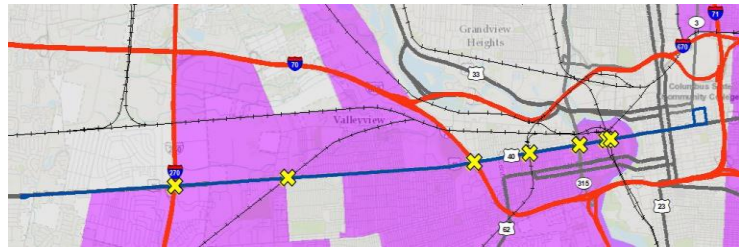


## FY23 Neighborhood Access & Equity (NAE) Capital Construction Project Narrative

### A. Overview

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), in collaboration with the City of Columbus, Ohio Department of Transportation, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), and numerous key stakeholders throughout the region, requests a \$41,900,000 NAE Capital Construction grant for the proposed West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor from the U.S. Department of Transportation. This project will restore community connectivity and ensure equitable access, mobility, and safety along the West Broad Street corridor in Columbus, Ohio. It will also launch a broader commitment to ensure regional connectivity and equitable access and development throughout Central Ohio through the comprehensive **LinkUs mobility and growth initiative**.

Broad Street is an east-west dividing facility that separates the communities it passes through. As shown in the map to the right and as detailed in section B, **75% of the corridor divides and burdens CEJST-documented disadvantaged communities** on one or both sides.



What should be a corridor that helps pull together communities on the opposite sides of Broad Street is instead a demarcation line that separates communities and businesses on either side. In addition to the burdens imposed by Broad Street, the communities along this corridor are further divided by six separate dividing facilities. As a result, disadvantaged populations along West Broad Street have been heavily burdened and impacted by frequent, serious crashes and other safety concerns on Broad Street. Furthermore, within the region itself, residents and businesses are burdened by the lack of a rapid transit network, the lack of complete active transportation networks, and the lack of housing units to support regional growth. The LinkUS Mobility Initiative (LinkUS) emerged in response to these regional challenges.

Building on a foundation of regional planning efforts to prepare the region for significant growth over the next three decades, the purpose of LinkUS is to enhance access to jobs, housing, healthcare, and education by building mobility systems to drive future growth in a way that is inclusive and accessible to all current and future residents. LinkUS incorporates numerous initiatives to improve housing, poverty, safety, and climate action, including high-capacity and advanced rapid transit, bikeways, greenways, complete streets, roadway safety, pedestrian improvements, and development along key regional corridors throughout Central Ohio. The West Broad Street BRT corridor project is an essential not only because of how it reconnects the communities along Broad Street, but also because its construction will mark the first step towards transforming the LinkUS vision of a more connected and equitable region into reality.

The proposed project consists of all the work necessary to transform 9.3 miles of West Broad Street (US-40) into a bus-rapid transit corridor and active transportation spine that reconnects communities along the project corridor. The BRT will operate in 5.2 miles of dedicated guideway and 4.1 miles of mixed traffic along West Broad Street from Rockbrook Crossing Avenue to Long Street in downtown Columbus. The BRT corridor will include 17 stations, including a new park and ride/transit center for BRT and local route riders and end of line layover facilities. Construction is expected to be completed in 2027 with new BRT service beginning shortly after.

## **B. Location & Map**

Columbus, Ohio (pop. 906,528) is the 14<sup>th</sup> largest city in the U.S. and the largest city in Ohio.<sup>1</sup> The Central Ohio region surrounding Columbus is experiencing significant growth, with three million residents projected by 2050.<sup>2</sup> This predicted growth will likely be accelerated by Intel Corporation’s 2022 announcement regarding the upcoming construction of two semiconductor factories in Central Ohio just outside of the Columbus corporate limits. Intel has described its site as a “mega-site,” which will significantly impact growth, the need for additional housing, greater densification, and improved transportation infrastructure throughout the region.<sup>3</sup>

The proposed West Broad Street BRT will improve mobility, safety, and affordable access to transportation and other infrastructure along the West Broad Street corridor. The BRT will improve east-west connectivity by providing safer access across the **six north-south dividing facilities**, including: I-270, the Camp Chase Industrial Railroad, I-70, the Indiana & Ohio Railroad, SR 315, and active rail lines owned by Norfolk Southern and CSX.

The West Broad Street corridor is situated on the west side of Columbus along W. Broad Street (US-40) in Franklin County. The majority of the corridor is within the corporate limits of the City of Columbus with the remaining portions in Prairie and Franklin Townships. The western terminus is at the intersection of W. Broad Street at Doherty Road/Rockbrook Crossing Avenue; the eastern terminus is the intersection of W. Broad Street at Washington Avenue. The corridor is defined by a half-mile buffer around the proposed alignment.

The West Broad Street BRT will connect residents in popular Columbus neighborhoods including Prairie Township, Franklin Township, Hilltop and Franklinton. These neighborhoods represent a full range of geospatial character, spanning from the density of downtown Columbus to the less dense suburban edge.

