



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
Minutes of the Board of Directors  
Wednesday, February 25, 2026**

**Present:** Scott Bogle, Sean Clancy, Sönke Dornblut (virtual, joined at 8:39am), Colin Lentz, Paula Devens (virtual), Denis Hebert, Kiersten Wright, Jason Garnham (virtual), Arthur Capello, Margaret Joyce, Emmy Ham, Jessica Garlough

**Absent:** Dennis Shanahan, Michael Mates, Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro, Dave Sandmann, Fred Butler, David Tovey

**Staff:** Rad Nichols, Margot Doering, Joanne Muckenhoupt, Michael Williams

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Joyce called the meeting to order at 8:35a.

**II. Approval of the minutes**

Mr. Lentz made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2026, meeting and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion. Ms. Ham verified who made the motions to approve the minutes and untabled the action on the Municipal Partner Request at the January meeting, and it was verified that Mr. Hebert made both motions, and Mr. Capello seconded both motions. With those clarifications Chair Joyce took the vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes
Mr. Garnham	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Garlough	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

**III. Public Comment**

Mr. Hebert stated that the mall (Fox Run Mall) is now closed and asked if there would be discussion about the continuation of Route 43. Mr. Williams stated that COAST has been in contact with Torrington about the mall closure, that COAST stopped serving the mall on January 31, 2026, and the Regal Cinema is now the last stop on Route 43. Mr. Williams also stated that he has had conversations with Torrington about a future bus stop on the redeveloped property. Mr. Hebert said Torrington had conveyed they had not had contact with COAST and asked that future route plans for the development be discussed with him.

**IV. Financial Report**

Ms. Doering presented a financial report. For the January results, Ms. Doering noted the interest and other income drop was due to an adjustment to gain on sale that the auditors noted and COAST made. Fringe benefits went up because the new 2026 premiums started in January. The negative purchase transportation number was due to a change requested by the auditor last year and will be changed again by the auditors for this year. Otherwise, year-to-date COAST is generally on or below budget for expenses. Utility bills for 6 Sumner Drive were incurred in the last fiscal year, in the summer, but were paid in FY 2026 due to delay in receiving them from the landlord.

## **V. Old Business**

Mr. Nichols gave updates on the following.

### **CommuteSMART Seacoast**

COAST will begin advertising for a full-time position to lead CommuteSMART Seacoast again on February 27, 2026.

### **Ford Safety Recall**

Five of the newly manufactured cutaway buses have been delivered. One more is awaited.

### **BUILD Grant**

Mr. Nichols submitted a grant to USDOT for \$3,504,814 for the new facility. This would cover the gap between the preliminary cost estimate and the final design cost estimate, plus inflation. These funds, if awarded, would be 100% federal funding without any local match requirement. Grant award decisions will be announced in June.

This was the first federal grant requiring a benefit cost analysis, which is a challenging lift and there are many benefits COAST anticipates that cannot be monetized.

Mr. Hebert raised the concern that COAST's fundraising efforts are proceeding slower than inflation, such that by the time funding goals are reached the new cost estimates are higher. He urged that a reduced version or phase of the project be built soon so that COAST gets something, rather than waiting for funding for the full project. Mr. Hebert asked what the plan was to consider and proceed with a phased approach.

If COAST receives the BUILD grant, there remains approximately \$3,400,000 of local funds needed for the full project. COAST has raised approximately \$355,000 of local match for the project so far.

Mr. Nichols explained that COAST's federal funding cannot be spent without local matching funds. At this time not enough local matching funds have been raised to be able to build any version or any phase of the project, so the building project is stuck until local match funds are raised.

Mr. Capello asked if COAST can go out to bid without all the funding raised. Mr. Nichols affirmed that is allowed, but time is needed to ensure the funding comes in before construction. That is a decision the board will need to make later this year. The hope is to go out to bid late summer 2026 or fall 2026 for a spring 2027 construction start. He also stated that COAST has been advised as soon as construction starts, fundraising is no longer effective.

