



Spring 2022 Update

COAST

COAST's mission is to champion and provide customer-focused public transportation with a commitment to excellence in safety and service.

Message from the Executive Director



Spring has arrived! Signaling a period of transition and excitement as we move from winter to summer. This year's spring is most certainly a time of transition and excitement for COAST this year. Here are a few things that we want you to focus on and take away from this update.

This March we welcomed more riders back than in any month since March 2020 when the pandemic began. We are welcoming more and more riders back onto the region's public transit system all the time, and it is great to see old friends, as well as new faces, more and more. Of course, in April, with the TSA mask mandate going by the wayside, we have gotten to see the faces and smiles of many of our passengers again.

In March we also received news on just how much the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law would specifically impact our annual allocation of FTA funds in the state and region. In FY22 we will see a 28.6% overall increase in FTA 5307 small urban funds allocated to our region. These increased funds are critical for us to meet growing demand for our services in the face of inflationary pressures. Of course, as the

federal government increases their investments in public transit infrastructure, without matching funds to leverage this additional investment, we can't put it to work here in New Hampshire.

Just like for you, it is painful to see the prices at the gas pumps so high. When a 10,000-gallon tanker truck pulls up to drop their load of diesel in our tanks every 3 weeks or so, we shudder to think of the upcoming bill. Given the retail prices of gas, we have boldly rolled out a new campaign comparing the price of a tank of gas to the cost of a monthly pass (\$52) good for unlimited miles and rides on COAST. The campaign has been very well received. Maybe you have seen it on our vehicles or on social media?

This update we are highlighting a very successful collaboration with CAPSC over the winter to support the Willand Pond Warming Shelter. The transition to a shelter offering daily respite for the homeless happened quickly last fall and we were happy to be able to help in that transition and assist individuals get to and from the shelter all through the winter.

Plans for our new 48,000 square foot administration, operations, and maintenance facility on our current property continue to move forward. We are currently working on finishing the conceptual and preliminary designs and obtaining permitting, so we can hopefully start active construction next summer. We continue to pursue available funding opportunities and have had some recent and notable success on that front that we hope to be able announce broadly very soon.

And finally, this spring COAST is celebrating our 40th anniversary of providing service. Since delivering our first passenger in 1982, COAST has given 15.6 million rides to people in the Greater Seacoast region, affordably linking them with work, school, doctor appointments, shopping, and social events. It is an honor and a privilege to have been able to perform our work on behalf of the region, and with your support we look forward to what we can accomplish over the next decade and by our next big milestone anniversary.

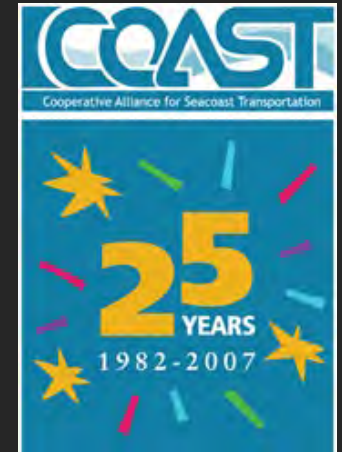
Rad Nichols

Answering to the Region's Transit Needs

COAST has been coordinating and/or providing essential public transit services in the Greater Seacoast region of New Hampshire since 1982. We have always been committed to expanding safe and affordable public transit options to better meet the needs of the region's residents, organizations, and businesses.

In the spring of 2022, we are celebrating our 40th year of providing public transit service to the region.

Over that time, we estimate that our buses will have carried nearly 16 million passengers.





Fixed Route Operations

Nine (9) local and four (4) regional routes, connecting 10 communities in New Hampshire and Maine to each other via public transit.

Connections with Wildcat Transit, C&J Bus Lines, Concord Coach, Greyhound, the Downeaster and Allegiant Air.

Hourly headways on all routes with easy to remember clockface schedules.

Timely connection/transfer locations in downtown Rochester, Dover, and Portsmouth.

