



Community Action Plan

June 2022

Foreword

From the LinkUS Executive Committee Co-Chairs

We recognize this region needs a comprehensive mobility investment strategy that expands options for residents; offers them reliable, faster, and convenient transit options; and incorporates business investment, mixed-income housing, and economic vibrancy as part of the plan. While much work is already being done in these areas by Central Ohio communities, LinkUS brings everyone together to achieve these common goals.

LinkUS is Central Ohio's mobility and growth initiative that will better connect our community and businesses as we grow so that everyone can share in the region's success. LinkUS will increase access to housing, jobs, schools, and healthcare for all members of the community—including seniors, veterans, historically marginalized and underserved communities, people with disabilities, students, and working families—to make the region more affordable and equitable for all.

LinkUS is a collaborative effort to realize the full potential of our neighborhoods and surrounding areas through reimagined mobility that builds upon previous extensive planning efforts. The City of Columbus, Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), Franklin County, and Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) announced the LinkUS effort in June 2020. The goal is to change how we think about and utilize our mobility systems, and to increase housing and access to jobs through more sustainable, equitable development patterns.

No one's opportunity should ever be limited by a lack of transportation choices. We must connect people, places, and opportunity in order to thrive now and for generations to come. Central Ohio is one of the fastest growing regions in the country and we will add more than 800,000 people by 2050. LinkUS will help focus sustainable growth patterns close to transit, protect open space and farmland, limit traffic impacts, and offer residents reliable, faster, and convenient transit options.

We have an opportunity to build a system focused on high-capacity transit, bicycle and pedestrian connections, safety improvements, and housing options. We will connect our workforce to job opportunities, offering many the opportunity to live a better life. Ultimately, LinkUS will make our community healthier and safer by adding more bikeways, sidewalks, and greenways that promote walkability and provide more affordable mobility options for all residents, while creating a high-capacity rapid transit system for our world class region.

We're excited about the future of our region! LinkUS will help ensure Central Ohio is affordable to residents, equitable for all, and remains one of the best places in the country to live.

Sincerely,



Andrew Ginther
Mayor
City of Columbus



John O'Grady
Commissioner
Franklin County Board
of Commissioners



Alex Fischer
Former President
and CEO
Columbus Partnership



Shannon Hardin
Council President
Columbus City Council

Introduction

From the LinkUS Steering Committee Co-Chairs

As we prepare for increased population growth, the actions we take to address affordability, housing, transportation, and mobility infrastructure development will increasingly determine how successful this region can be. We know that changing historically fragmented and inequitable development patterns takes bold, deliberate action. It takes smart growth, planning and decision making. It takes our collective thoughts, insights, and efforts to move us from where we are today to a future anchored by aligned and connected communities that drive opportunity for all Central Ohio residents. It takes all of us to move us forward.

LinkUS is a growth and mobility initiative to help us support the region. We are in a position to create a system of connected walkable, bikeable networks that support expanded public transit options to promote opportunity for all residents across the region. We are able to build upon lessons of the past to create a comprehensive and dynamic system that sustains us over the next decade and beyond. We have choices to make that will shape our lives, economy, and future.

Our 37-member LinkUS Leadership Coalition Steering Committee consists of a broad representation of community, business, and civic leaders. We are focused on providing insight and direction to the LinkUS mobility and growth initiative. Our work is a critical next step in moving the region closer to implementing an equitable system of mobility that reimagines infrastructure in Central Ohio for the next century. We recognize this region needs a comprehensive mobility investment strategy that expands options for residents; offers them reliable, faster, and convenient transit options; and incorporates business investment, mixed-income housing, and economic vibrancy.

LinkUS will provide a world class mobility and transportation system that links residents to opportunities and ensures our region remains affordable and economically competitive. The implementation of LinkUS will allow the region to accommodate future growth in an intentionally inclusive way while reimagining development to maximize the potential for shared success for all.

LinkUS programming elements align with the successes of other key initiatives occurring across the region, such as housing, workforce development, transportation, health and equity, climate, and more. LinkUS is an opportunity to create great places, invest in more equitable infrastructure and development, increase competitiveness, and drive infrastructure strategy in ways that move all people forward. On behalf of the entire LinkUS Leadership Coalition Steering Committee, we are excited about this important and strategic work and look forward to our ongoing engagement to drive mobility options for our region.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Gallagher
Director of Public Service
City of Columbus



William Murdock
Executive Director
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning
Commission



Joanna M. Pinkerton
President and CEO
Central Ohio Transit Authority



LinkUS will be implemented within the COTA service area. It includes:

Franklin County and Portions of:

Delaware, Fairfield, Licking, and Union Counties

17 Cities

Bexley, Canal Winchester, Columbus, Dublin,
Gahanna, Grandview Heights, Grove City,
Groveport, Hilliard, New Albany, Obetz,
Pickerington, Reynoldsburg, Upper Arlington,
Westerville, Whitehall, and Worthington.

9 Villages

Brice, Harrisburg, Lockbourne, Marble Cliff,
Minerva Park, Riverlea, Urbancrest, and
Valleyview.

17 Townships

Blendon, Brown, Clinton, Franklin, Hamilton,
Jackson, Jefferson, Madison, Marion, Mifflin,
Norwich, Perry, Plain, Pleasant, Prairie, Sharon,
Truro, and Washington.

When "region" or "community" is used in this document, it is referring to the geography of the COTA service area. When "Central Ohio" is used, it is generally referring to Franklin County and the entirety of the surrounding counties.

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A front-facing view of a white COTA bus. The destination sign above the windshield displays 'MOVING EVERY LIFE' in yellow, segmented characters. The bus features a silver grille with the 'COTA' logo in red and black. The number '2130' is visible on the left side of the front bumper. A metal bike rack is mounted on the front. The windshield reflects a city skyline and trees. A blue semi-transparent hexagonal graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

MOVING EVERY LIFE

*LinkUS can be
defined by a
simple message...*

*Moving our
Region.
Together.*

2130

COTA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The LinkUS Community Action Plan showcases the Who, What, Why, and How for investment in mobility through the LinkUS Mobility Program. This Executive Summary section highlights the critical portions of the recommendations from within the document.

Our Vision

By 2050, Central Ohio will be a region of 3 million people.

Today, most people rely on cars to get to and from their destinations. However, there is an opportunity to improve mobility options and shape how the region grows in a manner that will increase transportation reliability, manage traffic congestion, support businesses and workers, provide access to housing, and improve quality of life.

LinkUS is Central Ohio's transformational and comprehensive mobility and growth initiative. LinkUS will provide equitable mobility options for residents and visitors, ensure access to jobs and affordable housing, promote economic growth, and improve sustainability. The innovative approach will include high-capacity and advanced rapid transit, bikeways, green space, complete streets, roadway safety, pedestrian improvements, and development along key regional corridors throughout Central Ohio. LinkUS will move our region forward.

LinkUS is centered around the following principles:

Creating Great Places

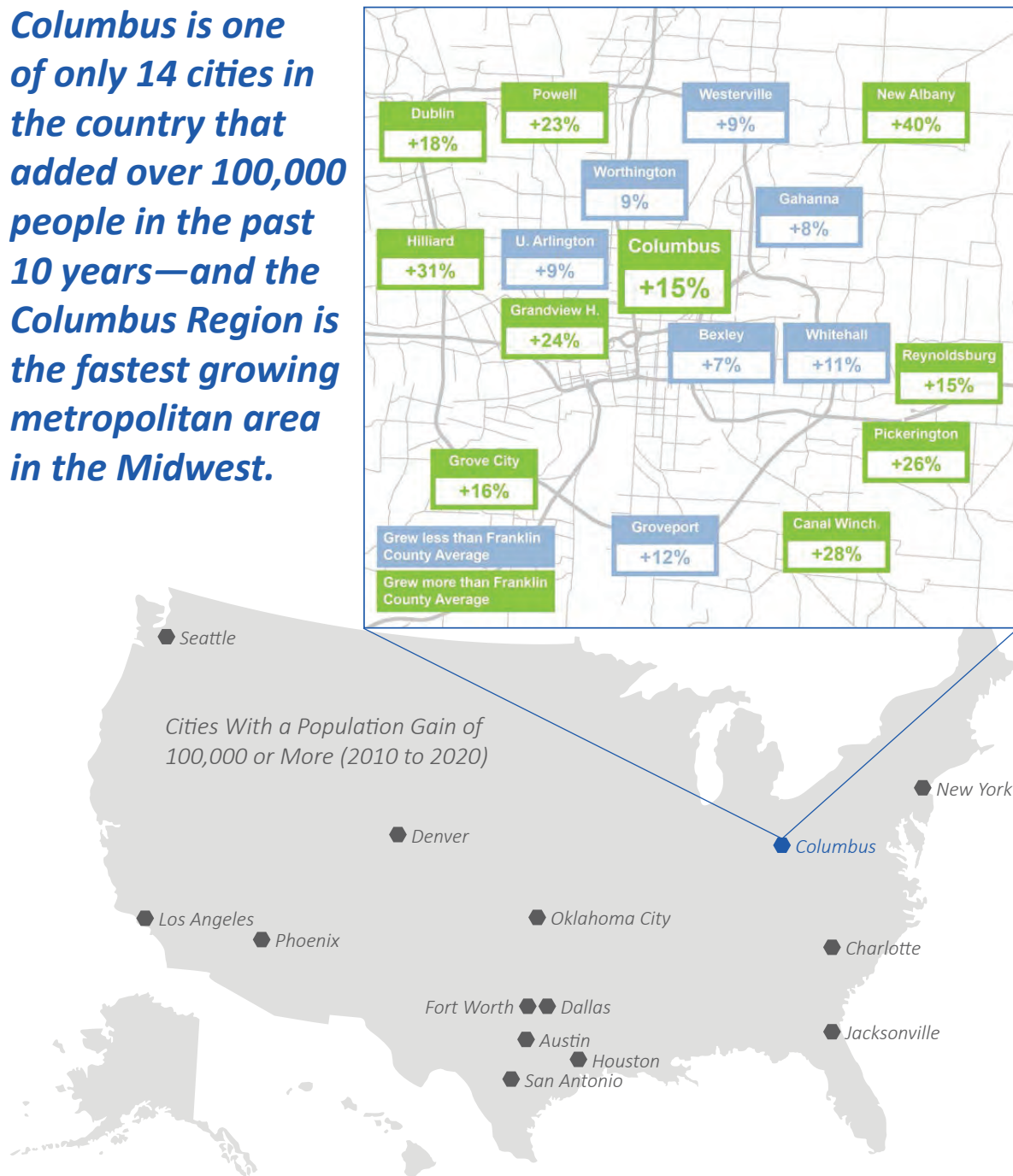
Reinventing the Region

Shaping the Future

Providing Equitable Opportunity



Columbus is one of only 14 cities in the country that added over 100,000 people in the past 10 years—and the Columbus Region is the fastest growing metropolitan area in the Midwest.



Accommodating the rapid growth of our region is a challenge we face, but also a great opportunity for investment in the priorities that matter most to us. In the latest census, Columbus was one of only 14 cities in the country that increased in population by more than 100,000 people over the last ten years. Columbus was the ninth fastest growing city of the 14. This growth represents the highest percentage increase (15%) since the 1950s, the largest numeric increase in history, and occurred while Columbus only grew 1.5% in land area. Franklin County grew by 13.8% or 160,383 people and represented 70% of the growth of Central Ohio.

Our Vision (continued)

A region that grows equitably is also one that remains competitive economically, by building prosperity and increasing opportunities for all who live and work here.

As we embark on a new mobility initiative, the impacts of past policies and programs must be at the forefront of our thoughts. Our infrastructure investments and growth patterns over the past 70 years now show their age, and the unintended consequences on current and future generations have become clearer. Past policies have created an urban form in Central Ohio that wastes taxpayers' money on infrastructure that over the long run is increasingly expensive to maintain while yielding a low return on investment. Our land use policies have reduced housing affordability, with housing costs consuming a higher allocation of family budgets and decreasing the purchasing power of households. The transportation system is the leading contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, with health consequences for our residents and planet. Discriminatory housing policies, suburbanization, and interstate highway construction has had disproportionately negative outcomes for minority residents.

As we work to make new investments in our mobility system, we must reconcile the negative outcomes of our past decisions and prioritize equitable and sustainable mobility investments in the future.

LinkUS will include aligned investment in housing and preserve valued community resources that create vitality. LinkUS will conserve jobs and create new business and job creation opportunities. LinkUS will bring opportunities for prosperity to our residents that have suffered due to redlining, housing and transportation policies that have divided our communities. LinkUS will promote a more efficient form of growth, ensuring good stewardship of public resources and a higher quality of life in our region.

Central Ohio residents are a diverse group, and each resident can anticipate that LinkUS will bring something to the table for them. Our working commuters will be offered a new convenient way of traveling, transit riders can anticipate a better travel experience and more access to jobs and housing options, and our rural neighbors can anticipate development patterns that preserve the natural environment and reduce encroachment of urban sprawl. Drivers can anticipate preservation of reliable travel times that allow access to good paying jobs and amenities. We all will benefit from safer streets and more mobility options.





Recommendations

1 *Invest in Our Region's Transportation System*

- *Commit to a Historic Infrastructure Investment*
- *Provide Sustainable Funding for LinkUS*

2 *Take Action and Commit Resources to Advance the Vision*

- *Pursue Legislative Changes*
- *Create a Committee to Prioritize Transit-Supportive Investments*

3 *Rise Together by Aligning with Regional Initiatives*

- *Support Regional Prosperity Outcomes*
- *Create a Regional Transit-Oriented Development Strategy*

LinkUS Simplified:



Mobility Investments

+



Walkable and Connected
Development

=



Opportunity

Our Priorities

Our established priorities for LinkUS and the region should guide our mobility investment decisions.

Providing equitable opportunity and accommodating our future growth are fundamental goals of LinkUS. Supporting people in the region in their desire for good jobs, quality affordable housing, transportation choice, and strong neighborhoods is a priority. Access to jobs, housing choices, education, and healthcare are necessary to support individual opportunity and regional success. Improving mobility in the region while focusing on these critical priorities established in the LinkUS Framework Strategy will create connections that put these goals within reach. The LinkUS initiative focuses on six critical priorities:



Equity

The introduction of mobility options allows for increased and equitable access and opportunity for all members of the community. Mobility is critical to improving equity in the region.



Economic Development

Enhanced mobility encourages public and private investment in transportation and development. This promotes local and regional economic vibrancy.



Affordability

More transportation choices improve the affordability of our community by reducing transportation costs. This reduction of combined housing and transportation costs also creates a more equitable region.



Sustainability

Increased mobility and additional transportation choice lowers automobile dependence to reduce carbon emissions. By coupling enhanced mobility with compact, walkable development patterns, growth can occur in the region while also preserving farmland and the natural environment.



Innovation

Mobility allows greater opportunities for more innovation between our people and places, creating shared prosperity. Technological innovations in transportation make a more efficient system, promoting the region's economy and sustainability.



Workforce Advancement

Increased travel choice and connectivity better links jobs with the workforce, promoting economic vibrancy and equity.

Our Foundational Efforts

Central Ohio has engaged in a number of regional initiatives to identify strategies to manage anticipated growth. All contemplate the advancement of high-capacity transit. These efforts have been building toward the creation of a regional corridor and integrated mobility system. LinkUS builds on numerous previous regional planning efforts, including COTA's NextGen plan and MORPC's insight2050 Corridor Concepts Study. Ongoing collaboration with other growth management efforts will be essential to its success. LinkUS is the next step in advancing these efforts through a coordinated implementation program.



insight2050 (2014)

Led by MORPC and in partnership with member communities, ULI Columbus, and other agencies, this effort considered various alternative growth patterns for the region. The outcome was a focused growth strategy that aimed to balance and accommodate growth in a cost-effective, efficient, and sustainable manner.



NextGen (2017)

COTA undertook the NextGen planning process to consider and evaluate 26 potential transit corridors. These were narrowed down to 14 corridors, which were studied more closely using themes of connectivity, equity, building on current successes, and sustainability.



insight2050 Corridor Concepts (2019)

insight2050 Corridor Concepts built on the NextGen work by taking a more detailed look at five specific corridors. The goal was to provide a demonstration of how more transportation choice and strategic development along each corridor could create more efficient and affordable options for working, commuting, and living in the region.

The Corridor Concepts Study Report builds from findings in insight2050 by focusing on new tools and modeling capacity for decisions about where and how to grow, where to invest transit resources, and how to balance community goals. The report measures the impact of varying approaches of planning with the expected growth. Additionally, it provides an implementation toolkit and identifies strategies on how the region can advance transit development to best serve the community.

Our Key Outcomes

Our Key Outcomes will be achieved through making mobility investments that are guided by our established priorities.

LinkUS is our growth and mobility initiative to better connect our community and businesses as our region grows so everyone can share in the region's success.

- *LinkUS will create an integrated mobility system to make it easier to walk, bike, or take public transit in our region's busiest areas, while preserving desirable commute times for everyone.*
- *LinkUS will increase access to jobs, schools, and healthcare for all members of the community, including seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, students, and working families—making the region more affordable and equitable for all.*
- *LinkUS is about connecting people, places, and opportunity.*

LinkUS is a response to many of the biggest challenges facing our community: growth, opportunity, affordability, and equity.



1

As the region continues to grow, LinkUS will provide a world class mobility system that links residents to opportunities.

Metrics

- Reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita per day
- Reduce or maintain average commute time across the region and by transit
- Mode Split (percentage of commuters who drive, take transit, bike or walk to work) shift

2

LinkUS will make our community healthier and safer by adding more bikeways, sidewalks, and greenways that promote walkability and provide more affordable mobility options for all residents.

Metrics

- Increase pedestrian and bicycle facilities across the region
- Reduce number of traffic-related injuries and fatalities
- Increase walking and biking access to transit stops & trails, especially in communities of interest*

3

LinkUS will provide greater access and connection to housing opportunities.