## Development

Ms. Muckenhoupt gave an update on fundraising efforts, including a \$2,500 donation from an anonymous partner, a \$1,000 donation from a COAST driver, efforts to meet with potential large donors, the now-live capital campaign website, the chamber lunch which occurred at COAST on February 18, and the April launch event. Ms. Muckenhoupt also said the \$3 million - \$5 million dollar campaign goal is attainable.

Mr. Hebert noted a driver donating \$1,000 for the facility speaks volumes.

Ms. Joyce added that in campaigns every dollar counts and donations of all amounts matter. Ms. Ham asked what donation ranges COAST is pursuing. Ms. Muckenhoupt said COAST is pursuing all amounts, including small donations of \$25.00.

Ms. Joyce asked if COAST would participate in NH Gives. Mr. Nichols affirmed we would. Ms. Doering said that funding isn't earmarked for anything specific, but examples of what different amounts accomplish are provided during the campaign.

Ms. Ham asked if COAST had a charitable gaming partnership. Mr. Nichols explained that COAST was found not eligible due to its status as an independent public body of the State (in addition to being a 501c3 nonprofit).

Mr. Hebert said the board should discuss a phased approach of the facility. He asked what pathway COAST will take to avoid losing the federal grants. Mr. Nichols responded that COAST has investigated with the CMA engineers whether COAST could move forward with one aspect of the project or another. He cited complicating matters moving forward with part of the project due to connections, elevation differences, interference with the existing facility.

Mr. Garnham asked if this conversation could continue if and when the BUILD grant was unsuccessful, or if fundraising objectives are not met by a certain date. Mr. Nichols agreed the May, June timeframe could be a better timeframe to discuss this question.

Mr. Capello asked that the engineers come speak with the board directly. Mr. Nichols agreed that could happen.

Ms. Doering noted that over \$1,000,000 in local match is needed to even look at a phased approach. Mr. Hebert noted that half of an impossible goal is still better than all of an impossible goal.

Mr. Garnham noted that hiring a Director of Development is an action the board and COAST took, and time should be allowed to see how that plays out.

Ms. Ham noted all nonprofits in the area are trying to make things work, and COAST is in a competitive environment. The benefit that COAST connects all the nonprofits is a compelling one.

Mr. Capello asked if there is a timeframe by which COAST must use all the federal funding or risk losing them. Mr. Nichols said having the grants obligated is the best way to protect them. They are all currently obligated except one grant from NHDOT, which cannot be obligated until matching funds are raised for it. Mr. Doering added that the timeframes are currently in FY28 to FY29. However, these could be adjusted further. Mr. Hebert said FY 28 is coming quickly and federal dollars can be rescinded if not being used. Mr. Nichols stated he is not concerned about losing the federal funding at this time.

Ms. Ham asked if CDFA funding had been pursued for the facility project. Mr. Nichols affirmed that it had, and COAST had raised approximately \$113,000. Ms. Wright asked how much local match had been raised so far, and whether it was just the two awards presented today. Ms. Muckenhoupt said more had been raised, and that she would bring those totals to future meetings.

Ms. Ham asked if COAST uses a donor database. Ms. Muckenhoupt said COAST uses Little Green Light.

Mr. Bogle asked for a board workshop to receive a set of talking points for board participation in fundraising efforts.

## **VI. New Business**

### **Action Items**

#### **Action Item #1: Annual Audit Review and Acceptance**

Ms. Doering gave a presentation on the 2025 audit, including the notes made and a summary of material weaknesses with management responses.

**Action Requested:** *The COAST Board of Directors accept the Draft 2025 audit reports as presented.*

Mr. Bogle made a motion to accept the audit report and Mr. Capello seconded the motion. There was no further discussion.

Chair Joyce took the vote once discussion had ended.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes
Mr. Garnham	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Garlough	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

**Action Item #2: Capital Spending Plan Update**

Mr. Nichols presented an updated capital spending plan, which projected capital spending through FY 33. This updated plan is being requested as part of the state capital match funding requests.

