



Short Range Transit Plan Update

April 2023



Short Range Transit Plan Overview

Project Timeframe: September 2022 – June 2023

Serve as a vital tool for Planning and Development to assess the following over the next 5 years:

- Initiatives, Challenges, and Opportunities
 - Stakeholder and Public Feedback
 - Existing Funding Sources and COVID-19 Impacts
 - Plans and Guiding Documents
- Service Operations + Potential Transit Improvements
 - Route and Performance Data
 - Market Analysis and Transit Need
 - Scenario Building
- Prioritize expenditures, service, and funding
 - Align with ODOT and MORPC for the regions Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)



Short Range Transit Plan Report



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to introduce the Existing Conditions of the Short Range Transit Plan (SRTTP) for the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA). This report provides a review of COTA transit planning and operations over the last several years. The COTA project team will use this information as the SRTTP moves forward to assess and make recommendations for improved transit operations. Highlights include:

- Review of COTA's current performance metrics
- Recent mobility innovations
- Review of recent plans
- COVID-19 Impacts
- Funding Overview
- Federal, State, and Regional Initiatives
- Engagement Overview
- System Evaluation
- Transit Market Analysis

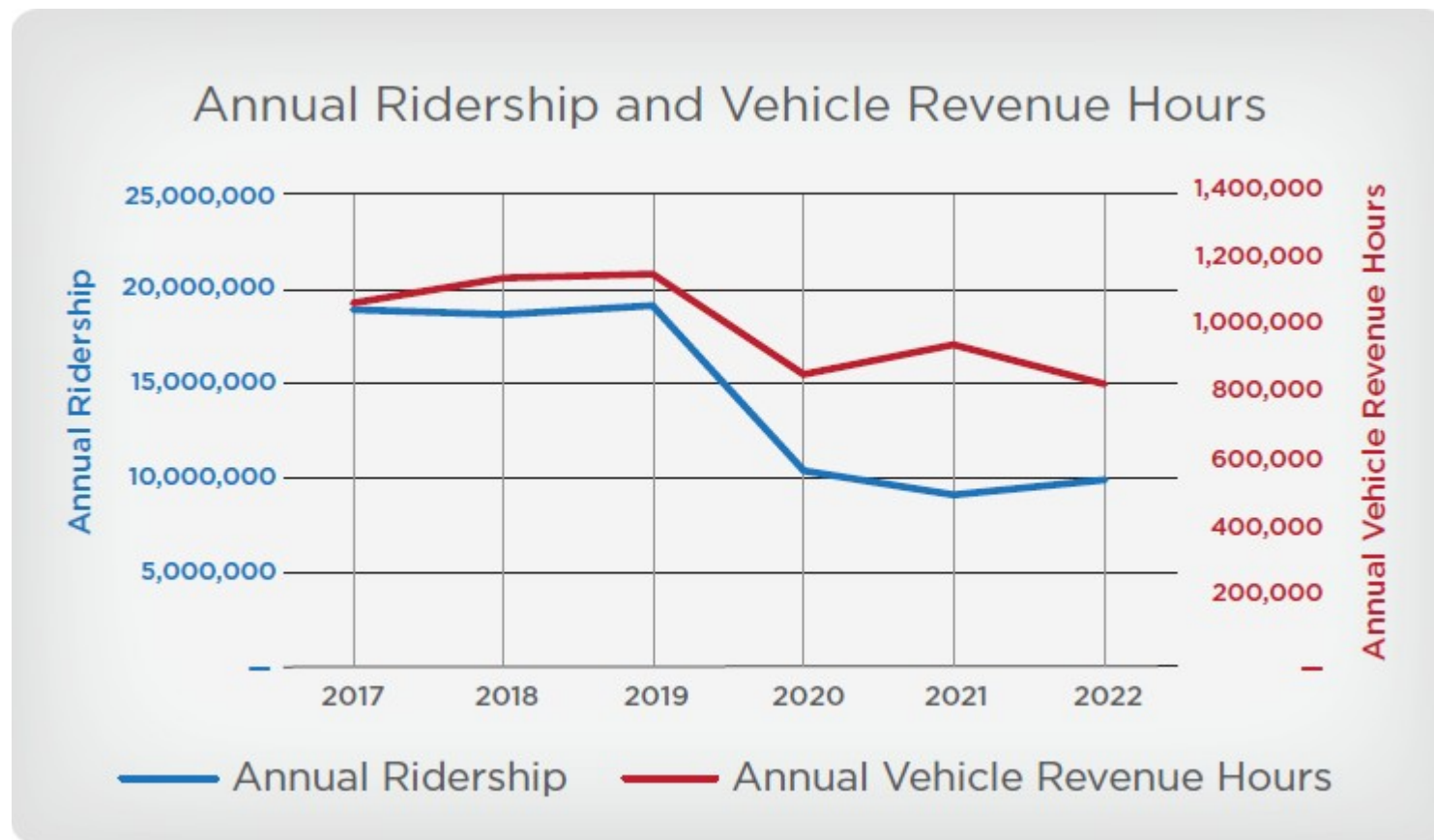
In conclusion, this report shows that despite all the positive that COTA has achieved with mobility initiatives, securing competitive funding opportunities, and navigating through an unprecedented pandemic, the continuous reduction of service and frequency has negatively impacted the role COTA plays in the community. Providing equitable and reliable service to neighborhoods should continue to be the priority of the agency over the next five years.

