

**Cleveland Avenue Bus Rapid Transit
Columbus, Ohio
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2014)**

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 15.6 Miles, 32 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$47.67 Million
Section 5309 Small Starts Share (\$YOE):	\$38.13 Million (80.0%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2017):	\$2.66 Million
Current Year Ridership Forecast (2014):	5,700 Daily Linked Trips 1,683,700 Annual Linked Trips
Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2035):	6,600 Daily Linked Trips 1,974,300 Annual Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Medium

Project Description: The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) is proposing a bus rapid transit (BRT) line connecting downtown Columbus with the OhioHealth Medical Center in Westerville via Cleveland Avenue. Service will operate in existing peak-period bus lanes for one mile in downtown Columbus and mixed traffic for the rest of the route. The project includes new BRT stations, traffic signal priority, 14 new low-floor compressed natural gas buses, and special branding of vehicles and stations. Along approximately 10.3 miles, between downtown Columbus and State Route 161, service would operate every 10 minutes during weekday peak periods and every 15 minutes during weekday off-peak periods. For the remaining 5.3 miles, between State Route 161 and the OhioHealth Medical Center, service would operate every 30 minutes during both peak and off-peak periods.

Project Purpose: Current ridership on COTA's #1 - Cleveland Avenue route is the second-highest in the system and rapidly growing; standing loads are common. The project would alleviate overcrowding, low travel speeds and substandard on-time performance for bus service along Cleveland Avenue. Increased service frequency and faster travel speeds associated with the proposed project would reduce current travel times by up to 20 percent. The corridor has significant transit-dependent populations that would benefit from improved connections to major destinations in the corridor, which include downtown Columbus, the region's primary economic node and location of many social services; Columbus State Community College, which enrolls over 24,000 students; the Northern Lights and Columbus Square shopping centers; and Mt. Carmel St. Ann's Hospital. The project is also expected to support economic revitalization along Cleveland Avenue, a historic commercial corridor.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: In September 2011, COTA initiated an alternatives analysis to examine transit improvements in the Cleveland Avenue corridor. BRT along Cleveland Avenue was included in the fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan that the region's metropolitan planning organization adopted in May 2012. COTA adopted

the locally preferred alternative in June 2012. FTA approved the project, then called the Northeast Corridor BRT project, into Small Starts Project Development (PD) in April 2013. COTA received a documented Categorical Exclusion for the project in July 2014. COTA anticipates receipt of a Small Starts Grant Agreement in early 2016 and the start of revenue service in late 2017.

This is the first time that FTA has evaluated and rated the Cleveland Avenue BRT project. Since the project entered PD, the estimated capital cost increased from \$39.43 million to \$47.67 million as a result of further engineering and design and a one-year delay in completing the project relative to COTA's anticipated schedule at that time. While the number of stations decreased from 43 to 32, the estimated costs for systems, paving and professional services increased, and COTA added an additional BRT bus to the project scope. The anticipated Section 5309 funding amount increased from \$31.54 million to \$38.13 million, with the share remaining at 80 percent.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan		
<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal: Section 5309 Small Starts	\$38.13	80.0%
Local: COTA Sales Tax	\$9.54	20.0%
Total:	\$47.67	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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LAND USE RATING: Medium

The land use rating reflects population and employment densities within ½-mile of proposed station areas, as well as the share of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the corridor compared to the share in the surrounding counties.

- The 115,900 employees served by the system corresponds to a medium rating by FTA guidelines. The population density of 3,600 in the station area corresponds to a medium-low rating.
- The proportion of existing legally binding affordability restricted housing in the transit corridor is compared to the proportion of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the project county is 1.75, which corresponds to a medium rating.
- Parking costs range between \$8 and \$20 a day in the CBD, with a midpoint of \$14, which corresponds to a medium-high rating. No parking spaces are required for development within the CBD, which corresponds to a high rating. Within the CBD, the ratio of parking spaces per employee is 0.89, which corresponds to a low rating.
- The existing corridor and study area development varies along the corridor from campus environments, auto-oriented retail, suburban residential developments, and dense, mixed-use environments in the central business district (CBD). Pedestrian facilities, including accessible sidewalks, are available at most stations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium

