Approved May 27, 2026

Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, April 22, 2026

Present: Scott Bogle, Fred Butler (virtual), Arthur Capello, Sean Clancy, Sönke Dornblut, Jessica Garlough, Emmy Ham, Jillian Harris (virtual), Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, Colin Lentz, Dave Sandmann (virtual), Dennis Shanahan, Kiersten Wright,

Absent: Jason Garnham, Michael Mates, Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro and David Tovey

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

Guest: Lee Nentwick (City of Rochester)

I. Call to Order

Chair Shanahan called the meeting to order at 8:35 am.

II. Approval of the minutes

Mr. Hebert made a motion to approve the minutes of the March Board of Directors meeting, seconded by Mr. Clancy. An edit was made to the minutes noting that the approval of the February minutes was made by Mr. Capello and seconded by Mr. Clancy.

A roll call vote was taken to approve the March minutes:

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

II. Public Comment

Mr. Nichols recognized the 10th work anniversary of Ms. Polychronis noting the many roles she fills at COAST from onboarding new staff, attending public events, handling social media and processing payroll. Mr. Nichols displayed the framed certificate issued to employees when they reach a significant milestone. He commented on the large number now displayed in the lobby and how that number has grown over the years.

Ms. Ham announced that she will be resigning from the Workforce Housing Coalition which requires her resignation from the COAST Board. She noted how much she enjoyed working with the Board and the staff at COAST. Mr.Shanahan praised her work at the Coalition and thanked her for her service on the COAST Board.

IV. Financial Report

Ms. Doering noted an uptick in fare revenues and advised that the Advertising Revenues are an estimate due to the medical leave of the ATA accountant. Other income jumped due to the interest payment on a maturing CD which was rolled over for another two months. The Supplies and Materials line jumped in March as predicted at last month's meeting due to the fuel delivery coming at the beginning of March. This increased the federal assistance amount for the month.

Compared against the budget, we continue to see some of the same themes in the contract services line item. We made the final payment to the CPA, so this line will balance out as the expenses reduce and the budget catches up. She also noted that the CPA increased the cost of the audit as the fee had lagged in recent years.

She reported that we took delivery of the last of our 6 cutaways in March. The Fixed Asset account for Transit Equipment stands at $9.3MM. This amount will reduce as the retired vehicles sell. Federal and State reimbursement for those vehicle purchases replenished our cash balance.

A question was asked about the primary source of advertising revenue being buses versus shelters. It was confirmed that most revenues are currently coming from advertisements on the buses.

V. Old Business

Mr. Nichols presented the following updates:

CommuteSMART Seacoast News

May is almost here. In the Greater Seacoast, that means it is time to pull together B2B Commuter Challenge Teams, go for all the glory and swagger of being at the top of the class, and competing for a CommuteSMART B2B Commuter Challenge trophy. This year will mark the 12th annual challenge, and we are excited to encourage commuters to travel to work smarter, particularly considering the current high gas prices.

Mr. Nichols introduced Stacy Brown who will take the reins at CommuteSMART Seacoast starting on Tuesday, April 21. Ms. Brown is a longtime seacoast resident with a strong background in education, which is a perfect fit for Program Coordinator position.

All-Staff Meeting

We will be holding an all-staff meeting on Sunday, April 26. All-staff meetings are a great opportunity to share the latest in the organization, share timely operational updates, etc. with the entire staff in person. We also dedicate sufficient time each time we all get together for an open Q&A session, which staff really appreciate.

Fare Increase Proposal

Notice has gone out on the fare increase proposal to be considered for later this year. It was published in local newspapers on Wednesday. Public input sessions are set for May. Public comments will be received through late May. Since the announcement went out, the responses on social media have been predominantly supportive.

Wildcat Transit has also agreed to increase their cash fare and monthly passes to equal ours. They will also cease requesting reimbursement for COAST drop tickets used on Wildcat as the number was never very high.

Website Update
COAST is soliciting proposals for the modernization of the organization's website. COAST's current website was created in 2018, has received regular maintenance since, and is hosted on the Drupal platform. The intent is to contract with one firm to provide all necessary redesign, migration to a new platform, and implementation for COAST. Additionally, COAST is looking to enter a two (2) year contract with multiple optional one (1) year extensions for continuing maintenance, service, and hosting of the website. Potential bidders have been submitting questions, which along with our answers, have been posted to our website (https://coastbus.org/opportunities/doing-business-with-coast/opportunities). Bids are due before 4p on April 22.

