

MEETING: STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

DATE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

TIME: 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

LOCATION: WILLIAM G. PORTER BOARDROOM

MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Marlon Moore called meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

2. ROLL CALL

Board Members Present

Marlon Moore, Chair
Doug McCollough
Tim Skinner

Board Members Absent

Steve Gladman

It is noted that Doug McCollough was unable to attend in person, but joined the call but will not be counted as part of the quorum or permitted to vote on any items before the committee.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MAY 5, 2021 AND JULY 7, 2021 STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Due to not having a quorum, approval of minutes were tabled to the November 3, 2021 Strategic and Operational Planning Committee meeting.

4. NEW BUSINESS

FARE POLICY UPDATE – ANGEL MUMMA, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Fare Policy Update was given by Angel Mumma, Chief Financial Officer. As you are aware, this project to look at our fare structure was done not only as part of our routine review of our fares, but also in recognition of the capabilities of our new on board

technology being implemented this fall and what this technology could bring to our customers in terms of benefits.

COTA evaluates its fares every three years. COTA considers farebox recovery ratios, affordability, inflation, comparable fares in peer cities, and public input when exploring potential changes. Current review done in conjunction with COTA's new fare management system.

Fare Policy Goals

- Affordability and equity
 - Reducing barriers to using transit by considering fare affordability and equity
- Technology
 - Encouraging use of new fare media
 - Defining policies for the new fare management system
 - Supporting use of technology to reduce use of cash for fare purchase
- Ridership
 - Leveraging capabilities of the new fare management system, such as fare capping, to promote transit ridership
 - Promoting transit ridership by supporting employer and student pass programs
- Simplicity/ease of use
 - Creating a more seamless fare payment experience for riders
- Financial stability
 - Establishing guideline for periodic fare changes

Recommending to the Board approve four changes to the fare structure which are consistent with the goals and objectives laid out at the onset of the project:

- Elimination of the upcharge on the rush hour routes
- Modify transfer to allow for two-hour accessibility (no one-way restriction)
- Modification to the definition of "Children" for the purpose of determining discount eligibility
 - All children under 5 – no charge
 - Age 5 -12 – discount charge
 - Elimination of current discount offered to children 48" tall and under 12 years of age (max. of three children)

Available to customers using Masabi

- Implementation of fare capping
 - Daily at \$4.50

- Monthly (calendar based) at \$62.00
 - Elimination of 7-day pass (including for fare capping consideration)
 - Elimination of rolling passes that begin on day one of use

Reason why the fare capping is only available to those using the Masabi system, being the smart cards or mobile technology, is because that is the technology needed to know when a customer has reached that number of boardings in a day or in a month. So if you imagine someone not using that technology, we have no way of knowing how many times they've boarded in any given day or given month. Therefore, that's why that is solely available for those using the new system and we hope this is a reason for people to convert to the new system.

Public involvement is integral in any change that COTA makes that could impact our customers. As such, we conducted four public meetings to discuss the fare policy along with the fare management system because you cannot address one without the other. The meetings included in person participation, Facebook live, WebEx, or phone in and use of the link. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ensures that no person in the US shall on the basis of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance.

COTA has committed to the FTA Title VI objectives ensuring that we ensure that any services that we offer are equitably distributed without regard to race, color, or national origin. As much, the changes we are proposing is an equity analysis which disproportionate burden on low-income riders. The Title VI fare equity was conducted by our consultant Four Nines, who does this for multiple entities who have found that this did not result in a negative impact to either group. More specifically, the findings of the analysis concluded that overall for all riders, the average fare is expected to decrease from \$1.00 to 95 cents, which is a four and a half percent decrease from the existing average fare. Minority riders are expected to benefit slightly more than nonminority riders as a result. Low-income riders are expected to benefit slightly more than non-low-income riders as a result of these changes.

Finally, when it comes to the changes that we're proposing, which include the retail network and utilizing the Masabi account based ticketing and availability of those retail networks, resulted in substantially greater access for minority and low-income populations. At the end of the day, we believe what we are proposing, actually helps all populations but especially, those low-income and minority populations.

