

Cleveland Avenue CMAX Project – Information for Columbus Art Commission

“What is BRT & Enhanced Bus Service?”

Slated to begin service in May 2017, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) will introduce a bus rapid transit service or “BRT” to improve one of its busiest routes, Local Line 1 Cleveland. BRT includes a mix of characteristics such as reduced travel times, frequent service, span of service, unique and distinctive branding as well as enhanced passenger amenities. Characteristics of enhanced bus service includes upgrade in local bus service, operates within shared traffic lanes with autos, provides riders with more reliable travel, upgrades bus platform areas, and is designed to attract people who do not regularly ride the bus.

“Project History”

In late 2010, COTA applied for a Federal Transit Administration or “FTA” alternative study grant for Cleveland Avenue. The Alternatives Analysis or “AA” initiated a year later was the first step to secure funding for service and passenger amenity improvements. After extensive public involvement, the AA was completed in summer 2012 and a Locally Preferred Alternative or “LPA” was selected. FTA approved entry of the LPA into project development in spring 2013 and about a year later FTA approved environmental review of the project indicating no significant impacts. In 2014, a BRT brand identity that included the name CMAX and logo were developed through findings from formal research as well as feedback from COTA stakeholders, employees and Board of Trustees.

“Project Benefits”

COTA expects the improved bus system to increase ridership by 15 to 20 percent within the first five years of operation. CMAX will be more reliable, provide riders more reliable travel, reduce travel times, improve pedestrian access and safety as well as help create opportunities for economic development within the corridor.

“Corridor Map”

Local Line 1 serves Cleveland and Livingston Avenues and has an average daily ridership of nearly 4,800, often with standing room only. Once in service, CMAX will run from Downtown Columbus north for 15.6 miles to the OhioHealth Westerville Medical Campus at Polaris Parkway and Africa Road. The new service will complement Local Line 1 Cleveland and connect with existing bus routes and other intercity services to provide a seamless transit system for riders.

BRT will occur from Downtown Columbus to SR-161 and consist of 24 northbound and 23 southbound CMAX platforms. Enhanced bus service will start north of SR-161 and provide an upgrade in local bus service, which will operate within existing traffic lanes along the corridor. There will be a total of 13 local service stops, seven northbound and six southbound. The average CMAX stop distances will be .20 miles in Downtown Columbus, .43 miles from Columbus State to Northern Lights, .58 miles from Northern Lights to SR 161, and .75 miles from SR 161 to Africa Road.

“Project Funding”

Preliminary project cost equal \$47.7 million with \$38.1 million from FTA's New Starts program. This is 80% of the project cost that has been recommended in President Obama's Fiscal Year 2016 budget and the 20% of the project has been committed by COTA. Some of the project's major capital components include 14 new CMAX buses and 60 CMAX platforms (see map) with real time arrival information as well as transit signal priority, a transit center and park & ride lots.

“Operating Frequencies”

CMAX BRT buses will arrive every 10 minutes on weekday mornings and afternoons as well as every 15 minutes off-peak and 30 minutes on weekends between Downtown and State Route 161. At that point, enhanced bus service will begin operating every 30 minutes all the way to OhioHealth Medical Campus at Polaris Parkway and Africa Road. Depending on the time of day, the trip will take around 56 minutes, reducing travel time by 21 percent.

“Shelter Maintenance”

COTA has a street and remote crews that review, maintain the shelters, and repair and replace any damaged items. COTA also has a contract with a cleaning contractor who is responsible to clean the shelters and report any damage.

“Final Design Phase”

Some of the major activities taking place during the project's Final Design Phase include shelter, pylon, park and ride lot and transit center final designs, ongoing coordination with utility companies and municipalities, subsurface utility evaluation, as well as some property acquisition. 90% complete plans for the project's Final Design Phase will be completed in May 2015 and 100% complete plans will be completed in August 2015.

“CMAX Stations & Transit Center”

Locations have been finalized along the corridor for the BRT platforms. The draft design of the shelters, pylons, transit center at Northland Plaza Drive, and the park and ride lot at Northern Lights have been completed. (See renderings) The final design of those sites are underway. The height of the pylons will vary from 18 feet to 12 feet in height depending on the location and the overhead conflicts.

“Public Art Program and Community Process”

COTA has been working with the diverse communities, businesses and property owners along the corridor to ensure the new CMAX stations enhance the existing neighborhoods. To aid in capturing the local identity, COTA is currently coordinating with Area Commissions to create art designs that best reflects their communities. (See handout) Due to FTA funding requirements, the artwork must be integrated into the architecture of the station. After much consideration of maintenance and cost factors, the artwork will be incorporated into the rear bus shelter windows of 33 CMAX stations on Cleveland Avenue between Mt. Vernon Avenue and SR 161. COTA will also include potential lighting enhancements that will match the CMAX brand at all stations along the corridor as well as work to incorporate art into the Transit Center at Northland Plaza Drive. Prior to approval by the CAC, all art concepts must be approved by a review panel determined by COTA consisting of COTA staff, consultants, Columbus College of Art and Design (CCAD) representatives, and Columbus Art Commission members.

“Project Timeline”

The proposed project is currently in the Final Design Phase and 100 percent complete plans will be submitted in August 2015. Construction is expected to begin in November 2015 and last until the end of 2016. Fabrication of the shelters will begin in January 2016 and installation of the shelter should begin in the summer of 2016. Testing of the new CMAX service will take place in early 2017 with the hopes to begin service in May 2017.