



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, April 22, 2015**

Members Present: Scott Bogle (Past Chairman), Jen Decker (Secretary/Treasurer), Eric Eby, Colin Lentz, Kenn Ortmann (Chairman), Marty Pepin, David Sandmann, John Stoll and Maria Stowell

COAST Staff Present: Rad Nichols, Jeff Donald, Heather Hesse-Stromberg, Brian Deguzis

Others Present: Kristin Murphy

I. Call to Order

Introductions were made and the discussion began at 8:32 AM. Mr. Ortmann apologized for not attending the March Board Meeting at which there was no quorum present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Pepin made a motion to accept the minutes. Mr. Bogle seconded. All voted in favor to approve the minutes.

III. Public Comment

Mr. Nichols reported there was no public comment submitted. He noted, however, that the Coordination Program received an award from NEPTA (Northeast Public Transportation Association) for its work. Mr. Donald spoke about the recent developments in the Coordination Program with regard to Purchase of Service and marketing to seniors.

Mr. Nichols reported that commuteSMARTseacoast also received an award that will be discussed at the May meeting.

IV. Financial Report

February 2015 Income Statement and Balance Sheet

Mr. Nichols reported that fare revenue continues to be under budget. He noted that the winter weather significantly impacted ridership. Mr. Nichols also noted that advertising revenue continues to be down, but is getting closer to being on budget and the contracts currently in process will get us to the budgeted amount.

Mr. Nichols reported that COAST is running under budget in wages and benefits. We received a refund of \$41,000 from HealthTrust.

Mr. Nichols informed the Board that the Affordable Care Act is presenting many areas in which changes might need to be made going forward. In particular, COAST needs to revisit PTO

(Paid Time Off) use of Part-Time employees so that PTO isn't used to cause them to be qualified as Full-Time workers.

Mr. Sandmann asked about the status of Portsmouth Hospital's advertising. Mr. Nichols indicated that Portsmouth Regional Hospital is undergoing some major transitions so have not been reengaging many prior contracts. He also noted that any contact from Portsmouth Regional Hospital would likely go through ATA (Alternate Transit Advertising).

V. Old Business

Staffing Updates

Mr. Nichols informed the Board that COAST is doing more fleet maintenance in-house and has hired another Full-Time mechanic, bringing the number of mechanics to 3 plus the Manager of Fleet Maintenance. Mr. Nichols noted that our current vehicle to mechanic ratio is 10 vehicles per mechanic and informed the Board that the industry norm is 7-8 vehicles per mechanic.

Mr. Nichols reported that we continue to conduct interviews for the Bookkeeper/Office Manager and have just finished up the round of first interviews with the second round to take place next week.

Two additional openings are upcoming, a Full-Time Demand Response Supervisor and a Part-Time Receptionist/Administrative Assistant.

Farmington Shelter Request

Mr. Nichols informed the Board that Farmington has requested to keep the shelter they have and have requested an additional shelter which would be a total of 3 in Farmington. It was noted that, per our shelter policy, none of the stops in Farmington warrant a shelter. Farmington wants COAST to provide the shelter and they have offered to pay to install it. Each shelter costs approximately \$8,000.

Mr. Bogle asked if we would consider any of Farmington's costs as match. Mr. Nichols stated that their pouring of the pad and install would be considered match.

Mr. Ortmann asked about the value of advertising opportunities on the shelter. Mr. Nichols stated that Farmington might be inclined to allow shelter advertising and that it would be packaged with other ATA advertising.

Mr. Eby asked if COAST sees an uptick in ridership after a shelter installed. Mr. Nichols reported that while we do not usually see a rise in ridership it does provide significant support to the current ridership. Ms. Decker asked for an explanation of the current policy on the conditions warranting a shelter. Mr. Nichols informed the Board that the most significant factor in the consideration of whether a shelter is warranted is the number of boardings/day. Mr. Nichols stated that it would be the preference to move the shelter to where it could be better utilized. Mr. Pepin asked whether we had had trouble with Farmington funding our request. Mr. Nichols reminded the Board that the community's support was instrumental in securing funding for COAST at the 2014 Town Meeting.