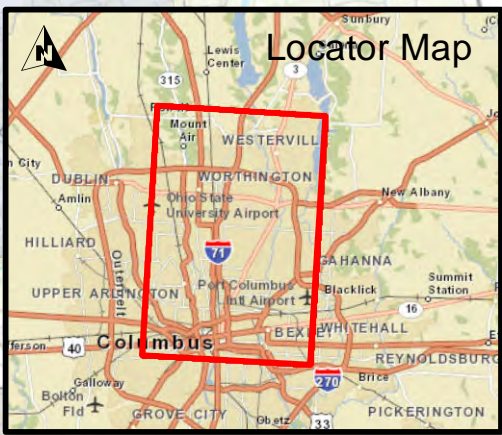
- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* The City of Columbus and Franklin County have established policies and strategies to encourage reinvestment and redevelopment along the Cleveland Avenue Corridor. The intent is to create urban, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development areas.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* Presently, there are no transit-specific zoning ordinances that support increased density in transit station areas. However, the Milo-Grogan Neighborhood, South Linden, North Linden, and Northland Plans encourage transit-supportive development in the corridor north of downtown and facilitates infill development.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* There are no specific regulatory or financial incentives to promote transit-supportive development. However, tax increment finance zones could be used within the corridor.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Performance of land use policies varies throughout the corridor, with activity largely concentrated in the CBD. New development in the Downtown District includes the redevelopment of the former Lazarus department store and multiple residential buildings.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Regional transit investment has the potential to support land use changes primarily around the CBD and at transit centers. Within other areas of the corridor, the redevelopment opportunities would be less dense.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium-Low