Metrics

- Reduce cost of housing and transportation to households within corridors and within communities of interest
- Increase both residential and commercial density around transit nodes and within corridors.

4

LinkUS will help tens of thousands of people get to and from jobs each day and will provide equitable access to enhanced mobility options so we can all share in our region's success.

Metrics

- Increase percentage of jobs accessible within 20 minutes and 40 minutes of transit
- Increase number of new employers and businesses within the corridors and across the region

5

LinkUS will support future growth and drive sustainable growth patterns close to transit, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality and help combat climate change.

Metrics

- Increase percentage of COTA fleet as low/no emissions to 100%
- Improve air quality along the corridors (GHG emissions)
- Reduce energy consumption per capita/per job along the corridors through sustainable development practices

*Areas with populations that have a higher density of seven equity indicators: people of color, low-income households, people with disabilities, people with low English proficiency, children, elderly adults, and poor vehicle access

“

In driving every day from the west side of town to the east side of town, for my job, I am creating a big carbon footprint. Seeing the region grow and creating mobility and transit options available to us and us utilizing it, it means that we are indeed a class A city.”

Malik Moore
Hilltop Community Member

The Time Is Now

Bold action is needed to achieve our desired outcomes.

Projections show that Central Ohio will grow to 3 million people by 2050, with 300,000 additional jobs being added. Central Ohio must be prepared for this growth. LinkUS is designed to position the region to respond to the impacts of rapid growth as we confront our challenges today—before they become more difficult and expensive to address tomorrow. The time is now. Through LinkUS, our region will be prepared to take action for the future.



Our Recommendations

Driven by the work of the LinkUS Leadership Coalition, and input from our region's leaders and residents, a series of recommendations has been offered. These recommendations will ensure our investments in transportation infrastructure and transit-supportive development will accommodate our anticipated regional growth in an equitable manner, and that we commit the resources to make those needed investments.

We recognize that we cannot support the population growth if we continue to develop without a sound strategy that moves people to alternate modes—protecting comfortable travel times for drivers and providing more options for those who want or need to ride public transit, bike, walk, or even scooter.

The recommendations of the Community Action Plan acknowledge the foundational work performed by many of our partners. The recommendations were complemented by research, peer-to-peer exchanges, and community engagement, as well as a deep dive into what our peer cities are doing. We explored how they are creating investment opportunities in their cities to prepare for growth, economic prosperity, and sustainability.

We know that this is a bold initiative. We know that in order to effect change in our community and create a community where there is opportunity for prosperity for all, we must change how we invest. Historically, transportation and community design have been used to segregate populations. LinkUS offers an opportunity to support all spectrums of income diversity and not just build the next shiny development, where those who can benefit the most from transit adjacent housing and employment options are driven out of the neighborhood as it gentrifies.

LinkUS is an undertaking like no other in this region. Every member of the LinkUS Leadership Coalition knows that implementing LinkUS will require regional cooperation and community support. As community leaders, engaged stakeholders, and Central Ohio champions, we are ready to share our recommendations and to support and advance LinkUS.

The recommendations shared in the LinkUS Community Action Plan represent our collective thoughts regarding what must happen in order for LinkUS to succeed.



Recommendation #1***Invest in Our Region's Transportation System***

Transportation infrastructure is the framework of our neighborhoods. Mobility connects us to everything we need to live our best lives—jobs, housing, education, healthcare, food sources and services.

Our region has been changing and will continue to change. By 2050, Central Ohio will grow to a population of 3 million people of all incomes, ages, and racial backgrounds. We will continue to see our current residents age. The 55 to 74 age group has grown by 70% since 2010 and will continue to grow.

Our region's transportation system has to support mobility for all. Car-centric transportation is neither financially or environmentally sustainable and discourages connected and walkable neighborhoods. This mode of transportation has limited connections and opportunity to jobs, housing, education, healthcare, food, services, and more.

LinkUS is a people-centric strategy designed to optimize opportunity by investing in critical transportation infrastructure like high-capacity rapid transit, sidewalks, shared-use paths, and roads. This mobility is aligned with development that encourages walkable neighborhoods, housing affordability, amenities, and jobs.

Therefore, the Leadership Coalition recommends:

Commit to a Historic Infrastructure Investment

The LinkUS financial model estimates revenues of nearly \$2 billion by 2030 and more than \$8 billion by 2050 to begin building high capacity rapid transit corridors, increasing transit services, expanding transit supportive infrastructure (sidewalks, bike, trail, and roadway improvements), and supporting equitable transit-oriented development.

Provide Sustainable Funding for LinkUS

A large share of this new funding will be created by a ballot measure to replace the existing COTA sales tax of 0.5% (0.25% temporary and 0.25% permanent) with a new 1.0% permanent sales tax (0.5% increase).

Annual audits and public committees composed of government, business, and community leaders will ensure strong accountability and oversight of LinkUS.



Our Recommendations (continued)

Recommendation #2

Take Action and Commit Resources to Advance the Vision

The cost of doing nothing is unacceptable.

We all know the famous quote by Ben Franklin: “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” This expression holds especially true for LinkUS. Addressing legacy infrastructure policies of the past and incorporating innovative technologies and infrastructure that sustains us for the future are critical to driving economic progress and competitive positioning for our region.

LinkUS is centered on addressing decisions related to transportation infrastructure, land use, housing, and economic development. Through our collective work, we will be intentional in our efforts to address the needs of the most vulnerable in our community as we innovate around driving economic development, business development, and progressive mobility options for Central Ohio.

These principles guide the mobility and investment recommendations presented in this document and were central to the analysis and evaluation processes used to determine corridor planning and infrastructure design.

Therefore, the Leadership Coalition recommends:

Pursue Legislative Changes

COTA should have the ability to invest in transit-supportive infrastructure, transit-oriented development (TOD), and permit the use of sales tax revenue as a pledge on revenue bonds issued by the authority. This will give COTA the ability to better work with public and private partners to support TOD. **On May 18, 2022, these changes were approved by the Ohio House and Senate.**

Create a Committee to Prioritize Transit-Supportive Investments

MORPC will work with the government agencies within the COTA service area to create a committee to develop an annual Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) and multi-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to prioritize LinkUS transit supportive infrastructure investments.



Recommendation #3

Rise Together by Aligning with Regional Initiatives

We cannot be truly prosperous unless all of us are sharing in our success.

We are at a historic moment where we can align our efforts to address our region's biggest challenges. LinkUS is aligned with efforts in our region that aspire to:

- *Invest in rapid transit corridors and full-service transit and service hubs to serve employment centers and neighborhoods* (City of Columbus and Franklin County Recovery and Resiliency Advisory Committee).
- *Improve opportunity and reduce poverty in our neighborhoods* (Franklin County Rise Together Blueprint).
- *Make housing a platform for equitable growth* in our region (MORPC Regional Housing Strategy).
- *Be the most prosperous region in the U.S. and help Central Ohio create 60,000 jobs by 2030* (One Columbus Strategic Plan).
- *Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 and 100% by 2050* (Columbus Climate Action Plan).

These, along with localized mobility planning efforts by many municipalities and townships, are just some examples of the many excellent initiatives that are being advanced to increase opportunity and prosperity in our region.

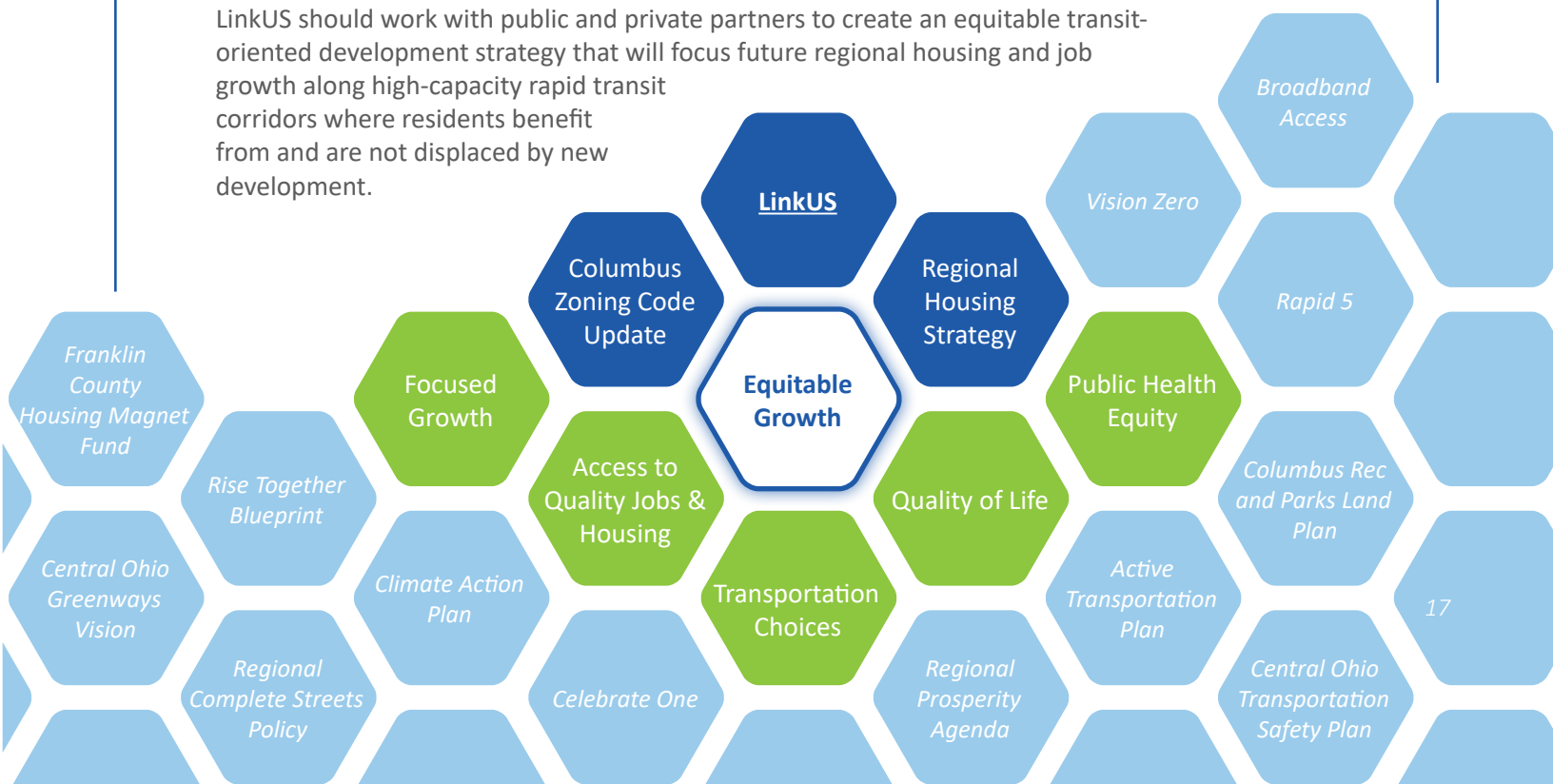
Therefore the Leadership Coalition recommends:

Support Regional Prosperity Outcomes

LinkUS provides a historic moment where we can use mobility and housing investments to help support numerous efforts across our community to address our biggest challenges.

Create a Regional Transit-Oriented Development Strategy

LinkUS should work with public and private partners to create an equitable transit-oriented development strategy that will focus future regional housing and job growth along high-capacity rapid transit corridors where residents benefit from and are not displaced by new development.



LinkUS Mobility Vision

Investing in our Mobility Vision helps ensure equitable access to travel options while improving the safety and connectivity of the transportation network.

Regional transportation planning in the 20th century responded to the pressures of growth largely after the fact. The LinkUS State of Mobility Report illustrates that Central Ohio was no different from many communities across the country. Reactive solutions typically involved suburban sprawl and widening highways to accommodate more vehicles.

However, Central Ohio is at a unique moment in time. insight2050 and COTA NextGen have positioned the region to envision and accommodate our region's growth. We have the opportunity to leverage our transportation investments to actually advance community priorities—not just travel faster. We not only have the opportunity to address transportation safety and capacity, but we can ensure equitable access to jobs and housing, promote economic vitality, and improve sustainability. The time is now for Central Ohio to make these critical investments.

Therefore, LinkUS has identified a Mobility Vision (transportation improvements) for our transportation system that promotes regional multimodal connectivity and better prepares us for growth. The vision is the result of a screening process of all currently identified mobility improvements in Central Ohio. The result is a more programmatic scale of projects that ensures equitable access to mobility options while improving the safety and connectivity of the transportation network.

LinkUS focuses financial resources on corridors and improvements that align with the core regional priorities of equity, workforce advancement, innovation, economic development, affordability, and sustainability. Essentially, LinkUS is about prioritizing investments to achieve our desired outcomes. It's about connecting people with the opportunities of a growing community, rather than displacing people to respond to the pressures of growth.



High-Capacity Rapid Transit



Transit Service Enhancements



Other Transit Improvements



Greenways



Bikeways



Sidewalks



Roadways

LinkUS Funding Strategy

Through our LinkUS Mobility Vision, the LinkUS partners estimate there are \$19-\$22 billion dollars of needs by 2050. Existing regional mobility investments can only fund \$3.5 billion (17-18%) of this need.

To meet the needs of our community it is necessary to ask voters within the COTA service area to approve an increase in the COTA sales tax from 0.5% to 1%. To maximize the ability to use bonds to finance LinkUS, we believe that the full 1% COTA sales tax should be permanent (.25% is already permanent). We estimate that this increase will help to leverage nearly \$760 million in federal grants and more than \$1 billion in bonds. This will help to generate total revenues of nearly \$2 billion by 2030 and more than \$8 billion by 2050.

COTA has created a financial model that demonstrates how the region can financially support LinkUS. The model provides a detailed accounting of reasonable cost estimates of the capital infrastructure, service improvements, operational and

maintenance costs through 2050. The model also establishes a sensible yet conservative estimate of revenue sources available to fund the program.

Given the conservative nature of the financial model, we believe that revenue could over-perform what is modeled and this will help to further close the gap in our mobility needs. There is also an even greater capacity to further close the needs gap through improved collaboration and the integration of existing capital and operating budgets of COTA and the multitude of jurisdictions within the COTA service area. In addition, we are confident that COTA and our jurisdictions will be successful in winning a multitude of competitive federal grants (especially over the next 5 years) to advance mobility. There are also several other mobility and economic development tools such as Tax Increment Financing, New Community Authorities, and Transportation Improvement Districts, that can help close this gap. The LinkUS partners will continue to update and refine the financial model for LinkUS on a regular basis.

2050 Funded Program

High-Capacity Rapid Transit	Transit Service Improv.	COTA//Plus Zones	Capital Improv.	Programs, Policy, Partnership	Tech. Improv.	Bikeways & Greenway	Sidewalks	Roadways
5 Corridors	+45% More Service Hours (2019)*	8 New Zones, Vehicles, Micromobility, and Mainstream Enhancements	4 Transit Centers, 5 Park and Rides, 1 Satellite COTA// Plus Garages, 128 New Bus Shelters, and Allocation for Mobility Hubs	5 New Mobility Programs, ~\$150 million to Support Transit-Oriented Development, and Allocation for Universal Design	Allocation for Customer Journey Tools and Security Enhancements	500+ miles of Bikeways, Greenways, and Sidewalks		~\$250 million Dollars

Transit Infrastructure

Transit-Supportive Infrastructure

*Service Hours include HCRT, Fixed-Route, and COTA//Plus

Aligned Development Strategy

As our region contemplates new investment in our regional transportation and mobility system, we cannot ignore the relationship between land use and transportation. This investment will support our current residents and sustain 800,000 more residents by 2050. LinkUS is an opportunity to reimagine our patterns of growth, help correct inequities created by infrastructure investment and design, and invest in systems that support our region's most vulnerable residents.

An aligned development strategy is essential to growing in a way that corrects, rather than accelerates, inequities in our community. As leaders in the region, we have worked to advance zoning code updates, housing strategies, and economic development initiatives that are inclusive and provide opportunities to diversify our economically disparate neighborhoods. These supporting updates, strategies, and initiatives are critical to the success of LinkUS.

Intentional Equitable Growth

Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (eTOD) is a national best practice concept that refers to efforts that are pursued with an explicit commitment to achieving equity goals. These efforts ensure that individuals who have historically been harmed by housing and infrastructure policies that led to racial segregation and divestment are instead helped by new development moving forward. With strategies in place to preserve and expand affordable housing, protect tenants from rising costs, connect residents to jobs and economic opportunities, stabilize and support small local businesses, and more, eTOD can foster equitable development and create healthy, opportunity-rich neighborhoods.

Based on the identified needs and established vision for our region, we should harness the alignment and investment potential of LinkUS to pursue growth strategies that preserve existing vitality, create opportunity, and include everyone in the region's success. Diverse housing, jobs, and vitality are essential elements to a community when focusing on equitable growth. Therefore, as LinkUS advances, we expect the following to hold true:

Housing

We will conserve and create affordable housing and include the community in addressing housing needs.

Jobs

We will conserve jobs and create new business and job creation opportunities.

Vitality

We will conserve valued community resources and amenities, and create enhanced community resources while including community stakeholders in identifying priorities for these resources and amenities.



Aligned Development Impacts

In 2019, MORPC and ULI Columbus' insight2050 Corridor Concepts explored how more walkable, compact neighborhoods and high-capacity rapid transit (HCRT) along five corridors can positively impact transportation, infrastructure, housing, and the environment. It showed that there are clear benefits around quality of life and economic development that come from investing in HCRT corridors including:

- *55% of new households and 60% of new jobs located along corridors*
- *Increasing the number of homes with access to jobs*
- *Expanding residents' transportation options—whether they bike, bus, walk, or drive*
- *Supporting inclusive communities for all*

By building upon the infrastructure we have today, the region can afford to grow in a way that makes tax dollars go further, focuses development, and gets people to places easier. In addition to infrastructure, establishing the necessary development tools is also critical. Columbus, along with other communities like Whitehall, Reynoldsburg, and Dublin, are enhancing their land use plans and zoning codes to facilitate transit-supportive development.