Financial Impact

10% reduction in overall fixed route revenue (\$1,800,000)

- Revenue impact conservative estimate and likely will be lower given ridership decrease
- Revenue impact based on 2019

Recommendation – Board approval of the Resolution approving modifications to the fare structure effective October 17, 2021:

- Elimination of the upcharge on the rush hour routes (applies to all customers)
- Modify transfer to allow for two-hour accessibility (no one-way restriction) (applies to all customers)
- Modification to the definition of “Children” for the purposes of determining discount eligibility (applies to all customers)
- Implementation of fare capping (applies to all Masabi account-based system users)

Trustee Skinner asked, on the monthly calendar base, the pass would be for the month of January, February, not 31 rolling days? That is correct.

Trustee Moore stated that he appreciated the community rollout strategy. He believes they are some very good channels for us to community what we are doing and why we are doing it. In addition, he appreciates our focus on the mission.

It recommended by the committee that the Resolution be placed on the Regular Agenda.

LINKUS UPDATE – KIM SHARP, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Kim Sharp, Senior Director of Development presented the LinkUS Update. Some of the work to date includes: East Main St. Corridor and West Broad Street Corridor – LPA adoption and letter submitted to FTA requesting entry into CIG Project Development phase; East Broad Street LPA adoption. The Commission is scheduled to vote on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan amendment, which updates that long range transportation amendment according to the locally preferred alternatives which is something the federal government looks at to ensure consistency.

What we are really focusing on now is the LinkUS program development, understanding how both transit system and other mobility systems can really help connect the region overall, and what that means for the community. You can find online on LinkUSColumbus.com a state of mobility report which sets the baseline of where our community is in the way of mobility and transportation and other demographics, which are extremely revealing and help set the pace where we are going and hope to accomplish with the overall program.

The potential program elements, transit is a big one and probably the majority of the large infrastructure investments, but also looking at greenways, sidewalks, bike ways, mobility hubs, and technology, what type of utilities would need to be approved along with tour course as well as specific roadway improvements and other supportive and critically supportive items such as housing and development along the corridors.

All of these are being considered in our discussions at the staff level and another set of groups. The leadership coalition was established last year to understand how a program could be understood as the most supportive of our community overall. There are three main committees on the leadership coalition:

- LinkUS Executive Committee decides and acts and meets three times at key milestone points
- LinkUS Steering Committee recommends and meetings five times at key milestone points
- LinkUS Administrative Committee gives technical oversight and meets monthly
- In addition, the Technical Teams studies and produces deliverables: program elements, corridor projects, cost estimating, etc.

Trustee Moore stated that he saw civic and business leaders listed. Would that include community partners where they can provide input as well? Kim replied absolutely. Full membership raft ever, both the Executive Committee and Steering Committee are online and will be happy to share.

What are some of the opportunities you see moving forward with the project? Kim stated that she believe there's a collaboration among the part of nerve agencies that maybe something new and different and exciting because it really outlines the possibilities, and she think there's a strength in understanding those possibilities and that it could be a reality. Believes there is excitement among the community. There's a belief that this really moves the needle in our community in multiple ways, connectivity and opportunities for a large portion of people.

COTA PLUS PERFORMANCE UPDATE – DEVAYANI PURANIK, MOBILITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Devayani Puranik, Mobility Development Program Director presented the COTA Plus Performance Update. COTA//Plus is a point-to-point mobility service for the Grove City, Westerville, South Side, and Northeast Franklin County as a first and last mile solution supported by a technology platform Via.

- All COTA//Plus zones have ridership growth even with the launch of couple zones in pandemic.
- Ridership in July 2021 was the highest in last six months with average pickup ETA – 9 minutes and 95.8% Five Star rating.
- COTA continues to monitor and evaluate growth within current zones and future opportunities to better serve the community.

A testimonial was included to show quantitative numbers. Mr. Hairston and Mr. LaMarr really see the value, a lot of people are using it for their jobs and to go to churches on weekends and both testimonials show how valuable the service is. We will continue to monitor to see what impact our service has on the community.

