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PLANNING COMMISSION

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Meeting Minutes

LinkUS Transit Supportive Infrastructure Committees
Leadership Committee

November 3rd, 2026
1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Committee Members (six in-person needed for quorum):

Member	Representing	Attendance
Ben Kessler (for Megan Meyer)	Bexley	✓
Christie Ward	Lockbourne	✓
Lucas Haire	Canal Winchester	
Kelly Scocco	Columbus	✓
Preeti Choudhary	Columbus	✓
Brian Stetson (for Devayani Puranik)	COTA	✓
Garth Weithman	COTA	✓
Mike Barker (for Megan O'Callaghan)	Dublin	✓
Kris Long	FCC	
Ken Wilson	FCC	
Adam Fowler	FCEO	✓
James Jewell, Acting Chair	FCTA	✓
Laurie Jadwin	Gahanna	✓
Emily Keeler	Grandview Heights	
William Murdock, Secretary (*ex officio*)	MORPC	✓

Other Attendees: Parag Agrawal, Kelsey Ellingsen, Tom Graham, Lawrence Harper, Matt Klingler, Jordan Petrov, Maria Schaper, Liz Webb

William Murdock, AICP
Executive Director

Ben Kessler
Chair

Laurie Jadwin
Vice Chair

Matthew Starr
Secretary

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1. **Welcome & Announcements**

    - Chair Jewell called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

2. **Action: Approval of May 28, 2026 Meeting Minutes - Chair James Jewell**

    - Chair Jewell introduced the draft minutes from the May 28 meeting. No discussion took place. Motion to approve the minutes as presented made by Ms. Jadwin and seconded by Ms. Socco. Motion carried and minutes were approved by voice vote with one abstention.

3. **Action: Recommended 2027 TSI Program Policies Updates – Maria Schaper, MORPC**

    - Ms. Schaper provided an overview of the TSI Policies update process and proposed changes. Ms. Schaper noted that TSI Policies are reviewed on an annual basis with MORPC staff completing an administrative review before seeking input on proposed changes from the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC). The TWG met in July 2026 to review policy changes, which were subsequently forwarded to the TCC in September 2026.

    - Mr. Petrov described the specific proposed changes, including a clerical update to include the 2027 program schedule and updating project eligibility adherence to the newly adopted 2027-2031 COTA Short-Range Transit Plan.

    - Mr. Petrov also presented policy changes to eligible project phases. He explained there were previous discussions to combine Preliminary Engineering and Detailed Design phases, but the TCC determined this may create additional constraints for project sponsors. The TCC recommended changing eligible project phase language to allow for utility coordination within the Right-of-Way project phase.

    - Mr. Petrov and Ms. Schaper explained the proposed change regarding an exception for pre-authorizing phase completion prior to the execution of a grant agreement for right-of-way acquisition of former railways eligible for TSI improvements. Mr. Petrov shared this policy change is directly related to acquiring right-of-way for the Heritage Trail. Ms. Schaper provided more context regarding the purchase strategy for the Heritage Trail. The estimated cost of purchasing the former railway is $23,500,000. The project received a One-Time Strategic Community Investment Fund award of $8,718,982 and Metro Parks received a $2,500,000 immediate reimbursement grant. The remaining $12.2M will be funded through a five-year disbursed reimbursement using TSI funds. Franklin County requested this change be made to the TSI Policies to facilitate purchasing Heritage Trail right-of-way in the near future.

    - Mr. Petrov reviewed proposed changes regarding allowing reimbursement of administrative costs when a project is being administered by an agency which will not

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have maintenance authority of the majority of the constructed infrastructure. Reimbursements for administrative costs shall not exceed 5% of the committed funding for a given project phase. Ms. Scocco shared her support for this change and noted a strong example for this is the Urbancrest Industrial Park Sidewalks project. If Grove City were to administer this project for the Village of Urbancrest, they could be reimbursed for administrative costs while furthering this high-priority safety improvement.

- Mr. Petrov described the final proposed policy change of preparing TSI status reports each trimester to align with the LinkUS Progress Report cadence.

- Mr. Murdock emphasized the collaborative nature of all proposed policy changes presented with MORPC staff, the TWGs, and the TCC contributing. He noted the former railway right-of-way acquisition and administrative cost reimbursement changes were especially thoughtful changes that were informed by input from multiple jurisdictions.

