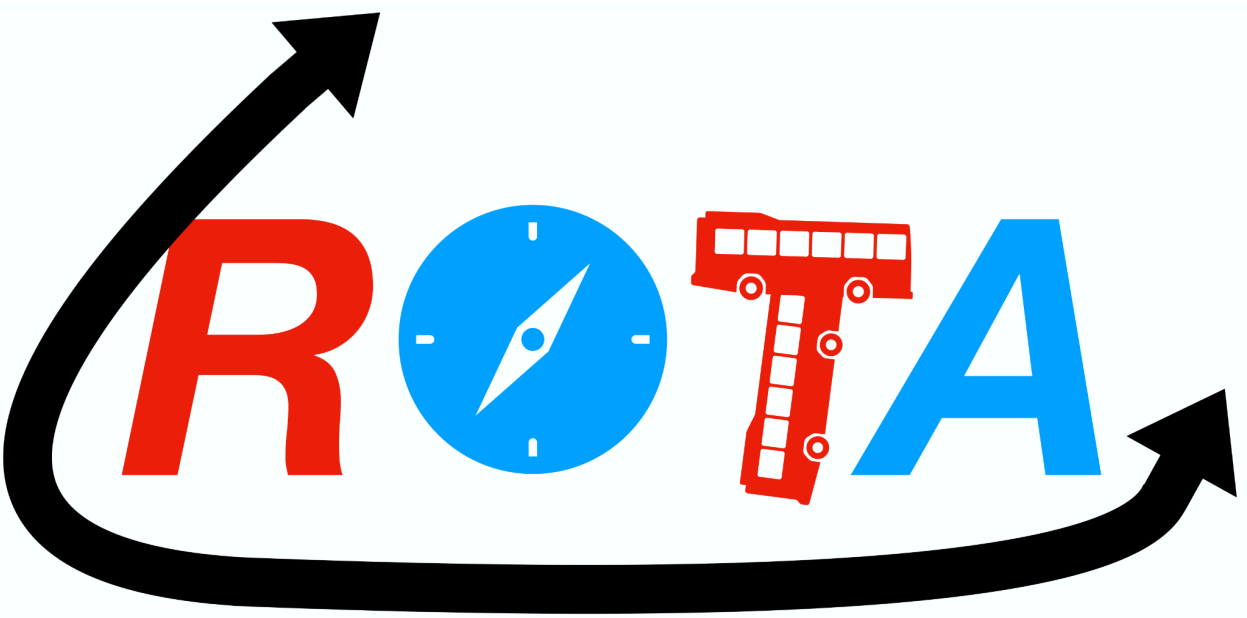
Regional Operations Transportation Authority Vision



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The vision is for the proposed transportation agency for the City of Reading, Regional Operations Transportation Authority.

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Executive Summary

Regional Operations Transportation Authority is a proposed public transportation system designed to improve mobility, accessibility, and opportunity for the people of Reading, PA.

This document presents the initial idea of what ROTA could develop into in the future. It outlines the objectives, tenets, and possible approaches that could direct its advancement as discussions with local authorities, transit officials, and local residents. Even though ROTA is still in its early stages, it embodies a vision for the future: building a dependable, sustainable, and inclusive public transportation system that will benefit Berks County for many years to come.

Introduction

Public transportation matters in Reading because it is crucial for those who don't have personal transportation, and helps the local economy, and it helps save money for passengers. Public transportation also helps connect people to jobs, schools, healthcare, community life, or for quick trips.

As of now, 2025, public transportation specifically in Reading is extremely needed, as many needed businesses are moving away from Reading, to areas public transportation doesn't serve, meaning residents must rely on cars. And the current transportation focuses specifically on Reading, which limits transportation options to areas beyond Reading. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, every single transportation system in the Delaware Valley interconnects with one another. Reading is one of the only places that doesn't have interconnecting public transportation, which is extremely important, as interconnected transportation would allow passengers to get around further, possibly beyond the Delaware Valley. ROTA has not yet been founded, but it is currently proposed to be a new transportation agency in the City of Reading, PA.

