LinkUS

Moving our region » Together

LINKUS PROGRESS REPORT

» MAY 2026

COTA | Franklin County Board of Commissioners 1803 | Mid-Ohio Regional MORPC Planning Commission | The City of Columbus Andrew J. Ginther, Mayor | Columbus Partnership

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LinkUS Progress Report MAY 2026

SINCE NOVEMBER 2024

45% MORE SERVICE

8.5% MORE COTA BUS SERVICE

- **Midnight service** on all frequent and standard lines
- **8 lines** with improved frequency *Lines 6, 34, 45, 52, 71, 72, 102 & CMAX*
- **13 lines** with expanded hours
- **81 more** Operators hired *(727 Total)*
- **76 more** CNG buses purchased *(38 arriving in 2026)*
- **37 sidewalk and trail projects** with funding for design or construction in 2026, totaling nearly $30 million
- **5% increase** in ridership in 2025, thanks to expanded service
- **Launch** of Tap to Pay
- **Extended hours for Mainstream** to complement fixed-route service
- **New COTA Mainstream app** to help customers with mobility needs book trips and pay fares with their phone, tablet or computer

LinkUS Launches West Broad TOD Study

The **West Broad Corridor Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan** is advancing alongside the development of the **West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor**, with a focus on encouraging transit-supportive, community-centered growth around future stations. The TOD Plan will establish a shared vision and an implementation roadmap to guide housing, access to jobs and services, walkability and placemaking along the 9.3-mile corridor.

Community engagement began with a public kickoff meeting on March 5 at the Hilltop Branch Library, which welcomed nearly 100 participants. Since then, a series of station area meetings have been held across the corridor, including completed meetings in Prairie Township, Downtown Columbus and the Hilltop area.

Six public meetings were held in April and May, using an open-house format designed to encourage conversation, walk-in participation and accessible feedback opportunities. These early engagement efforts have helped surface local priorities and inform the next phase of TOD planning.

Engagement will continue through June, with four remaining station area meetings scheduled in Franklinton and Westland, along with a **public survey** to gather additional input. 19 Community Ambassadors are also active throughout the corridor this summer, engaging residents and sharing project information at neighborhood locations and events. Information on upcoming meetings, survey participation and ongoing project updates is available at **linkuscolumbus.com/development**, and public input will continue to shape TOD strategies as the plan develops.

Upcoming Transit-Oriented Development Meetings

FRANKLINTON
Gladden Community House
Thursday, June 4: 5:30–7:30 p.m.
Saturday, June 6: 10 a.m.–Noon
RSVP

WESTLAND
Westland Area Library
Saturday, June 20: 11 a.m.–1 p.m.
Monday, June 22: 5:30–7:30 p.m.
RSVP

To find upcoming community events and meetings related to TOD projects and planning, visit **linkuscolumbus.com/calendar.**

May Service Improvements Thanks to LinkUS

COTA's May 2026 service changes included an important LinkUS milestone: **Line 6 Sullivant became COTA's newest frequent service line.** Beginning on May 4, weekday service on Line 6 improved from every 30 minutes to **every 15 minutes,** responding to customer requests and strong weekday ridership. This is a clear example of how LinkUS is delivering better transit for Central Ohio riders by providing more frequent, more convenient service where demand is growing.

COTA's seasonal **Zoo Bus** also returned May 9, providing service from Downtown Columbus to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. Weekend service operates May 9 through May 24, with daily service beginning Memorial Day, May 25, and continuing through Labor Day, Sept. 7. Fall weekend service is scheduled to operate Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays starting Friday, Sept. 11 through Saturday, Oct. 31. The Zoo Bus runs five times per day from Downtown Columbus to the Zoo, with stops including Griggs Dam Park and Ride and Dublin Park and Ride.

Other May 2026 service changes included:

- **Line 61 Grove City:** Service was streamlined to use Front Street from Main Street to Greenlawn Avenue instead of High Street, improving efficiency and providing faster, more direct service south of Downtown Columbus.
- **Line 74 Smoky Row:** Service was realigned to travel north on Smoky Row Road and west on Summit View Road.
- **Schedule Improvements:** Minor schedule adjustments were made on Lines 10, 22, 35 and 73 to improve on-time performance and account for traffic, construction, extended late-night service and other operating conditions.

