



External Stakeholder Relations Committee Minutes

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 3:30 PM

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

1. Call to Order

External Stakeholder Relations Committee Chair Erika Clark Jones called the March 3, 2026 meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee to order at 3:37 pm.

2. Roll Call

Committee Members Present

Erika Clark Jones, Chair

Matt Starr, Trustee

Pete Bucher, Trustee

Heather Ulrey, Trustee

3. Approval of External Stakeholder Relations Committee Minutes

A. January 13, 2026 External Stakeholder Relations Committee Minutes

Trustee Pete Bucher moved to approve the January 13, 2026 External Stakeholder Relations Committee meeting minutes, seconded by Trustee Matt Starr. Motion carried.

4. New Business

A. 2025 Marketing Report - Sarah McQuaide, COTA Marketing and Engagement Director

COTA Marketing and Engagement Director Sarah McQuaide presented the 2025 Marketing Report, noting that through campaigns focused on service enhancements, rider education, community partnerships, and leadership visibility, COTA achieved measurable growth—including a 4.2 percent year-over-year increase in fixed-route ridership and major digital gains driven by targeted messaging and multi-platform outreach. Initiatives such as the Midnight in Motion campaign saw a 16.9 percent ridership increase and the September “More Service, More Often” service-change saw a ridership increases of 3.28 percent. Rider-resource investments, including the How to Ride video series and OSU-focused engagement, generated more than 1.5 million views and contributed to a 62 percent increase in related web traffic. Leadership storytelling through “Minute with Monica” and community-facing campaigns such as Zoo Bus and Club COTA expanded COTA’s reach, producing millions of

impressions while building trust and elevating brand affinity. Ms. McQuaide shared upcoming marketing plans, which include expanding access with Tap to Pay; introducing Rider Alerts for real-time updates; deploying a new Mainstream booking platform; transitioning OSU students to tap-to-ride and, promoting ongoing service improvements.

B. West Broad Construction Engagement Strategy - Jeff Pullin, COTA Public and Media Relations Director

COTA Public and Media Relations Director Jeff Pullin presented the 2026 West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) engagement strategy, which focuses on maintaining strong public awareness, preparing corridor stakeholders for construction impacts, and delivering clear, timely information as the project moves from final design into early construction. Mr. Pullin said key priorities include coordinated communications across BRT, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), and LinkUS partners; refreshed messaging and targeted outreach; and direct engagement with property owners, businesses, civic leaders, and corridor residents. He said the plan outlines pre-construction and active-construction tactics—such as briefings, newsletters, real-time updates, wayfinding support for businesses, and sentiment monitoring—to reduce uncertainty and reinforce trust throughout the build process. Mr. Pullin said alignment with the West Broad TOD plan ensures unified messaging and clear differentiation between infrastructure and long-term development, and noted performance will be evaluated through participation metrics, subscriber growth, media tone, and inquiry response tracking.


5. Other Business

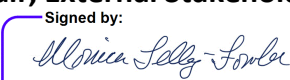
No other business was brought before the committee.

6. Adjournment

Trustee Bucher moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Trustee Starr. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 4:06 pm.

Adopted: _____ May 5, 2026 _____

Signed: 
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Chair, External Stakeholder Relations Committee

Attest: 
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President/CEO