



SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN 2027-2031

Executive Summary
and Recommendations

July 2026



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Project Background

In November 2024, voters in Central Ohio passed COTA's levy to pass LinkUs initiative, increasing the local sales tax by 0.5 percent to fund a long-term expansion of the region's transportation system.

The LinkUS program is expected to increase COTA transit service by approximately 45% between 2025 and 2050 by introducing bus rapid transit (BRT), improving multimodal access, and expanding service coverage. The 2027–2031 Short-Range Transit Plan (S RTP) represents the first major implementation phase of this long-term program.

COTA's 2027–2031 S RTP is a five-year, implementation-focused roadmap that prioritizes service investments based on rider demand, operational feasibility, and financial resources. The plan identifies which improvements will be advanced in the near term (2027–2028) and establishes a prioritized program of future investments to be implemented as resources allow.

The 2027-2031 S RTP outlines a set of coordinated service changes, including network redesign, frequency improvements, and new service types, along with the associated financial, operator, and capital requirements. These recommendations are designed to prepare the system for the introduction of BRT corridors on West Broad Street and East Main Street while reallocating resources to better align with current and projected rider demand.

Overview of the Process

COTA's 2027-2031 S RTP was developed through a multi-step process that focused on delivering promises made as part of the LinkUs vision, addressing gaps in the current network, and soliciting feedback from riders and other key stakeholders on proposed new service investments. The end result is a complete transit network that COTA will implement over the next five years.



Figure 1 Project Timeline

The recommended network will be implemented through a phased approach that reflects financial capacity, workforce availability, and dependencies on capital projects such as BRT. Early phases (2026–2028) include defined service changes, while later phases prioritize additional improvements based on performance and available resources. Phasing is designed to maximize near-term benefits while minimizing service disruptions and maintaining continuity for existing riders.

Short-Range Transit Plan Report & Companion Website

This report summarizes the key findings of the Short-Range Transit Plan. The SRTP project website was developed in tandem with the report and was a useful tool for sharing data and recommendations with the public and collecting feedback. The final version of the project website was published with the report and includes detailed interactive maps and charts of the data, analysis, and network recommendations included in the Existing Conditions, Engagement, and Recommended Transit Network sections of the report. To visit the SRTP project website, COTA.com/SRTP.

SRTP Project Website

COTA.com/SRTP



The Planning Process Continues

The Short-Range Transit Plan serves as COTA's roadmap for advancing service improvements over the next five years, guiding decisions from Board adoption through phased implementation and ongoing refinement. Following adoption, the plan will be implemented through upcoming service change cycles beginning in 2027, prioritizing high-impact improvements and advancing the highest-ranked service packages first.

Implementation is designed to be iterative and responsive. COTA will continuously monitor system performance, ridership trends, and operational outcomes to ensure the plan is delivering intended benefits. Based on this evaluation, adjustments will be made over time, with a formal plan update anticipated in 2028.

Public engagement will remain a central component throughout implementation. COTA will continue to host regular public meetings for each service change, conduct targeted outreach to riders, and coordinate closely with local jurisdictions, employers, and key stakeholders. For significant service changes, additional steps such as focused outreach, expanded public

Recommendations

Recommendation Themes

In the development of COTA's 2027-2031 SRTP, several themes guided the recommended path forward.

DELIVER ON PROMISES OF LINKUS

Prepare for Bus Rapid Transit

BRT is a cornerstone of the LinkUs vision and will begin operating during the 2027-2031 SRTP implementation period. This plan accounts for the transition of COTA Line 2 (East Main BRT) and Line 10 (West Broad BRT) into BRT and includes support services such as Line 80 on West Broad St. and operational adjustments that will break Line 2 and Line 10 in downtown Columbus.

Expand COTA's Frequent Service Network

Frequent service is the core of building transit networks that people can rely upon easily without needing to consult schedules and timetables. COTA's 2027-2031 SRTP identifies opportunities to improve the quality of service on high-performing lines to help meet passenger demand.

Late Night Service

To improve access for people working non-traditional hours, COTA will expand its network to introduce 24-hour service on key lines to connect workers to jobs during non-peak times. Overnight service on select lines will operate hourly from midnight to 5:00 AM daily.

Improve Weekend and Off-Peak Service

Weekend and off-peak service will improve travel access across the course of a week, creating midday, night, and weekend service that better matches service frequencies during peak times. This service will expand access for workers and ensure transit is accessible for riders when needed, not just during morning and afternoon commute times.

Expand COTA//Plus to New Communities

COTA//Plus is a service mode (microtransit) that can be used to extend transit's footprint in areas where fixed-route service may be infeasible. COTA's 2027-2031 SRTP identifies opportunities to augment COTA's fixed route services by offering COTA//Plus in lower-density environments to connect passengers into COTA's network.

FOCUS ON OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Break Long Routes into Shorter Routes to Improve Operational Reliability

COTA operates several routes that have travel times in excess of 2 hours and travel more than 40 miles per trip. Because of these long travel times and distances, these routes often struggle

with operational performance, including on-time performance. Dividing lines into two shorter lines creates improved operational reliability while also allowing each line to be evaluated separately, allowing for unique differences between these routes to be considered independently.

UPDATE NETWORK TO MEET DEMAND

Monitor and Consider Discontinuing Underperforming Services

As Columbus and the surrounding communities continue to grow, COTA must update its services to best reflect where demand is greatest. Several recommendations of this plan focus on ensuring COTA's operational resources are used to be most effective for Central Ohio residents. This results in some areas reducing service due to low demand while other areas may require adding additional service because there is unmet demand. As a best practice to remain responsive to taxpayer funds and provide the most effective service possible, underperforming services were evaluated, and several routes are proposed for discontinuation through this plan.

Recommended Network

The recommended network for the 2027-2031 SRTP focuses on accomplishing several goals for COTA:

- Implement the West Broad BRT corridor
- Implement the East Main BRT corridor
- Expand COTA's network to improve service access across the course of a week, including improved late night and weekend services
- Realign of underperforming lines
- Introduction of new COTA//Plus services

Service Type	
Bus Rapid Transit	
Span: All day, all week	
Frequency: 15 minutes or less	
Standard	
Span: All day, all week	
Frequency: 16-60 minutes	
Frequent	
Span: All day, all week	
Frequency: 15 minutes or less	
Rush Hour	
Span: 6:30-9AM and 3-6PM, Monday through Friday	

