



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, August 27, 2025**

Present: Scott Bogle, Arthur Capello, Sean Clancy, Sönke Dornblut (virtual), Margaret Joyce, Colin Lentz, Joanne Neumann, Michael Scala, Dennis Shanahan, Emmy Ham (virtual), Jillian Harris (virtual)

Absent: Fred Butler, Jason Garnham, Denis Hebert, Michael Mates, Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro, Dave Sandmann, David Tovey

Staff: Rad Nichols, Margot Doering, Vanessa Polychronis, Joanne Muckenhoupt, Michael Williams

I. Call to Order

Chair Shanahan called the meeting to order at 8:37a.

II. Approval of the minutes

Mr. Lentz made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 23, 2025 meeting and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the minutes and Chair Shanahan took a roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Abstain
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

II. Public Comment: Mr. Nichols introduced Ms. Joanne Muckenhoupt as COAST's new Director of Development and noted how excited he was to have her on board. Ms. Muckenhoupt expressed how busy her first days have been and how impressed she has been with COAST so far.

III. Financial Report

Ms. Doering reported on the financials noting continuing trends as seen in prior months. She advised that there will be a restatement of the June results for Coordination due to extra funds at SFY end available to pay our subrecipients for otherwise unreimbursed rides in that month. The revised results will be completed for the September meeting.

IV. Old Business

Mr. Nichols gave updates on the following.

Sudden Staffing Shortage

We had three CDL Operators resign recently. On top of those CDL operators we had already lost two earlier this summer and several operators are out or will be going out on extended leaves of absence in

September/October (overwhelmingly under FMLA). These changes suddenly leave us in a situation where it is unrealistic to cover our schedules during September. We will be asking for all staff's help and cooperation in shifting schedules to cover open work. It will likely be quite messy. We really have very few painless options as we have reduced our bus routes requiring a CDL license down to Routes 1/33, 12/13/14, and 41. These are all of course our highest ridership routes.

Additional Bus Operator Support

Of the CDL operators who have left COAST this summer, three of the five have indicated the customers and environment they are working in have pushed them to seek other work. As is the case in many front-line roles in the customer service industry now, it is an increasingly hostile environment for these employees, and our bus operators are truly on their own on their buses.

A discussion of the behaviors involved, safety issues and possible actions COAST can take was held. Several avenues of action were suggested and discussed including involving case workers, the social service agencies, police departments, and so on.

Route 7 On Demand Service Expansion

We have received continuing and greater support from a local foundation for Route 7 On Demand. In addition to the continuation of an additional day of service, the additional funding received this year will also allow us to pilot opening the service up to serve any potential locations in Newmarket and Exeter. This is something both communities have been asking us to increasingly move in the direction of.

We are excited to be going in this direction and have scheduled public information meetings in Exeter and Newmarket to solicit public feedback in September.

- September 9 – Exeter Public Library, 4-5pm
- September 11 – Newmarket Town Hall, 1-2pm

Final Design Progress

Last week we received final design plans for our final owner review. We are awaiting receipt of interior design plans from Office Interiors in the very near term.

This project is behind schedule, but since we have postponed bidding due to the status of funding, delay in completing final design will not hinder the project.

Transit Accessibility Specialist Recruitment Update

The Transit Accessibility Specialist will be working with our ADA applicants and riders to help determine eligibility for the service through a new functional assessment, as well as offer travel training to teach riders how to use the fixed route system when able.

We have made an offer to an individual who has accepted the position. He will be starting mid-September.

Annual Meeting Planning

We are focusing on this being an opportunity to review the last fiscal year's 'successes among the stressors', introduce our new Director of Development, and to preview and seek feedback about the Connected by COAST campaign video. We are looking to invite a cross section of past stakeholders whose feedback we value.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 24, 2025 from 8am-10am at the Cocheco Country Club (125 Gulf Road, Dover, NH). A full buffet breakfast will be served. The business meeting will follow at 10-10:30am.

