

LINKUS PROGRESS REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2025



Welcome COTA's Chief LinkUS Program Officer

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) is pleased to announce that Dorinda McCombs joined COTA on Sept. 2 as its Chief LinkUS Program Officer. McCombs is responsible for strategic planning, project implementation, performance evaluation, policy development and executive oversight of the LinkUS project team.

Prior to joining COTA, McCombs was Associate Vice President at HNTB Corporation, where she worked for more than two years. Her resume also includes Chief Capital Planning and Project Delivery Officer for the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority in Alabama, where she helped implement Bus Rapid Transit. She also served as Senior Director of Capital Programming for the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). McCombs is the former CEO of MONTCORP, LLC, and held leadership roles for Peniel Solutions, LLC, the City of Atlanta, Booz Allen Hamilton, the City of Carlsbad and California State University San Marcos.

"LinkUS is about shaping a future where every resident has access to opportunity, mobility and a higher quality of life, and I have seen firsthand how transformative transit modernization can be for communities. I'm excited to work alongside COTA's talented team and our partners to deliver on that vision."

Your LinkUS Dollars at Work

Transit Improvements

COTA Ridership to Date

COTA's decision in May to extend service past midnight affirms the demand in Central Ohio for more access to transit, particularly for local second- and third-shift workers. Thanks in part to that extended service, COTA experienced a **17% increase** in ridership May 2025 vs. May 2024. Overall, **ridership is up 10% year to date** compared to 2024.

+10%

September Service Improvements

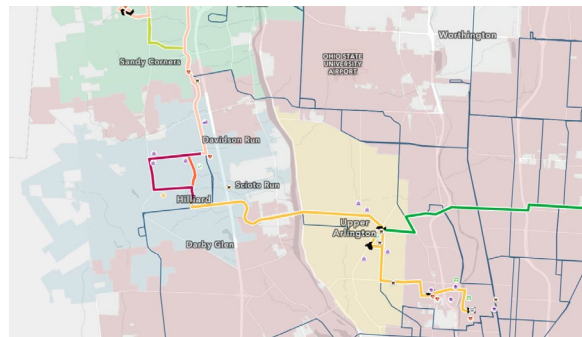
On Sept. 1, COTA increased frequency along five vital lines, cutting wait times in half on some routes.



Improved Lines:

- **Line 34** (Morse Road)
- **Line 45** (New Albany)
- **Line 52** (Canal Winchester)
- **Line 72** (Tuttle)
- **Line 102** (Polaris Pkwy/N High)

Higher weekend demand, coupled with recent return-to-office mandates, necessitated additional service. These improvements represent COTA's commitment to delivering transit solutions for communities across Central Ohio.



Line 30 Updates

In June, COTA hosted a public meeting about a new proposed bus line — Line 30 — which would better connect three important communities, Dublin, Hilliard and Upper Arlington, to one of the region's largest employment and educational centers, The Ohio State University.

The proposed line will also connect customers to grocery stores, medical centers, schools and community centers.

Line 30 is still in the planning phase.

No final decisions have been made, and September 2026 is the earliest possible launch date.

January Service Change Public Information Meetings

Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. and Dec. 9 at noon

Public information meetings are held in person at 33 N. High St. and online via Facebook Live ([@COTAbus](#)).



Short-Range Transit Plan

COTA is working to improve its transit system for the future. In 2026, COTA will update its Short-Range Transit Plan (S RTP), which will help COTA plan service through 2031. That includes gathering feedback from COTA customers and the community. Look for S RTP public meeting dates beginning in March 2026, where you can provide suggestions and comments on how COTA can improve its service. Meetings will be available in person and online.



Supplier Summit

The LinkUS Supplier Summit held Aug. 6 marked another monumental milestone in the progress of the LinkUS initiative. LinkUS partners — [COTA](#), the [City of Columbus](#), [Franklin County Board of Commissioners](#) and [MORPC](#) — shared upcoming contracting opportunities, resources and progress reports. Approximately 200 attendees, representing distinguished guests, contractors and suppliers, attended the event at the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. Sessions included information on upcoming infrastructure, transit and construction projects, how to get involved in the opportunities and insight into how to do business with LinkUS partners. Contracting opportunities and partner resources can be accessed through the [LinkUS Supplier Summit](#) page.