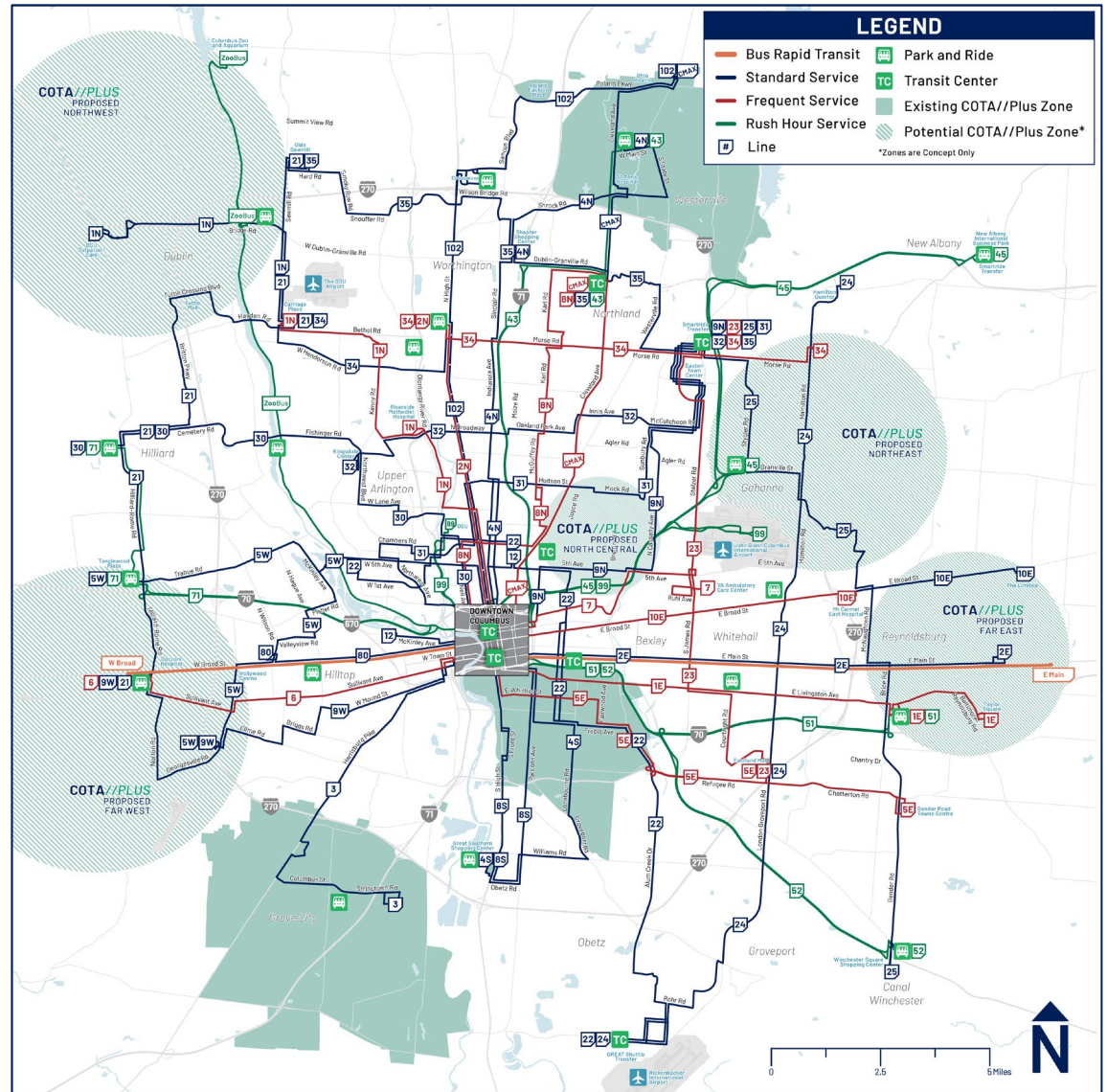


Figure 2 Recommended System Map – Interactive map available at www.cota.com/srtp

NETWORK SUMMARY

The SRTP includes a comprehensive set of service changes spanning new services, frequency improvements, route realignments, and service discontinuations. These changes collectively reshape the network to better align with demand and improve system performance.

The COTA Short-Range Transit Plan 2027-2031 includes the following recommendations:

Recommendation Type	Recommendation	Impacted COTA Service	Notes and Considerations
Implement New Service	Implement BRT service along West Broad St	Line 10, West Broad BRT, Line 80	Route 80 alignment will be reassessed after the West Broad BRT alignment is finalized.
Implement New Service	Implement BRT service along East Main Street	Line 2, East Main BRT	
Increase Frequency/Span	Introduce overnight hourly service	Line 1, 2, 10, 22, W Broad BRT, E Main BRT	
Increase Frequency/Span	Expand COTA's Frequent Service Network	Line 5E, 6	Line 5 Refugee leg only
Increase Frequency/Span	Improve weekend frequency from 30-minutes to 15-minutes	Line 1, 2N, 10E	
Increase Frequency/Span	Improve weekend frequency from 30-minutes to 20-minutes	Line 5E, 6, 7, 8, 23, 34	
Increase Frequency/Span	Improve weekend frequency from 60-minutes to 30-minutes	Line 3, 4, 9, 24, 30	
Increase Frequency/Span	Improve weekday frequency from 60-minutes to 30-minutes	Line 9, 25, 32, 35	

Recommendation Type	Recommendation	Impacted COTA Service	Notes and Considerations
Alignment Change	Break long routes in downtown Columbus to improve operational reliability and allow for independent scheduling.	Line 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10	Lines 2 and 10 must change as part of BRT service implementation. All other lines can be implemented individually over time.
Alignment Change	Extend service to Taylor Square in Reynoldsburg	Line 1E	
Alignment Change	Extend service to OSU Outpatient in Dublin	Line 1N	Replace Line 33 service to Dublin
Alignment Change	Discontinue Line 3 north of downtown Columbus	Line 3	Service replaced by new service on Line 30 from Hilliard to Downtown Columbus
Alignment Change	Extend service to Westerville along Busch Boulevard, Schrock Road, State Street, and Main Street	Line 4N	
Alignment Change	Realign service along Koebel Road, Fairwood Ave, Watkins Road, and Alum Creek Drive to Williams Road, Parsons Avenue, and Obetz Road to Great Southern	Line 4S	
Alignment Change	Realign service along Wilson Road and Broad Street to McKinley Avenue, Risher Road, Hague Avenue, Valleyview Drive, Wilson Road, Broad Street, and Georgesville Road to Walmart	Line 5W	
Alignment Change	Realign service along Georgesville Road, and Broad Street to Sullivant Avenue and Westwoods Boulevard to Westwoods Park and Ride	Line 6	

Recommendation Type	Recommendation	Impacted COTA Service	Notes and Considerations
Alignment Change	Discontinue Line 7 service to Easton Transit Center and CMH Airport, and terminate at VA Clinic	Line 7	Service replaced by new service on Line 9N on Cassady Avenue and 99 to CMH Airport
Alignment Change	Realign service along Dublin-Granville Road to Northland Transit Center	Line 8	
Alignment Change	Realign service from Brentnell Avenue, Perdue Avenue, Agler Road, and Sunbury Road to Cassady Avenue, Sunbury Road, McCutcheon Road, and Stelzer Road.	Line 9N	Service replaced by new COTA//PLUS service in the North Central area
Alignment Change	Realign service from Town Street and Central Avenue to Souder Avenue, Davis Avenue, and Mound Street. Realign from Norton Road and Broad Street to Sullivant Avenue and Westwoods Boulevard.	Line 9W	
Discontinue service	Discontinue service	Line 11	Service replaced by new COTA//PLUS service in the North Central area
Alignment Change	Realign service near Easton Town Center to Stelzer Road, Easton Way, Morse Crossing, Morse Road, and Stelzer Road to Easton Transit Center	Line 9, 31, and 32	
Alignment Change	Extend service from Carriage Place to Sawmill via Sawmill Road. Discontinue service past Westwoods Park and Ride	Line 21	Replace Line 33 service to Sawmill
Alignment Change	Realign service to the new Mobility Center at Rickenbacker via Shook Road in both directions	Line 22 & 24	
Alignment Change	Extend service to 1 st Avenue via 5 th Avenue	Line 22	

