



Elimination of Route 7 Bus Service Proposed

Lack of Local Financial Support Cited

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dover, NH – For a number of years, some communities along Route 7 have not fully funded COAST’s financial requests, resulting in the need to reexamine whether the service could be sustained. Over the fall and winter, COAST staff held several meetings with key stakeholders along the bus route to examine alternatives to a proposed elimination of Route 7. Ultimately, without adequate local financial support COAST cannot continue to sustain Route 7 bus service (which serves to connect Exeter, Newmarket, Stratham, Greenland, Portsmouth, and Newington). Unfortunately, the discussions did not result in solutions to avoid the elimination of Route 7. The proposed elimination also includes all associated complementary ADA paratransit service along the portions of the corridor serviced solely by Route 7.

After years of making small adjustments to the service in order to increase ridership (which are just now having positive impacts), Route 7 continues to have the lowest number of riders per hour of all routes in the COAST system. This is partly a function of; (1) the very limited schedule COAST is able to operate, (2) the large geographic area the route covers and, (3) the rural nature of large segments of the bus route. At the same time, for those who ride the service, Route 7 serves as a critical connection between the six communities it serves.

Unfortunately, the low ridership has negatively impacted the willingness of municipalities served by Route 7 to provide financial support. Three communities have now eliminated, or are proposing elimination of, any funding for the route. The end result is an annual shortfall in excess of \$45,000 in local support needed to operate the route. The lack of adequate political and financial support makes the route no longer practical. The proposed elimination of services would tentatively take effect on Monday, June 29, 2015.

COAST Executive Director, Rad Nichols, stated, “Proposing the elimination of Route 7 and the associated ADA paratransit services has been extremely difficult. I understand how these services are an absolute lifeline for many of our riders. Unfortunately, there simply are not sufficient funds to continue their operation.”

It is hoped that at least two of the communities currently served by Route 7 will work with COAST to maintain some level of service within their community. However, any future service would operate very differently than the current Route 7 bus service.

As required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) whenever a significant service change is proposed, COAST is working on establishing a meeting schedule for public outreach meetings related to

the proposed elimination of Route 7. As soon as the meeting locations and times are established COAST will publish an announcement. It is anticipated that these meetings will take place in late March and early April. After the public outreach meetings and the receipt of public comments on the proposed changes, the COAST Board of Directors could take a final action on the proposal to eliminate all Route 7 services. The earliest time at which this action could be taken would be at their April 22 meeting.

For more information on these proposed service adjustments, visit www.coastbus.org or call COAST at (603) 743-5777.

The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) has provided public transit service to the Seacoast New Hampshire region since 1982. Nearly 13 million passengers have boarded COAST buses in that time. COAST is a public, non-profit transit system that relies primarily on federal and local government support to operate.