# 2026
# BRAND GUIDE

COTA

# OUR *purpose*

With each campaign, we connect to our audiences by becoming a part of their lives. Rather than talking about ourselves or simply explaining the importance of mobility, we are creating shared experiences. Our audiences will hear about COTA from the voices of our own customers.

Through our photography and visuals, we showcase "life in the moment" by telling the stories of people who are moving forward toward their goals and dreams. Overall, our message becomes a growing anthem: "We're on this ride together."

We speak with a bold, future-forward voice that listens to and involves others. We focus on being authentic and aspirational, representing people of different backgrounds and the many possibilities we can achieve together. This is a campaign about people coming together for the unified goal of moving all lives forward.

# OUR *tagline*

## MOVING EVERY LIFE
## *FORWARD*

Our brand tagline is the external manifestation of our company vision, speaking in a voice directly connected to the lives and motivations of our audiences. It is an inspiring promise, a bond built between us.
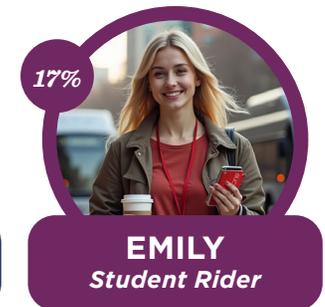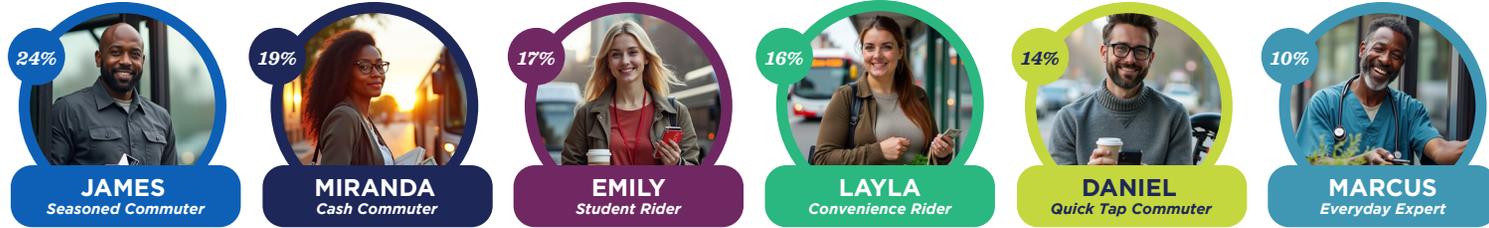
# OUR *personas*

At COTA, our customers are at the heart of everything we do. Each person who boards our vehicles has unique needs, challenges and goals. By understanding our core rider personas, we can create better experiences, improve accessibility and ensure our services truly serve Central Ohio.