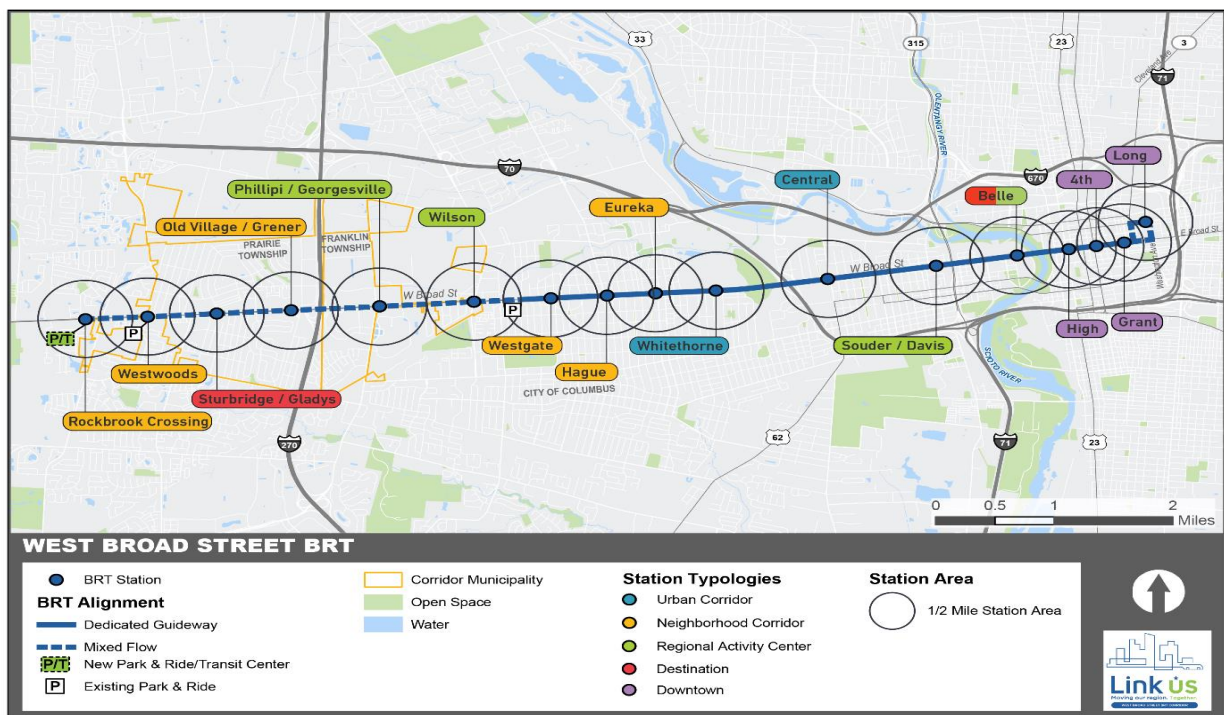
---

<sup>1</sup> “Fastest-Growing Cities Are Still in the West and South,” CB22-90, U.S. Census Bureau, May 26, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/fastest-growing-cities-population-estimates.html>

<sup>2</sup> The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) estimates that Columbus and Central Ohio, will grow to 3 million residents by 2050. See “2018-2050 Population Growth Projects,” MORPC, last accessed Jan. 17, 2023, <https://www.morpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MORPC-POPULATION-PROJECTIONS.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> “Innovating and Investing in Ohio,” Intel Corporation, last accessed Jan. 17, 2023, <https://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/corporate-responsibility/intel-in-ohio.html>.

Key activity centers on the corridor include hospitals and medical facilities including OhioHealth Doctors Hospital, Mount Carmel medical facilities, OhioHealth Grant Medical Center, as well as major employers such as Hollywood Casino Columbus, Ohio Department of Transportation headquarters, and Ohio Department of Public Safety. The BRT will also serve popular tourist destinations such as the Center of Science and Industry, National Veterans Memorial and Museum, and the Scioto Mile riverfront and parkland, as well as the downtown Columbus Central Business District which includes the Ohio Statehouse, Supreme Court of Ohio, Columbus Metropolitan Library, Columbus Museum of Art, and the Ohio and Palace Theatres. Additionally, riders can connect to several educational institutions including Capital University Law School, Columbus State Community College, Mt. Carmel Nursing College and the Columbus College of Art and Design.



## C. Response to Merit Criteria

### 1. Equity and Environmental Justice

The proposed West Broad Street BRT corridor (census tracts (CT) bordering the roadway or within 0.25 miles of it) spans 18 CT, of which 10 (56%) are considered as disadvantaged per the Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). (See Attachment 1). The roadway itself passes through or borders 17 of these CT; one CT is 200 feet south of the roadway and cut off by the Camp Chase Industrial Railroad. Approximately 75% of the corridor's alignment is bordered by a CEJST-identified disadvantaged CT on at least one side.

<b>Table 1. Disadvantaged Census Tracts (CT) Along West Broad Street Corridor</b>		
<b>Segment Limits</b>	<b>Disadvantaged CT (3404900+)</b>	<b>Length**</b>
Doherty Road to Norton Road	None	0.02
Norton Road to I-270	South side: 81.20	<b>0.02</b>
I-270 to Camp Chase RR	North side: 82.10. South side: 82.10, 82.30, 83.11*	<b>0.03</b>
Camp Chase RR to Roys Avenue	North side: 45.00	<b>0.01</b>
Roys Avenue to I-70	North side: 45.00. South side: 46.20, 47.00, 49.00	<b>0.03</b>
I-70 to SR-315	South side: 50.00	<b>0.03</b>
SR-315 to Scioto River	North and south sides: 42.00	<b>0.01</b>
Scioto River to Washington Ave.	None	0.03
<b>Total length</b>		<b>0.18</b>
<b>Portion bordering disadvantaged CTs</b>		<b>75%</b>

\*CT 83.11 is located within 0.25 miles of the corridor but does not actually touch West Broad Street because it is divided by Camp Chase Trail Railroad. \*\* Segment lengths are in degrees.

According to USDOT's Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer, the West Broad Street BRT corridor borders or passes through 21 census tracts, of which 16 (76.2%) are indicated as disadvantaged. USDOT ETC data in Table 2 indicates that **49.7% of residents in the corridor live below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and 28.3% live below the FPL.** ETC data in Table 2 also shows that the percent of the population with disabilities, percent with limited English proficiency (LEP), percent without a vehicle (NV), and the number of traffic fatalities (TF) per 100k population exceed the citywide averages as noted in orange.

<b>Table 2. Corridor Census Tract (CT) Demographic and Transportation Characteristics</b>							
<b>Communities</b>	<b>CT</b>	<b>200% FPL</b>	<b>FPL</b>	<b>Disability</b>	<b>LEP</b>	<b>NV</b>	<b>TF</b>
Westland	81.10	26.3%	8.3%	17.2%	2.90%	10.2%	5.15
Westland	81.20	51.3%	14%	22.2%	6.36%	3.9%	4.74
Westland	81.32	28.9%	12.5%	12.7%	6.92%	5.9%	0
Westland	81.65	37.4%	10%	16.6%	0.00%	4.1%	1.52
Westland	81.66	19.9%	3.6%	8.7%	2.36%	2.3%	0
Westland	81.79	19.9%	7.9%	7.2%	3.82%	0.0%	5.4
Greater Hilltop	45.00	59.1%	40.5%	19.9%	0.00%	13.9%	17.4
Greater Hilltop	46.10	22.2%	11.8%	13.8%	1.4%	4.9%	4.7
Greater Hilltop	46.20	76.3%	37.6%	17.9%	8.4%	26.1%	2.5
Greater Hilltop	47.00	66.1%	35.8%	14.2%	6.4%	24.2%	2.6
Greater Hilltop	49.00	65.5%	32.3%	17.6%	0.8%	7.7%	24.2
Greater Hilltop	82.10	47.3%	22.8%	24.7%	2.9%	11.0%	29.9
Greater Hilltop	82.30	67.1%	51.1%	7.6%	19.9%	4.1%	8.1
Greater Hilltop	83.11	56.9%	26.3%	21.4%	9.4%	18.0%	7.8
Franklinton	42.00	65.0%	49.8%	25.1%	0.0%	36.0%	0
Franklinton	43.02	86.7%	62.6%	11.2%	0.0%	10.7%	18.6
Franklinton	50.01	54.0%	37.9%	27.3%	1.6%	26.7%	2.98
Franklinton	50.02	73.4%	55.0%	35.9%	0.2%	26.2%	10.1
Downtown	30.00	25.01%	23.5%	14.7%	0.4%	26.7%	10.6
Downtown	40.01	59.53%	28.6%	18.9%	0.0%	17.6%	2.8
Downtown	40.02	36.21%	22.3%	17.5%	0.0%	27.4%	1.5
<b>Corridor</b>		<b>49.7%</b>	<b>28.3%</b>	<b>17.7%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>7.7</b>
<b>Citywide Ave.</b>		<b>37.2%</b>	<b>20.0%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>9.3%</b>	<b>4.1</b>

These socioeconomic disparities are inextricably linked to **harmful historic and current policies that the City of Columbus and partners are actively working to address.**

Specifically, there is a history of redlining in Columbus, particularly in the Franklinton area as demonstrated by the socioeconomic characteristics in the table above. In August 2023, the City unveiled plans to modernize the 70-year-old zoning rules through a comprehensive “Zone-In” process. The City is prioritizing transit corridors within the Zone-In process, particularly corridors served by COTA buses that affect more than 11,000 parcels. In light of the projected population growth over the next several decades, the City recognizes the need for more housing around transportation corridors. City officials are currently drafting the zoning code changes, with plans for a City Council vote by mid-2024.

