters were replacing old shelters. Mr. Nichols noted the shelters would be expansions, placing bus shelters where there currently is not one.

Mr. Shanahan took a roll call vote:

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes

Mr. Clancy	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Ms. Sawyer	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Tovey	Yes

The motion was approved unanimously.

**Action Item #2: FY26 Municipal & Partner Funding Requests**

Mr. Nichols reported that COAST is projecting a 6% increase in total FY26 expenses over the FY25 operating budget. Some expenses are continuing to trend at higher inflationary rates and we are experiencing some additional costs in some line items (e.g., fringes, materials and supplies, insurance). These make up the bulk of the overall increases.

On the revenue side, Mr. Nichols noted he is hopeful that State funding will be no less than SFY25 funding levels. In addition, Route 7 On Demand will transition to being funded by the 5311 Rural Areas program through FTA and NHDOT and will replace, at a minimum, the 5307 funding we were using on that service.

Barring any dramatic shifts coming from the new administration, we are confident in all our estimates in other revenue projections. As a result, we have a higher need in terms of Municipal (1.85M increase) and partner funding (1.08M increase). On January 13 there was a Municipal Funding Workshop that looked at options to mitigate the 15% increase to municipalities and partners. No clear pathways were identified in that workshop and there are several factors that will not be resolved in time to impact this increase (e.g., the state operating budget will not be approved in time). We remain at the projection of 15% increase to municipalities overall (range of 9.5%-25% once funding formula is applied).

**Action Required:** *The COAST Board of Directors approve municipal and other partner funding requests for FY26 as presented.*

Mr. Clancy made a motion to approve municipal and other partner funding requests for FY26 as presented which was seconded by Mr. Sandmann.

Mr. Nichols noted the workshop materials are available in a handout at the meeting. Mr. Shanahan noted that if SFY26 state funding does not match prior funding, COAST will need to dip further into its reserves. He also noted that current projected use of reserves in FY26 is less than \$300,000.

Mr. Lentz asked where Route 7 with Newmarket and Exeter funding fits in. Mr. Nichols noted it is now a pure demand response service so is not part of municipal funding formula. It is a partner program, and the municipal ask is at the minimum participation level, which for FY26 would be \$37,007. Mr. Nichols noted that staff are talking with Newmarket and Exeter about potential expansions of the service areas in their communities. The challenge with Route 7 is anytime there's an increase in demand there are additional expenses incurred. On fixed routes,

there are no additional costs incurred unless demand increases so much that another vehicle is required.

Mr. Bogle asked about the funding associated with the Foundation that is helping to support Route 7 On Demand. Mr. Nichols noted those funds are currently funding 1 day of service per week and it is hoped that that will continue.

Ms. Amaral noted that with the uncertainty of federal funding going forward and knowing how everyone is struggling with increased costs and not having enough resources, she knows it will be challenging to find additional funding, but Kittery cannot say it believes in and supports public transportation and then not bear that cost.

Mr. Shanahan noted that Dover is in the same position, there are a lot of additional demands on their funding, but they support public transit. He shared that we need board members to check in with our representatives at the state. Mr. Shanahan noted that NHDOT and NHTA continue to do good work to help ensure that our state funding is at least level if not increased.

Mr. Clancy noted he received an email from a hotel asking for a new bus stop and asked if we have ever considered approaching hotels who need transportation to support their employees, to see if they would contribute. Mr. Nichols noted that that is part of the capital campaign initiatives, though right now we are focusing on banks. Mr. Nichols shared that we work closely with hotels around the H1B employees who come in the summer. He also shared that he has a new one-page informative flyer on the impact of public transportation on the economy and return on investment of 4:1. That information will be provided with the playbook.

With no further discussion Mr. Shanahan took a roll call vote:

Ms. Amaral	Yes
Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Abstain
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Ms. Sawyer	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Tovey	Yes

The vote was unanimous with one abstention.

## **Discussion Items**

### **Joint Loss Management Committee (JLMC) Recommendation**

The JLMC who meets regularly, as required by law, has put forward a recommendation that in cases where the personal effects of employees are stolen off the bus, the passenger be banned for life.

Mr. Nichols shared that we had an employee whose personal items were stolen off the bus. He noted that we encourage staff to keep their personal effects out of sight and out of reach and, subsequent to this event, lock boxes were installed on the vehicles for that purpose.

There was significant discussion around several topics, including;

- Whether COAST can prosecute individuals who steal a staff member's personal effects from the bus. COAST does not have standing. The employee must prosecute, but COAST will support them in those efforts.
- The history of prior lifetime bans on the system. There have been 2-3 indefinite/permanent bans put in place prior to this for customers who threatened physical violence against a COAST employee or a terrorist attack against COAST. Current policy has much stricter bans against persons threatening violence versus other offenses.
- The composition of the JLMC. The JLMC is our "safety committee" and is made up of equal representation of staff and management.
- Concern over the driver's personal information being in the hands of the individual who stole it, and whether that information is shared with others.
- Whether someone under a permanent ban would have the ability (once rehabilitated?) to have their ability to ride restored. In some cases where certain criteria have been met (e.g., a certification that a mental health issue has resolved) that has been allowed.
- How thefts of staff's personal items may be treated differently than those of riders. The current policy references "illegal activity" so does not list specific criminal acts.
- Should thefts of personally identifiable information be treated differently?

In the end, the board was comfortable considering changes to the policy but wanted more information before they would be willing to put anything into place. Ms. Joyce suggested we differentiate in the policy between acts against other customers and drivers so we can protect our staff. Mr. Nichols suggested we could reach out to other systems to find out how they handle situations like this. He also suggested reaching out to our FTA Civil Rights Officer for guidance.

Mr. Capello asked that we please let the operator know the Board is considering their recommendation, so they know it is being addressed.

### **Committee Updates**

Mr. Nichols reported that our draft audit report for 2024 was received on Monday night. There were no substantive findings. It is a clean audit. The audit report must be accepted by the Board so COAST can move forward with submitting taxes and applying for grants. It will require an early February joint Finance and Executive Committee meeting, with a vote of concurrence by the full board at their late February meeting.

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

### **Ridership**

December ridership was down a little bit from November, but still a double digit increase from December of 2023. December was the ninth month in a row with ridership over 30,000 and helped result in the second quarter in a row of ridership over 100,000. Everything is trending in

the right direction. Mr. Nichols noted that Demand Response ridership is down a bit from this time last year.

Mr. Nichols noted that we are at about 95% of pre-pandemic ridership levels.

Mr. Nichols noted that COAST has a two-page spread in the Charitable Giving Guide put out by the Business & Industry Association.

Mr. Shanahan noted that COAST is seeing some return on the investment in fundraising consultants. Mr. Nichols reported that one company has signed up as a sponsor for Fare Free Saturday (Cross Insurance) and we expect another will later this winter.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

The next Board Meeting will be on February 26, 2025. Mr. Shanahan adjourned the meeting, without objection, at 9:34 am.

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Joyce, Secretary