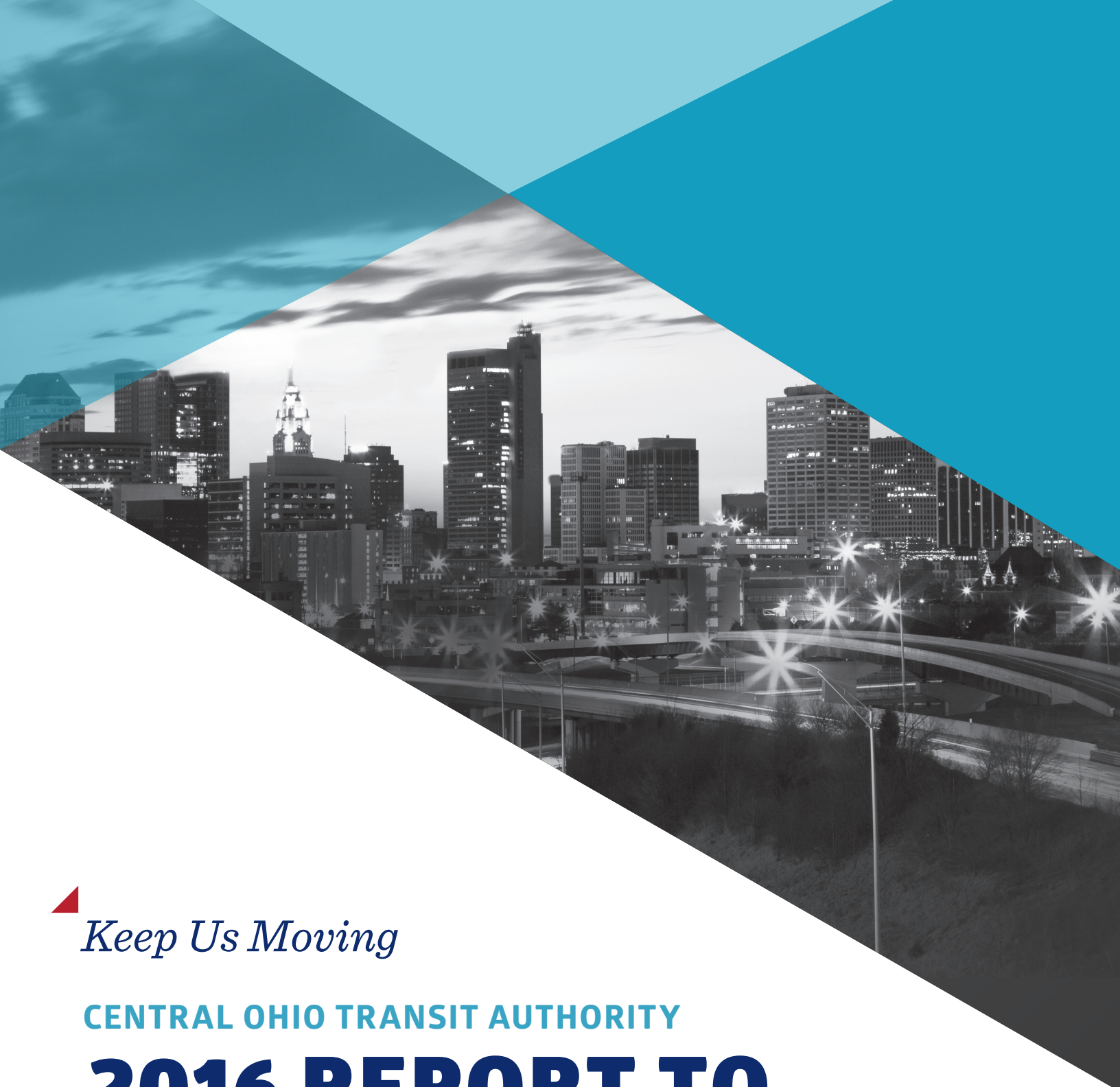




▲ *Keep Us Moving*

CENTRAL OHIO TRANSIT AUTHORITY

2016 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

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One Vacancy-Franklin County

A Message from the BOARD CHAIR AND PRESIDENT/CEO

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) continues to move our community forward as we travel through this very critical year in the future of public transportation.

In November's general election, central Ohioans will decide whether to renew the .25% sales tax that accounts for 50% of COTA's current funding. With the confidence that comes from knowing we have been a great public investment and serve as responsible stewards, COTA is making great strides in advancing and providing safe, convenient and reliable public transportation.