COTA ridership survey data reinforces that **COTA riders who will benefit the most from this project are from historically underrepresented and underserved populations.** In a detailed ridership survey conducted in 2018, 373 surveys were completed by riders of Route 10 with a home zip code situated along the portion of Route 10 that is along the proposed BRT corridor. Of those, 244 respondents (65.4%) reported earning less than \$35,000 per year; 186 (49.9%) indicated at least one non-White/Caucasian ethnicity; 242 (64.9%) did not have a driver’s license; 37 (9.0%) were students; 231 (61.9%) had no vehicles in their household, and 91 out of 142 respondents (64.1%) who generally had access to a household vehicle could not have used it for the trip they were on when surveyed.

As a key pillar in the LinkUS initiative, COTA and partners are committed to **equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD)** throughout the region. Equity was carefully considered in the selection of corridors for proposed BRT routes as part of the LinkUS initiative planning phase. Recognizing the negative impacts of West Broad Street as a dividing and burdening facility, COTA is currently pursuing a FY23 TOD Grant from the FTA to conduct a detailed equity assessment for the West Broad Street corridor.

**Mitigation plans for potential negative impacts of the proposed capital construction project:** COTA and partners have considered the importance of enabling residents and renters to remain in their homes during the construction process, and as such, the current plans for construction of the West Broad Street BRT reflect this intention. In the unlikely scenario of temporary displacement, COTA will follow all relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines and will work with partners in the community to find the best possible solution for affected individuals and families.

Mitigation plans are also in place to mitigate any negative impacts to the community including noise and air quality, disruptions to the transportation services, sacred or historic sites, and environmental impacts including flood risks. Regarding **noise**, construction activities that will generate excessive noise beyond reasonable limits will be regulated to daytime hours with advanced community notice. Regarding **air quality**, all vehicles will be required to meet DOT air quality standards for construction activities. Dust control will also be regulated using water spray treatments as needed. Regarding potential **disruption to transportation**, a phased Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) Plan will be established for vehicular traffic including active transit corridors, as well as pedestrian traffic including bicycles and scooters.



Regarding **sacred and historical sites**, the corridor is being evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Section 106. Finally, regarding **potential environmental impacts**, the corridor is being evaluated under NEPA and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency General Permit for flood mitigation and wetland preservation.

## 2. Access

The West Broad Street BRT will significantly increase the accessibility and safety of public transit along this high-density corridor in a manner designed to reconnect disadvantaged communities who have been displaced by dividing and burdening facilities along the corridor. The enhanced transit plans will enable disadvantaged individuals, including those with low-incomes and those with disabilities, to access critical infrastructure such as affordable housing, employment opportunities, healthcare settings, grocery stores, education and training institutions, places of worship, and recreation spaces. The BRT will foster thriving communities along the corridor in an area where nearly 15% of residents lack access to a vehicle. T

**Affordable housing:** Central Ohio has identified a deficiency of at least 40,000 housing units needed across the region, including both rental and owned. While the West Broad Street corridor currently contains over 1,100 affordable housing units, comprising 12.4% of total units within the corridor, attainable housing is difficult to come by in the study area due to the existing tools available in the area to developers and unresponsive landlords. Further, in some of the older areas with high percentages of rental housing, there are significant concerns with the quality of housing stock available for rent.

Columbus residents voted in 2022 to issue \$200 million in bonds to activate attainable housing tools. Of that total, \$80 million will be used to build affordable rental units, \$50 million for affordable homeownership, \$40 million to preserve housing affordability, and \$30 million for programs and housing for people dealing with homelessness. Franklin County established the Affordable Housing Magnet Fund to incentivize affordable housing starts along LinkUS corridors in 2019. Additionally, the State of Ohio approved a \$100 million annual state-level Low Income Housing Tax Credit in its last budget cycle that can be leveraged for projects along the project corridor.

The LinkUS initiative includes strategies to encourage new housing developments along the corridor as well as the redevelopment of the older housing units within the corridor communities. Equitable housing choices will provide a range of rental and ownership options as well as a range of price points that are affordable to individuals that are low-income. These plans are aligned with the City's plans, including three low/moderate income housing projects recently started and/or planned for the Franklinton area.

**Increased safety:** Broad Street (US 40) is arguably one of the deadliest roadways within the state of Ohio. According to the Ohio State Highway Patrol Crash Dashboard<sup>4</sup>, US 40 is notable for the total number of fatal crashes (5<sup>th</sup> highest in Ohio), total number of serious injury crashes (7<sup>th</sup> highest in Ohio), and total number of pedestrian-involved crashes (1<sup>st</sup> highest in Ohio).

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://statepatrol.ohio.gov/dashboards-statistics/ostats-dashboards/crash-dashboard>

Fatality and crash statistics are even higher in the section of Broad Street within Franklin County, ranking 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Ohio for fatal crashes, 2<sup>nd</sup> for serious injury crashes, and 1<sup>st</sup> for pedestrian-involved crashes. Crash data from 2018-2022 was further analyzed for the West Broad Street corridor (Rockbrook Crossing Avenue to the west and Washington Avenue to the east). Compared to the Central Ohio region – specifically the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area – this section of the **corridor exhibits a significantly higher fatality rate (6x) and serious injury rate (4.5x) than the metropolitan area.** This calculation is based on ADT data from 2022.

