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PLANNING COMMISSION

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LinkUS
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Meeting Minutes

LinkUS Transit Supportive Infrastructure Committees
Leadership Committee

May 28th, 2026
1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

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

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

Other Attendees: Maria Schaper, Parag Agrawal, Tom Graham, Jordan Petrov, Arjun Kurup, Ralonda Hampton, Liz Webb, Jeff Ortega

William Murdock, AICP
Executive Director

Ben Kessler
Chair

Laurie Jadwin
Vice Chair

Matthew Starr
Secretary

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1. **Welcome & Announcements**

    - Chair O'Callaghan called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM.

2. **Action: Approval of November 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes - Chair Megan O'Callaghan**

    - Chair O'Callaghan introduced the draft minutes from the November 12 meeting. No discussion took place. Motion to approve the minutes as presented made by Ms. Keeler and seconded by Mrs. Jadwin. Motion carried and minutes approved unanimously by voice vote.

3. **Action: Recommended 2027 – 2031 LinkUS TSI Capital Improvement Program – Maria Schaper, MORPC**

    - Ms. Schaper provided an overview of the development process and timeline for the recommended 2027-2031 TSI Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Ms. Schaper noted that the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) met twice to review project status updates and develop recommendations, which were subsequently forwarded to the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), which reviewed and adopted the draft CIP on April 21.

    - Ms. Schaper also reviewed the public comment period and noted strong support for both the overall CIP and future project investments. She added that staff intend to begin future comment periods earlier in the process to better inform CIP development.

    - Ms. Schaper described the budget-first approach used to develop the recommended CIP, which focused on accommodating higher-than-anticipated project costs, maintaining project viability, and reducing program overcommitment. She reviewed project status updates received from sponsors, noting that increased project costs were largely attributable to changing market conditions, higher project fees, and scope changes. Ms. Schaper highlighted several lessons learned from the process, including the importance of soliciting project updates earlier, gradually introducing a program reserve to address contingency costs, and providing additional policy clarity regarding project status updates and new funding commitments.

    - Ms. Schaper also summarized feedback received from the TWGs and TCC. She noted support for the CIP development process, continued appreciation for the flexibility and regional collaboration built into the TSI Program, and a desire to establish a clearer understanding of consensus within the TWG process moving forward.

    - Mr. Petrov reviewed the details of the recommended 2027–2031 TSI Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He explained the budget-first approach in developing the CIP and began by reviewing existing program commitments. Mr. Petrov noted that updated project costs and existing commitments had created a projected budget

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overage in future years, particularly in 2028 by nearly $20 million, requiring staff and project sponsors to identify opportunities to rebalance the program.

- Mr. Petrov reviewed project status updates submitted by sponsors and described how delayed commitments were used to create a balanced CIP. He noted that several projects were shifted into later years, creating additional funding capacity in 2029 and beyond while maintaining previously approved commitments. Mr. Petrov highlighted the importance of sponsor coordination throughout this process, noting that the Franklin County Engineer's Office identified approximately $10 million in delayed commitments to help achieve a balanced program. He added that delayed commitments would remain 'locked-in' to their revised years, barring future project status updates.

- Mr. Petrov stated that the recommended CIP provides a strong foundation for future program development. While the CIP generally prioritizes existing commitments over new projects, he noted that staff worked to maintain proportional investment across the four LinkUS corridors and intends to continue that approach in future CIP updates.

- Chair O'Callaghan thanked staff for the presentation and noted that the recommended CIP reflects the intended annual update process.

- Motion to approve the recommended 2027–2031 TSI Capital Improvement Program made by Ms. Keeler and seconded by Mr. Jewell. Motion carried and approved by voice vote.

4. Informational: TSI Bylaws & Leadership Committee Membership – Maria Schaper, MORPC

- Ms. Schaper provided an overview of ongoing efforts to review and update TSI Program Bylaws and committee governance structure. She explained that staff have been evaluating the Bylaws from a timing and governance perspective as the program approaches the end of its initial three-year committee term cycle.

- Ms. Schaper noted that while the Leadership Committee (LC) rotation is outlined in current Bylaws, the timing of those transitions isn't specified. She proposed considering revisions to better align committee appointments and leadership transitions with the annual CIP development cycle, which would allow members and officers to participate uninterrupted throughout an entire program development cycle.

