



DRAFT

SHORT & LONG RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

2020-2050

Executive Summary

 **COTA**

STRATEGIC PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES



COTA'S VISION

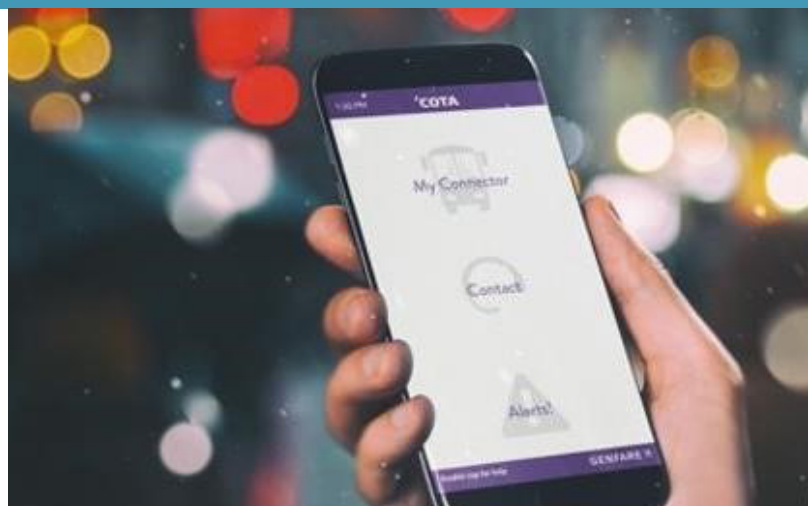
"To move every life forward."

COTA'S MISSION

"We provide solutions that connect people to prosperity through innovation, dedication and teamwork."

This **Short (2024) & Long (2050) Range Transit Plan (SRTP/LRTP)** continues the momentum and is an implementation tool for COTA's Strategic Plan. Outlining near and long-term initiatives of COTA, this plan is informed by local and regional reports, plans, data, and input from stakeholders and the general public. This process ensured a complete regional, local, and organizational overview of the current conditions, goals and objectives, and initiatives to promote COTA as the region's leader in mobility.

COTA continues to coordinate closely and work with the region's partners for mobility solutions: Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), the City of Columbus and all surrounding municipalities, townships, Franklin County, and Delaware County.



Short & Long Range Plan Process



Short & Long Range Transit Plan

SERVICE AREA AND AGENCY OVERVIEW

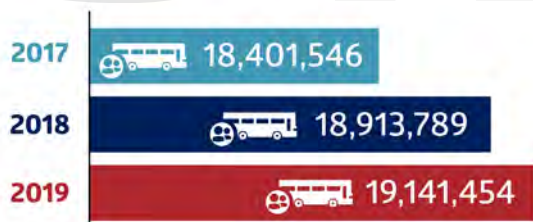
The Central Ohio Region's **population of 2.1 million people is expected to grow to 3 million by 2050**. Public transit plays a vital and pivotal role in the region's ability to grow in a sustainable manner.

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) is the primary provider of public transit services for the greater Columbus and Central Ohio region, striving to deliver safe, reliable, and cost-effective transportation services to the public. COTA delivers an average 60,000 daily trips, which equates to over 19 million trips annually serving an area of over 1.2 million residents.

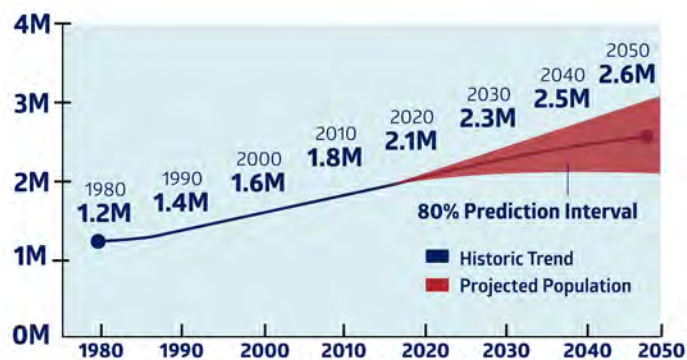
Significant service expansion and a new bus network in 2017 increased ridership and access to homes, jobs, healthcare and education. Initiatives such as C-pass, an employer-paid transit program in downtown Columbus, and CMAX, COTA's first bus rapid transit, has also catalyzed this growth.