Recommendation Type	Recommendation	Impacted COTA Service	Notes and Considerations
Alignment Change	Realign service along Easton Way and Stelzer Road to Morse Crossing, Morse Road, and Stelzer Road	Line 23	
Alignment Change	Realign service along Morse Road and Stelzer Road to Hamilton Road to OSU Outpatient Center	Line 24	
Alignment Change	Discontinue service on Chantry Drive, Park Drive, Alshire Road, and Scarborough Boulevard	Line 25	
Implement New Service	Implement new service from Hilliard Park and Ride to Downtown Columbus via Kingsdale Center and OSU	Line 30	Replace Line 32 service to Hilliard
Alignment Change	Realign and extend service from along Kinnear Road, North Star Road, King Avenue, Grandview Avenue, 1 st Avenue, and Northwest Boulevard to Chambers Road, North Star Avenue, 5 th Avenue, Northwest Boulevard, and Vine Street to Downtown Columbus.	Line 31	Alternative service for discontinued Line 3 NW.
Alignment Change	Discontinue service west of Kingsdale Center	Line 32	Replaced by Line 30 from Hilliard to Kingsdale Center
Discontinue service	Discontinue service	Line 33	Service replaced by new service on Lines 1 to Dublin, 21 to Sawmill, and 34 on Henderson Road
Alignment Change	Extend service to Carriage Place via North High Street, Henderson Road, and Sawmill Road. Streamline service to remain on Morse Road west of Easton Transit Center	Line 34	Replaces Line 33 to Carriage Place on Henderson Road
Alignment Change	Discontinue service east of Easton Transit Center. Extend service to Sawmill via Busch Boulevard,	Line 35	Service from Easton Transit Center to New Albany replaced by SmartRide

Recommendation Type	Recommendation	Impacted COTA Service	Notes and Considerations
	Schrock Road, Huntley Road, Wilson Bridge Road, Snouffer Road, Smoky Row Road, and Hard Road		
Discontinue service	Discontinue service	Line 41, 42, 44, 46, 61, 72, 73, 74, and 75	Line 45 is replaced by Line 46. Line 73 is replaced by Zoo Bus
Alignment Change	Streamline to operate via Cleveland Avenue	Line 43	
Alignment Change	Serve both New Albany and Gahanna Park and Ride	Line 45	Replace Line 46 service to Gahanna Park and Ride
Implement New Service	Implement service that operates between OSU, Downtown, and CMH Airport	Line 99	Replaces Line 7 service to CMH Airport
Alignment Change	Extend to Meijer on North State Street	CMAX	
Increase Frequency/Span	Operate year-round	Zoo Bus	Replace Line 73 entirely
Implement New Service	Implement COTA//PLUS Service	North Central, Northwest, Northeast, Far East, Far West	Each zone will be evaluated and implemented independently

Figure 3 Recommendations

Impacts and Benefits

The recommended network for the 2027-2031 SRTP proposes a 27-30% service increase over the next five years. Service improvements include:

- **Refocusing the transit network** into high-demand, transit-dependent, or underserved communities.
- **Expanding the frequent service network** by upgrading high-performing routes or extending existing frequent routes into new areas.
- **Improving frequency throughout the week** with a focus on improved weekend frequency.
- **Expanding hours of operation** including introducing a 24-hour network on core routes.
- Providing direct access between John Glenn International Airport, Downtown Columbus, and OSU.
- Introducing two new COTA//Plus microtransit zones to create more first- and last-mile connections to the fixed-route network.

The recommended network is based on where residents live, work, and move today and responds to the changing travel needs of Central Ohio's growing population. The recommended network serves 56% of the population and 67% of the jobs in COTA's service area. Service improvements are focused in areas with transit-critical populations, including areas with high densities of zero-car households, low-income residents, and people of color. Benefits of the service investments made as part of the 2027-2031 SRTP are focused on transit-critical populations. Investments in the 24-hour network will benefit 42% low-income residents and 50% people of color (40% and 48% respectively for the weekend improvements network), compared to 37% and 46% respectively across the service area. By focusing on transit investments in communities where ridership is concentrated, COTA can effectively improve transit access for people who are most likely to use the service.

FREQUENCY IMPROVEMENTS

The recommended network improves weekend frequency on 14 lines so service is consistent and useful throughout the week. It also upgrades five hourly lines to 30-minute frequency on weekdays such that all frequent and standard service runs every 30-minute or better on weekdays. Frequency improvements are summarized below.

Frequency Improvements	Lines Impacted*
Improve weekend frequency from every 30-min to 15-min	Lines 1, 2N, 10E
Improve weekend frequency from every 30-min to 20-min	Lines 5E, 6, 7, 8N, 23, 34
Improve weekend frequency from every 60-min to 30-min	Lines 3, 4, 9, 24, 30
Improve weekday frequency from every 60-min to 30-min	Lines 9, 21, 25, 32, 35
Improve weekend frequency from every 40-min to 30-min	Lines 8S

Figure 4 Summary of Frequency Improvements

*Split route is specified if only one segment will receive frequency improvements.

NUMBER OF TRIPS

- The recommended network will increase service every day of the week by 35%, especially on weekends. While traditional 9-5 commuters have made a more permanent shift to hybrid or remote work post-pandemic, many people who rely on transit are more likely to work weekends and to take transit for various purposes like shopping and socializing. The recommended network would make it easier to travel at all hours of day and all days of the week, as well as overnight for the first time.
- **Weekday Trips:** The number of weekday trips increases by 27%. Service increases at all hours of the day, but most notably after 9 PM and overnight. While transit service has historically been more frequent during morning and afternoon weekday peak periods, the recommended network builds on the existing network by providing nearly as much service in the midday and late evening through 11 PM as the peaks.
- **Weekend Trips:** Recommended Saturday and Sunday service increases the amount of service compared to the current network by 64% and 74% respectively, a much larger increase compared to the weekday. The amount of recommended weekend service is higher than the amount of current weekday service and similar to weekday service levels (89% and 80% of weekday service on Saturdays and Sundays respectively). In other words, riders will be able to use transit almost as easily on weekends as on weekdays. The 24-hour network also operates on weekends.

FREQUENT TRANSIT ACCESS

The recommended network increases the number of residents within walking distance (of ½ mile from a bus stop) frequent service by 39% and all-day service (frequent and standard) by 8%. Frequent service is much more useful to riders because they can travel more spontaneously and is appropriate for denser areas that are more conducive to more frequent transit. By investing more in the all-day network, per one thousand residents the number of weekday trips increases from 1.8 to 2.4.

The recommended network increases the number of jobs along frequent transit by 10% and all-day service by 4%. Because jobs cluster more than residents, a larger portion of jobs are already served today by frequent transit, but a higher number of residents can reach these jobs with frequent transit. Per one thousand jobs, the number of trips increases from 1.9 to 2.5 by investing more resources into the all-day network.

The main tradeoff of the recommended network is reducing the number of residents and jobs with access to Rush Hour service. Rush Hour service ridership has permanently reduced by over 80% since the pandemic and is much more expensive to operate per passenger than local service. Rush hour service by nature offers far fewer trips as it only operates during peak periods.

Phasing Plan

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Year 0 – 2026

While the SRTP covers 2027–2031, several priority improvements will be advanced in 2026 to accelerate benefits and prepare for subsequent phases. These changes with **estimated** vehicle and operator requirements include:

Recommendation	Estimated Marginal Revenue Vehicle Hours (annual)	Estimated Marginal Peak Vehicle Requirements	Estimated Marginal Operator Requirements
Extend Line 1 to the Ohio State University Outpatient Medical Center in Dublin Break Line 1 (Line 1N and Line 1E) into two shorter routes, split in downtown Columbus Improve night and weekend service on Line 1N to 15-minute frequency. ¹ Introduce Line 30 Shorten Line 32	+70,400	+8	+44
Introduce one COTA/Plus Zone	+15,000	+4	+10

Figure 5 Phased Recommendations - 2026

¹ To be implemented at later date

Year 1 – 2027

Recommendation	Estimated Marginal Revenue Vehicle Hours (annual)	Estimated Marginal Peak Vehicle Requirements	Estimated Marginal Operator Requirements
Extend Line 21 to Sawmill Extend Line 34 to Carriage Place Discontinue Line 33	+150	0	+1
Combine Line 42 and Line 43 into new Line 43	+1,500	0	+2
Extend CMAx to N State Street in Westerville (Meijer)	+850	0	+1

