

West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit Project
Columbus, Ohio
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned June 2024)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 9.3 Miles, 17 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$339.89 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$149.99 Million (44.1%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2027)	\$7.40 Million
Current Year Ridership Forecast (2024):	4,100 Daily Linked Trips 1,265,600 Annual Linked Trips
Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2045):	6,900 Daily Linked Trips 2,144,200 Annual Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium-High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	High

Project Description: The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) proposes to implement bus rapid transit (BRT) on the West Broad Street corridor between downtown Columbus and Prairie Township. The project includes approximatively five miles of dedicated bus lanes, as well as the purchase of 10 zero-emission or electric vehicles. The project will operate along the alignment in a combination of dedicated center and curbside guideways, as well as sections in mixed traffic. The project is expected to feature near-level boarding at stations, off-board fare collection, complete streets improvements, transit signal priority, improved station amenities with enhanced safety and security, a new park and ride facility, on-route vehicle charging at the Western terminus and increased transit service. The service is planned to operate between 5:00 AM and 12:00 AM, seven days a week, with service every 10 minutes during weekday peak periods and every 15-20 minutes weekday off-peak, and every 10-20 minutes on the weekend.

Project Purpose: The Project is intended to link residents in Prairie Township, Franklin Township, Hilltop and Franklinton to key activity centers including the OhioHealth Doctors and Mount Carmel Hospitals, the central business district, and connections with the existing CMAX BRT and other transit modes. The project corridor has a higher proportion of low-income and zero car households, elderly persons, people with disabilities and minority groups than others in the metro area. COTA indicates the purpose of the project is to provide high-capacity transit with greater reliability, more frequent service and fewer stops, to produce shorter travel times and improved connectivity in Columbus.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: COTA selected the West Broad Street BRT as the locally preferred alternative in July 2021, and it was included in the

region's fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan in September 2021. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in October 2021. COTA anticipates completing the environmental review process with receipt of a categorical exclusion in January 2025, a Small Starts Grant Agreement in 2025 and beginning revenue service in 2027.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 CIG	\$149.99	44.1%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Surface Transportation Block Grant)	\$23.57	6.9%
FTA Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant	\$17.22	5.1%
State:		
Ohio Department of Transportation, Transportation Review Advisory Council, Major New Capacity Program Funds	\$15.00	4.4%
Ohio State Biennial Capital Budget Appropriated Transportation Budget General Funds	\$2.50	0.7%
Local:		
FY 2025-2026 COTA Bonds for West Broad Right-Of-Way acquisition and construction (repaid by sales tax revenue grants and interest income)	\$64.33	18.9%
FY2024-2028 COTA Capital Improvement Plan Funds	\$43.65	12.9%
FY 2021-2025 COTA Capital Improvement Plan Funds	\$15.60	4.6%
FY 2023 City of Columbus Capital Improvement Budget - LinkUS Program Special Income Tax	\$7.00	2.1%
FY 2022-23 Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission	\$1.03	0.3%
Total:	\$339.89	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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LAND USE RATING: Medium

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- The population density in station areas is about 5,000 persons per square mile, corresponding to a Medium-Low rating by FTA benchmarks. Total employment served is about 89,000 jobs, corresponding to a Medium rating. The daily parking cost in the central business district (CBD) ranges from \$5 to \$20, corresponding to Medium-Low to High ratings. The ratio of station area to county LBAR housing is 2.80, corresponding to a High rating.
- The project spans a diverse land use mix in Columbus that includes: downtown high-density office, civic, residential, and institutional developments; older, walkable neighborhoods with a mix of single and multi-family residential and street-fronting commercial; and mid to late 20th century auto-oriented commercial and lower-density residential areas. Sidewalks are present on streets in most station areas, with some gaps in some of the residential and industrial neighborhoods.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Regional and municipal plans support focusing growth in transit corridors, including the West Broad Street corridor. The Downtown and Hilltop neighborhoods of Columbus have plans recommending transit-supportive densities. Plans for the Franklinton provide broad target density ranges; Prairie Township plans support corridor development at relatively low commercial densities. Plans generally support mixed-use development and improved pedestrian connectivity for West Broad Street across the entire corridor.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* The zoning code allows moderate densities in most of the corridor and strongly transit-supportive densities within East Franklinton and downtown. A comprehensive update of the Columbus zoning code is in progress to better align it with recent transit-supportive regional planning. There are no parking minimums downtown; elsewhere, minimum parking requirements for office uses rate Medium-Low to Medium-High.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* Regional and local agencies have taken a proactive approach to stakeholder and community engagement in recent years to consider transit-supportive land use concepts as part of regional transportation and local land use planning. To date, outreach related to planning within the West Broad Street corridor station areas has only focused on a few specific locations. A number of tax increment financing districts (TIF) cover the eastern parts of the corridor but information was not available on how TIFs support development in the project corridor.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* There has been significant development in the corridor in the past decade, but nearly all of this has been concentrated in the eastern third of the corridor. Information on the character of these developments was available only for a few project examples.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* An economic analysis concluded that there is a strong potential for new development and growth along the project corridor, and in particular the Franklinton and downtown areas. Regional projections show station area population nearly doubling and employment increasing by 24 percent between 2020 and 2040. A regional study identified 1,200 acres with redevelopment potential in the project corridor and 330 acres in the downtown area.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Columbus and Franklin County have a \$100 million fund to support affordable housing developments and a few smaller private and public financing programs are active. In the corridor, two of the existing neighborhood plans include affordable housing needs and policies. Examples were provided of one recently-completed and four planned affordable housing developments in the corridor, adding about 370 units.



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West Broad Street BRT Corridor Overview