Upcoming September Service Improvements

In September, COTA will continue building on LinkUS progress with additional service improvements, including the launch of **Line 30** from Hilliard to Upper Arlington, The Ohio State University and Downtown Columbus, and the extension of **Line 1** from Downtown Columbus to Ohio State and Dublin.

These changes will expand access between key residential, employment, education and activity centers, creating stronger east-west and northwest connections across the region.

As LinkUS promises, these improvements reflect COTA's commitment to adding more service, improving regional connectivity and giving more people reliable transit options to reach jobs, school, healthcare, entertainment and other daily destinations.

September Service Public Information Meetings

Downtown: 33 N. High Street
COTA Board Room and
Facebook Live (@COTAbus)
Thursday, Aug. 6 at 6 p.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 11 at noon

January 2027 Service Public Comment Meetings

Downtown: 33 N. High Street
COTA Board Room and
Facebook Live (@COTAbus)
Thursday, Sept. 7 at 6 p.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 22 at noon

West Broad Street BRT

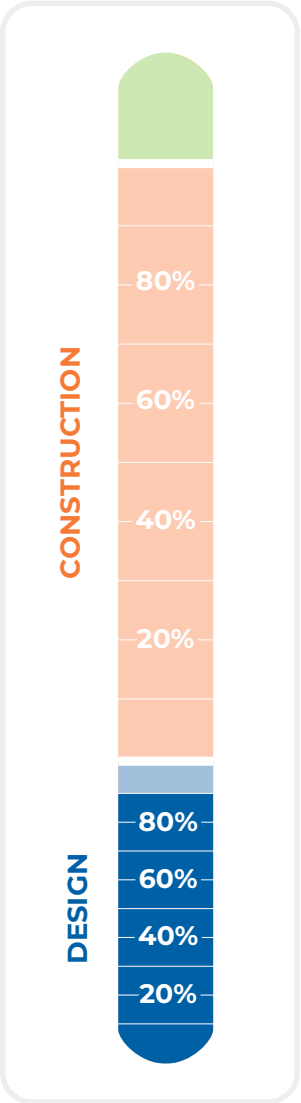
Timeline for Construction Is Currently Fluid

COTA continues making important progress on the **West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor**, advancing the detailed design work currently at 90%. This work includes close coordination between COTA, the City of Columbus and the Ohio Department of Transportation to refine key design elements, align technical requirements and prepare final updates for submission to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The West Broad Street corridor remains a foundational piece of LinkUS, connecting communities along one of the region's most important east-west corridors with faster, more reliable and more accessible transit.

With all large federally funded projects, there is expected variability in project delivery and complexity, but COTA and its partners are as committed as ever to delivering rapid transit to Central Ohio. We continue to work with the FTA to advance this project through the Capital Investment Grants Program and we will adjust construction timelines as we get more information.

As this process continues, COTA and its partners remain focused on the larger LinkUS vision: a more connected mobility network that includes rapid transit, more frequent COTA service, bike and sidewalk connectivity and transit-oriented development that supports growth, access and opportunity across Central Ohio.



WEST BROAD PROGRESS

Connecting With the Community

This spring, COTA's outreach team connected with neighbors and stakeholders through presentations and neighborhood events to receive feedback, answer questions and spread the word. Summer 2026 is packed with opportunities to learn more and share feedback. The project team will be at community events throughout the year, including:

JUNE 6:
614 Day
Land-Grant Brewing Company
424 W. Town St.

JUNE 6:
Westgate Farmers Market
Westgate Masonic Lodge
2925 W. Broad St.

JUNE 12–14:
Columbus Arts Festival
Scioto Mile

JUNE 19–20:
Juneteenth Ohio Festival
Scioto Mile

JULY 12:
All Disabilities Day
Dorrian Green Park
50 S. Belle St.

To find upcoming West Broad Street BRT community events and meetings, visit **linkuscolumbus.com/calendar**.

Preparing the Community for Construction

COTA and its LinkUS partners are preparing for the future of West Broad Street with the understanding that major infrastructure improvements require strong communication, careful coordination and a commitment to supporting the people who live, work, travel and do business along the corridor.

