

WEST BROAD STREET BUS RAPID TRANSIT FINANCIAL PLAN

CENTRAL OHIO TRANSIT AUTHORITY

REVISION #C

August 23, 2023

PREPARED FOR:

Central Ohio Transit Authority
33 N. High St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

PREPARED BY:

AECOM
277 W Nationwide Blvd
Columbus, OH 43215

REVISIONS

REVISION NO.	DATE	PREPARED BY
A	June, 2022	AECOM – Poindexter, Lynch
B	August, 2023	AECOM – Poindexter, Lynch

DRAFT

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The LinkUS Mobility and Growth Initiative is Central Ohio's transformational and comprehensive prosperity and mobility initiative. By bringing rapid transit solutions and world-class mobility options to Central Ohio, LinkUS will propel the region forward so that getting to and from where you are going is easy, accessible, and affordable. LinkUS will help to address growth, affordability, and opportunity gaps in the community. It will advance numerous existing initiatives that are working to improve housing, poverty, safety, and climate action.

To address these challenges, LinkUS aims to make historic investments in the region's mobility systems that will encourage more walkable connected communities will increase opportunity for all. It builds on a foundation of regional planning efforts like the Central Ohio Transit Authority's (COTA) NextGen Vision Plan and the insight2050 Corridor Concepts Study to prepare the region as the population is projected to grow to more than three million people by 2050. By 2050, LinkUS plans to integrate 5 new rapid transit corridors; 45 percent more transit service hours, 500 miles of new sidewalks, bike trails and greenways; lastly, roadway/intersection improvements along frequent transit lines to support housing affordability and equitable economic development. COTA's East-West Corridor High Capacity Transit (HCT) Plan evaluated the feasibility of the East-West Corridors, defined as West Broad Street, East Broad Street, and East Main Street, for rapid transit. All three alignments were identified for BRT investment and have advanced separate Locally Preferred Alternatives (LPA).

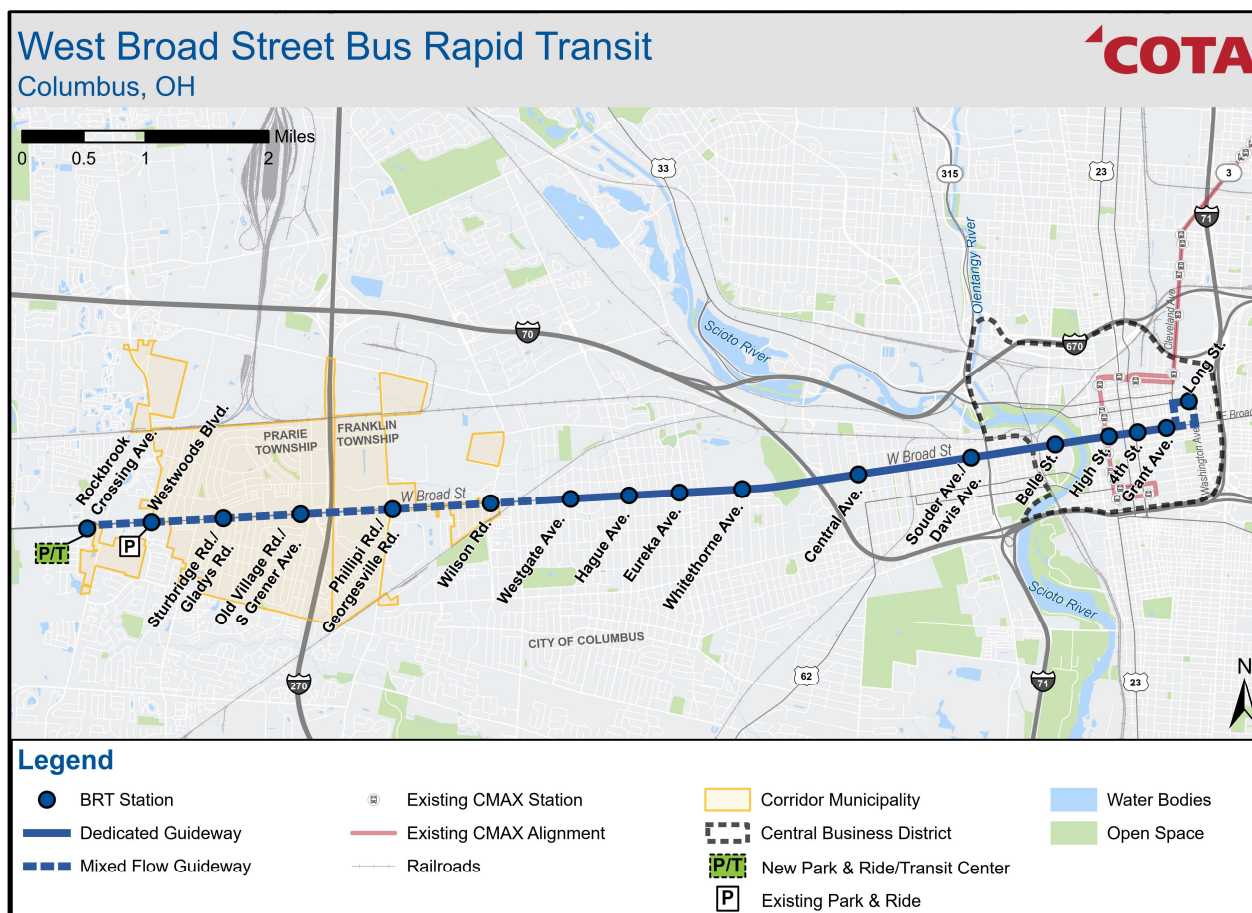
1.2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The West Broad Street LPA was adopted in August 2021 and included in the fiscally constrained MORPC Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2020-2050) in September of 2021. Since August 2021, the West Broad Street Corridor LPA was modified to reflect engineering refinements, public engagement, and further stakeholder coordination during the 15% and 30% design phase completed in December 2022. The 60% design for the BRT corridor is anticipated to be completed in December 2023.

The West Broad Street BRT is approximately 9.3 miles in length and 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. West Broad Street BRT includes 17 stations which includes new park and ride/transit center for BRT and local route riders, end of line layover facilities, and on-route BRT vehicle charging at the Western terminus. The BRT will feature off-board fare collection, near-level boarding at stations, transit signal priority, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements. BRT service is planned to operate every 10 to 20 minutes between 5:00 A.M. to 12:00 A.M.¹, seven days a week.

¹Spans represent the departure from the first scheduled stop of the first and last trip. Evening service may extend later at select stations as the final vehicle completes its trip.

Figure 1-1. West Broad Street BRT Corridor Project Map



Source: West Broad Street BRT, Reflective of 30% Design (December 2022).