This document outlines the future direction for the organization, reflecting the region's robust growth and demand for mobility options.

COTA ANNUAL RIDERSHIP



CENTRAL OHIO POPULATION PROJECTIONS 7-COUNTY REGION



<https://www.morpc.org/program-service/insight2050/>



LONG RANGE PLAN

The future of transit belongs to more and faster fixed-route service, microtransit solutions, technology advances, and a high-capacity transit network along appropriately developed corridors throughout Central Ohio.

NextGen (2017) represents the community's vision for the future of transit and a transformative effort to keep central Ohioan's on the move to the year 2050. The three components of NextGen are: High Capacity Transit, Smart Mobility Options and Enhanced Bus Service. The vision includes smart mobility options to develop technologies and services that improve access to jobs; connecting Columbus residents to safe, reliable transportation; better connecting our visitors to transportation options; and developing a more environmentally sustainable transportation system.

The backbone of the NextGen plan is the development of a high capacity transit network along a number of the region's corridors. NextGen outlines additional smart mobility options, improvements to the bus network, implementing new types of mobility services, and developing high capacity transit such as bus rapid transit (BRT), light rail, streetcar, and/or commuter rail.

COTA's new network, implemented in May 2017, took crucial first steps in transforming the bus network into a more effective system with resources that exist today.

TODAY - 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement one high capacity transit corridor • Operate high frequency network until 9 p.m. • Add capacity to routes with crowding • Upgrade three routes to high-frequency route status • Implement limited stop service on East and West Broad • Add two commuter bus routes to regional job centers and two local bus routes • Expand number for dedicated bus lanes • Upgrade user technology, including mobile fare payment and wifi • Implement emerging mobility pilot programs, including autonomous vehicles, first/last mile solutions, and night owl service
2025 - 2040	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement three high capacity transit corridors • Upgrade four routes to high frequency service • Add three new commuter routes to regional job centers and one new local route • Operate all local service at least every 30-minutes all-day • Expand smart mobility programs to more job centers
2040 - 2050	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement seven high capacity transit corridors • Upgrade the frequency of three routes • Add two local routes and four new commuter routes • Further expand smart mobility programs to include municipal partnerships

THREE LONG RANGE INITIATIVES



High Capacity Transit

... which moves more people, faster, in less physical space, attracts new development and focuses growth.



Smart Mobility Options

... such as self-driving vehicles, first/last mile services, and smart apps, which makes planning and paying for transportation services and job access easier than ever.