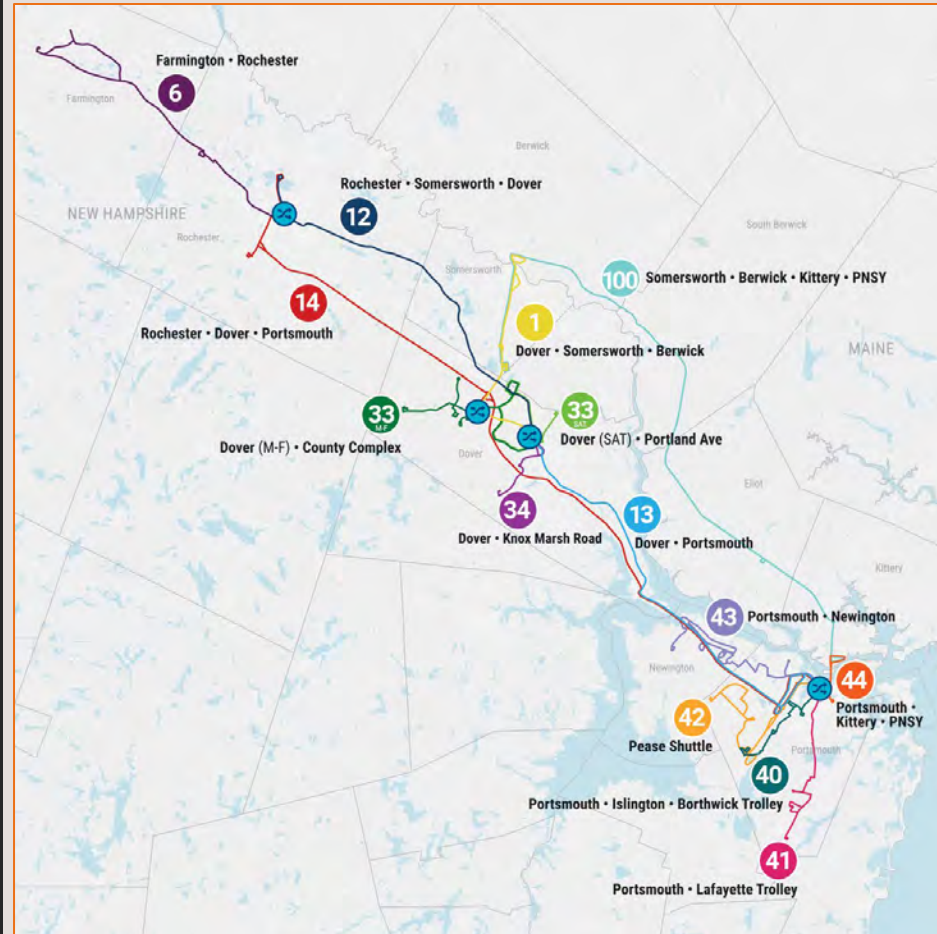
\$1.50 to board / \$0.75 for Older Adults and individuals with disabilities

Safe. Affordable. Convenient.



2018-2020 Comprehensive Operations Analysis

www.coastbus.org/ourfuture



Demand Response Services

Six unique advance reservation demand response services operated in Strafford and eastern Rockingham counties.

- COAST ADA
- COAST Route 7 On Demand
- Portsmouth Senior Transportation
- Community Rides
- Accessible Volunteer Driver Program Rides
- Contracted Non-emergency Transportation
- *General Public Demand Response Service*

Focused on serving primarily older adults and individuals living with disabilities.

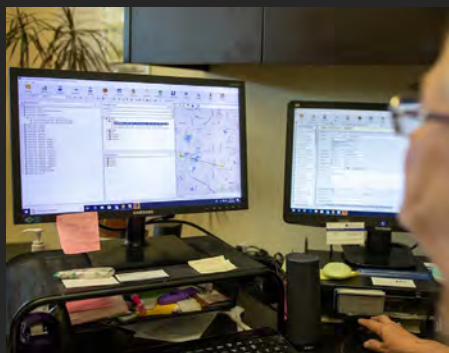
These services are often a lifeline for area residents who have no other means to get to their jobs, volunteering, medical appointments, pharmacy, and even grocery stores.

Accessible. Affordable. Reliable.





Regional Transportation Coordination



COAST has been engaged in coordinating public and human service transportation since our founding in 1981. It is central to our core mission.

We have been a champion and leader for regional transportation coordination and serve as the lead agency of the Alliance for Community Transportation (ACT) in what is known as Region 10 in New Hampshire's statewide network of Regional Coordination Councils for Community Transportation.

At the start of FY2022, TripLink, the regional call center hosted by COAST was managing information and referral inquiries for the entire region, as well as booking, scheduling and dispatching rides for three (4) different organizations and nine (10) different programs.

In the last six-plus years, TripLink staff have answered an estimated **245,000+ calls** for help and booked **more than 190,000 life-enabling rides** for older adults and individuals with disabilities across the Greater Seacoast region of New Hampshire.

ACT and TripLink are a direct result of the State of New Hampshire's commitment and efforts to build a lasting and meaningful system to coordinate and support a better network of community transportation services, in coordination with local champions, across all regions of the state.

How We Impact Lives

Terms regularly used by our passengers when describing COAST and our staff:

- Reliable
- Safe
- Clean
- Welcoming
- Affordable
- Essential
- Dedicated
- Caring
- Lifesaver



There's a stop close to my home, and I can walk a short distance to work. It's a great way to save on gas.

- Greg

You have some of the friendliest drivers. They are the best!

- Mary

I use the real-time bus app and love it! Especially today taking my son home from the ER as he hurt his leg and I don't drive. Knowing where the bus was so we could make it out to the bus stop and not have a long wait was great.

- Danielle

What a wonderful service!

- Carolyn



The Business Community Weighs In

A recently completed economic impact analysis by the Rockingham Planning Commission and Strafford Regional Planning Commission calculated the **total economic impact of COAST services at \$25.9 million for FY2019** as compared to COAST's annual operating budget of \$6.1 million at the time.

This represented a return of \$4.08 for every public dollar invested.

The study also conducted an extensive series of interviews with major employers, service sector employers, developers, and other professionals in health care, education, housing and social services to gain a broader understanding of transit's role in the region, its strengths and its limitations.

http://straftord.org/uploads/documents/plans/mpo/transitstudy_economicbenefits_2021.pdf

"After learning about the challenges of accessing education faced by Dover Adult Learning students, the bank chose to donate bus tickets each year for students who do not have reliable transportation. The economy is made stronger when more people can actively participate in it."