Figure 6 Phased Recommendations - 2027

Year 2 – 2028

Recommendation	Estimated Marginal Revenue Vehicle Hours (annual)	Estimated Marginal Peak Vehicle Requirements	Estimated Marginal Operator Requirements
Shorten Line 7 to end at VA Hospital Improve Line 7 frequency to 20 minutes on weekends Reroute Line 9 to utilize Cassady Avenue Break Line 9 (Line 9N and Line 9W) into two shorter routes, break in downtown Columbus Improve Line 9 frequency to 30 minutes all days of week Introduce Line 99	+24,800	+3	+16
Transition Line 11 and introduce North Central COTA/Plus Zone		+1-2	+4-5
Extend Line 22 to Grandview Heights Adjust Line 31 routing in Grandview Heights Improve Line 31 frequency to 30 minutes on weekends Discontinue northern segment of Line 3 Improve Line 3 frequency to 30 minutes on weekends	-2,400	-2	0
Discontinue Line 75	-500	-1	0

Figure 7 Phased Recommendations - 2028

Years 3-5 – 2029-2031

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Marginal Revenue Vehicle Hours (annual)	Estimated Marginal Peak Vehicle Requirements	Estimated Marginal Operator Requirements
High	Improve frequency on Line 1E to 15 minutes at all periods	+20,600	+1	+13
High	Extend Line 5W and Line 6 to Westwoods Park and Ride. Line 6 frequency improvement to 20 minutes on weekends.	+20,350	+3	+13
High	Improve frequency on Line 5E to 15 minutes on weekdays, and 20 minutes on weekends	+26,800	+4	+17
High	Improve frequency on Line 8N and Line 8S	+18,400	0	+12
High	Improve frequency on Line 9W to 30 minutes	+9,700	+1	+6
High	Implement late night service on Line 1, Line 2, Line 10, Line 22 , and CMAx	+15,800	+0	+10
Medium	Discontinue Line 41	-500	-1	0
Medium	Discontinue Line 44	-500	-1	0
Medium	Implement combined Line 45 and Line 46	+1,000	-1	0
Medium	Discontinue Line 61	-1,000	-1	0
Medium	Discontinue Line 72	-1,000	-2	0
Medium	Implement combined Line 73 and ZooBus	+550	-3	0
Medium	Discontinue Line 74	-500	-1	0

Low	Break Line 4 into Line 4N and 4S , extend Line 4N to Westerville via Schrock Road. Increase weekend frequency on 4S & 4N to every 30 minutes.	+19,750	0	+13
Low	Streamline Line 23 via Stelzer Road, Morse Crossing and Morse Road. Increase Line 23 weekend frequency to every 20-minutes.	+3,900	0	+3
Low	Extend Line 24 to OSU Outpatient Center in Hamilton Quarter. Increase Line 24 weekend frequency to every 30-minutes.	+6,600	0	+5
Low	Streamline to remove JC Penny Catalog Outlet Store loop just south of I-70. Schedule to provide 2-way service south of US-33, and seek improved end-of-line location. Increase Line 25 weekday frequency to every 30 minutes.	+11,100	+2	+7
Low	Extend Line 35 to Sawmill via Wilson Bridge Road. Shorten eastern portion of Line 35 to end at Easton Transit Center. Increase Line 35 weekend frequency to every 30-minutes.	+9,600	+2	+6
Low	Implement an additional COTA//Plus Zone	+15,100	+4	+10
Low	Implement an additional COTA//Plus Zone	+15,100	+4	+10
Low	Implement an additional COTA//Plus Zone	+15,100	+4	+10
Low	Implement late night service on Lines 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 23, 30, and 34	+23,850	+0	+15

Figure 8 Phased Recommendations - 2029-2031

POLICY AND PHASING CONSIDERATIONS

Rush Hour Lines

Rush Hour lines are the lowest-performing services COTA currently provides, and ridership has not shifted significantly since 2020. However, recent fluctuations in gas prices have sparked new interest in Rush Hour services, and COTA has been experiencing ridership gains over the past several months. While COTA's 2027-2031 SRTP recommends consolidating and discontinuing many Rush Hour lines, COTA should continue to monitor ridership and performance to determine if discontinuation is necessary. Maintaining Rush Hour lines will increase COTA's revenue hours, vehicle requirements, and operator requirements.

Line 99 Extension to Easton

COTA's 2027-2031 SRTP recommends launching Line 99 to provide direct, frequent access to John Glenn International Airport as an alternative to current Line 7. To improve regional connectivity, COTA may consider extending Line 99 to Easton Town Center as well. This extension will require one additional vehicle throughout the day but would improve regional access to the airport and create limited stop service connecting the airport directly to major COTA nodes where passengers can easily reach the rest of the COTA network.