COTA//Plus

COTA is excited to announce that the framework and criteria have been finalized to select future COTA//Plus zones as part of the LinkUS Initiative.

[COTA//Plus](#) is a premium, on-demand microtransit service designed to extend the reach of COTA's fixed-route and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network. Operating within defined zones, the service offers flexible, app-based or phone-scheduled rides, especially in areas where traditional transit may not be easily accessible.

Currently, there are three COTA//Plus zones: Grove City, Westerville and South Side. Thanks to voters, the LinkUS initiative will allow COTA to launch up to eight more zones over the next several years.

The new framework helps COTA select future zones based on specific criteria. COTA is working with jurisdiction partners to ensure each has the opportunity to submit a Request for Community Interest.

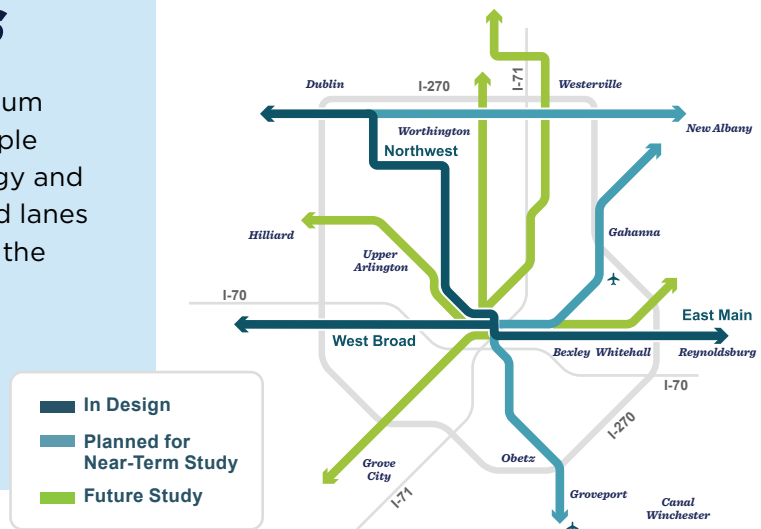
For more information on the framework and how future zones will be selected, visit LinkUSColumbus.com/cotaplus.



BRT Project Status

Bus Rapid Transit, known as BRT, is a premium transit solution designed to move more people through larger vehicles, enhanced technology and increased frequency. By providing dedicated lanes specifically for rapid transit — most often in the center of the road — it is more reliable and convenient than traditional bus systems.

Rapid Transit Corridors



West Broad BRT

Connecting With the Community

- Through the first half of summer 2025, LinkUS representatives attended 18 community events with 4,500 attendees to share information and answer questions about the [West Broad Street BRT](#) project.
- Events included major festivals such as 614 Day, the All Disabilities Festival, Summer Jam West, CBUS Soul Fest, Latino Heritage Festival and Parade and Bike the Cbus, as well as appearing at recurring events like Franklinton Fridays and the Prairie Township Farmers Market.

What's Next

- The West Broad Street engagement team is rolling out the Business Hub plan for business owners and representatives. This plan aims to utilize both new and existing relationships with neighborhood businesses along the corridor. The goal is to distribute information, routinely hold pop-up events and strengthen communication pathways that will span from pre-construction through construction.
- Our team will continue to appear at community events throughout the fall. These events are planned to include the Westgate Farmers Market, a Prairie Township Community Center pop-up and HighBall Halloween.

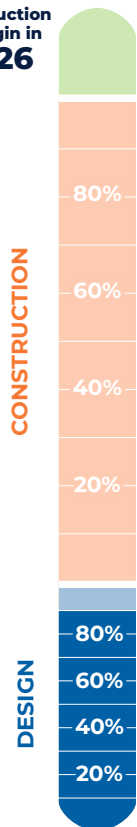
Looking Ahead to 2026

- A groundbreaking ceremony is being planned in 2026 to celebrate a major milestone — the start of implementing BRT! Construction will begin at the site of the future Rockbrook Crossing Park and Ride and Transit Center in 2026 and continue east toward downtown.
- A range of outreach and communication methods will keep residents and businesses informed about construction activities and address questions as they arise.

