



Service Delivery Improvement Coming to Newmarket & Exeter

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

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Dover, NH – COAST currently operates its bus service, known as Route 7, between Newmarket and Exeter four days a week during daytime hours. This route connects pre-determined stops along a set schedule. After two plus years of operating the service, the organization believes changing the way service is delivered from the current fixed-route to a reservation-based demand response model will produce a more attractive service for both existing and potential new customers, expand the potential reach of the service, and be a more efficient use of resources. COAST's coming service changes are explained below and are a way to improve existing service without increased investment.

Current Route 7 Service

The existing bus route follows a fixed route pattern, meaning it travels between pre-determined stops on a set schedule. Where urban density creates sufficient demand, this is the most efficient type of service. However, Newmarket and Exeter's demand opens the door to a more flexible demand response service that would not be possible in other areas.

Coming Service

COAST will be replacing the existing Route 7 bus service with a reservation-based demand response service open to the general public in a service area anywhere within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of current Route 7 bus stops. This service will operate the same days and times as the existing Route 7. This type of service will have three distinct advantages:

- customers can be picked up and dropped off right at their preferred locations within the service area, resulting in a higher customer service experience,
- customers with disabilities will see no change in service, but will no longer have to go through COAST's ADA eligibility process for service within this corridor, and
- providing a service based on advanced reservations allows a higher efficiency of service.

The existing bus stops will remain in place and be called "Designated Stops." Customers who make a reservation to be picked up and dropped off at a designated stop will pay the current fare of \$1.50 for a one-way ride. Customers who request an alternative pick-up or drop-off point (or both) within the service area will be charged a fare of \$3.00 for a one-way ride. Under this structure, none of COAST's

customers will see a fare increase for equivalent service. However, the option for service all the way to/from their chosen location within the service area is open to everyone.

Specific Service Parameters

- To schedule rides, customers will simply call the regional transportation call center, known as Triplink
- Reservation requests must be made by 4:00pm the weekday before (by Friday for Monday trips)
- Customers may set up standing rides for trips they take routinely
- Actual pick up and drop off times may vary by up to an hour from the customer's requested time to facility grouping customers on trips, increasing efficiency. Actual times will be communicated to the customer in advance. COAST will ensure customers who need to be at an appointment by a specific time have that time honored within the service guidelines
- Reservations will be limited to the number a single non-CDL vehicle can accommodate, or be negotiated with the passenger for up to one hour in either direction of the original request
- Fixed Route discounts, passes, and half-fare conditions will continue to apply at designated stops
- No discounts will be allowed at non-designated stops
- Service would operate Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday with pick-ups allowed between 9:30am and 5:15pm

The rollout of the revised service will take approximately 2-1/2 months, with multiple public information meetings scheduled in late May to explain the project and the resulting new schedules. The expectation is that the revised service will be implemented on Monday, July 2.

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.

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