What are our results? More than 19 million times in 2015 someone boarded on a COTA bus. And today's riders enjoy a far more convenient experience with:

- ▶ 80% more opportunities to catch the bus than they had 10 years ago.
- ▶ Newer buses, most of which are less than five years old.
- ▶ More routes for riders to take to work, school, health care, shopping, the airport, entertainment destinations like Red, White & Boom, the Columbus Zoo, the Arena District, the Short North or the Brewery District.
- ▶ Predictability of service, allowing riders to use their smartphones to track the bus in real-time.
- ▶ AirConnect buses featuring built-in USB power ports that passengers can use to recharge their smart phone.
- ▶ Cleaner-burning compressed natural gas (CNG) buses. By converting our fleet and building our own CNG fueling station, we've significantly reduced our fuel costs, freeing us to spend more on service, rider safety and convenience, driver training and improvements to stops and transit centers.

This report to the community highlights some of our accomplishments and awards in 2015 and also serves as your transit map. You can read about innovations underway such as CMAX Cleveland Avenue Bus Rapid Transit, which is now under construction, implementation of our Transit System Redesign, COTA's role in the \$140 million Smart City Challenge and our NextGen planning effort. Like any good map, it shows where we are coming from, where we are going and how we are going to get you there.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support to keep us moving.



JEAN CARTER RYAN
Chair, Board of Trustees



W. CURTIS STITT
President/CEO

COTA FACTS AND STATS

19 MILLION PASSENGER TRIPS IN 2015

562
SQUARE-MILE
SERVICE AREA

3,400+



68 LINES

LOCAL, EXPRESS
AND CROSSTOWN

2

DOWNTOWN TRANSIT
TERMINALS

2

FIXED-ROUTE OPERATIONS
AND VEHICLE MAINTENANCE
FACILITIES

1

PARATRANSIT OPERATIONS,
MAINTENANCE AND
ASSESSMENT FACILITY

360+

PASSENGER SHELTERS

650

COACH OPERATORS

76

MAINSTREAM
VEHICLES



FIXED ROUTE
BUSES

357

27



PARK AND RIDE FACILITIES

CNG BUSES

127

EMPLOYEES

993



1,136,628 FIXED ROUTE
SERVICE HOURS

VISION

COTA will be the region's transportation leader.

MISSION

COTA is committed to excellence in serving our stakeholders including customers, employees and taxpayers. We will deliver quality transportation services and conduct business courteously, safely, ethically and reliably. We will demonstrate leadership that is fiscally responsible and environmentally conscientious.

HISTORY

COTA was created by an agreement executed on February 17, 1971, with Franklin County and the cities of Bexley, Columbus, Gahanna, Grandview Heights, Grove City, Hilliard, Reynoldsburg, Upper Arlington, Westerville, Whitehall and Worthington. In 2008, an amended agreement added the city of Dublin. COTA's first day providing public transportation services was January 1, 1974.

KEY TRANSIT PROJECTS

TRANSIT SYSTEM REDESIGN (TSR)

When fully implemented in May 2017, the Transit System Redesign (TSR)—a comprehensive realignment of the COTA network—will result in simpler, more convenient and easier-to-use public transportation, designed to better meet the needs of our growing community.

TSR brings more service and better service to central Ohioans. Benefits include:

- ▶ Simpler and more direct routes.
- ▶ Better connections to more destinations, routes that work together.
- ▶ Linking people and places. COTA will connect more people to jobs, and get them there faster.
- ▶ More consistent and frequent service seven days a week.

By shaping COTA into an even more appealing and responsive transportation option, we will attract more riders, earn more fares and yield an even greater return to the community.

Simpler Routes

Old Bus Network

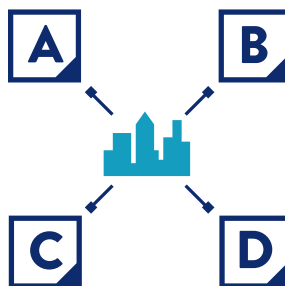


TSR Bus Network

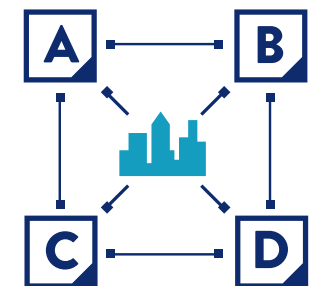


Better Connections

Old Bus Network



TSR Bus Network



CMAX-CLEVELAND AVENUE BUS RAPID TRANSIT

CMAX, central Ohio's first Bus Rapid Transit line, will connect people to major destinations between Downtown Columbus and Polaris Parkway when it begins operation in January 2018.