112
Square Miles of Land
Conserved



\$10 Billion
Dollars Saved on
Infrastructure Costs



\$8,500
Cost Savings Per
Household



30% Less
Greenhouse Gas
Emissions

WHO IS THE LinkUS LEADERSHIP COALITION?

It's all of us. The people of Central Ohio play the largest role in LinkUS. We have made more than 6,000 touch points from the community to date—this engagement has been a critical component to identifying the program, priorities, and outcomes for LinkUS. We have also done extensive engagement with the governments within the COTA service area in creating the LinkUS Mobility Vision.

In addition, LinkUS was informed by the Leadership Coalition, made up of the Executive, Steering, and Administrative Committees. The Executive and Steering Committees were composed of business, civic, and community leaders that reflected the diverse interests, demographics, and geography of our region. These committees provided insight and guidance to the Administrative Committee in the development of LinkUS. They also proposed and endorsed the final LinkUS recommendations, actions, and outcomes.

The Administrative Committee was composed of the administrative and technical staff from the LinkUS partners—the lead implementing agencies of LinkUS (COTA, MORPC, Franklin County, and the City of Columbus). They took direction from the Executive and Steering Committees in the creation of this plan and will be responsible for implementing it.

More information about the Executive and Steering Committees are on the pages that follow.

The Leadership Coalition

The LinkUS Leadership Coalition was convened to engage community, business, philanthropic, and civic leaders to provide insight and guidance to the LinkUS mobility and growth initiative.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee endorsed the key recommendations of the Steering Committee on April 7. It provided valuable feedback to the Steering and Administrative Committees in three meetings between August 2021 and April 2022.

Andrew J. Ginther (Co-Chair)
Mayor | *City of Columbus*

John O'Grady (Co-Chair)
Commissioner | *Franklin County*

Alex Fischer (Co-Chair)
Former President and CEO | *Columbus Partnership*

Shannon G. Hardin (Co-Chair)
Council President | *City of Columbus*

Joanna M. Pinkerton
President & CEO | *Central Ohio Transit Authority*

Jennifer Gallagher
Director | *Department of Public Service - City of Columbus*

William Murdock
Executive Director | *Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission*

Steve Schoeny
City Manager | *City of Upper Arlington*

Brett Kaufman
Founder | *Kaufman Development*

Stephanie Hightower
President & CEO | *Columbus Urban League*

Christie Angel
President & CEO | *YWCA*

Mark Fluharty
Executive Director | *Central Ohio Labor Council*

Jean Carter Ryan
President | *Columbus-Franklin County Finance Authority*

Trudy Bartley
Associate Vice President | *Local Government & Community Relations - The Ohio State University*

Greg Davies
CEO | *Columbus Downtown Development Corporation*

Victor Davis
Pastor | *Trinity Baptist Church*

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee established the key recommendations for consideration by the Executive Committee and provided valuable insight into all aspects of LinkUS. The Steering Committee met six times between August 2021 and April 2022. These members represent a cross section of community, business, and civic leaders and were conduits to the people of Central Ohio.

Joanna M. Pinkerton (Chair)

President & CEO | *Central Ohio Transit Authority*

Jennifer Gallagher (Chair)

Director | *Department of Public Service - City of Columbus*

William Murdock (Chair)

Executive Director | *Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission*

Barbara Benham

Chief Public Affairs Office | *Huntington Bank*

Craig Treneff

Council Member, Board Member | *City of Westerville, COTA Board of Trustees*

Jeff Rose

Vice President, Government Relations and Public Policy | *Battelle*

Sandy Doyle-Ahern

President | *EMH&T*

Kumi Walker

Vice President | *Root Insurance*

Matthew Martin

Community Research and Grants Management Officer | *The Columbus Foundation*

Chad Jester

President | *Nationwide Foundation*

Janelle Coleman

President | *AEP Foundation*

Rebecca Butler

Executive Vice President | *Columbus State Community College*

Libby Hoang

VP of Planning | *Nationwide Children's Hospital*

Amanda Hoffsis

President | *Campus Partners - The Ohio State University*

Kevin Lloyd

President | *ColumbusBlack*

Derek Grosso

President | *Columbus Young Professionals Club*

Dionne Blue

Chief of Staff | *Columbus City Schools*

Patty Huddle

Vice President | *Columbus-Franklin County Finance Authority*

Chuck Dyer

Administrator | *Ohio Department of Transportation*

Cornell Robertson

County Engineer | *Franklin County Engineer's Office*

Michael Wilkos

Senior Vice President | *United Way of Central Ohio*

Denise Robinson

CEO | *Alvis, Inc*

Katie White

Director | *Age-Friendly Columbus*

Cathy Cowan Becker

Executive Director | *Simply Living*

Josh Lapp

Chair | *Transit Columbus*

Erin Synk

Vice Chair | *Yay Bikes & South Side Area Commission*

Yaromir Steiner

Founder/CEO | *Steiner & Associates*

Mark Wagenbrenner

President | *Thrive Companies*

Lark Mallory

CEO | *Affordable Housing Trust for Columbus and Franklin County*

Robert Bitzenhofer

Vice President | *Planning and Development, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)*

Andrew Chrismer

Chief Alignment Officer, Health and Human Services | *Franklin County Board of Commissioners*

Mike Simpson

Chair | *Urban Land Institute*

Leah Evans

CEO | *Homeport*

Guadalupe Velasquez

Managing Director | *Welcoming City*

Tim Moloney

Director | *Metro Parks*

Jeff Polesovsky

Vice President, Public Policy | *Columbus Partnership*

Lisa Patt-McDaniel

CEO | *Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio*





Improving access to parks through mobility investment is imperative to improving public health and equity within the region.

WHY LinkUS?

LinkUS anticipates a large investment in transportation and mobility infrastructure in Central Ohio. As the LinkUS partners plan, design, and build the program in this document, we must consider past biased policies regarding infrastructure that have devastated many of our neighborhoods. Historically, transportation and community design have contributed to economic segregation and hindered access to healthcare, jobs, education, and affordable housing. Specifically, investments in transportation and the built environment have not created equitable access to the basic elements of life that allow all residents an opportunity to succeed.

As we advance LinkUS, it is helpful to understand that growth, including the expansion of city boundaries, has driven suburbanization and segregation. Additionally, interstate construction has segregated and bisected many established and historically Black neighborhoods. Discriminatory housing policies, like restrictive covenants prohibiting the sale of property to Black residents, have all played a role in creating inequities throughout our country and in Central Ohio. These past practices have also led to less sustainable and less economically productive outcomes, creating inefficiencies in our transportation system, consuming more land for development, and creating infrastructure that will be difficult to maintain in the long run.

In this section, we will examine how the state of our mobility, learning from our peers, and community support have contributed to establishing why we need LinkUS.

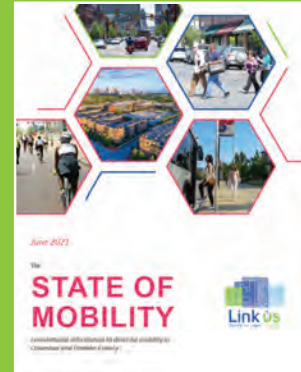
The State of Mobility Report

The LinkUS partners released the State of Mobility Report in June 2021. It is a foundational assessment of the physical conditions and sociodemographic trends that affect how Franklin County moves. Understanding the mobility needs of our community is critical to ensuring our future investments help achieve our desired outcomes. The report documents our successes and takes stock of our weaknesses.

In short, the State of Mobility defines the mobility needs of our region and the “why” for future investment.

Use the link below to learn more about the State of Mobility Report.
<https://linkuscolumbus.com/framework-strategy/>

This section highlights the key takeaways from the State of Mobility Report and aligns them with the six LinkUS Priorities.



Understanding the mobility needs of our community is critical to defining the “why” for future mobility investment and ensuring that investment helps to achieve our desired outcomes.





The State of Mobility

Demographics

36%

Franklin County Minority Population

24% Black, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 6% other

Diversity in Central Ohio is anticipated to continue to increase in the coming decades due to in-migration and specifically international immigration.

70%

Increase in People Ages 55-74 Since 2010

Will continue to be the largest-growth age group

Given the aging population, investment should consider multimodal accessibility for people of all ages and abilities.

Equity

15.1%

Share of Population Below Poverty Level

23.6% of minority population compared to 10.5% of white population.

Our minority populations are most likely to need access to multiple transportation options.

56%

COTA Transit Riders That Are Minorities

94% of riders walk to access transit

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant percentage of the essential workforce still relied on COTA for daily commuting.

Our lowest opportunity areas are primarily low-income minority communities with limited access to vehicles.

Vehicle Access

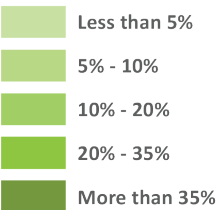
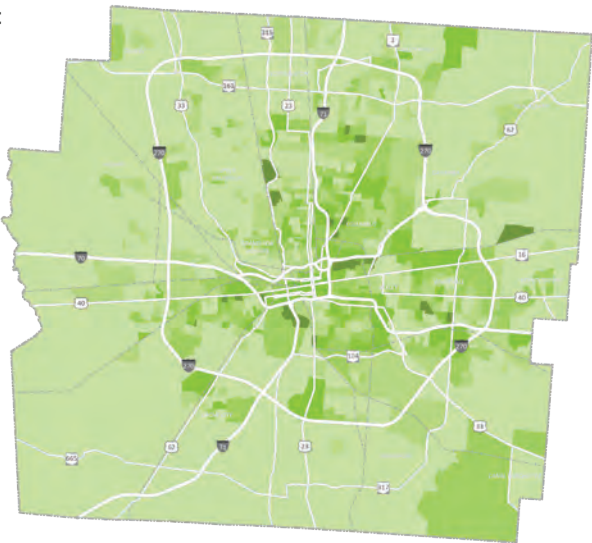
38,000

Franklin County Households Without Access to a Vehicle

13% of renter households do not have access to a vehicle.

Past mobility investment has primarily focused on vehicular travel, and it is very difficult to move around our region without one. This limits opportunity for those without access to a vehicle.

Households Without Vehicle Access



Jobs

13,000

Average Annual Net Job Growth (2012-2018)

4.75% average unemployment rate (2017-2021)

As the number of jobs continue to increase in Franklin County, workers will require affordable, safe, and sustainable options to get to work.

302,000

Daily Commuters Coming Into Franklin County

471,000 people live and work in the county

Our residents spend 50 extra hours and \$1,000 per year on their daily commutes due to rising congestion and reliance on vehicular travel.

Sustainability

-25%

Target Reduction in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

Identified target in the Climate Action Plan (CAP)

The CAP identifies a wide variety of mobility-related strategies and targets aimed at reducing GHG emissions in Central Ohio.

89%

Franklin County Residents Use a Vehicle for Daily Commute

5% use an alternative mode for their commute

The largest proportion of transportation-related GHG emissions come from vehicular travel miles.

Continued growth in our diverse economy should be supported by investment in our mobility.

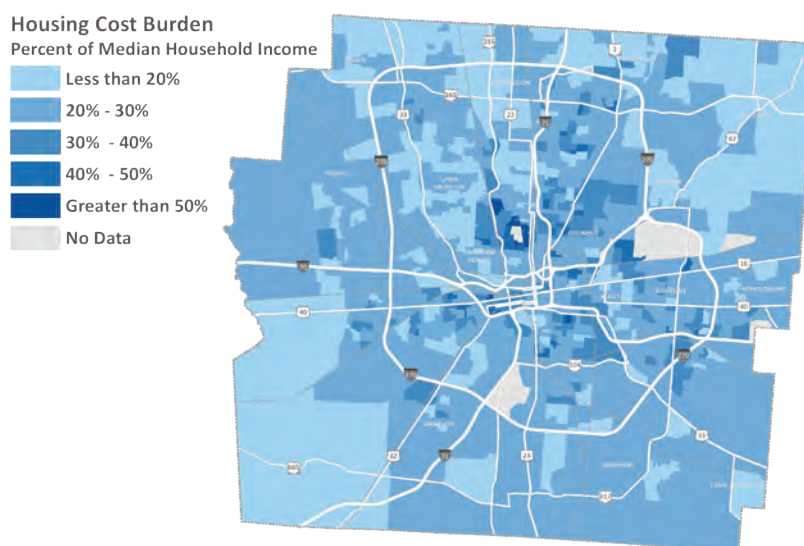
Affordability

142,000+

Franklin County Households That Are Cost Burdened

These households spend 30% or more of their median income on housing expenses.

Cost-burdened households are primarily in our communities that have the least access to opportunity.



Learning From Others

In October 2021, LinkUS and ULI Columbus hosted representatives from three peer cities – Austin, Charlotte, and Indianapolis. These cities are fast-growing urban centers that share similar characteristics with Columbus and Central Ohio. Like our region, they are each grappling with modernizing their transportation systems, creating equitable opportunities for residents, housing affordability concerns, and complex growth pressures. Experts from these communities shared their experiences in implementing bold transportation initiatives focused around high-capacity rapid transit and sustainable mobility systems.

Some insights from this knowledge-sharing session include:

The importance of a bold vision and comprehensive approach

Building a complete multimodal system will create a greater positive impact, more than one or two transit projects on their own. Each of the peer cities has taken a systems approach to its programs as a key strategy in enhancing economic competitiveness at a regional and national scale.

The need for clear goals and measurable outcomes

Define goals with a focus on articulating the Return on Investment of a mobility program. Each community has aligned its measures of success with its vision for the future, and is developing tools to track progress and communicate outcomes to the public.

Linking transit and other transportation investments with land use, zoning, and housing policies

This is critical to tackling regional growth challenges. These communities have undertaken strategic planning for equitable Transit-Oriented Development, focused affordable housing investments along their transit lines, built strong public-private partnerships, and modernized their zoning codes to facilitate TOD.

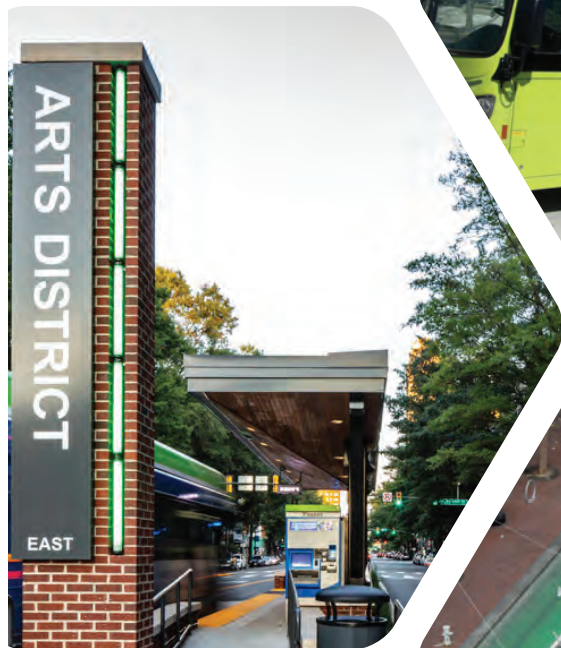
The role of robust community engagement

Each of these cities has undertaken extensive outreach efforts to identify community needs and priorities, build neighborhood buy-in for specific projects, and communicate the opportunities created through infrastructure investment and strategic growth.

A collaborative funding strategy is key to success

Civic leaders in these communities have rallied regional support for a sustainable local funding commitment, which is necessary to leverage significant state and federal funds for major transportation infrastructure projects.

Our current and projected growth already presents our region with many of the same challenges that our peer cities are facing.



What Have We Heard?

Connecting and Listening to Communities

LinkUS builds on a strong foundation of community engagement that has occurred over many years throughout Central Ohio. This includes multi-jurisdictional engagement led by MORPC during the insight2050 and Corridor Concepts efforts and the development of the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, as well as COTA's robust engagement efforts through its NextGen planning processes. These efforts have documented a region-wide desire among Central Ohio residents and leaders to manage growth equitably and sustainably, and to invest in a 21st century multimodal transportation system.

Other community and stakeholder engagement efforts—through aligned initiatives such as Franklin County's Rise Together Blueprint on Poverty, MORPC's Regional Housing Strategy and Rapid 5, the Columbus Zoning Code Update and Climate Action Plan, and many other outreach efforts within the region's diverse communities—have identified a desire to coordinate, collaborate, and align our investments toward improved mobility.

Since the launch of LinkUS in June 2020, a series of outreach efforts has further informed this initiative. The Northwest and East-West Corridors Bus Rapid Transit projects are continuing to engage residents, neighborhood leaders, businesses, institutions, nonprofits, regional partners, and advocacy groups to understand their needs and priorities—both for LinkUS as a regional mobility system, and for the design of corridors. This has included discussions with COTA's member jurisdictions, focus groups, online and field surveys, interactive online story mapping activities, virtual and in-person public meetings, open houses, and direct on-the-street engagement in neighborhoods and at community events.

LinkUS includes and engages groups and communities that have been historically marginalized and underrepresented in similar efforts. Community participants representing diverse perspectives in the regions are engaged through focus groups, participation in meetings and presentations and by

leveraging their networks to expand participation. Public engagement includes regional outreach to jurisdictions within Central Ohio. More specifically, to date, at least 19 jurisdictions located in COTA's service area have provided input regarding their unique needs for both mobility and coordinated development. Along with unanimous desire to improve accessibility and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, communities requested improvements ranging from restoring and/or establishing more fixed route services and transit connections, adding micro-transit services for older adults and to transport residents to current and future jobs, and connecting to a potential new Amtrak service. Dialogue between the jurisdictions, community members, and LinkUS will continue as the project navigates from planning to implementation.

Pandemic conditions required project leadership to find alternative ways to engage the community during the early stages of this initiative. Leveraging online tools, the support of partners to help spread the word and shifting some engagement to highly interactive virtual meetings and multifaceted web-based engagement was critical. This work was supplemented—especially as the pandemic situation improved—with socially distanced, outdoor engagement in communities.