## PERSONA BREAKDOWN:
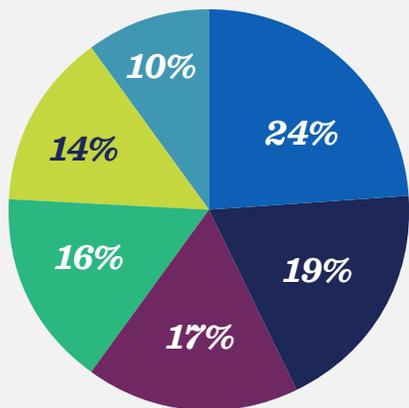


**24%** Seasoned Commuter

**19%** Cash Commuter

**17%** Student Rider

**16%** Convenience Rider

**14%** Quick Tap Commuter

**10%** Everyday Expert

**24%**
**JAMES**
*Seasoned Commuter*

**19%**
**MIRANDA**
*Cash Commuter*

**17%**
**EMILY**
*Student Rider*

**16%**
**LAYLA**
*Convenience Rider*

**14%**
**DANIEL**
*Quick Tap Commuter*

**10%**
**MARCUS**
*Everyday Expert*

|  | **JAMES**<br>*Seasoned Commuter*<br>24% | **MIRANDA**<br>*Cash Commuter*<br>19% | **EMILY**<br>*Student Rider*<br>17% | **LAYLA**<br>*Convenience Rider*<br>16% | **DANIEL**<br>*Quick Tap Commuter*<br>14% | **MARCUS**<br>*Everyday Expert*<br>10% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Type of Rider** | **61%** are work commuters | **67%** are work commuters | **47%** commute to school; **23%** commute to work | Mixed trip purposes (commutes, appointments, social events, errands, etc.) | **81%** are work commuters | Mixed trip purposes (appointments, social events, errands, etc.) |
| **Frequency** | **25%** ride 6–7x a week | **51%** ride 5x a week | **69%** ride 3–5x a week | **64%** ride 3x a week or less | **48%** ride 5x a week | **50%** ride every day |
| **Payment Method** | **53%** use a paper pass | **66%** pay with cash | **63%** pay with an OSU or CCS student ID or another kind of educational pass | **68%** pay with cash | **55%** pay with the Transit app or Smartcard | **73%** use a paper pass |
| **Vehicle and License Access** | **4%** have license and vehicle access | **7%** have license and vehicle access | **30%** have license and vehicle access | **51%** have license and vehicle access | **45%** have license and vehicle access | **6%** have license and vehicle access |

# OUR *message*

We are always authentic, telling stories that connect COTA to the lives of our audiences. As we craft messages, keep these principles in mind.

### PROMISES AND PROOF

Our passion empowers a bold voice that makes promises based on understanding. But we always follow those promises with proof of our commitment and our progress.

### OUR MEANING OF MOBILITY

Our future-forward message: We are reinventing what mobility means to the people of Central Ohio and reimagining how it connects them to what matters in their lives.

### "WHY" IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN "WHAT"

Our content and creative is purpose driven, so we make sure we showcase why we are doing something before we showcase what we're doing.

### A PART OF EACH OTHERS' LIVES

We are people oriented, so we fit our messaging to what is important in the lives of our audiences. We celebrate the people who move us forward, from customers to COTA team members.

# OUR *look*

No matter what medium or platform, our creative elements are unified around common design tenets.

### IN THE MOMENT

Our campaign lives in the moment, capturing the everyday experiences of our customers.

### CINEMATIC & COLORFUL

Color and vibrance shows through at all times, with a cinematic approach to lighting and composition that create emotion.

### SIMPLE & DIRECT

Our style is simple, directly moving our audience to its point. Nothing is overdesigned or obscures the message.

### HIGHLIGHTING OUR COMMUNITY

We see an aspirationally rich sense of humanity in the situations we create. A positive portrayal of real life.

# OUR *voice*

We speak in a way that proves our deep understanding of others and our passion to make mobility matter in all our lives.



### WE ARE BOLD, YET COMPASSIONATE

We have a personality, we show commitment and we are guided by a compassionate purpose. It drives us to stand up and stand out for our beliefs.

### INVOLVING, A BOND OF TOGETHERNESS

We do not do everything on our own; we are not superheroes. Instead, we work with people.
We are involved in our communities.
We are stronger when we collaborate and unite.
As we say, "We are on this ride together."

### CONVERSATIONAL & APPROACHABLE

We are redefining the concept of "authority" as we transition from a transit authority to a mobility solutions provider.
We listen, we discuss, we involve others. We understand that moving forward means being transparent and open-minded.

# OUR *voice*



> **cotabus** Have you seen gas prices lately? They're high enough to make anyone consider their options! If you're seeking new ways to move, there's a seat for you on COTA. Whether you take a fixed-route line to work or call COTA//Plus for your evening pickup, you have the power to choose how you commute.
>
> 5w



### SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF EVERYONE

Connection is a cornerstone etched in our DNA. We are driven by the collective power of all people. And we exercise this commitment every day.

### HOPEFUL AND POSITIVE, A VOICE OF OPTIMISM

We face the future with authentic positivity. We have an unwavering sense of hope and limitless energy to get involved, to make things happen.