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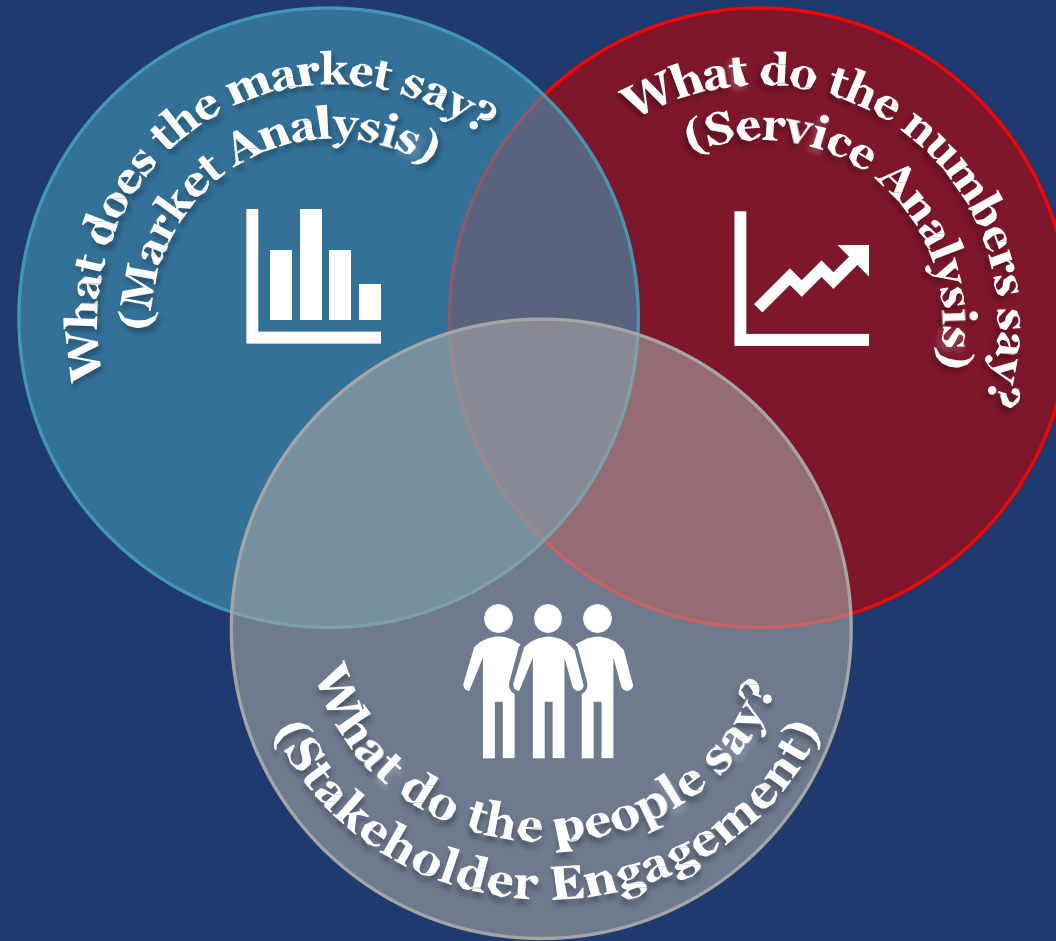
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Present Day Challenges