During the five-year period between 2018-2022, more than 100 crashes involved pedestrians. Nearly 30% of those crashes resulted in a severe or fatal injury for the pedestrian, demonstrating a fatal and serious injury (FSI) rate much higher than that experienced across the greater MPO area (24.5%). Additionally, the FSI rate for motorcyclists on the corridor was even higher at 38% compared to only 31.5% for the MPO. This entire section of Broad Street is identified as a High Injury Corridor in MORPC’s 2019 Central Ohio Transportation Safety Plan<sup>5</sup>; and nearly the entire corridor (from Wilson Road to Washington Avenue) was also identified on the City of Columbus’ High Injury Network.<sup>6</sup>

<b>Table 3. Crash Data for the MPO and West Broad Street Corridor</b>		
<b>Measure</b>	<b>MPO Area</b>	<b>W. Broad Street</b>
Fatality Rate per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled	1.16	7.16
Serious Injury Rate per 100 MVMT	6.30	28.63
Number of Fatalities*	138	5.4
Number of Serious Injuries*	845	21.6
Number of Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries*	156	7.0

*\*5-year rolling averages*

Much of the Broad Street corridor within the proposed project extents is a five-lane cross-section today, with two vehicular travel lanes in each direction, a median or two-way center left-turn lane, and a striped bike lane in each direction. The segment of the corridor between I-270 to the west and Wilson Road to the east (approximately 1.2 miles) becomes a seven-lane cross-section, with the addition of a third vehicular travel lane in each direction. The posted speed limit changes throughout the corridor, beginning with 45 MPH at the western end, changing to 35 MPH east of Wilson Road, changing again down to 30 MPH east of Hague Avenue, back up to 40 MPH through the underpass at I-70, back down to 30 MPH east of Central Avenue, and down to 25 MPH at the entrance into downtown Columbus.

Most of the corridor has existing sidewalks on one or both sides of the street. Signalized intersections are the primary, dedicated safe crossings for pedestrians to get across Broad Street. These crossing locations are often more than ¼ mile apart, and sometimes closer to ½ mile in distance from each other.

<sup>5</sup> [www.morpc.org/safety](http://www.morpc.org/safety)

<sup>6</sup> <https://vision-zero-columbus.hub.arcgis.com/pages/resources>

The frequency of dedicated crossing locations increases closer to downtown Columbus, but they are still primarily only at signalized intersections due to a need for enhanced crossing treatments at any uncontrolled locations.

After pedestrian-involved crashes, the next most severe crash types included angle and left-turn collisions. Those three crash types (pedestrian, angle, and left turn) accounted for nearly 60% of all fatalities and serious injuries. The details related to severity of the crashes that occurred by the category of crash type are shown in the chart in Table 4. It is worth noting that more than 200 crashes along this stretch of corridor involved a motorist leaving the roadway and striking a fixed object (utility pole, building, etc.). While this indicates a likelihood of reckless driving behaviors, it also suggests that speeds are too high for the context of the roadway. The BRT structure will mitigate the potential for high speeds.

Crash Type	Injury Level					Grand Total	Total %
	Fatal	Serious Injury Suspected	Minor Injury Suspected	Injury Possible	PDO/No Injury		
Angle	1	20	145	96	296	<b>558</b>	17.9%
Animal	0	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>	0.0%
Backing	0	0	3	0	61	<b>64</b>	2.1%
Fixed Object	2	6	26	31	147	<b>212</b>	6.8%
Head On	3	8	28	11	25	<b>75</b>	2.4%
Left Turn	4	12	90	46	163	<b>315</b>	10.1%
Other Non-Collision	1	0	7	6	10	<b>24</b>	0.8%
Other Object	0	0	0	0	5	<b>5</b>	0.2%
Overtaking	0	3	3	1	2	<b>9</b>	0.3%
Parked Vehicle	0	1	10	9	97	<b>117</b>	3.8%
Pedalcycles	2	3	26	6	5	<b>42</b>	1.4%
Pedestrian	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	55	17	2	<b>104</b>	3.3%
Rear End	1	7	120	134	620	<b>882</b>	<b>28.4%</b>
Right Turn	0	2	25	7	119	<b>153</b>	4.9%
Sideswipe - Meeting	0	0	1	0	1	<b>2</b>	0.1%
Sideswipe - Passing	2	4	47	38	445	<b>536</b>	17.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>2,005</b>	<b>3,109</b>	<b>--</b>

Safety Countermeasures: The frequency and severity of pedestrian-involved crashes along the corridor indicates a need to incorporate pedestrian-specific safety countermeasures in future roadway redesign. This could include reducing speeds, enhancing visibility of crosswalks, providing more safe opportunities for pedestrians to cross, and filling any gaps in the pedestrian network. The Federal Highway Administration has identified the following safety benefits for these proven safety countermeasures:

- High-visibility crosswalks can reduce pedestrian injury crashes by up to 40% depending on the context of the crossing location.
- Lighting at crossing locations can reduce pedestrian crashes by up to 42%.



- Advance yield or stop markings can reduce pedestrian crashes by up to 25%<sup>7</sup>.
- Walkways such as shared use paths have shown a 65-89% reduction in pedestrian-involved crashes for corridors without such facilities.<sup>8</sup>

According to the Bikeway Selection Guide released by FHWA in 2019, and the Ohio Multimodal Design Guide adopted by ODOT in 2021, the most appropriate bicycle facility for this corridor would be a separated bike lane or shared use path.<sup>9</sup> A shared use path will provide needed accommodations for people walking and bicycling and will require less right-of-way than separate facilities for each user type. As such, the West Broad Street BRT will include **3.5 miles of mixed traffic and 5.1 miles of dedicated guideway** as detailed in section C.3, below. (See Attachment 2.)

**Enhanced accessibility for persons with disabilities:** Accessibility for persons with disabilities will be enhanced as customers won't have to step *up* into the vehicle as the boarding platforms will be level with the floor of the vehicle. Level boarding also encourages multi-modal transportation, as customers will be able to roll their bicycle right into the vehicle and stow it safely in an on-board bike rack, rather than locking it to the front. Completion of sidewalk gaps along the corridor will be completed to ensure 100% accessible travel for persons with mobility devices and the general public. (See Attachment 3.)

**Enhanced reliability and transit times:** The Bus Rapid Transit Corridor Project will be a significant upgrade to the current Route 10 line that currently operates along the corridor, from Westwoods Park and Ride, through Downtown, to Reynoldsburg along East Broad Street. Route 10 is COTA's second highest ridership fixed route service with nearly 4,000 weekday trips. Upgrading the system to BRT is expected to increase ridership in the corridor to 7,300 trips per weekday by 2040.

The larger, zero-emission BRT vehicles will comfortably fit more people with off-board fare collection, level boarding at stations, and traffic signal priority, thereby improving transit travel speed and reliability and improved passenger waiting areas at modern stations. BRT service is planned to operate every 10 to 20 minutes between 5:00 A.M. to 12:00 A.M., seven days a week. The fares customers pay on the BRT will be the same as the current fares on Route 10.

Service timing will be more reliable because customers can more efficiently transfer on and off the vehicle by paying fares before getting on the vehicle. BRT vehicles will travel through the region in dedicated lanes with traffic signal priority, giving public transit priority at these intersections. At the same time, in the spaces surrounding the BRT stations, LinkUS is laying the foundation for beautiful greenways, safe bicycle lanes and accessible pedestrian paths.