To date, more than 6,000 interactions have occurred. Over 23,500 people have visited the project website and/or engaged online. In September 2021, LinkUS was featured during a Columbus Metropolitan Club luncheon event, which was live and online; LinkUS has also garnered media coverage in a wide variety of local and regional outlets.



“

Helping families and children get to educational opportunities, healthcare and employment that allows families to thrive is critical if we are going to be a region where everyone has access to equitable opportunities. LinkUS, when fully implemented, can be a catalyst to help drive equity in our region—today and tomorrow. I am really looking forward to what it can bring to Central Ohio.”

Brenda Rivers

President | Child Development Council Head Start

COTA Community Survey

In December 2021, COTA conducted 800 interviews of service area residents via live telephone and email-to-web methodologies. Key takeaways regarding mobility investment include:

- Nearly half of residents (47%) strongly agree that public transit is important to them, even if they don't personally use it.
- Expanding and improving public transportation is a priority to three-in-five (60%) residents; however, a similar share (64%) prioritizes widening roads and improving other automobile infrastructure.
- Expanding transportation choice is a priority to many (63%), however that priority is rated with lower intensity than other LinkUS priorities

Two major themes have emerged through our LinkUS engagement efforts:

1

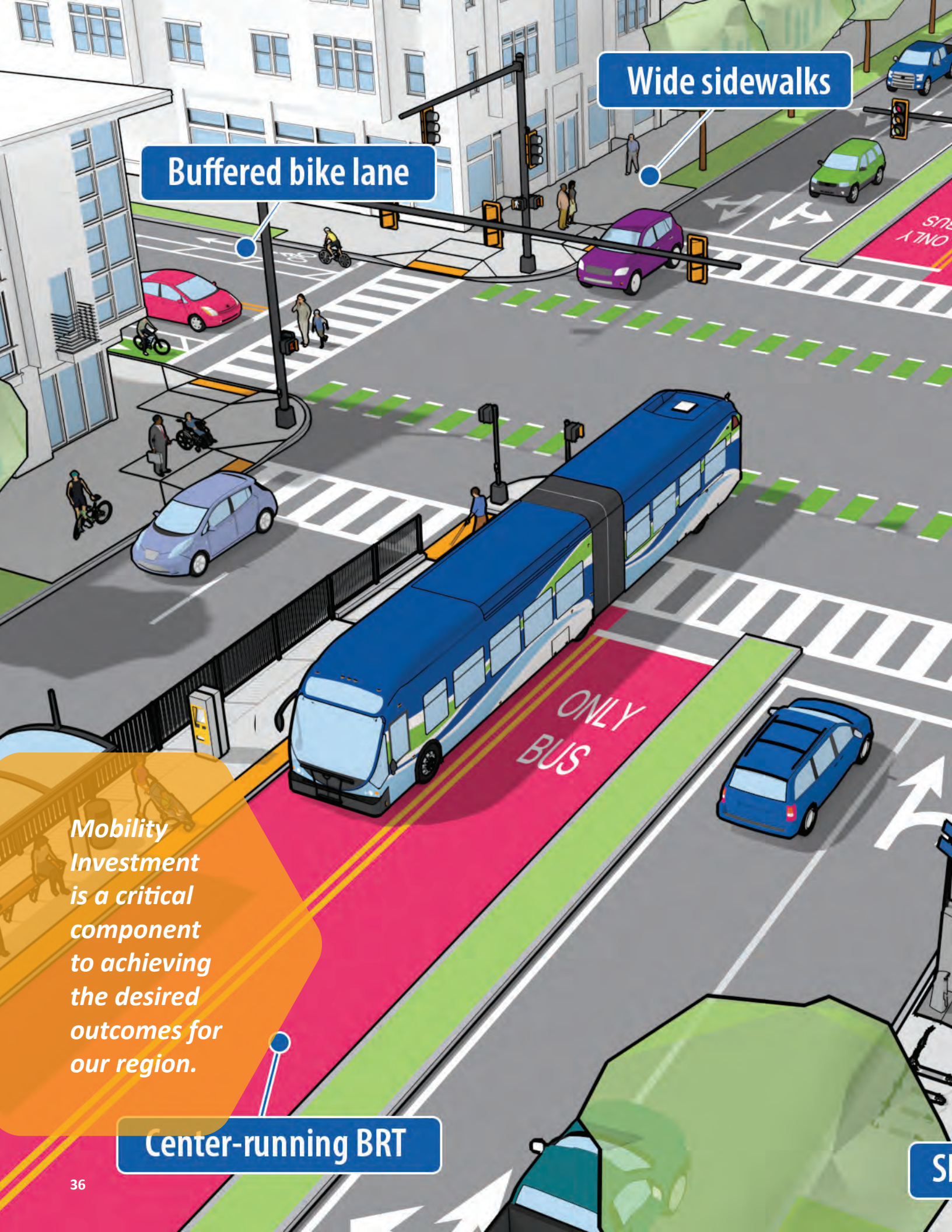
More Desirable Development Patterns

- More walkable neighborhoods and development with access to quality transit
- More efficient and sustainable use of land with access to green space
- High quality, diverse, and affordable housing options
- Well-designed, mixed-use development that creates attractive places to live and work
- An emphasis on equitable outcomes for existing residents as development occurs in or near established communities

2

A Need for Improved Transportation Options

- More and improved transportation options
- Safer access for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Premium rapid transit infrastructure to provide convenient, reliable, fast service that is competitive to driving alone
- Attractive streets that are designed for people, not just cars
- A more equitable transportation system that reunites the community
- More transit access to jobs
- A convenient alternative to congestion as the region grows, and a slower rate of congestion growth overall



Wide sidewalks

Buffered bike lane

Mobility Investment is a critical component to achieving the desired outcomes for our region.

Center-running BRT

WHAT IS LinkUS?

The need for mobility investment in our region is well documented, but what does it actually look like? Investment can largely be described as physical and programmatic improvements to our mobility network (i.e., our various travel modes like biking, taking transit, etc.) However, to ensure that available resources are used most efficiently and effectively, improvements in our mobility networks must be prioritized.

This section highlights the LinkUS Mobility Vision for a complete, connected, safe, and efficient multi-modal transportation system. The vision for each mode of transportation (transit + transit-supportive infrastructure) reflects our priority needs as identified through various local and regional mobility planning efforts to-date. A programmatic summary of improvements to be advanced through the LinkUS funding strategy is also provided. Additionally, this section outlines the aligned land-use strategy, focused on equitable transit-oriented development (eTOD), that is needed to support these mobility investments and to achieve the broader vision of LinkUS.

Identifying Our Mobility Vision

The LinkUS Mobility Vision establishes the “What” for mobility investment. Given cost realities, we won’t be able to address every need right away. However, these identified improvements provide the foundation for future prioritization of resources.

These improvements promote regional multimodal connectivity, specifically associated with existing/planned high-capacity transit corridors and Central Ohio Greenways Vision, with an emphasis placed on safety and equitable access to mobility options. By definition, these improvements would therefore close a gap in an existing facility, cross a significant barrier, and/or extend an existing network to new destinations, travel modes, or serve more people.

In general, improvements identified in our Vision:

- Are included within a current plan or study
- Have no dedicated source of funding
- Are captured by technical screening criteria as identified and vetted by the Leadership Coalition

Central Ohio communities and agencies have generated many transportation plans, and it’s critical that LinkUS leverage that great work. Improvements and programs included as part of our vision generally have already been identified in previous plans or studies, but may lack available funding. The process to develop the Vision covered a wide range of existing plans and studies, including but not limited to:

- insight2050
- COTA NextGen
- insight2050 Corridor Concepts
- COTA Short-Range Plan
- COTA Long-Range Plan
- MORPC Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- MORPC Active Transportation Plan
- Central Ohio Transportation Safety Plan
- COG Greenway Vision
- Safe Routes to Schools Projects
- Small Area/Corridor Plans
- Jurisdiction-Specific Plans



LinkUS Transit Infrastructure



High-Capacity Rapid Transit



Transit Service Enhancements



Other Transit Improvements

LinkUS Transit-Supportive Infrastructure



Greenways



Bikeways



Sidewalks



Roadways

Screening Criteria

The range of possible improvements was obtained from existing plans and studies and includes only those improvements that lack an available funding source. The next logical step to establish the Vision is to apply community values and priorities in the form of screening criteria to see what subset of those improvements will have the best short-term benefit and better align with the goals of LinkUS.

Given the magnitude of need, we aim to develop a programmatic scale of needs and improvements through the lens of community need, equity, and safety.

To prioritize mobility need in a strategic, defensible, and equitable manner, the following screening criteria were vetted by the LinkUS Leadership Coalition and used in the technical identification of the Priority Needs:

- *Communities of Interest*
- *Vision-Zero, High-Injury Network*
- *Level of Traffic Stress*
- *High-Capacity Rapid Transit Access*
- *High-Frequency Transit Access*
- *Transit Ridership*
- *Greenway Access*
- *Bicycle Access*
- *Sidewalk Access*
- *Future Job and Population Density*
- *Future Transit-Supportive Land Use*

LinkUS Transit

The Transit Vision is the foundation for LinkUS and includes three categories: High-Capacity Rapid Transit, Transit Service Enhancements, and Other Transit Improvements.

COTA has a goal to provide 100% of the residents within its service area equitable access to public transit.



High-Capacity Rapid Transit

High-Capacity Rapid Transit (HCRT), such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), can carry more passengers than traditional bus service and offer greater customer experience. It can also reduce travel times with high-frequency service, dedicated space for transit vehicles to travel in, stations with special amenities, and larger vehicles.

HCRT corridors are the backbone of LinkUS and represent a multi-generational investment in the region. As COTA NextGEN and insight2050 Corridor Concepts analyzed and defined, the HCRT corridors are a faster and more reliable transit system for the region. HCRT connects residents, workers, and visitors to jobs, regional shopping, and entertainment destinations. It also connects to our regional greenway and bikeway network, and essential services including healthcare, social services, and food retailers. The HCRT corridors are a major tool in mitigating the impacts of single-occupant vehicles, congestion, and greenhouse gas emissions.

LinkUS envisions eight rapid transit corridors, filtered through a set of prioritization criteria and metrics from both COTA's NextGen and MORPC's insight2050 Corridor Concepts. The location and number of HCRT Corridors will be determined by the availability of funding in our financial model and through a robust technical public engagement effort.





Transit Service Enhancements

Fixed-route transit service enhancements build upon COTA NextGen strategies and include 24-hour service, more frequent schedules, route realignments, and new fixed routes. Additional investments in transit service include improved access for seniors and those with disabilities, new COTA//Plus zones, new electric vehicles that will be added as service expands, and investment in other forms of mobility including e-bicycles and e-scooters.

Through LinkUS, COTA has a goal to provide 100% of the residents within its service area equitable access to public transit. Investment in service will fill the gaps as the region continues to grow and HCRT corridors are implemented, and the transit network continues to expand.

With over 19 million passenger trips each year, COTA connects thousands of people to jobs, health care, education, arts, entertainment, and more. COTA's vision to Move Every Life Forward will guide how COTA addresses regional growth through unmatched service delivery, leading-edge technology, and collaborative solutions. Funding through LinkUS will improve the transit system by strengthening the existing system and creating new mobility options with fixed-route service, on-demand service, and multimodal investment.



Other Transit Improvements

COTA's mission is to connect people to prosperity through innovation, dedication, and teamwork. To advance this mission, additional capital, technology, and partnership improvements were identified through working groups and review of existing plans and agency needs. These components were identified to support intermodal connectivity as the HCRT corridors and service enhancements are implemented, as well as to enhance the customer experience.

By investing in capital and technology improvements, COTA can promote connectivity between transportation modes, enhance passenger amenities, and improve transit operations. Programs, policies, and partnerships will be centered around the transit rider with the goal of increasing mobility through connections with employers, organizations, and universities, similar to MORPC's GoOhio Commute program. These investments are key to improving the existing transit system and accommodating future growth fueled by the HCRT corridors.

High-Capacity Rapid Transit

To be truly effective as an alternative to single occupant vehicle travel, transit must be designed and operated to provide a premium user experience, with fast and reliable travel times. As noted in insight2050 Corridor Concepts, a key feature necessary to deliver that service is dedicated transit guideway, ensuring that transit vehicles are not stuck in traffic. Corridor Concepts did not specify exactly what high-capacity transit should look like in Central Ohio or in any of the potential corridors. The specific mode (i.e. type of vehicle and associated infrastructure) and the right-of-way design might look different in different corridors depending on development context, available space or physical constraints, costs and available technologies, and timeframe to implementation. The table below illustrates comparative cost ranges and design considerations among various high-capacity transit modes.

The focus of LinkUS is to implement an interconnected system of high quality mobility corridors linking communities together and advancing regional goals. Service and design for corridors should be considered in the context of the larger system. For example, at the typical cost and timeframe required to build a single light rail line, multiple Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines can be implemented—providing broader, more equitable service coverage to the region. Regardless of the specific mode, it is critical that key elements of transit service, technology integration, vehicle types, and infrastructure design be prioritized in each corridor. Each corridor must also undergo analysis through Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements to determine the appropriate mode of transit. These types of features are shown on the next page, using BRT as an example. Each of these comes with a cost but also a higher return on investment.

Mode	Construction Cost (per mile)*	Station Spacing	Runningway	Land Value Impact
Light Rail	\$60-\$120 Million	1/2 to 1 mile	<i>Mostly dedicated, minimally shared with traffic</i>	<i>High</i>
Streetcar	\$35-\$50 Million	1/4 mile or more	<i>Mixed flow and dedicated lane</i>	<i>High</i>
Bus Rapid Transit**	\$10-\$35 Million	1/4 mile or more	<i>Primarily dedicated</i>	<i>Medium-High</i>
Express Bus	\$1-\$2 Million	<i>Limited stops</i>	<i>Mostly mixed flow, may benefit from HOV or other dedicated lanes</i>	<i>Low</i>
Local Bus	<\$1 Million	1-2 blocks to 1/4 mile	<i>Mixed flow</i>	<i>Low</i>

*Cost estimates vary widely. Typical costs are based on case studies of recent projects in the United States.

**Assumes Bus Rapid Transit operating in dedicated runningway and other premium transit features (see next page).

Key Elements of Premium Transit

High-Capacity Rapid Transit implemented as part of LinkUS will include a suite of features that provide a premium level of service and quality of experience to riders. These examples illustrate how Bus Rapid Transit can offer almost identical service features and characteristics as light rail, but with a significantly lower implementation cost. With this combination of service and design features, BRT can essentially operate as “light rail on rubber tires.” As specific modes and designs are determined for individual corridors, these types of features should be prioritized.



**Level Boarding and
Multi-Door Boarding**



**Off-Board Fare
Collection**



**Dedicated Right-of-
Way**



**Signal Priority and
Intersection Control**



**Modern and Branded
Vehicle Designs**



**Frequency and
Capacity**



Enhanced Stations



Clean Energy

To learn more about the key elements of premium transit, go to www.linkuscolumbus.com and check out the LinkUS Framework Strategy.

High-Capacity Rapid Transit



Expand our transit network to become the backbone of a world-class mobility system, driving connectivity and equitable access to opportunity in our region.

We envision 8 HCRT corridors in our region by 2050 that will expand transit capacity, foster connectivity, advance the goals of LinkUS, and reflect the voices and needs of the community. Three corridors are already in design (East Main, West Broad, and Northwest) and could be completed by the end of 2030 if we can implement our funding strategy. Pre-development work was done on East Broad Street but it is not currently in design. The location and number of the future corridors will be determined by a community involved prioritization process, growth patterns, and funding availability.

The mode (rail versus bus rapid transit, for example) selected for each HCRT corridor must be competitive with Federal Transit Administration criteria, including anticipated ridership, consistency with local and regional plans, and providing the greatest value for its cost. As a result, the corridors currently under development are advancing BRT. Modal assumptions for the remaining corridors have been made for the purpose of developing a cost estimate for rapid transit; however, the specific mode will be determined following feasibility studies for future corridors.

The illustrative HCRT vision on the following page would be within one-quarter mile of approximately 202,000 people, 300,000 jobs, and 6,500 units of affordable housing. Among those living within one-quarter mile, 73,000 people live in communities that may have fewer choices about how, when, and where they travel due to low income, disability, poor vehicle access, etc. The HCRT corridors will connect to both existing and planned COTA transit networks including 47 envisioned bus routes, 3 existing COTA//Plus zones, and 12 of the envisioned COTA//Plus zones. HCRT will provide access to 67 schools, 11 colleges and universities, 143 parks, and 8 hospitals. All the corridors will connect to Downtown Columbus and will be supported by pedestrian and bicycle connections within one-half mile of each corridor.