V. New Business

Action Items

Action Item #1: Gillig Bus Purchase Authorization

Mr. Nichols explained, funds for this project were awarded previously by the NHDOT, but the source of the funding was switched as part of the 10-Year Plan approval process last year. Subsequently the NHDOT has been attempting to work out a plan to accommodate a change in funding source. That has now all officially been approved with the late July approval of NHSTIP Amendment #1 by the FHWA and FTA. There is now \$2,000,000 of CMAQ funding listed in the STIP for 3+ buses to be replaced in the COAST fleet. The total project listing is \$2.5M, 80% FTA funded and 20% locally funded.

Under an available contracting opportunity through the State of Virginia we can procure new Gillig buses that meet our requirements for a price of \$599,407 each. The total cost for the procurement with Gillig will be \$1,798,221. This is a price Gillig has held for us since March as we have worked through the details of the funding. We had budgeted for these vehicles to cost a total of \$1,875,000. So, the Virginia contract offers us savings from what we had originally projected.

Action Requested: The COAST Board of Directors approve purchase order for three (3) heavy duty Gillig buses for \$1,798,221.

Mr. Lentz made a motion to approve the purchase and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion and Chair Shanahan took a roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #2: Proposed FY26 Service Changes

Mr. Williams explained, as previously discussed, the organization needs to slow down the spend rate of our FTA 5307 funds to better match the allocations we are now receiving on an annual basis.

Over the past month we have continued to review opportunities to improve our original proposal based on public input received. Those discussions have now been wrapped up with minimal resulting changes from the original proposal.

In terms of the final proposed changes, the following is recommended by staff:

- Route 42 will be discontinued.

- Route 100 will be discontinued.
- Route 33 Saturday will operate the same as the current Route 33 weekday.
- Route 14 will continue to serve the Rochester Park & Ride for at least the next 9 months.
- Route 40 will operate past C&J to GBCC and then the Pease Airline Terminal. On the inbound it will not go back into GBCC or C&J.
- Route 40's first run is being discontinued.
- Route 43 and Route 44 are to be interlined—operationally they will alternate in the same vehicle.
- Route 44 will not run on Saturday. Route 43 will run with the same timetable and just have long layovers at Hanover Station.
- All services will end by 8:15pm.
- Implementation date is proposed to be moved back up to October 4, 2025 due to the current staffing shortfall.

These changes as proposed are expected to have the effect of reducing the use of FTA funding by \$284,350, and \$512,750 overall, in FY26.

A small number of clarifying questions were asked and answered.

Action Requested: *That the board of directors approve the proposed changes for an implementation date of October 4, 2025.*

Ms. Neumann made a motion to approve the proposed changes and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion.

Discussion ensued around the response from the community regarding the changes. Most comments came from the cancellation of Route 100. Chair Shanahan took a roll call vote once discussion had ended.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	No
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes

The motion passed.

Action Item #3: State Capital Match Agreement with NHDOT

Mr. Nichols shared the NHDOT had awarded COAST capital matching funds to be used to provide a maximum of one-half of the non-federal funds, up to 7.5%, of the total eligible project costs and not to

exceed \$110,658 of the required monies to match Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for eligible capital projects as previously provided by COAST.

The NHDOT is entering into a contract with COAST for these SFY2026 Capital Match funds. The total of the contract will be \$110,658.

Action Requested: *That the board of directors adopt the attached Corporate Resolution to enable the Executive Director to enter a contract for said funds with the NHDOT.*

Ms. Joyce made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion and Chair Shanahan took a roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #4: Proposed ICE Policy

Mr. Nichols stated the proposed Policy is for use by COAST should Federal CBP, DHS, and/or ICE agents board COAST vehicles or come on COAST property.

COAST'S POLICY ON WARRANTLESS SEARCHES ON VEHICLES OR IN FACILITIES

COAST does not consent to, or provide permission for, warrantless and/or suspicionless immigration enforcement checks on its vehicles or in its facilities.

While riding with COAST, federal agents from United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) may board the vehicle and ask customers about their immigration or citizenship status.

Under COAST policy, no COAST employee will provide consent to immigration enforcement checks without a warrant or reasonable suspicion that a person is violating immigration laws or another federal law on COAST vehicles or at its facilities.

COAST employees will not physically resist or otherwise prevent federal agents from boarding our vehicles if they do so even without our consent. Nor will COAST employees encourage, invite, or assist in immigration enforcement searches. This policy has been implemented for the safety of COAST customers and employees.