2. PROJECT SPONSOR

The West Broad Street BRT is sponsored by the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) in coordination with its partners the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), the City of Columbus, Franklin County and partner municipalities and townships (e.g. *Prairie Township and Franklin Township*). In addition, COTA has retained a consultant team led by AECOM to assist the agency and its partners in fulfilling the requirements of the Federal Transit Administration Capital Investment Grant (CIG) – Small Starts process and lead National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance activities for the West Broad Street BRT project.

2.1. CENTRAL OHIO TRANSIT AUTHORITY

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) is the public transit agency serving the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area. COTA operates fixed-route bus, bus rapid transit, paratransit, and COTA//Plus microtransit services. According to the National Transit Database (NTD) in 2021 COTA's service area covers 336 square miles and includes 1.2 million residents. COTA provides 39 million annual passenger miles (PMT) and 9 million annual unlinked passenger trips (UPT). As project sponsor, COTA and its co-sponsors are responsible for the overall management of the project and the coordination of the various partners involved. This includes having the final responsibility for the technical analyses, public involvement, project design, engineering, and documentation under Project Development. In addition, this includes managing the completion of the environmental review process and providing FTA with sufficient information to develop a project rating.

3. PROJECT PARTNERS

3.1. OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is partnering with COTA to coordinate on street design and right-of-way management. ODOT was responsible for ensuring that the project was included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The West Broad Street BRT is in ODOT right-of-way and requires coordination with planned interchange projects within and adjacent to the corridor. ODOT will require an Interchange Operations Study (IOS) to be approved for the adjustments in traffic patterns being proposed at I-270, I-70, and SR-315. ODOT provides pass through funding through the Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) for the development and construction of Major New Capacity Program projects.

3.2. MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) maintains the regional model used for forecasting and data analysis in alignment with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). During the study phase, MORPC provided support on technical analyses and included the project within the fiscally constrained MTP and the regional transportation improvement program (TIP). Additionally, MORPC allocates and oversees a portion of federal transportation funding, available at its discretion, through its Attributable Funding Program.

3.3. CITY OF COLUMBUS

The City of Columbus is a local agency partner and project partner. The dedicated bus lanes of the West Broad Street BRT will operate within the City of Columbus right-of-way. The City of Columbus controls many public utilities, traffic signals, cross streets, and right-of-way for portions of the alignment. The City of Columbus serves as a partner in implementing the LinkUS vision which requires coordination of the design and engineering of transit supportive infrastructure for a rapid transit project. As such, various

departments within the City of Columbus will be approvers for different areas of the project corridor, including building permits for BRT stations and site compliance at the Rockbrook Crossing Park & Ride.

3.4. LOCAL PARTNERS

COTA will be working closely with municipalities, townships, or other local government entities as required throughout implementation of the BRT project including Prairie Township, Franklin Township, and Franklin County. Municipality representatives previously served on the Technical Group and Stakeholder Groups providing technical expertise and recommending the LPA. These partners will continue to be engaged throughout final design in alignment with the LinkUS vision for rapid transit.

3.5. CONSULTANT TEAM

COTA retained AECOM to provide detailed design and construction support services. Design and construction documents are developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the FTA Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program. AECOM led the East-West HCT Study, conceptual design, and 30% design for the West Broad Street BRT. AECOM will continue to support COTA through final design, public involvement and stakeholder coordination. As the BRT advances past 60% design, AECOM will continue to coordinate the final design effort with COTA and COTA's Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR).

4. FINANCIAL CRITERIA

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that COTA, the sponsor, meets the criteria established by FTA for a highly simplified financial evaluation. The project sponsor must demonstrate the following:

- ▶ **Criterion A:** A reasonable plan to secure funding for the local share of capital costs or sufficient available funds for the local share;
- ▶ **Criterion B:** The additional operating and maintenance cost to the agency of the proposed Small Starts project is less than five percent of the project sponsor's current year approved operating budget; and
- ▶ **Criterion C:** The project sponsor is in reasonably good financial condition, as demonstrated by the past three years audited financial statements indicating a positive cash flow over the period, a reasonable current ratio, and no material findings.²

² Final Interim Policy Guidance, Federal Transit Administration, Capital Investment Grant Program – June 2016.

4.1. CRITERION A: REASONABLE PLAN TO SECURE FUNDING

4.1.1 Order of Magnitude Capital Costs

The order of magnitude cost estimate, based on 30% design (December 2022), was developed using FTA's Standard Cost Categories (SCC) in anticipation of a future Small Starts grant application and documented in the Basis of Estimate (January 2023). In accordance with the FTA SCC, there are two levels of contingency; Allocated and Unallocated. The capital cost estimates for categories 10 through 50 include an allocated contingency percentage between 20% and 40%. Further allocated contingency of 50% is included for right of way (SCC 60), 5% for vehicles (SCC 70), and 2.5% for professional services (SCC 80). A detailed allocated contingency per SCC category table is included in the Basis of Estimate.

A brief description of each cost category is provided below.

- **SCC 10 Guideway:** Guideway elements included in the 30% cost estimate include costs for at-grade mixed traffic, at-grade semi-exclusive, and at-grade exclusive right-of-way costs associated with bituminous guideway reconstruction and mill and resurfacing.
- **SCC 20 Stations, Stops, Terminals, Intermodal:** This cost category includes costs associated with at-grade stations included platform, shelter, foundations, furnishing/amenities, wayfinding and signage, architectural finishes, and lighting/electrical. The West Broad Street BRT cost estimate reflects seven station typologies for the 23 station platforms that will be constructed for the project, as described:
 - M1 – median station with 14'x60' platform and large (7'x48') shelter. Station access is from the crosswalk.
 - M2 – median station with 14'x60' platform and standard (7'x32') shelter. Station access is from the crosswalk.
 - M3 – median station with 12'x60' platform and large (7'x48') shelter. Station access is from the crosswalk.
 - M4 – median station with 12'x60' platform and standard (7'x32') shelter. Station access is from the crosswalk.
 - S2 – side station with bike lane behind; 10-12'x60' platform and standard (7'x32') shelter. Station access is from the crosswalk.
 - S4 – side station with sidewalk or shared-use path behind; 10-12'x60' platform and standard (7'x32') shelter. Station access is from behind the station.
 - E1 – downtown end of line station with 12'x120' platform and large (7'x48') shelter. The longer platform will accommodate bus layovers. This station will have a bike lane behind. Station access is from the crosswalk.
- **SCC 30 Support Facilities:** This cost category includes an allowance in SCC 30.01 for a restroom facility and operator comfort station at the park-and-ride based on square foot cost of the facilities, as well as an allowance in SCC 30.02 for minor upgrades to the existing McKinley bus maintenance facility based on the number of BRT vehicles.
- **SCC 40 Sitework and Special Conditions:** This category includes estimated costs for all the other construction activities that are not accounted for in SCC's 10, 20, 30, and 50 such as the following:
 - Demolition, Clearing, and Earthwork

