



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

Present: Scott Bogle, Sean Clancy, Sönke Dornblut (virtual, joined at 8:42am), Colin Lentz, Joanne Neumann (virtual), Dennis Shanahan, Fred Butler (virtual), David Tovey (virtual), Denis Hebert, Kiersten Wright, Jason Garnham, Jillian Harris (virtual, joined at 9:01am)

Absent: Arthur Capello, Margaret Joyce, Emmy Ham, Michael Mates, Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro, Dave Sandmann

Staff: Rad Nichols, Margot Doering, Joanne Muckenhoupt, Vanessa Polychronis, 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 September 25, 2025 meeting and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the minutes and Chair Shanahan took the vote.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Tovey	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes
Mr. Garnham	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

III. Public Comment

No public comment was made at the meeting.

IV. Financial Report

No financial report was made during the meeting. Financial statistics were presented in the written meeting packet prior to the meeting.

V. Old Business

Mr. Nichols gave updates on the following.

Staffing

Since last month our staffing situation has not gotten much better. Not all our operating staff out on medical-related leaves are back in the driving seat, and some new staff are out. Thankfully our mechanic that had been out is back at work. We remain at an all-time high for the organization in terms of staff out on leave.

We are advertising and interviewing for one additional CDL operator currently.

We did lose some service last month, but not nearly as much as we had thought we might. That said, it has taken a toll on our staff and signs of burnout are evident. Despite the service changes implemented in early October, we remain in a situation where Supervisors and Dispatchers are regularly driving large parts of their workday.

We have two CDL Operators who have been hired and are preparing to start.

Mr. Hebert asked for clarification on the reason for absences. Mr. Nichols clarified they were FMLA-related absences.

Route 7 On Demand is now the [COAST Connector: Newmarket - Exeter](#)

The rebranding of this service is complete. Ridership in the first week was very strong. Based on the budget we are limiting daily bookings to 10 one-way trips, unless there are groups who wish to travel together. We will reassess this approach after four months of operations. We have not performed much advertising for this service as of yet.

Mr. Hebert asked how this service is funded.

Mr. Nichols responded that the funding types are 5311 FTA rural funding, which is new to COAST as of October 2025, then Newmarket and Exeter each provide match, and finally COAST has a grant from a local foundation providing a significant portion of the funding (more than the towns).

Mr. Bogle asked if the trips are between the towns or within the towns. Mr. Williams replied that it is a variety, but we would have to check the data to give a precise answer. Mr. Nichols added that in the next few months COAST will get a better sense for demand and what to expect with the expanded service area.

October Service Adjustments

All service adjustments went into effect on October 4. Fixed route ridership for the month has been very strong so far and is currently projected to top FY25 for the month.

CommuteSMART Seacoast

COAST will begin advertising for a full-time position to lead CommuteSMART Seacoast again very soon. This program is funded through a five-year FTA CMAQ grant award we finally executed over the course of the summer. Ideally, we are looking to bring on this new staff

member before the end of the year or just after the new year. However, we have limits on administrative workload due to staff absences.

Ms. Wright asked for an explanation of CommuteSMART. Mr. Nichols explained that it is a marketing and communications effort encouraging people to use alternative modes of transportation that is greener, cleaner, or more affordable. Mr. Bogle added that it started as a mitigation measure for the Spaulding Turnpike widening. Mr. Nichols commented on how successful the program was and how well received it has been with the local business community.

Facility Update

Given staff shortages in September and early October, progress on final owner comments on the final design plans has been delayed. Most feedback has been provided at this point, except on the civil drawings. A meeting on October 21, 2025 occurred involving review of COAST's comments with the architect.

Mr. Hebert expressed several comments about the facility. He said he has concerns with the energy consumption of the facility, and particularly the bus storage building. Mr. Hebert expressed not being in support of putting in heated space for the buses. He said this was not a frugal use of funding. Second, Mr. Hebert expressed concern about all vehicles being stored in a single building due to the risk of fleet loss during a fire. He did not feel there were sufficient fire protection measures in the design, such as a two hour fire wall or multiple storage buildings for the vehicles to separate them. Last, Mr. Hebert expressed that the delay to construct is resulting in the cost to construct rising. He recommend that COAST build something now rather than wait for everything, and recommended the bus storage facility be the first to be built.

Mr. Nichols responded that he shares the concern about cost escalation. He said staff have looked into cost cutting measures, including not heating the vehicle storage building. Staff have also spoken with the engineers about fire protection and will likely get a fire protection engineer involved. A two-hour fire wall is an option for the facility storage building, but it would not be effective during for example an electric vehicle fire.

Mr. Hebert also raised a concern that the energy consumption study has not been completed. Mr. Nichols replied that the Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing (MEP) engineers are working on this study. Mr. Hebert stated this has been the case for some time and his community is pushing for more information.