**Integration into the Central Ohio transportation network:** In addition to making the corridor more accessible through safety improvements and other upgrades, the project will make the corridor – and region – more accessible by creating a rapid transit corridor that includes an active transportation spine while also supporting denser housing along the corridor. The West Broad

<sup>7</sup> <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/crosswalk-visibility-enhancements>

<sup>8</sup> <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/walkways.cfm>

<sup>9</sup> [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/tools\\_solve/docs/fhwasa18077.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/docs/fhwasa18077.pdf)

Street BRT will connect to other fixed routes in Downtown Columbus and along the corridor, including the CMAX BRT, other north-south fixed routes and future LinkUS rapid transit lines such as the East Main Street and Northwest Corridors. (Attachment 4.)

In short, upgrading the West Broad Street corridor to BRT will increase access to jobs, businesses, schools and healthcare for all members of the community, including seniors, people with disabilities, students and working families, making Central Ohio a more affordable and equitable community.

### 3. Facility Suitability

The 9.3 miles of the West Broad Street Corridor includes several barriers for communities along it. It includes two Interstate Highways (I-270, I-70) and a State Highway (SR 315) that crosses along West Broad Street. It also includes four railroads that pass over it in just a 4.25 mile stretch. West Broad Street can be considered a burdening facility and a dividing facility in some stretches due to crash frequency, the rate of fatal and serious injury crashes involving vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, and widths of Right-of-Way requiring pedestrians to cross many travel lanes to get to the other side.

The West Broad Street BRT will help lessen the burden these barriers have caused on the residents in the communities along the corridor and help tie adjacent communities back together. This will be possible by making significant improvements to transit service along West Broad in the form of Bus Rapid Transit. Five miles of the 9.3 mile corridor will include dedicated bus lanes for the BRT which will utilize existing general purpose travel lanes. These dedicated lanes, along with modern stations, will serve as a traffic calming measure since there will be fewer lanes for single-occupancy vehicles.



Additionally, the project includes focus on making improvements to bicycle facilities including separated and buffered bicycle lanes and in some segments **multi-use path for both bicyclists and pedestrians** to utilize. There will be a shared-use path (SUP) from Doherty Road to approximately Wilson Road and a new SUP on Georgesville Road, which will connect to an existing SUP in front of Hollywood Casino and tie-in with a planned SUP that is currently in design to extend the existing SUP on Georgesville down to Parkville Road. (See Attachment 5.)

The Broad Street SUP will also connect to the existing SUP on Wilson Road, which provides a corridor to Camp Chase Trail, which is a major regional trail. In addition to these SUPs, related active transportation improvements will be designed and constructed that will add separated bike lanes on Broad Street east of Wilson Road. These bike lanes will provide access to two additional major regional trails in Downtown Columbus: the Scioto Trail and the Olentangy River Trail. The project will also connect to other planned network improvements along the corridor, including the Franklinton Loop Trail. Sidewalks and new sidewalk connections will be added along the Corridor where they do not exist today.

Six of the stations will have new **micro mobility hubs** installed nearby, with three more areas in the future as development patterns become more pedestrian and transit friendly. Micro-mobility hubs are defined set aside areas dedicated to the storage and retrieval of on-demand bike share and scooter share infrastructure to seamlessly integrate a multimodal trip using multiple modes.

Combined, all of these improvements will help **reduce the over-reliance on automobiles to safely access infrastructure throughout the corridor** by encouraging other modes of travel including transit, biking and walking.

**Addressing environmental burdens:** The West Broad Street BRT will also mitigate environmental burdens within the current dividing and burdening facilities along the corridor. First, all BRT buses along the corridor will be converted to battery electric, which will significantly **lower emissions and improve air quality**. The replacement of diesel-fueled vehicles with zero-emission buses is one of the highest priorities detailed in COTA's recent sustainability planning initiative, with an objective of zero diesel buses starting in 2025.

Deploying zero-emission battery electric buses in place of internal combustion engine (ICE) buses will reduce energy consumption and harmful emissions, including greenhouse gases and particulates. The zero-emission buses that COTA plans to put into service consume less energy per mile than buses that use other common propulsion technologies, such as gasoline, diesel, and natural gas engines. Even when considering well-to-wheels energy requirements, zero-emission battery electric buses are a more efficient transit solution than these other vehicle technologies.

In addition, the project will address insufficient tree canopy coverage, as the corridor currently has less tree canopy coverage than the city as a whole. According to the Columbus Urban Forestry Master Plan<sup>10</sup>, the areas along the West Broad Corridor including downtown, Franklinton and Greater Hilltop, Westland areas within Columbus have a tree canopy coverage of 9%, 15%, 23% and 13%, respectively. While Columbus as whole has a tree canopy coverage of 22%, which is also low, these areas are lower than the City's average. The West Broad BRT station plans include planting 12 street trees per station. This will have an impact directly on the areas surrounding the stations and will help provide much needed tree canopy to some of the busiest nodes for pedestrians and transit users. Additional information about the environmental impacts are described in section C.6, below.

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.columbusufmp.org/tree-canopy-overall.html>

**Goods movement:** While LinkUS does not currently anticipate the West Broad Street BRT having a significant impact on movement of freight in the area, additional planning efforts—including those proposed within a FY 23 FTA Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) grant—will include further analysis on impacts such as this. The crossing of I-270 around Broad and Phillip Roads is a major distribution/warehouse district that could see benefits from the implementation of bus rapid transit and completion of a pedestrian/bike network through the project.

**Regional significance:** The importance of LinkUS as a regional catalyst for equitable mobility and growth cannot be understated. The West Broad BRT corridor is the first opportunity to demonstrate the ability of using a BRT corridor to support ETOD along the corridor, provide regional transportation connections, and establish regional active transportation spines. LinkUS partners feel so strongly about the need for LinkUS that the partners are pursuing a ballot initiative in 2024 to obtain voter approval for increasing COTA’s sales tax from 0.5% to 1.0%. A portion of the additional revenue generated would be used to fund transit supportive infrastructure (TSI) projects in Central Ohio. These TSI projects include sidewalks within 0.5 miles of a transit line, and bicycle/trail facilities within 3.0 miles of a transit line. This additional revenue has the ability to transform transit and active transportation in Central Ohio.

The West Broad BRT project is the first of several Rapid Transit Corridors in the region that plan to receive significant improvements in the next several years. Together, the Corridors will help provide a regional backbone for a world-class mobility system providing connectivity and equitable access to opportunity in the Central Ohio region.

#### **4. Community Engagement**

Since the West Broad Street BRT project began in 2020 as a part of an alternatives analysis to determine a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), there have been various methods of public engagement through detailed plans that include strategies to engage with hard-to-access community members. Engagement and input strategies have entailed virtual and in-person public meetings, pop-up events, tactical urbanism experiences, small group focused presentations, tabling events, community design charettes, virtual open houses, corridor tours, videos and distribution of project flyers. The engagement strategy has evolved over time to include a more multi-faceted approach. Since the first alternatives analysis phase, more engagement opportunities have taken place in-person while maintaining a strong digital presence through the LinkUS website<sup>11</sup> and other social media channels.