- Site utilities and utility relocation
 - Environmental Mitigation (e.g. stormwater, wetlands, historic/archeologic parks).
 - Pedestrian/Bike access and accommodation and landscaping. These accommodations include the following:
 - Multi-use path on the north side of West Broad from Rockbrook Crossing Ave. to Georgesville Rd., not including the underpass at I-270,
 - Multi-use path on the east side of Georgesville Rd. to make connection to the existing multi-use path that ends approximately 450' south of West Broad, and
 - Sidewalk infill along Westwoods Blvd. to connect to existing sidewalk approximately 850' south of West Broad near the schools
 - Automobile, Bus, Van Accessways Including Roads, Parking Lots including the park and ride at the end of line (Rockbrook Crossing)
 - Temporary facilities and other indirect costs during construction.
- **SCC 50 Systems:** This category includes costs for traffic signals and upgrades to existing intersections to include TSP, communications systems, central control hardware and software, and fare collection systems and equipment.
 - **SCC 60 Right-of Way (ROW), Land, Existing Improvements:** This category covers land acquisition and acquisition-related costs required to obtain real property needed for the construction of the project. For the 160 permanent partial acquisitions and 2 full acquisitions (e.g. Rockbrook Crossing and Georgesville Road parcel).
 - **SCC 70 Vehicles:** A total of 10 BEB's (Battery Electric Buses) are included for West Broad. These are 60' articulating buses. Depot Chargers are included for every 2 vehicles; 1 on-route charger is included; and an allocation is made for spare parts.
 - **SCC 80 Professional Services:** category includes estimated costs for professional services that are associated with implementing major fixed guideway project.
 - **SCC 90 Unallocated Contingency:** The unallocated contingency is applied to the total project costs as per FTA SCC guidelines. This contingency is designed to represent the costs of changes in scope, uncertainty in the present design, including political events, labor strife, weather, variable commodity pricing, unfavorable market conditions, bid risk, changed conditions, etc. that occur during construction for all SCC line items. A 10% unallocated contingency was used in the 30% cost estimate. The contingency levels will generally decrease with design progression due to increased detail in the estimate
 - **SCC 100 Finance Costs:** No costs associated with this category.

4.1.2 Inflation

The capital cost estimate for the West Broad Street BRT was developed in 2023 dollars and projected to YOE dollars based on a conceptual project implementation schedule and annual inflation factors. **Table 4-1** summarizes the annual factor assumptions, which reflect an annual escalation rate of 6% for 2024, and 5% for 2025 to 2027 (revenue service). As the West Broad Street BRT moves through the Project Development and design process, an updated implementation schedule will be prepared that will result in revised annual costs for each SCC code, as necessary.

Table 4-1. Annual Inflation Rates

Fiscal Year	Inflation Factor	Compound Growth Rate
2023	0.000	1.00
2024	0.060	1.06
2025	0.050	1.11
2026	0.050	1.17
2027	0.050	1.23

Source: SCC Workbook (Rev 24 May with SLFRF) as of 7/17/2023.

Table 4-2 summarizes the Project's capital costs in the FTA SCC format in 2023 dollars and in YOE dollars. As shown in the table, based on the conceptual implementation schedule and annual inflation factor assumptions, the order of magnitude capital cost of the West Broad Street BRT Project is \$281.1 million in FY 2022 dollars and \$339.5 million in YOE dollars.

Table 4-2. Estimated Capital Costs (2023 \$ and YOE \$ in millions)

SCC #	Description	2023 \$	YOE \$
10	Guideway & Track Elements	\$ 15.4	\$ 17.5
20	Stations, Stops, Terminals, Intermodal	\$ 18.1	\$ 20.7
30	Support Facilities: Yards, Shops, Admin. Bldgs.	\$ 5.8	\$ 6.8
40	Sitework & Special Conditions	\$ 99.4	\$ 113.5
50	Systems	\$ 34.6	\$ 39.5
60	ROW, Land, Existing Improvements	\$ 17.6	\$ 18.6
70	Vehicles	\$ 21.8	\$ 25.5
80	Professional Services	\$ 62.2	\$ 66.1
90	Unallocated Contingency	\$ 27.5	\$ 31.5
100	Finance Costs	\$ -	\$ -
Project Total		\$ 302.3	\$ 339.5

Note: Summation of categories may not match total due to rounding.

4.1.3 Preliminary Capital Revenues

COTA has identified the following reasonable financial plan to secure funding in anticipation of a Small Starts Grant Agreement under the FTA's CIG Program. The funding levels from the revenue sources for the West Broad Street BRT project are summarized in Table 4-3. COTA plans to utilize a mix of Federal and Non-Federal sources to fund the project. Federal funding sources including CIG funding, 5307 Urbanized Area Formula funding, ODOT Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) – Major New Capacity Program Funds, and MORPC's Attributable Funds. Several of the Federal funding sources have been budgeted or committed through COTA's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and MORPC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Non-Federal funding sources include COTA's CIP, Bonds, City of Columbus contributions, and the Ohio State Biennial Capital Budget. Further descriptions of federal and non-federal programs have been outlined in **Table 4-4** and **Table 4-5**.

Table 4-3. Preliminary Capital Funding Approach (YOE \$, in millions)

Federal Funds	Amount	Percentage	Status
5309 Capital Investment Grant	\$142	42%	Planned
5309 Capital Investment Grant FY 2022 Allocation for Project Development	\$8	2%	Budgeted
5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant (FY 2024)	\$0.4	0.1%	Budgeted
5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant (FY 2024)	\$6	2%	Budgeted
5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant (reserved for vehicles)	\$16	5%	Budgeted
ODOT TRAC- Major New Capacity Program Funds (FY 2023)	\$39.1	12%	Planned
MORPC Attributable Funds 2022 (FY 2025)	\$8	2%	Committed
MORPC Attributable Funds 2023 (FY 2027)	\$13	4%	Committed
MORPC Attributable Funds 2022 – Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG-S)	\$2	1%	Committed
MORPC Attributable Funds 2022 – Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG-M)	\$1	0.2%	Budgeted
Total Federal	\$235	69%	
Non-Federal Funds	Amount	Percentage	Status
COTA Capital Plan Transit Match (<i>Local Transit Match</i>)	\$38.5	11%	Budgeted
COTA Bonds	\$34.9	10%	Planned
Capital Improvement Plan – Project Development	\$15.6	5%	Committed
City of Columbus	\$7	2%	Committed
Section 5307 Formula Grant (Vehicles) Local Match	\$4	1%	Budgeted
Ohio State Capital Biennial Budget	\$2.5	1%	Planned
5307 Urbanized Area Local Match (FY 2023)	\$1.1	0.3%	Budgeted
COTA Matching Funds for MORPC Attributable Funds 2022 – STBG-S	\$0.6	0.2%	Budgeted
COTA Matching Funds for MORPC Attributable Funds 2022 – STBG-M	\$0.5	0.1%	Budgeted
Total Non-Federal	\$105	31%	
Project Costs YOE\$	\$339.5	100%	

Note: Summation of sources may not match total due to rounding.