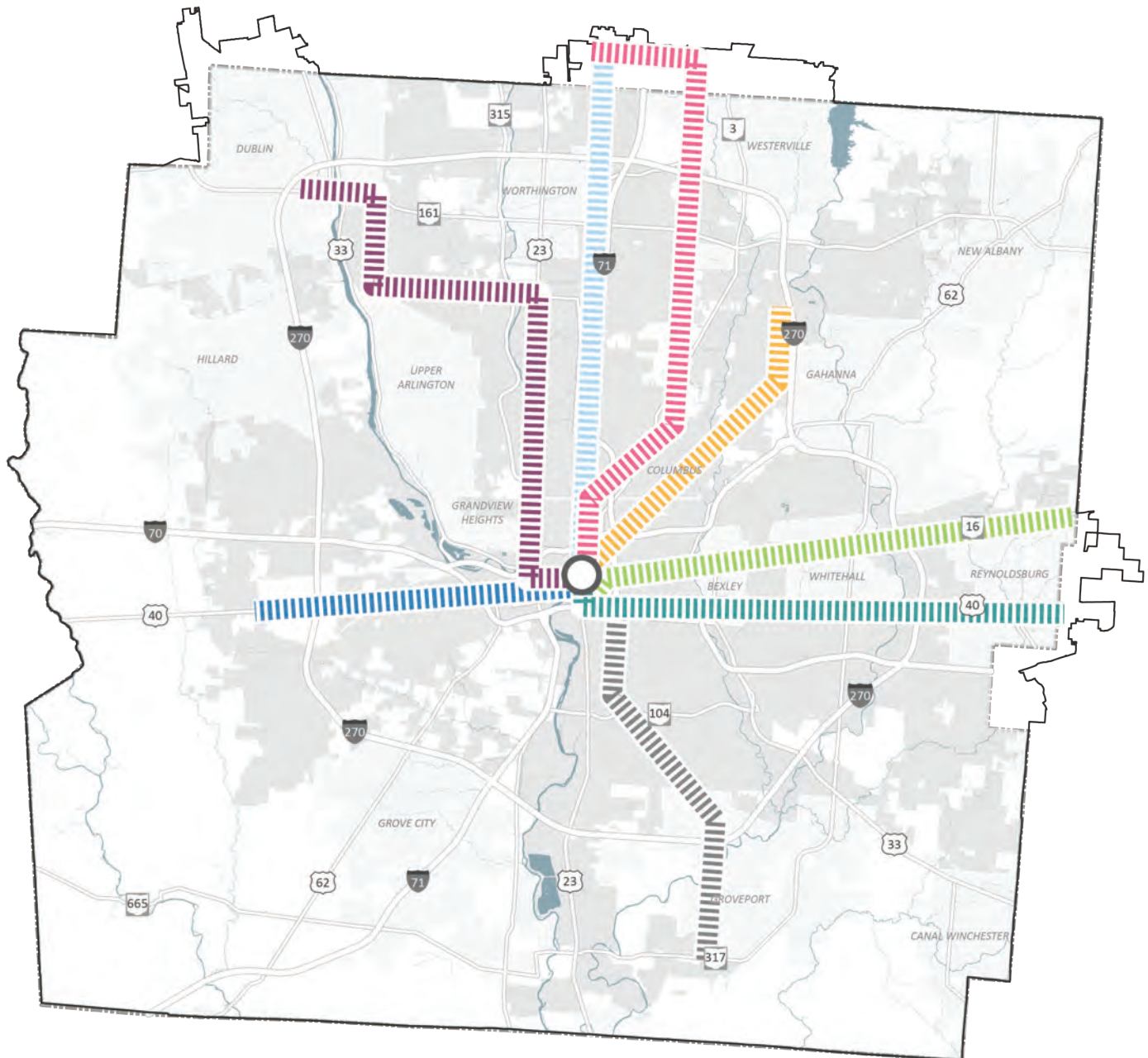


Leveraging Existing Efforts

- *insight2050*
- *COTA NextGen*
- *insight2050 Corridor Concepts*
- *COTA Short-Range Plan*
- *COTA Long-Range Plan*

High-Capacity Rapid Transit Vision

This map represents an illustrative vision for a system of HCRT corridors throughout the COTA service area. The map does not represent the entirety of HCRT projects that may be constructed in the future. Specific alignments, preferred transit modes, and station locations will be refined, and new connections may be identified through future planning and design. The illustrative vision is informed by the screening process highlighted on page 39.



Transit Vision

Future High-Capacity Transit Network

	East Main Street*		North High Street		COTA Service Area
	West Broad Street*		Downtown - CMH - Easton	*Pre-development work underway	
	Northwest Corridor*		Groveport Road - Alum Creek		
	East Broad Street*		CMAX (upgrade to existing)		

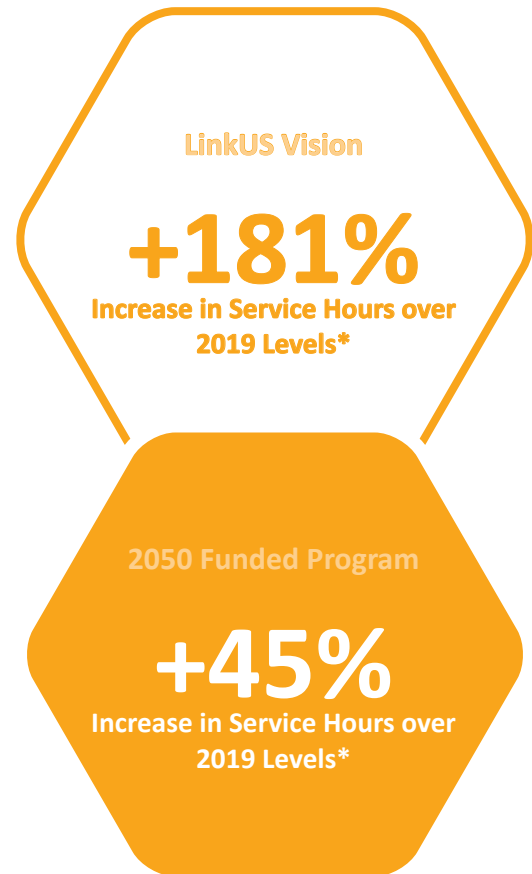
Transit Service Enhancements



Provide 100% of the residents within the COTA service area equitable access to public transit.

- **Fixed-Route Bus System** | COTA will add new routes, update existing route alignments, and provide more frequent and expanded hours of service on its fixed-route bus system.
- **COTA//Plus Zones** | 16 new zones are envisioned in addition to COTA's four existing zones. This on-demand service is accessible via the COTA//Plus mobile phone app and will allow users to request a low-cost transit trip to destinations in designated zones.
- **Mobility on Demand** | Expansion of the Mainstream and Mainstream On-Demand service for seniors and those with disabilities will provide more access to more residents.
- **Multimodal Investment Areas** | COTA will explore opportunities to enhance the transit system by supporting access to other forms of mobility including e-bicycles like CoGo and e-scooters.

The envisioned fixed-route bus system and COTA//Plus zones are within one-quarter mile of about 1.1 million people—including 280,000 people with fewer choices about how, when, and where they travel due to low income, disability, poor vehicle access, etc.—772,000 jobs, and 24,000 units of affordable housing. The envisioned transit service enhancements will connect to all eight envisioned HCRT corridors, all 4 existing transit centers, and all 23 existing Park and Rides. They provide access to 350 schools, 24 colleges and universities, 774 parks, and 21 hospitals. The envisioned high-frequency fixed-route bus system (routes with buses that come every 15 minutes or more frequently) will be supported by pedestrian and bicycle connections within one-half mile, connecting to the larger LinkUS bikeways and greenways network vision (see pages 50-51).



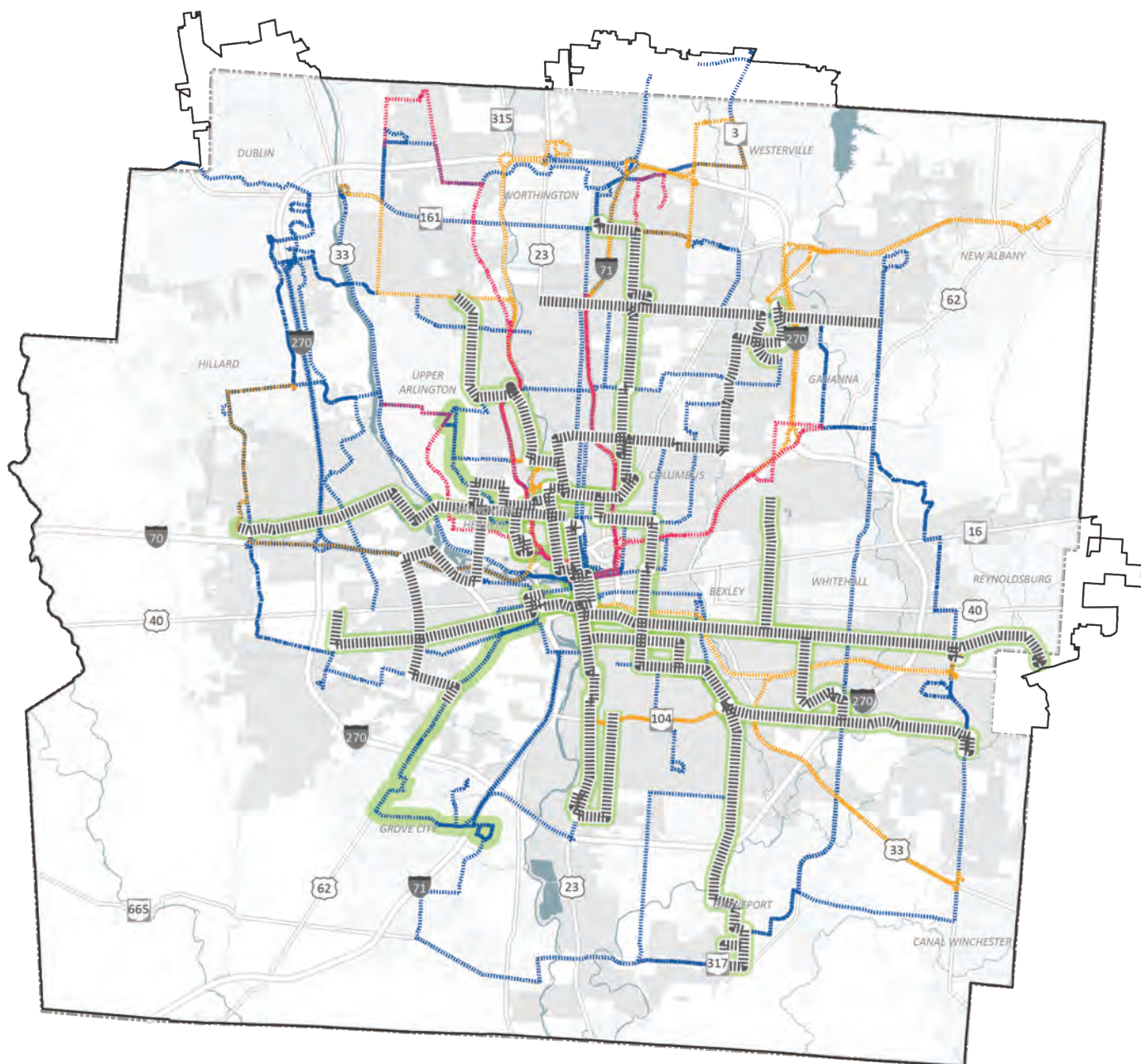
*Combined service hours for HCRT Corridors + fixed route enhancements + additional COTA//Plus zones

Leveraging Existing Efforts

- *insight2050*
- *COTA NextGen*
- *insight2050 Corridor Concepts*
- *COTA Short-Range Plan*
- *COTA Long-Range Plan*

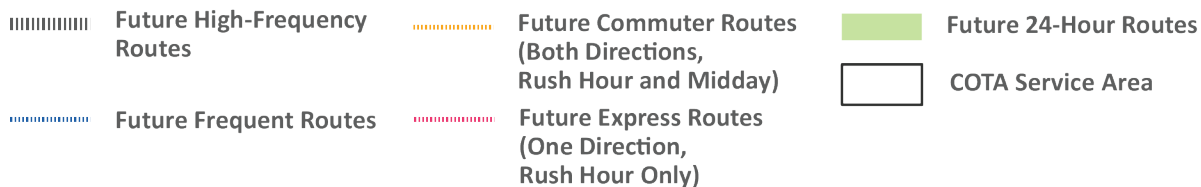
Transit Service Enhancements Vision

This map represents an illustrative vision for transit service throughout the COTA service area. The map does not represent the entirety of transit services that may be implemented in the future. Specific route alignments, COTA// Plus zone boundaries, and service characteristics will be refined, and new connections may be identified through future planning. The illustrative vision is informed by the screening process highlighted on page 39.



Illustrative Transit Vision

Potential Service Improvement Locations



Other Transit Improvements



Expand our transit network to become the backbone of a world-class mobility system, driving connectivity and equitable access to opportunity in our region.



Programs, Policy, and Partnerships

- Mobility Programs
- Service Partnerships
- Land Development Programs
- Flexible Fixed-Route Service Improvements
- Universal Design Retrofit Program



Capital Improvements

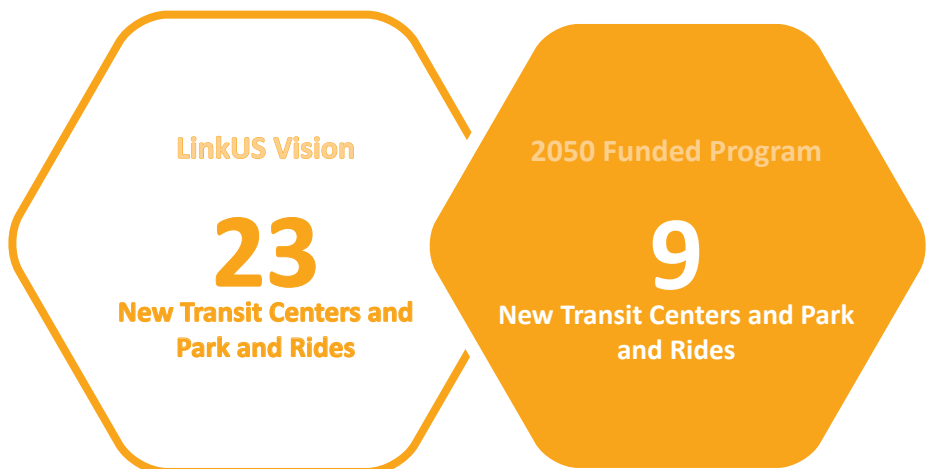
- Intermodal Connectivity
- Alternative Clean Fuels
- Vending Marketplaces
- COTA//Plus Garages
- Bus Shelter Program
- Treatments to the Public Right-of-Way (ROW)



Technology Improvements

- Emerging Technologies
- Customer Journey: Information and Experience Tools
- Security
- Technology to Support Traffic Operations

Many of the other envisioned transit improvements do not have specific locations but rather are system-wide programs that would provide benefits throughout COTA's service area. Envisioned capital improvements that do have identified locations are within one-quarter mile of 33,000 people—including 12,000 people with fewer choices about how, when, and where they travel due to low income, disability, poor vehicle access, etc.—112,000 jobs, and 2,250 units of affordable housing. These capital improvements connect to eight envisioned rapid transit corridors, 45 envisioned bus routes, three existing COTA//Plus zones, and eight envisioned COTA//Plus zones. Funding through LinkUS will provide COTA the flexibility to implement new transit technology improvements, programs, policies, and partnerships allowing for both system-wide solutions and geographic-specific improvements as needs and opportunities arise over time.





Bikeways & Greenways



Create a world-class active transportation system that connects our region and is easily accessible to every Central Ohioan.

LinkUS envisions a complete, interconnected system of bikeways and greenways (an “active transportation network”) throughout the COTA service area. This includes a complete build-out of the Central Ohio Greenways (COG) Regional Trail Vision, integrated with a robust network of bikeways throughout the regional roadway system. This network is informed by the following principles:

Create a network of low-stress, high-comfort bikeways and trails that are safe, convenient to use, and provide a meaningful active transportation option for all residents regardless of age or ability. This includes separated and protected facilities that minimize exposure to traffic (including on-street and off-street infrastructure, as appropriate to the roadway type).

Connect every community within the COTA service area with bikeways or trails designed to fit the unique needs of individual neighborhoods and jurisdictions.

Cross barriers safely and effectively. Much of our existing bikeway and greenway system is broken by major barriers such as rivers, freeways, and busy roadway intersections. Safe and frequent crossings are critical to completing the network.

Connect people to places. Prioritize projects that get people where they want to go, including daily services, entertainment, education, recreation, and employment centers throughout the region.

Connect people to transit. The first-mile/last-mile gap can be shortened with quality bikeway facilities that allow for effective multi-modal commuting.

Complete our streets. As roadways are improved, build out the bikeway network and connect it to the existing system. Where possible, fill gaps in our sidewalk system with facilities that serve pedestrians and people on bikes or other mobility devices.