COTA, the City of Columbus, the Franklin County Engineer's Office and construction partners are working together to help residents, businesses, customers and visitors continue navigating West Broad Street as Bus Rapid Transit is eventually constructed.

Design concepts are subject to change as planning, engineering and public engagement continue.

This work is about more than building a transit line. It's about keeping West Columbus neighbors informed and engaged through a historic transformation that will improve mobility, strengthen connections and support long-term growth along one of Central Ohio's most important corridors. Before, during and after construction, COTA and its partners will focus on proactive outreach, clear information and practical tools to help corridor businesses, residents and travelers understand what is happening, what to expect and how to stay connected.

TACTICS WILL INCLUDE:

- Clear wayfinding and construction signage to help drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, transit customers and visitors safely navigate changing conditions along the corridor
- Business support toolkits with shareable materials, project updates, customer access information, social media graphics, frequently asked questions and other resources to help businesses communicate with employees and customers
- Dedicated outreach teams to connect directly with residents, property owners, employers, neighborhood organizations and community leaders before and during key phases of work
- Public meetings and open houses to provide project updates, answer questions and gather feedback from the community as work advances
- Regular corridor communications through email updates, project webpages, printed materials, social media, media outreach and community partner networks
- Coordination with neighborhood and business organizations to share information through trusted local channels and ensure West Broad Street stakeholders have multiple ways to stay informed
- Access-focused planning to help maintain connections to businesses, homes, schools, healthcare, places of worship and community destinations as construction activity moves through the corridor

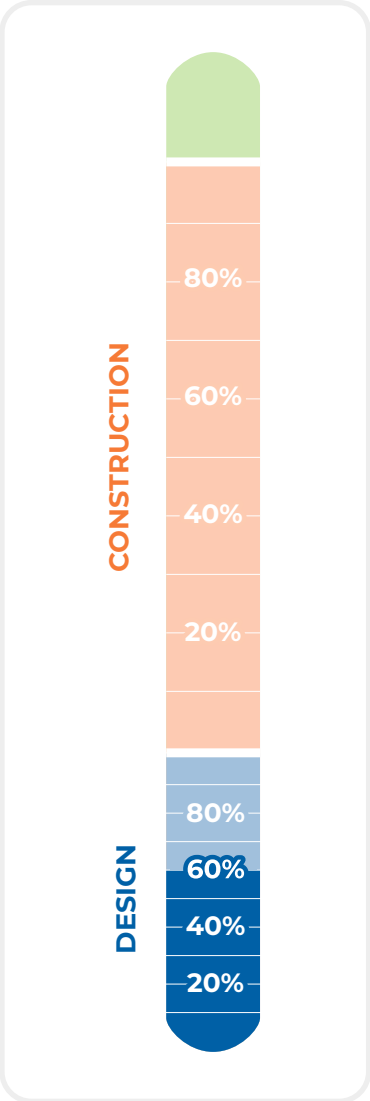
East Main BRT

BRT DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS THANKS TO COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

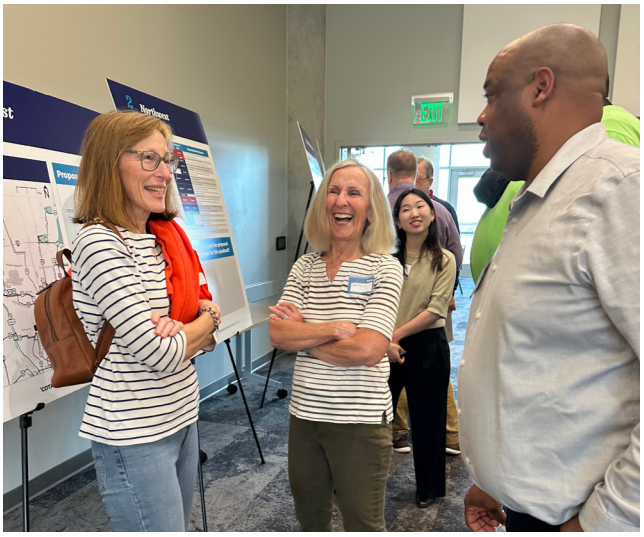
Since fall 2025 when COTA published 60% design plans, the East Main BRT team has been working on refining the design based on community and stakeholder feedback. Some examples include moving the station from Brice Road to Beeler Drive in Reynoldsburg, and extending mixed traffic lanes and adding new turn lanes throughout the corridor to improve both the BRT operations and traffic flow.