Goals of the most recent (May 2023) LinkUS West Broad Street Public Involvement Plan (PIP) are to: (1) Inform the public and stakeholders on planning and design progress, including decisions made and milestones reached along the way; (2) Gather feedback and input from the public and stakeholders to help guide the planning and design process wherever possible; and (3) Report on the outcomes of outreach and engagement efforts, with a focus on what was heard from the public and stakeholders and how what was heard helped shape West Broad Street BRT. Specific objectives of the PIP are to:

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://linkuscolumbus.com>

- Seek participation from a broad cross-section of the communities along the corridor, as well as key stakeholders with an interest in the West Broad Street BRT, with a focus on reaching identified environmental justice communities
- Raise awareness of and interest in the West Broad Street BRT project overall, including what BRT is and how it operates; how the project relates to other planned BRT corridors; how the project will integrate into COTA's greater network; and how it aligns with the priorities and goals of LinkUS
- Address questions and concerns that the public may have about West Broad Street BRT
- Gain insight into public expectations for West Broad Street BRT, and how they may incorporate the West Broad Street BRT into their travel routine once it begins service.
- Document successes and shortcomings in outreach and engagement to inform future involvement efforts for this and similar projects.

The LinkUS partners have formed three **advisory groups** that will focus on community engagement and visioning, workforce advancement, and ETOD. The ETOD group is comprised of hundreds of representatives from Central Ohio development, development finance, public sector economic development, and affordable housing organizations. The “ETOD Advisory Group” has selected two co-chairs: the President and CEO of the Affordable Housing Trust for Columbus and Franklin County, and the CEO of a national development company focused on creating welcoming, sustainable, pedestrian-friendly, town center destinations. The partnering of the private and public sector leaders is intentional, allowing the advisory group to understand how important this type of partnership is and will be in the future to create the most equitable, safe and inviting walkable neighborhoods around each of the West Broad Street BRT stations.

Furthermore, the LinkUS team will engage the Franklin Area Commission, Greater Hilltop Area Commission, and the Westland Area Commission to ensure that the needs of local communities are taken into consideration throughout the project. These are three of the 21 neighborhood area commissions in Columbus that are tasked with reviewing proposed development projects for their respective areas. They make recommendations to the City Council on whether or not the local area approves of the project or not, many times making recommendations to strengthen the project to meet local concerns or demands.

The engagement efforts conducted in the planning and engineering phases of the West Broad BRT project will continue to evolve as the project transitions into construction after a Small Starts grant agreement has been secured and the Design and Engineering work is completed. While previous and current engagement has been focused on project updates and project input, the engagement during the construction phase will be focused on project updates and narrow in on any impacts and changes happening along the Corridor. There will be a particular focus on communicating impacts to existing COTA transit routes and service, maintenance of traffic and any business impacts as the construction progresses in order to minimize the impacts for the various small and minority businesses along the Corridor. COTA is currently applying for a FY23 TOD grant to hire a facilitator to coordinate the community input process through the primary streams of Community Co-Creation, Stakeholder Alignment, and Communications and Education.



NAE Capital Construction funding would replace COTA bond funding listed in the CIG ratings request, enabling COTA to use the bonds on future projects, including the next bus rapid transit corridor – the East Main Street BRT. A significant portion of NAE funds would go towards the design and construction of additional roadway improvements for which Columbus is providing design and construction funds to COTA. These are improvements that will support the BRT, and also improve corridor safety and accessibility. Using NAE funding to build out this active transportation spine will allow the LinkUS partners to show the entire region what is possible with improved funding for all travel modes while also generating significant support for the wider LinkUS and transit supportive infrastructure initiatives.

See Attachment 6 for letters of partnership from community stakeholders.

## **5. Equitable Development**

Preventing displacement and enhancing equitable opportunities and access along the West Broad Street Corridor are critical priorities of the LinkUS initiative. The LinkUS ETOD work will ensure that the West Broad Street BRT benefits all residents and minimizes the potential for displacement. One of the purposes of the East-West High Capacity Transit Corridor Plan prepared by COTA and partners in December 2020 is to “improve traditionally underrepresented communities’ access to employment opportunities and core services to address disparities in quality of life across the different corridor communities.

One of the purposes of the corridor approach is to encourage denser development along transit corridors, including housing that is more affordable and higher quality than many of the older housing stock. These community restoration and stabilization investments will help amplify the impact and accessibility of existing investments in certain areas with predominantly low-income households that have been historically displaced, such as the Wheatland Crossing Senior Community<sup>12</sup>. For example, the January 2020 Envision Hilltop planning document<sup>13</sup> specifically calls for a bus rapid transit corridor, and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective’s urban farm opened a farmer’s market for low-income families in 2022<sup>14</sup>. The City-funded Hilltop Early Learning Center opened in early 2023 to provide low-cost early learning, healthcare, counseling, and food assistance services to low-income communities in the Hilltop area along the corridor.

The LinkUS initiative will set aside 27.5% of the collected sales tax dollars to fund transit supportive infrastructure (TSI). This fund and other state/federal grant opportunities will enable all corridors to be linked with fully built out multimodal transportation spines including shared use paths on one or both sides to allow for separated and safe travel for those on foot or biking.

The City of Columbus recently enacted several strategies to ensure renters and homeowners can stay in their homes. Pay to Stay and third party payments on behalf of a renter are now codified into the Columbus code. While these tools are just a stopgap measure, they allow renters the ability of time to get financial stability while being assisted by external financial support.

---

<sup>12</sup> <https://wheatlandcrossing.wodagroup.com/>

<sup>13</sup> [https://issuu.com/envisionhilltop/docs/full-hep-jan14\\_digital1](https://issuu.com/envisionhilltop/docs/full-hep-jan14_digital1)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/local/2022/04/04/mid-ohio-farm-urban-farm-columbus-hilltop-set-expand/6851930001/>



MORPC convened a Regional Housing Strategy with partners from across the region to envision a future where growth and recovery help realize more equity among Central Ohioans. This work was completed in 2020 and continues to advance through subcommittee level work. The Regional Housing Strategy recommended investment priorities for the region's public and not-for-profit housing resources, regulatory strategies, and opportunities for new programs to address core housing issues and achieve the greatest impact on housing supply and affordability in the region.

LinkUS will use the spaces surrounding the BRT stations to invest in trails, bikeways, accessible pedestrian paths and sidewalks, making it safer and more convenient for people to walk, bike and ride public transit. These spaces also offer an opportunity for ETOD to ensure that everyone in the communities benefits from this generational investment.

**Creative place-making:** To highlight the unique characteristics of communities along the corridor, each of the BRT stations will include a community art wall in the center. (See Attachment 7.) This idea derived from meeting with each community along the corridor as part of the community engagement process over the past several years. Residents voiced that they wanted to make these stations feel as though they were a part of their communities. COTA will work with each area surrounding each station to help determine what will be on each of these community art walls.