- Ms. Schaper added that staff will be updating processes related to Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) representation, as the current bylaws do not specify term limits or lengths of TCC representation of the Technical Working Group (TWG) quadrants. Moving forward, Technical Working Groups will be given an opportunity at the beginning of each fall CIP development cycle to reaffirm or select new TCC

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representatives. This will also be included as proposed Bylaws language in the upcoming Bylaws update.

- Ms. Schaper also discussed potential updates related to TWG processes. While the groups were intentionally designed to be informal and collaborative, staff have received feedback that additional clarity regarding consensus-building and the role of TCC representatives would be beneficial. She noted that staff intend to engage the TWGs this summer to gather input before bringing a consolidated Bylaws update forward for consideration.

- Ms. Schaper reviewed the anticipated timeline for Bylaws revisions and upcoming Leadership Committee membership rotations. Current three-year terms are scheduled to conclude in December 2026, and staff will begin coordinating with jurisdictions regarding updated membership later this year.

- Committee members discussed continuity and onboarding for new committee members. Mr. Petrov noted that standing committee members provide continuity between rotations. Members suggested providing orientation materials, pairing incoming and outgoing members, and utilizing existing committee members to help familiarize new appointees with the program structure, policies, and committee responsibilities. Staff noted that these ideas will be considered part of the governance review process, and future committee meetings may be used to support member orientation.

5. Informational: LinkUS TSI Project Roll-Out – Ralonda Hampton, MORPC

- Ms. Hampton provided an overview of upcoming TSI project groundbreaking and ribbon-cutting events. She noted that as TSI projects move from planning into construction, MORPC, COTA, and project sponsors are working together to celebrate key project milestones and highlight progress across the region. Ms. Hampton noted that the Hoover Road Pedestrian Bridge project will be the first TSI groundbreaking event and will feature local leaders and project partners.

- Ms. Hampton and Ms. Webb described ongoing coordination with project sponsors to identify future groundbreaking and ribbon-cutting opportunities, including projects such as Shier Rings Road and the Brooksedge Mobility Project. Ms. Webb also noted that the Cooke Road project is currently under construction and utilized TSI funding as a match for MPO funds. Staff noted that invitations will be shared with Leadership Committee members and other TSI committees as events are scheduled, and that updates will be posted to the LinkUS website to keep the public informed of upcoming celebrations.

- Mr. Murdock expressed support for the effort and emphasized the importance of engaging local employers, chambers of commerce, and community organizations to help highlight the benefits of TSI investments. He noted that these events provide an

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opportunity to demonstrate how LinkUS is delivering infrastructure improvements throughout the region and encouraged committee members to help share those stories within their communities.

6. Informational: LinkUS Program Updates – Kelsey Ellingsen, COTA

- Ms. Ellingsen provided updates on LinkUS program activities and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor development. She noted the importance of coordinating transit investments with community needs and highlighted the role of TSI projects in connecting residents to future BRT corridors.

- Ms. Ellingsen provided an update on the West Broad BRT corridor, noting that the project is approximately 90% designed and is currently undergoing a risk assessment process with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). She explained that COTA is awaiting a draft risk findings report and will have an opportunity to adjust before submitting its Capital Investment Grant application. Ms. Ellingsen noted that the assessment will help inform project phasing and future schedule updates. She also highlighted ongoing coordination with ODOT and local partners regarding traffic considerations and thanked Prairie Township for donating a parcel at the Prairie Township Community Center for the end-of-line facility.

- Ms. Ellingsen reported that the East Main BRT corridor is approaching 60% design. She noted that COTA has incorporated public and jurisdictional feedback and is currently working through feedback follow-ups. The project is expected to reach 90% design in the fall, with completion of the NEPA process anticipated around the same time.

- Ms. Ellingsen also provided an update on the Northwest BRT corridor, noting that COTA is currently conducting a competitive procurement process, including RFP and RFQ activities, for the final design contract for the initial segment between Downtown Columbus and the Bethel Road Park-and-Ride. She noted that COTA is also undertaking comprehensive financial modeling and funding assessments for future phases extending from Bethel Road to Sawmill Road and Dublin. Ms. Ellingsen reported that the COTA Board recently approved the submission of a rating request to the FTA for the initial segment. She explained that obtaining a rating is an important step in building momentum for future funding and project phasing and noted that COTA hopes to receive feedback from the FTA within approximately 45 days.

- Ms. Ellingsen also highlighted ongoing coordination with MORPC regarding the identification of future transit corridors and provided an update on COTA's Short-Range Transit Plan, which is expected to be considered by the COTA Board in July. She noted that COTA has added approximately 87,000 service hours since September 2024, representing an 8.5% increase in service, with a focus on increasing frequency and reducing transfer and wait times. She noted better service on the weekends and shrinking transfer times as factors.