Tiffany Melanson
First Seacoast Bank

"The Sheraton Portsmouth works with employees to identify available transportation options, purchases COAST bus passes, and coordinates employee schedules so they can carpool and use transit."

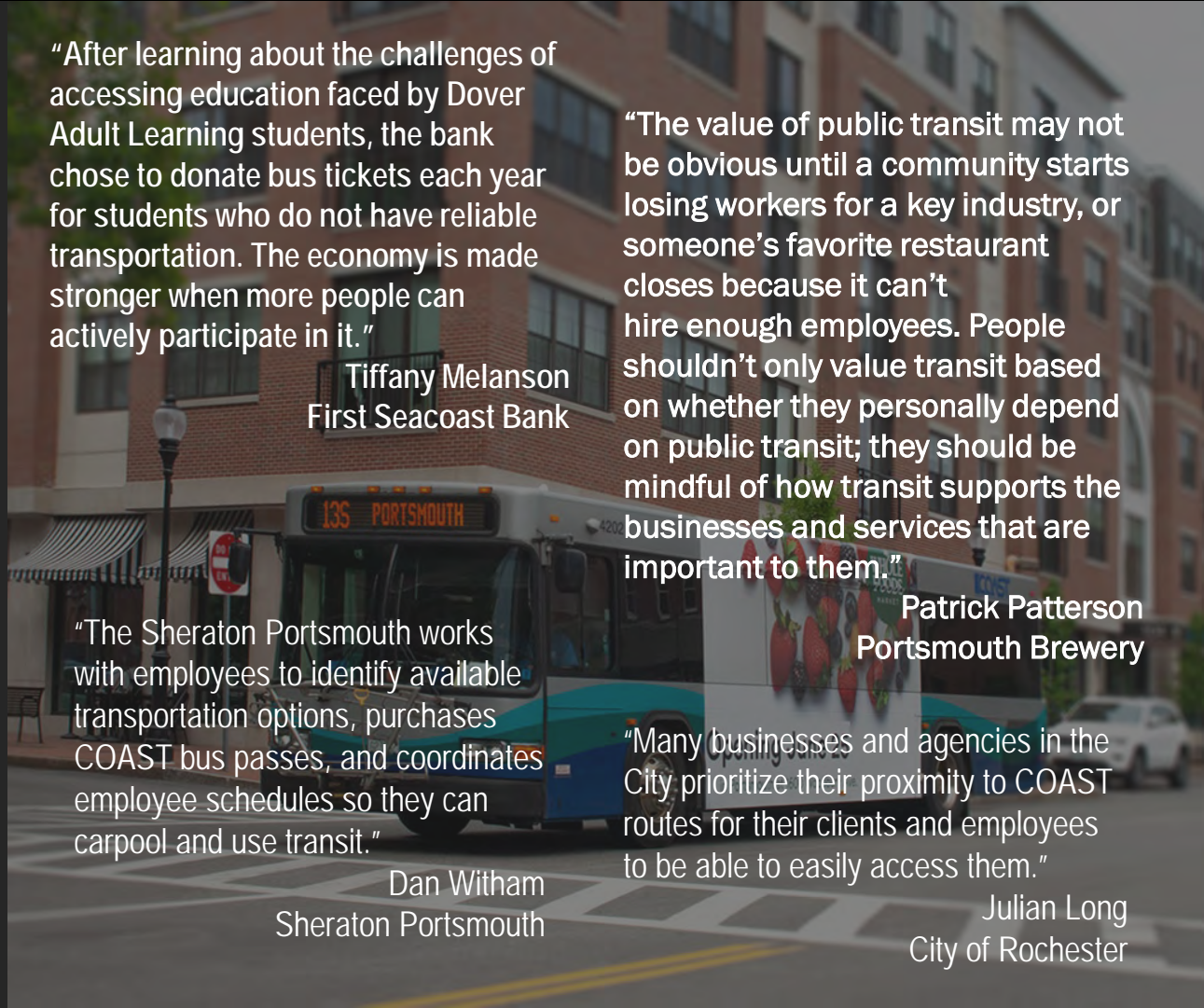
Dan Witham
Sheraton Portsmouth

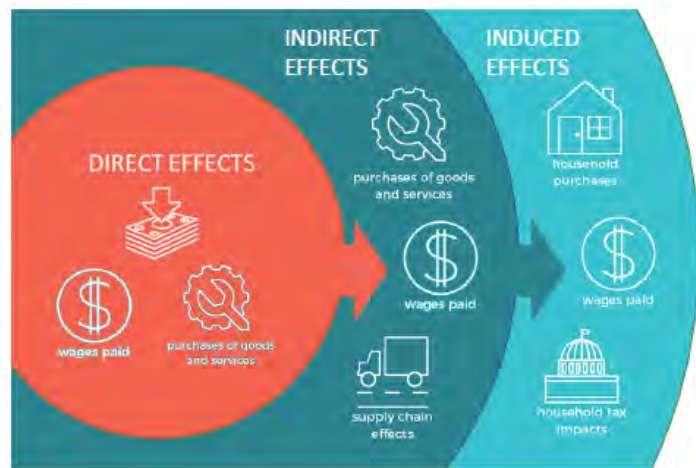
"The value of public transit may not be obvious until a community starts losing workers for a key industry, or someone's favorite restaurant closes because it can't hire enough employees. People shouldn't only value transit based on whether they personally depend on public transit; they should be mindful of how transit supports the businesses and services that are important to them."