ROTA aims to provide safe, reliable, accessible, and dependable public transportation to communities in Reading and Berks County.

The timing of ROTA being proposed is due to a few key factors:

- Economic growth: Connects workers to jobs, expanding customer bases for businesses, and creating direct and indirect employment opportunities.
- Environmental needs: With proper bus service, it could reduce carbon emissions, which helps the air stay clean.
- Population changes: If more people move into Reading, there may be higher demand for public transportation. If population declines, it could make cars less affordable, which makes public transportation necessary. Seniors may require public transportation if they are physically unable to drive. The youth and student populations may need affordable ways to get to school, work, and other activities.

It is important to know that this document is a planning and guiding document, **not** operations yet.

The mission, vision, and guiding principles of ROTA, which will influence Reading's public transportation system going forward, are presented in the pages that follow.

Mission, Vision, and Values

ROTA's mission is to provide accessible, affordable, and dependable public transportation to communities in Reading and the surrounding areas.

ROTA envisions creating a transportation system that is equitable, inventive, and sustainable, enhancing regional ties and raising everyone's standard of living.

ROTA's core values are:

- **Accessibility** - Transportation service for everyone, regardless of physical ability and income.
- **Safety** - Protecting all passengers and operators at all times.
- **Reliability** - Providing consistent, on-time service.
- **Sustainability** - Investing in reducing emissions and in clean energy.
- **Equity** - Serving all communities equitably and fairly.
- **Community Partnership** - Working with schools, residents, and businesses.
- **Innovation** - Adopting technology to help improve rider experience.

These mission, vision, and values form the foundation of ROTA's future, guiding every decision from service planning to community engagement.

Community & Regional Overview

Located in the center of Berks County, is the City of Reading, the fourth populous city in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Reading serves as a regional hub for a variety of suburban, rural, and industrial communities.

As of the 2023 American Community Survey, the City of Reading had a population of 94,897. The age population by category shows that 30% of the population is aged under 18, 60% of the population is aged 18 to 64, and 10% of the population is aged 65 and over. Per capita income in Reading is $18,879, and the median household income is $38,814. 59% of the population drives alone to get to work, 23% of the population carpooled, and only 5% of the population uses public transportation.

ROTA would provide bus service to help connect the City of Reading to the Delaware Valley, and provide service to areas within Berks County that currently don't have public transportation.

BARTA mainly focuses on serving areas of the City of Reading, with limited service to areas of Berks County and beyond the county. ROTA's goal would be to provide public transportation to those service gaps.

ROTA is being proposed to provide affordable transportation, sustainability and environmental goals, and a need for better regional coordination.

Comprehending the population, economy, and transportation requirements of the area emphasizes how crucial it is to establish a cohesive transit system, which ROTA seeks to provide.

ROTA Today

As of Q4 2025, public transportation within Reading and Berks County is provided primarily by BARTA, which serves the City of Reading and nearby municipalities, such as the Borough of West Reading, Township of Spring, and the Township of Muhlenberg. While BARTA has a crucial part in public transportation for many residents, several challenges and gaps still exist across the region, especially in areas beyond BARTA's core service area.

Many outlying neighborhoods and suburban communities have limited or no access to public transportation. Residents in these areas often rely on personal vehicles, carpools, or ride-hailing services to get to work, school, and other essential destinations. For individuals without access to a car, this can create large barriers to employment, education, and healthcare.

Service frequency and span are also common concerns. Evening and Sunday service is limited in much of Berks County, and many routes are designed primarily around daytime-weekday commuters. More and more locals are looking for more adaptable and dependable transportation options as regional development continues and travel demand changes.

These challenges create a unique opportunity for ROTA to address unmet transportation needs and enhance current services as a result of these difficulties. Instead of taking BARTA's place, ROTA is intended to be a partner agency that works to improve regional connectivity, reach underserved areas, and investigate cutting-edge strategies, such as express routes, on-demand service, and clean-energy vehicles.