The project is now advancing toward 90% design and the project team continues to coordinate closely with the municipalities in the corridor to review interim design updates and ensure the plans align with local needs. At the same time, the project team is planning for construction by coordinating with other nearby projects, including work in Downtown Columbus and with the West Broad BRT project where projects overlap.

In January, COTA's Board of Trustees unanimously voted to hire Columbus-based construction firm Elford Inc. as Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) for the East Main BRT project. In this role, Elford Inc. will help keep the project on track and on budget, while also supporting COTA's efforts to communicate construction phasing to East Main communities.



EAST MAIN PROGRESS



For more information about the East Main Street BRT line, visit **linkuscolumbus.com/eastmain**.

Connecting With the Community

The East Main Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project team connected with neighbors and customers at the First Tuesday Tea at the King Arts Complex (April 7), the Asian Festival (May 23–May 24) at Franklin Park and the Bexley Farmers Market along East Main Street (which began May 14 and continues through Oct. 22).

Earth Day offered another opportunity for the project team to engage. The group held an event on April 15 for tree planting and litter cleanup, reinforcing COTA's commitment to sustainability and highlighting how the BRT project supports a cleaner, more connected corridor.

The East Main project team will be at community events throughout the summer, including:

JUNE 3–SEPT. 16:
Franklin Park Conservatory Farmers Market
Franklin Park Conservatory
1777 E. Broad St.

JUNE 5:
Whitehall Big Summer Kickoff
John Bishop Park
4815 Etna Rd.

JUNE 20:
Juneteenth Celebration in Reynoldsburg
Huber Park
1520 Davidson Dr.

JUNE 26:
Food Truck Friday
JFK Park
7232 E. Main St.

JULY 4:
Bexley 4th of July
Bexley, Ohio

To find upcoming East Main Street BRT community events and meetings, visit **linkuscolumbus.com/calendar**.

Design concepts are subject to change as planning, engineering and public engagement continue.

Northwest BRT

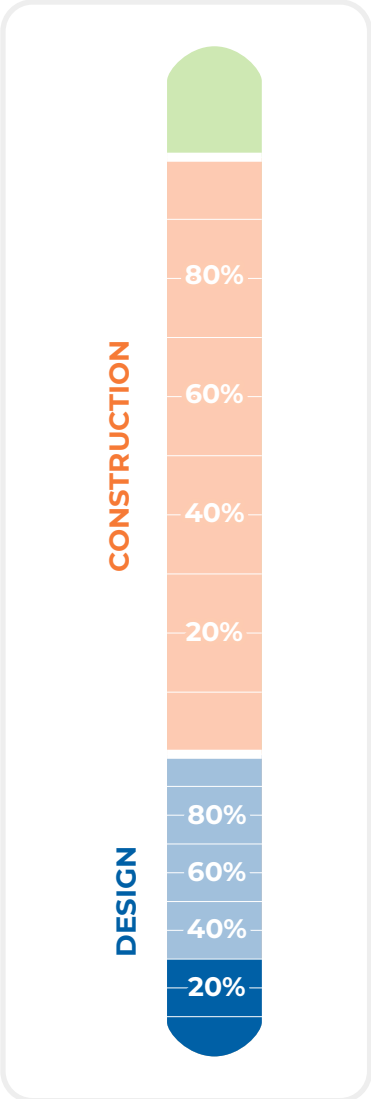
Design for the first phase of the Northwest BRT stretches approximately 10 miles from Downtown Columbus to Bethel Road. At 30% design, this phase of work includes 6.4 miles of dedicated transit lanes.

COTA is sharing a first look at one of the designed intersections of the Northwest BRT — a before-and-after view of Olentangy River Road at King Avenue. The rendering shows the intersection will have two dedicated north and south BRT lanes and four mixed traffic lanes. The design also includes more sidewalks and bike paths, high-visibility crosswalks and an ADA-accessible BRT station.