**Public-private investment:** One of the goals of this project is to support economic development efforts with the outcome of revitalization along the corridor by encouraging new investment and supporting local job creation. The LinkUS initiative in general, and the West Broad Street BRT project in particular, already embody a public-private partnership model. The LinkUS ETOD Advisory Group includes hundreds of representatives from Central Ohio development, development finance, public sector economic development, and affordable housing organizations, many of whom are located along the West Broad Street corridor. The co-chairs are from public and private entities, respectively partnering of the private and public sector leaders is intentional, allowing the larger advisory group to understand how important this type of partnership is and will be in the future to create the most equitable, safe and inviting walkable neighborhoods around each of the West Broad Street BRT stations.

By better understanding the market feasibility and infrastructure needs of ETOD surrounding station locations, COTA, the City of Columbus, and Franklin County can better assess which locations are best suited to pursue value capture mechanisms such as Tax Increment Finance (TIF) or public-private partnerships to help sustain the operations of the West Broad BRT, future public spaces and desired development incentives.

Most residential land use for the city overall is single family only (approximately 61% of land permitting residential uses). Some classifications do permit duplexes by right (approximately 3% of land permitting residential uses), triplexes and quads by right (approximately 4% of land permitting residential uses), and multi-family housing by right (approximately 33%). However, the West Broad Street BRT corridor presents a unique opportunity for development.

Within the census tracts surrounding the corridor, multi-family by right is permitted in approximately 45% of the land permitting residential use; triplexes and quads are permitted by right in almost 10% and duplexes are permitted by right in approximately 1% of the land permitting residential use. The remaining area – approximately 43.8% - is limited to single family housing, unless the owners request a variance. The current zoning, combined with Columbus' Zone-in initiative, will create opportunities for Columbus to work with stakeholders to ensure equitable development throughout the corridor. (See Attachment 8.)

## **6. Climate and Environment**

The West Broad Street BRT is designed to reconnect communities and support economic growth and vitality in the region while enhancing mobility in a way that protects the region's natural environment. The project is **aligned with the City of Columbus' Climate Action Plan (CAP)**.<sup>15</sup> The CAP is organized by the four major action sectors of sustainable neighborhoods, buildings, transportation, and waste. The CAP lays out a thoughtful set of actions that City government, private businesses, organizations and residents can implement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 and by 100% by 2050. The five sections of the CAP outline 13 strategies that have 32 quantifiable actions which can significantly reduce the community's greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint, while also creating a more equitable and resilient community.

A broad goal of the Plan is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 100% by 2050 with objectives such as reducing vehicle miles by 40% by 2050, in large part by mode shift changes. The West Broad Street BRT bus rapid transit project is key to this goal by providing reliable and fast alternatives to transportation by single occupancy vehicles. Furthermore, the equitable transit-oriented development to be made possible by this study will allow for more connected, dense housing and mixed-use districts along the corridor with opportunities to walk, bike, and ride rapid transit, thus reducing vehicle miles and emissions.

The West Broad Street BRT project is also aligned with COTA's 2022 Sustainability Plan<sup>16</sup> and 2022 Zero-Emission Bus Transition Plan. Through these guiding documents, COTA has set an ambitious goal to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. This requires transitioning COTA's fleet of approximately 300 transit buses to 100 percent zero-emission vehicles by 2035. The West Broad Street BRT also supports specific goals in the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's (MORPC) Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2020-2050<sup>17</sup> to implement high-capacity transit corridors, as a means to move and connect more people, and to help the region reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions by enabling mode-shift.

**Design elements to mitigate the impact of climate change:** The West Broad Street BRT incorporates various elements designed to mitigate the impact of climate change, particularly through reduced greenhouse gas emissions and natural infrastructure elements.

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.columbus.gov/sustainable/cap/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.cota.com/sustainabilityplan2022/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.morpc.org/2020-2050-metropolitan-transportation-plan-mtp/>

Air quality: The entire West Broad Street Corridor is identified as being in the 80-90 National percentile for Particulate Matter 2.5 according to the EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool. As the regional air quality monitor, MORPC identifies the area as being in a maintenance area for ozone and particulate matter 2.5. Per EPA guidance, the region is in attainment for all NAAQS pollutants. MORPC and Franklin County Public Health have launched a neighborhood air quality monitoring program utilizing PurpleAir monitors to study air pollution at the local level. Two monitors are located along the corridor at this time with future expansions planned. MORPC is closely monitoring the new proposed rules from the EPA for particulate matter and will comply with the standards when final rulemaking is issued. MORPC issues an end of the season air quality report each year that defines the number of alerts that have been issued and the trends for each type of particulate matter.

Extreme heat: On August 12, 2022, partners completed a Heat Watch program through the City of Columbus, Franklin Township, and Prairie Township. This program collected heat samples at three different times throughout the day (morning, afternoon, and evening). Results found that the temperature difference ranges up to 13 degrees in certain neighborhoods—including Franklinton, downtown, and Westland—due to the built environment and tree canopy, thus resulting in poorer health indices for the populations experiencing higher temperatures.<sup>18</sup>

A tree canopy study conducted by the City of Columbus in 2021 revealed drastic differences in tree canopy coverage by neighborhood. The neighborhoods the corridor traverses include the following canopy percentages: Greater Hilltop 23%, West Scioto 21%, Franklinton 15%, Westland 13%, Far West 12%, and Downtown 9%—far below the City's goal to reach citywide tree canopy coverage of 40% by 2050. The BRT corridor project will implement at a minimum 12 new native trees at each station alongside new stormwater mitigation landscaped beds to collect runoff.

Noise pollution: Unlike noise pollution created by single and multiple passenger vehicles, the all-electric COTA BRT system will create significantly less noise. Reduced traffic resulting from fewer car lanes will also reduce noise pollution.

Water quality, wetlands, and endangered species: The far western portion of the corridor, in Prairie Township, includes a protected watershed that is vital to protected ecosystems. Franklin County, the City of Columbus, and Prairie Township signed on to the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan in 2006. The Accord sets development and conservation responsibilities for each jurisdiction maintaining that growth is inevitable but must be done in a responsible way to protect the waterway for the future.

The corridor is also situated within the Franklinton Flood Wall improvement area. The first neighborhood west of Columbus's downtown business district in Franklinton. Developers have historically been reluctant to invest in this area due to flooding concerns. Public agencies

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/4f23a2cff8bb47a09ea4c10d856b7d7a/>

invested in new floodwall in 2004<sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup>, which has significantly changed the area landscape. There are several large commercial and residential areas currently under construction in the area.

Otherwise, COTA and partners do not anticipate any significant impacts on water quality, wetlands, or endangered species. Any unlikely impacts in these areas will be identified and addressed through the NEPA process. COTA anticipates receiving a categorical exclusion through the NEPA process.