Staff will be oriented to the Policy and trained in internal procedures we have also established on how to interact with federal agents who present themselves to them.

We also expect to post something on our website similar to what C&J has at <https://answers.ridecj.com/immigration-procedures-know-your-rights>.

Action Requested: *That the board of directors approve the proposed ICE Policy.*

Mr. Scala made a motion to approve the ICE Policy and Mr. Clancy seconded the motion.

Mr. Capello asked for clarification about the action the driver will and will not take, specifically the driver will not take any action to prevent a boarding by an agent or purported agent. There was further discussion on the motion and Chair Shanahan took a roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #5: State Operating Match Agreement with NHDOT

Mr. Nichols shared the NHDOT had awarded COAST state operating match funds to be applied against eligible project costs, and match Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for the operating scope.

The NHDOT is entering into a contract with COAST for these SFY2026-27 State Operating Match funds. The total of the contract will be \$694,542.

Action Requested: *That the board of directors adopt the attached Corporate Resolution to enable the Executive Director to enter a contract for said funds with the NHDOT.*

Mr. Bogle made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion and Chair Shanahan took a roll call vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Scala	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Discussion Items

Discussion Item #1: FY26 Operating Budget Proposal

Mr. Nichols presented the proposed budget where the key goals are to conserve our 5307 funding, minimize impacts of service reductions on ridership, maintain competitive pay rates (particularly for operators) and consider ways to address the challenging environment on the buses. He explained how the numbers are developed based on results through 9 months of operations and then adjusted for known factors. The budget is a 2.3% decrease compared with the FY2025 budget due to service reductions. But it is an increase from the projected FY2025 results. A breakdown of the largest expense increases was presented, including the effect of inflation. Components of revenue were reviewed, specifically scaling back on advertising revenues to reflect FY2025 results and the inclusion of non-federal grants as a new line item. The budget recap shows \$8.15MM in revenues, \$8.07MM in expenses. If COAST adds case workers to staff to help with bus safety, we anticipate having to pay \$72K per individual and we would expect to hire three full-time positions, adding \$217K to the budget. COAST might be able to pursue non-FTA funding to help with this role.

Schedule for Budget Adoption

- Budget Workshop Mtg. (week of 9/8) –The Board did not feel a need for a workshop this year.
- September Board Meeting (9/24) – vote to adopt the final FY26 operating budget

No questions were raised.

Discussion Item #2: Fare Increase

Mr. Nichols described, as part of the changes proposed for Route 7 On Demand, we are also considering doing away with the over complicated and confusing designated vs. non-designated stops, and their different fares (\$1.50 vs. \$3.00).

Instead, we propose moving the fare on this service to a flat \$3.00. And at an increment of \$1.00, we could consolidate fare media for ADA, Senior Transportation, and Route 7 On Demand passengers. Under this scenario we could sell a punch ticket with multiple \$1.00 punches in whatever denomination(s) we want. Currently we sell multiple different fare media associated with paying fares on these three different services.

The use of the designated stop was intended to provide efficiency in the route which has not been highly effective so losing these stops will not negatively impact efficiency. Mr. Dornblut asked if one or two designated stops could be retained in downtown Newmarket. Mr. Williams suggested having a separate discussion on the topic.

We propose this be part of our upcoming public meetings on changes to Route 7 On Demand in September.

- September 9 – Exeter Public Library, 4-5pm
- September 11 – Newmarket Town Hall, 1-2pm

VII. Committee Reports

Nothing to report

VIII. Community Updates/Information Items

Ridership

- Overall ridership in July totaled 34,740. This was down 0.1% from June, and up 4.3% over July 2024.
- Fixed route ridership totalled 32,403, down 0.8% from June, and up by 3.6% over July 2024. YTD fixed route ridership is now up 12.0% over FY24 and is 95.3% of our FY19 (pre-pandemic) levels.
- Demand response ridership totaled 2,337 for the month. This represented a 12.0% increase from June, and a 14.7% increase over ridership in July 2024. YTD ridership is 7.1% over FY24 and is 108% of our FY19 (pre-pandemic) levels.

IX. Adjournment

Mr. Shanahan asked for a motion to adjourn which was made by Mr. Lentz and seconded by Ms. Neumann. The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 am.

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Joyce, Secretary