A portion of the Northwest BRT alignment will include Business Access and Transit (BAT) lanes. These are included in areas where it makes the most sense to have curb-side running BRT and still maintain driveway or perpendicular roadway access for regular vehicles.

The design work includes designating the Bethel Road Park and Ride at Anheuser-Busch Sports Park as the northern end of the line for this initial segment. The southern end of line will be at Fulton and High Streets near Franklin County Courthouse.

COTA is submitting project materials to the FTA this spring as part of a formal rating request under the Capital Investment Grant program. The FTA will rate the project to determine if it can advance in the program — it must score medium or better to continue toward funding. The Capital Investment Grant, along with local sales tax funds, makes up a large portion of the project's funding.



NORTHWEST PROGRESS

For more information about the Northwest BRT line, visit **linkuscolumbus.com/northwest**.

Sidewalks, Bikeways and Trails

Transit-Supportive Infrastructure (TSI) Updates

In July 2025, COTA's Board of Trustees approved the five-year Transit Supportive Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP will partially or fully fund 37 projects for a combined $29.7 million.

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), COTA and local government partners in COTA's service area are currently updating the CIP to reflect project updates and develop a balanced budget for 2027–2031. Updates to the CIP will be available in the September 2026 progress report.

2026 Groundbreakings

There are eight TSI projects anticipated to begin construction in 2026, creating nearly 10 miles of new sidewalks, bikeways and trails that provide essential connections to COTA service. Project sponsors and LinkUS partners will host groundbreakings and ribbon-cuttings throughout 2026 to celebrate these project milestones.

CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS:

- **Columbus:** Big Walnut Trail – Winchester Pike to Refugee Road/Nafzger Park
- **Columbus:** West Broad Street BRT Corridor Shared-Use Path
- **Franklin County Engineer's Office:** Cooke Road – Karl Road to Cleveland Avenue Shared-Use Path and Sidewalks
- **Grove City:** Hoover Road Pedestrian Bridge
- **Grove City:** McDowell Road Diet
- **Minerva Park:** Cleveland Avenue/Minerva Lake Road Shared-Use Path
- **Washington Township:** Shier Rings Road Shared-Use Path
- **Westerville:** Brooksedge Mobility Project

To find upcoming community events and meetings related to TSI projects, visit **linkuscolumbus.com/calendar**.

Highlighted Projects

Below are three additional projects programmed for 2026 and 2027.

Winchester Pike (Gender Road to Shannon Road)

Project Type:
Shared-Use Path

Primary Sponsor:
Franklin County Engineer's Office

Other Sponsors:
Canal Winchester, Columbus, Madison Township

Project Description: This project will connect residents to the Blacklick Creek Trail and serve new housing developments in the area by constructing a shared-use path along Gender Road. Preliminary design will begin in 2026 to ensure the project is shovel-ready for construction in 2029.

Connects To: COTA Lines 25 and 52

Funding: LinkUS will fund two-thirds of the total project cost with $700,000 committed for project development in 2026 and 2027 and $6,000,000 committed for construction in 2029.

Worthington Sidewalk Gaps

Project Type:
Sidewalks

Primary Sponsor:
Worthington

Project Description: This project will construct 1.33 miles of sidewalks within the City of Worthington to fill existing sidewalk gaps and improve safety and connectivity. Initial pre-construction engineering and design work will occur throughout 2026 and 2027. Construction will be completed in phases between 2027 and 2029.

Connects To: COTA Lines 4, 35 and 102

Funding: LinkUS will fund the $1,430,000 project through all project development and construction phases between 2026 and 2029.

Sullivant Avenue Improvements

Project Type:
Shared-Use Path and Sidewalks

Primary Sponsor:
Columbus

Other Sponsors:
Franklin County Engineer's Office, Franklin Township, Prairie Township

Project Description: This project will construct more than two miles of shared-use path and sidewalk on Sullivant Avenue, improving mobility options for multiple neighborhoods on the west side. This project also connects users with two proposed TSI projects that offer safer access to the Camp Chase Trail and the West Broad BRT Corridor. Preliminary design and pre-construction work will begin in 2027. Construction will begin by 2030.