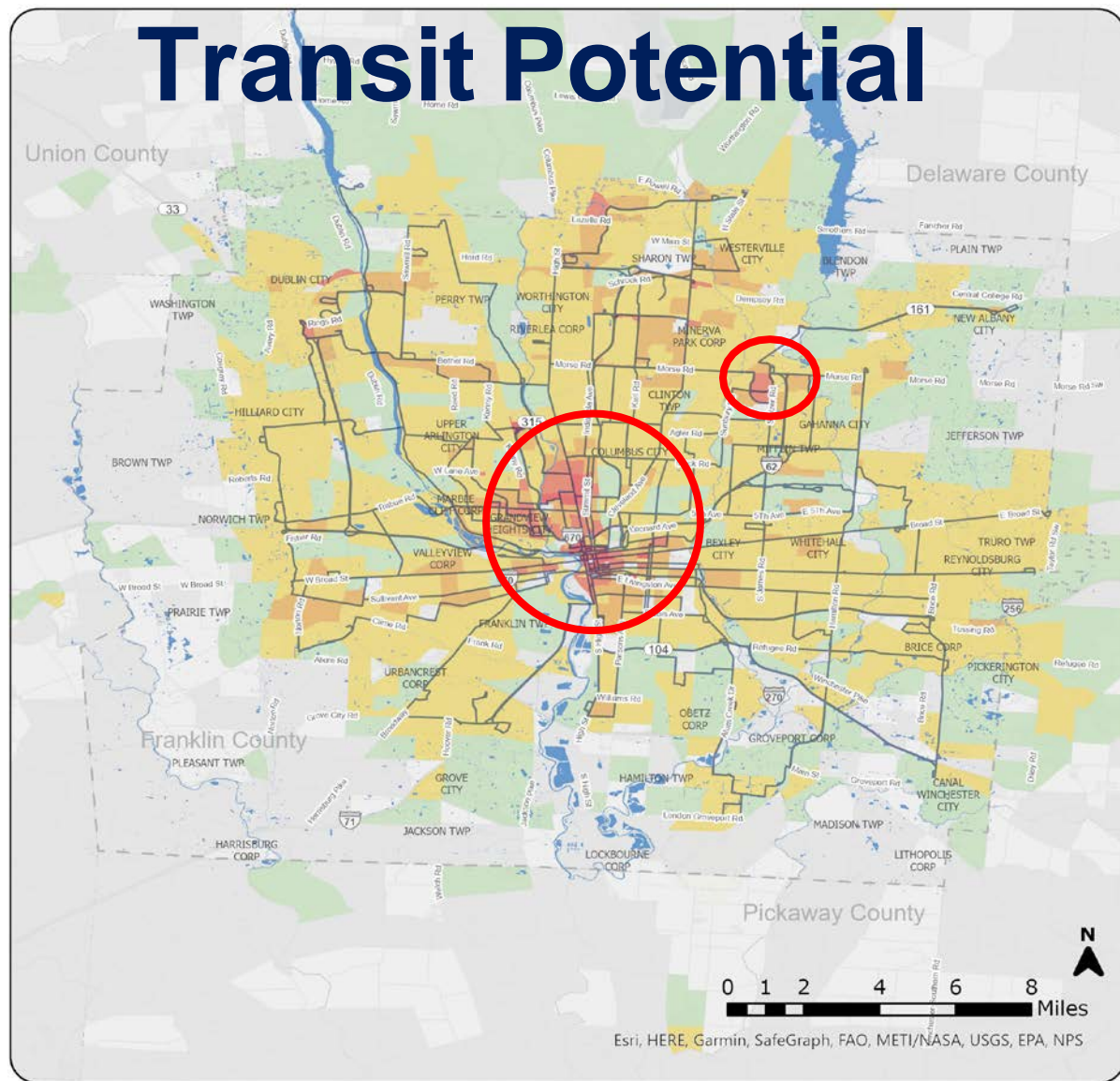
- Loss of Ridership
 - COTA has lost over 48% of its weekday ridership since 2019
- Operator Shortage
 - 592 operators in 2022, 100 short to provide pre-pandemic service
 - Operating with 27% less total revenue hours than pre-pandemic