ROTA can create a system centered around accessibility, safety, and sustainability by identifying existing constraints and opportunities. This will help to close the gaps between Reading's surrounding towns and its urban core.

Public Engagement

People who use public transportation should be able to give feedback on how well it works. Community involvement is extremely crucial from the very beginning of the planning process to ensure that ROTA meets the needs of the people of Reading, Berks, and the surrounding areas.

Although ROTA is a proposed agency, receiving input from residents, local businesses, schools, and community groups helps create the perfect vision that reflects the needs of the people who will use it. Public engagement will focus on:

- Receiving feedback from residents about their transit needs and priorities.
- Working with schools, businesses, and local officials to make sure the transit system meets the needs of the whole region.
- Making sure that the voices of seniors, people with disabilities, low-income residents, and other groups that don't receive enough attention are heard.
- Keeping the community up to date on proposals, plans, and progress.

ROTA can make sure that the system is efficient, fair, and able to meet the future needs of Reading and the surrounding communities by planning for meaningful engagement from the start.

This framework lays the groundwork for ROTA's long-term vision and strategic goals. It will help the agency make decisions about routes, infrastructure, and service priorities once it is officially set up.

Service Vision

The Service Vision of ROTA outlines the types of transportation services, routes, and connections that the proposed authority would offer to meet the needs of the People of Reading and the surrounding communities. ROTA is not yet in operation, however – this vision provides a roadmap for creating a network that is reliable, accessible, and responsive to future growth.

Route Expansion

ROTA plans to provide fixed-route bus service to areas of Berks County that are underserved by existing transportation authorities. Proposed routes would connect neighborhoods, suburbs, and outlying communities to major hubs, commercial centers, schools, and out-of-county service. Fixed-routes would include direct lines for commuters, as well as local loop services to provide better service within neighborhoods.

Service Types

- Local Routes: Standard fixed-routes connecting residential areas to Center City and key destinations.
- Express/Commuter Routes: Faster connections between long-distance areas.

Note: ROTA Service Types are bound to change in the future.

Regional Connections

To guarantee smooth connections throughout the area, ROTA would work with current transportation providers, such as BARTA. The suggested transfer points would improve mobility and cut down on travel times by making it simple for riders to switch between ROTA and other systems.

Technology & Rider Experience

ROTA technology may have enhancements in the future, such as:

- Real-time bus tracking, trip planning, and service alerts via ROTA GO Mobile Application
- Digital fare and pass payment system
- Rider information that is easily readable at stops, terminals, and online

Priorities & Guiding Principles

The following are key components of ROTA's vision:

- Using clean-energy vehicles to lessen environmental impact
- Serving all populations, including seniors, students, and underserved neighborhoods
- Developing routes and schedules in accordance with local needs

ROTA ensures the routes, schedules, and connections can be implemented effectively after the agency is formally established by establishing this service vision now, which lays the groundwork for future planning.

Facilities & Infrastructure

ROTA Main Terminal

The RMT would likely be located near Center City, Reading. It would have restrooms, a waiting area, bus operator break area, sales window, customer service, and bus stops, under one roof, with shelter.

Bus Garages

ROTA, as of now, would have one bus garage, located no more than five miles from the RMT. The name of the bus garage would be “ROTA Bus Garage #1” (RBG1).

Headquarters

The ROTA Headquarters would likely be located in Reading, or in an outskirt. It would have a customer service desk, restrooms, and a waiting area. ROTA Headquarters would also house administrative offices.

Bus Stop Amenities

All ROTA bus stops will have the official ROTA logo, full ROTA name , Bus Stop Type, No parking text and symbol, Routes Served, Stop ID, and BSIN. Most ROTA Bus Stops will have a scannable QR code to retrieve information regarding that bus stop, such as basic information, planning trips, or check bus departure times.

