

# The Columbus Dispatch

Ohio's Greatest Online Newspaper

## SERVICE TO RICKENBACKER

Express bus line opens area to workers

Wednesday, August 20, 2008 3:18 AM

By [Tim Doulin](#)

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH



[Click here](#) to enlarge image.

A new COTA bus line starting next month will deliver workers to the Rickenbacker Industrial Park area.

The Central Ohio Transit Authority will begin a 16-mile express bus service on weekdays between Downtown and Rickenbacker starting Sept. 2.

The authority has been working in recent months with businesses at Rickenbacker and social-service agencies that help people without transportation who are looking for jobs, said William J. Lhota, COTA president and chief executive officer.

"Rickenbacker is the economic engine in this community and we want to get people to jobs down there," Lhota said. "We are going to put the service on and see if it works."

There are more than 130 companies in the Rickenbacker area. Many jobs involve seasonal work at warehouses and distribution centers.

RedEnvelope, an online catalog gift-giving company, is looking for about 500 people to work the holiday season, from late October to early January.

"One of our major challenges is connecting people with jobs," said Nicole Piwinski, of RedEnvelope. "By putting a bus line out here, you are opening up many job opportunities. There is a lot of growth potential out here, so it seems like a logical fit."

Gap Inc. Direct, the online division for clothing retailer Gap, employs 1,400 to 1,500 people a year, but the number typically doubles during its peak season, which is November through December, said J.D. Null, employment manager.

"Jewish Family Services stepped up to the plate to represent some of the nonprofits in Columbus who have lots of candidates looking for work and trying to connect with a place that has a lot of job opportunities," Null said.

Lynn Aspey, director of business relations for Jewish Family Services, said the bus will help with placements at Rickenbacker.

"Transportation has always been an issue to the Rickenbacker area," Aspey said. "I have heard over the next three years they hope to increase jobs by 20,000 at Rickenbacker. If we can get people to where the jobs are, and we can help people with the process of getting hired, this will help the economy in a huge way."

The bus, No. 50, is an express bus that will leave from High and Long streets at 5:53 a.m. weekdays, make a handful of stops on High before leaving Downtown and reach Groveport Road at 6:35 a.m. It will stop in the vicinity of nine businesses in the Rickenbacker area.

In the afternoons, the bus will leave Alum Creek Drive and Rohr Road at 4:30 p.m., stop at the same businesses and then head Downtown. It will arrive at Wall Street, the final Downtown stop, at 5:17 p.m.

The express bus fare is \$2 one way. Many of COTA's routes start early enough to arrive Downtown in time to connect with the No. 50 in the morning. Transfers from a local bus to the No. 50 express will require an extra 50 cents, while a transfer from another express bus is free.

If successful, additional runs could be added to accommodate more work shifts, COTA said.

[tdoulin@dispatch.com](mailto:tdoulin@dispatch.com)