- Chair Jewell thanked staff for their efforts, especially in regards to administrative costs.

- Ms. Choudhary asked if language around sales tax collection is included in the policy changes. Ms. Schaper noted there will be a chance to discuss this later on in the meeting during a presentation from COTA. Mr. Weithman agreed that there is a goal to provide regular sales tax collection updates at all TSI meetings.

- Mr. Fowler asked if reimbursement for in-house construction inspection was clarified. Ms. Schaper explained that COTA will allow for this reimbursement with proper documentation. MORPC and COTA staff will clarify what proper documentation entails.

- Motion to approve the 2027 TSI Program Policies was made by Mr. Barker and seconded by Ms. Ward. Motion carried and approved by voice vote.

4. Action: 2027-2031 CIP Updates – Maria Schaper, MORPC

- Ms. Schaper provided an overview of the approved 2027-2031 budget and presented the update request from the Franklin County Engineer's Office regarding the Heritage Trail. Currently, $12M is committed for right-of-way in the 2026-2031 CIPs at $2M/year. The County Engineer requested an additional $500,000 in the active CIP to provide additional committed funding needed for purchasing the railway. This update is proposed for 2031. Ms. Schaper emphasized the Heritage Trail is a major regional priority.

- Mr. Petrov emphasized FCEO's request for funding committed prior to sale, which is the reason for the current timing of the update request.

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- Ms. Scocco voiced her support for the update, nothing the Heritage Trail is the top priority for the Northwest TWG and a top priority for the City of Columbus. She explained that once the land is purchased, Metro Parks has committed their responsibility for constructing the trail.

- Mr. Weithman asked if this CIP amendment will go to the COTA Board. Ms. Schaper agreed this requires COTA Board action. Mr. Weithman noted this will likely be included in the December 2026 meeting.

- Motion to approve the 2027-2031 CIP update made by Ms. Scocco and seconded by Ms. Ward. Motion carried and approved by voice vote.

5. **Action: Recommended TSI Bylaws Updates & Committee Membership – Maria Schaper, MORPC**

- Ms. Schaper introduced the proposed TSI Bylaws updates. She explained the Leadership Committee (LC) is the only TSI Committee responsible for reviewing and approving these changes. Staff provided a high-level overview of changes to the TCC, but the LC is responsible for implementing. Proposed changes focus on clarification of TSI Committees, committee membership changes, virtual meeting policy updates, and LC responsibilities.

- Mr. Petrov provided context for many of the the proposed changes. He explained the TWGs and TCC met and discussed distinguishing the TWGs as informal, flexible bodies that hold consensus-seeking decisions rather than formal voting to provide input to the TCC. TCC representatives for each TWG quadrant are responsible for representing quadrant-scale priorities and should have clear understanding of TWG-level priorities and deliberations. Ms. Schaper emphasized the goal of keeping TWGs as inclusive, participatory bodies.

- Mr. Petrov reviewed the specific proposed bylaw changes, including clarifying the name of the TSI Committees governed by the Bylaws and clarifying the origin of MORPC's program administration in the Master Transit Supportive Infrastructure Agreement between MORPC and COTA. He also shared the proposed revision to detail the purpose of each TCC representative's responsibility to represent quadrant-level outcomes in TCC meetings.

- Mr. Petrov also explained the proposed revision to allow each TWG quadrant to determine if they will change their TCC representatives. This process will be completed annually at the policy review TWG meeting(s). Only one TCC representative will change this year, with New Albany offering their place as a Northeast representative. Gahanna will serve in this role.

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- Mr. Kessler asked if staff considered staggering membership rotations on the LC to avoid gaps in institutional knowledge. He suggested changing the rotating LC members representing cities and villages to have two people roll-off every two years. Ms. Schaper noted there are permanent LC members to help with any knowledge gaps. Mr. Murdock also shared the rotating seats have been a priority as many communities wanted to join the LC. Mr. Petrov explained many of the incoming LC members served on the TCC, which will help with the knowledge transfer. Mr. Fowler also expressed his interest in staggering rotations. Mr. Weithman offered to share the COTA Board language regarding rotations. Mr. Murdock suggested MORPC staff review this suggestion and discuss at a future LC meeting, noting many communities are looking forward to beginning a term in 2027. Ms. Scocco agreed this could be built into future Bylaws updates after the next membership rotation.

