



External Stakeholder Relations Committee Minutes

Tuesday, September 9, 2025 at 3:30 PM

COTA - WG Porter Boardroom, 33 N High St, Columbus OH

1. Call to Order

Chair Erika Clark Jones called the September 9, 2025 meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee to order at 3:30 pm.

2. Roll Call

Committee Members Present

Erika Clark Jones, Chair
Pete Bucher, Trustee
Heather Ulrey, Trustee

Committee Members Excused

Matt Starr, Trustee

3. Approval of External Stakeholder Relations Committee Minutes

A. May 8, 2025 External Stakeholder Relations Committee Minutes

Trustee Pete Bucher moved to approve the May 8, 2025 External Stakeholder Relations Committee meeting minutes, seconded by Trustee Heather Ulrey. Motion carried.

4. New Business

A. No Fare Feasibility Study Progress Report - Patrick Harris, COTA Chief External Relations Officer

COTA Chief External Relations Officer Patrick Harris presented the No Fare Feasibility Study Progress Report, noting the timeline of work, which started in June. Four Nines Technologies is conducting the study; they have performed no-fare analysis work with other North American transit organizations. Mr. Harris said data collection includes internal and external stakeholders, and that several alternatives are being considered. He shared next steps, which include external engagement through key community leaders, union leadership, and community surveys. Mr. Harris estimated COTA is halfway through the work, and that the Board will receive copies of the full study in January.

B. COTA//Plus Service Provider Plan - Devayani Puranik, COTA Mobility Development Program Director and Kelsey Ellingsen, COTA Local Government Affairs Director

COTA Mobility Development Program Director Devayani Puranik provided the background of COTA//Plus Service, noting this service fills the gap of service and extends our service. Current zones are Grove City, Westerville, and South Columbus. She said the

goal is to expand up to eight new COTA//Plus zones to strengthen regional mobility. Ms. Puranik described the service model and key benefits, and said seniors, students and workforce are main users of this service. She shared the proposed shared investment model, where COTA covers 90 percent of the funds (through grants, sales tax and farebox); the community’s share is 10 percent.

COTA Local Government Affairs Director Kelsey Ellingsen shared details of the expansion program promotion, noting key partners are involved with outreach about this opportunity. Interested communities are asked to submit a letter of interest by October 10. This program is included in the progress report work.

C. LinkUS Communications and Engagement Update - Patrick Harris, COTA Chief External Relations Officer

COTA Chief External Relations Officer Patrick Harris presented the LinkUS Communications and Engagement update, noting tactics that the engagement plan is taking: LinkUS Delivery Alliance Program communications; progress reports; website updates; LinkUS newsletters; continuous communication with government leaders and key stakeholders; community engagement events, public meetings and scheduled presentations. He also talked about the 2025 Supplier Summit, held August 6, which had more than 200 attendees. Mr. Harris noted what is coming up: September Progress Report; Short Range Transit Plan Public Meetings; introducing COTA’s new Chief LinkUS Program Officer Dorinda McCombs; and finalizing and announcing the 2026 operating and capital budgets.

5. Other Business

No other business was brought before the Committee.

6. Adjournment

Trustee Heather Ulrey moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Pete Bucher. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 4:09 pm.

Adopted:

November 5, 2025

Signed:

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Erika Clark Jones

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Chair, External Stakeholder Relations Committee

Attest:

Signed by:

Monica Sally Lopez

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President/CEO