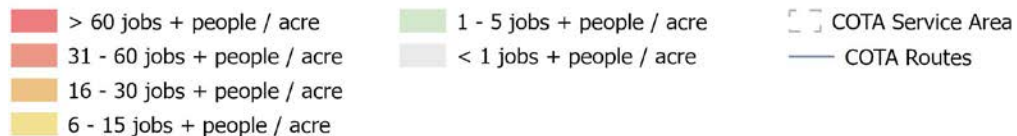
Analysis Approach



Transit Potential

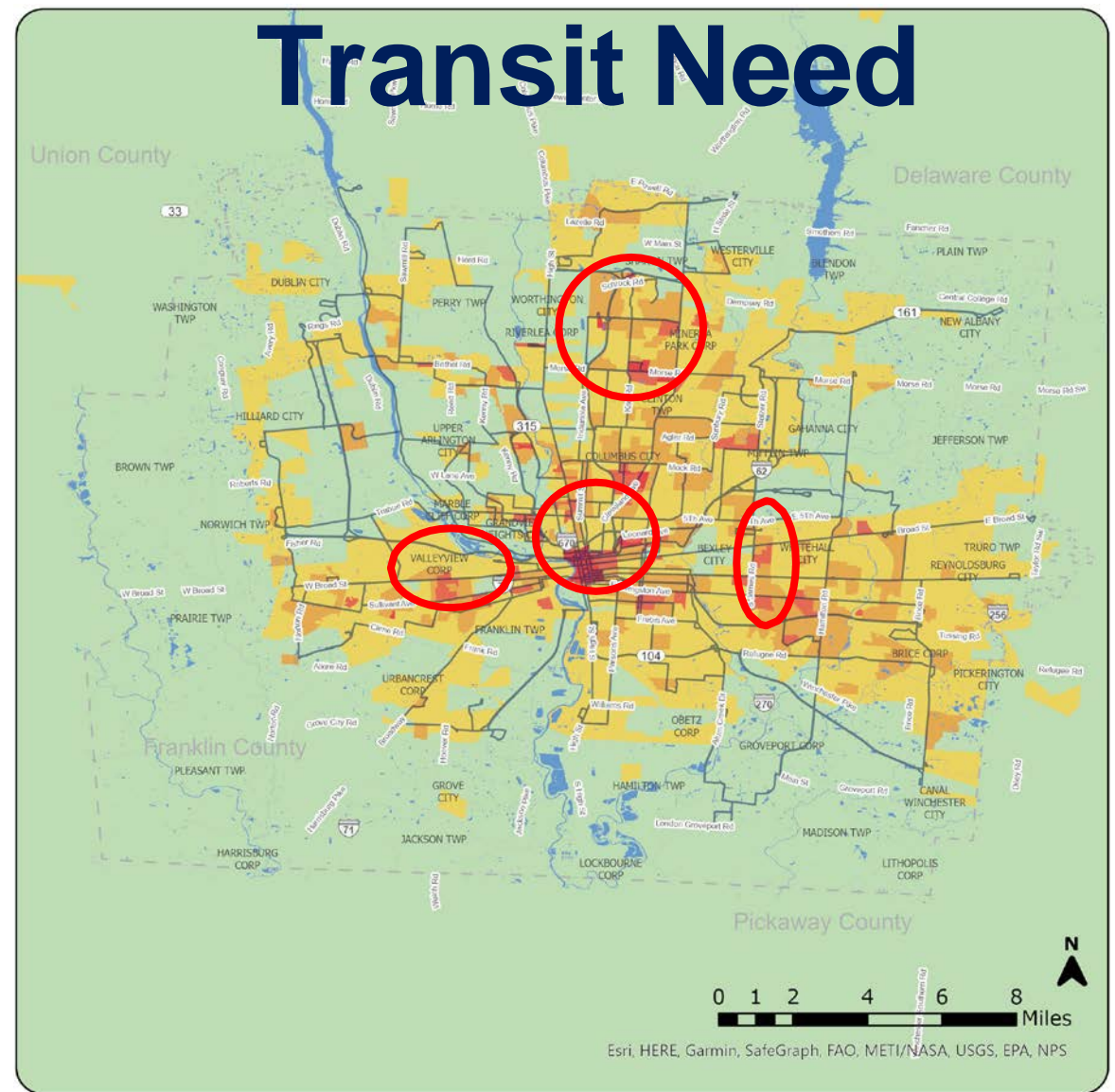


2020 Transit Potential



Source: MTP 2020-2050 Land Use Forecasts (TAZ)

