

The Columbus Dispatch

COTA plans bus line between airport and Downtown

By **Rick Rouan** *The Columbus Dispatch* • Wednesday January 27, 2016 2:08 PM

PROPOSED NEW SERVICE: DOWNTOWN-PORT COLUMBUS AIRPORT

Goal: Provide direct service between the Airport and Downtown hotels and convention center



CENTRAL OHIO TRANSIT AUTHORITY |



**30 minute service,
7 days a week,
approximately 6am-9pm**

COTA

Visitors flying into Columbus soon will have a new option to travel between the airport and Downtown.

The Central Ohio Transit Authority plans to start running a new circulator between Port Columbus and the city center in May.

The new service, dubbed AirConnect, will stop at the airport's arrival and departure area and loop through Downtown Columbus. The buses will be specially branded, similar to the Cbus Downtown circulator.

Buses will run every 30 minutes, seven days a week. Passengers will pay a \$2.75 express fare to travel one-way. Tickets will be sold at a kiosk that accepts credit cards, and riders also can use cash in the bus.

“This is an area of great need and great demand,” CEO Curtis Stitt said.

COTA has tried running a bus line to the airport in the past, but it was cut several years ago during a budget crisis because too few people used it.

Stitt said the old line wasn’t around long enough to catch on, and COTA plans to stay dedicated to it this time as long as its budget stays strong.

See COTA's AirConnect plan [here](#)

COTA also has a stronger marketing plan for the circulator route, he said. The authority is working with Experience Columbus to put ads on the airport concourse, and smartphone users will see social media plugs for the service when they’re in the airport.

The new airport line is part of a larger set of changes COTA is planning in a redesign of its bus network. In January, it started running a new route between its Crosswoods park and ride and Polaris and from its Northern Lights park and ride to Easton Town Center.

COTA will launch more crosstown routes that connect outlying suburbs as well instead of forcing suburban residents to ride Downtown before traveling back out to another suburb. Several of those will start in September.

Stitt said Wednesday at a COTA board meeting that customers will be able to track buses in real-time online in the second quarter of 2016.

Data from COTA’s contractor, the Trapeze Group, are now reliable enough to start pushing the information to riders, he said. Now, COTA has to work with its website developer and Google to figure out how to display the information online.

Trapeze was supposed to deliver that data at the end of 2010, but technical problems have plagued the system and data were unreliable until now. Last year, a consultant recommended that COTA hire a new company for real-time tracking, but COTA stuck with Trapeze.

“In the second quarter, you should be seeing people with it in their hands,” Stitt said.