### A PERSONALITY, A SENSE OF HUMOR

We see the lighter side of life, the things we all enjoy and that make us smile. When the situation calls for a lighter touch or a smile, we make it happen.

# OUR *voice*



## RAPID GROWTH.
## RAPID CHANGE.
## RAPID TRANSIT.

With three rapid transit corridors in development, midnight service launching on May 5 and more COTA//Plus zones on the way, COTA is expanding mobility options to keep Central Ohio moving — delivering faster, smarter and more connected transit for the region.

ZERO EMISSIONS

'COTA

### *QUICKSTART COPY CHECKLIST*

- Focus on simplicity, and get to the point.
- Make bold, compelling statements of truth.
- When writing, "we" is the pronoun of choice.
- Always speak with compassion and empathy.
- When looking forward be realistic, yet aspirational.
- Always focus on believability and authenticity.

### *TERMINOLOGY USE*

**VEHICLE/BUS** We offer services above and beyond bus transit, so use the word vehicle when discussing transportation outside of COTA fixed-route lines, like COTA//Plus or COTA Mainstream. For our fixed-route services, bus or vehicle is appropriate.

**CUSTOMER/RIDER/PASSENGER** The people we serve are much more than just riders to us. Customer is preferred, though rider or passenger can be substituted when appropriate.

**BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT)** A fixed transit system that operates with increased frequency and high-capacity articulated vehicles that have Traffic Signal Priority (TSP), dedicated lanes and platform-level boarding, making travel faster and more reliable. Use Bus Rapid Transit or BRT.

**PARK AND RIDE** In all instances, capitalize the P and R, and do not substitute & for and.

**EMOJIS** We don't use skin-tone emojis (emojis with selectable skin tones) because we represent the entire community, not just one type of person. Use standard, universal emojis that don't specify demographic characteristics.

# OUR *voice*

## GENDER NEUTRALITY AND USE OF PRONOUNS

Growing numbers of people use *they/them/their* as a gender-neutral singular personal pronoun. To promote inclusiveness, diversity and equity, adhere to AP Style guidelines as much as possible for internal and external communications.

### GUIDELINES

- Use *they/them/their* to describe/represent a person who uses these pronouns.
  - *Don't say*: preferred or chosen pronouns
  - *Do say:* the pronouns they use, whose pronouns are, who uses the pronouns, etc.

- *They/them/their* take plural verbs — even when used as a singular pronoun.

- The singular reflexive themself is acceptable when referring to people who use *they/them/their*.

- Use *they* rather than he/she for an unspecified gender or indefinite pronoun (anyone, everyone, someone).

- Rewording to avoid a pronoun is also acceptable
  *example:*
  The foundation gave grants to anyone who lost a job.
  (instead of anyone who lost their job).

- In instances where we say men and women, use *them/those/they*.
  *example:*
  Honoring those who died defending our freedom
  (instead of the men and women who died defending)

- When using *they/them/their* as a singular pronoun, explain if context isn't clear.
  *example:*
  Smith, who uses the pronoun they, said they will retire in June.

# OUR *voice*

## CAPITALIZATION



COTA should always be in all caps, even in URLs.



C-pass will always have a capital C, a hyphen and a lowercase p. (Though C-pass has a lowercase c in its logo, the C should always be capitalized in body copy.)



Transit app should have a capital T unless being used in a URL. (Though Transit app has a lowercase t in its logo, the T should always be capitalized in body copy.)



COTA//Plus within body copy should be COTA in all caps, followed by two forward slash marks, then Plus. Capitalize only the P in Plus.



When referring to Mainstream On-Demand, always capitalize the D after the hyphen.



Smartcard will always have a capital S and be one single word, no spaces.

# OUR *voice*

## PRESIDENT/CEO BRANDING

When referring to COTA's President/CEO, use the following proper copy format.