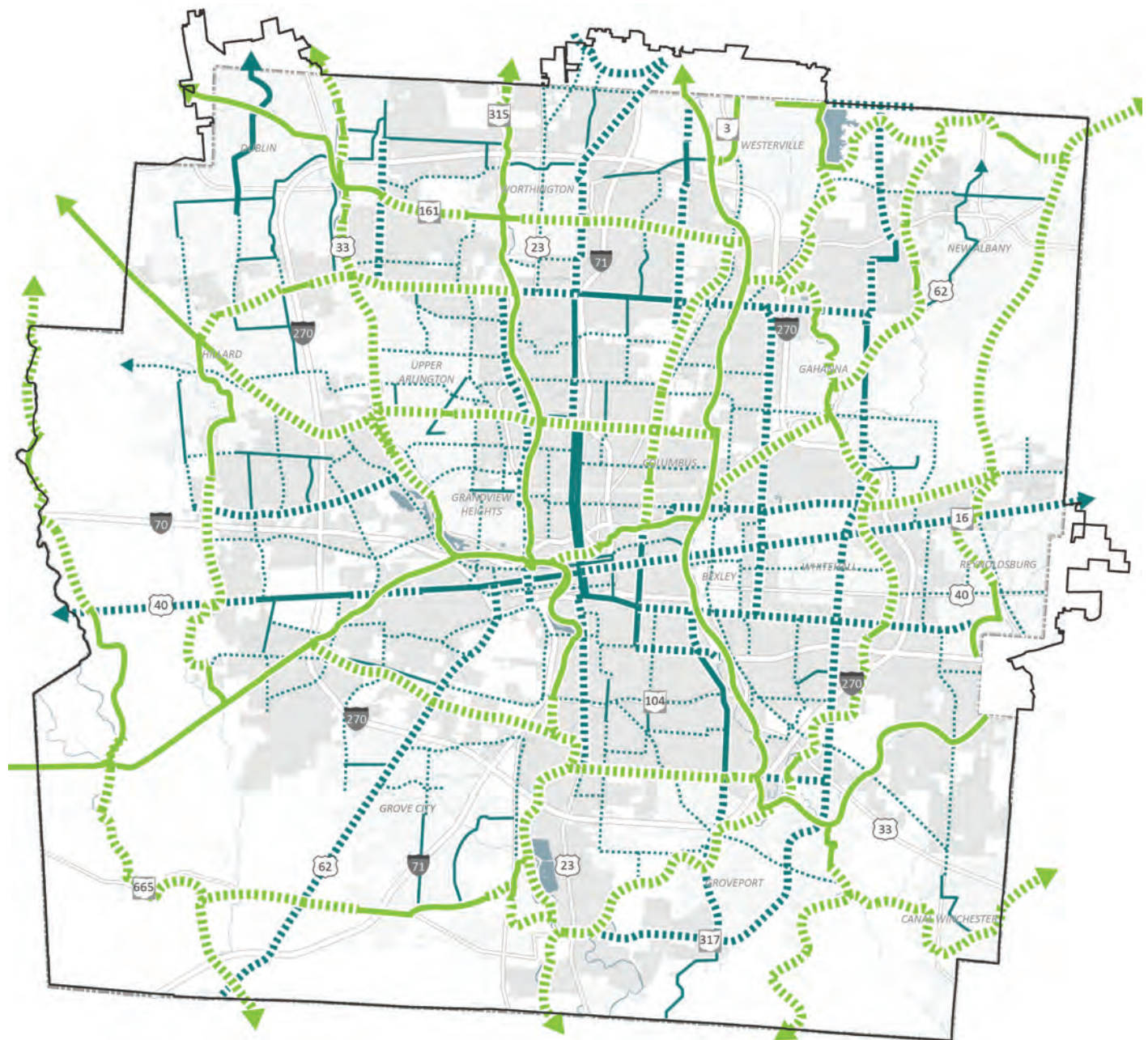


Leveraging Existing Efforts

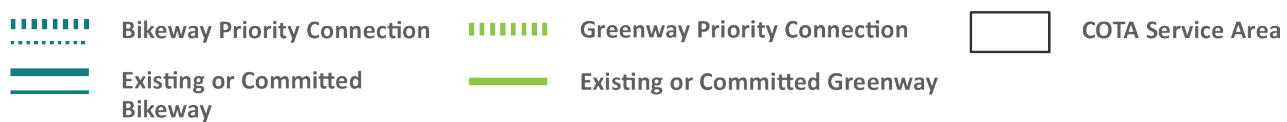
- Central Ohio Greenways (COG) Greenway Vision
- RAPID 5
- MORPC Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- MORPC Active Transportation Plan
- MORPC Attributable Funds Projects
- Jurisdiction-Specific Plans
- Small Area Plans
- Corridor Plans
- Vision Zero Columbus

Active Transportation Vision

The map below represents an illustrative vision for such a network. The map does not represent the entirety of potential bikeway or greenway trail projects that may be constructed in the future. Specific alignments may be refined or new connections may be identified through additional planning and project prioritization conducted by individual jurisdictions. The illustrative vision is informed by the screening process on page 39.



Illustrative Greenway and Bikeway Vision



Sidewalks



Prioritize investments to close gaps in critical first- and last-mile connections to the transit system and along major roadways in need of pedestrian safety improvements.

Walkability is great for the economy, public health, and the environment. In 2018, MORPC published a sidewalk inventory for all of Franklin County and other portions of the metropolitan planning area. In particular, this inventory included sidewalks, crosswalks, and sidewalk gaps. Currently there are 3,168 miles of sidewalk gaps located in Franklin County. The need is so great that LinkUS has taken a programmatic approach rather than project-by-project approach. This involves prioritizing sidewalk connections and gaps based on the established screening criteria that align with the LinkUS priorities.

The vision for sidewalk improvements includes a program of addressing sidewalk gaps:

- *Located within Communities of Interest**
- *Located along an arterial or collector street within 0.5 mile of existing or planned premium transit or greenways*
- *Located along COTA fixed routes*
- *Identified in Columbus Safe Routes to School Plan*

Leveraging Existing Efforts

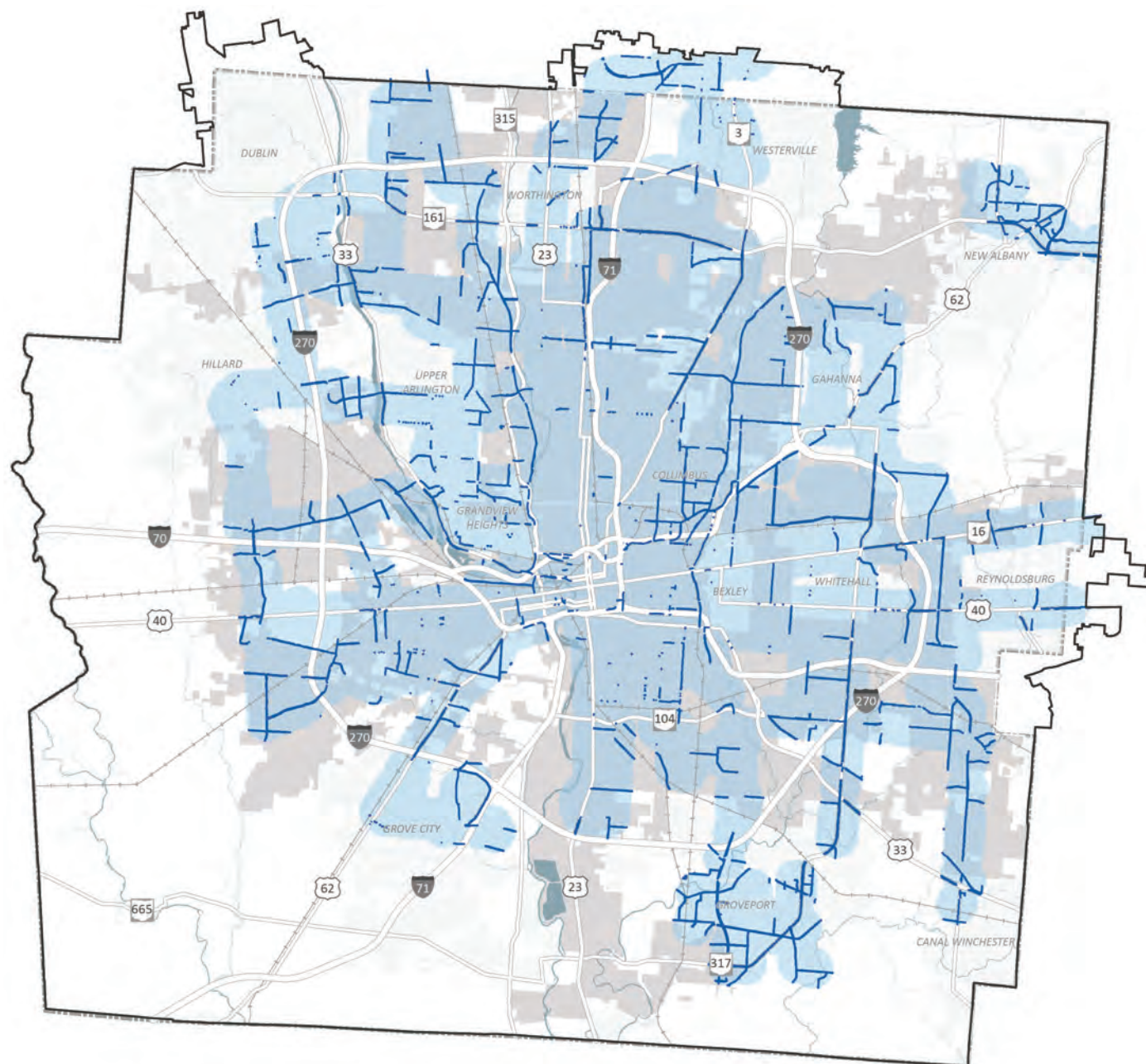
- *MORPC Sidewalk Inventory (Identified Gaps)*
- *Safe Routes to Schools Projects*
- *COTA Bus Routes without Sidewalks*
- *Vision Zero*
- *Jurisdiction-Specific Plans*



*See definition on page 11.

Illustrative Sidewalks Priority Needs

The map below represents the priority needs identified for sidewalk improvements within the COTA service area. There are many sidewalk gaps in our region, however, per the technical screening process, there is an identified need to prioritize gaps to improve equitable access to transit stops. The map below showcases that priority while remaining gaps can be improved through additional funding through LinkUS.



Illustrative Sidewalk Vision

- Sidewalk Gaps within 1/2 Mile of Transit Stops Along Major Roads
- Area within 1/2 Mile of Transit Stops
- COTA Service Area

Roadways



Increase safety, efficiency, and connectivity of our roadway network in order to confront the effects of congestion and growth for our commuters.

LinkUS defines the vision for transit and transit-supportive infrastructure for the region. While roadway improvements are a critical part of this overall vision, the MORPC Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the guiding document for establishing the vision for future roadway investment. LinkUS leverages the MTP in conjunction with the LinkUS Mobility Vision to define a more sustainable mobility future for the region.

Improving mobility necessarily includes improving safety on our roadways. While cars are ubiquitous on our region's roadways, in many instances roadway corridors also provide facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit. Most corridors that lack such facilities are candidates for "complete streets" improvements to provide a more equitable access to mobility in our street network. The confluence of these modes makes safety a major priority on roadway corridors and intersections. Furthermore, there is a need for strategic multimodal connections to cross barriers and connect communities.

In 2019, MORPC developed the High Injury Network (HIN) as part of the Central Ohio Transportation Safety Plan. In 2020, the City of Columbus launched The Vision Zero Columbus Action Plan which defined the High Injury Network and featured multi-agency commitments to specific actions and strategies focused on eliminating fatal and serious injury crashes on Columbus streets, especially in Communities of Interest, as defined by the Vision Zero process. These analyses will allow leaders to focus resources on these high crash locations and work toward the ultimate goal of eliminating fatal and serious injury crashes. Other Central Ohio communities are incorporating Vision Zero principles into their planning as well.



Leveraging Existing Efforts

- MORPC Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- MORPC Attributable Funds Projects
- Vision Zero

What Can Be Funded?

Transit and Transit-Supportive Infrastructure

	LinkUS Vision	2030 Funded Program	2050 Funded Program	
Transit Infrastructure	High-Capacity Rapid Transit	8 Corridors	3 Corridors	5 Corridors
	Transit Service* Improvements	+180% Service Hour Increase (2019)	+40% More Service Hours (2019)	+45% More Service Hours (2019)
	COTA//Plus Zones	16 New Zones, Vehicles, Micromobility, and Mainstream Enhancements	8 New Zones, Vehicles, Micromobility, and Mainstream Enhancements	8 New Zones, Vehicles, Micromobility, and Mainstream Enhancements
	Capital Improvements	10 Transit Centers, 13 Park and Rides, 4 Satellite COTA//Plus Garages, 203 New Bus Shelters, Allocation for Mobility Hubs, and Alternative Clean Fuels	1 Transit Center, 1 Park & Ride, and 34 Shelters	4 Transit Centers, 5 Park and Rides, 1 Satellite COTA//Plus Garage, 128 New Bus Shelters, Allocation for Mobility Hubs
	Programs, Policy, and Partnerships	6 New Mobility Programs, 9 Land Development Pilots, Allocation for Universal Design, and Transit and Service Improvements	5 New Mobility Programs, ~\$60 Million to Support Equitable Transit-Oriented Development, and Allocation for Universal Design	5 New Mobility Programs, ~\$150 Million to Support Equitable Transit-Oriented Development, and Allocation for Universal Design
	Technology Improvements	Emerging Technologies, Allocation for Customer Journey Tools, Security Enhancement, and Technology to Support Traffic Operations	Allocation for Customer Journey Tools, and Security Enhancements	Allocation for Customer Journey Tools, and Security Enhancements
Transit-Supportive Infrastructure	Bikeways & Greenways	700+ Miles of Bikeway and Greenway Improvements		500+ Miles of Bikeways, Greenways, and Sidewalks
	Sidewalks	1500+ Miles of Sidewalk Improvements Throughout Entire System	~\$380 million total investment in bikeways, greenways, sidewalks, and roadways	
	Roadways	Established by the MORPC Metropolitan Transportation Plan		~\$250 Million Dollars

*Service Hours include HCRT, Fixed-Route, and COTA//Plus

Our Growth Imperative

As our region grows, we must plan for where our new residents will live and work, and how they will travel in between.

As outlined in the State of Mobility Report, Central Ohio has experienced significant growth over recent decades. Prior to the 1990s, much of this growth came from territorial expansion of the region's cities. However, since then, infill growth has become more prominent, in the City of Columbus as well as in denser mixed-use developments within our suburban communities.

From 2010 to 2020, the metro area grew by 12%, to more than 2.1 million people. Much of this growth was concentrated in Franklin County, with Columbus adding 118,000 residents—a 15% population increase.

To keep pace with this expansive growth, Central Ohio presently must build 14,000 to 21,000 housing units per year. In 2020, the region produced its most units ever—just 11,000 units. This under production of units is constraining the housing market and driving up housing prices. From November 2020 to November 2021, home prices in the region grew by 14.2%.

Nearly 50% of Columbus families earning less than \$50,000 annually are rent burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income on housing. Days in a shelter have increased in Franklin County from an average stay of 39 days in 2017, to an average of 61 days in 2021. Given historic patterns of under-investment and discrimination that made Central Ohio's residents of color more economically vulnerable, they have disproportionately experienced the rise in rent burden and homelessness.

To keep pace with expansive growth, Central Ohio must build 14,000 to 21,000 housing units per year. In 2020, the region produced its most housing units ever—just 11,000 units.





Both a driver of and result of the region's population growth, the economy is thriving. The private sector is growing, there is a healthy mix of industries, and residents possess the talent and enthusiasm to propel the community forward to create economic opportunity.

However, the economy is not equitable. When compared with peer metros, our region lags in terms of small business growth and racial, ethnic and gender diversity in business ownership. A considerable number of new jobs have been created outside the urban core and on the periphery of the transit system. With nearly 40,000 households in Franklin County lacking access to a personal vehicle and affordable transportation choices, these new opportunities have been hard for some to access.

Many past decisions and transportation investments have led to inequitable outcomes for residents. Local zoning policies that exclude multifamily and affordable housing have often reinforced racial and economic segregation patterns across the region. These factors have contributed to the Columbus metropolitan area now ranking second in the nation for economic segregation. LinkUS presents a generational opportunity for our communities to adopt equitable development regulations and supportive policies. This is a critical step to ensure all residents are included in our growth and success.

Enhanced development regulations will set the stage for Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (eTOD). This form of development is a national best practice to guide private investment so that people of all incomes experience the benefits of dense, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development near transit hubs. This improves affordability, boosts neighborhood economies, and benefits the environment.

While our growth has created prosperity for many, it could also widen inequities in access to housing, jobs, and opportunity. An aligned development strategy can change that.

Intentional Equitable Growth

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) leverages joint development, public/private partnerships, or private development to integrate improvements to transit and community infrastructure with an aligned development strategy. TOD uses commercial, residential, or mixed-use development to create value for the community, residents, and business owners.

Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (eTOD) refers to an explicit commitment to achieving equity goals and ensuring that low-income residents and residents of color benefit from—and are not displaced by—the new development. With strategies in place to preserve and expand affordable housing, protect tenants from rising costs, connect residents to jobs and economic opportunities, stabilize and support small local businesses and more, eTOD can foster equitable development and create healthy, opportunity-rich neighborhoods.

Regional growth partners have developed a series of strategic initiatives for ensuring inclusive, equitable growth, including insight2050 (2015), insight2050 Corridor Concepts (2019), the MORPC Regional Housing Strategy (2020), Franklin County Rise Together Blueprint for Reducing Poverty (2019), and the City of Columbus and Franklin County

Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan (2021). These studies and recommendations provide a foundation for the programs, policies, practices, and funding that must be pursued to adequately and equitably manage growth in our region.

Preserve

Recent analysis of US Census figures by the United Way of Central Ohio (2021) found that demographic shifts are occurring throughout Franklin County. New residents are creating demand for new housing throughout all of our communities, and if space is not made for them, the influx will drive up housing prices. Existing renters and homeowners will be put at risk of predatory practices, eviction and foreclosure, and ultimately may be displaced from their longtime neighborhoods.

Similarly, growth from corridor revitalization could drive up the rent for existing small businesses, driving them—and the jobs they create—from neighborhoods. It is vital that the LinkUS development strategy actively preserve existing affordable housing, jobs, and vibrancy along the corridors.

Central Ohio should harness the alignment and investment potential of LinkUS to pursue growth strategies that preserve existing vitality, create opportunity, and include everyone in the region's success.





Create

The unprecedented investment presented by LinkUS offers an opportunity to create new housing units and job centers along the corridors through new mixed-income, multi-use development. Locating compact development along transit corridors can connect people to housing, jobs, and retail while encouraging fewer car trips and creating dynamic spaces.

Local municipalities, regional agencies, and private sector partners must come together to create our aligned vision. In Central Ohio, it is not unusual for many agencies to be a part of the process. This can result in redundancies and inefficiencies, or it can result in accelerated project implementation through effective project management.

Include

In the mid-1900s, land use decisions, transportation investments, and zoning policies resulted in low-income individuals and people of color being excluded from certain communities. Today, policies and investment decisions may instead be used to intentionally include residents in thriving neighborhoods along the corridors.

Through regional collaboration, we can remove the exclusionary policies and practices that have divided neighborhoods and instead foster equitable, inclusive growth along the LinkUS corridors. A regional approach to inclusion along the corridors will help ensure that families have a choice in where they live and work throughout the region.

LinkUS eTOD Framework

We are committed to achieving equity goals that ensure vulnerable residents benefit from investment.

Preserve

Housing



Preserve existing housing affordability

- Establish a housing baseline inventory for the corridor, reflecting unit count, type, and related information.
- Expand/align homeowner assistance programs to include transit corridors.
- Provide multifamily rehabilitation incentives.
- Extend affordability provisions for existing affordable units with time limited commitments.