The summary of the federal funding sources that will be utilized for the West Broad Street BRT project are included in **Table 4-4**. Note that some of the funding sources include totals for multiple line items included in Table 4-5; additional narrative has been included to differentiate the totals.

Table 4-4. Summary of Federal Funding Sources for the West Broad Street BRT Project

Federal Funds	Description of Funding Program
Capital Investment Grant (5309)	<p>COTA will request FTA Small Starts (Section 5309 Capital Investment Grant) funds to support implementation of the West Broad Street Corridor BRT project. This corridor-based BRT includes rapid transit improvements and is being implemented as part of the LinkUS Initiative. The preliminary funding approach assumes that COTA will request a Small Starts Grant Agreement of approximately 42 percent of the total project costs. Based on the capital cost estimate and conceptual implementation schedule, this would be a request of \$141,865,399. The actual level and timing will be negotiated with the FTA as the West Broad Street BRT project moves through the Small Starts Development Process.</p> <p>COTA has already received \$8,134,600 (2 percent) from the <i>FY 2022 5309 Allocations of Prior Year Capital Investment Grant</i> funding, from the FTA, for project development purposes. COTA has budgeted this advance allocation. Therefore, COTA's total CIG request is \$149,999,999.</p>
Urbanized Area Formula Grant (5307)	<p>The Urbanized Area Formula Funding program (49 U.S.C. 5307) makes federal resources available to urbanized areas for transit capital and operating assistance and for transportation-related planning in urbanized areas. An urbanized area is a census-designated area with a population of 50,000 or more as determined by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. COTA has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeted \$16 million of Section 5307 funds for BRT vehicles • Budgeted approximately \$375,000 of Section 5307 funds, a carryover from FY 2023, in the FY 2024 TIP Amendment for State Fiscal year 2024. • Budgeted approximately \$5.8 million of Section 5307 funds for the project for State Fiscal year 2024. <p>COTA has budgeted funds in 2024 and 2025, for a total of \$22.2 million in Section 5307 funds for the West Broad Street BRT project to vehicle purchase in 2026.</p>
Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) – Major New Capacity Program Funds	<p>The Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) was established to develop and oversee a project selection process for major new transportation capacity projects (Major New Capacity Program) exceeding \$12 million which add transportation capacity and are critical to the mobility, economic development, and quality of life of citizens of Ohio. Funds can be used for preliminary engineering, detailed design, right-of-way, or construction. TRAC funding is comprised of state and federal gas tax revenues. In May 2023, COTA submitted an application to the FY 2023 ODOT TRAC funding cycle for \$39.1 million for construction of the West</p>

Federal Funds	Description of Funding Program
	<p>Broad Street BRT project. TRAC reviews applications and applies scoring criteria. From application submission to adoption of a final Major New Construction Program Funding List is approximately six months to allow for time for review, questions, and public comment. Award announcement is anticipated in spring 2024.</p>
<p>Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) Attributable Funds – Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Funds</p>	<p>The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), the regional council and metropolitan planning organization (MPO), receives funding allocation from ODOT from the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program, the Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). MORPC is charged with attributing the funds to projects and activities sponsored by local public transportation agencies located within the MPO.</p> <p>MORPC has established a competitive evaluation process to review requests which are then evaluated by the Attributable Funds Committee and Staff. A public involvement process follows, and the MORPC Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) makes awards based on the recommendations and public comments. To reduce difficulty in administering separate selection processes for each program and in applying for multiple programs for an eligible activity, MORPC has combined the funding programs into a single selection process. The funding program allocation is distributed in alignment with the U.S. Department of Transportation eligibility requirements for STBG, CMAQ, and TAP.</p> <p>STBG is the most flexible of the MORPC-attributable funding programs and funds may be used for transit capital projects. MORPC designates STBG fund sources when awarding projects, specifically: STBG-S which indicates funds attributable to the state and STBG-M which indicates funds attributable to MORPC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022, COTA received approximately \$2 million in STBG-S funds, \$1 million in STBG-M funds, and \$8 million for use in FY 2025 • In 2023, COTA received approximately \$13 million for use in FY 2027. <p>The total MORPC attributable funding received is approximately \$24 million in STBG funds.</p> <p>In even number years, MORPC requests applications for new funding commitments. Typically in late spring, MORPC announces solicitation for funding applications. Applications are required to be submitted by Fall and draft recommendations are released the next spring for public comment. MORPC approves final recommendations of awards in spring and signs partner</p>

Federal Funds	Description of Funding Program
	agreements with sponsoring agencies in the fall. The process takes approximately 16 months from solicitation to signature.

The summary of the Non-Federal funding sources that will be utilized for the West Broad Street BRT project are included in **Table 4-5**. Note that some of the funding sources include totals for multiple line items included in **Table 4-5**; additional narrative has been included to differentiate the totals where applicable.

Table 4-5. Summary of Non-Federal Funding Sources

Non-Federal Funds	Description of Funding Program
COTA's Capital Improvement Plan	<p>The Five Year CIP establishes COTA's blueprint for investment in its capital infrastructure. The CIP uses financial guidelines that provide assurance COTA can meet debt service obligations and other obligations competing for resources.</p> <p>Financial guidelines for the CIP include 20 percent of COTA's permanent quarter percent sales tax revenue shall be made to fund capital improvements; of the total sales tax revenue 60 percent will be allocated to long-term debt and the remaining 40 percent to fund projects and capital g the maximum amount of debt service shall not exceed 75 percent of the allocation of sales tax revenue allocated to pay debt service.</p> <p>The COTA Board of Trustees approved \$29 million for Project Development for the East/West Corridors: East Main Street BRT and West Broad Street BRT. Resolution 2021-08 approved COTA's 2021-2025 Capital Improvement Program, which apportioned \$20 million to the project while \$9 million was apportioned in Resolution 2021-77. Project Development for West Broad Street BRT, including NEPA and design, is anticipated to cost approximately \$15.6 million of the \$29 million apportioned for the East/West Corridors.</p> <p>COTA's Local Match for the West Broad Street BRT project is \$60.3 million. COTA has budgeted the following amounts, as documented the MORPC Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the CIP, and supporting resolutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15.6 Million reserved for Project Development costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$6.8 million was included in the previous year CIP 2021-2025 and in COTA Board of Trustee Resolutions. ○ \$8.8 million is budgeted in 2023 (CIP 2024-2028) • Budgeted in the 2024-2028 CIP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$4 M Section 5037 Local Match for BRT Vehicles ○ \$1.1M Section 5037 Local Match (2023)