Trustee Moore asked, how do we determine the request or future opportunity? We have internally analyzed what different zones that we can look at based on community needs and really analyzed neighborhoods and jobs and based on mapping exercises. In this case, the city of Dublin reached out to us based on the reputation we have for Grove City and Westerville.

Trustee Skinner, for future opportunities the communities reach out to us, how big can this grow into in serving outside communities? In case of existing zones outside COTA's initiatives, we did not partner with any other community, but Westerville and Grove City are in partnership.

Based on jobs, minority population, population density, and several other attributes, we have analyzed different zones. We looked at seven as our top zones, but there are 40 other zones that we are looking at to see how we can connect to our larger system. In the future, it would be fixed route system in relation to on demand system in relation to our partnership.

Joanna added that each community that have been operationalized has offered matching funds. A longer strategy is to get corporate sponsorships.

Trustee Moore stated that the KPIs were helpful. Is it reasonable to think that we could reach 100% demand? Yes, it's reasonable.

DATA ENGINEERING AND VISUALIZATION PRESENTATION – SOPHIA MOHR, CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER

Sophia Mohr, Chief Innovation Officer gave a Data Engineering and Visualization presentation.

- **Needs:** We have direct interface and connections with our partners and vendors who have increasing complex and cloud architectures.
- **Project Goal:** Build a reusable data infrastructure that is stable, dependable and secure
- **Expected Project Outcomes:** Atomic data structure, geospatially enabled data, real time & batch analytic integration patterns, rapid external data sharing, rapid dashboard delivery, foundation for data science environment, foundation for web services
- **Project Expected Cost:** *Estimated \$1.5M*

There are three focus areas:

1. **Data Governance and Strategy:**
 - The collection of processes, roles, standards, and metrics that ensure the effective and efficient use of information.
 - Focuses on sources of data and how they should be linked and aligned.
2. **Data Engineering & Architecture:**
 - The models, policies, services, rules standards that govern which data is collected, and how it is stored, arranged, integrated, and put to use in data systems and in organizations.
 - Focuses on the data plumbing - the pipes and other connectors used to move data across systems and vendors - to enable efficient, scalable consumption, usage, blending of data.
3. **Data Analytics/Visualization:**
 - The computational analysis of data for discovery, interpretation and communication of meaningful patterns.
 - Focuses on converting data into information to feed decision-making.

Goal is to build reusable infrastructure that is stable, dependable and secure.

In 2021, COTA has adapted to external factors and implemented several different strategic cloud-based solutions. As a result COTA's data needs have evolved as we have direct interface and connections with our partners and vendors. The RFP went out to over 9,000 vendors and received 18 proposals. The three chosen were: Centric, Cultivate Geospatial and Keyspal.

Trustee Moore stated, as we think about the process and data, will the services that are provided have a focus on cyber security or any type of external things? We have evaluated each of these vendors. One of the things that we brought up in the RFP was really around cyber security and squirreling our data so an inherent nature of cyber security with each of the proposed solutions and how it's implemented will be determined upon the assessment, but with the RFP interest is an inherent basis to have cyber security built in and have data with that as well.

UNDERWRITER SELECTION RESOLUTION – ANGEL MUMMA, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

As discussed in the Capital Improvement Program want to make sure we are looking at ways to fund the programs and we are looking at long term debt. As part of preparing, we have established a team and now have gone through the process of underwriters. We had 21 responded. The Goldman Sachs, KeyBanc Capital Markets and Estrada Hinojosa Investments.


It was recommended by the committee that the resolution be placed on the consent agenda.

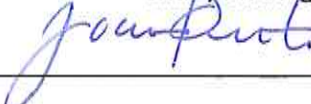
5. **ADJOURNMENT**

Trustee Moore motioned to adjourn the Strategic and Operational Planning Committee meeting. It was moved the Tim Skinner. Meeting adjourned at 9:53 a.m.

Next Meeting: 9:00 AM, Wednesday, November 3, 2021

Adopted: November 3, 2021

Signed: 
Chair, Strategic and Operational Planning Committee

Attest: 
President/CEO



BOARD STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE:

Marlon Moore, Chair

Steve Gladman

Doug McCollough

Tim Skinner