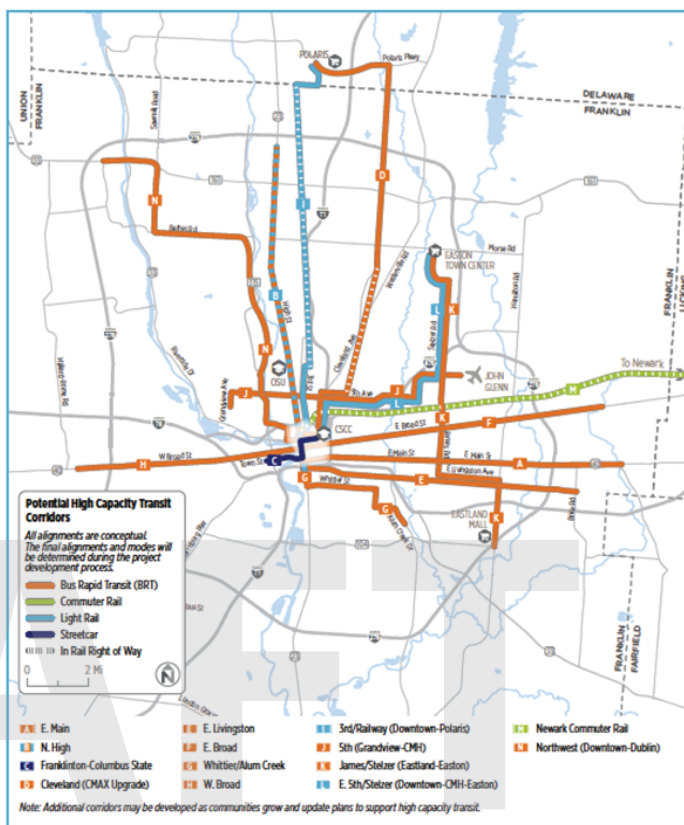


Enhanced Bus Service

... that runs more frequently, to more places-ensures residents can access jobs and employers can attract employees because transportation is accessible 24-hours a day.

With central Ohio predicted to grow significantly, it is more important than ever that residents are able to access jobs in the safest, most convenient and efficient way possible. NextGen's combination of technology innovations, high capacity transit, and on demand services facilitates this movement so central Ohio can continue to thrive.

Potential High Capacity Transit Network



FIXED-ROUTE SERVICE

The backbone of COTA's public transit system is fixed-route bus service, which operates a fixed-schedule along specific streets. Buses pick up and drop off passengers at specific bus stop locations. COTA reviews and makes adjustments to its fixed-route system three times a year. As of January 2020, COTA operates 1,234,143 annualized scheduled service hours.

To address increasing customer needs for fixed-route bus service, service changes focus on four key areas of improvement: increased service frequency, expanded

service area coverage, expanded hours of operation, and decreased travel times.

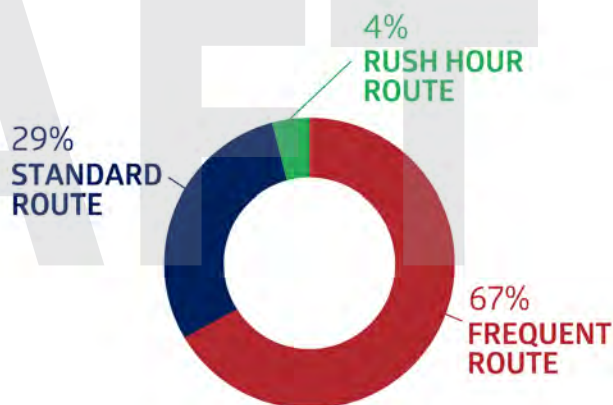
Based on the long range initiatives, projections shows a need for an additional 800,000 annual service hours. Focusing on how service is provided, enhancements include continued evaluation to optimize service, developing alternatives to provide service in less dense areas, connecting job sites with residential areas, and aligning technology to support these improvements.

COTA ANNUAL SERVICE HOURS



COTA's service hours have doubled since 2006.
Note: 2020 is projected hours.

PASSENGERS BY SERVICE TYPE



A majority of COTA's trips occur on routes that provide frequent service.

PLAN INITIATIVES

SHORT RANGE 2020-2024

- Continued level with incremental improvements
- One to two 24-hour lines

LONG RANGE 2020-2050

- Increased service hours (up to 800,000 annual service hours)
- Expand Hours of Operation – multiple 24-hr lines
- Increase dedicated bus-only lanes to reduce travel times
- Suburb to Suburb, suburban circulator, and crosstown service

BUS RAPID TRANSIT

CMAX, COTA's first bus-rapid transit (BRT) service, was launched in January 2018, from downtown Columbus to Westerville along Cleveland Avenue. BRT is a premier service with branded buses, limited and enhanced bus stops, operating every 15 minutes or better. COTA anticipates adding more Bus Rapid Transit and Limited Stop services in the future.

Working from NextGen plans, the Insight 2050 Corridor Concepts ([hyperlink this](#)) (MORPC/ULI Columbus in 2019) laid the groundwork for implementing a system of high-capacity transit corridors, of which BRT is one solution that is part of that network. A network as proposed will only work with high-density development focusing job and housing growth along these corridors.



