



March 7, 2025

Chairman Keith Erf
House Finance Committee - Division II
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Chairman Erf and Members of the Committee,

I am writing you as the chair of the NH Transit Association and the Executive Director of the Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation, otherwise known as COAST.

Thank you for today's budget work session focused on public transit. I appreciate the opportunity to highlight the positive economic and social benefits that public transit in New Hampshire yields and how state investment can strengthen our state's economy while also supporting our most vulnerable residents.

Public transit represents an important segment of New Hampshire's economy and plays a significant role in our ongoing economic and social health.

- Public transit services are provided regionally in New Hampshire by 8 different organizations, operating in 42 communities, which comprise more than half of New Hampshire's resident population.
- NH transit providers directly employ more than 300 individuals statewide.
- And we help to drive the state's economy by contributing an estimated \$110 million each year.
- A recent economic impact analysis conducted in NH shows that for every \$1 invested in public transit, there is a more than \$4 economic impact in the state economy.
- In addition, and very importantly, that \$1 investment leverages an equal amount of federal funds already allocated and ready to be put to use in NH.

How does public transit have such a significant economic impact? By harnessing the power of connecting people with the opportunities they need to succeed personally and contribute economically.

- Public transit connects New Hampshire's workforce to jobs—people like the restaurant worker who lives in Lebanon and works in Hanover.
- Public transit connects students (who are tomorrow's workforce) to educational opportunities—people like the student attending Nashua Community College to become an air traffic controller.
- Public transit is an affordable connection between workforce housing, jobs and workforce training opportunities—which are increasingly located further apart from one another.
- We live in a graying state and the State Plan on Aging has identified transportation was the number one reason seniors in NH were not able to access the services they needed.
- Making sure seniors can get where they need to go has significant economic implications. The AARP Longevity Outlook from 2018 identified that while the 50-plus population accounted for 41% of New Hampshire's population it contributed nearly 47% — or \$42 billion — of the state's total GDP.

- Public transit also supports New Hampshire’s most vulnerable residents by providing ADA-mandated services for individuals living with disabilities. Public transit allows them to access support services, healthcare and employment opportunities. These are people like the young woman who lives in Dover and uses COAST’s paratransit services to get to her job at the YMCA in Portsmouth.
- On average, between 20-30% of riders would not be able to make their trip without public transportation.
- In SFY2023, more than 2.1 million trips were taken on public transit—by workers, students, seniors, families and individuals living with disabilities.
- In SFY24, that number grew by 18.2% to over 2.5 million trips to work, school, medical appointments, shopping, social and recreational activities.

So how can public transit help the state achieve its economic and social goals in the coming budget cycle?

As you take up the work of crafting the State’s next budget, I encourage the committee to consider the difference between “State Spending” and “State Investment” as it relates to public transit.

Spending infers a net drain, while with investment there is an expectation of a return.

In this budget cycle, where difficult choices must be made, investing in public transit can help sustain and grow our state economy while supporting Granite staterers that need us the most. It is the proverbial, yet often illusive, win-win proposition.

The state invested in public transit operations in SFY24 with \$600,000 in funding and increased that to \$1.68 million in SFY25. The return on that increased investment is already measurable—that investment helped public transit operators expand services, growing ridership by over 385K rides in SFY24. And ridership continues to experience strong growth in SFY25. And more riders translate into more economic activity.

As we look down the road ahead, there is a direct correlation between affordably connecting housing, jobs, and workforce training opportunities across the state and our ability to sustain economic development.

So that public transit operators across New Hampshire can continue to support and further grow the state’s economy, the New Hampshire Transit Association (NHTA) is advocating for:

- 1) Investment of \$6.8 million of state operating support in the state fiscal year (SFY) 2026-2027 budget.
- 2) We also ask that state operating match be clarified as eligible to be used not only to leverage FTA operating expenses at a 1:1 ratio, but also for those eligible FTA operating expenses with a very advantageous 4:1 match ratio (federal/local). These include expenses associated with ADA operations, preventative maintenance, planning, mobility management, and for rural agencies, administration.

Investment by the state at this level will activate additional investment from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) by opening access to a minimum of another \$6.8 million of already allocated FTA funding for NH. These are FTA funds that require non-USDOT matching funds in order to be put to use connecting our residents.

We should always be looking for ways to do more with the resources we have in order to support our economy and New Hampshire residents. Public transit touches every segment of the state’s economy, directly impacting the lives of hundreds of thousands of Granite Staters.

Investment in public transit makes good financial sense and good social sense.

Local communities around New Hampshire are already investing in the power of public transit to drive their economies and support their residents. We invite the state to join them as near equal partners. I know that together we can do even more.

