

COTA September 2023 Service Change Meeting  
Thursday, May 23rd, 2023

### **Meeting Purpose, Meeting Format, Introductions**

*Jeff Pullin, Manager, Public Media Relations*

All right, welcome to this service change meeting. This is our service change meeting public comment period for September 2, 2023, service change. The purpose of this meeting is to take public comments on those proposed service changes that will take effect on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023 please keep in mind that no final changes have been made for September 2023. This is just to get your public comment. A reminder, we are recording this meeting. The recording will be posted on our website at COTA.com. If you are joining us by computer or phone, just know that we cannot see or hear you. And please be considerate of meeting attendees and staff. If you're joining us by Webex, you will submit your comments and questions in the Q&A chat box, we'll show you in a moment how to do that. If joining us by phone, just direct all your questions and comments to COTA'S customer care center at 614-228-1776. And if you're joining by Facebook live, just submit your questions by commenting in the live stream.

Let's show you how to use the Q&A chat. If you click on #1 you will see the chat button in the lower right hand corner. It'll bring up a window. That chat window. You want to make sure that it says all panelists and place your questions in that chat box then click enter. We will answer those questions in the order that we received them. We want to remind people of the workforce challenges like most organizations, COTA is impacted by national work worker shortage. COTA continues to recruit and hire new transit operators, but those hires have not been enough to offset retirements and departures. COTA will continue to adjust transit schedules due to the unprecedented workforce challenge. The adjustments will be made to improve service reliability help minimize adverse service impacts to our customers and staff. We hope to begin adding service in future trimesters when we are able to hire, train and retain more operators. Let's talk a little bit more about our recruitment efforts. Those efforts include a revamped and revitalized careers landing page internal and external recruitment incentives including monetary referral and hiring bonuses upwards of \$2000 making candidates with commercial driver licenses eligible to receive a 2500 dollars sign on bonus. Strategic and marketing communication campaigns that boast benefits and increased wages, and partnering with local and state organizations to host hiring events like the one we did last month. Operators' wages start at \$21.50 an hour. Those are training wages. Operators can make more than \$33 an hour after five years. We have comprehensive insurance including medical, dental and Vision, flex health, flexible spending accounts, retirement savings benefits: including OPERS deferred compensation, vacations, holidays, sick pay. This year, we're offering domestic partner benefits and monthly student loans payment stipends after six months of employment, we'll pay \$100 a month towards your student loans. We offer biometric screenings, fitness and Wellness reimbursement, personal training and development, job advancement and tuition reimbursement and employee assistance programs. You can learn more at COTA.com/careers and let's learn more about the proposed adjustments that would begin on Monday, September 4th, and we'll turn this over to Amber.

### **Service Changes**

*Amber Boyd, Service Planner*

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Amber Boyd. I'm a Service Planner with COTA's Planning Team and I'm going to discuss/share some of our recommendations for the September 2023 service change. These changes are scheduled to take place on Monday, September 4th, 2023. Please keep in mind these recommendations are not final and we're here today to hear more from our customers.

Starting with Line 4, Indianola/Lockbourne, we are proposing to remove service from Venice Drive, Weirton Rd and Fairwood Ave south of Watkins. This routing change will allow for a more simple direct routing for customers traveling to and from Alum Creek Dr. Instead, Line 4 would remain on Watkins Rd. in both directions and the stops that you see pictured here to the left will be removed. Any customers impacted by this change. This alignment is fully encompassed within our COTA//Plus Southside zone and those customer customers will still be able to schedule trips in this area; this zone operates 5:30 AM to 8:00 PM seven days a week. Based on feedback from Ohio State University, we are proposing to realign lines 8, 22 and 31 on Ohio State's campus. Currently, they're using W 12th Ave. from Neil. Before continuing to the regular route, we are proposing that they now move to 11th Ave. We would place new stops along 11th college and 12th Ave if we do choose to realign these lines. And this proposal will not have any impact on frequency. We are also proposing to restore line 35 Dublin-Granville. This line was suspended in March 2020 as a part of service impacts caused by the COVID pandemic. And we're proposing to now bring that line back. Previously the line was operating every 45 minutes. We're actually proposing to bring it back, operating every hour, and that's because it would now operate from Boardwalk and Shapter Ave near Worthington, out to New Albany. The stops that are currently being served by our COTA plus Northeast on demand zone with return to line 35. And then after Easton Transit Center, we're proposing all day nonstop service to the New Albany Park and ride. As a part of this recommendation, we are proposing to permanently eliminate the Northeast on-demand zone. And I'll talk about that. So here in this picture to the left you can see the alignment east of 270 and then excuse me West of 270 and then heading east of 270. It'll take the same alignment as line 45. And like I mentioned before, we are proposing to discontinue the COTA plus northeast On-Demand zone. This zone launched during the pandemic to provide service to our passengers who are experiencing suspended fixed route lines in areas of northeast Columbus, Gahanna, Westerville and New Albany. Currently, this zone operates similar to our fixed route system. So, from 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM seven. Days a week. We've also restored lines 25 Bryce, one of the fixed route lines, and the 45 that was temporarily suspended. And so now we are proposing to restore the line 35. And just to be clear, the two recommendations are dependent on each other. We are also proposing to extend ZOO Bus service out to Halloween, which is October 31. Currently the suggestion is operating Saturday and Sunday and then beginning Memorial Day it will begin daily service until Labor Day. So that's September 4th we are proposing. To extend service so beginning Friday, September 8th, the zoo bus would operate Friday, Saturday and Sunday only through Halloween. And you can learn a little bit more about our ZOO Bus. I think we also have some schedules if you would like to pick them up at the door. But by visiting our website at [COTA.com](https://COTA.com) back slash do this. And then friendly reminder, COTA will be providing Red White & Boom service this year. That will take you directly from one of our park and rides to the fireworks display they do here in downtown Columbus. More information will be posted on our website. And that concludes our recommendations for the September service change.

### **Construction Impacts**

*Amber Boyd, Service Planner*

Now I'm going to speak about one construction impact that you can expect on line one. We were notified by the Ohio Health Riverside Hospital that they will be constructing a new Women's Health center that will impact service to our line one that ends at Riverside Hospital. So instead of laying over on Thomas Lane, it will now have a new layover on Ohio Health Parkway. The line one that continues to Carriage Place will not be impacted by this change, so it will still be using the stops along N Broadway. If you're heading to the hospital. This impact is slated to begin in July 2023 and last until the summer of 2024, and we'll have some more notification posted at the STOP and on our website. If you receive our service alerts. And that concludes the construction impacts now going to pass it. Back to Jeff to lead the Q&A.

### **Closing Comments & Q&A**

*Jeff Pullin, Manager, Public Media Relations*

There we go. If you're OK, let's go ahead with the question and answer. Joining us by Webex. Submit your comments in. The chat box. Joining us by phone? Submit your questions at 614-228-1776 or [COTA.com/contact](https://www.cota.com/contact) and if joining it by Facebook Live, will answer those questions that you're leaving right now on the live stream. We're going to go ahead and begin with questions from people here and the audience here at 33 N High St. If anybody has any questions, come up to the podium and we will take them.