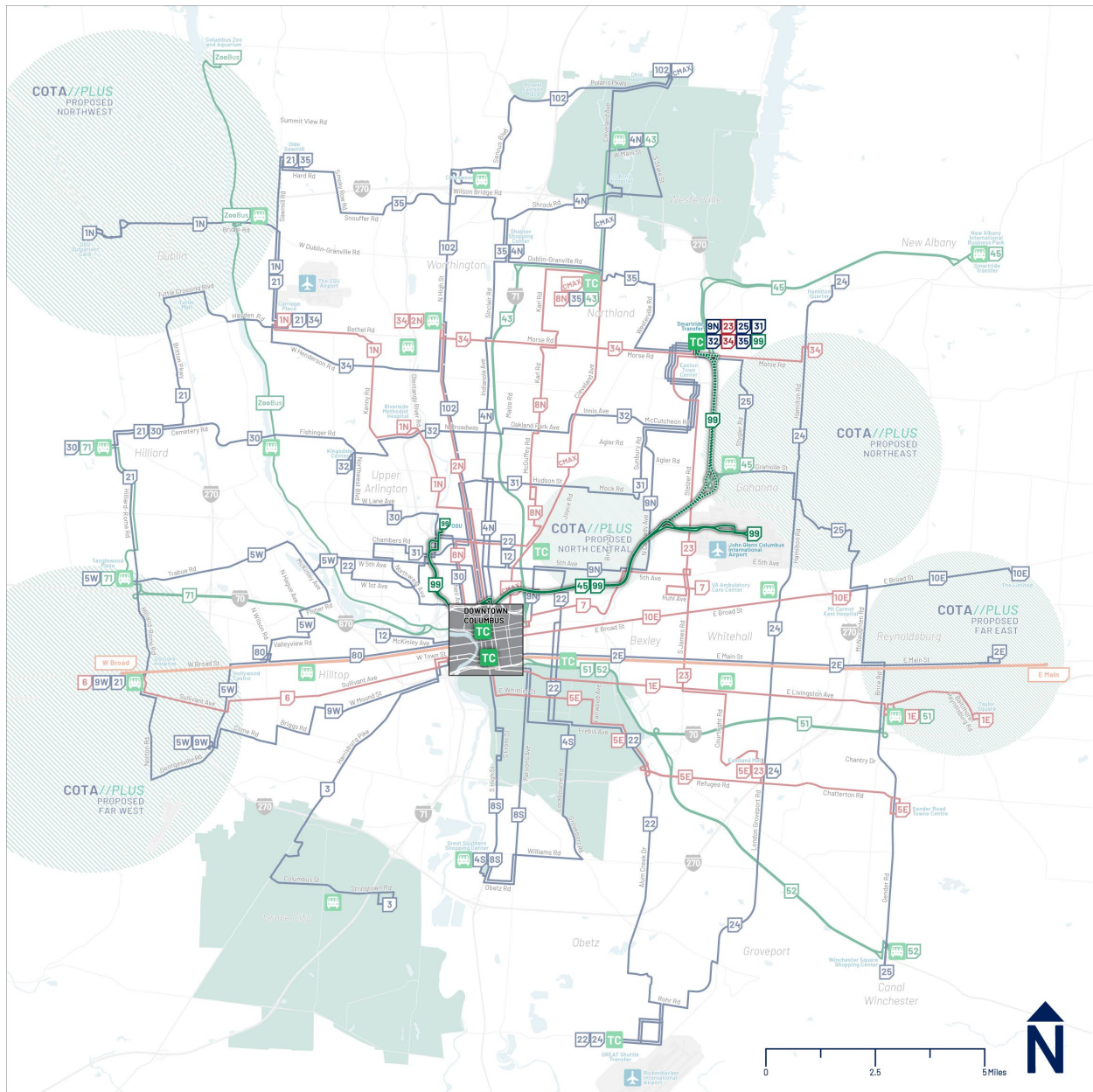


Figure 9 Proposed Line 99 Extension to Easton Town Center

Redundancy on Line 2 and Line 102

While COTA's 2027-2031 S RTP recommends maintaining Line 2 and Line 102 along High Street, these two separate services provide duplicative coverage to the same corridor and should be considered for consolidation long-term to create operational efficiencies. Today, Line 102 provides limited stop service along High Street with Line 2 providing local stop service. Line 102 passengers benefit from faster travel times by bypassing local stops, while Line 2 operates with 15-minute frequency throughout much of the week. By providing these two levels of service, COTA incurs higher operating costs with mixed benefits across the corridor.

Beyond the 2031 project horizon, COTA should examine travel times along High Street to identify opportunities to improve travel times for all passengers and ultimately discontinue Line 102 with improved Line 2 operations.

BRT Implementation

COTA's BRT program is a series of capital-intensive transit investments that will significantly impact COTA's current network and phasing for key recommendations of this plan. As West Broad and East Main BRT projects advance toward implementation in the coming years, COTA must begin planning adjustments to other services to align with these new routes.

COTA//Plus Operational Model

COTA//Plus services are currently designed to provide on-demand trips across the entirety of each COTA//Plus zone, regardless of the presence of COTA fixed route services. When COTA//Plus and fixed route services operate in the same area, this operational model creates operational redundancy, with fixed route services often providing similar trips to COTA//Plus trips. While COTA//Plus has a lower operating cost overall, the cost per passenger is significantly higher than fixed-route service. Passengers utilizing COTA//Plus service when fixed route is available both increases COTA's cost to provide a trip and makes the available fixed route service less productive.

To address this, for each COTA//Plus zone, COTA should consider operational models that allow greater control of operating costs, including restricting zone size, increasing advertised wait time, or limiting trip purposes or destinations. For example, updating the current Southside COTA//Plus zone to limit usage to first/last-mile connections will ensure COTA is maximizing its resources and not providing duplicative services in a community with extensive access to both the fixed route and microtransit networks. By adjusting these parameters, COTA can exert greater control over its operational costs and deliver COTA//Plus more efficiently.

Late Night Service

Late night service has two major considerations for implementation and phasing. First, COTA will need to implement several late night routes at the same time to create a network of available services for passengers. Implementing only one or two routes will limit impact across the network, with only riders using those specific routes realizing any benefit. By creating a network of four to five routes, passengers will have greater access across the region and will be able to transfer across services to make regional connections during off-peak hours.

Second, late night service introduces a new service period that requires COTA to consider impacts to its operations. This new service period occurs when most vehicles are currently being maintained, and no operators are working. Late night service will impact COTA's vehicle maintenance program, and will require COTA to expand its workforce schedules across the night, including operators, safety and security personnel, and street supervision.

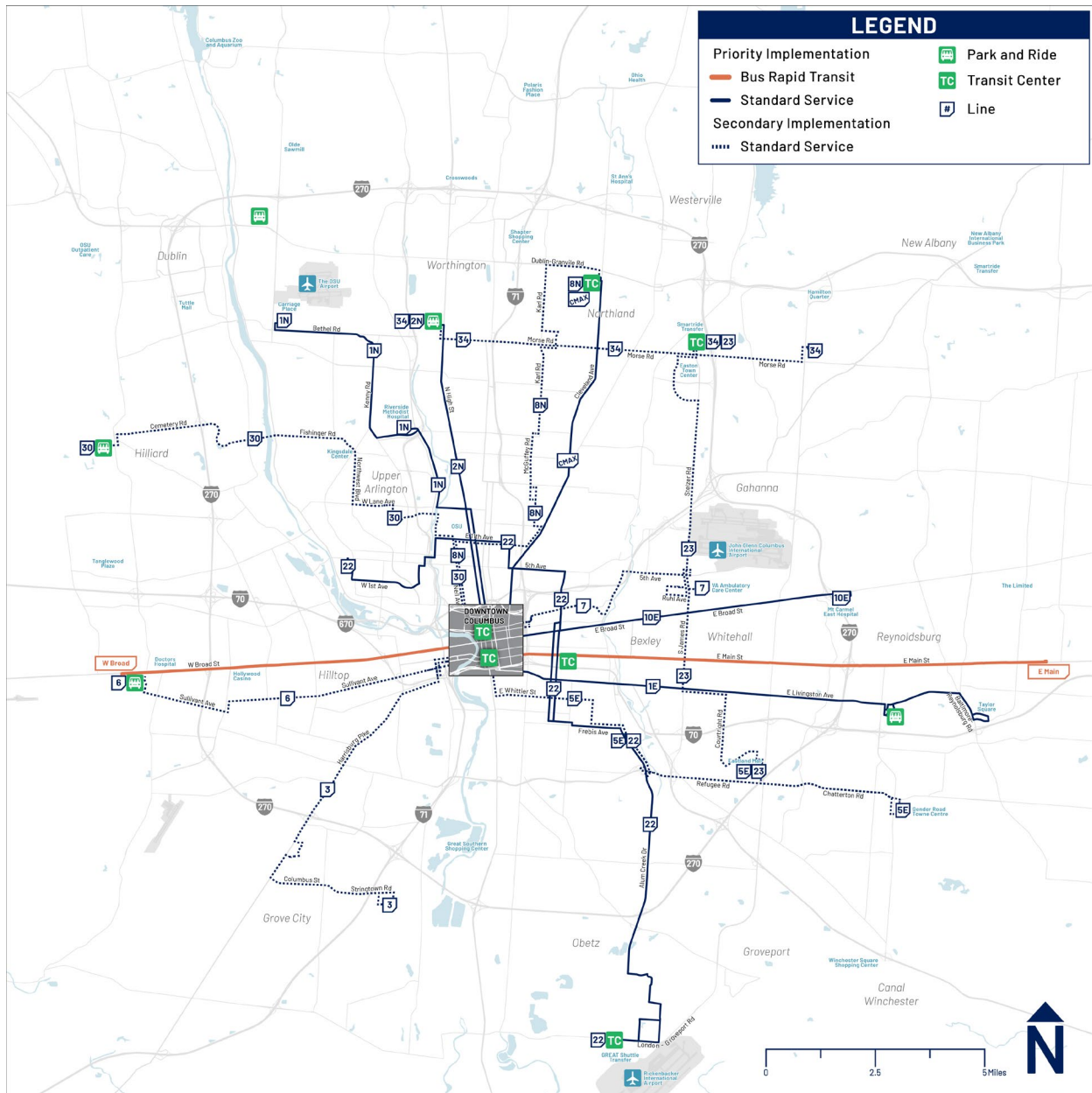


Figure 10 Proposed Late Night Network

Capital Plan

With the implementation of COTA's SRTP 2027-2031, COTA will need to invest capital funds to support the increased service. Capital considerations are listed below.