On behalf of the New Hampshire Transit Association members, I thank you for your time, attention and careful consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "RAD NICHOLS", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Rad Nichols
NHTA Chair

cc: House Finance Committee - Division II members

NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COALITION



New Hampshire Public Transportation Funding

1:1 Federal Match
MAXIMIZE IMPACT

Increased state funds will unlock at least a 1:1 federal match available through the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and ensure those funds are put to use in New Hampshire.

Partners
DOING THEIR PART

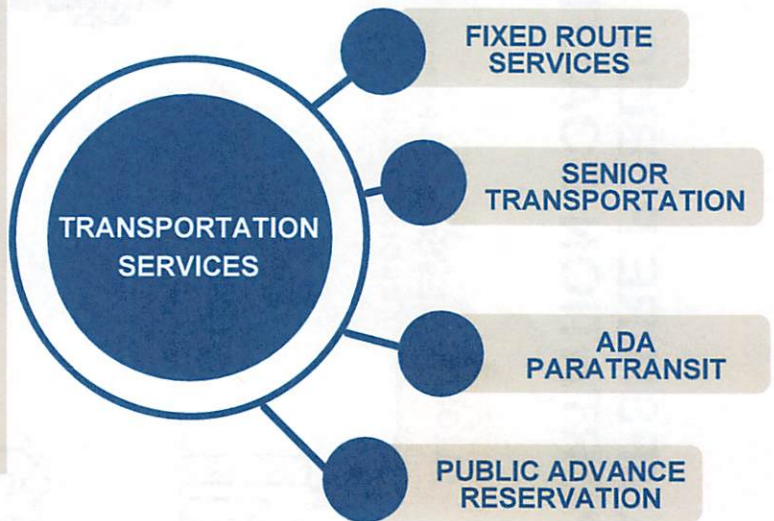
Local municipalities are investing over \$5 million dollars annually in regional and local public transit services across New Hampshire.

209,000
RIDERS PER MONTH

We support New Hampshire's workforce, students, older adults, and disabled residents through our fixed route and advance reservation services.

FY26-27 STATE BUDGET

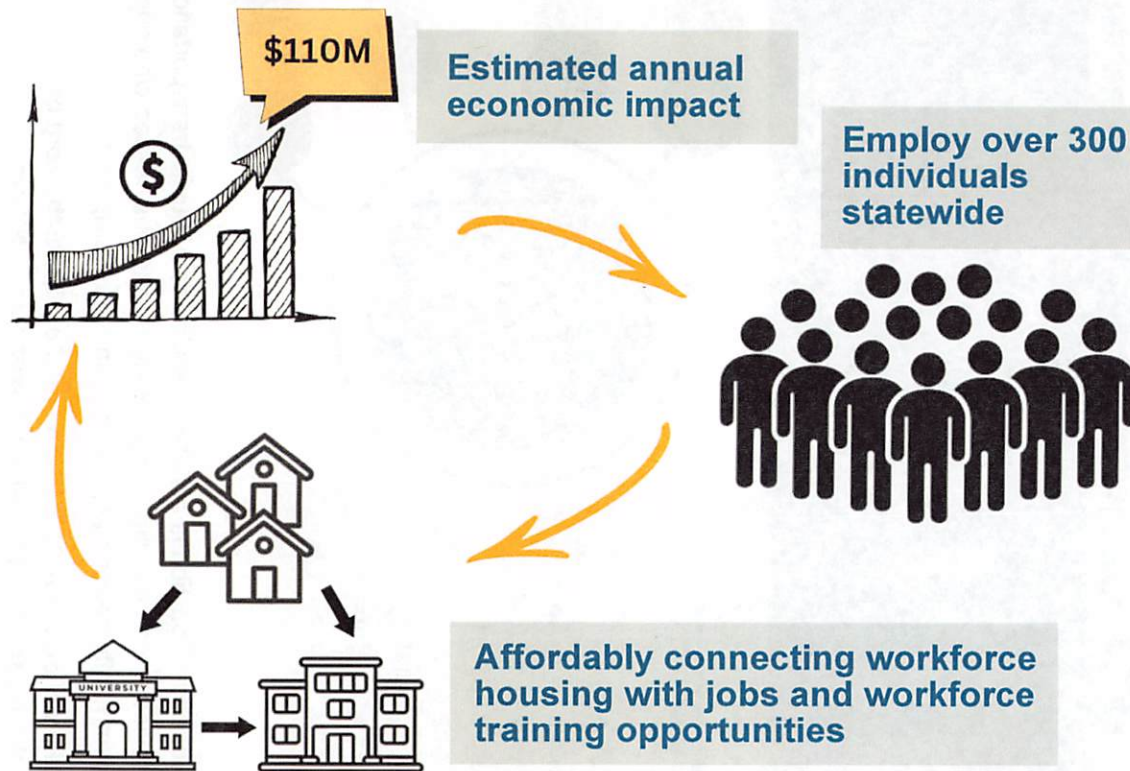
The New Hampshire Public Transportation Coalition seeks \$6.8-7.5 million in state operating funds over the biennium. This will help support further service expansions and ridership growth. That is approximately \$2.39-\$2.64 per capita in New Hampshire.