Mr. Pepin noted that buying the shelter for Farmington might be a good way for building bridges with Farmington.

Mr. Bogle suggested that we amend our policy to indicate that if a community wants a shelter in place that is not warranted, it requires a 50% cash match.

Mr. Eby asked if there are any businesses nearby that can benefit from the shelter. Ms. Murphy asked if Farmington has said why it wants the shelter. Mr. Nichols noted that a shelter might mitigate the perception that our riders are “straying” from the areas of the bus stops which has been an issue in the past.

Ms. Decker asked if we know the real reason Farmington wants the shelter kept there when there is such low ridership.

Mr. Ortmann asked if we anticipate upgrading shelter to those that allow for advertising. He wondered if we could use the non-advertising shelters elsewhere. Mr. Sandmann wondered if that would be cost-effective. Mr. Nichols thought it might be.

Mr. Ortmann wondered if Farmington might work with us to move the existing shelter to the new location and we could offer them the Somersworth shelter when it is replaced.

Mr. Ortmann asked for a monthly update on the status of shelters.

Executive Director Review

Mr. Ortmann informed the Board that the Committee will meet after the Board Meeting to set up a time to get together.

Facility Updates

Mr. Nichols reported that furniture has been ordered and we anticipate being in the new space mid-late May.

VI. New Business

ACTION ITEMS

Advertising Policy & Guidelines Revision

The Advertising Policy is ready to be adopted. Mr. Nichols reviewed the changes that have been made to the policy and guidelines including:

- Clarifying language that when it comes to accepting advertising, generating revenue is the primary purpose of advertising, not creating a public forum for discourse (Section1).
- Reserve the right to require advertisers to add a disclaimer that an advertisement is not sponsored by, and does not necessarily reflect the views of, COAST and also reserve the right to require an advertiser specify who is the sponsor of an advertisement.
- Create a “Permitted Advertising Content” section, with categories including (1) Commercial and Promotional Advertising and (2) Limited Government and Non-Profit Advertising.
- Rename the “Advertising Policy, Guidelines and Rationales” section to “Prohibited Advertising Content.”
- Clearly define advertisements that contain “controversial content” under Section 3.3 of the Policy.

- Clearly define controversial topics in advertisements that COAST wishes to prohibit in the future under Section 3.6.
- In order to remain 'viewpoint neutral', either limit non-commercial speech entirely, or allow non-commercial advertising under limited circumstances.
- Review language in Section 3.5(b) to limit potential liability.
- Consider removal of the word 'controversial' in Section 3.3
- Add two new Prohibited Advertising Sections: (1) False, Misleading or Deceptive Advertising and (2) Advertising that contains material that is an infringement of copyright, trademark or service mark and is otherwise illegal.

We have proposed incorporating all of the recommendations.

Mr. Nichols noted that COAST used both Seattle and Chicago transit advertising policies as models and consulted with our corporate attorney.

Mr. Sandmann made a motion to accept the policy as written and Mr. Pepin seconded. All voted in favor.

NHDOT Contract – Certificate of Vote/Authority

Mr. Nichols informed the Board that in order for FTA 5310 and 5339 funds to be awarded to COAST, NHDOT and COAST must enter into an agreement that the funds will be managed by NHDOT.

Mr. Bogle made a motion to authorize Mr. Nichols to enter into such an agreement and Mr. Sandmann seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

ROUTE 7 PUBLIC HEARINGS AND OPTIONS

Mr. Nichols informed the Board that COAST held 4 public hearings that saw a very large turnout and very strong attendee participation. Although there was much discussion of strategy and opportunities for people to get involved Mr. Nichols has not seen any movement since the meetings. COAST has been exploring options with Exeter and Newmarket as they are the only funding communities remaining.

Mr. Deguzis, Manager of Operations and Planning, presented several possible options for continuing some level of service to the funding communities along with associated costs and how those would be covered by the municipal contributions.

Mr. Bogle asked whether many riders utilize Amtrak. Mr. Nichols noted that it is rare that someone uses COAST to go to, or from, the Amtrak Station.