Non-Federal Funds	Description of Funding Program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$38.5 M Local Transit Match for BRT Corridors • Budgeted in the TIP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$550k for matching funds on MORPC-STBG-S in 2022 ○ \$470k for matching funds on MORPC STBG-M in 2022
COTA Bonds	<p>COTA is issuing bonds for the first time in 10-years in the fall of 2023 the rating agencies have rated COTA an anticipated AAA rating. In 2023, COTA is planning to issue \$30 million for capital projects. This bond issuance is not for the West Broad BRT project. COTA is willing to share information about the bond rating process when information is available later in 2023.</p> <p>It is anticipated that in a future year, either 2025 or 2026, COTA will issue additional bonds for \$34.9 million for the timely acquisition of right-of-way and construction anticipated for the West Broad BRT project.</p>
City of Columbus Contributions	<p>The 2023 City of Columbus Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) was adopted by Columbus City Council on July 10, 2023 and included \$18 million for the LinkUS program through ordinance 1711-2023. The City intends that \$7 million of this amount will go towards funding improvements related to the West Broad Street BRT. The remaining funding will advance other aspects of the LinkUS initiative.</p>
Ohio State Biennial Capital Budget	<p>The State of Ohio's biennial Capital Budget, enacted in each even-numbered year, provides appropriations for the repair, reconstruction and construction of capital assets of state agencies, colleges, universities and school districts. Funds may also be allocated for community projects of local or regional interest. In general, funding for state highways, bridges and other transportation construction is appropriated through the biennial Transportation Budget, enacted in odd-numbered years.</p> <p>The process of enacting a biennial Capital Budget occurs in preparation of the state's six year Capital Improvements Plan. The plan is updated biennially by Office of Budget and Management (OBM) on the basis of recommendation. The process begins in the late summer of each odd-numbered year. OBM reviews submissions and sends its recommendations to the Governor where the recommendations are then introduced in General Assembly in the spring. After debate and approval by the General Assembly, the capital appropriations bill is signed by the Governor and effective at the start of the fiscal biennium (July 1). COTA plans to request \$2.5 million in the Ohio State biennial capital budget for the West Broad Street BRT project.</p>

4.2 CRITERION B: PROJECT INCREMENTAL OPERATING SERVICE LEVELS

The service plan for the West Broad Street BRT corridor includes station spacing, travel time estimates, headways and span of service assumptions. BRT service assumptions reflect the 30% level of design. Refinement of these service assumptions may occur as design detail advances. In addition, this analysis includes similar details for the proposed local network service concept. The West Broad Street BRT *Operating and Maintenance Costs Technical Memorandum* (August 2023) is available under separate cover.

4.2.1 Cost Methodology Overview

This assessment follows guidance issued by FTA that encourages bottom-up determination of O&M costs, through a multi-variable cost model for BRT. The multi-variable model sums costs across multiple categories of operating expense (such as operator salaries, fuel, or marketing costs, etc.) each tied to a particular supply variable (such as revenue hours, revenue miles, or peak vehicles). Costs for each category are calculated as the product of the supply variables and a unit cost for each supply variable based on historic agency costs and service levels.

Bus O&M costs are developed using a single-variable model driven by annual revenue miles of service. This provides a high-level approximation of incremental bus costs that account for the need modify route lengths while maintaining a fixed schedule and is especially helpful in preserving complex schedule detail such as headway and travel time variability by time of day, turn backs or other schedule optimization strategies. Single-variable simply means that unit costs are developed by dividing the total cost by the total annual revenue miles, without any prior allocation of costs by category.

All O&M Costs associated with BRT or incremental bus network changes presented in current year (FY 2023) dollar values for consistency with other evaluation criteria and allow estimates that are not tied to a particular year of service operations. Current dollar estimates reflect two years of cost inflation above the latest available FY 2021 NTD reported financial data. A factor of 1.062 (6.2%) is used to escalate from 2021 to 2023 dollar values.

4.2.2 O&M Cost Formulas for BRT Service

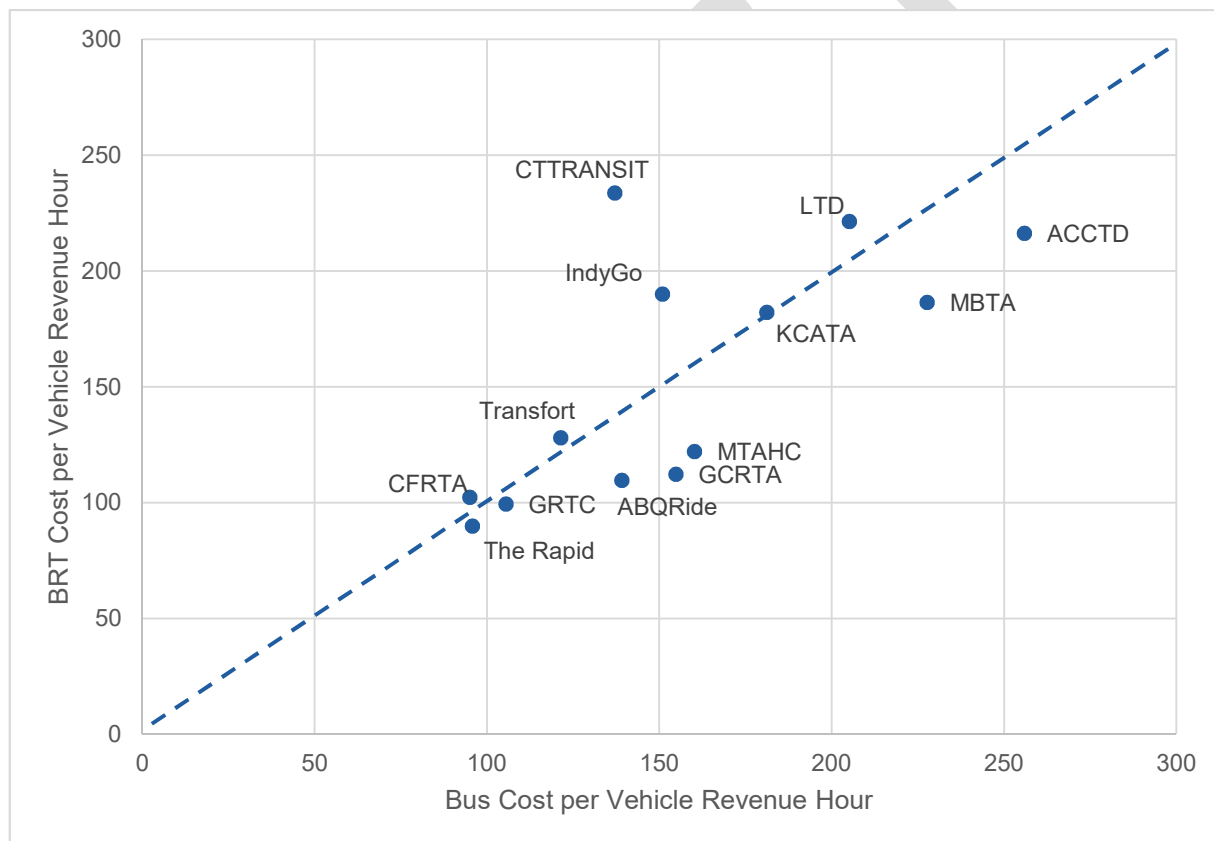
Sixteen NTD full reporters were direct operators of BRT service in 2021³, including Lane Transit District (LTD), Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), CTTRANSIT – Hartford Division (CTTRANSIT), MTA New York City Transit, Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC), Central Florida Regional Transit Authority (CFRTA), Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA), Interurban Transit Partnership (The Rapid); Grand Rapids, MI, Indianapolis and Marion County Public Transportation (IndyGo), Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), City of Fort Collins (Transfort), Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (Houston Metro), Alameda Contra Costa Transit District (ACCTD), Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), City of Albuquerque (ABQRide), and Los Angeles County Metro (LACMTA). MTA and LACMTA were extreme outliers in terms of total operating expenses,