BUS STOPS

Today, COTA's service area includes 2,996 bus stops. The 2027-2031 SRTP recommends that COTA discontinue service to approximately 459 stops due to realignment of service. Based on new services proposed and COTA's Transit Stop Design Guide, COTA will require 113

additional stops. As a result, COTA SRTP 2027-2031 results in a net decrease of 346 bus stops, resulting in a total of 2,650 bus stops across the recommended network.

PASSENGER FACILITIES

As COTA changes operations in downtown Columbus while implementing the BRT program and dividing longer routes, COTA will need to consider passenger transfer needs, as well as an increased operational footprint. Today, both the Spring Street Terminal and COTA Terminal (High Street & Rich Street) can have capacity for additional passengers and vehicles, but may require capital investments to serve increased usage of these facilities.

With expanded service, passenger activity is anticipated to increase at additional locations such as Carriage Place in northwest Columbus and Eastland Transit Center in the southeast. COTA should consider evaluating capacity and passenger amenities at these locations to determine if additional capital investments are needed to support passenger and operator needs.

PARK AND RIDE LOCATIONS

Reducing Rush Hour lines and implementing BRT services will impact COTA's Park and Ride locations. Westwoods Park and Ride will be upgraded as part of the West Broad BRT project. Several service investments recommended by this plan, including **Line 6**, **Line 9**, and **Line 21**, also depend on Park and Ride upgrades. COTA's new Dublin Park and Ride location in Dublin's mixed-use development will also service updated **ZooBus** more regularly.

Should the recommendations to decrease Rush Hour lines proceed, COTA should consider closing the St Andrew Park and Ride.

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONS TO THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

COTA maintains a report called the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that outlines COTA's long-term financial plans and projects. Inclusion on this list is the first step in advancing a project toward potential funding. Based on the recommendations within the Short-Range Transit Plan, COTA should consider adding the following projects to the next update of the CIP.

- Dublin Park & Ride Relocation Project – costs associated with a joint development project to relocate Dublin Park & Ride
- Northwest Area Enhancements (Sawmill & Bethel area): locate and construct new facility with space for off-street vehicle layovers and passenger waiting areas, operator restrooms, and other improvements
- Westwoods Park & Ride Upgrades – at COTA's existing park & ride, construct new facility with space for off-street vehicle layovers and passenger waiting areas, operator restrooms, and other improvements
- Spring Street Terminal enhancements – upgrade facility and surrounding area to serve more all-day buses in anticipation of more COTA lines ending in downtown Columbus
- COTA Transit Terminal enhancements – upgrade facility and surrounding area to serve more all-day buses in anticipation of more COTA lines ending in downtown Columbus

- Eastland Transit Center – locate and construct new facility with space for off-street vehicle layovers and passenger waiting areas, operator restrooms, and other improvements

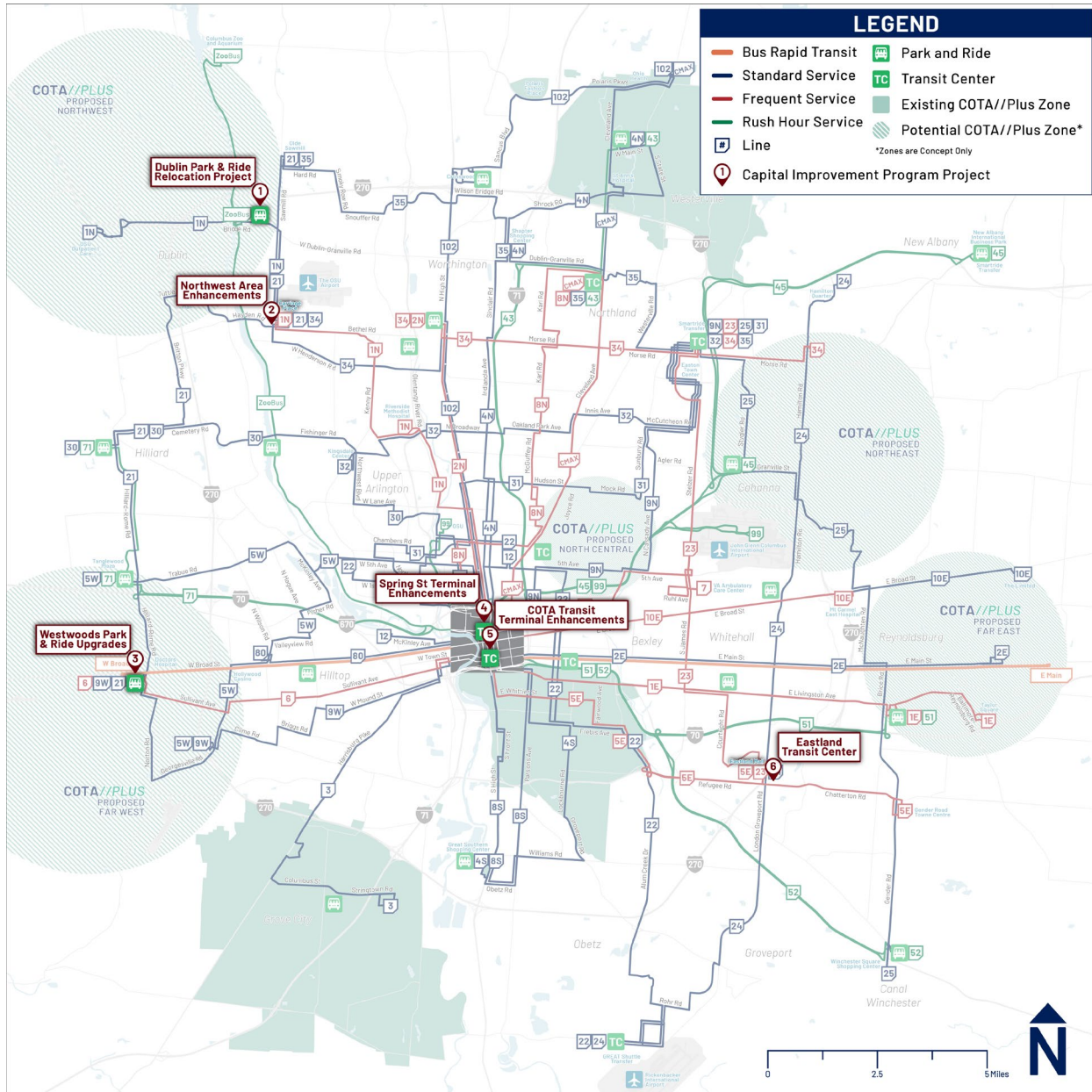


Figure 11 Proposed Additions to the Capital Improvement Program

Financial Plan

Expansion of transit service identified as part of LinkUs program is captured within COTA's 2027-2031 SRTP. The 2027-2031 SRTP accounts for a 30% increase over 2026 service levels, which equates to approximately an additional 215,000 annual vehicle revenue hours (VRH)

each year. Using COTA's 2026 hourly service cost, when fully implemented, the 2027-2031 SRTP will increase COTA's operating budget by \$42.1M annually and will require 200 additional operators.

	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Annual Increase in VRH	+50,000	+50,000	+50,000	+50,000	+15,000
Cumulative Increase in VRH	+50,000	+100,000	+150,000	+200,000	+215,000
Cumulative Operational Budget Impacts	\$9.7M	\$19.6M	\$29.3M	\$39.2M	\$42.1M

Figure 12 Anticipated Annual Increase in Operation Budget

While this plan considers service implementation in steady investments through 2030 with a smaller service implementation in 2031, recommendations are intended to be flexible to provide COTA the ability to adjust due to unforeseen financial impacts.