Transit Need



Transit Need



Source: ACS (2020), population density by census block group

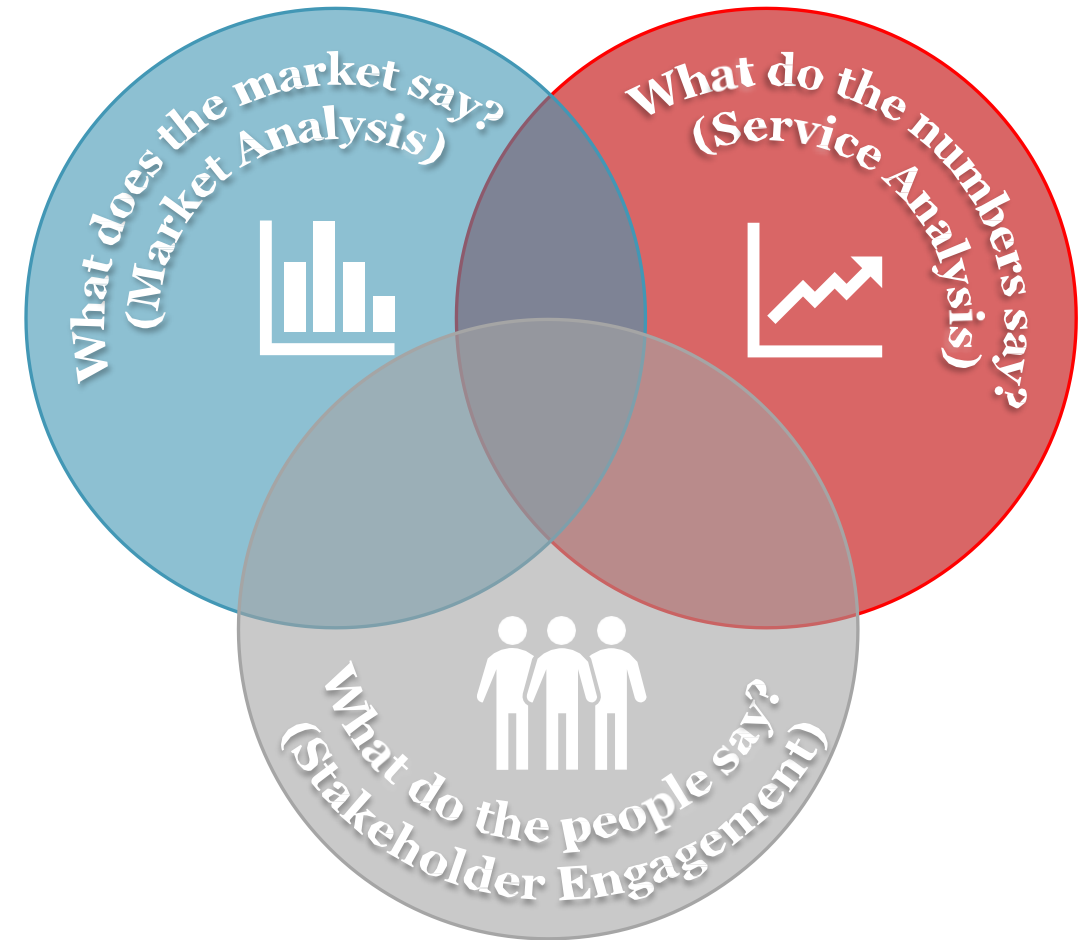
Service Analysis

- Route by Route Analysis from Dec 2022 – Jan 2023
 - Serve existing riders better
 - Attract new riders
 - Improve overall system efficiency
 - Consider new and emerging technologies
- Gathered Feedback
 - Customer Database
 - Municipalities
 - Service Planning
- Create opportunities for each route for increased ridership and efficiencies
- 2-Day workshop



Other Considerations

- 2017 Transit System Redesign
 - Ridership – Coverage Tradeoff
 - Streamline Services with restructured numbering
- Stakeholder Involvement
 - Municipality Goals and Objectives for the next 5 years
 - Service Planning & Scheduling Considerations
 - Customer Feedback from 2022
- Future Economic and Job Growth
 - Licking County
 - Rickenbacker Area (Pickaway + Fairfield Counties)



Engagement

- 13 municipalities, 2 counties, and two key stakeholders, John Glenn Columbus International Airport and The Ohio State University
- City of Columbus Public Works and City of Columbus Division of Neighborhoods
- COTA Advisory Panel
- MORPC TIP Public Meeting
- Met with COTA Personnel in the Fall and Spring
- Met with an External Stakeholder committee
- Evaluated over 22,000 comments from Customer Service Database
- Held 12 Public Meetings – 6 In-Person, 6 Virtual with over 45 attendees
- Online Survey with 55 Responses
- Operator Outreach

Key Themes



- Dense development is occurring on the existing fixed route system that supports frequent transit and the existing network provides the backbone for future service growth and opportunities