³ 2021 is the latest available dataset from NTD as of the date of this report. As reported to the NTD (mode = RB). Does not include fixed route services branded as rapid bus but not meeting FTA criteria for this mode.

service provided, and unit costs and were excluded from the analysis. Similarly, PSTA's recently launched BRT service was excluded due to limited data availability.

For the majority of systems, BRT costs were near or below bus costs per revenue hour of service, as shown in **Figure 4-1**. Systems where BRT costs exceeded bus costs, including CTTRANSIT, IndyGo, and LTD, all feature more than 15 miles of dedicated guideway and significant increases in facilities maintenance costs. This indicates that historical COTA bus service costs will provide a reliable starting estimate that considers local labor costs and organizational cost drivers. This initial estimate based on bus costs is then supplemented by national data to account for the higher facility maintenance costs typically associated with BRT operation.

Figure 4-1: Comparison of Bus and BRT unit costs (2021 \$)



Source: National Transit Database, FY 2021

The O&M cost model uses unit costs derived from NTD-reported cost categories and total service quantities as shown on **Table 4-6**. Vehicle operations costs are associated with revenue hours of service, due to the dominance of labor costs and an hourly pay structure. Vehicle maintenance costs are associated with revenue miles. Administrative costs are assigned to peak vehicles, as an approximation of the agency's size and allowing for these costs to be held constant for minor service changes making efficient use of existing resources. Facility maintenance costs are based on BRT peer operators rather

than existing COTA financial trends. All initial unit costs are based on FY 2021 data (the latest available NTD dataset) and are escalated to 2023 dollar values using a chained price inflation factor of 1.062.

Table 4-6: Unit Cost Assumptions

2021 COTA Bus Service	Annual Vehicle Revenue hours	Annual Vehicle Revenue miles	Peak vehicles
Total Service Quantity (2021)	951,163	11,809,700	283
Vehicle Operations Cost (2021 \$)	\$73,947,927	N/A	N/A
Vehicle Maintenance Cost (2021 \$)	N/A	\$25,930,500	N/A
General Administration Cost (2021 \$)	N/A	N/A	\$37,777,854
Blended Unit Cost (2021 \$)	\$77.74 per vehicle revenue hour	\$2.20 per vehicle revenue mile	\$133,491 per vehicle in max service
Inflation-adjusted Blended Unit Cost (2023 \$)	\$82.55 per vehicle revenue hour	\$2.33 per vehicle revenue mile	\$141,734 per vehicle in max service

Source: National Transit Database, FY 2021

A 2023 unit cost of \$32,000 per dedicated guideway mile represents the median of the national peer group above, escalated and rounded to the nearest \$1,000 increment.

To estimate O&M costs for the West Broad Street BRT corridor, the cost model uses a multi-variable approach that blends COTA local bus trends for vehicle operations, vehicle maintenance, and administrative costs plus an additional factor for facilities maintenance, given by the formula (FY 2023):

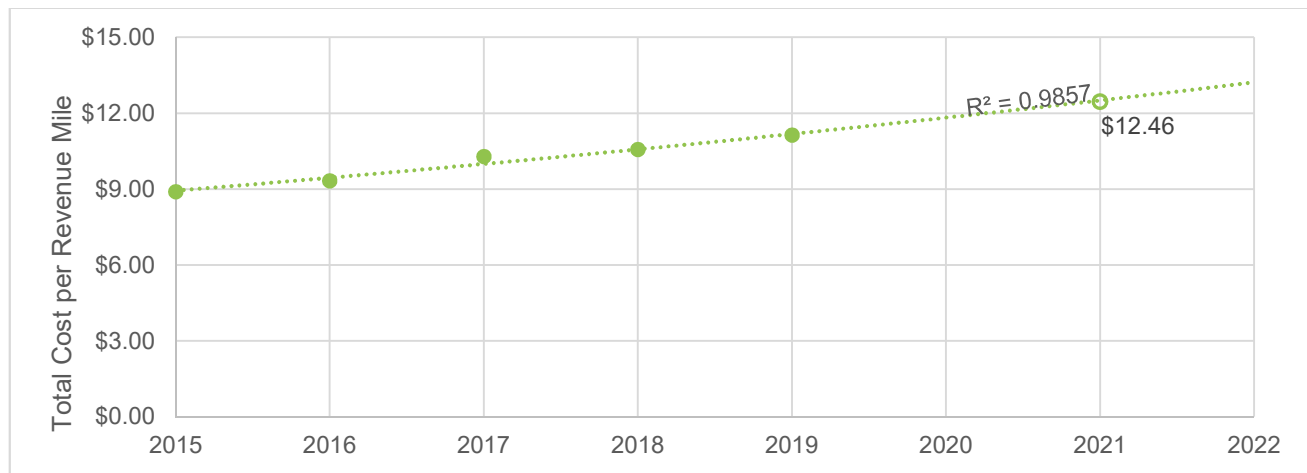
$$BRT\ Cost = (\$82.55 \times \Delta VRH) + (\$2.33 \times \Delta VRM) + (\$141,734 \times \Delta VOMS) + (\$32,000 \times \text{dedicated guideway miles})$$