Connects To: COTA Lines 6, 9, 10 and 21

Funding: LinkUS will fund a portion of the total project cost by committing nearly $12,500,000 in TSI funds for design and construction phases.

Website Update

It is now easier than ever to follow and engage with LinkUS progress, thanks to the newly refreshed linkuscolumbus.com website! The updated site is designed to educate the public, share project status updates and provide clear ways for residents to engage with COTA and LinkUS partners online and in person.

New features to help you navigate linkuscolumbus.com:

- **A new interactive events calendar** lets residents find public meetings, open houses, tabling and pop-up events, and RSVP directly through the calendar
- **A notification bar** at the top of the homepage for upcoming events and future construction or service alerts
- **A refreshed homepage** to help visitors learn more about LinkUS and better navigate the site to find COTA service updates, BRT progress and the locations of the sidewalks, bikeways and trails to be built

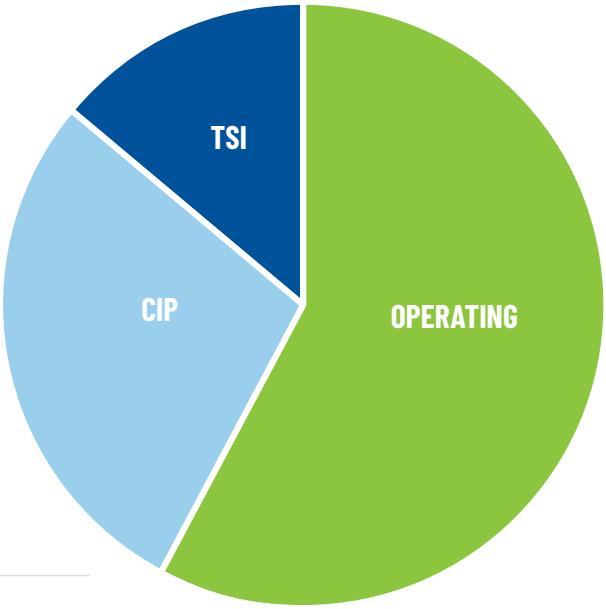
Upcoming features will include:

- **Refreshed BRT corridor pages** so visitors can get the latest information on design and future construction more easily
- **News and resources** sections for businesses and residents, including downloadable business toolkits to help maintain customer access to stores, restaurants and other services during construction

Financial Updates

2026 Sales Tax Projection & Allocation

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	ALLOCATION
Operating	$216.9 million	58%
Capital Improvement Program (CIP)	$105.3 million	28.2%
Transit-Supportive Infrastructure (TSI)	$51.4 million	13.8%
>> **Total Sales Tax Projection**	**$373.6 million**	**100%**



2026 Operating Budget

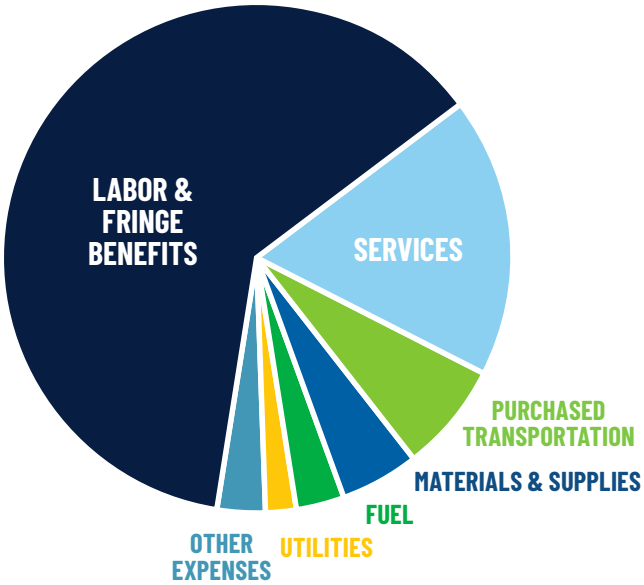
The $276 million operating budget builds on 2025 accomplishments and advances key long-term priorities.