Jobs



Preserve existing jobs and businesses

- Establish a baseline for corridor businesses, reflecting type, employment, and related information.
- Provide incentives for the preservation of businesses and jobs that serve corridor residents and align with project goals.
- Undertake a SWOT analysis for existing businesses.

Vitality



Preserve valued community resources and amenities

- Inventory corridor resources and amenities that contribute to the vitality of the community, such as parks and recreation facilities, schools, libraries, medical facilities, grocery stores, and neighborhood retail.
- Undertake SWOT analysis for key resources and amenities.
- Support preservation of resources and attributes serving the needs of current and future residents and businesses.
- Provide incentives for preservation/reuse of contributing historic structures.

Communities along the LinkUS corridors have a variety of policy tools available to incentivize inclusive growth. The following table outlines strategies for fostering eTOD in jurisdictions along the LinkUS corridors by applying the principles of Preserve, Create, and Include to housing, jobs, and vitality. The specific tools used will vary by corridor, jurisdiction and area; however, the overarching principles of walkable, mixed-use, people-focused development should apply, regardless of location.

Create

Include

Create new housing with an emphasis on affordability

- Adopt mixed-use zoning districts that support eTOD principles, including higher residential densities within corridors.
- Include density bonuses and other incentives for inclusion of affordable housing.
- Expand/align housing programs to include transit corridors.
- Use land acquisition to facilitate affordable housing and transit oriented development.
- Undertake capital improvements that support new housing investment.

Include community in addressing housing needs

- Minimize risk of displacement of existing corridor residents due to LinkUS investment through tenant and homeowner protections and programs.
- Work with community partners to promote affordable housing resources and programs to current residents.
- Facilitate intentional development of affordable housing in opportunity areas throughout the corridors.
- Monitor for neighborhood change using data that measures community indicators of physical and economic change, and exclusionary displacement.

Attract new business investment and job creation

- Adopt mixed-use zoning districts that support eTOD principles, including job compatible business investment.
- Expand/align existing economic development programs to include transit corridors.
- Create new economic development programs to support eTOD.
- Undertake market analysis to inform business strategy for the corridor.
- Undertake improvements that support job creation, redevelopment, and transit related upgrades.
- Use land acquisition to facilitate business and community investment and job attraction.

Include area businesses and stakeholders in addressing jobs and economic development needs

- Minimize displacement of existing businesses and jobs within the corridor, recognizing market trends.
- Work with community partners and small business support organizations to promote available business assistance.
- Work with economic development, small business, and entrepreneurial partners to leverage resources for expanded impact.

Create new/enhanced valued community resources and amenities

- Adopt mixed-use zoning districts that support eTOD principles, including community resources and amenities.
- Consider policies and programs to support expansion of existing and establishment of new resources and amenities that contribute to the vitality of the community.
- Locate new/expanded resources and amenities near transit stations to maximize benefit to existing and future residents.
- Integrate sustainable design with transit-oriented development, including high efficiency and zero carbon design practices.

Include community stakeholders in identifying priorities for community resources and amenities

- Engage community stakeholders in identifying valued and desired resources and amenities.
- Take deliberate steps to engage traditionally marginalized groups within the community throughout the process.

Supporting Initiative

Zoning Code Updates

Successful transit requires and supports higher density, walkable, mixed-use development.

The connection between transportation and land use is broadly recognized. Successful transit requires and supports higher density, walkable, mixed-use development. This interrelationship offers a strategy for equitable growth of our region. LinkUS communities have an opportunity to update their regulations—particularly zoning codes—to foster TOD. Progress has been made in this direction, including local examples of a zoning overhaul in Reynoldsburg and Dublin’s Bridge Street District, with both focusing growth along key corridors.

Franklin County has adopted a Smart Growth Overlay (SGO) along major corridors in unincorporated areas as identified in adopted land use plans with the intention of creating denser, more walkable, mixed use corridors. The SGO allows for significantly higher levels of development than found in standard County zoning districts, no limit on density provided adequate utility services are available, and allowing a reduction in the minimum parking required along with a maximum parking threshold.





Since much of the LinkUS Mobility Vision lies within the City of Columbus, it is critical that the city's zoning code be positioned to support this investment. First adopted in 1959, the Columbus zoning code has had many major and minor amendments over time but has not benefited from a comprehensive update. While the code has been adapted to accommodate a tremendous amount of new growth, it also presents significant challenges.

To better understand the issues, the City of Columbus commissioned a third-party assessment of the code and process. The report found that the present zoning code does not support the community's shared aspiration to be an equitable, thriving city. Specific to transit, the assessment found that the code does not prioritize housing or transportation needs equitably. Work is underway to launch a comprehensive update in 2022. In recognition of the opportunity LinkUS brings to Central Ohio, eTOD strategies will be an early priority of the update to ensure the relationship between transit and land use is addressed.

The Importance of Intentional Design

Higher densities around high capacity rapid transit stations are important to support transit ridership with more people in walkable distance to the transit line. This lessens the need for more parking and minimizes traffic impacts of new development. Well-designed transit-oriented development can help to enhance the vibrancy of communities in close proximity to the corridors by transforming high speed auto-oriented roadways into walkable places, adding neighborhood services and retail destinations, and creating spaces that invite community interaction. It is also an opportunity to integrate green building and zero carbon building design techniques into new development, consistent with the goals of the Columbus Climate Action Plan. For an example of development design principles incorporated into LinkUS corridor planning, see the Building Transit Supportive Environments section of the Northwest Corridor Mobility Study Report (<https://linkuscolumbus.com/northwest/>).

Supporting Initiative

Economic Development

Our region only moves forward when we embrace an inclusive approach to economic growth—when all of our community members are able to enjoy the opportunities that contribute to personal and local economic success.

One Columbus, the economic development organization for the Columbus Region, has issued a strategic plan to guide the region toward shared prosperity as we continue to grow. The strategy sets forth a vision to be the most prosperous region in the United States. The plan outlines 10-year goals, including the creation of 60,000 new jobs, adding over \$3 billion of payroll within communities in the region, and attracting \$20 billion of capital investment to the region. While these goals apply to the entire 11-county metropolitan area, the right combination of coordinated strategies can ensure that investment in the LinkUS corridors will substantially contribute to these regional aspirations.

In recent months, the impact of the region's economic development strategies and response to rapid growth have been highlighted through the announcement of the \$20 billion Intel semiconductor plant, creating 3,000 new jobs in the region, and other significant projects such as the Hyperion hydrogen-electric technology facility, with an additional 700 jobs. In 2021, a major funding partnership was announced between JobsOhio, The Ohio State University, Nationwide Children's Hospital and others to leverage nearly \$650 million of investment in Ohio State's West Campus Innovation District, creating a new regional jobs center that will be served by the LinkUS Northwest Corridor Bus Rapid Transit line.

Throughout each of the corridor planning efforts, LinkUS partners are focused on the impact of transit investment on jobs, businesses, and place. Additional development, particularly new housing, can bring opportunities for existing and new business. Conversely, rising property values, redevelopment, and the cost of new commercial spaces can also contribute to the loss of existing businesses without coordinated policies and strategies.



LinkUS will serve as a catalyst for economic development—spurring specific types of development (and redevelopment opportunities) throughout our region along critical corridors, where the market may not be ready to invest.

Coordinated with this effort, in 2022 the City of Columbus Department of Development is issuing an RFP to partner with a real estate consulting and brokerage firm to evaluate how to most effectively advance the eTOD strategies within the LinkUS corridors. This will serve as a catalyst to spur specific types of development (and redevelopment opportunities) within various submarkets of the region along the LinkUS corridors, where the market may not be ready to invest.

This strategy intends to use this generational opportunity to adopt equitable development principles that allow our community's workforce to flow freely to and from living wage employment opportunities in the region. At the same time, it will allow residents to access service and retail opportunities, help small businesses be more accessible to customers, and enable people to live closer to these amenities in walkable environments. Neighborhood economies will be enhanced in a deliberate and intentional way along the LinkUS corridors.

This approach will utilize the eTOD model to create Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Districts (eTODDs) along the LinkUS corridors. New and existing economic development and small business incentive programs will be utilized to allow for dense, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented developments that embrace transit as a focal aspect of the environment. Strategies like this can serve as a model to be adapted in partnership with other jurisdictions along the corridors as well.



Supporting Initiative

Housing Strategy

Achieving housing accessibility and equity is a regional effort. Jurisdictional partners and key housing advocates and investors are actively collaborating to build an equitable housing ecosystem along the LinkUS corridors.

In 2020, MORPC developed a Central Ohio Regional Housing Strategy to help guide the region toward a collaborative approach to addressing our housing challenges. The strategy provides a comprehensive view of today's housing market and identifies five core housing issues being experienced by residents across Central Ohio. It recommends priorities for the region's public and not-for-profit housing resources, regulatory strategies, and opportunities for new programs to address housing issues and impact the housing supply and affordability in our region.

Also beginning in 2020, Franklin County established an Affordable Housing Magnet Fund. Thus far the County has authorized over \$8 million in funding, leveraged with affordable housing tax credits and bond gap financing. The Magnet Fund intentionally prioritizes affordable housing along high frequency transit lines to allow for equitable access for all residents to jobs, housing, education, health, and wellness opportunities. Additionally, the County has reviewed its zoning resolution to identify barriers to the creation of additional housing in the community and is developing recommended revisions to promote the development of more housing types with a specific focus on major transit corridors.

Other Central Ohio communities are also taking measures to address housing access. Notably, the City of Westerville recently adopted an ordinance to prohibit discrimination on the basis of source of income in rental and leasing of housing accommodations. Municipalities throughout the region have been working through zoning updates, such as those noted earlier in this section, and public-private partnerships to expand the types of housing offered in their communities.

In 2021, the City of Columbus hired its first-ever Assistant Director of Housing Strategies to lead the City's efforts to address the lack of affordable housing, encourage development of mixed-income neighborhoods, and coordinate with community leaders in building a more inclusive and equitable city. The City is shifting into implementation of housing strategies identified in recent planning efforts by developing and executing programs, policies, and practices to positively impact housing outcomes. Additionally, expanding and leveraging financial resources to increase the supply of affordable housing will be a focused effort.

In 2019, the City of Columbus included an unprecedented housing issue as part of its successful 2019 bond package, which authorized \$50 million to help fund affordable housing. The bond funds have helped the City to leverage more than \$300 million in public and private funding to build more than 1,300 new units at a rate twice as fast as the market had previously brought affordable housing online. This November, Mayor Ginther will ask voters to approve a subsequent bond package with \$150 million for housing. Mayor Ginther has also called on the region to double the number of units coming to market every year in the Columbus Region over the next 15 years, and to collectively invest \$1 billion in public and private dollars into housing.

In addition, LinkUS allocates nearly \$60 million by 2030 and nearly \$150 million to support eTOD by 2050.





Developing a complete regional mobility system requires significant investment. These proposed capital investments will require us to consider how we fund major investments in the future.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE LinkUS?

The identified priorities of LinkUS address the established needs and vision of our region. The next step is to determine how to make those investments. This largely occurs through the development of effective partnerships and the identification of a dedicated funding strategy. This chapter highlights potential steps toward achieving the investment needed for our region.

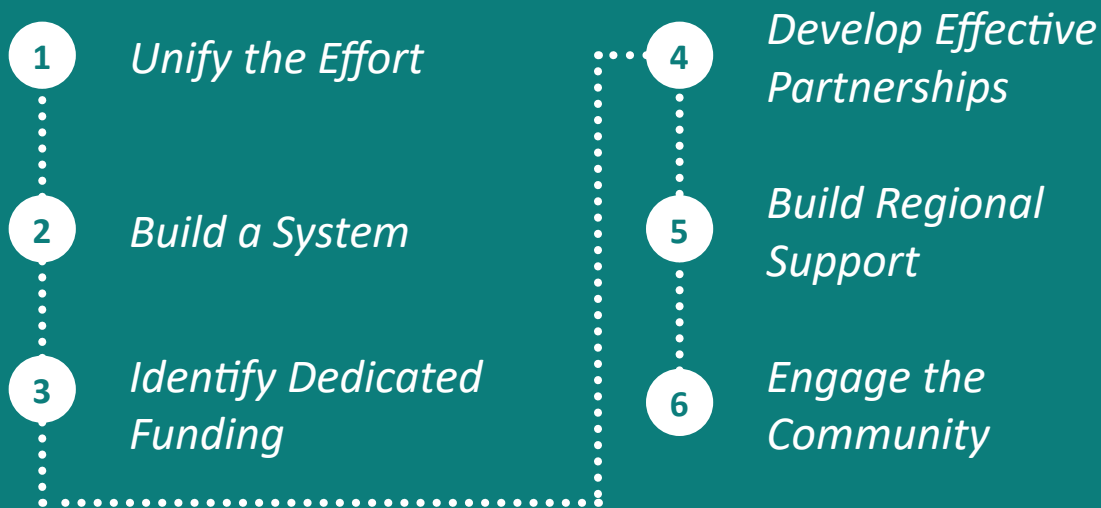
Annual audits and public committees composed of government, business, and community leaders ensure strong accountability and oversight of LinkUS.

Roadmap to Success

In Central Ohio, our collaborative efforts have centered around the idea that we all share the responsibility of addressing our regional challenges. This includes working together to implement a regional enhanced mobility strategy for an integrated, high-capacity transit system. Achieving this will require a focused process dedicated to achieving regional goals through best practices.

By studying the successes and challenges of other regions that have undertaken similar processes, LinkUS has identified six key ingredients for success. These evidence-based elements are common among successful regional mobility programs and form the core of the LinkUS framework. By focusing LinkUS efforts on these elements, the implementation to follow will enjoy regional support, have a clearly identified place in a comprehensive strategy, and have access to the financial resources needed.

These steps are highlighted in the LinkUS Framework Strategy (<https://linkuscolumbus.com/framework-strategy/>) as critical for success:



LinkUS has had more than 6,000 interactions with the community to date—this engagement is a critical ingredient for identifying our needs and establishing the vision for the program.



*Our capacity
and appetite for
collaboration is the
cornerstone of the
Columbus Way. LinkUS
represents a needed
collaborative effort
for our region.*

The Funding Strategy

A system focused on high-capacity transit, bicycle and pedestrian connections, safety improvements, affordable housing, workforce development, and job opportunities requires a significant level of investment—a level of investment that the existing level of funding cannot support. In addition to the funding challenges, existing Ohio Revised Code (ORC) limits our ability to better coordinate transit, transit-supportive infrastructure, and transit-oriented development (TOD) investments.

Therefore, the Leadership Coalition recommends:

Increase COTA Sales Tax From 0.5% to 1%

COTA should ask voters to replace the existing COTA sales tax of 0.5% (0.25% temporary and 0.25% permanent) with a new 1.0% permanent sales tax (0.5% increase).

Create a Committee to Prioritize Transit Supportive Investments

MORPC should work with the communities within the COTA service area to create a committee to develop a multi-year capital improvement budget and program, leveraging existing resources, and new funding from the COTA sales tax to advance LinkUS transit supportive improvements.

Pursue Legislative Changes

COTA should have the ability to invest in transit-supportive infrastructure, transit-oriented development, and permit the use of sales tax revenue as a pledge on revenue bonds issued.

Advance Partnership and Coordinate Future Investments in Mobility

The LinkUS partners must coordinate investments in mobility to advance and support an equitable transit-oriented development and housing strategy.



COTA Sales Tax and Financial Model

COTA's existing 0.5% sales tax is the primary funding source to operate the transit system, including a portion of capital improvements. This level is the lowest of its peers in Ohio and provides no capacity to contribute to LinkUS.

	Current RTA Sales Tax	Current Total County-Wide Sales Tax
COTA (Franklin, Fairfield*, Licking*, Delaware*, and Union* Counties)	0.5%	7.25% - 7.75%
Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (Cuyahoga County)	1.0%	8%
Southwestern Ohio Regional Transit Authority (Hamilton County)	0.8%	7.8%

*The portions of these counties in which COTA operates.

A 0.5% increase to the COTA sales tax is the most viable component to begin funding the LinkUS Mobility Vision, which will allow us to implement a safe and equitable transportation network to address our needs and accommodate our growth.

The ORC limits the amount of sales tax that can be levied by a transit agency. Given the parameters outlined in ORC 5739.023, COTA's sales tax levy cannot exceed 1%. Therefore, the LinkUS Leadership Coalition recommends that the COTA sales tax be increased from 0.5% to 1.0%. The 0.5% increase to the COTA sales tax is the most viable component to funding LinkUS. It is the only source that is able to provide the predictable and significant level of investment that is needed to fund the scale of the investments that are part of LinkUS. Estimates show that the 0.5% increase would yield just under a \$100 increase (\$8.33 per month) in the per resident tax amount based on 2019, 2020, and 2021 figures.

The 0.5% sales tax increase is expected to generate an average of \$210 million annually through 2050. This new revenue will be the primary source to fund LinkUS. Using that new revenue as a basis, a financial model has been developed that provides a detailed accounting of reasonable cost estimates of the capital infrastructure, service improvements, and operational and maintenance costs through 2050. Additionally, the model establishes a sensible yet conservative estimate of revenue sources available to fund the program beyond the sales tax and to leverage federal dollars with dedicated local match funds. Local financial matching is a requirement to secure federal funding for HCRT Corridors through the Federal Transit Administration, as well as through various other federal grant programs now made available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).