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7. Informational: Central Ohio Advance Fund Update – Parag Agrawal, MORPC

- Mr. Agrawal provided an update on the development of the Central Ohio Advance Fund, which is intended to assist communities in accessing reimbursement-based funding programs such as TSI. Mr. Agrawal noted that some communities face challenges advancing the upfront capital required to initiate projects before reimbursement is received. Mr. Agrawal explained that MORPC is modeling the concept of this program based on similar ones developed by peer agencies, including the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), but developing a distinctive program that is tailored to the needs of Central Ohio communities.

- Mr. Agrawal reported that MORPC is working with COTA to identify approximately $5 million in seed funding for the program. He noted that the initial fund is intended to support smaller infrastructure projects and could assist approximately five to six projects annually. Under the proposed structure, local jurisdictions would continue to manage project delivery, contracting, and reimbursement requests, while the Advance Fund would provide working capital to address cash-flow needs until grant reimbursements are received.

- Mr. Agrawal reviewed next steps for the program, noting that MORPC and a financial consultant are currently developing policies related to eligibility, application procedures, project selection, program administration, and associated costs. He stated that the proposed policies will be brought before MORPC committees for consideration prior to the anticipated launch of the program in the third quarter of 2026.

- Ms. Meyer asked how closely the proposed program is being modeled after the NCTCOG program. Mr. Agrawal responded that while ongoing communication with them serves as a reference, the advance fund is designed to meet the specific needs of Central Ohio communities.

- Chair O'Callaghan asked whether any currently programmed TSI projects may be candidates for the Advance Fund. Mr. Graham noted that several projects have already been identified, including the Lockbourne Road Shared Use Path project and Franklin Township's Triangle Area Sidewalks project, with additional projects potentially benefiting from the program in the future. Chair O'Callaghan noted the possibility that there exists more potential projects which communities have not pursued because of the reimbursement issue.

- Ms. Long asked how administrative costs associated with the program would be covered. Mr. Agrawal responded that staff are evaluating options including interest earnings and a small administrative fee charged to participating communities.

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8. Next Steps – Maria Schaper, MORPC

- Ms. Schaper provided an overview of next steps for the 2027–2031 TSI Capital Improvement Program (CIP). She noted that the CIP includes approximately 75 projects spanning over 100 miles across 20 jurisdictions, including 56 multi-jurisdictional projects. Ms. Schaper reviewed updated mapping materials showing 2026 and 2027 project progress and noted that MORPC will integrate the adopted CIP into regional planning documents, including the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

- Ms. Schaper outlined upcoming program activities for fall, including initiation of new grant agreements, project status updates, and the start of the next CIP development cycle. She also noted that MORPC will convene a joint Technical Working Group workshop later this year to discuss policy updates, bylaws, and committee processes, as well as a project evaluation framework informed by the regional Active Transportation Plan.

- Mr. Murdock provided an update on the Heritage Trail project, noting that it involves seven partner communities and organizations and is progressing toward potential rail line acquisition. He explained that the project remains in active coordination and is expected to require alignment of multiple commitments to advance. Mr. Murdock noted that the current 2027-2031 CIP includes annual funding allocations for the project but may require additional funding of up to $500,000 in the current CIP years. He mentioned that the Leadership Committee will be kept informed as the project advances.

- Committee members discussed project mapping details, including interest in additional breakdowns by facility type. Ms. Schaper noted that staff are working to refine these materials. Discussion also included potential project signage, with staff confirming that signage emphasizing LinkUS is included as part of agreements with COTA and will be distributed to communities as projects move into construction.

- Mr. Fowler asked a question regarding eligibility for construction inspection reimbursement, noting that some jurisdictions complete their own construction inspection work in-house. He expressed concern that potentially requiring communities to hire consultants for reimbursable conspection inspection work could increase project costs unnecessarily when the work could be completed by local staff. Ms. Schaper noted that staff would review the question as part of upcoming policy updates. Multiple committee members agreed that the issue may affect multiple jurisdictions and discussed the need for clear documentation standards and reimbursement procedures for any in-house inspection activities. Staff indicated that the issue would be reviewed with COTA as part of ongoing policy development.

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9. **Adjourn – Chair Megan O'Callaghan**

    - A motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:49 PM was made and seconded by committee members. Motion carried by voice vote.