



Combining public transportation and technology to make a city smarter.

COTA Plus



PARTNER

Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)

LOCATION

Columbus, Ohio

LAUNCH

July 2019

USE CASE

Provide a comprehensive point-to-point and first-and-last-mile public transit service for commuters and the overall community.

GOAL

Expand transit coverage and improve service efficiency by replacing, and connecting to, fixed routes with an on-demand service.

Overview

Columbus, Ohio, was already a winner – and that was before they reimagined and improved the city’s transit system. This Midwestern city – the 14th most populous in the country – competed against 77 others nationwide to win the U.S. Department of Transportation’s “Smart City Challenge” – a challenge that asked participants to develop an “integrated, first-of-its-kind smart transportation system that would use data, applications, and technology to help people and goods move more quickly, cheaply, and efficiently.”

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)’s goal was to increase transit coverage and ridership. Additionally, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a need to reevaluate underused fixed routes and analyze which areas could benefit from an on-demand service.

83%

OF FIXED ROUTES CONNECT TO THE ON-DEMAND SERVICE

13x

INCREASE IN SERVICE COVERAGE

“We know our community will move differently. We will need to adapt as things evolve.”

— COTA CEO
Joanna Pinkerton

“Through our partnership with Via, COTA//Plus Bus On-Demand is providing residents of Northeast Franklin County with service that meets their immediate and specific needs. We are excited to explore how other neighborhoods can benefit from this innovative solution and connect more people to our transit system.”

— Sophia Mohr COTA
Chief Innovation Officer

Solution

In partnership with Via, COTA launched its first microtransit service in July 2019. Since then, they have introduced three additional zones, including Via's first fully on-demand bus service in the United States. The services provide point-to-point and first-and-last-mile transportation in Grove City, South Side, Westerville, Northeast Columbus, and New Albany. Riders can connect to 19 different fixed routes, 10 of which were added after consulting with the Via Strategy team to connect to areas that were experiencing a reduction in fixed route service due to the pandemic.

Riders can book rides through a mobile application or by phone, and rides are free if making a connection to a fixed route service.



SERVICE ZONE

72 SQUARE MILES (4 ZONES)



FLEET SIZE

3 LARGE BUSES
13 VANS



HOURS OF SERVICE

GROVE CITY, WESTERVILLE:
MONDAY – FRIDAY 5.30AM – 8PM

SOUTH SIDE:
7 DAYS A WEEK 5.30AM – 8PM

NORTHEAST:
7 DAYS A WEEK 5AM – 11PM



RIDER COHORTS

COMMUTERS, RESIDENTS,
SENIORS, STUDENTS

Results

The outstanding stats speak for themselves. From December 2019 to December 2020, ridership increased nearly 4x while also unlocking access to the 19 of the city's fixed transit routes. During this timeframe, COTA and Via implemented social distancing protocols to ensure riders and driver safety. Ninety six percent of COTA Plus/Bus On-demand's riders have rated the service 5 out of 5 stars – a fantastic metric considering more than 5,000 riders have completed upwards of 18,000 rides since launch. Across all zones, the average wait time is down to 12 minutes – a significant improvement for zones with a previous wait of nearly half an hour.