**NAME**

Monica Téllez-Fowler

*Always include an accent on the first 'e' in Téllez-Fowler.*

**TITLE**

President/CEO of COTA

**HEADSHOT**

For photography, this is the preferred headshot for Monica Téllez-Fowler. Please use this image when necessary in all creative assets.

**SIGNATURE**

Digital signature can be obtained through the President's Office with approval of CEO or Chief of Staff only.

# OUR *voice*

## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

When listing members of COTA's Executive Leadership team and Board of Trustees, names and titles should run in the following approved order.

### EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

| | |
|---|---|
| Monica Téllez-Fowler | President/CEO |
| Garth Weithman | Deputy CEO |
| Nikki Brandon | Chief Human Resources Officer |
| Patrick Harris | Chief External Relations Officer |
| Earl Jackson | Chief Financial Officer |
| Dorinda McCombs | Chief LinkUS Program Officer |
| Sophia Mohr | Chief Innovation and Technology Officer |
| Tanya Salyers | Chief of Staff |
| Alicia Walker | Chief Operating Officer |
| Christina Wendell | Chief Legal/General Counsel |

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sean Mentel | Chair | Doug McCollough | Trustee |
| Trudy Bartley | Vice Chair | Marc Reitter | Trustee |
| Pete Bucher | Trustee | Stephen Sayre | Trustee |
| Erika Clark Jones | Trustee | Matt Starr | Trustee |
| Jay Deis | Trustee | Amy Taylor | Trustee |
| Mallory Donaldson | Trustee | Heather Ulrey | Trustee |
| Jeff Hunley | Trustee | | |

# OUR
## *photography*

All COTA photography should be representative of the rider and vehicle in the following manners:

### WE ARE ORGANIC, CANDID & REPRESENTATIVE

• The goal is to feel natural and authentic, not posed.

• Models should be relatable, as if they are an every day customer on our vehicles. Capture persons of color, persons ranging in age (children–seniors), different genders, abilities, persons of varying professions and social and financial demographics.

### OUR TRANSIT VEHICLES ARE HEROIC

• A vehicle must be present, whether in the foreground, background or represented by the interior architecture of the vehicle.

• Consider multiple angles of our vehicles, making them heroic. Think of them as a model, not a prop.

### BE IN THE MOMENT

• Photographer(s) should move around the environment capturing multiple angles of the riders and the vehicles.

• Capture candid moments of customers talking, reading or decompressing. These moments are best captured while traveling between shoot locations, not as individually posed moments.

### WE FOCUS ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT

• Use medium depth of field and sharp focus to allow for more adaptable images.

• Be cautious of our "live" set, avoiding obtrusive objects, light posts or harsh angles that draw the eye away from the subject matter, our vehicles and customers.

• Capture tall verticals and wide horizontals to encompass a vast majority of marketing spaces.

• Utilize level horizon lines whenever possible instead of skewing the shot.

• Continue to look for ways in which to capture, source and utilize imagery that reflects our entire community, while maintaining the raw integrity of our customers.