Possible Future Upgrades

The ROTA Route Finder Dialer would be at most bus stops, allowing passengers to locate their route at a specific bus stop.

Fleets & Technology

This section outlines the planned fleet and technology systems for ROTA once operations begin. ROTA is proposed, so specifics are conceptual, and not guaranteed.

Fleets

All ROTA fleets must be hybrid-electric or battery-electric, to sustain a clean environment. There would need to be enough buses to fully operate, alongside 15 backup buses. Fleets would likely be Gillig or MCI buses, being at least 35 feet.

Technology

ROTA's technology would consist of:

- Real-time bus tracking for passengers and Operations & Dispatch,
- Trip planning, service alerts, and a digital fare payment system,
- Wi-Fi for ROTA buildings, and possibly on ROTA buses,
- Mobile applications for Android and iOS phones,
- And a fleet management software to track servicing, repairs, and lifecycle.

Accessibility & Equity

Accessibility and equity are critical to ROTA's mission. ROTA will prioritize serving all residents, including seniors, students, people with disabilities, and low-income households. The key initiatives are as follows:

- ADA compliance ensures all buses, bus stops, and facilities are accessible to individuals with mobility impairments.
- Fare equity by developing affordable fare to structures to ensure there is no barrier between cost and transportation access.
- Underserved areas would be served by creating routes to current neighborhoods without reliable public transportation.
- ROTA would engage with communities to understand and address barriers to public transportation.

By integrating accessibility and integrity, ROTA can create a transportation system that service the communities fairly and efficiently.

Sustainability & Environment

ROTA is committed to minimizing an impact on the environment through sustainable operations, such as using hybrid or battery electric vehicles, incorporating solar bus shelters, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and exploring new technologies to reduce environmental footprint and improve efficiency.

Sustainability is embedded in every aspect when planning, ensuring a transportation system that supports environmental responsibility while meeting community needs.

Safety & Security

One of ROTA's top priorities is passenger and operator safety.

In order to ensure onboard safety, all ROTA buses will have security cameras, lighting, and clear signage to protect our riders. All staff will also be in training programs to ensure safety during emergencies, such as incidents, weather events, and other emergencies.

ROTA will also collaborate with local law enforcement and emergency services for coordinated response plans.

ROTA shall maintain a safe environment where all passengers feel safe and confident using public transportation.

Workforce & Operations

ROTA must have a skilled workforce for reliable transportation:

- Programs for drivers, dispatchers, and support staff, for training.
- Staff assignment to ensure coverage across all routes and facilities.
- Standardized processes for scheduling, route management, and vehicle maintenance for operational procedures.
- Increasing staff size as service expands.

ROTA will prepare a professional, knowledgeable, and responsive staff team to ensure high-quality service.

Funding & Partnerships

For long-term operations, financial sustainability is crucial:

- ROTA would receive revenue from sources such as fares, grants, local/state/federal funding, and potential partnerships,
- collaborating with businesses, schools, and community organizations for joint initiatives.
- conducting long-term planning, budgeting for fleets, infrastructure, technology, and staff,
- and identifying and pursuing applicable transportation grants and subsidies.

ROTA can expand and maintain high-quality transportation services with strong funding and strategic partnerships.

Marketing & Branding

For the community to acknowledge and use ROTA services, effective communication is important by:

- using a unified visual style for vehicles, bus stops, and online media,
- informational campaigns through community channels, local media, social media, and in-person events for public outreach,
- posting updates, service alerts, and using feedback tools for rider engagement,
- and pushing efforts to promote community involvement and ridership.

Using these strategies, marketing can increase the proposed transportation system's visibility, credibility, and user engagement.

Performance Measures

To ensure ROTA meets operational, financial, and social goals while ensuring customer satisfaction and environmental responsibility, ROTA will perform performance evaluations. Data would be collected regularly and reviewed to make future improvements.

Ridership & Service

- ROTA will measure ridership performance monthly, and review performance quarterly and annually,
- Monitor demand and route usage in every service area,
- and aim for 90% or greater punctuality.