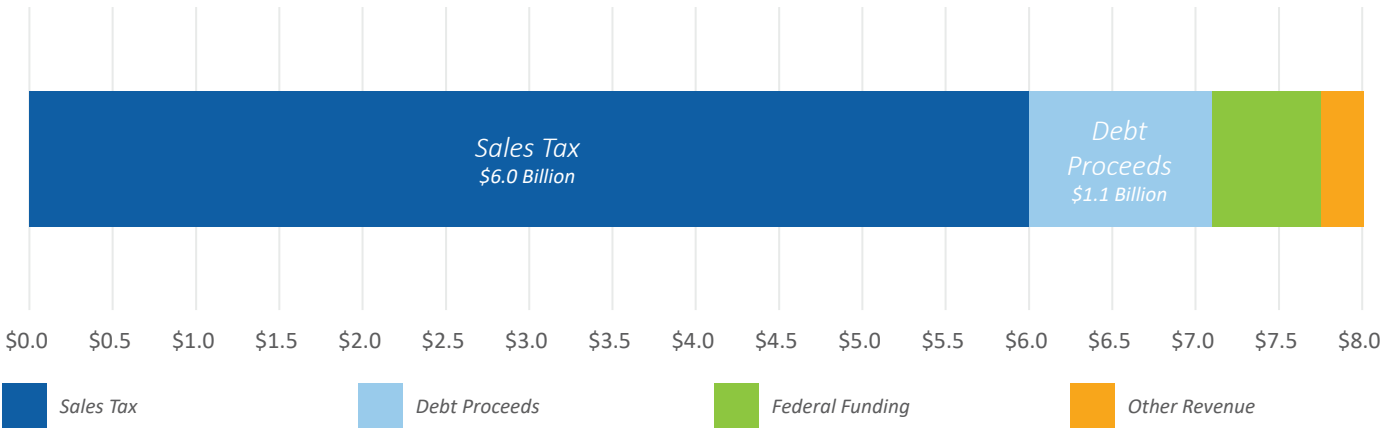
Grant Funding

and Other Financial Tools

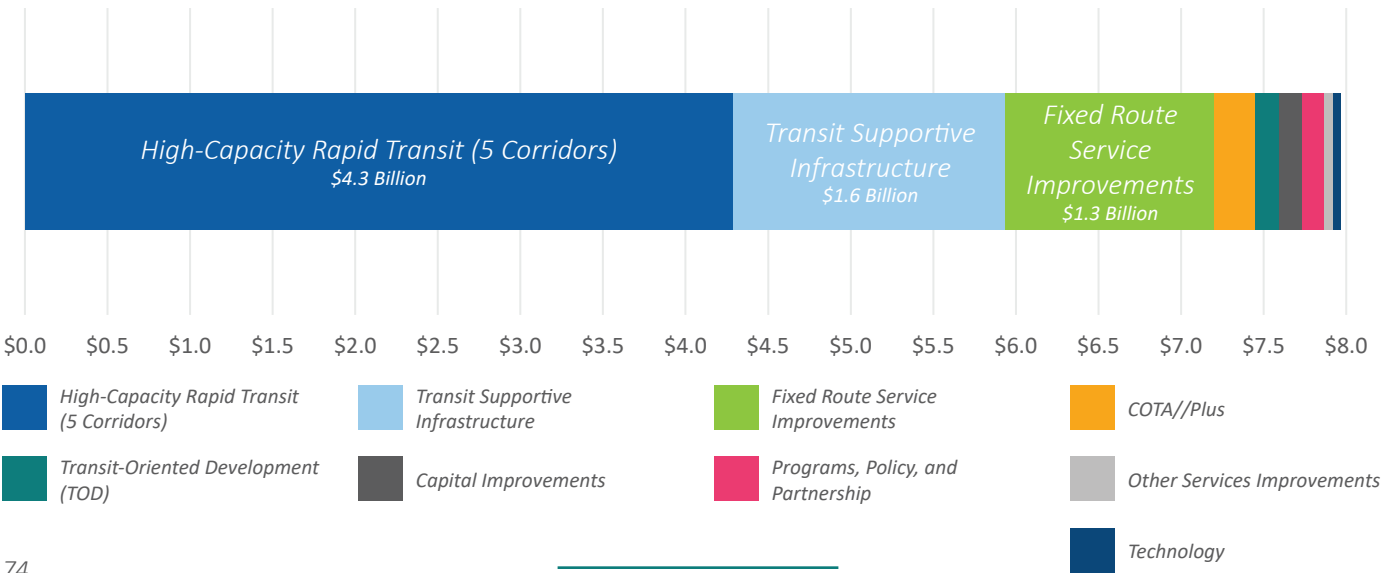
The financial model assumes nearly \$760 million in federal grants would be provided through Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Capital Investment Grant Program (CIG). While other grant dollars are anticipated to be available through the federal government and the State of Ohio, the CIG program is the most likely source of meaningful grant revenue.

The financial model was developed using conservative revenue estimates and cost estimates that include annual escalation due to inflation. Given the conservative nature of the model, we anticipate that revenue could over-perform, allowing us to complete more of the LinkUS Mobility Vision, beyond the initial funded program. We believe that COTA and the jurisdictions within the COTA service area will continue to be successful in obtaining grants to advance mobility. By improving collaboration and coordination between all the jurisdictions, operating and capital dollars can be leveraged to further advance mobility. And finally, there are other mobility and economic development tools such as Tax Increment Financing, New Community Authorities and Transportation Improvement Districts that can generate new revenues that are not contemplated in the current financial model.

LinkUS Revenue Sources (\$8.00 Billion)



LinkUS Expenditures (\$7.97 Billion)



Creating a Committee

to Prioritize Transit-Supportive Infrastructure (TSI)

The 0.5% increase to the COTA sales tax is estimated to generate on average \$60 million annually to be used for transit supportive infrastructure investments. We propose that MORPC work with COTA and our regional communities to create a committee to develop a collaborative annual Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) and multi-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that is updated annually.

MORPC should create a committee that will create a 2024 CIB and begin work on a multi-year CIP based on the estimated funding available within the financial model.

While more work needs to be completed to formalize how the Committee would operate, this Committee should be:



Inclusive

Allows for all the jurisdictions within the COTA service area to have a voice in how we prioritize TSI.



Accountable

All meetings of the Committee will be public with regular updates to the community on the progress of our TSI investments.



Efficient

By having a CIP, we can prioritize where investment is needed the most. This will create predictability for what and when projects will be completed.



Collaborative

Unlike other grant programs that are competitive, we will create a collaborative process to determine the TSI needed to achieve the key outcomes of LinkUS.



Legislative Changes

The ORC largely precludes regional transit authority (RTA) sales tax dollars from being used on non-traditional transit infrastructure and improvements. An exception was created for Hamilton County in 2019, when the law was modified to allow the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) to fund the general construction or maintenance of roads or bridges related to the provision of services by the RTA. The Leadership Coalition recommended the following statutory changes to the ORC in order to implement LinkUS:

Recommendations

Modernization

Building on the SORTA amendments, the Leadership Coalition recommends seeking legislative changes to modernize the scope of “transit facilities” that COTA may fund, construct, operate, and maintain by adding the authority to:

- *Improve rights of way along Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or light rail transit (LRT) corridors, including utilities and “smart” communications infrastructure*
- *Enable COTA to utilize all possible federal and state grants available to transit authorities*
- *Expand demand-responsive transportation beyond pilot programs to address first- and last-mile transportation needs*

Revenue Bonds

To maximize the use of the sales tax revenues, it is recommended the ORC be amended to allow COTA to issue revenue bonds backed by the COTA sales tax. Current law permits COTA to pledge any sales tax revenue that is provided through the counties. However, none of the counties in which COTA operates provide COTA with sales tax revenue; instead, all sales tax revenue generated by COTA is done through its own levying of the regional sales tax. As written, the ORC does not permit these dollars to be used to back revenue bonds issued by COTA.

Funding Authority

Legislative changes are recommended to further expand on the authority previously available only to SORTA to:

- *Allow funding for roads, bridges, greenways, pathways, bikeways, or pedestrian underpasses or overpasses that are not part of transit facilities, but that relate to the provision of COTA’s services*
- *Enable regional oversight for these improvements by metropolitan planning agencies like MORPC to allow for quicker project delivery and more regional collaboration*

Transit-Oriented Development

Recognizing that successful transit requires and supports higher density, mixed-use development, TOD is an important component of LinkUS. Further legislative changes are warranted to enable COTA to acquire real property beyond that needed for transit facilities in order to catalyze TOD. TOD projects may include uses like day care facilities, grocery stores, medical care and housing, which benefit from a market of transit riders and whose customers would use a more robust transit and mobility network. This is not to suggest that COTA would develop TOD projects; rather, it is to convey property to, or partner with, other public or private entities to develop TOD projects in the region.

The LinkUS partners acted on the recommendations of the Leadership Coalition and the above changes to the ORC were approved by the Ohio House and Senate on May 18, 2022.



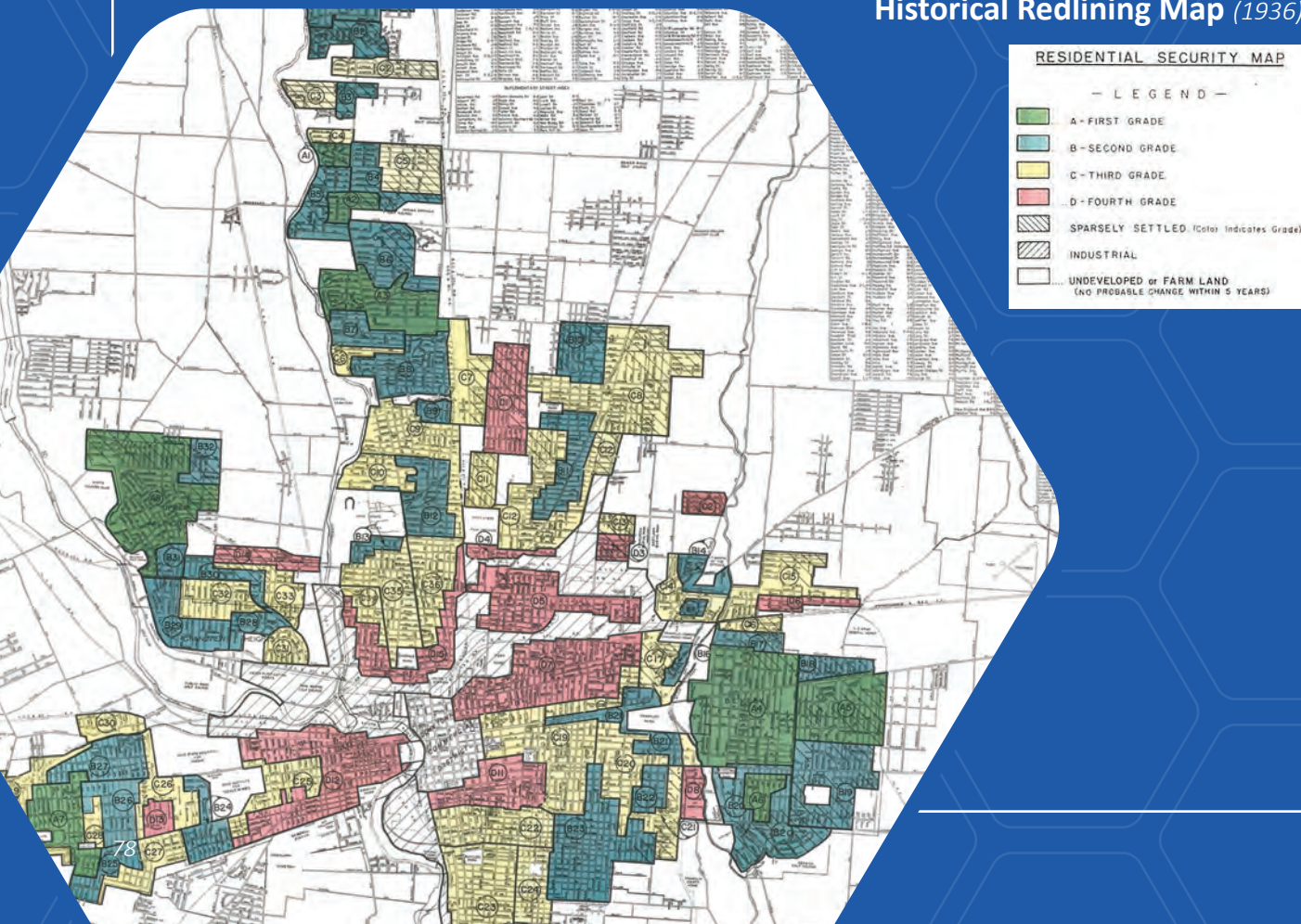
Our Imperative

We must seize this moment.

As we grow to a region of three million people, we must take the opportunity to grow equitably and sustainably. More specifically, we must take the opportunity to eliminate the disparities that exist among our residents. These disparities have always existed; however, the global pandemic accelerated them and had a disproportionate effect on low-income residents and people of color.

Discriminatory housing policies like redlining and interstate highway construction that tore apart thriving minority neighborhoods have continued to widen the opportunity gap for people of color. A review of the historical redlining map and our current Opportunity Index shows that those areas of our region continue to have less opportunity.

Historical Redlining Map (1936)



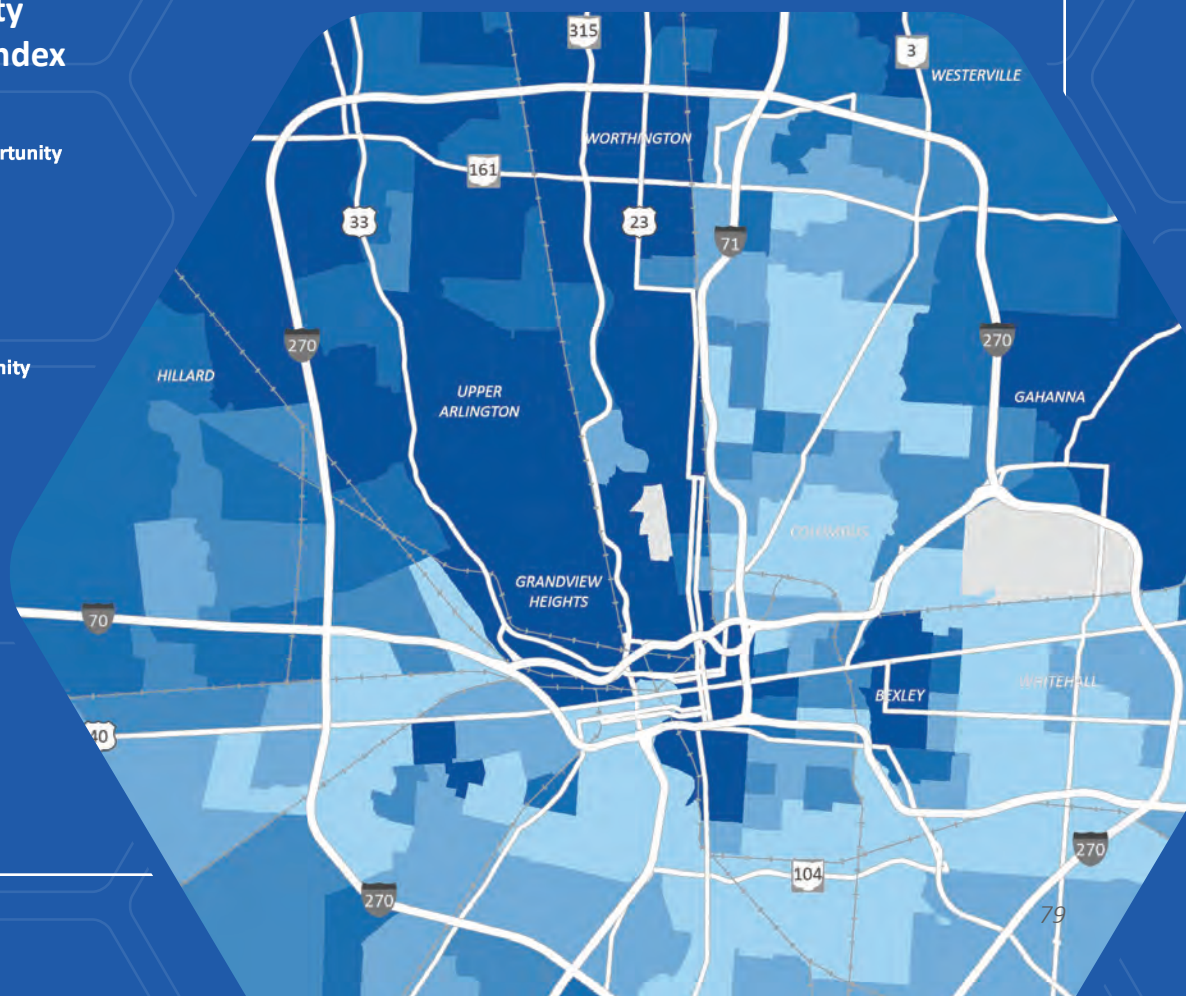
All residents deserve greater opportunities to thrive: to be able to find an affordable home in the neighborhood of their choosing, to get to a job with a living wage, and to access the education and health resources they need to live. LinkUS is our region's transformational growth initiative and proposes a catalytic network of investments in high-capacity rapid transit, bikeways, greenways, roadways, and pedestrian improvements. Thriving development along these corridors with housing options, new and preserved jobs, and vitality with neighborhood parks and other amenities is also essential to our region's intentional equitable growth. LinkUS provides a historic moment where we can use these mobility and housing investments to help support numerous efforts across our community to address our biggest challenges.

We have a small window to make the necessary mobility and housing investments that we need to accommodate the rapid growth that our region is experiencing. While the cost of LinkUS is significant, the costs of inaction will be far greater financially and most importantly, to our quality of life.

Our region has been attracting exceptional companies, talent and residents for a long time and we must continue to do so. With recent high impact announcements like the arrival of Intel and Hyperion, our world-class region deserves a world-class mobility system—a system that better connects our community and businesses as our region grows so everyone can share in our success.

Franklin County Opportunity Index

Opportunity Index





Acknowledgments

This effort is led by the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), City of Columbus, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), and Franklin County. LinkUS is guided by the Leadership Coalition, whose membership is highlighted on pages 22–25 of this document. LinkUS is informed by input from all jurisdictions within the COTA service area and the thousands of people we have engaged in our outreach.



<https://linkuscolumbus.com/>