



## Operator Shortage Forcing Temporary Suspension of Some Services

**\*\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\*\***

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**DOVER, NH** – Like many local, regional, and national employers who rely on commercial vehicle operators, COAST is suffering from a lack of qualified CDL Bus Drivers. “We have been operating with an ongoing driver shortage for most of the last six years,” stated Rad Nichols, COAST Executive Director. Unfortunately, over the past few months the shortage has grown, and the region’s public transit provider is now unable to meet all its published service schedules. “The pinch we’re feeling most recently is because we have lost a number of employees who moved out of the area, retired, or due to health related issues,” confirmed Nichols.

In May, COAST raised the starting wages for its CDL Bus Drivers by 9.3 percent to \$21.25 per hour. After a CDL Bus Driver completes their first year, the wage rate increases by an average of 8.3 percent per year through their fourth anniversary. COAST’s wage scale is also increased annually to account for inflation. COAST regularly has overtime opportunities which result in time and a half for all hours worked over 40 in a week.

Nichols added, “We’re very proud of the benefits package we offer to our employees too. Our benefits include medical, dental, disability, life, generous paid time off, SIMPLE IRA with employer match, and many others. Our employees regularly comment that our benefits are some of the best they’ve ever had.”

Since announcing the new wage rates in May, COAST has hired 3 new full and part time CDL Bus Drivers, which will fill one third of COAST’s CDL job openings once they successfully complete their training.

COAST provides a comprehensive paid training program that allows operators to be fully prepared prior to driving routes on their own. Unfortunately, COAST cannot train drivers to get their commercial driver’s license, due to liability insurance restrictions, however COAST can help CDL drivers earn their passenger endorsement, if needed.

Until COAST reaches adequate staffing levels, the following services will be temporarily suspended:

### Monday – Saturday

- every other run of Routes 40 and 43 during the PM shift (after 1:30pm). On Route 40 this will mean that the following runs will not operate: 2-3pm and 6-7pm. On Route 43 this will mean that the following runs will not operate: 1:30-2:00pm (outbound), 3-4pm, 5-6pm, and 7-8pm. The last normal runs (inbound and outbound) for both routes will be preserved. When a bus

from one route continues service on a different route, no additional fare will be charged. This saves one full shift Monday-Saturday in the PM.

### Saturdays Only

- every other run of Routes 1 and 33 during the PM shift (after 3:30pm). On Route 1 this will mean that the following runs will not operate: 3:30-4:30pm and 5:30-6:30pm. On Route 33 this will mean that the following runs will not operate: 4:30-5:30pm and 6:30-7:30pm. Except for the last inbound departure on Rte. 33 from the Dover Arena and Outdoor Pool, the last normal runs for both routes will be preserved. The last run inbound from the Dover Arena and Outdoor Pool stop will be at 5:57pm. When a bus from one route continues service on a different route, no additional fare will be charged. This saves one full shift on Saturdays in the PM.

This suspension of service will begin on Saturday, June 19 and will last until COAST is able to return to adequate staffing levels. Nichols confirmed, “the sole reason COAST is suspending these services is due to the shortage of CDL drivers to operate our schedules. This represents a very small overall reduction in the services we offer.” For more details on specific runs that will not be operated, please see COAST’s website at [www.coastbus.org](http://www.coastbus.org).

Being a public transit bus driver can be an incredibly rewarding career, where every day you help your many passengers safely get to work or school and back, go to doctor appointments, make trips to the grocery store or local retailers, meet up with friends for a day or an evening out, or otherwise go about their daily lives. COAST buses are “rolling neighborhoods” that represent each of the 13 communities in which they operate. Friendships are formed, life stories and struggles are shared, and successes are celebrated. COAST bus drivers get to experience all of that first-hand.

If you have a commercial driver’s license and are looking for a change and a great work environment, please visit [www.coastbus.org/careers](http://www.coastbus.org/careers).

**The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST)** has provided public transit service to the Seacoast New Hampshire region since 1982. COAST is a public, non-profit 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 is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

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