PLAN INITIATIVES

SHORT RANGE 2020-2024

- Multiple corridor BRT system designed; multiple BRT lines integrate specific funding mechanisms and enter FTA funding pipelines
- Strategic Land Acquisition to integrate BRT stations into High Capacity Corridor Developments

LONG RANGE 2020-2050

- Build a system of BRT integrating with focused corridor development. BRT lines will include frequent service, dedicated bus-only lanes, pre-board fare collection and level platform boarding to reduce travel times

MICROTRANSIT

In 2019, COTA began COTA Plus in Grove City. This on-demand service integrates technology with a microtransit solution to provide customers with further access to jobs, healthcare and more, while also offering a fast, convenient and comfortable transit solution. Further microtransit solutions are planned for additional first-mile/last-mile solutions.

COTA will identify and expand community and business partnerships to provide service offerings and innovative partnerships. Both public and private partnerships will need to be pursued. One initiative will be to identify the potential to leverage corporate/community funding sources for developing new mobility hubs and routes (e.g. COTA Plus route servicing a specific large business). COTA will also look to work with developers and employers to site developments close to transit.



PLAN INITIATIVES

SHORT RANGE 2020-2024

- COTA Plus Expansion: Advance a method to deploy multiple first-mile/last-mile microtransit 'zones', connecting the region to the fixed-route bus system
- Integrate community partners into each zone.

LONG RANGE 2020-2050

- Sustainable business model for microtransit options
- Build a system of first-mile/last-mile connections, including multiple mobility solutions

MAINSTREAM PARATRANSIT

COTA provides American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service named "Mainstream", which is an on-demand shared-ride service providing origin-to-destination transportation for people whose functional limitations prevent them from riding COTA's fixed-route buses for some or all of their trips.



PLAN INITIATIVES

SHORT RANGE 2020-2024

- Paratransit Vehicle Replacement(s) per FTA regulations
- Explore cost efficiency elements
- Expand travel training across the region including multiple modes
- Explore restructuring ADA service delivery using the model trialled by Mainstream On-Demand

LONG RANGE 2020-20250

- Paratransit Vehicle Replacement(s) per FTA regulations

FLEET

As replacement continues in the short term, COTA will evaluate the feasibility and impact of converting COTA's fleet to an alternative energy source and identify the components needed to develop an alternative energy strategy including workforce preparation. Evaluation will include the implementation analysis of charging infrastructure.



PLAN INITIATIVES

SHORT RANGE 2020-2024

- Replace all diesel buses with alternative sources such as CNG
- Explore Electric Buses as another form of alternative fuels

LONG RANGE 2020-20250

- Evaluation of alternative energy sources for replacement
- Implement a parts inventory system
- Predictive maintenance and technology

FACILITIES

COTA facilities include 25 park and ride lots, 4 transit centers, the Administrative Office and Customer Experience Center, McKinley Avenue Bus Storage, Maintenance, and Customer Service Call Center that includes a CNG fueling facility, Fields Avenue Bus Storage and Maintenance Facility, and Fields Avenue Mobility Services.

COTA will continue to provide additional external facility improvements and additions as well as strategic land purchases. COTA will evaluate existing Park & Ride lots and transit centers for renovation and the possibility to expand. This evaluation will investigate creating additional **Mobility Hubs** and **Mobility Centers** that

will incorporate Smart Columbus projects and future technologies such as real time information, connected vehicle communications, electric vehicle charging, and an interface with other modes of transportation.

COTA will continue to purchase real property to be used for park and rides, future facilities or expansions to existing facilities, operating corridors, properties of current or future development potential, and for future operations. In an effort to boost permanent revenues, COTA will identify and evaluate opportunities to leverage current facilities (e.g. parking lots, wash bays, facilities) to share with other entities and explore lease options to diversify revenue streams.