Successful implementation of the SRTP will require careful coordination across service planning, workforce development, capital investment, and customer communication. Key considerations include workforce availability, financial variability, and project dependencies such as BRT delivery timelines. COTA will monitor performance and adjust implementation as needed to ensure the plan remains responsive and financially sustainable.

Existing Conditions

Summary of Findings – Market Analysis

Evaluating population, employment, and combined/composite density is a critical step in gauging transit demand for a given area. Areas with higher density generally indicate greater demand for transit. Dense areas are also likely to experience vehicle congestion and limited parking, conditions that would benefit from increased access to transit. In addition, looking at travel overall is helpful for better understanding the main trip patterns across all modes of travel and for evaluating whether transit service is providing the desired connections.

The following is a summary of the Market Analysis. To view a detailed interactive display of the Market Analysis, visit COTA's project website at COTA.com/SRTP.

POPULATION

Population density in COTA's service area was assessed in terms of people per acre, with population densities of 2-10 people per acre considered the minimum needed to support public transit service.

The majority of the area COTA serves has transit-supportive population density in the low to very low categories. However, there are several distinct clusters and corridors throughout the county with higher population density (more than 30 people per acre), including:

- **The Ohio State University and surrounding neighborhoods**
- **Downtown Columbus and nearby east/west neighborhoods**
- **German Village, Hilltop, and North Linden**
- **Northland area, Westerville**

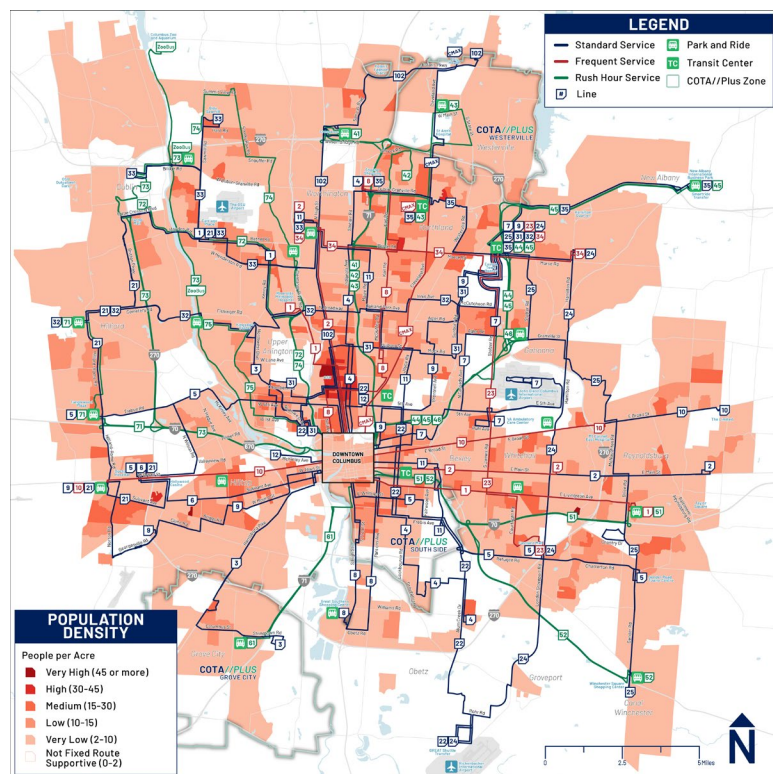


Figure 13 Population Density of COTA Service Area

EMPLOYMENT

Employment density was assessed in terms of jobs per acre, with at least 2 or more jobs per acre considered the minimum to support public transit service.

Areas with high employment density tend to be located near large urban centers, main corridors, large office parks, or key employers. Most jobs are concentrated around the urban core of Downtown Columbus. However, there are also several distinct employment clusters throughout the region, including:

- Easton Town Center
- Polaris Town Center
- OhioHealth Riverside Methodist Hospital and surrounding medical district
- Dublin Office Park
- OhioHealth Doctors Hospital

COMPOSITE DEMAND

To better assess potential transit demand, the study team combined measures of population (2023), employment (2022), and adjusted demographic factors, including zero-car household rates, low-income households, and minority status, and also used the findings of COTA's 2023 on-board survey to produce the Composite Demand index. The Composite Demand index identifies areas with the highest potential demand for transit service and can serve as a guide for identifying

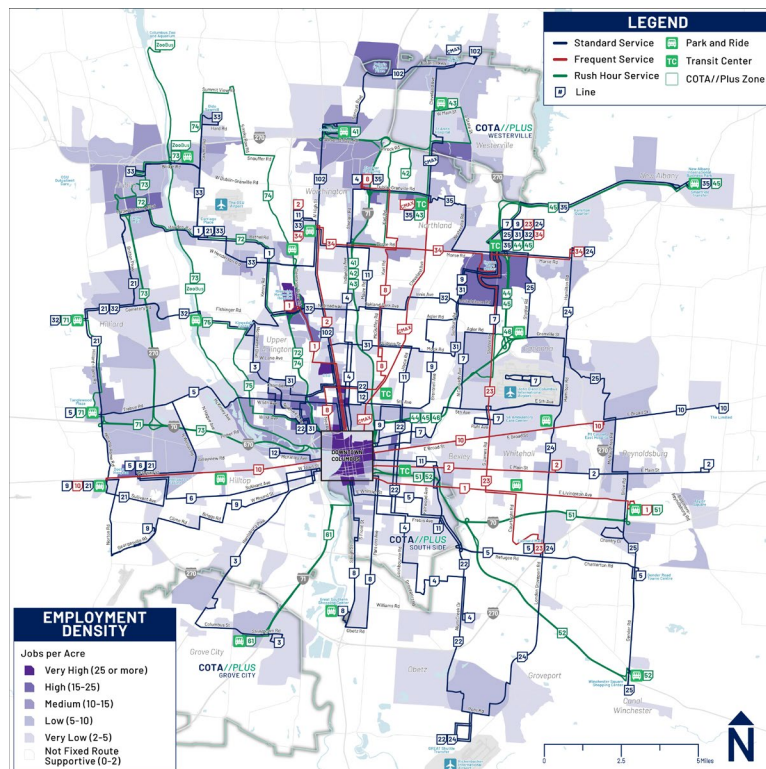


Figure 14 Employment Density of COTA Service Area

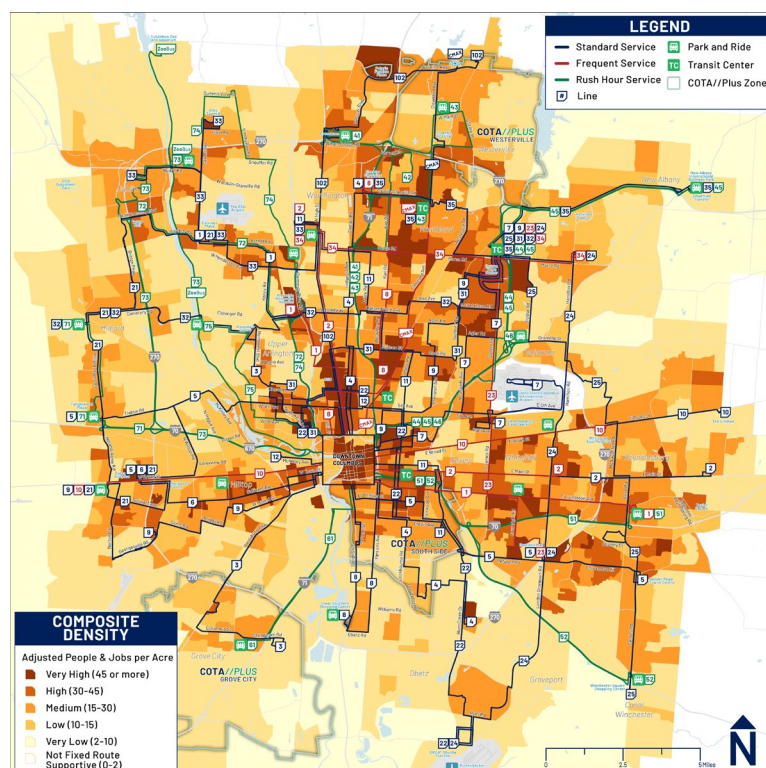


Figure 15 Composite Transit Demand of COTA Service Area

priority areas for future transit investments.