West Broad BRT PROGRESS

Construction to Begin in 2026

CONSTRUCTION

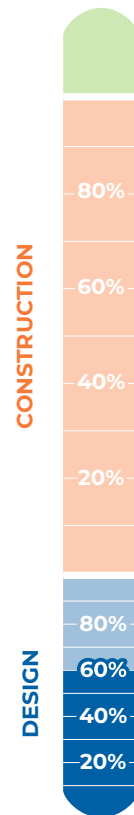


For more information about the West Broad Street BRT line, visit LinkUSColumbus.com/WestBroad.

East Main BRT



East Main BRT PROGRESS



Connecting With the Community

- Through the first half of the summer, the East Main engagement team has appeared at 22 community events along the East Main corridor, interacting with thousands of attendees to share the latest information and answer questions about the [East Main Street BRT](#) project. The project team also hosted a series of community open houses and meetings with corridor residents and businesses to share what's changed between 30% and 60% of the project's design.

WATCH HOW BRT WILL MOVE



- The team has tabled at major festivals such as the Bexley 4th of July Parade, All Disabilities Festival, Reynoldsburg Tomato Festival and CBUS Soul Fest, as well as appearing at recurring events like Music in the Park in Whitehall and the Reynoldsburg Farmers Market.



What's Next

- The East Main engagement team is continuing to meet and host small group meetings with neighborhood businesses along the corridor, sharing the latest design information.
- Our team will continue to appear at community events through the fall. These events are planned to include Taste of Bexley, Fall Forward Mingle in Whitehall and Halloween in the BURG! in Reynoldsburg.

Looking Ahead to 2026

- Project staff are advancing design and anticipate completing 90% design in 2026.



For more information about the East Main BRT line, visit LinkUSColumbus.com/EastMain.

Northwest BRT

Connecting With the Community

- Over the summer, the team met with more than 150 residents. The engagement team joined two community events, including a COTA public meeting to highlight the Northwest corridor's connection to the future [Line 30](#), and tabling at the Rise Up CBUS! event at Bethel International United Methodist Church to share project updates and gather community input.
- Public involvement opportunities will increase this fall. The Northwest corridor's engagement team will be at several community meetings and events.

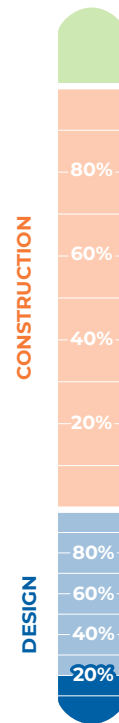
What's Next

- The Northwest corridor team is preparing to submit a grant application, also known as a ratings package, to the Federal Transit Administration. This is an important milestone in advancing the Northwest BRT and securing federal funding for this project.
- Community engagement will continue throughout the fall with briefings at local area commissions and outreach at festivals, farmers markets and other community events to share the latest design plans and listen to community feedback.

Looking Ahead to 2026

- The design team will achieve the 30% design milestone in early 2026, then advance the design plans into 60% design and continue work on the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.
- The team will continue engagement efforts with residents, workers and businesses in the Northwest corridor through presentations and tabling.

Northwest BRT PROGRESS



Sidewalks, Bikeways and Trails

Highlighted 2026 Projects

Detailed information about LinkUS sidewalks, bikeways and trail investments is in the Financial section. Below are three projects scheduled for construction in 2026.



Big Walnut Trail
(Winchester Pike to
Refugee Road/Nafzger Park)



Shier Rings Road
Shared-Use Path



Hoover Road
Pedestrian Bridge

Primary Sponsor:

Columbus

Other Sponsors:

Franklin County, Madison
Township

- This project will construct a portion of the Big Walnut Trail between Winchester Pike and Refugee Road.
- LinkUS will fully fund the construction of a shared-use path to better connect neighborhoods to transit.

