

## **LinkUS – COTA - Issue #47**

NOVEMBER 5, 2024

**Issue #47**, if approved, will increase Franklin County sales tax by 0.75%. The revenue will be used to increase public transportation infrastructure in the COTA service area. The tax includes 0.5% that would support LinkUS and 0.25% that would replace a temporary sales tax that is set to expire in 2026.

### **League Explanation:**

#### **LinkUS**

LinkUS is central Ohio's transportation and growth plan created by COTA, the City of Columbus, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). The purpose of the plan is to accommodate the region's major population growth by expanding COTA transit service and other transportation options, like sidewalks, bike lanes and trails.

If approved, the COTA/LinkUS levy would raise sales taxes in Franklin County (and the small areas of the COTA service area in Fairfield, Licking, Union, Delaware County) by half a percent, to bring COTA's total share of sales tax to 1%. That would bring Franklin County's total sales tax to 8%.

How much would this cost the average Franklin County resident per year? Using a common model for sales tax usage, we estimate \$90 of new taxes for the average Franklin County household due to LinkUS sales tax increase per year.

The ballot measure is projected to bring in an estimated \$2 billion in new revenue for COTA by 2030 and more than \$8 billion by 2050.

The levy will allow COTA to provide:

- 45% more COTA service
- New and improved sidewalks, bike lanes, trails and crosswalks
- Construction of COTA Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines
- Bus station improvements. Examples include platform-level boarding and heated platforms to melt snow
- More COTA/Plus zones for on-demand transportation

## PRO

- Investing in public transportation infrastructure will have a long term positive impact on the community, allowing for accessible, reliable travel options and reducing dependence on individual vehicles.
- Differences between typical bus service and the rapid transit proposed by LinkUS include dedicated bus lanes, traffic signal prioritization and control, increased bus capacity and off-board fare collection to speed up boarding and more. Along with bus rapid transit, LinkUS would also provide funding for sidewalks, greenways and bike paths.
- COTA plans to leverage revenue from the sales tax increase to obtain federal grants for at least \$800 million that require a local match to help fund the project.

## CON

- Franklin County residents already pay a high sales tax on goods and services.
- A large number of Franklin County residents do not currently use COTA services.
- Sales taxes fall more heavily on low-income people than high-income people due to their higher rates of spending on consumer goods, making a sales tax a regressive tax.

\*Franklin County household 2024 median income is \$69,681. An Average household spends an estimated 80% of income on consumption. 33% of the 80% is taxable. Therefore, a 0.5% sales tax = ~\$90 in new taxes for the average household. *The Economic Impact of the Nonprofit Sector in Franklin County*, Human Service Chamber of Franklin County, October 2010, p. 9.