Mr. Nichols noted that 5 days of service would be similar in cost to the current service but would be of great benefit to the ADA riders.

Ms. Decker commended COAST staff for how they handled the Public Hearings. Mr. Nichols noted he had never seen such high Board Member participation at a Public Hearing before and there were several Board members in attendance.

LOCAL MATCH UPDATE (SOMERSWORTH)

Mr. Nichols was asked to attend a Somersworth Finance Committee meeting on April 14th as a follow-up to the April 4th Budget Workshop at which COAST's funding request was discussed.

At the Finance Committee meeting two main topics were discussed: bus shelter advertising and use of vehicle registration fees collected for COAST.

The Committee voted to advance the concept of shelter advertising and discussed, but was unable to come to consensus on, the use of vehicle registration fees.

There was no discussion about the possibility of a surcharge being implemented.

Mr. Pepin expressed serious concerns about the Committee and Council not being fully aware of the impact a surcharge will have on riders. He urged that the public be notified of the Public hearing on May 4th and come to discuss the hardship a surcharge would cause.

Mr. Ortmann asked Mr. Pepin if there was anything the Board could do to help educate the community. Mr. Pepin indicated that COAST's assistance in getting the word out to riders would be very helpful.

Ms. Decker noted that there are a high number of riders from Somersworth who live at Somersworth Housing Authority sites and suggested we target some outreach to those sites. Mr. Pepin reported that some of the Council members are also on the Somersworth Housing Board.

Mr. Nichols asked if Somersworth allows shelter advertising and a \$6,000 additional contribution is given do we consider that a good faith effort by Somersworth? That would mean that Somersworth made up for \$18,000 of its \$23,000 deficit. Mr. Pepin stated that he is fearful that if they don't experience some penalty they will not act.

Mr. Nichols suggested a lower surcharge if they come half-way. Mr. Ortmann expressed concern that that might send a mixed message like "you've done all of this to provide funding but you're still going to have to pay a surcharge." He noted, however, that Somersworth's forward movement is a must. Mr. Sandmann suggested that perhaps Somersworth needs to feel some pain. Mr. Pepin stressed that the people who will feel the pain are the riders, not the city representatives. Ms. Decker agreed with Mr. Pepin. Mr. Eby suggested we see what they come up with and tailor the surcharge based on their contribution. Mr. Bogle asked if riders really understand the reality of a \$1.00 surcharge. Mr. Nichols indicated that riders are aware but need to be better educated about why this is happening and what it really means. Mr. Decker noted that no matter what the situation is, people will see it as COAST doing this.

Mr. Ortmann urged the Board to come to some consensus to provide guidance to COAST staff. All agreed that we need to get people to the hearings to talk about the realities of a surcharge. Ms. Murphy suggested we develop a Fact Sheet for riders that we put on the buses that provides a Budget Snapshot. She noted this could also be used to educate Council members. Mr. Pepin agreed that that would facilitate them seeing that what they do has an impact.

Mr. Ortmann summarized that we want to recognize progress Somersworth makes in narrowing the gap but that the gap should be addressed with a surcharge.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Board Development Committee (BDC) met on April 8th. The Committee continues to focus on member recruitment and securing alternates for all Board Members to encourage attendance and engagement.

The BDC developed a Board Member Agreement, a draft of which was distributed and feedback was requested by the end of April.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Mr. Nichols thanked Strafford Regional Planning Commission and Rockingham Planning Commission for their assistance in helping COAST obtain a STIP adjustment. NHDOT has transferred \$400,000 to COAST from the Boston UZA and will allow COAST to go after new buses or other capital projects.

Ridership through March was down 2.4% due to bad weather and no longer contracting with Lamprey Health Care. Mr. Nichols noted there were gains on Routes 6 and 7.

Mr. Ortmann noted he is putting together an Executive Committee meeting for ED performance review.

Community Updates

None

Adjournment

Mr. Sandmann made a motion to adjourn at 10:07, second by Mr. Pepin. All voted in favor.