2026 Operating Revenue Sources & Projections

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
Sales Tax	$216.9 million
Federal/State Funds	$28.5 million
Partner Contribution Revenue	$9.0 million
Farebox Revenue	$10.4 million
Other Revenue	$11.2 million
>> **Total Revenue**	**$276.0 million**

2026 Operating Expenses

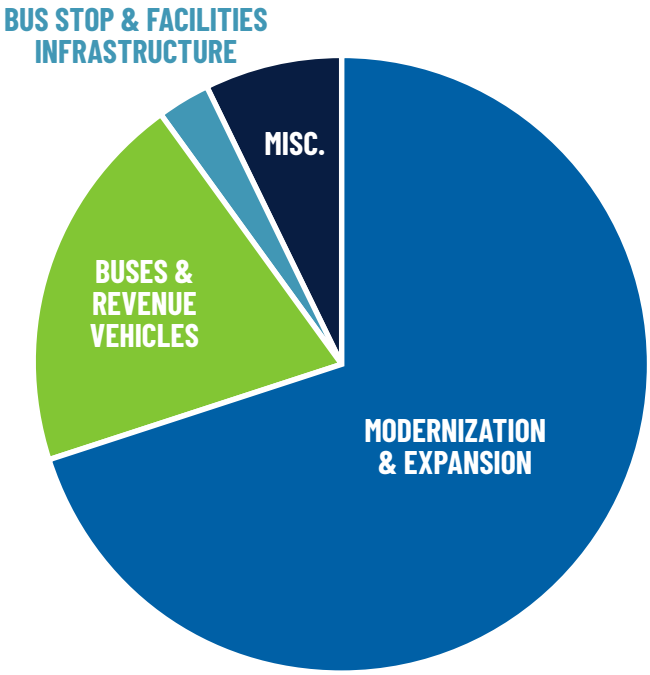
DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	ALLOCATION
Labor and Fringe Benefits	$172.8 million	63%
Services	$49.2 million	18%
Purchased Transportation	$19.8 million	7%
Materials and Supplies	$15.1 million	5%
Fuel	$7.0 million	3%
Utilities	$4.6 million	2%
Other Expenses	$7.5 million	3%
>> **Total Expenses**	**$276.0 million**	**100%**



2026–2030 Capital Investment Plan

5-Year $1.47B CIP Advances Key Capital Priorities with Investments In:

- LinkUS expansion and corridor development
- Replacement and modernization of buses and other revenue vehicles
- Bus stop, station and customer facility improvements



2026–2030 Capital Investment Plan

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	ALLOCATION
Modernization and Expansion	$1.04 billion	70%
Buses and Revenue Vehicles	$290.6 million	20%
Bus Stop and Facilities Infrastructure	$49.3 million	3%
Miscellaneous	$101.4 million	7%
>> **Total Expense**	**$1.48 billion**	**100%**

Bus Rapid Transit Project Expenses

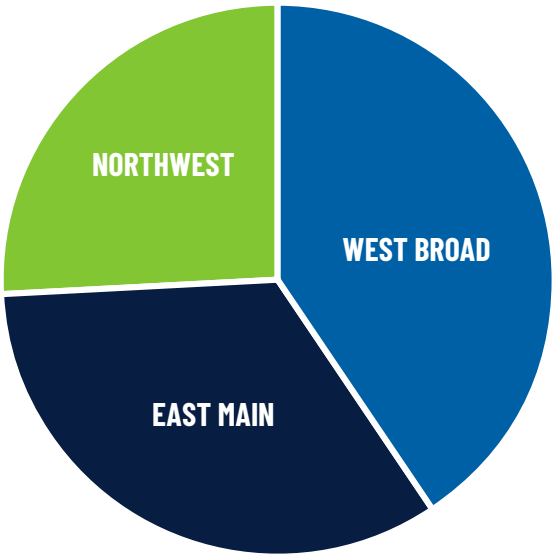
PROJECT	ACTUAL 2023–2025	PROJECTED 2026–2030	TOTAL****
West Broad Street*	$28.8 million	$402.9 million	$431.7 million
East Main Street**	$15.7 million	$339.5 million	$355.2 million
Northwest***	$4.9 million	$268.6 million	$273.5 million
>> **Total Expense**	**$49.4 million**	**$1.01 billion**	**$1.06 billion**

