



PRESS RELEASE

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COTA to Expand Bus on Shoulder Program to I-670

Beginning in September, COTA Buses Authorized to Operate in Left Shoulder Lane During Times of Congestion

COLUMBUS, OH—This September, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) will expand its Bus on Shoulder program to I-670 in an effort to encourage the use of COTA as a faster alternative, reduce traffic and fully utilize the capacity of Central Ohio’s highway system.

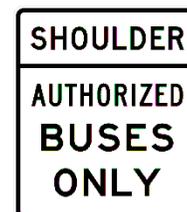
COTA buses may use designated shoulder lanes when traffic is stopped or moving slower than 35 mph. Beginning Monday, September 7, COTA buses will be authorized to travel along the left shoulder lane/inside berm on I-670 between Downtown and I-270 on the east side of Columbus. Since 2006, COTA buses have been authorized to travel in the right shoulder lane/outside berm on I-70 East between Downtown Columbus and State Route 256.

“By utilizing shoulder lanes during traffic congestion, COTA has the ability to reduce travel times for commuters,” said Curtis Stitt, COTA President/CEO. “We’re pleased to be able to offer this convenience to our customers, and to promote this advantage to potential customers.”

COTA, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) partnered to identify the I-670 corridor, and install the appropriate signage to ensure safety.

“This opportunity makes more efficient use of our built highway capacity and encourages modal options during peak traffic hours ultimately improving commute times,” states Thea Walsh, MORPC Director of Transportation Systems and Funding. “We appreciate the partnership of COTA and ODOT to quickly implement Bus on Shoulder service on I-670.”

ODOT is installing the necessary signs along the corridor to guide bus drivers and caution motorists. The main signs are white with black lettering, and read “Shoulder. Authorized Buses Only.” They will be placed every ½ mile along the corridor, and permit the legal use of the shoulder by COTA buses only. “BEGIN” and “END” placards will be added to the signs to designate the shoulder lane usage area. Yellow signs with black lettering state, “Watch for Buses on Shoulder,” and will be posted at entrance ramps to caution drivers entering the freeway of buses using the shoulder.



“The benefit of maximizing freeway capacity by allowing buses to operate in the shoulder is great for Central Ohioans,” said Ferzan Ahmed, ODOT District 6 Deputy Director. “This practice has been successful on I-70 and we’re excited to partner with COTA and MORPC to expand this program.”

Background

In 2006, COTA partnered with MORPC, ODOT, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Columbus Police and the Ohio State Highway Patrol in an effort to encourage the use of public transit and to fully utilize the capacity of the urban highway system. The Bus on Shoulder pilot project tested the feasibility of transit buses using the shoulder of the interstate during congested times. The project was evaluated on safety, traffic impacts, bus operator and passenger perceptions of the project, and the impact on freeway traffic flow. ODOT concluded that the pilot was a success and recommended that the program be expanded in metropolitan areas where appropriate.

Since the pilot, COTA buses have been authorized to use the shoulders of the I-70 East Corridor between Downtown Columbus and State Route 256 under certain conditions. The project has helped maintain bus schedules and improved on-time performance. In addition, COTA customers have reacted favorably to the program.

For more information about the Bus on Shoulder program, visit cota.com/busonshoulder.

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