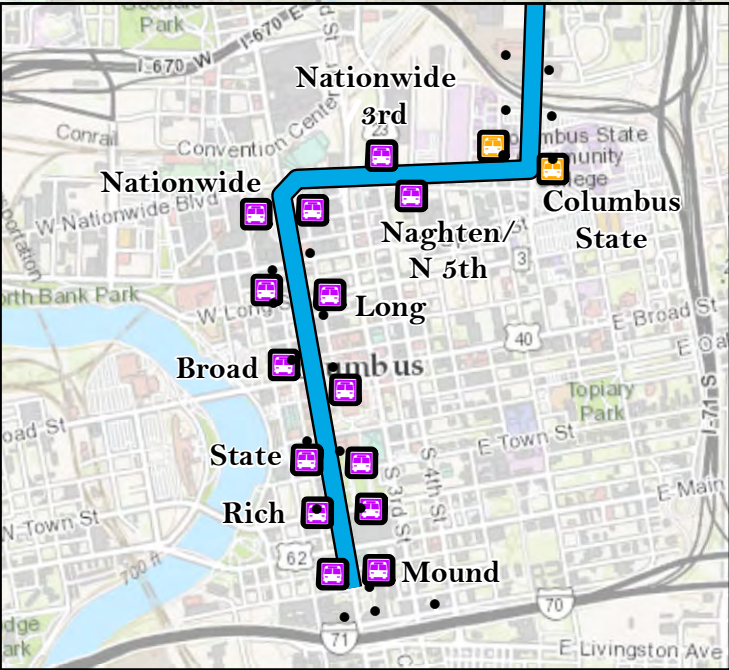
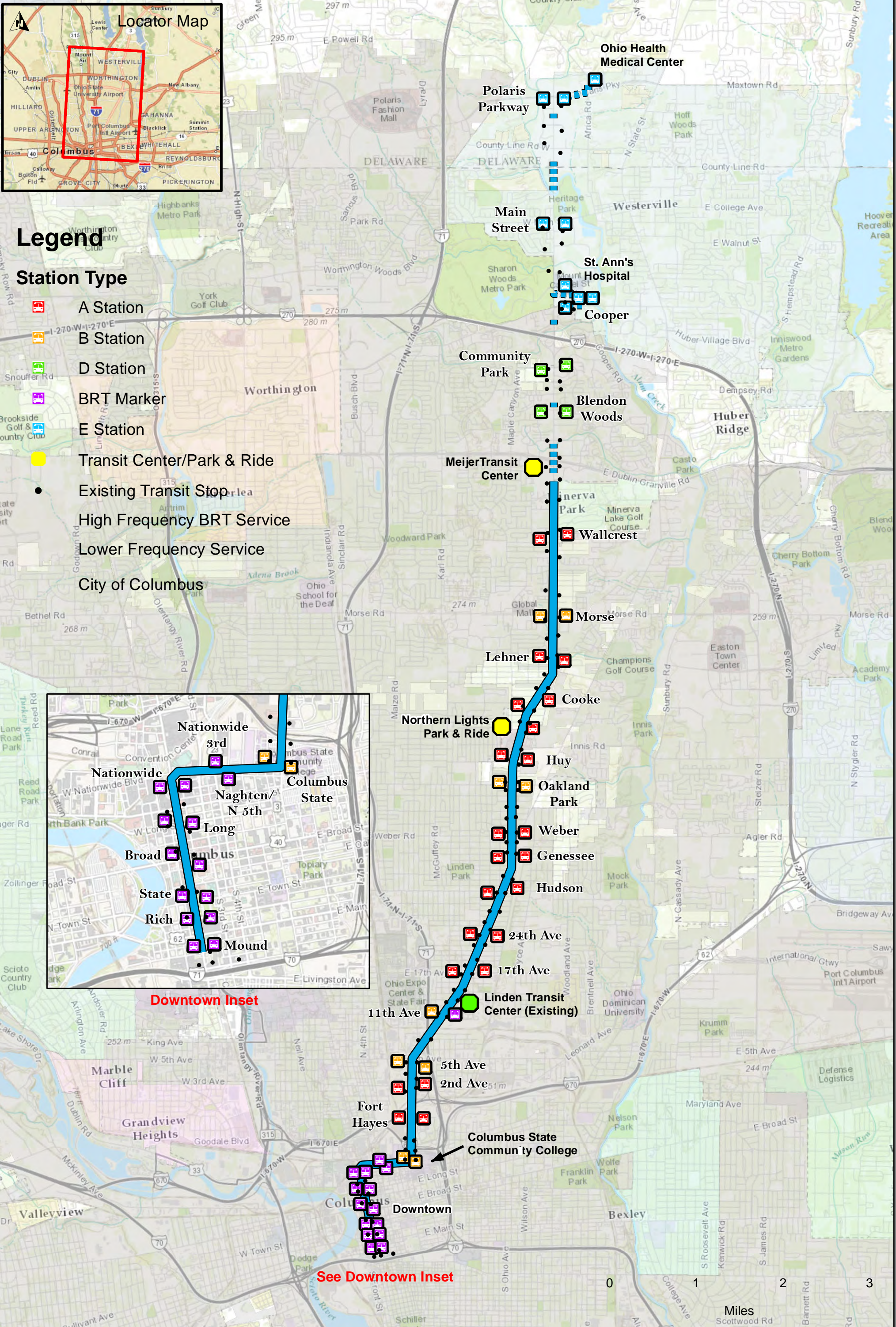
- The City of Columbus and Franklin County use both federal and local programs to maintain and create affordable housing along the Cleveland Avenue Corridor.
- The City of Columbus and Franklin County have used federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds to jointly implement four affordable housing projects in the Cleveland Avenue corridor, including 640 units.
- The Land Bank of the City of Columbus acquires and sells vacant and abandoned residential properties for redevelopment through the City's Land Reutilization Program.



Legend

Station Type

- A Station
- B Station
- D Station
- BRT Marker
- E Station
- Transit Center/Park & Ride
- Existing Transit Stop
- High Frequency BRT Service
- Lower Frequency Service
- City of Columbus



COTA - Cleveland Avenue BRT Stations and Transit Centers - Columbus, OH