4.2.3 O&M Cost Formula for Incremental Bus Changes

Unit costs for bus on 2021 NTD reported total bus costs of \$146,845,560 and 11,809,700 annual revenue miles for a unit cost of \$12.43. **Figure 4-2** shows the 2015-2019 trend for total cost of bus service per vehicle revenue mile operated, as well as the 2021 costs to help establish the continued validity of 2021 financial performance for COTA following the pandemic. Escalating this to a 2023 dollar value, the formula used to estimate O&M costs for incremental bus service changes is:

$$Incremental\ Bus\ O\&M\ Cost\ (2023\ \$) = (\$13.20 \times \Delta VRM)$$

Figure 4-2: Total Bus Cost per Vehicle Revenue Mile



4.2.4 Data Sources

The following data sources are relevant to the methodology described in Section 4.1:

- COTA bus operating expenses, as reported to NTD, FY 2015 - FY 2019 and FY 2021
- COTA bus annual revenue miles and hours, as reported to NTD, FY 2015 - FY 2019 and FY 2021
- National average BRT costs and service statistics, NTD FY 2021

4.2.5 Summary of Results

Estimated O&M costs for the BRT and local bus Build Alternative are shown in **Table 4-7**. BRT O&M costs are estimated at approximately \$6.2 million regardless of local service alternative. The incremental bus costs are comprised of roughly \$80,000 to extend Line 9 to the proposed Rockbrook Park and Ride and savings associated with the Line 10 service option. All three local service plan options provide sufficient savings such that the total incremental project O&M cost impact is less than 5% of COTA's current budget, as required by the FTA financial capacity assessment.

Table 4-7: O&M Costs by Alternative

Local Service Option	West Broad Street BRT
West Broad Street BRT Cost	\$6.24 M
Incremental Bus changes	(\$1.15 M)
Total Incremental Project Cost	\$5.09 M
Financial Capacity (%)	3.0%

4.3 CRITERION C: THE PROJECT SPONSOR FINANCIAL CONDITION

COTA (“the Agency”) is an independent political subdivision of the State of Ohio with its own taxing power and is governed by a Board of Trustees vested by Ohio law with the powers necessary to manage COTA. The Agency’s taxing power was established by an agreement executed on February 17, 1971 with Franklin County and the cities of Bexley, Columbus, Gahanna, Grandview Heights, Grove City, Hilliard, Reynoldsburg, Upper Arlington, Westerville, Whitehall and Worthington. In 2008, an amended agreement added the city of Dublin to COTA. COTA is not dependent upon appropriations from any political subdivision for local funding. It is empowered by Ohio Revised Code to issue general obligation debt secured by its own taxing power.

This criterion is based on the COTA’s audited financial statements for the past three years and COTA’s most recent bond statement and ratings. The complete Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFRs) for fiscal years 2019 and 2020, and Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) for 2021 and 2022 are available on COTA’s website at www.cota.com/financial-records and in the supporting documentation folder. COTA’s Financial Statements were used for the current ratio and cash flow for the Agency. Copies are also included in as supporting information for this Financial Plan’s documentation.

Project Sponsor Financial Condition measures, which are described below, include:

- Reasonable Current Ratio
- Historical Positive Cash flow
- Recent Bond Ratings

COTA’s financial records are maintained on the accrual basis of accounting and the activities are accounted for in a single-enterprise, proprietary-type fund. COTA receives funding from a variety of funding sources with primary funding sources including passenger fares, sales tax revenues, and grants as described below.

- **Passenger Fares** are comprised of farebox revenues and special services revenues
- **Sales Tax Revenues** are received from a permanent .25% sales tax levy approved by voters in November 1999 and a temporary .25% sales tax levy approved by voters in November 2016 applicable to the Authority’s service area for a ten-year period.
- **Federal Assistance and Capital grants** funding received from the FTA for capital expenditures and other expenditures limited to specific programs.
- **State and Local Assistance** – funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation urban transit grants, reimbursement of Ohio State fuel taxes, and regional subsidized payments from various cities for on-demand, microtransit (COTA//Plus) services.

4.3.1 Reasonable Current Ratio

The current ratio for COTA compares current assets to its current liabilities for 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. The working current ratio is calculated by dividing the current assets by current liabilities as outlined in the Statement of Net Position (ACFR pg. 26, 2022). **Table 4-8** shows that between 2019 and 2020 COTA had a reasonable current ratio of 1.3, and in 2021 and 2022 COTA exceeded a ratio of 4.0. Since 2019, COTA has continued to meet and exceed FTA’s threshold of a current ratio of 1.2 for a medium in a standard evaluation and exceeded a 2.0 in 2021 for a high rating in a standard evaluation.

Table 4-8. Current Ratio – COTA Audited Financial Statements (CAFRs and ACFR)

Statement of Net Position: CAFR/ACFR for Years Ending 12/31 ^a	Analysis Period			
	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Current Assets	\$236,386,696	\$256,975,463	\$378,702,421	\$381,693,013
Total Liabilities	\$185,100,380	\$198,086,259	\$91,866,492	\$64,316,226
Current ratio	1.3	1.3	4.1	5.9

^a 2019, 2020, CAFRs and 2021 and 2022 ACFR as indicated.

4.3.2 Cash Flow

The cash flow for COTA, as indicated in on the Statement of Cash Flows (ACFR, pg. 37, 2022) is shown in **Table 4-9** which shows that between FY 2019 and FY 2020, COTA at year end had cash balances between approximately \$178 and \$190 million. In FY 2021, COTA nearly doubled the cash available in 2020. In the past four fiscal years, COTA has maintained an average of approximately \$245 million in cash. COTA continues to maintain a historical positive cash flow and no cash flow shortfalls, therefore meeting and exceeding FTA's standard evaluation rating of a medium.

Table 4-9. COTA Cash Flow Audited Financial Statements (CAFRs/ACFR)

CAFR/ACFR for Years Ending 12/31 ^a	Analysis Period			
	2019	2020	2021	2022
Operating Activities:	(\$129,771,967)	(\$144,651,821)	(\$149,552,261)	(\$159,810,127)
Noncapital Financing Activities:	\$132,281,856	\$184,015,119	\$299,447,420	\$169,745,605
Capital and Related Financing Activities:	(\$27,213,647)	(\$29,610,175)	(\$15,709,799)	(\$35,854,964)
Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	(\$5,114,796)	\$10,941,329	\$133,161,112	(\$35,334,127)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of Year	\$183,916,371	\$178,801,575	\$189,742,904	\$322,904,016
Cash and Cash Equivalents at End of Year	\$178,801,575	\$189,742,904	\$322,904,016	\$287,569,889

Source: ^a 2018, 2019, 2020, CAFRs and 2021 ACFR as indicated.