Patrick Patterson
Portsmouth Brewery

"Many businesses and agencies in the City prioritize their proximity to COAST routes for their clients and employees to be able to easily access them."

Julian Long
City of Rochester





DIRECT EFFECTS = \$7.23M

Direct spending by COAST on operations and maintenance including employee wages and purchase of goods and services

INDIRECT EFFECTS = \$3.78M

COAST contractors in turn spend revenue from COAST contracts on wages, goods and services from other local business sectors

INDUCED EFFECTS = \$3.28M

Spending by employees of COAST and COAST contractors on goods and services, recirculating within the regional economy.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COAST SPENDING = \$14.28M



REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ACCESS PROVIDED BY COAST = \$11.62M



Regional
Economic
Impact



Continued Impacts of COVID-19

- Reducing risk to maintain safety for our staff and passengers continues to be paramount to our operations
- Riding public transit continues to be perceived as a risky behavior, despite the general lack of evidence linking public transit use to COVID-19 cases or outbreaks
- The negative impacts to certain key revenues continues to be sizeable and are anticipated to continue for an extended timeframe, impacting us for years
- The pandemic has exacerbated an already critical commercial operator shortage as many drivers have retired, training schools were shut down for a period, and intense competition for drivers has expanded with the huge growth in private delivery driving jobs
- CARES and ARP Act emergency funding continue to be critical as we work through the ongoing pandemic and absorb key revenue losses.
- Regular, straightforward, and genuine communications to our staff, passengers, and the greater community have been essential to our success in navigating the ongoing pandemic

Continued Impacts of COVID-19

- In FY21 a total of 40 employees were forced to miss work due to quarantine or isolation requirements based on NH guidance/best practice recommendations. Some staff were unfortunately out multiple times. COVID-related work absences have continued in FY22 with a significant peak to start the year off in January.
- In anticipation of the expiration of Emergency Paid Sick Leave under the FFCRA on December 31, 2020, COAST HR crafted and put into place a COVID Paid Administrative Leave Policy for 2021. This Policy allowed each employee to have a bank of hours that would be paid to them if they were required to miss work for a COVID-related issue (symptoms or exposure) without having to use their Paid Time Off (PTO). This policy has been extended in FY2022 until at least June 30.
- This policy encouraged more honest reporting on COVID Screening Forms and helped to relieve additional stress staff may have felt around the financial impact of missing work due to potential COVID symptoms or exposure. This also allowed people to wait for COVID PCR test results and to recover from symptoms without draining their PTO banks.

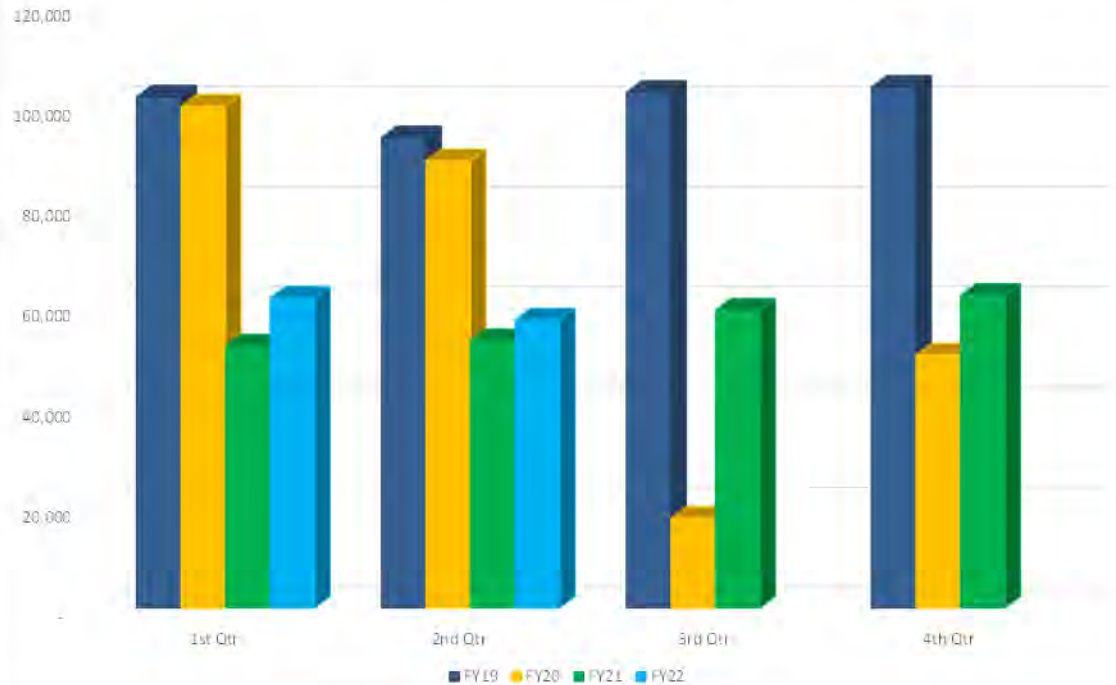




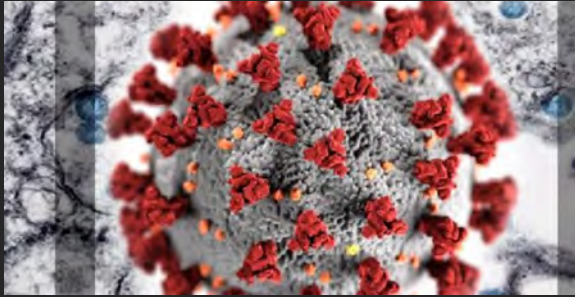
COVID-19

Fixed Route Ridership Impacts

COAST Fixed Route Ridership by Quarter (FY19-22)