CMAX will link residents, visitors and customers along Cleveland Avenue to jobs, healthcare and educational resources faster than local bus service—but at the same fare.

Customers will enjoy sleek, new, brightly branded, CNG-powered buses with free on-board WiFi and charging ports to keep them connected during their trip. Traffic signal priority and limited stops mean customers will reach their destinations up to 21% faster. COTA projects that these premium benefits will attract 20% more customers to our service within 5 years.



**CUSTOMERS WILL REACH
THEIR DESTINATION UP TO
21% FASTER**

Buses on the 15.6-mile route will run seven days a week and as frequently as every 10 minutes during peak hours between Downtown Columbus and SR-161 with enhanced service to Polaris Parkway/Africa Road. CMAX's 64 stations—including the Northland Transit Center and upgraded Northern Lights Park & Ride—will feature LCD real-time bus information screens connected to on-board GPS systems. Thirty-three stations along the corridor will showcase local artwork. The Federal Transit Administration is providing \$38 million of the \$48.6 million project. COTA is contributing the balance with local community capital improvement funds.



COTA AIRCONNECT EXPRESS SERVICE

People traveling between the John Glenn Columbus International Airport and Downtown Columbus can now ride AirConnect, unique buses with USB charging ports and on-board luggage racks that make the trip every 30 minutes, every day between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m.

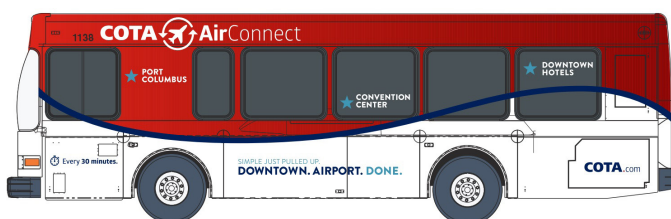
COTA and our partners at Experience Columbus and the Columbus Regional Airport Authority launched AirConnect in May 2016 to provide attractive and affordable transportation between Downtown hotels, the Greater Columbus Convention Center and the Airport for visitors and residents

Riders can buy tickets in advance at Experience Columbus in the Arena District and the Convention Center, use their credit card to purchase them from COTA's ticket-vending machines and Airport shelter, or pay with exact change when they board.



**TRIPS BETWEEN AIRPORT
AND DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS**

EVERY 30 MINS



KEY TRANSIT PROJECTS

REAL TIME BUS INFORMATION ON TRANSIT APP

More than 7,000 iPhone and Android phone users downloaded the free Transit App to track COTA buses (including AirConnect, the Zoo Bus, and other COTA routes) in real-time during the first two months after the app's launch. The app recorded 630,000 user sessions in those first two months, and more than 50 people download the app every day.

The app's options include:

- ▶ Letting the user minimize walking
- ▶ Showing users locations of nearby bike paths
- ▶ Locations of nearby *car2go* and *CoGo* stations
- ▶ More adventurous users can set the app to use the Metric System.

Transit App displays a user's favorite routes and users can set it up to send alerts to their phone as their bus is approaching. COTA launched *Transit App* on May 26, 2016 and promotes it through audio messages on our buses.



7,000+

DOWNLOADS OF TRANSIT APP

COTA FTA GRANT AGREEMENT

On Wednesday, June 1, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Acting Administrator Carolyn Flowers and U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown joined the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) President/CEO W. Curtis Stitt to sign a \$37.45 million funding agreement for COTA's CMAX Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. Program speakers included Stitt, Acting FTA Administrator Carolyn Flowers, Sen. Brown and donna Hicho, executive director of the Greater Linden Development Corporation.

More than 50 elected officials, business and community leaders gathered at COTA's Linden Transit Center to witness the signing and celebrate the new transit technology that will enhance the Cleveland Avenue corridor when operation begins in January 2018.



FUNDING AGREEMENT
FOR COTA'S CMAX BUS
RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT

\$37,450,000

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AWARDS

ONGOING TRANSITION TO CNG

In May of 2013, COTA opened a compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling station at its McKinley Avenue location. This was the first step of a plan to transition fuel from Diesel to CNG for its fleet of over 400 revenue and non-revenue service vehicles. The project began with the construction of a CNG fueling plant and facility modification at COTA's McKinley Avenue location.

Through July 2016, COTA has saved nearly \$6 million utilizing CNG, as compared to Diesel, to power 122 fixed route vehicles and five non-revenue vehicles.

COTA anticipates undertaking the construction of a CNG fueling station at the Fields Avenue location to continue the transition of COTA's fleet. By 2025, COTA plans to be 100% CNG for its revenue vehicles and most of its non-revenue fleet. This transition to CNG is estimated to save the Authority nearly \$8 million per year. CNG is cleaner burning and domestically produced and potentially renewable within the methane complex.