4.3.3 No Material Findings

For 39 consecutive years, COTA has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. The respective year's Single Audit Report for FY 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 show that there were no material findings with respect to the financial positions or financial statements provided by COTA.

4.3.4 Bond Ratings

COTA does not currently have a bond rating; however, COTA is planning to seek a bond rating, anticipated at the AAA level, in fall of 2023. COTA is willing to forward additional information to FTA about the bond rating when available.

4.4 RATING REQUEST

COTA has demonstrated that its financial condition meets the requirements for the FTA's Small Starts simplified financial evaluation. As described under Criterion A, for the West Broad Street BRT project COTA will be requesting a Capital Investment Grant, Small Starts funding of approximately \$142 million, which is in addition to the \$8,134,600 COTA received from the *FY 2022 5309 Allocations of Prior Year Capital Investment Grant* funding, from the FTA, for project development purposes. The CIG request is approximately 44 percent; therefore, COTA respectfully requests a Local Financial Commitment Rating of **High**⁴.

⁴ As demonstrated by the rating criteria in FTA Capital Investment Grants Policy Guidance (January 2023)

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Table S-1. Summary of Supporting Documentation

Source	Supporting Documentation
Federal Sources	
5309 Capital Investment Grant	<i>Not applicable</i>
5309 Capital Investment Grant FY 2022 Allocation for Project Development	FY22 5309 Funding Allocation_COTA WBCBRT
5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant (FY 2024)	MOPRC Attributable Funding Application Summary_2022; MORPC T-7-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024; MORPC T-1-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024;
5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant (FY 2024)	MORPC T-1-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024;
5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant (reserved for vehicles)	COTA 2024 -2028 CIP
ODOT TRAC– Major New Capacity Program Funds (FY 2023)	20230526_ODOT TRAC Application_COTA WBCBRT
MORPC Attributable Funds 2022 (FY 2025)	MORPC T-3-22 SF 2021-2024 TIP Amendment
MORPC Attributable Funds 2023 (FY 2027)	MORPC T-2-23 Adopting MORPC Attributable Funds
MORPC Attributable Funds 2022 – Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG-S)	MORPC T-7-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024;
Non-Federal Sources	
COTA Capital Plan Transit Match (<i>Local Transit Match</i>)	MORPC T-3-22 SFY 2021-2024 TIP Amendment
COTA Bonds	<i>Documentation will be shared with FTA when available.</i>
Capital Improvement Plan – Project Development	2021-2025 CIP COTA 2024 -2028 CIP Resolution NO 2021-08; Resolution NO. 2021-72; Resolution NO. 2021-77
City of Columbus	City of Columbus Capital Budget Process Amended 2023 Capital Improvement Budget Ordinance 1711-23 City of Columbus_Proposed 2023-2028 CIP City of Columbus Financial Letter of Support
Section 5307 Formula Grant (Vehicles) Local Match	MORPC T-3-22 SF 2021-2024 TIP Amendment COTA 2024 -2028 CIP
Ohio State Capital Biennial Budget	<i>Planned funding source – N/A at this time.</i>
5307 Urbanized Area Local Match (FY 2023)	MORPC T-3-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024; COTA 2024 -2028 CIP
COTA Matching Funds for MORPC Attributable Funds 2022 – STBG-S	MOPRC Attributable Funding Application Summary_2022; MORPC T-7-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024; MORPC T-1-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024;



Source	Supporting Documentation
COTA Matching Funds for MORPC Attributable Funds 2022 – STBG-M	MOPRC Attributable Funding Application Summary_2022; MORPC T-7-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024; MORPC T-1-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024; MORPC T-3-21 TIP Amendment SFY 2021-2024

DRAFT

August 24, 2023

Honorable Nuria I. Fernandez, Administrator
Federal Transit
Administration 1200 New
Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Fernandez:

On behalf of the City of Columbus, Department of Public Service, I am writing in support of the Central Ohio Transit Authority's request for funding under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)'s Capital Investment Grants Program for the West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor.

LinkUS is Central Ohio's comprehensive mobility initiative to help address growth, affordability and opportunity gaps in our community. Central Ohio is one of the fastest growing regions in the country and is on track to increase by 726,000 more residents over the next 25 years. That means we are expected to have 3.15 million residents in Central Ohio by 2050. As we grow, we must learn from our peers and make transportation investments now, before growing traffic leads to gridlock. The LinkUS rapid transit corridors, improved transit regionwide and transit supportive infrastructure are essential to ensure that our infrastructure keeps pace with the demands placed on it by population and economic growth.

The proposed West Broad Street BRT Corridor will run approximately 9.3 miles, through a combination of dedicated lanes and mixed traffic, along West Broad Street through Franklin County, connecting Prairie Township, Franklin Township, Hilltop, and Franklinton to Downtown Columbus. Dedicated lanes for BRT, achieved through conversion of general travel lanes, will provide a quicker, reliable travel experience while limiting the need for right-of-way acquisition and the displacement of the community we serve.

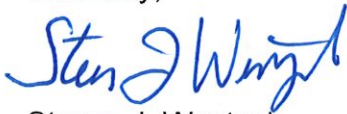
The 2023 City of Columbus Capital Improvement Budget was adopted by Columbus City Council on July 10, 2023 and included \$18 million for the LinkUS program through ordinance 1711-2023. The City intends that \$7 million of this amount will go towards funding improvements related to the West Broad Street BRT. The remaining funding will advance other aspects of implementing the LinkUS initiative.

Rapid transit will expand access and enhance mobility for corridor residents as well as the thousands of people working within the corridor. The West Broad Street BRT corridor is essential to ensure that our infrastructure keeps pace with the demands placed on it by population and economic growth. This investment will connect people to jobs, affordable housing, education, healthcare, entertainment and recreation. In the spaces surrounding the BRT stations, LinkUS is will invest in trails, bikeways, accessible pedestrian paths and sidewalks, making it safer and more convenient for people to walk, bike and ride public transit.



The West Broad Street BRT Corridor will provide improved transit options and encourage more people to choose transit, which is recognized as a more equitable and sustainable travel option. This investment will expand access and mobility for traditionally underserved groups. Stations along the alignment will spur further development along the corridor, facilitating sustainable growth for the region. For these reasons, we fully support actions to fund and implement the West Broad Street BRT, the first rapid transit corridor project of the LinkUS initiative.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Wentzel
Deputy Director