Connects to COTA Line 8
and CMAX

LinkUS will fund \$4,082,250
for construction in 2026 and
\$4,303,500 in 2027.

Primary Sponsor:

Washington Township

Other Sponsors:

Dublin, Franklin County
Engineer's Office

- This project will close a gap in an existing shared-use path on Shier Rings Road.

Connects to COTA Line 32

LinkUS will fully fund this
project at the cost of \$544,300
for construction in 2026.

Primary Sponsor:

Grove City

Other Sponsors:

N/A

- The pedestrian bridge on Hoover Road will provide a connection over I-71, creating a safer walking path for residents and visitors.

Location is served by
COTA//Plus Grove City

LinkUS will partially fund the
construction of the pedestrian
bridge, committing \$2,200,000
for construction in 2026.



Financial Updates

LinkUS is backed by a sustainable funding model that is projected to generate \$6.25 billion in local sales tax by 2050 to support expanded transit, walkable infrastructure and a more connected region.

COTA Announces New Chief Financial Officer

COTA welcomed Earl Jackson on Sept. 15 as its new Chief Financial Officer, assuming responsibility for financial strategy, accounting, procurement and financial strategic planning initiatives.

Jackson was Chief Financial Officer for Denver's Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, where he managed a team of 130 and an annual budget of \$850 million. Jackson's career in financial management and planning includes a leadership role at the Chicago Transit Authority, the nation's second-largest transit agency, where he oversaw budget development and financial planning for more than \$775 million in annual operating expenses.

He also served in leadership roles at New York MTA, the largest transit authority in the U.S., as well as Bank of America and BNSF Railway.

"COTA is entering an era of unprecedented opportunity for growth and impact," said Jackson. "I look forward to ensuring that our financial strategies and resources are aligned to deliver the transformative results that LinkUS and our community deserve."

2025 Financial Snapshot

Anticipated Sales Tax Revenue* \$104 million

**The new sales tax went into effect on April 1, 2025. This projection includes seven months of the new sales tax received in 2025.*

Expenses (2023–Present)

West Broad	\$24.27 million
East Main	\$11.56 million
Northwest	\$4.85 million
>> Current Corridor Total	\$40.68 million

LinkUS Grant Spending (YTD)

West Broad Corridor Design	\$8 million
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PROJECTED EXPENSES

New Transit Services (2025)	\$11.75 million
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Estimated Corridor Spending (2025-2029)

West Broad	\$350 million
East Main	\$340 million
Northwest	*\$185 million
>> Total Capital Investment	\$875 million

**COTA is updating financial information on the Northwest corridor and will provide that updated cost estimate in the January 2026 progress report.*



Funding Sidewalks, Bikeways and Trails

In July, COTA's Board of Trustees approved the Transit Supportive Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program (CIP) five-year plan. The CIP will be updated annually and in 2026, it will partially or fully finance 37 projects with a combined \$29.9 million in funding. The projects represent 27 jurisdictions in COTA's service area. Below are the projects slated for funding in 2026:

Northeast Quadrant

PROJECT	PRIMARY SPONSOR	AMOUNT
East Broad Capital Trail — East (Washington Ave. to Alum Creek Trail)	Columbus	\$1,000,000
Eastmoor Green Line	Columbus	\$100,000
Cooke Rd. (Karl Rd. to Cleveland Ave)	*FCEO	\$672,755
Reynoldsburg-New Albany Rd./Morse Rd. (Clark State Rd. to Havant Dr.)	*FCEO	\$250,000
Cleveland Ave./Minerva Lake Rd.	Minerva Park	\$550,000
Brooksedge Mobility Project Phase 1 and 2	Westerville	\$3,265,800