- Mr. Petrov reviewed the other Bylaws changes, including clarifying rotation cycle for the TCC and LC, removing quorum requirements for TWGs, confirming TCC and LC officer election cycles following membership rotations, updating language to align with MORPC's virtual meeting policy, and updating that Bylaws may be reviewed as needed by the LC.

- Mr. Jewell asked if the TCC expressed any concerns about these changes. Mr. Petrov explained Bylaws updates are only a responsibility of the LC. TCC members received a high-level overview of the proposed changes and did not express any concerns.

- Motion to approve the recommended TSI Bylaws updates made by Ms. Choudhary and seconded by Ms. Scocco. Motion carried and approved by voice vote.

- Mr. Petrov reviewed changes to LC and TCC membership. He explained that staff will schedule an LC orientation meeting in January 2027 with little action items included to help on-board new members. Ms. Schaper shared this meeting was suggested by Franklin County Board of Commissioners. Staff will also offer individual meetings with new representatives as needed. Mr. Petrov shared one change to TCC membership in which the City of Gahanna will replace the City of New Albany as a Northeast TWG representative.

6. Informational: COTA Sales Tax Collections Update – Garth Weithman, COTA

- Mr. Weithman presented draft sales tax performance and TSI allocations for 2025 and 2026. He emphasized that 27.5% of the 0.5% sales tax increase, or 13.75% of COTA's total 1% sales tax, is allocated to TSI. In 2025, COTA collected $200,108,941 in sales tax. $25,278,497 of that total was allocated to TSI for 2026 CIP grant agreements. This allocation was less than the $32,805,000 budgeted for TSI. COTA supplemented this with $4.6M from their operating funds. He also explained COTA's deduction of internal

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administrative costs are not included in the 2025 information. COTA staff will add that in for future presentations.

- Mr. Weithman explained 2026 collections improved. $53,918,780 is projected for 2027 CIP grant agreements using September-December 2026 sales tax projections. He shared COTA and MORPC are continuing to work on how to handle under/over collections and will bring forward suggested changes in the TSI Policies.

- Mr. Murdock emphasized the intent is for COTA to update the TSI Committees on sales tax collections at future meetings. Mr. Weithman noted COTA will also update MORPC on a bi-weekly cadence during regular staff coordination meetings. Ms. Schaper explained staff will propose Policies changes to manage over/under collections.

- Ms. Scocco asked about the $4,612,594 supplemental transfer from COTA's operating funds in 2025. Mr. Stetson explained COTA committed $29.6M in allocations to TSI but only received $25.2M as staff was not aware of a delay in sales tax collections and disbursements from the state. This transfer was COTA's attempt to ensure the TSI program could perform as expected for 2026 grant agreements. Mr. Weithman noted the need to show this negative $4.6M balance and discuss how to ensure the transfer is accounted for between MORPC and COTA.

- Mr. Kessler asked if the sales tax collection increase between 2025 and 2026 is happening across the state or if it is unique to Central Ohio. Mr. Stetson explained this is likely increasing across the state. COTA staff also was conservative in initial budgeting. He also shared COTA anticipates another year of strong sales tax collections.

7. Informational: Upcoming Program Schedule – Jordan Petrov, MORPC

- Mr. Petrov shared staff is beginning the 2028-2032 CIP update. Staff received project status update requests for existing commitments last week and are processing requests now. All TWGs will meet in the next two weeks to discuss the update requests and deliberate overall programmatic strategy on how to handle update requests, new project requests, and the program reserve. He explained the TWGs will meet again in December 2026 to compile the quadrant-level project priority lists for the TCC to review in January. Priority lists will be compiled into the 2028-2032 CIP/CIB and will follow a May-July approval schedule with the TCC, LC, and COTA Board.
- Mr. Petrov shared the COTA Short-Range Transit Plan results are available for review now. COTA will provide more detail on these recommendations in the December TWG meetings to inform programming strategy.
- Mr. Petrov shared the 2027 program calendar and noted upcoming items for the TSI program include accepting new project requests through November 2027, sharing 2027 grant agreements with project sponsors, scheduling the January LC meeting, and continuing CIP development activities.

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- Ms. Schaper concluded staff updates by thanking the members rolling off of the LC and encouraging them to remain engaged in the TSI program.

8. **Next Steps and Adjourn – Chair James Jewell, Prairie Township**
    - A motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:58 PM was made and seconded by committee members. Motion carried by voice vote.