## **7. Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity**

One of the five goals within the East-West High Capacity Transit Corridor Plan (Dec. 2020) is “to improve traditionally underserved communities' access to employment opportunities and core services to address disparities in quality of life across the different corridor communities.” As such, the LinkUS team is committed to addressing equity and barriers to opportunity by connecting workers with entry level through advanced job opportunities. According to socioeconomic forecasts developed by MORPC for the Travel Demand Model and the MTP, the West Broad Street BRT is anticipated to connect riders to as many as 95,000 jobs by 2040.

**Local commitment to inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship:** In an effort to foster a diverse and inclusive marketplace for all businesses, COTA adheres to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) regulations, 49 CFR Part 26. As such, it is COTA’s policy to engage with and utilize disadvantaged and small businesses that are ready, willing and able for employment. COTA’s policy includes using its best efforts to level the playing field in the marketplace by ensuring these firms have the opportunity to participate in the procurement process. COTA has established race-conscious and race-neutral initiatives in the DBE annual and contract specific goals to provide opportunities in all procurement activities.

Similarly, the City of Columbus is committed to ensuring meaningful opportunities for Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MBE/WBEs) and Small Local Business Enterprises (SLBEs) to participate in its construction, professional services, and goods and services contracts. In administering this Supplier Diversity Policy, Columbus takes all necessary and reasonable steps to ensure business enterprises certified as MBE/WBEs have an equal opportunity to participate in city contracts. It is Columbus’ policy to create contracting opportunities for MBE/WBEs and SLBEs in its construction, professional services, and goods and services contracts. The MBE/WBE and SLBE Programs ensure contracts are awarded in a manner that promote economic inclusion. Free gender and race-based certification is offered to more easily identify those ready, willing, and able to perform on contracts.<sup>21</sup> Local preference is shown when awarding construction contracts.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/2022/03/13/hot-off-press-franklinton-floodwall-dedicated-march-16-2004/9424070002/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e9d1e18672074c4990c52f86e543ec7e>

<sup>21</sup> "Minority, Women, and Veteran Business Enterprise Certification: Policy" City of Columbus, <https://www.columbus.gov/odi/supplier-diversity/Business-Certifications/>

<sup>22</sup> Columbus City Code § 329.212

**High quality workforce development programs:** This project has the potential to promote high-quality workforce development programs with supportive services to train, place, and retain workers. The eastern part of the corridor serves the employment heart of the region, the Central Business District in downtown Columbus.

The Long Street station on the Broad BRT corridor will be located at the campus of Columbus State Community College (CSCC), which will serve as one of five Workforce Hubs within President Biden’s Investing in America agenda. The President and First Lady formally announced the five Workforce Hubs at Columbus State in July 2023 as part of the administration’s commitment to ensuring that students and workers have access to good-paying jobs. As part of this effort, CSCC recently launched a new certificate program for semiconductor technician roles and is working with partners to prepare 10,000 or more skilled construction trades workers over the next five years. President Biden’s formal announcement for the Workforce Hubs emphasized the importance of Columbus, Ohio as a “center of investment in key industries – including semiconductor manufacturing, clean energy, biotechnology, high-performance computing, and transportation.”<sup>23</sup>

CSCC also hosts the SBA’s Administration’s Small Business Development Center, which advises and supports business start-ups and helping businesses grow. In addition, CSCC is the higher education partner for the Columbus Promise program along with the City of Columbus, Columbus City Schools, and I Know I Can. The Columbus Promise program provides scholarships for tuition, fees, and educational expenses, along with exclusive advising and supportive services for eligible low-income students. Having a BRT stop at the CSCC campus will significantly impact the ability of students eligible for this program to get to campus.

The corridor also serves the main campus of the Mount Carmel College of Nursing. A third (29%) of the college’s 790 students are Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). Having a BRT stop at the main campus will not only help current and prospective students travel to the campus, but also to travel to medical centers on the corridor for clinical training.

The West Broad Street BRT project will also impact workforce development opportunities within COTA. COTA currently has over 1,100 employees, 40+ bus routes, more than 300 buses, and operates out of four facilities in the Columbus, OH area. Creating, sustaining and retaining a viable workforce is the core of our mission and vision to “Move Every Life Forward.” COTA is committed to upskilling its workforce and providing opportunities for disadvantaged workers by partnering with workforce development agencies and business advisory councils, acquiring funding to support programs, offering internships, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, leveraging community support, job training support and engaging educational institutions. COTA is actively working to expand its Bus Operator workforce by hosting hiring events and attending community events. COTA’s next hiring event is October 25 with a focus on Bus Operators to meet the demands of the region’s future mobility needs. COTA is committed to enhancing the region’s economic stability and prosperity.

---

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/07/12/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-launches-workforce-hub-in-columbus-ohio-and-announces-new-commitments-to-help-more-workers-access-good-jobs/>

## **D. Project Readiness**

The West Broad Street BRT is already included in the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) State FY 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP ID 173)<sup>24</sup> and the MORPC 2020-2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP ID 988)<sup>25 26</sup>.

In 2020, COTA's NextGen Plan and MORPC's insight2050 Plan and subsequent Corridor Concepts Study set the foundation for the East-West High Capacity Transit Corridor by identifying it as a potential high capacity transit corridor and an area with future growth and redevelopment opportunities. Guided by MORPC's insight2050, COTA's NextGen, and the insight2050 Corridor Concepts Study, the LinkUS initiative was established to create a strategy for implementing high capacity transit in the region.

In July 2021, the COTA Board of Trustees adopted three Locally Preferred Alternatives (LPAs), voting to move the East Main Street and West Broad Street BRT Corridors into the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program process. In 2022, the project team met with hundreds of residents to learn more about what enhancements to mobility and transit can look like in central Ohio neighborhoods. From virtual meetings to community festivals and a bike-a-long event, LinkUS reached more than 10,000 residents and businesses to spread the word about the West Broad and East Main Street BRT Corridors. After meeting with residents, the LinkUS project team released the first station design concepts in December 2022. More than 100 community members joined the project team via Zoom and Facebook Live to get a first look at concepts for transit stations and mobility updates along LinkUS corridors.

As detailed in the project schedule (Attachment 9), construction is expected to be completed by November 2027 with new BRT service beginning shortly after. The 30% design for the West Broad Street BRT was completed in December 2022 and the 60% design for the BRT corridor is anticipated to be completed in December 2023.

The project schedule also details the plans to secure all required approvals and permits, NEPA class of action and status, ongoing public involvement, and right-of-way acquisition plans, as well as contingency planning and risk mitigation strategies. COTA began the NEPA process in May 2023. NEPA is scheduled to be complete by the end of August 2024.

Through the FTA Small Starts application process, this project is being evaluated for cost effectiveness regarding increasing transit ridership.

---

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.morpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Final-MORPC-TIP-2024-2027.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> [2020-2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan \(MTP\) – MORPC.org](https://www.morpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2020-2050-Metropolitan-Transportation-Plan-(MTP)-MORPC.org)

<sup>26</sup> <https://morpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/CrowdsourcingReporter/index.html?appid=5b842ecac9e64683b092a9b5f3dcd2ca>