Northwest Quadrant

PROJECT	PRIMARY SPONSOR	AMOUNT
Trabue Rd. — Buckeye Yard to I-270	Columbus	\$500,000
Blazer Pkwy Bike/Ped Improvements	Dublin	\$605,299
Dublin Rd. Shared-Use Path (SUP)	FCEO	\$500,000
Heritage Trail (Arena District to Old Hilliard)	Multiple	\$2,000,000
Renner Rd. (Alton Darby Creek Rd. to Hilliard Rome Rd.)	FCEO	\$285,000
Snouffer Rd. (Bride Water Blvd. to Smoky Row Rd.)	FCEO	\$175,000
Leap Rd. South Improvements	Hilliard	\$300,000
Shier Rings Rd. SUP	Washington Twp.	\$544,300
E. Wilson Bridge Rd. SUP	Worthington	\$175,000
SR 315 Crossing — Olentangy Trail to SR 161	Worthington	\$180,000
Worthington Miscellaneous Sidewalk Gaps	Worthington	\$100,000

*Franklin County Engineer's Office (FCEO)

Southeast Quadrant

PROJECT	PRIMARY SPONSOR	AMOUNT
Gender Rd. (sidewalk connections)	Canal Winchester	\$45,000
Gender Road South (multi-use path)	Canal Winchester	\$50,000
Big Walnut Trail (Winchester Pike to Refugee Rd./Nafzger Park)	Columbus	\$4,082,250
Capital Trail (Broad St. from Scioto Peninsula to Washington Ave.)	Columbus	\$2,300,000
Nelson Rd. Sidewalks	Columbus	\$1,000,000
Groveport Rd. (Ebright/Corbett/Front to Canal Corp)	FCEO	\$900,000
Winchester Pike (Gender Rd. to Shannon Rd.)	FCEO	\$547,500
Lockbourne Rd. SUP (Magnolia Trail to Collings Dr.)	Lockbourne	\$350,000
Groveport-Madison HS (area sidewalks)	Groveport	\$125,000

Southwest Quadrant

PROJECT	PRIMARY SPONSOR	AMOUNT
W. Broad St.	Columbus	\$1,632,900
Galloway Rd. (Broad St. to O'Harra Rd.)	FCEO	\$685,000
Grener Rd. (SUP on West Side)	FCEO	\$375,000
McComb Rd. (Sidewalks over I270)	FCEO	\$275,000
Triangle Area (Brown Rd./Harrisburg Pike) Sidewalks	Franklin Twp.	\$500,000
Farmstead to Holton Rd. SUP	Grove City	\$90,000
Grove City connection to Camp Chase Trail	Grove City	\$2,200,000
Hoover Rd. Pedestrian Bridge	Grove City	\$2,200,000
McDowell Rd. Diet	Grove City	\$1,088,600
Scioto Grove Metro Park to Great Southern Metro Park	Grove City	\$300,000
Centerpoint Transit Stop Upgrade	Urbancrest	\$7,500

West Broad Street BRT

COTA BOARD APPROVED BUDGET*

*Does not include bus procurements.

BUDGET YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET	SPENT TO DATE	REMAINING
2023	\$ 6,493,000.00	\$ 5,317,893.21	\$ 1,175,106.79
2024	\$ 12,512,825.00	\$ 12,395,819.71	\$ 117,005.29
2025	\$ 112,830,768.00	\$ 6,555,956.61	\$ 106,274,811.39
2026	\$ 150,020,000.00	\$ -	\$ 150,020,000.00
2027	\$ 86,114,000.00	\$ -	\$ 86,114,000.00
>> TOTAL	\$ 367,970,593.00	\$ 24,269,669.53	\$ 343,700,923.47

APPROVED PROCUREMENT AGREEMENTS

■ Planning and Design

■ Support Services

DESCRIPTION OF CONTRACT	AMOUNT	SPENT TO DATE	% COMPLETION
Detailed Design and Construction Support Services	\$ 37,772,593.00	\$ 23,931,590.77	63.36%
West Broad BRT	\$ 50,029.00	\$ 32,696.48	65.36%
General Support WBC, EMC, NWC Support	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 234,461.39	78.15%
West Broad BRT Project Management	\$ 51,408.00	\$ 18,921.00	36.81%
Outside Legal Sources	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 2,590.00	2.59%
West Broad BRT IT Project Management	\$ 119,998.87	\$ 49,409.89	41.18%
	>> \$ 38,394,028.87	>> \$ 24,269,669.53	

