



New Free Transfer Program Pilot Announced

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

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On January 3, 2022, the Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) will ring in the New Year by piloting a free transfer program on fixed route buses. The pilot will run for six months until June 30.

Transfers will be valid for immediate transfer to the next available bus on the desired route. Customers paying with cash or single ride tickets will be issued a free transfer ticket if they request it while boarding their first bus. For a trip involving two different routes to get to a destination, the full cash fare will be cut in half, from \$3.00 to \$1.50. For individuals who qualify for COAST's half fare program, trips involving two different routes will go from \$1.50 to \$0.75.

"Free transfers are not something COAST has ever tried implementing before," remarked Rad Nichols, COAST Executive Director. "Our redesigned system likely causes more riders to transfer between routes, and we are hoping this pilot gives us the data we need to evaluate its benefit to riders and financial impact on the organization."

Passengers who remain on a single vehicle to their destination will continue to not need a transfer, including on routes that change number along the way (such as 12S, which continues as 13S to Portsmouth).

COAST ADA paratransit passengers will also benefit from the six month pilot. The fares charged for their equivalent two-legged trips will also be cut in half because of the free transfers offered on the fixed route buses.

The goals of the new program are to make riding with COAST simpler, reduce costs for passengers traveling on multiple routes on COAST's system, and to encourage increased ridership overall.

Nichols continued, "Near the end of the six month trial period, COAST will evaluate the impacts of the free transfer program on ridership, operations, and revenues to determine whether it will continue."

COAST has provided public transit service to the Seacoast New Hampshire region since 1982. COAST is a non-profit agency, operating a regional public transit system that relies primarily on federal and local government support to operate. COAST is governed by a board of directors

representing the communities served, two regional planning commissions, and many local and state agencies. COAST's vision is to be an innovative leader in providing a broad range of public transportation services, connecting, and coordinating a robust network of transportation options for everyone.

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