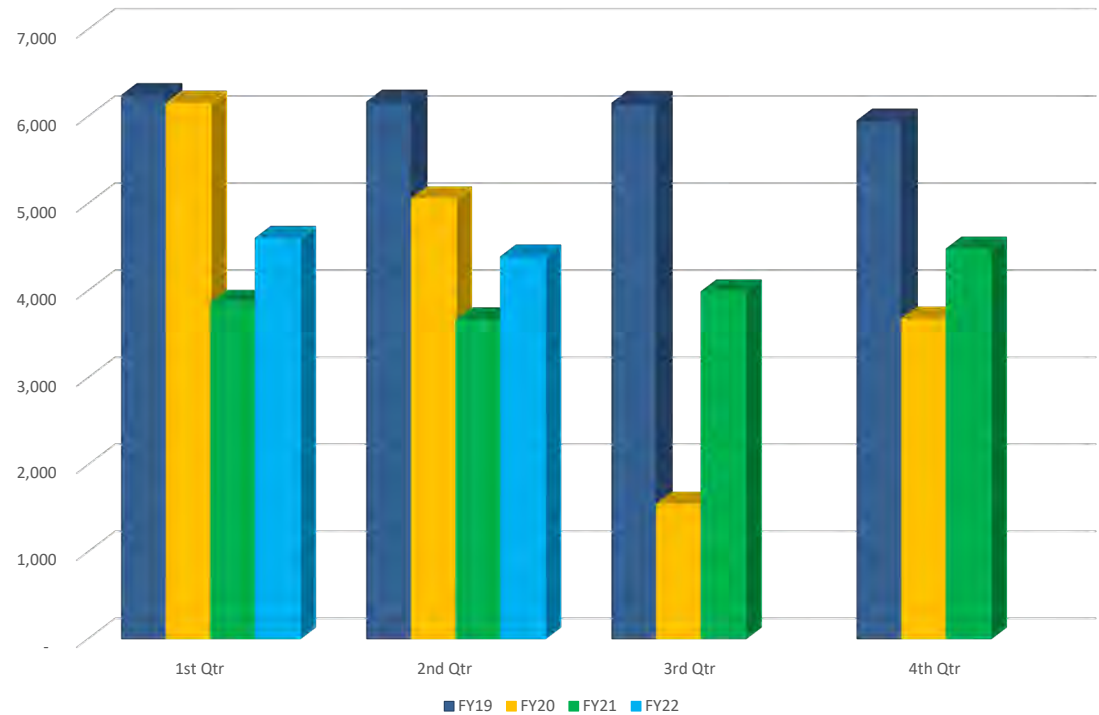
- In May and June 2020 passengers were asked to limit their use of COAST for essential trips only
- By July 2020, our messaging shifted to encourage riders to take only necessary trips as community spread in the region was still ongoing
- By mid-fall 2020 we dropped any references to limiting use of public transit for necessary or essential trips
- Ridership grew slowly and steadily through FY21 and FY22, except during spikes in COVID cases within the region. Average monthly ridership in the first half of FY22 represented a 13% increase over the first half of FY21
- Fixed route ridership is currently averaging between 60% and 65% of the pre-pandemic levels in FY19



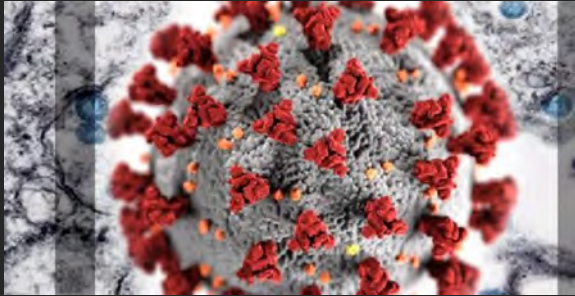
COVID-19

Demand Response Ridership Impacts

COAST Demand Response Ridership by Quarter (FY19-22)

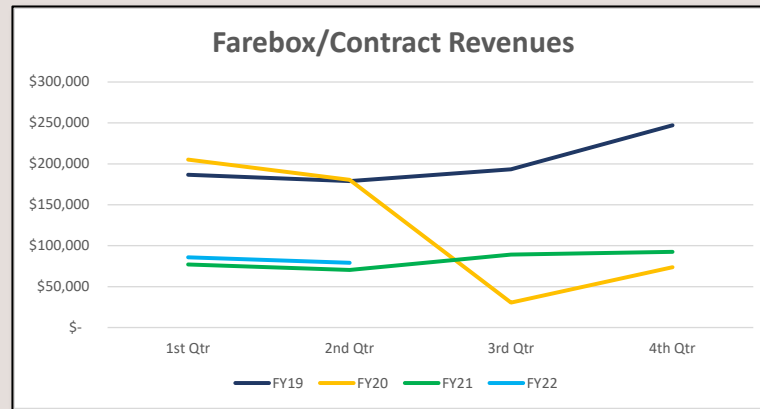


- In April, May, and June 2020 passengers were asked to limit their use of COAST for essential trips only
- By July 2020, our messaging shifted to encourage riders to take only necessary trips as community spread in the region was still ongoing
- By mid-fall 2020 we dropped any references to limiting use of public transit for necessary or essential trips
- Ridership grew slowly through FY21 and FY22. Average monthly ridership in the first half of FY22 represented a 19% increase over the first half of FY21
- Demand response ridership is currently averaging 70% to 75% of the pre-pandemic levels in FY19