**Source: SCC/PMOC Cost Estimate 4/10/26*

***Source: 2026–2030 CIP*

****Source: NWC Financial Plan 4/3/26*

*****Total cost estimates include infrastructure costs not factored into the Capital Investment Grant Program Small Starts Grant request.*



2026–2030 Capital Improvement Program | By Primary Sponsor

LOCATION	TRANSIT-SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT	AMOUNT
Canal Winchester	**Gender Rd.** Sidewalk Connections	$45,000
Canal Winchester	**Gender Rd. S.** Multi-Use Path	$50,000
	>> **Total:**	**$95,000**
Columbus	**Broad Street Urban Trail East** (Washington Ave. to Alum Creek Trail)	$1,000,000
Columbus	**Eastmoor Green Line**	$100,000
Columbus	**Trabue Rd.** (Buckeye Yard to I-270)	$500,000
Columbus	**Big Walnut Trail** (Winchester Pike to Refugee Rd./Nafzger Park)	$4,082,250
Columbus	**Broad Street Urban Trail** (Broad St. from Scioto Peninsula to Washington Ave.)	$2,300,000
Columbus	**Nelson Rd.** Sidewalks	$1,000,000
Columbus	**W. Broad St.** Shared-Use Path	$1,632,900
	>> **Total:**	**$10,615,150**
Dublin	**Blazer Pkwy.** (Bike/Pedestrian Improvements)	**$605,299**
FCEO*	**Cooke Rd.** (Karl Rd. to Cleveland Ave.)	$672,755
FCEO*	**Reynoldsburg-New Albany Rd/Morse Rd.** (Clark State Rd. to Havant Dr.)	$357,134
FCEO*	**Dublin Rd.** Shared-Use Path	$500,000
FCEO*	**Renner Rd.** (Alton Darby Creek to Hilliard Rome Rd.)	$270,481
FCEO*	**Snouffer Rd.** (Bride Water Blvd. to Smoky Row Rd.)	$251,969
FCEO*	**Winchester Pike** (Gender Rd. to Shannon Rd.)	$500,308
FCEO*	**Galloway Rd.** (Broad St. to O'Harra Rd.)	$692,935
FCEO*	**Grener Rd.** Shared-Use Path on the West Side	$473,388
FCEO*	**McComb Rd.** Sidewalks over I-270	$243,377
FCEO*	**Groveport Rd.** (Ebright/Corbett/Front to Canal Corp)	$701,008
	>> **Total:**	**$4,663,355**
Franklin Twp	**Triangle Area** (Brown Rd./Harrisburg Pike Sidewalks)	**$500,000**
Grove City	**Farmstead to Holton Rd.** Shared-Use Path	$90,000
Grove City	**Grove City** Connection to Camp Chase Trail	$2,200,000
Grove City	**Hoover Rd.** Pedestrian Bridge	$2,200,000
Grove City	**McDowell Rd.** Diet	$1,088,600
Grove City	**Scioto Grove Metro Park to Great Southern Metro Park**	$300,000
	>> **Total:**	**$5,878,600**
Hilliard	**Leap Rd. South Improvements**	**$300,000**
Lockbourne	**Lockbourne Rd.** Shared-Use Path (Magnolia Trail to Collings Dr.)	**$350,000**
Minerva Park	**Cleveland Ave./Minerva Lake Rd.**	**$550,000**
Multiple	**Heritage Trail** (Arena District to Old Hilliard)	**$2,000,000**
Urbancrest	**Centerpoint Transit Stop** Upgrade	**$7,500**
Washington Twp	**Shier Rings Rd.** Shared-Use Path	**$544,300**
Westerville	**Brooksedge Mobility Project** Phases 1 and 2	**$3,265,800**
Worthington	**E Wilson Bridge Rd.** Shared-Use Path	$86,400
Worthington	**SR 315 Crossing** (Olentangy Trail to SR 161)	$180,000
Worthington	**Worthington** Miscellaneous Sidewalk Gaps	$40,000
	>> **Total:**	**$306,400**
	>> **Total:**	**$29,721,404**

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

**Franklin County Engineer's Office*