The New Hampshire Public Transportation Coalition is a statewide alliance of public transportation and community-based transportation providers, communities, organizations, and businesses who support expanded state funding of public transit and community-based transportation in New Hampshire.

Contacts: Rad Nichols / COAST & NHTA / rnichols@coastbus.org or
Steve Workman / TransportNH / steve@transportNH.org

NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COALITION



A Great Investment

WITH A LARGE HUMAN IMPACT

An increase in state support to \$6.8-7.5M would be an investment in critically important services that have an economic impact of over \$4 for every \$1 invested and would leverage an equal amount of federal funds already allocated and ready to be put to use in New Hampshire.



Terri Paige, CAPBM Transportation Director, NHTA Secretary

House Finance Div II Testimony

Good afternoon. I am Terri Paige and I would like to sincerely thank you for taking the time today to hold this budget work session for public transit.

As the transportation director at the Community Action Program, Belknap & Merrimack Counties, Inc. (CAPBM) and the treasurer of the NH Transit Association I experience every day the positive impact that our public transportation systems have here in NH.

First of all I would like to support and echo the testimony provided by my valued colleague Rad Nichols, Chair of the NH Transit Association. His testimony clearly outlines the many positive economic and social benefits that investing in public transportation will yield for NH citizens. In addition to his excellent testimony, I thought that it might be helpful for you to have some data from the Concord Area Transit (CAT) service here in the capital region.

- In FY24 CAT provided 115,938 rides to NH residents living in and around Concord. An increase of 9% from FY23.
 - Fixed route 106,350
 - Demand Response 9,588

The CAT fixed route system is designed to connect work force housing locations and employment centers throughout the city of Concord using three routes within the Concord city limits. Destinations include:

- Walmart and other retail businesses along Loudon Rd.
- Manufacturing and construction business on Pembroke and Airport Roads
- The State Hospital Complex, Concord Hospital and DHMC Clinic on Pleasant St.
- Retail and restaurant business in downtown Concord
- NHTI and retail business on Fort Eddy Road and the Concord Coach Bus terminal

Some of our regular riders on the fixed route services include:

- Residents from the work force housing units in Penacook going up to Loudon Rd, or Concord Hospital to get to jobs daily.
- Inmates from the state prison who are on work release and going to jobs in restaurants and manufacturing businesses on the heights and on Airport Rd.
- Students going to and from NHTI to complete their education goals

We also have stops at social service and medical facilities along the three routes serving Concord. Allowing residents access to vital services to keep them healthy and whole.

The CAT demand response services provide rides for some of the most vulnerable citizens in NH, those citizens over the age of 60 and individuals with disabilities who qualify for our ADA paratransit service. These door-to-door trips include:

- Medical appointments, including dialysis, cancer treatment and regular well checks
- Work and volunteer commitments
- Shopping, banking and legal support
- Senior Center activities and other wellness activities
- Lunch trips to celebrate birthdays and other special life events
- Funerals and visits to the burial sites of loved ones.

In FY25 we were able to expand our service to include a commuter service called the Concord to Laconia Connector (CLC) which runs from Concord to Laconia via US Rt 3. This service connects Concord, Boscawen, Franklin, Tilton and Laconia. The service was designed to provide commuter service to employment destinations along this corridor. We are currently providing just over 500 trips a month to residents going to employment sites and medical facilities in this service area. As word spreads of this new service our ridership numbers continue to increase monthly.

The 9% increase in ridership and our CLC expansion route is due in large part to the operating support that we received in FY25 in the NH State Budget. Without this support we would not be where we are now.

I would also like to highlight another aspect of the CAT service which is often unappreciated. CAT employs 27 people who work very hard every day to provide these vital transportation services. The operating match that we were granted in FY25 allowed us to give these talented drivers and dispatch staff pay raises that brought them closer to market wage rates and allowed us to keep this team intact. While we are still not at the market rate of \$29-35 an hour for CDL drivers, the pay increase that we were able to provide last year lowered our attrition rate significantly this year.

Hopefully this quick report of some of the valuable work being done locally helps you put a framework around the value that the operating match that the State of NH provides to a small rural provider like CAT.

I appreciate your time and effort as you do this important work to ensure that this state budget provides the best possible resources to NH citizens.

March 7, 2025

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

My name is Danis Chamberlin, and I am part of the small but mighty team at ATA Outdoor Media, located in Greenland, NH. I'm here to share the benefits that public transit systems provide to our business and many others like it.

ATA was established in 1992 and has partnered with transit providers across New England -- starting with COAST as our very first partner -- and we have since built decades-long relationships with NH transit systems in both rural and urban areas all over the state.