ONE MILLION CBUS TRIPS

COTA's CBUS reached the one million trips milestone this year. Since its first day of operation, the free bus service has become a favorite mode of transportation for Downtown employees, residents and visitors.

CBUS conveniently connects riders to shopping, dining, entertainment, hotels and meeting sites throughout Downtown, the Short North, the Arena District and the Brewery District.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AWARDS

EXPERIENCE COLUMBUS EXPY AWARD

Experience Columbus honored COTA with an EXPY Award for CBUS, the city's free Downtown circulator that provide more than 1.1 million rides since May 2014 from the Brewery District through Downtown to the Short North and back, as often as five times an hour, seven days a week. EXPY Award winners "demonstrate the best of Columbus and serve as role models for creativity and collaboration in the community."



SECURITY GOLD STANDARD

COTA earned the Gold Standard Award from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for high scores in the Baseline Assessment for Security Enhancement (BASE) program. The federal measurement reviews all fundamentals of a transit agency's security program including security plans, training, drills and exercises, public protection, outreach efforts and background check process.

"I commend you and your organization for the commitment and hard work that this level of achievement requires."

— Transportation Security Inspector Michelle White to the COTA Board in April 2016

EXCEPTIONAL EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Business First ranked COTA 10th among large employers in the publication's fourth annual ranking of Healthiest Employers in Central Ohio.

"COTA's wellness goals are to encourage healthy lifestyle choices, increase awareness of factors and resources contributing to well-being, inspire and empower individuals to take responsibility for their own health, and develop a positive workplace culture"

— COTA President/CEO W. Curtis Stitt said in accepting the award which recognizes local companies with outstanding health and wellness initiatives

BEST IN SHOW AD CAMPAIGN

COTA's branding agency, Ologie, won Best in Show for the We Move Us campaign at the 2015 Columbus American Advertising Awards, the ADDY's. The campaign highlights COTA's value as a public transit agency and a true community asset, captured in the tagline, "We Move People. People Move Us."



EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

COTA AND THE COLUMBUS ZOO

COTA moves people from Downtown directly to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium and Zoombezi Bay and back between May and September under a partnership that has flourished for nearly two decades. COTA riders enjoy half-off regular admission to the Zoo or \$4 off admission to Zoombezi Bay when they take the bus, as well as saving the cost of parking at the Zoo.



COTA PARTNERS WITH THE MID OHIO FOOD BANK

Operation Feed provides fresh, healthy food for local families struggling with hunger. Each year, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) join forces with The Mid-Ohio Food Bank to raise critically needed resources through a community-wide drive. This year COTA employees successfully executed an Authority-wide Bake Sale, Potluck, Jeans Week, On-line contributions and its famous “Stuff The Bus” projects to raise money. COTA employees met their goal of by providing the equivalent of 11,510 meals for families here in our community struggling to make ends meet.



**COTA EMPLOYEES PROVIDED
THE EQUIVALENT OF**

11,510 MEALS

COTA PARTNERS WITH NEXT LEVEL GIVES

COTA partnered with local leadership program Next Level Columbus (NLC) for the Abundance Bus community service project at the Taste of Tri-Village in August 2016. Next Level team members loaded a COTA bus with more than 50,000 donated items—including bicycles, books, clothing, toiletries and sleeping bags—for homeless youth in central Ohio. The donations were then delivered to the benefiting organization, OSU Star House. COTA also supported NLC's Veterans Impact Project in April 2016, benefiting the Military Veterans Resource Center.

NEXTLEVEL
C O L U M B U S

50,000+ ITEMS

**DONATED FOR HOMELESS YOUTH
IN CENTRAL OHIO**



FINANCIAL

COST PER REVENUE HOUR

Since passage of the 2006 levy, COTA has positioned the Authority for the future by:

- ▶ Expanding service by 80%
- ▶ Modernizing our bus fleet
- ▶ Initiating a transition to compressed natural gas (CNG) to fuel our fleet
- ▶ Investing in our infrastructure.

At the same time, COTA has achieved a cost ratio per revenue hour that is better than our industry peers.

FUNDING

COTA's operations are funded by a 0.5% sale and use tax, of which 0.25% is continuing and 0.25% is renewable. The tax is collected in Franklin County and parts of Delaware, Fairfield, Licking and Union counties. Voters approved the 10-year renewable sales and use tax in 2006 to begin implementation of COTA's Long-Range Transit Plan. Sales tax revenue makes up 85% of COTA's operating revenue, while fare box revenue accounts for 15%. In July 2015, COTA's Board of Trustees passed a resolution to seek renewal of the expiring .25% sales tax in the November 2016 General Election.

