

# Franklin TOWNSHIP

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Station 193

2193 Frank Road  
Columbus, OH 43223

Station 192

4100 Sullivant Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43228

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit Corridor Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Franklin Township, I am writing in support of the Central Ohio Transit Authority's (COTA) request for funding under the Pilot Program for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) to conduct comprehensive capacity, economic, and market analysis as well as resource and policy recommendations for the remaining transit stations along the West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor.

Franklin Township believes the partnership with LinkUs will contribute to revitalizing the community with both residential and commercial development. The township's role in relation to the West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit is to encourage continued initiatives to address a need in the ever-growing Central Ohio area for safe and sustainable transit-oriented alternatives.

The West Broad Street BRT corridor is the first rapid transit corridor that will be constructed as part of the regional LinkUS partnership. LinkUS is Central Ohio's comprehensive mobility initiative to help address our community's growth, affordability, and opportunity gaps. In 2022, LinkUS was awarded a Regional Infrastructure Accelerator Grant from the Build America Bureau, and the West Broad Street BRT was accepted into the Small Starts FTA CIG program.

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. The average Central Ohio household spends more than \$12,000 on transportation, and the median home sale price is up 68% since 2020. More than 40,000 Franklin County households lack access to a personal vehicle, and 1/3 of Franklin County residents live in areas of low opportunity. To address these challenges, LinkUS will build faster and more reliable public transportation, create safer and expanded bike and pedestrian paths, and enable truly walkable communities with more affordable access to work, home, and entertainment. Implementing LinkUS will also advance numerous existing initiatives to improve housing, poverty, safety, and climate action in our community.

By 2050, LinkUS plans to construct five rapid transit corridors and increase transit service hours by 45%; 500 new miles of sidewalks, bikeways, and trails; and \$250 million in complete streets roadway improvements. LinkUS will move our region forward together.



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The three LinkUS corridors in design will utilize bus rapid transit (BRT) and have dedicated lanes for transit with premium stations in the center lane where possible. It will also run on 15-minute or less intervals and have many of the same amenities as light rail, such as off-board fare collection and level and multidoor boarding.

COTA's West Broad Street BRT Corridor includes 17 stations and will run approximately 9.3 miles—along West Broad Street, connecting Prairie Township, Franklin Township, Hilltop, and Franklinton to Downtown Columbus. This investment will significantly improve the opportunity gaps in our community. One-third of the residents along the corridor live below the poverty level, 16% of households lack access to a personal vehicle, 36% are Black, Indigenous, or persons of color, and 76% live within an area of persistent poverty. Concurrently, the West Broad BRT is projected to connect residents to 100,000 jobs while adding 40,000 more residents by 2040. The corridor will also join the workforce at Columbus State Community College, a federally designated anchor institution for one of the nation's five regional Workforce Hubs announced this year.

The Pilot Program for TOD is essential to implementing the LinkUS Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Action Plan to build connected, walkable, and bikeable communities where the existing residents benefit from new residential and commercial development and are not displaced by it. The LinkUS ETOD strategy aims to preserve housing affordability, jobs and businesses, and valued community resources and amenities. It will create new housing, emphasizing affordability, attracting new business investment and job creation, and encouraging new or enhanced community resources and amenities. At the same time, ETOD will be inclusive in ensuring diversity in housing options and price points, ensuring access to jobs, services, and amenities for all residents.

The West Broad Street BRT is the first fixed guideway BRT project in Central Ohio. The additional resources the grant could provide would be a significant step toward helping our community address the abovementioned challenges. Columbus is concurrently seeking Capital Construction and Regional Partnership Challenge Grants within the USDOT Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program for the West Broad BRT.

The strong partnership of COTA, the City of Columbus, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, and Franklin County and the West Broad BRT's significant impact on our community perfectly aligns with the Pilot Program for TOD. Our organization wholeheartedly encourages USDOT to fund this application, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Steve Mazer, Administrator