Our mission is to continue to network the public transit providers and maximize financial benefits for all systems by selling advertising space on buses and bus shelters. Most of the revenue goes directly to transit providers to reinvest in their systems, while we retain a commission to sustain our business. We have a symbiotic relationship. Our success depends on their success; just as they rely on us to help generate funds, we rely on them to maintain a robust transit system that will attract advertisers. We are a small business like many across New Hampshire, that benefits directly from the relationship we have with public transit systems operating in our state.

Additionally, the funds we raise for most of the transit systems can be used to elevate their local match, unlocking federal resources to sustain and expand vital services in our communities. With rising ridership and a growing influx of new residents, securing these funds is essential—not only to maintain public transit, but to drive the expansion that helps our communities thrive.

Outdoor advertising has seen tremendous growth nationwide across all media formats in recent years, with transit leading the way as one of the fastest growing sectors. In 2024, outdoor ad spending, nationally, hit a record \$9.1 billion, clearly reflecting its rising impact. We see businesses of all sizes are increasingly turning to transit advertising as a powerful way to reach their audience. Demand in New England rose significantly last year, and we expect to see a boost in demand for the rest of 2025. It is our hope that our transit partners continue to be fully operational and able to expand their reach into our communities, as it will help us to secure more advertising contracts for them.

While many advertisers are national brands or larger regional buyers from the banking, education, and healthcare sectors, transit advertising is also a vital, cost-effective solution for NH small businesses and nonprofits. It offers a smart, scalable way for them to stand out in their communities—putting their message in front of thousands of potential customers every day, right where it matters most.

As we educate advertisers on the wide reach and powerful impact of transit advertising, we also strive to help local businesses understand its full-circle benefits. By advertising their products and services, they not only attract more customers but also invest in their local transit systems. This, in turn, helps strengthen public transportation, drives economic growth and enhances community well-being.

This is because public transit is more than just a means of transportation—it fuels local economies. Multiple studies show that every dollar invested in public transit generates significant economic returns, creating a ripple effect that benefits residents, businesses, and entire communities. A strong public transit network is essential for a thriving, forward-moving society.

To create such an impact, they need proper funding. On behalf of the many small businesses in NH that benefit directly or indirectly from our public transit systems, I hope that you will consider including sufficient state funds to maximize the use of federal funding allocated to our state for their operations, which will help grow public transit and boost the NH economy.

Many thanks for your time and attention today.

Danis Chamberlin

ATA Outdoor Media

MODEL 1 COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

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Good afternoon. My name is Patrick Claffey, I am a Public Sector Sales Representative for Model 1 Commercial Vehicles. Model 1 is the nation's largest bus dealership. We're a nationwide company, but we have a notable footprint in New Hampshire at our offices in Hudson and Bedford.

We support New Hampshire transit providers, not only through vehicles sales but also with parts sales, preventative maintenance and repairs. Offering this complete set of services is important to our success and for helping keep our state's public transit providers in good operating condition.

New Hampshire's transit providers are an important part of our business here. As a company that operates, leases multiple properties, and employs individuals who live in New Hampshire, it is in our interest to see public transportation well-funded and thriving in New Hampshire.

We therefore strongly support the NHTA's call for state investment, and at levels that allow them to put all available FTA funds allocated to New Hampshire to use here in our state.

Besides our direct interest in the success of New Hampshire's public transportation providers, the case for funding them from a business and economic growth perspective is very strong.

Rad has already done a great job making this case, but I also want to share a few stories that help demonstrate how much people come to rely on these services.

During my travels, I've had the opportunity to speak with individuals who use public transportation as part of their daily lives.

On one trip to Rhode Island, I was doing a vehicle demonstration for an advocacy group. The members of this group are themselves regular users of public transportation who volunteer their time to speak on behalf of their communities to the decision makers for Rhode Island Public Transit Authority.

They were discussing a pilot project for an expanded service that was scheduled to conclude at the end of the year. The conclusion of this pilot was strongly opposed by the group. One volunteer told a story of a woman who needed this service to attend school. "How is she supposed to get to class?" he asked.

Even though this is an out of state example, there are many similar stories about the residents of New Hampshire. For instance, towards the end of her time here, my wife's late grandmother relied on a paratransit service to attend the family's yearly Christmas party. It meant a lot to her and to her family that she was able to be there.

The work that public transportation providers do is essential. Any reduction in service is extremely disruptive to the individuals who use it. Instead, we ought to help them expand their services and help more people.

Whether we're talking about a senior that needs to get to a doctor's appointment, or the productive worker who doesn't have another form of reliable transportation, public transportation is a crucial part of a robust and vibrant community/region, while also offering an effective safety net for our most vulnerable residents.

Thank you.

*Setting the example
the industry follows*