The following areas have been identified as areas with the potential for strong transit demand, based on residential and employment densities and demographic analysis:

- **Downtown Columbus & The Ohio State University**
- **Northland**
- **OhioHealth Riverside Methodist Hospital**
- **Whitehall**
- **Central Hilltop**
- **Polaris**

TRAVEL FLOWS

Location based service data from Fall 2024 suggests that travel demand patterns are relatively consistent across the different time periods, with most trips concentrated in areas with higher population and employment density. Downtown Columbus and The Ohio State University and surrounding neighborhoods see high concentrations of trip origins and destinations throughout the different time periods.

The data also indicates strongest demand during the Saturday midday period followed by the weekday midday period, with the weekday AM period seeing the lowest total number of trips starting and ending in the study area. This emphasizes the importance of providing transit service outside of traditional “peak commute” hours to best serve potential riders.

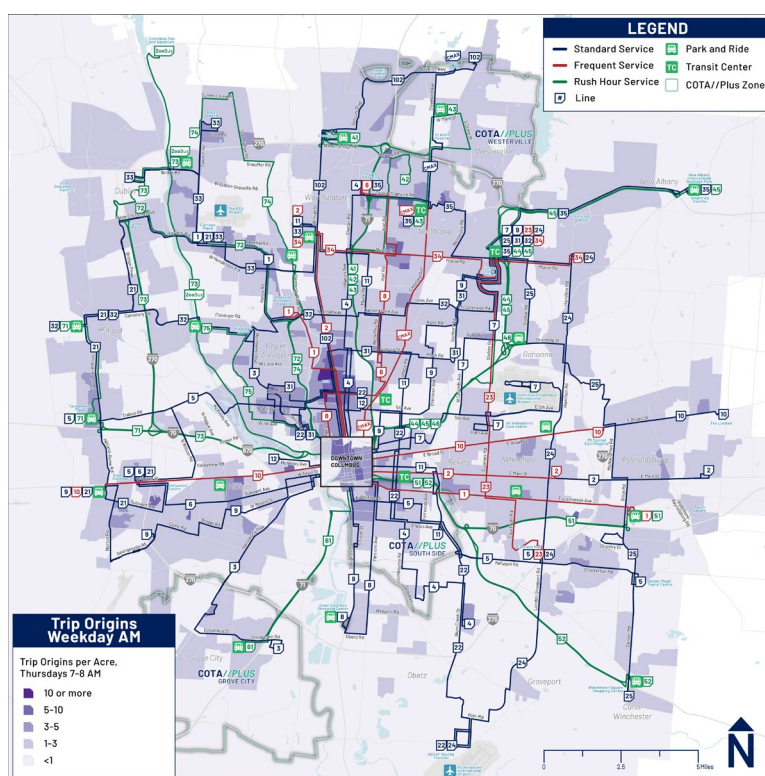


Figure 16 Weekday AM Trip Origins

Summary of Findings – Service Analysis

Evaluating ridership performance, on-time performance, and route alignments and connections can reveal opportunities for service improvements. The following is a summary of key takeaways from the Service Analysis.

To view a detailed interactive display of the Service Analysis, visit COTA's project website at COTA.com/SRTP.

SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS: COMPOSITE DEMAND VS TRANSIT SUPPLY

Currently, the COTA fixed-route network and its distribution of frequency appropriately meet high demand areas.

- Frequent Lines 1, 2, 10, and CMAX provide high quality transit service along the high demand corridors N High Street, Livingston Avenue, Main Street, Cleveland Avenue, and Broad Street.
- The high demand Easton area is served by high-quality transit.
- Frequent Line 1 serves high density areas out to Carriage Place, but analysis suggests service demand extends further out in Dublin.
- There is unmet demand for transit along Busch Boulevard, Shrock Road, and near Northland Transit Center in north Columbus.

FIXED-ROUTE SERVICE

- **Duplicative Alignments** - In Franklinton, Lines 6, 9, and 10 all serve the area, but ridership patterns show passengers choose to walk to Broad Street to access Line 10. The Lines serve three parallel corridors (Broad Street, Town Street, and Sullivant Avenue) within less than a quarter mile of each other.
- **Ridership Recovery from COVID** - Across most Standard and Frequent Lines, annual ridership has slowly recovered since the pandemic began. On average, annual ridership on these Lines in 2024 is about 68% of annual ridership in 2019. Standard Lines 6, 7, and 32 have current day ridership under 50% of pre-pandemic ridership. Standard Lines 21, 22, 24, and 33 have recovered at least 85% of their pre-pandemic ridership. Among Frequent Lines, Line 10 has the slowest recovery (55% of pre-pandemic levels), and Line 34 has the best recovery (73% of pre-pandemic levels). Rush Hour lines have only recovered about 14% of their pre-pandemic ridership while operating about 25% of the number of pre-pandemic trips.
- **Short Lines** - Lines 6, 12, 33 have high ridership efficiency (passengers per vehicle revenue hour, passengers per vehicle revenue mile, and operating cost per passenger), but low total ridership. Lines 6 and 12 also have the highest on-time performance in the system.
- **On-Time Performance (May to September 2025)** - On Weekdays, Standard and Frequent Lines both have an on-time performance of about 74%. CMAX has an on-time

performance of 69%, falling below average. Rush Hour Lines have an average on-time performance of 69%.

- **Circuitous Alignments** - Most Frequent and Standard Lines with high ridership offer direct, streamlined service on one or two corridors. However, Lines 4, 11, 21, 22, and 31 have circuitous alignments designed to serve key destinations but can be detrimental to productivity and cause confusion for riders.
- **Branching Patterns** - Most Lines have a single pattern or two patterns (e.g. Line 1, 2, 8, and 10) where one pattern terminates as short turn along the alignment. However, Lines 5, 7, and 33 have branching patterns provide more coverage in less-dense areas, and with lower frequency.
- **John Glenn Columbus International Airport (CMH)** has low frequency and ridership on Line 7. Airport employees may benefit from late night / early morning service.
- **Rickenbacker International Airport (LCK)** area has high ridership via Lines 22 and 24 but lacks connections to downtown.
- **Crosstown Service** - Crosstown Lines have the lowest ridership productivity within their Line categories. This includes Frequent Lines 23 and 34, and Standard Lines 11, 21, 25, and 32. These Lines connect various high-ridership Park and Rides and shopping centers but have low frequency, limiting ridership potential.

ON-DEMAND SERVICE

- **The South Side zone** has the highest ridership but is duplicative with fixed-route transit. Except for a few high schools, ridership in the zone and in fixed-route generally exists at the same nodes.
- **The Westerville zone** has the lowest ridership, and a significant number of drop-offs are concentrated along State Street, which may indicate an opportunity for future fixed route service.
- **The Grove City zone** has the second-most ridership among the three zones, and its destinations primarily consist of schools and shopping centers. While Line 3 serves most of the shopping centers, it does not provide local circulation.

Appendix

Service Standards

Phasing/Network workbook

Engagement summary