**Action Requested:** *The COAST Board of Directors approve the updated capital spending plan from FY26 – FY33.*

Mr. Clancy made a motion to approve the proposed plan and Mr. Lentz seconded the motion. There was no discussion and Chair Joyce took vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes
Mr. Garnham	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Garlough	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

**Action Item #3: New Purchase Thresholds & Procurement Policy Update**

Mr. Nichols presented the updated Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) purchase thresholds, which were updated on October 1, 2025. Since then, FTA released the following procurement threshold guidance:

- Micro-purchase Threshold (MPT): Increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000
- Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT): Increased from \$250,000 to \$350,000
- Buy America “Small Purchase” waiver remains at \$150,000

Mr. Nichols proposes to bring COAST’s procurement policy in line with this new guidance.

**Action Requested:** *The COAST Board of Directors approve the incorporation of the new acquisition-related thresholds as allowed under the FAR, and other updates necessary to stay current when referencing applicable Federal regulations.*

Mr. Lentz made a motion to approve the proposed threshold changes and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion.

Ms. Joyce asked if it is better for COAST if the thresholds are raised. Mr. Nichols affirmed it is, it makes it easier to make purchases. Mr. Lentz asked if thresholds define the line where COAST

must go out to bid. Mr. Nichols said yes and explained how each threshold triggers the next level of procurement regulations.

There was no further discussion and Chair Joyce took vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes
Mr. Garnham	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Ms. Garlough	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hebert asked if more than one signature is required at some level. Mr. Nichols said no. Mr. Hebert asked what the process is for someone to buy something for \$350,000 at COAST. He asked if board approval is required. Mr. Nichols stated that the purchase would either be part of the operations budget or the capital plan, which both have been approved by the board.

Ms. Joyce noted that large purchases like vehicles go to the board for approval.

**Action Item #4: Free Ticket Program Expansion – Christopher Robin Foundation**

Mr. Nichols presented the Christopher Robin Foundation, a new nonprofit which has requested consideration for COAST's Free Ticket Program.

This nonprofit is listed on the NHSOS website as having been created in November 2025, and its principal address is located within COAST's service area. They do not appear to have been recognized yet as a 501c3 by the IRS.

Through conversation with the President of the organization, it appears the purpose of the organization is to raise philanthropic support for two private for profit businesses which provide mental health and addiction services. Staff do not have a proposed action for this item.

Ms. Joyce said this individual, who started these businesses and this nonprofit, does provide the type of work that would make them eligible, but has continued these businesses as for profit businesses for a reason she does not understand.

Mr. Hebert expressed having a problem giving to a nonprofit that we can't confirm exists yet. Ms. Joyce said it does exist in the eyes of the State, but the process with the IRS takes longer.

Mr. Garnham asked if COAST could get more information from the organization about the organization and who the tickets would go to. Ms. Joyce confirmed these organizations are not generating wealth and that the work they are doing aligns with the intent of the program. Mr. Garnham said it seems like something the board would support, but more detail is needed.

Mr. Bogle asked if COAST could see a year's track record first, and maybe that is a new requirement moving forward. He also asked if there is overlap between this organization and others in terms of their clientele, such that the clients could still access tickets elsewhere.

Mr. Nichols said there is overlap and he would further the conversation with the Christopher Robin Foundation.

Mr. Hebert asked for context around the recovery house, whether it is drug rehab. Ms. Joyce confirmed it is for substance misuse, both drugs and alcohol. Mr. Hebert asked if the clients at this facility are at a point where they can afford it and afford tickets on the bus. Ms. Joyce stated she believes many of the clients pay through Medicaid. Mr. Hebert said he did not want to bleed out more free tickets without knowing more about the organization and their clients.

Ms. Wright agreed the board should learn more information about the clients before making a decision. Ms. Wright also said the decision regarding a nonprofit should go by the federal designation, not the NHSOS, to give an incentive to actually go through that process.

## **VII. Discussion Items**

There were no discussion items.

## **VIII. Committee Reports**

The finance committee met, but there is nothing to report.

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

Ridership information through January was presented in the board packet. While average ridership per day is doing well, total ridership is down due to service cancellations for weather.

## **X. Adjournment**

Ms. Joyce asked for a motion to adjourn which was made by Mr. Lentz and seconded by Mr. Bogle. The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 am.

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Ham, Secretary