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**COTA AWARDED THIRD “RECOMMENDED” RATING FOR NORTH CORRIDOR  
LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT PROJECT**

(Columbus, OH)—The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has awarded the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) its third highly coveted “recommended” rating for the FastTrax North Corridor Light Rail Transit (NCLRT) Project. Columbus was only one of ten transit projects in Preliminary Engineering nationwide awarded a “recommended” rating this year. To be eligible for FTA New Starts funding, projects must meet a number of criteria related to economic feasibility, transportation mobility, economic development and environmental benefits.

Under FTA guidelines, a “recommended” rating allows the project’s estimated \$501.8 million capital cost to be eligible for 50% federal funding from the New Starts program, which is dedicated solely for transit uses. The Ohio Department of Transportation has also indicated that COTA could request up to 25 percent project funding from the state. Local funding commitments would be required for the remaining 25 percent of the project's cost.

“We are pleased that the FTA continues to support the NCLRT Project. Our planning, engineering and public involvement process has been extremely successful in creating an enhanced public transportation plan for central Ohio,” said Ron Barnes, COTA President and CEO.

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Each year the FTA rates projects in preliminary and final design on a series of project justification criteria including: mobility improvements, environmental benefits, operating efficiencies, cost effectiveness, transit supportive land use and future growth patterns and local financial support. For a project to receive a recommended rating the project must receive a rating of at least medium for both finance and project justification.

COTA received the first “recommended” rating from the FTA in 2002 and has been proceeding with plans to complete the Preliminary Engineering and Environmental process by the first quarter of 2005. Final design would take approximately 18 months, and construction could begin in 2006 with COTA opening the line at the end of 2008. This timetable is dependent on the availability of funding to complete each phase of the project.

The NCLRT Project is the first of eight FastTrax rail lines COTA is planning as part of Vision 2020 Plus-a comprehensive transportation plan to increase mobility in central Ohio, which includes expanded bus and paratransit service, 17 transit centers and neighborhood circulators. The North Corridor was chosen as the first rail line because it has the highest population density, one-third of the region’s jobs and is projected for significant future growth and development. These factors also make the North Corridor the most competitive to receive federal funds.

For more information on the North Corridor Light Rail Transit Project, please also visit the project web site at [www.cotaFastTrax.com](http://www.cotaFastTrax.com).