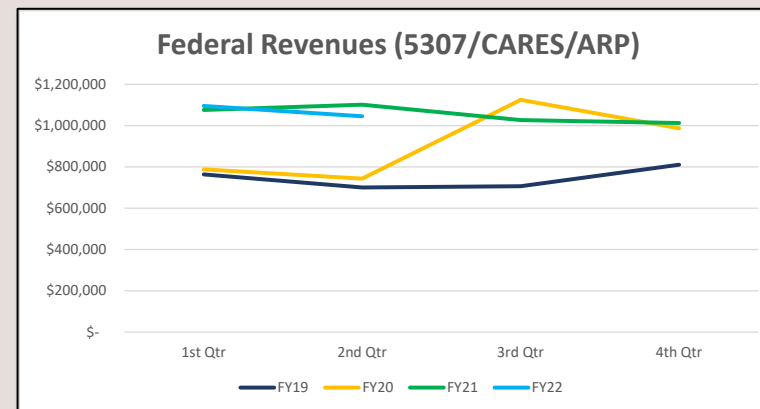
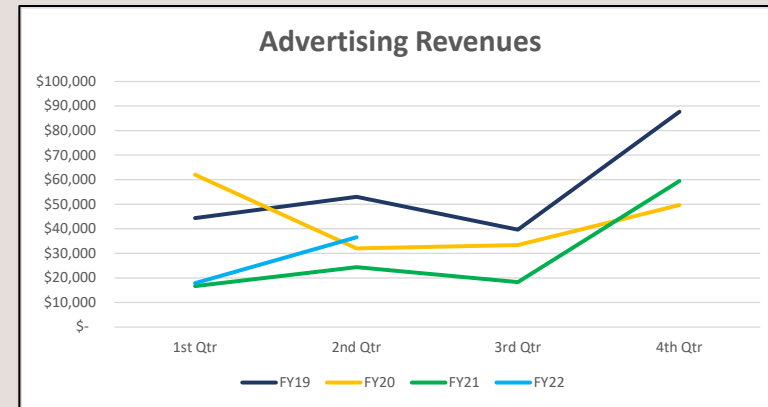
COVID-19

Revenue Impacts



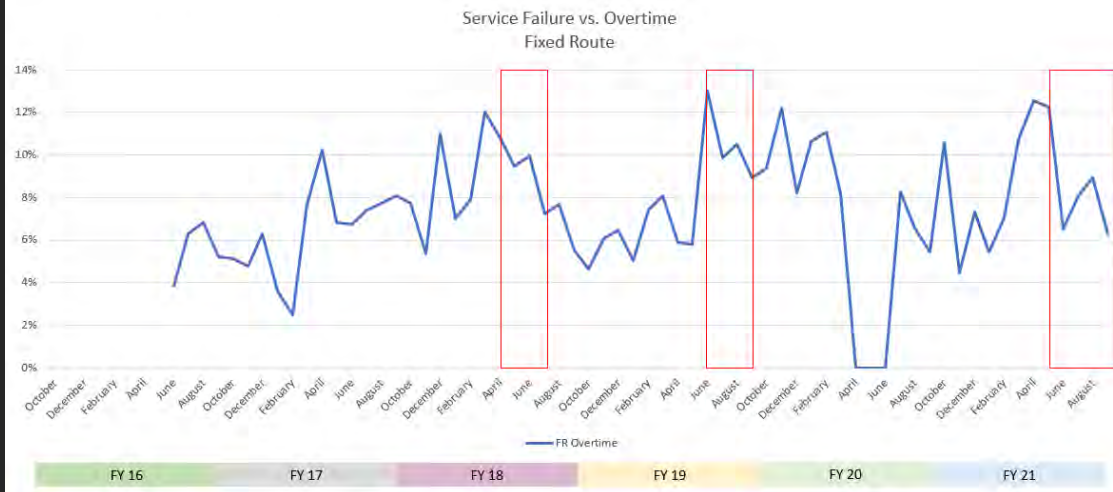
- Farebox/Contract Revenues grow slowly, but remain down (55%) when compared with FY19

- Advertising Revenues are down 42% from FY20, and down 44% when compared with FY19



- Federal Revenues, used to cover other revenue shortfalls, are up 40% over FY20, and up 46% when compared with FY19

Fixed Route Overtime is the blue line, and the red boxes are driver shortage induced cancellations. Cancellations usually happen when overtime crosses 12% or exceed 10% for more than a single month.