# CNG VEHICLE

# ELECTRIC VEHICLE

# LATE-NIGHT PHOTOS

# MAINSTREAM VEHICLE
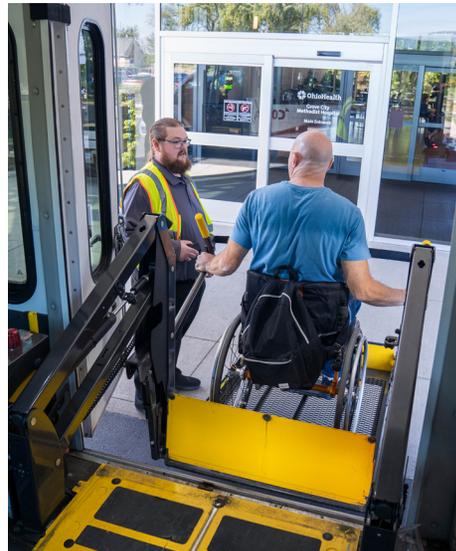
# COTA//PLUS VEHICLE
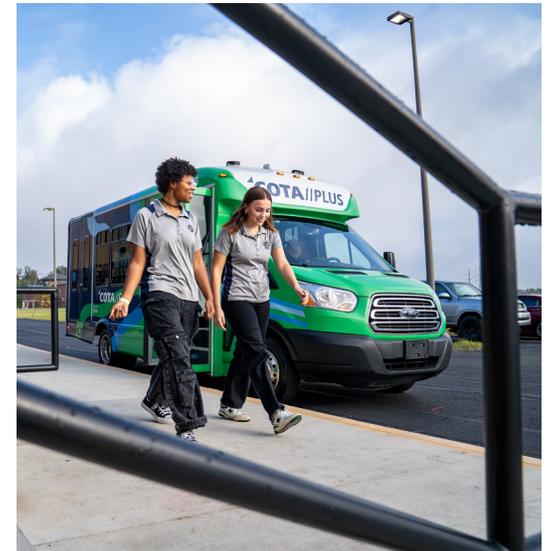
# CUSTOMERS

# OPERATORS

# OUR *colors*

Our primary brand colors best represent our brand and should always be key when designing, but we also have secondary and accent colors to help support and enhance our various campaigns.

As a basic rule, use secondary colors as complements.

**PRIMARY COLORS**

**COTA Red**
PMS 1805

**CMYK:** 5/96/80/22
**RGB:** 175/39/47
**WEB:** AF272F

**COTA Blue**
PMS 281

**CMYK:** 100/85/5/36
**RGB:** 0/32/91
**WEB:** 00205B

**SECONDARY COLORS**

**COTA Gray**
PMS Cool Gray 6

**CMYK:** 55/45/41/8
**RGB:** 121/124/129
**WEB:** 797C81

**COTA Teal**
PMS 7459

**CMYK:** 73/27/21/0
**RGB:** 65/151/181
**WEB:** 4298B5

**COTA Green**
PMS 354 C

**CMYK:** 95/0/100/0
**RGB:** 0/174/66
**WEB:** 00AE42

**COTA Yellow**
PMS 7548

**CMYK:** 0/22/100/0
**RGB:** 255/199/9
**WEB:** FFC708

**COTA Purple**
PMS 7657

**CMYK:** 59/95/32/18
**RGB:** 112/43/99
**WEB:** 702B63

# OUR *colors*

As a basic rule, use accent colors minimally so as not to overtake or dominate any creative.

## ACCENT COLORS

**PMS:** 1645
**CMYK:** 0/73/79/0
**RGB:** 255/106/64
**WEB:** FF6A40

**PMS:** 1225
**CMYK:** 0/22/85/0
**RGB:** 254/198/65
**WEB:** FEC641

**PMS:** 162
**CMYK:** 0/25/29/0
**RGB:** 255/200/173
**WEB:** FFC8AD

**PMS:** 7480
**CMYK:** 73/0/68/0
**RGB:** 0/195/130
**WEB:** 00C382

**PMS:** 389
**CMYK:** 21/0/85/0
**RGB:** 198/216/65
**WEB:** C6D841

**PMS:** 7457
**CMYK:** 17/0/1/0
**RGB:** 207/243/255
**WEB:** CFF3FF

**PMS:** 2727
**CMYK:** 91/66/0/0
**RGB:** 13/96/181
**WEB:** 0D60B5

**PMS:** 7425
**CMYK:** 22/100/45/4
**RGB:** 188/23/92
**WEB:** BC175C

# OUR *colors*

All of COTA's transit lines are color coded for easy recognition. Whenever line numbers are called out in print, digital, social and video assets, the color surrounding the number should match the corresponding line.