Financial Performance

- Keeping an eye on and maximize spending, being extremely frugal,
- evaluating fare income in relation to operating expenses,
- and assessing each project's financial efficacy.

Customer Experience

- Receiving input from passenger surveys annually,
- examining passenger comments and ADA compliance,
- and attempting to address every issue that is mentioned within 5 business days.

Environmental Impact

- Calculating how much power and fuel a car uses per mile,
- and monitoring the recycling of materials and appropriate disposal techniques.

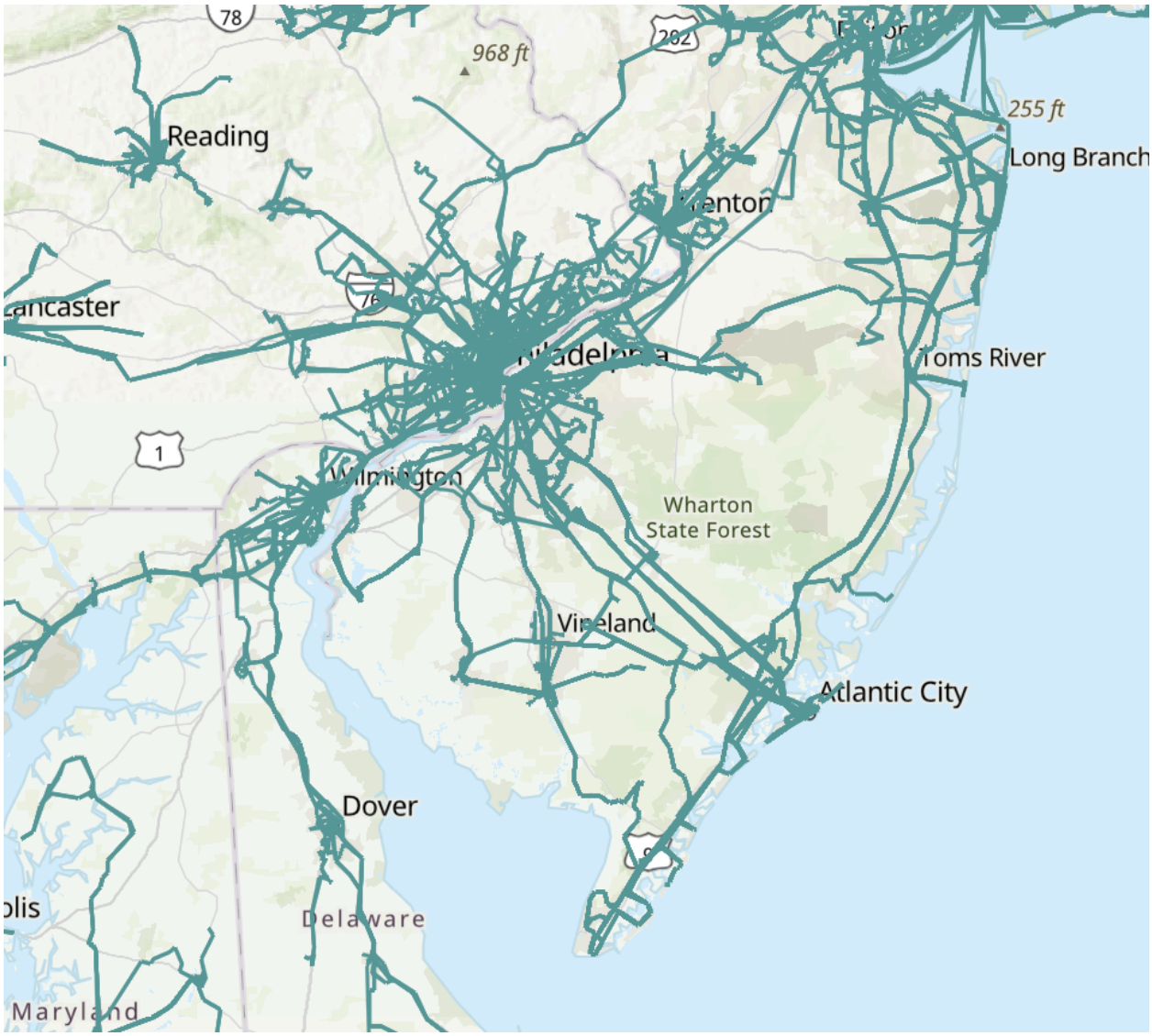
Equity & Inclusion

- Monitoring on coverage in underserved areas and low-income communities,
- assessing how well prices reflect regional economic circumstances,
- and keeping track of the number and variety of open forums and feedback sessions.

Appendices

The appendices serve as a reference section, with detailed supporting materials data, and definitions that inform the planning and implementation of ROTA's operations.