The CDL Operator Shortage

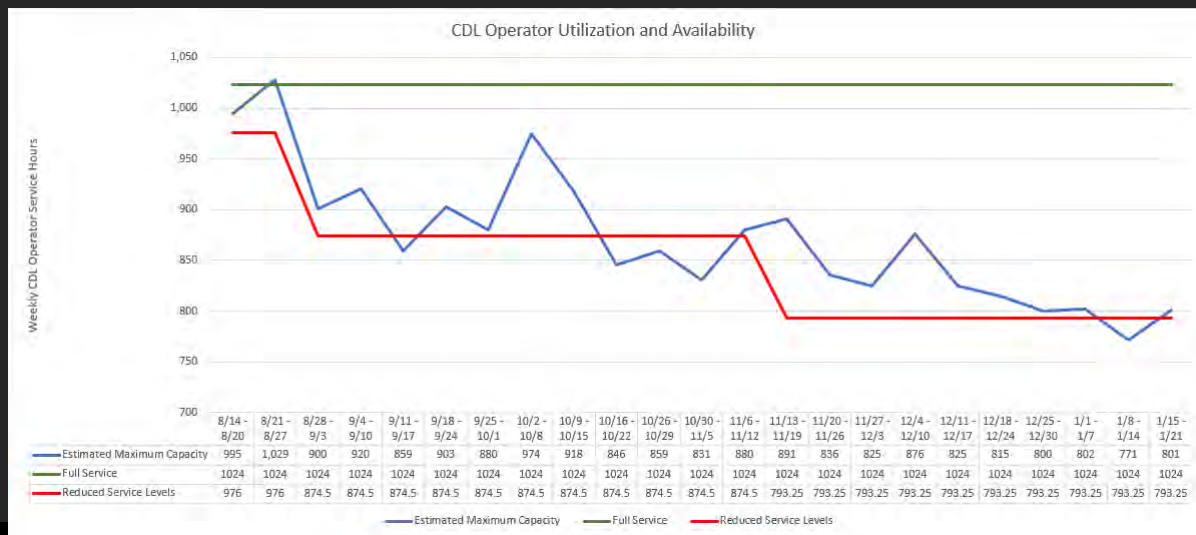
Though it was already a major issue before the pandemic, COVID-19 has exacerbated the national shortage of qualified CDL operators. Many drivers near retirement age made the decision to leave the workforce when COVID-19 struck, while others took jobs in other industries, and some moved out of state to be closer to family.

In FY21, COAST lost 3.25 CDL operators for every CDL operator we hired.

On average over the past four years, one in every 4.3 applicants is hired and successfully makes it through training. Over the last three fiscal years we have needed an average of 12 new operators a year, which translates to needing 52 qualified applicants a year. In FY21 we received a total of 28 applications from qualified individuals.

It takes an average of 77 days from the day a CDL operator applies until they are released to drive their own shifts.

Drivers are leaving much faster than we can replace them. The end result of driver shortages are service suspensions.



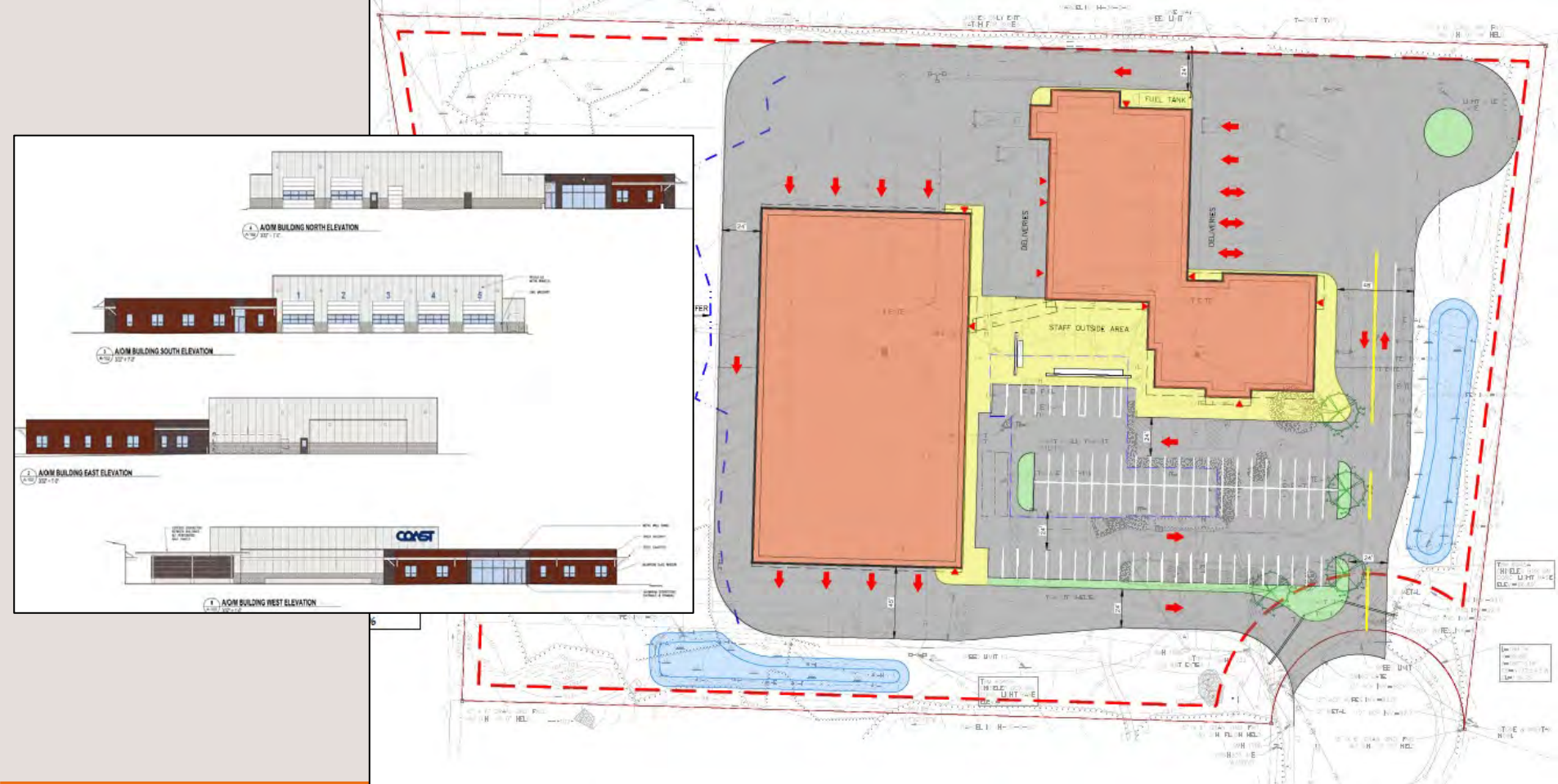
Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