Demand Response Software
As staff have struggled more with our current software solution, as it continues to be regularly updated and becomes more glitchy with those updates, we have begun looking at alternative solutions. We have a solution we prefer, however continue to negotiate on price, which is significantly higher.

An increase in efficiency of 3-5% will pay for the $47,000 (total $60,000) increased cost of the software and will reduce significantly the frustrations currently experienced by staff. There is no implementation fee and no multi-year contract. A question was asked about the cost efficiency calculation. Mr. Williams explained that his cost analysis found that an increase in passengers per hour from 1.77 to 1.82 will offset the higher price through cost savings. He talked with other systems that have made this exact same change. Their experience was an improvement 3x the efficiency needed in the cost analysis. Statistics are tracked monthly and we will be able to measure improvements directly through the passenger per hour calculation.

Mr. Williams also noted that some other software programs that cost less could not accommodate our business model that includes scheduling for partner organizations. A question was asked if the partner organizations might pay a portion of the increase. Mr. Nichols noted that COAST is the primary beneficiary of the efficiency improvement. Further discussion followed regarding the details of the proposed software.

Development Update
Ms. Muckenhoupt talked about the process to cultivate a large donor. She believes that receiving a large donation from this particular foundation can lead to support from other local funding sources.

Ms. Muckenhoupt gave a summary of the Campaign Launch Event on April 16th. She hopes it will be an annual event that will become more fundraising focused versus celebratory. While financial results are still being tallied, she believes revenues were around $11,000 with costs around $8,000. The Dover Father's Day Road Race is held in June and COAST is the nonprofit recipient of that event this year. The race is part of a series in Dover. More information will be circulated electronically to Board Members. Other charity events that occur on the Seacoast were discussed.

New Business

Action Items

Action Item #1: Proposed Customer Code of Conduct Revision

In the past month we have had situations in which we were informed passengers scheduled to ride had highly infectious diseases. In one case, the decision was made not to transport the passenger due to serious safety concerns for our staff and potentially other passengers. In all cases these conditions were only known because they were reported to us by caregivers of passengers using our demand response services.

Staff reviewed the Customer Code of Conduct, found this type of situation was not covered, researched what other public transit systems might have for policies (little found), and have proposed language covering expectations for working with passengers who have an infectious disease. The proposed new language can be found below.

> *Infectious Diseases*
> *Individuals with infectious diseases may not ride COAST if there is a risk of passing the disease to fellow passengers or COAST employees, unless that risk can be significantly mitigated without changing the nature of COAST's service. Mitigating actions may include wearing a mask for respiratory illnesses. Actions that would change the nature of COAST's services, and therefore cannot be accommodated, would be requiring the infected individual to travel alone, the vehicle to be sanitized afterward, or the driver to avoid providing standard customer assistance.*

This policy amendment is being proposed in order to maintain a safe workplace for our employees and riding experience for our passengers, as well as to set expectations when we face a situation where a passenger has an infectious disease.

Action Recommended: *That the COAST Board of Directors approve the proposed changes to the Customer Code of Conduct.*

It was asked if we had conferred with legal counsel regarding this policy change. The response was negative. It was deemed that this policy protects the fundamental nature of our service, which is the standard set by FTA when assessing an accommodation.

Ms. Joyce made a motion to approve the proposed changes to the Customer Code of Conduct. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ham.

Chair Shanahan called for a rollcall vote:

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Capello	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes

Mr. Dornblut	Yes
Ms. Garlough	Yes
Ms. Ham	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Joyce	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Mr. Sandmann	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes

Discussion Items

Discussion Item #1: Facility Sequencing/Phasing Options Workshop

Board Members were invited to a workshop on Monday, April 13 with COASTs engineers and architect for our facility project to discuss sequencing/phasing options for construction.

During the discussion four potential scenarios were outlined:

1. Sequential Construction, Remain On Site – Staff and fleet remain on site. Construction is estimated to take approximately 2 years. There will be physical constraints from construction. Cost estimate basis is the final design estimate of June 2025 ($19.54M).

2. Concurrent Construction, Relocate Off Site – Staff and fleet relocate offsite w/associated relocation costs. Construction duration reduced by approximately 8 months, lowering time-dependent costs. Improved efficiency through concurrent construction (single mobilization for major activities). Estimated construction cost savings of $300-$600K.

2A. Concurrent Construction, Relocate Fleet Only Off Site – Operations office staff and maintenance function remain active on site. Associated relocation costs for fleet relocation (potentially). Construction duration reduced by approximately 6 months, lowering time-dependent costs. Improved efficiency through concurrent construction (single mobilization for major activities). Estimated construction cost savings of $200-$500K.

