

COTA Sept 2022 Service Change Meeting
Thursday, May 19 at 6pm

Meeting Purpose, Meeting Format, Introductions

Jeff Pullin, Manager, Public Media Relations

All right, good evening. Good evening and thank you for joining us. It is Thursday, May 19, 2022 and thank you for joining us for this public meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to take public comments on the Income Assistance Pilot Program and propose service changes that will take effect on September 5th, 2022. It's important that when we talk about the proposed service changes no final decisions have been made for the September 2022 service.

We are recording this meeting and the recording will be posted on our website at cota.com. And if you're joining us by computer or phone, please know we cannot hear or see you. Please always be considerate of the meeting attendees and COTA staff. If you are joining us by computer, you'll submit comments using the Q&A Chat box if joining by WebEx. If you are joining us by phone, you'll direct all your questions and comments to COTA's Customer care Center at 614-228-1776. And if you're joining Facebook Live, just submit your comments or questions in the livestream and we will answer them in a moment.

I want to show you how to use the Q&A chat. If you're using Webex, you'll notice number one there at the bottom right you will click on that chat button. That will open a window and you'll want to click on 'all panelists.' Make sure that you submit in the number 3 box right there after you hit 'all panelists. You will be able to submit your comment there and we will be able to respond to you at the end of the presentation.00:01:49 Speaker 1

First, we want to kick off with a quick presentation on the income assistance program, and for that I turn it over to Tanya.

Income Assistance Program

Tanya Salyers, Community Relations Manager

First, we would just like to say that there are no fare increases under consideration. This is a pilot program for a discount. COTA's Board of Trustees approved a six-month pilot that extends eligibility for 50% transit discounts to individuals who receive public income assistance. This pilot period began on March 1st and will end on August 31st. To be eligible, proof of one of the following public assistance programs is required for participation. SNAP, Publicly funded childcare, Ohio Works First cash assistance, PRC- Prevention, Retention and Contingency emergency assistance, Medicaid, or TANF-Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. Those who are eligible remain eligible for one year to receive that discount.

To apply, customers can apply for the discount program at the COTA Customer Experience Center at 33 N High St. Our hours of operation are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. 00:03:10 Speaker 2

Customers who qualify for COTA's Income Assistance will need to use one of the payment methods included in our new digital fare payment system. In order to receive the discount, you can set up an account through our Transit App or obtain a smart card at the Customer Experience Center.

So just some important dates to remember. We are receiving comments on this pilot program today and additionally we will be receiving comments Thursday or Tuesday next week, May 24th at noon. You can attend and participate as you are today in person virtually, or by phone. Additional meetings will be held to hear comment on this specific program on Thursday, June 9th at 6:00 PM and Tuesday, June 14th at noon. And a permanent program will be presented to the COTA Board of trustees on Wednesday, July 27th at 9:00 AM.

If there's no comments online or come in from the audience on the income assistance program, we thank you for watching that presentation. We're now going to move on to our service change presentation. Let's go ahead and advance to the next slide so this is service change for proposed changes to service for September.

Sept 2022 Service Changes

Jeff Pullin, Manager, Public Media Relations

If there's no comments online or come in from the audience on the income assistance program, we thank you for watching that presentation. We're now going to move on to our service change presentation. Let's go ahead and advance to the next slide so this is service change for proposed changes to service for September 2022.

I want to begin with some of the latest on our COVID-19 policy updates. As you might know, the mask policy was lifted on April 19th. We of course encourage people who want to wear masks to do so. And those who don't have that right as well. Cleaning and sanitization will continue on all our transit vehicles and high ridership stops. We are now in year two of that sophisticated cleaning system that we have implemented. We implemented in 2020. We have also installed barriers on our fixed route fleet to protect our operators and our customers. We've improved our ventilation on all our transit vehicles, and hand sanitizer is available.

We want to let you know that our workforce's challenges continue as they do across the country. Like most organizations, COTA is impacted by the nationwide worker shortage. COTA continues to recruit and hire new transit operators, but those new hires are not enough to offset retirement and other departures. COTA will continue to adjust transit schedules due to the unprecedented workforce challenges. The adjustments will be made to improve service reliability and help minimize adverse service impacts to our customers and staff, as best as we can.

We want to remind people that COTA is hiring. We are actively recruiting, hiring and training new operators. If anyone is interested in a rewarding career at COTA, they can learn more and apply AT cota.com/careers.. We want to let you know some updated efforts on COTA's starting wage for operators and training has been increased to \$17.50 per hour. That's about a \$2.00 increase from about two weeks ago. Upon completion of training, operators' wages increased to \$21.10 per hour. Operators under the current contract can make more than \$33 an hour in five years. COTA is in the top 5% among peer agencies for wages and benefits. We will continue to document requests for services and work to restore hours as we get more operators.

So, let's begin with a look at the service adjustments that are proposed for Monday, September 5th, 2022. And I'm going to start off I believe with Amber? Excuse me with Drew. Drew will start first and a reminder that no decisions have been made for the September 2022 service change.

Andrew Merrill, GIS Specialist & Planner

Like you said, I'm going to be walking through the changes and the specific changes by line over the next few slides. For Lines 1, 2 and three we are proposing a frequency reduction for line four we are proposing a frequency reduction and a route change for line 6 we are proposing a change.

Amber Boyd, Service Planner

New Programs & Policies

Jeff Pullin, Manager, Public Media Relations