Mr. Shanahan responded that he has discussed this concern with Mr. Nichols. He also recounted how delay was created when the MEP firm tried to back out and it took months to get them working on the project again. Mr. Shanahan also stated that this board will need to decide in the next several months what the future of the new facility is, and what phasing may be necessary.

Mr. Hebert expressed concern about the possibility of losing funding for the facility due to delay. Mr. Nichols replied that the federal funds have been on a grant for a year and a half, and COAST has two to three more years before being at risk of losing the money. Additionally, COAST is drawing on the funds for design, so the grant is not inactive.

Mr. Bogle asked how much of the federal funding could be used given the amount of local match accumulated. Mr. Nichols said it isn't enough to start construction.

VI. New Business

Action Items

Action Item #1: Approval of the Safety Plan (revision 7)

Mr. Williams presented the updated Safety Plan. We have recently completed annual updates to a draft of our revised Safety Plan. Updates included updated revision numbers, dates, the safety hazard list, and the performance measures and targets. An internal review of the document revealed no policy or higher-level changes are needed at this time.

Additionally, COAST's Joint Loss Management Committee (JLMC) reviewed and provided feedback that they had no additional requested changes.

Action Requested: *The COAST Board of Directors approve the Safety Plan revision 7.*

Mr. Lentz made a motion to approve the plan and Mr. Bogle seconded the motion.

Mr. Garnham asked about the levels of violence against drivers represented in the safety performance measures. He also asked what training and resources drivers are given. Mr. Williams responded that the number of assaults is high and that this figure includes both verbal assaults and physical assaults in the FTA definition. He also explained that drivers receive de-escalation training and have access to an Employee Assistance Program.

Chair Shanahan took the vote once discussion had ended.

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Tovey	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes
Mr. Garnham	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #2: Approval of the Transit Asset Management and Maintenance Plan (revision 10), including the FY26-30 Capital Spending Plan

Mr. Williams presented the updated Transit Asset Management and Maintenance Plan (revision 10). COAST prepares an update to our Transit Asset Management and Maintenance Plan annually to ensure it accurately reflects our current asset conditions, needs, and maintenance procedures. This update resulted in an updated vehicle inventory list, fleet needs assessment, and updated replacement costs/schedules for some of our planned capital purchases.

Additionally, the Transit Asset Management and Maintenance Plan contains our 5-year capital spending schedule in Appendix F. This schedule has been updated in accordance with the updates to the Plan itself.

Action Requested: *The COAST Board of Directors approve the Transit Asset Management and Maintenance Plan (revision 10), including the FY26-30 Capital Spending Plan.*

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

Mr. Bogle	Yes
Mr. Clancy	Yes
Mr. Lentz	Yes
Ms. Neumann	Yes
Mr. Shanahan	Yes
Mr. Tovey	Yes
Mr. Hebert	Yes
Ms. Wright	Yes
Mr. Garnham	Yes
Mr. Dornblut	Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item #3: Consideration of an Age Limit for COAST Connector (Newmarket - Exeter) and General Demand Response Services

Mr. Nichols explained the reason for this proposed action. COAST Connector services, specifically the rebranded Newmarket-Exeter Connector, and our general demand response services are unique demand response services we operate in that they are not targeted for older adults or people living with disabilities. They are open to anyone.

On our fixed route services and our general demand response service, we currently require passengers aged 12 and under to be accompanied by an adult.

Given the very personalized, often one-on-one nature of demand response services such as the COAST Connector and our general demand response service, we are proposing that minors (those under 18) not be allowed to ride unaccompanied. This has recently arisen with the rebranding of Route 7 On Demand to the Newmarket-Exeter Connector and minors for the first time inquiring about using the service.

It is commonplace for services such as Uber and Lyft to not allow unaccompanied minors to ride alone on their services. Drivers of these services are required to confirm a passenger's age if they suspect they are under 18 and can refuse the ride if the passenger is underage.

There are no restrictions on COAST from our federal or state partners that would prevent us setting an age limit of 18 for these services.

Action Requested: *That the board of directors limit COAST Connector and General Demand Response services to adults (18 years or older) unless accompanied by an adult.*

Mr. Lentz asked if there are concerns about legal liability. He expressed that without legal liability children using transit may be a good thing. Mr. Nichols said there is some potential exposure but COAST does not know how much. He gave the example that COAST could

deliver a minor to an address where we don't know what is happening there. Mr. Hebert asked if we have data on minors using the on demand service due to lack of transportation to community events and appointments. Mr. Nichols stated he has no knowledge of minors using the service in the past and this issue is new due to the expanded nature of the service.

Chair Shanahan asked for a motion to enable discussion. Mr. Bogle made a motion to take the requested action and Mr. Clancy seconded the motion.