- The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provides \$91 billion in funding for public and community transit across the US
- This represents just under a 24% increase overall in FTA funds for New Hampshire that could significantly influence New Hampshire's ability to provide critical access to jobs, health care, education, and essentials like groceries
- The catch - to spend any of the FTA funds, agencies must match it with non-USDOT funds (typically state and local funds).
- Without substantial increases in match funds, New Hampshire will not be able to take advantage of this most recent commitment by the Federal government to invest consequentially in public and community transportation.

Federal Transit Administration FY22 Funding Increase by FTA Program for New Hampshire

Program		FFY2021		FFY2022		\$ Increase	% Increase	Potential Additional Local Match Needed *
5307	Urbanized Area Formula Program (<200K)	\$	4,318,240	\$	5,565,563	\$ 1,247,323	28.9%	\$ 831,549
5307	Urbanized Area Formula Program (>200K)	\$	4,491,227	\$	5,745,937	\$ 1,254,710	27.9%	\$ 836,473
5310	Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities	\$	1,308,377	\$	1,891,000	\$ 582,623	44.5%	\$ 582,623
5311(b)(3)	Rural Transit Assistance Program	\$	133,271	\$	175,548	\$ 42,277	31.7%	\$ -
5311	Nonurbanized (Rural) Area Formula Program	\$	4,624,725	\$	5,681,898	\$ 1,057,173	22.9%	\$ 1,057,173
5305(d)	Metropolitan Planning Program	\$	467,811	\$	608,712	\$ 140,901	30.1%	\$ 35,225
5305(e)	Statewide Planning & Research Program	\$	130,949	\$	160,098	\$ 29,149	22.3%	\$ 7,287
5339	Bus & Bus Facilities Capital Program	\$	4,276,444	\$	4,638,787	\$ 362,343	8.5%	\$ 90,586
TOTAL FTA FUNDING		\$	19,751,044	\$	24,467,543	\$ 4,716,499	23.9%	\$ 3,440,916

* Assumes either a 50% or 80% match requirement depending on whether the FTA funds are being used to support operating vs. capital/planning expenses.



A New Facility for our Next 40+ Years

After years of discussions and plans, a conceptual plan for a new 48,000 sq. ft. facility at 42 Sumner Drive was prepared based on an engineering needs assessment for COAST's administration, operations, and maintenance functions. A facility with adequate, efficiently planned space, that meets COAST's needs today and into the foreseeable future will allow our organization to increase safety for our on-site staff, reduce the ongoing operating costs of our system for our eleven (11) member communities and multiple institutional partners, allow us to maintain a safe, affordable and efficient operation for our passengers, extend the useful life of our fleet, and improve our overall environmental impact through the incorporation of green building standards. **The challenge:** raising nearly \$3M of non-USDOT funds to match a potential FTA grant.

soline

1D



soline (USD/Gal) 3.3588 +0.119 (+3.67%)



Public Transit: a ready-made solution

Jul

Sep

Nov

2022

Mar

Mi





Our FY22 Forecast

- Strive to enhance our attractiveness as an employer with a new, more affordable 2-person and family healthcare plan option for eligible staff **(ACHIEVED)**
- Submit FTA 5339 Bus and Bus Facility grants for a new style low floor minibus for use on select fixed routes, to reduce our reliance on CDL operators, as well as for part, or all, of the funds necessary to construct our new facility **(FUNDS AWARDED)**
- Pilot a six-month trial of a new free transfer system and potentially reduce or eliminate this potential barrier to riding, or riding more frequently **(4 MONTHS IN)**
- Introduce a new marketing effort to encourage ridership on public transit **(ACTIVE)**
- Recognize and celebrate our 40th anniversary of providing service to the Greater Seacoast Region in 2022 **(JUST ANNOUNCED)**
- Maybe most importantly, we will continue to pursue critically important operating support from the State of New Hampshire through an active long-term education campaign on the importance of our, and other, public transit services across the state **(ACTIVELY PURSUING)**