## COLORS BY LINE

| FREQUENT LINES | STANDARD LINES | RUSH HOUR LINES |
|---|---|---|
| PMS 1805 | PMS 281 | PMS 341 |
| **CMYK:** 5/96/80/22 **RGB:** 175/39/47 **WEB:** AF272F | **CMYK:** 100/85/5/36 **RGB:** 0/32/91 **WEB:** 00205B | **CMYK:** 100/0/69/30 **RGB:** 0/126/99 **WEB:** 007e63 |
| 1  2  5  7 | 3  4  6  11 | 41  42  43  44 |
| 8  10  23  34 | 12  21  22  24 | 45  46  51  52 |
|  | 25  31  32  33 | 61  71  72  73 |
|  | 102 | 74 |

## EXAMPLES



Lines 11, 10, nine and seven will get you here.

11  10  9  7

cotabus

Let's Vincent van GO! Join us "On The Line" as we check out the latest exhibit at the... more

columbusmuseum and 1 other



**1 KENNY / LIVINGSTON** *frequent*

### MOVING YOU FORWARD



### LINE 1 MAP



## EXCEPTION



stop # 1295

1 KENNY / LIVINGSTON
2 E MAIN/ N HIGH
31 HUDSON

### ATTENTION CUSTOMERS
### REROUTES AHEAD

*COLUMBUS 10K*

SUNDAY, JUNE 1 | BEGINNING AT 8 A.M.

**IMPACTED LINES:**
1-12, 102, CMAX & ZOO BUS

The only exception to this rule is if the line number is contained within the body copy.

# OUR *type*

As seen throughout this brand book, our typefaces and fonts occasionally combine to help add emphasis to words and phrases. Weights are chosen based on messaging hierarchy, from main headlines to body copy.

**PRIMARY**

## Gotham

abcdefghijklmnop
qrstuvwxyz
**1234567890**

**WEIGHTS**

| | |
|---|---|
| light | book |
| **medium** | **bold** |
| **black** | |
| ***ULTRA ITALIC*** | |

**SECONDARY**

## Sentinel

*abcdefghijklmnop*
*qrstuvwxyz*
***1234567890***

**WEIGHTS**

| | |
|---|---|
| light | *light italic* |
| book | *book italic* |
| medium | *medium italic* |
| **bold** | **black** |

**SUBHEAD OPTION**

## BARLOW CONDENSED

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

**WEIGHT**

**EXTRA BOLD**

# OUR *type*

We have substitute typeface options if main typefaces are not available, but we should always strive to use our primary choices.

## SUBSTITUTE SANS

# Arial

abcdefghijklmnop
qrstuvwxyz

**1234567890**

### WEIGHTS

Regular

*Italic*

**Bold**

***Bold Italic***

## SUBSTITUTE SERIF

# Georgia

abcdefghijklmnop
qrstuvwxyz

**1234567890**

### WEIGHTS

Regular

*Italic*

**Bold**

***Bold Italic***

# OUR *logos*

## PRIMARY LOGO

## MINIMUM SIZES

To maintain full legibility, never reproduce the logos at sizes smaller than those listed below.



**1.125 inches or 80 pixels**

## CLEAR SPACE

Clear space must surround the logos to ensure legibility and prominence. The size of the clear space around all logos must be at least the width of the "T" in "COTA."
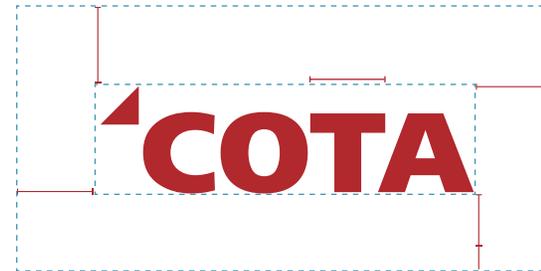
# OUR *logos*

## PRIMARY LOGO



**DO NOT** use any of the secondary or tertiary colors for the logo unless otherwise approved. White is acceptable.
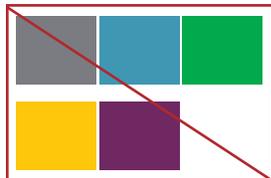


## IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure consistent use of the logo, avoid the practices shown here.



**DO NOT** stretch or bend the logo in any way.



**DO NOT** change the font.



**DO NOT** change the color of the triangle.



**DO NOT** use drop shadows or other visual effects.



**DO NOT** use our logo in a sentence.



**DO NOT** add any extra elements to the logo.

# OUR *logos*

COTA has a number of sub-brands. The basic principles of logo space and use apply to these as well.