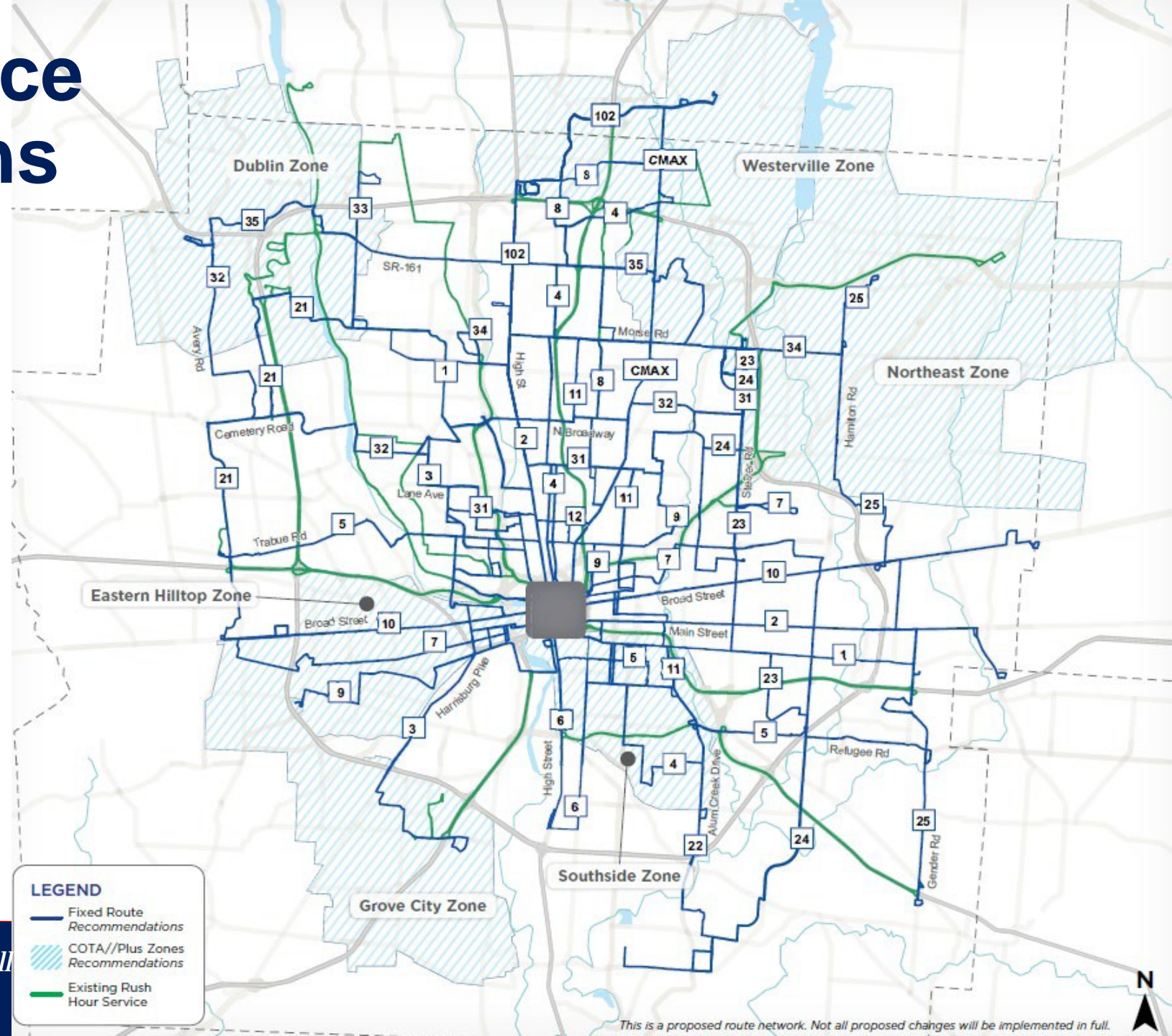


- Outward growth continues
 - New Albany
 - Dublin
 - Rickenbacker
 - Grove City
- New Mobility Options such as COTA//Plus

Preliminary Service Recommendations

Increased connections to:

- Suburban Medical facilities
- The Ohio State University
- Rickenbacker Mobility Center
- Retail Establishments Easton Town Center
- East – West Connection along 161



Draft – Implementations of the recommendations will require further public review

This is a proposed route network. Not all proposed changes will be implemented in full.

Rush Hour

- Provide a benefit to downtown transit commuters and municipalities
- Today's service has reduced frequency due to uncertain work patterns

Recommendation: Continue evaluation of rush hour demand and increase number of trips when resources are available to provide a viable option to commuters and enhance regional connectivity

Capital Plans (2023 – 2027)

Vehicle Replacement:

- Battery Electric Buses
- COTA//Plus Vehicles
- Mainstream Cutaway Vehicles + Full-sized Vans

Infrastructure Improvements:

- Electrification and Hydrogen Infrastructure
- Park and Ride facility improvements
- Investment in Mobility Hubs to improve first/last mile solutions
- Rickenbacker Mobility Center

Operating Plans (2023 – 2027)