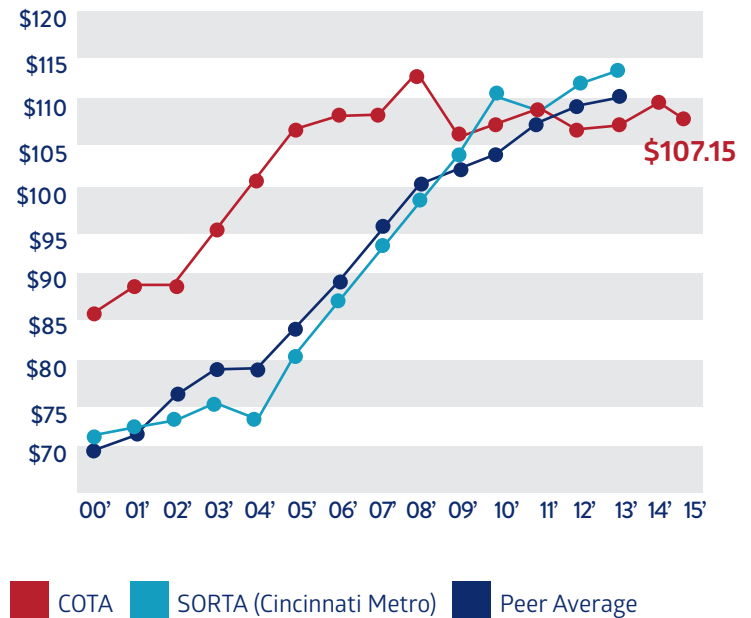
FINANCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

COTA received the Auditor of State Award with Distinction (2015) this award is given to those entities that receive a "clean" audit report, as well as file an annual Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and timely financial reports in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Additional Achievements include a "clean" audit report for eight consecutive years (2008-2015), and 26 consecutive years for receiving the Government Finance Officers Association's Excellence in Financial Reporting Certificate" (1989-2014).

PEER CHART

Prudent fiscal management reduced cost per hour to lowest level since 2009 and lower than 2007 when COTA started to add services.



EXPANDING SERVICE BY **80%**

MODERNIZING OUR BUS FLEET

LOWER COST PER REVENUE HOUR

PLANS FOR FUTURE

#SMARTCOLUMBUS

The U.S. Department of Transportation named Columbus America's Smart City with an award that provides a total of \$140 million in new technology investments to transform mobility, access and transportation citywide. COTA is a key planning and implementation partner in Smart Columbus.

COTA will employ key new Smart City technologies including:

- ▶ Shield+ collision avoidance system
- ▶ Traffic Signal Priority (TSP) upgrades in the CMAX corridor
- ▶ Universal payment systems applications
- ▶ Information Data Exchange providing access to COTA's Computer-aided dispatch/Automatic vehicle locator (CAD/AVL) and schedule data.

Winning the Smart City Challenge transforms public transit as well as the entire community. COTA's commitment to our community, our customers and our stakeholders aligns perfectly with the goal of Smart Columbus.



INSIGHT 2050

2050 will be here before we know it. Coordination between COTA's long-range planning effort, NextGen, and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's (MORPC) insight 2050 assures public transportation will align with region's growing population and changing development priorities.

MORPC launched insight 2050 two years ago to examine the effects of population growth and changing development patterns over the next 35 years. COTA relies on data and direction from insight 2050 to invest in future technology and transit. This approach assures that the COTA of the future will connect people and places in ways that meet their needs and drive economic growth.

NEXTGEN

As our region welcomes an estimated 1 million more residents by 2050, demand and expectations for transportation will change. NextGen is COTA's long-range planning effort to identify transit needs and opportunities for the next 10, 25 and 35 years.

Three efforts to capture extensive public and stakeholder input will occur between 2015 and 2017, as will a comprehensive review of regional growth projections and community development plans. The final report will recommend system enhancements, including an improved fixed-route network, new service between suburbs, first-mile/last-mile connections to job centers, and technology investments. The NextGen report will also feature a list of prioritized rail, streetcar and bus rapid transit projects, including conceptual designs, estimated costs and strategies for development.

Partners in developing COTA's NextGen plan include the City of Columbus thoroughfare plan, Connect ColumbUS, and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) multi-modal Metropolitan Transportation Plan.



**EXPECT A FINAL REPORT
IN SPRING 2017**



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