Going forward, new sub-brand logos will reflect the format of the COTA//Plus lockup. COTA is in navy (or white when reversed), and the triangle and sub-brand are another color.

## SUB-BRANDING

**PRIMARY**


COTA//PLUS


COTA//RAPID

**STACKED**


COTA //PLUS


COTA //RAPID

**REVERSED**


COTA//RAPID

COTA //RAPID

COTA//RAPID

COTA //RAPID


cmax

COTA ZooBus

COTA MAINSTREAM

COTA MAINSTREAM ON-DEMAND POWERED BY UZURV

# OUR *logos*

Occasionally, COTA partners with other brands and communications require the use of both logos together. To give ample space for each logo, place the other brand's mark no closer than the width of the "T" in the COTA logo, and center it with "COTA," not the full height of the logo to the top of the triangle.

**LOCKUP EXAMPLE**



Place second logo no closer than the width of the "T" in the COTA logo
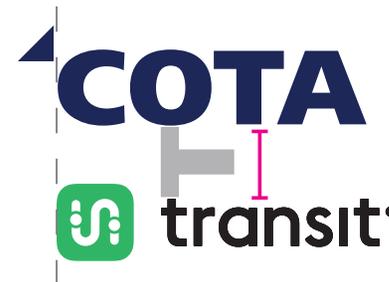


If a stacked lockup is required, place second logo below the COTA with a width of "T" between them. Left align logos using the "C" in COTA, not the triangle.

# ERG *logos*

The logos for COTA's Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) should not be altered and should be included on all related content when appropriate or applicable. The text remains the same color throughout. The basic principles of logo space and use apply to these as well.
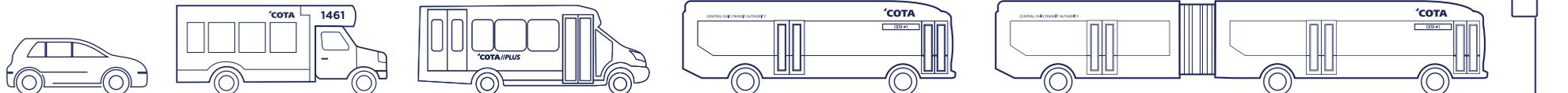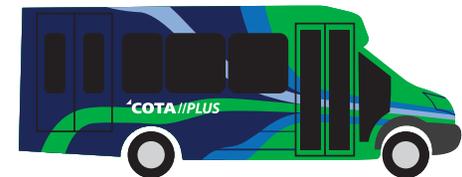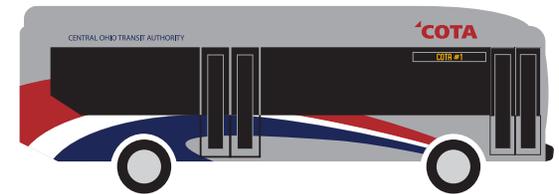


**VERG**
ᐟCOTA VETERANS ERG

**PACT**
ᐟCOTA WORKING PARENTS ERG

**BELIEVE**
ᐟCOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN ERG

**WISE**
ᐟCOTA WOMEN'S ERG

**PRIDE**
ᐟCOTA LGBTQIA+ ERG

# VEHICLE
## *illustrations*

These are the approved design illustrations for COTA's vehicles.

When possible, we should use vehicle illustrations that depict all of COTA's main services.

# OUR *icons*

Brand icons should always be simple, line-based (thinner lines are preferred) graphic depictions of the intended actions or information.

Always one color, they should complement the main color choices within the designed message and never overpower the overall message.

## EXAMPLES

MOVING EVERY LIFE *FORWARD*

COTA