Mr. Bogle asked how many resources may be used up by students at the Academy, versus others in the community. Mr. Hebert suggested limiting the age may result in a lawsuit. Mr. Nichols clarified that the new policy would not prohibit minors, simply require them to be accompanied. Mr. Dornblut asked what would constitute "accompanied." Mr. Nichols replied the minor riding with anyone over the age of eighteen and it does not need to be a relation. Mr. Bogle asked if a student who was nineteen could ride with their minor friends. Mr. Nichols replied that they could.

Ms. Polychronis added that the concern is around safety and COAST's responsibility to not drop minors off in an unsafe situation. Mr. Lentz asked whether the same issues apply to fixed route. Mr. Nichols said the difference is the personalized nature of the service and the likelihood of riding alone with the driver. Mr. Lentz said it would be a shame to limit transit usage for a demographic that are trying to be independent, though acknowledged it is a difficult situation that could drain COAST's resources.

Mr. Dornblut expressed concern about the age eighteen cut off and suggested a sixteen cut off. This would result in parity with other sixteen-year-olds that can drive. Mr. Nichols suggested bringing the issue back to the towns for their opinion.

Chair. Shanahan asked what the implementation plan would be if adopted. Mr. Williams said it would be added to the information on our website. Mr. Nichols added it could be on COAST's printed materials.

Mr. Hebert expressed concern with the conversation, expressing that other transportation systems allow children and that COAST is an alternative to children driving drunk. Ms. Polychronis reminded that this is an advance reservation service where trips need to be planned in advance. Mr. Nichols added that it does not run in the evening. Ms. Doering asked if COAST's knowledge of the drop off location makes this service different than fixed route in terms of COAST's liability.

Chair Shanahan asked if there was consensus to table this item and send it back to the communities for review. Mr. Garnham asked if COAST could bring this issue to our attorney for review. Mr. Nichols said we could do that.

Mr. Bogle withdrew his motion and Mr. Clancy also withdrew his second. No vote was taken on this action item.

VII. Discussion Items

Discussion Item #1: Development Update

Ms. Muckenhoupt gave an update on COAST's development efforts.

Events: COAST is the new hosting non-profit for the Dover Father's Day road race. Ms. Muckenhoupt is preparing to engage potential sponsors and is now the race director. There is potential for funding and exposure. There will also be a new lunch-and-learn series. The first will be in November at 42 Sumner Dr. The goal is to allow potential donors to see the need in person. In the spring there will be a larger celebration of the campaign instead of a launch now.

Capital Campaign materials are being updated. The public phase is being met with some interest. COAST was awarded a \$50,000 donation through the NH Charitable Foundation. The video is in progress of being updated with the feedback received from the annual meeting. Two grant applications are going out this month. The webpage is also being updated. COAST will be sending an annual appeal letter out this year for the first time. This letter is in support of COAST's annual budget.

VIII. Committee Reports

Nothing to report

IX. Community Updates/Information Items

Ridership

- Overall ridership in September totaled 35,379. This was down 1.9% from August, and up 3.9% over September 2024.
- Fixed route ridership totalled 32,913, down 2.2% from August, and up by 2.7% from September 2024. Fixed route ridership ended the year 10.1% over FY24 and 95.5% of our FY19 (pre-pandemic) levels. Routes that experienced the largest percentage growth rates were Routes 12 (+20%), 1 (+16%), 41 (+16%), and 13 (+14%).
- Demand response ridership totaled 2,466 for the month. This represented a 2.7% increase from August, and a 24% increase over ridership in September 2024. Demand response ridership ended the year 9.4% over FY24 and 110.7% of our FY19 (pre-pandemic) levels. Services that experienced the largest percentage growth rates were Accessible VDP rides (+124%), Rte. 7 OD (+38%), and Community Rides (+14%).

Mr. Lentz shared his plan to present at the upcoming GACIT public meetings on behalf of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Hebert observed the NH has low toll rates compared to our neighbors and that he felt an increase in the gas tax would be beneficial.

Mr. Bogle asked if there was a NH court decision on whether gas tax revenue can be used for rubber tired buses. Mr. Nichols responded that his testimony to GACIT is that this question should be clarified and the revenue should be allowed to be used for transit.

Mr. Hebert noted COAST's cost per rider to operate needs to be reduced. He made a comparison to Uber's rates as an example. Mr. Nichols said COAST can reduce the per rider cost by having more riders. Mr. Hebert said we should also look at reducing spending. Mr. Lentz said COAST's pay and benefits for drivers is a positive difference between COAST and Uber. Mr. Bogle said COAST also provides more driver training and has responsibility for ADA paratransit services, which Uber does not. Ms. Wright said Uber is not always available.

Mr. Hebert said he presented the budget to Newington. He noted COAST's ask of Newington went up, even while the quantity of service was reduced. He said this was a difficult ask.

X. Adjournment

Approved November 19, 2025

Mr. Shanahan asked for a motion to adjourn which was made by Mr. Lentz and seconded by Mr. Garnham. The meeting was adjourned at 9:46 am.

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Joyce, Secretary