FUNDING SOURCES (PENDING)

GRANT	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	REMAINING FUNDS	FUNDS RECEIVED
OH-2025-002	FY 2023 Reconnecting Community Program Project Development Activities Only	\$ 18,895,157.00	\$ 8,724,550.00	\$ 10,170,607.00
pending	\$5309 Small Starts CIG Program Project Development Activities Only	\$ 8,134,600.00	\$ 8,134,600.00	\$ -
pending	FY 2023 Reconnecting Community Program Construction, ROW, and Utilities	\$ 23,004,843.00	\$ 23,004,843.00	\$ -
pending	FY2023 TOD_ LinkUS WB BRT Transit-oriented development along WB Street	\$ 1,080,000.00	\$ 1,080,000.00	\$ -
pending	FY2025 CRPAttributable flex funds (MORPC) Construction, ROW, and Utilities	\$ 7,520,000.00	\$ 7,520,000.00	\$ -
pending	FY2027 CRPAttributable flex funds (MORPC) Construction, ROW, and Utilities	\$ 13,100,000.00	\$ 13,100,000.00	\$ -

East Main Street BRT

COTA BOARD APPROVED BUDGET*

BUDGET YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET	SPENT TO DATE	REMAINING
2024	\$ 10,500,000.00	\$ 4,879,462.00	\$ 5,620,538.00
2025	\$ 28,674,000.00	\$ 6,683,771.94	\$ 21,990,228.06
2026	\$ 45,701,000.00	\$ -	\$ 45,701,000.00
2027	\$ 86,519,000.00	\$ -	\$ 86,519,000.00
2028	\$ 104,575,000.00	\$ -	\$ 104,575,000.00
2029	\$ 76,112,000.00	\$ -	\$ 76,112,000.00
>> TOTAL	\$ 352,081,000.00	\$ 11,563,233.94	\$ 340,517,766.06

APPROVED PROCUREMENT AGREEMENTS

■ Planning and Design

■ Support Services

DESCRIPTION OF CONTRACT	AMOUNT	SPENT TO DATE	% COMPLETION
East Main Street Corridor	\$ 3,231,420.00	\$ 944,764.54	29.24%
Design and Construction Services	\$ 24,758,183.00	\$ 10,344,386.87	41.78%
General Support WBC, EMC, NWC Support	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 269,483.53	89.83%
East Main BRT Project Management Services	\$ 26,656.00	\$ 4,599.00	17.25%
	>> \$ 28,316,259.00	>> \$ 11,563,233.94	

FUNDING SOURCES (PENDING)

GRANT	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	REMAINING FUNDS	FUNDS RECEIVED
OH-2025-006	\$5309 Small Starts CIG Program Project Development Activities Only	\$ 8,134,600	\$ 8,134,600	\$ -

2025-2029 COTA Capital Improvements Program

LinkUS West Broad Corridor

YEAR	ANNUAL BUDGET
2023	\$ 6,493,000
2024	\$ 12,512,825
2025	\$ 112,830,768
2026	\$ 150,020,000
2027	\$ 86,114,000
	>> \$ 367,970,593

LinkUS East Main Corridor

YEAR	ANNUAL BUDGET
2024	\$ 10,500,000
2025	\$ 28,674,000
2026	\$ 45,701,000
2027	\$ 86,519,000
2028	\$ 104,575,000
2029	\$ 76,112,000
	>> \$ 352,081,000

LinkUS Northwest Corridor

YEAR	ANNUAL BUDGET
2024	\$ -
2025	\$ 7,000,000
2026	\$ 4,000,000
2027	\$ 27,000,000
2028	\$ 100,000,000
2029	\$ 47,000,000
	>> \$ 185,000,000



Learn more, submit a question
or request a presentation at
LinkUSColumbus.com