Fixed Route Service Hours

- 1,108,761 consistent fixed-service annual service hours for the next five year

COTA//Plus

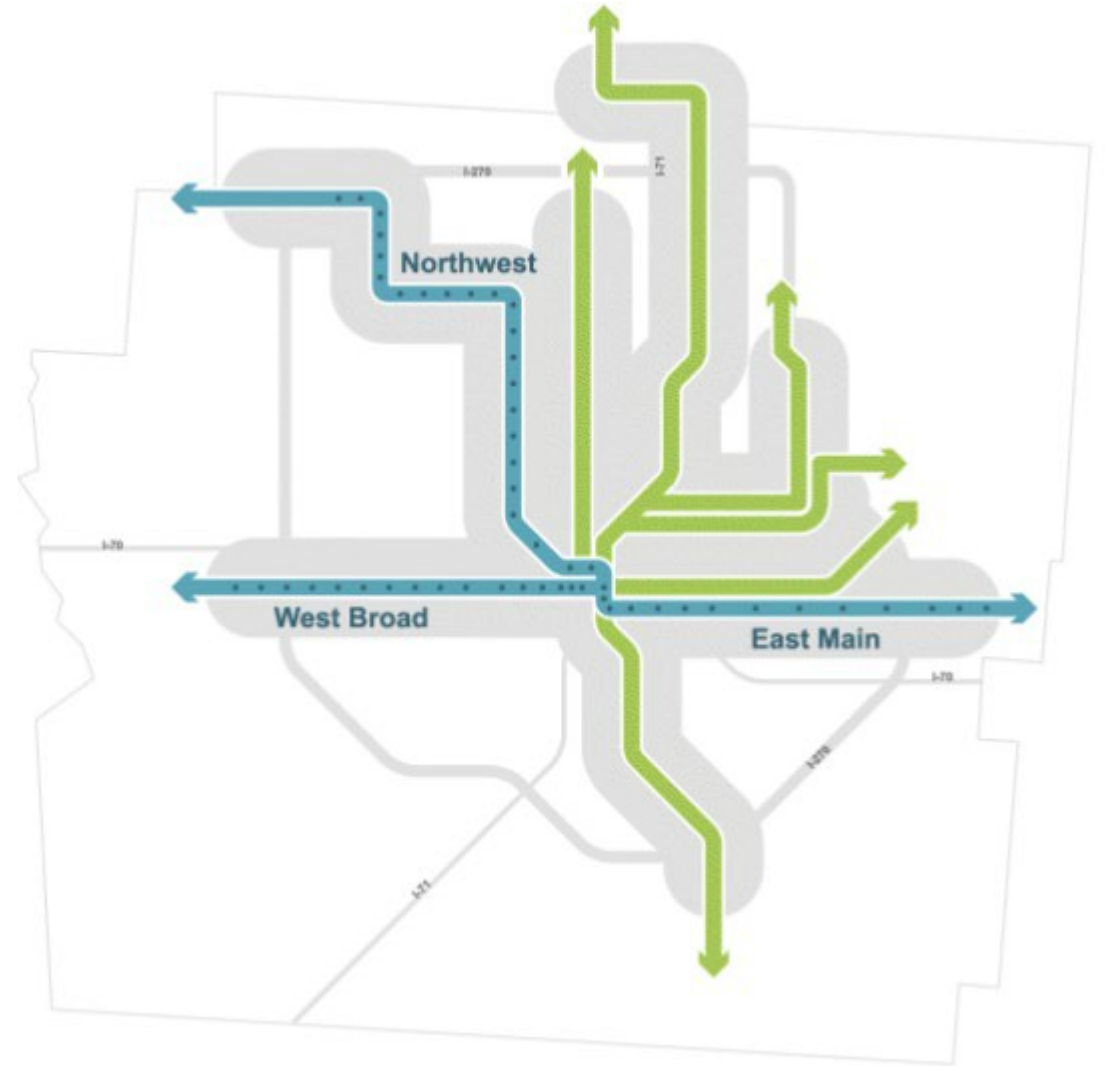
- Possibility of additional COTA//Plus Zones to improve coverage

LinkUS

- Continued regional partnership and investment to the LinkUS program

LinkUS

- LinkUS is Central Ohio's transformational and comprehensive mobility and growth initiative. LinkUS will provide equitable mobility options for residents and visitors, ensure access to jobs and affordable housing, promote economic growth, and improve sustainability.
 - High-capacity and advanced rapid transit
 - Bikeways and greenspace
 - Complete streets and roadway safety
 - Pedestrian improvements
 - Development along key regional corridors
- *SRTP is a link between existing service today and the future vision of LinkUS*



Phased Approach



Next Steps

- Engage Front Line Staff Outreach
- Revise Recommendations based on feedback
- Finalize the Short Range Transit Plan

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