3. Construct A/O/M Building Only – Staff and fleet remain on site. Delay costs of building bus storage building. Construction duration estimated to be 15 months. Will incur future cost inflation and inefficiencies when bus storage building is finally constructed. Would reduce the cost of initial construction by $5.5M.

A discussion was also had on other potential cost reduction areas including wash bay system alternatives, outdoor fueling, architectural items, walkway canopy, and site finishes.

Staff found Option 2A to be quite compelling as there is concern about finding a suitable location for the maintenance function if we had to move off site. After the meeting, some quick inquiries found there appear to be reasonable fleet storage options within proximity of our property. The reduced construction duration and cost savings are also attractive vs Option 1.

During the workshop there was discussion on building the bus storage building first vs. the A/O/M building. While that is an option, some additional context was shared on the condition of the current facility and serious concerns about its ongoing functioning even in the short term.

There were several other questions raised during the discussion:

- Why are we fueling vehicles indoors - that adds expenses and danger?
  - Answer: We store fuel and pump it into the buses inside today. Due to the climate we're in, it provides a better work environment for our staff. Otherwise, vehicle cleaners would be standing in the wind/rain/sleet/snow/cold, to refuel each bus and then must go back inside to finish their work, soaking wet.
- Is there a reason the bus operators can't fuel their own buses?
  - Answer: It is more expensive overall as they are paid much more per hour. They also are not trained currently and there is a cost associated with training them all on the procedures and counter measures should there be a fuel spill.
- Why are there so few drive through bays in the design?
  - Answer: the layout of the site, and proximity of the bus storage building, restricts the number we can have.
- Have we found any offsite locations for our staff and fleet (and maintenance) that are a reasonable option for us if we must move off site?
  - Answer: Not if we are looking for a site where we can also maintain our fleet.
- Could we potentially work with C&J, or NHDOT, or Pease?
  - Answer: Potentially. We have not approached them yet.
- It appears as if the offices are already at max capacity and there is no allowance for growth.
  - Answer: We allow staff to work remotely and share office spaces. There is suitable space in our opinion.
- Is there a drop dead date that we lose already awarded funds by?
  - Answer: We are in regular communication with the FTA Region I staff on the progress of the project. No concerns have been expressed to us about progress we are making and we continue to keep our grants in active status with drawdowns.
- What do we have available to spend today?
  - Answer: With the local funds we have today, just over $1M.
- Could a switch from a hard wall floorplan to an open space concept floor plan save both money and allow for additional staff growth?

The general consensus was that we are still a number of months away from having to make any decisions and we need to let our development efforts continue to advance. It was very good however to have a clearer understanding of our options.

A discussion followed about open concept office versus individual office both in terms of cost savings and operational challenges. Mr. Nichols explained further how some of the staging options would affect maintenance and operations. The order of construction, storage building versus operations building, was mentioned and discussed.

Committee Reports

The Finance Committee met on Monday, April 20. During the meeting, financial statements were reviewed, an update on grant activity provided and a discussion of the proposed fare increase. Mr. Nichols did a rough calculation on the proposed fare increase. Holding ridership equal with current levels, the fare increase would result in $121,000 additional revenues. If ridership drops by 5%, the revenue increase would be $96,000.

Ms. Doering reported that the NTD report did a final round of comment and submission. Now there are no outstanding issues. It takes some time for the report to be finalized by NTD. NHDOT requested an update on the action items resulting from the 2025 audit. We were able to respond that all items had been addressed and actions completed.

VII. Community Updates/Information Items

Ridership

The tables and charts that follow show where we are relative to the same month the previous fiscal year and versus the previous month.

- Overall ridership in March totaled 34,001. This was up 13.1% from February, and down 3.9% from March 2025. The extended winter weather this year negatively impacted our ridership again in March.
- Fixed route ridership totalled 31,441, up 13.5% from February, and down by 4.9% from March 2025. Average weekday ridership was 10.5% higher than in March 2025.
- Demand response ridership totaled 2,560 for the month. This represented a 9% increase from February, and a 11.7% increase in ridership from March 2025.

Dover

Ms. Joyce reported on the State of the City event and its focus on Transportation in the region. A panel included Mr. Nichols, representatives from Dover Planning and the Downeaster.

Portsmouth

Mr. Clancy invited Board Members to participate in the presentation of and feedback on the proposed Master Plan which focuses on housing and transportation.

Mr. Hebert made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Bogle.

Meeting Adjorned at 10:11a