Maps & Visuals



Map of the Delaware Valley, Reading being isolated from all other public transportation.

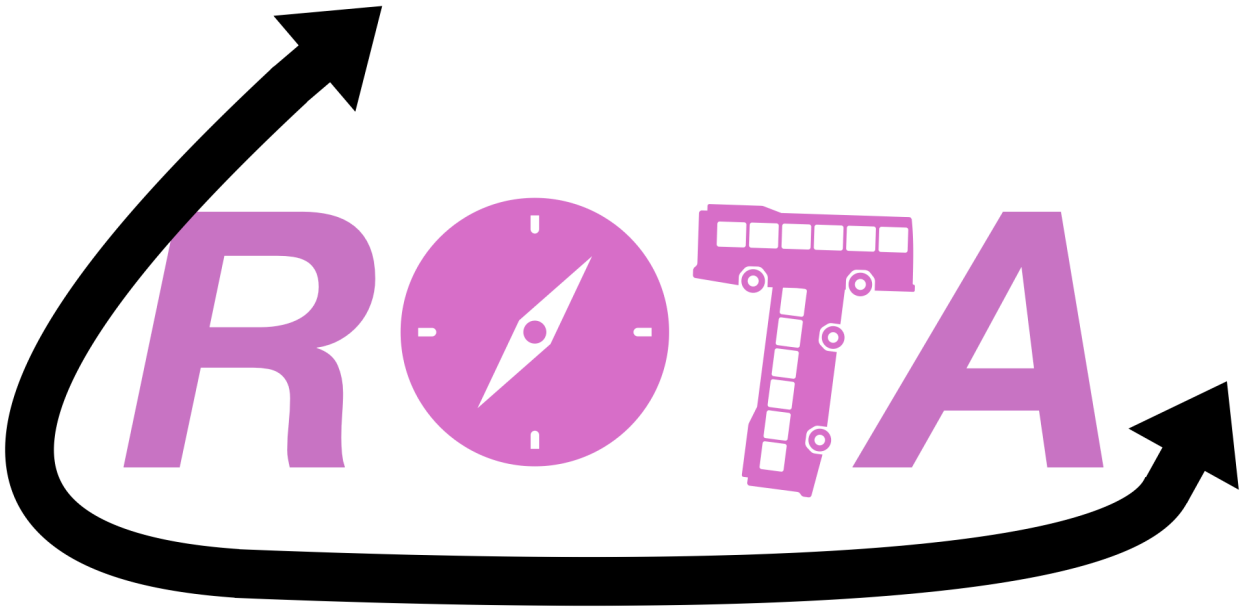
Reading, Pennsylvania Voting Data

https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US39740-reading-pa-metro-area

Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

Term/Acronym	Definition
BARTA	Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority
ROTA	Regional Operations Transportation Authority
RMT	ROTA Main Terminal
BSIN	Bus Stop Identification Number
Wi-Fi	Wireless Fidelity
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
RBG1	ROTA Bus Garage #1

This Vision document shall serve as the vision of the proposed transportation authority, Regional Operations Transportation Authority.



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Regional Operations Transportation Authority, 2025

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