PLAN INITIATIVES

SHORT RANGE 2020-2024

- Mobility Center(s)/Park & Ride Improvements
- Bus Shelter improvements
- Rickenbacker Mobility Center
- Electric Charging Stations
- Support and partner to launch multiple Mobility Hubs

LONG RANGE 2020-2050

- Mobility Center(s) / Park & Ride Improvements
- Bus Shelter improvements
- Electric Charging Stations



ORGANIZATION EXCELLENCE

Employees are the backbone of every organization. COTA staff work to provide day to day operations as well as future planning for increased operations. There are continual improvements to increase organizational efficiencies by evaluating and improving internal COTA processes.

THE INITIATIVES TO ACCOMPLISH THIS INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Employee Benefits Program |  Operator and Rider Safety Training |
|  Transparency & Accessibility |  Customer Experience Training for Bus Operators |
|  Employee Mobile Technology |  Technology Training |
|  Employee Evaluation Improvement |  Learning Management System |
|  Organizational Communication |  Sustainability Plan |
|  Equity, Diversity & Inclusion | |

FUNDING

COTA's major source of local funding is sales and use tax receipts levied in all of Franklin County and small portions of adjacent Union, Delaware, Licking and Fairfield counties. Voters within the service area approved a permanent 0.25% sales tax; with an additional ten-year renewable 0.25% sales tax renewed in 2016. This allows for continued service enhancements through at least 2026. COTA will continue to work with FTA, ODOT, and MORPC to best manage and expand existing funding.

The revenue estimates for the five year plan for passenger revenues are based on no change in the existing fare structure and a 1% growth in passenger revenue annually. Along with assumed growth in sales tax revenue, this results in an average of \$171.7 million in operating revenue annually between 2020 and 2024.

COTA's expenses are assumed to grow 2.5% annually in all aspects. The 2020-2024 plan includes maintaining service levels at approximately 1.24 million service hours, pending annual adjustments for efficiencies; significant capital improvements aimed to provide improved and new transit services; and planning/design for multiple high-capacity high-frequency corridors.

COTA and community partners will actively investigate new funding mechanisms to help address growing mobility needs. Based on the long range initiatives, projections shows a need for an additional 800,000 annual service hours.

PLAN INITIATIVES

SHORT RANGE 2020-2024

Rider Engagement

- Real time passenger communication
- ITS improvements
- Improve Bus Stop amenities, access and safety
- Using data for customer feedback

Fares

- Fare Study and Pass Program evaluation
- Enhance new fare payment system

Fleet

- Evaluate electric bus pilot program
- Replace fleet with CNG buses

Partnerships

- Public and Private
- Innovation Lab
- Data Sharing
- COTA Plus expansion
- Service Bundling

Service Optimization

- R/W and Curb Management
- High Capacity Corridor development
- On Time Performance analytics
- Mobility Innovation Tests

External Facility/Land Investments

- Transit Oriented Development
- Fields Avenue and McKinley Avenue facilities renovations
- Rickenbacker Area Mobility Center
- Strategic Land Purchase

Leverage Assets

- Diversify revenue streams

LONG RANGE 2020-2050

Rider Engagement

- Real time passenger communication
- ITS improvements
- Improve Bus Stop amenities and safety
- Ambassador Program
- Connected Vehicle Technology

Fares

- Continue to enhance fare payment system

Fleet

- Alternative energy sources for replacement

Partnerships

- Data Sharing
- Service Bundling
- Energy Efficiency
- Regionalism
- Coordination with potential future services (hyperloop, autonomous vehicles, passenger rail)

Service Optimization

- R/W and Curb Management
- On Time Performance analytics
- Service expansion
- High Capacity Corridor/BRT expansion

External Facility/Land Investments

- Transit Oriented Development
- Mobility Centers
- Strategic Land Purchase

Leverage Assets

- Advertising Partnerships
- Diversify revenue streams
- Develop regional funding programs

FOCUSING ON ENHANCING HOW SERVICE IS PROVIDED, SERVICE CHARACTERISTIC INITIATIVES ACHIEVE THREE PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:



Improving Service Frequency



Decreasing Travel Times and Improving Reliability



Improving Overall Service Design



COTA will continue to seek ways to “*Move Every Life Forward*” by improving transit for the residents and visitors of central Ohio, enhancing economic vitality and quality of life.



DRAFT



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