

Ashland BRT: CTA, CDOT, Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development

Image: Map depicting the proposed Ashland BRT corridor, listing all proposed BRT stops from north to south, on Ashland Avenue: Irving Park, Addison, Roscoe, Belmont, Diversey, Fullerton, Cortland, North, Division, Chicago, Grand, Lake, Madison, Jackson, Harrison, Polk, Roosevelt, 18th, Blue Island, 31st, 35th, Pershing, 43rd, 47th, 51st, Garfield, 59th, 63rd, 69th, 74th, 79th, 83rd, 87th, 91st, 95th. The image also highlights the "Phase 1" corridor, which includes all stops between the Cortland Street stop and the 31st Street stop.

Project Vision

CTA, in partnership with the Chicago Department of Transportation, the Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development, and the Federal Transit Administration is proposing to implement an approximately 16-mile long Bus Rapid transit (BRT) service along Ashland Avenue to improve transit speed and reliability and enhance the pedestrian environment. In 2012, a year-long planning study called an Alternatives Analyses was performed to assess options for BRT on both Ashland and Western Avenues. After analysis and input at public open houses, a center running configuration was selected, and Ashland Avenue between Irving Park Road and 95th Street was prioritized for further planning and study.

What is BRT?

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a term applied to a variety of bus service designs that provide for faster, more efficient and more reliable service than an ordinary bus line.

Project Schedule

- Alternatives Analysis: 2012
- Environmental Analysis and Conceptual Engineering: Spring 2013 – Fall 2013
- Detailed Design: Date to be determined, contingent upon available funding

All Phases include public engagement

This project is planned as part of a citywide BRT initiative consistent with the goals and objectives outlined in the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning 2040 regional long range transportation plan (GO TO 2040). The project purpose and need were developed through the Alternative Analysis process in coordination with public and agency outreach efforts

Project Need

CTA and CDOT are proposing to implement the Ashland Avenue BRT Project to address the following issues:

- Regional growth patterns outside of Chicago's Loop
- Congestion and a lack of competitive travel options
- Large number of transit dependent customers
- Lack of non-downtown, north-south, fast transit alternatives
- Slow bus speeds, frequent stops, and unreliable bus travel times

- Street design issues no longer meet corridor needs or land use policy objectives

Project Purpose

The purpose of the Ashland Avenue BRT Project is to expand connectivity to the region’s existing transit system by providing a new and upgraded high quality, high capacity and cost effective premium transit service—a service which provides faster, more reliable, and comfortable passenger experience. The proposed project would address the transportation needs of expansive population and employment growth outside of the Central Business District or “Loop” and support local and regional land use, transportation and economic development initiatives. Specifically, the project will improve accessibility, mobility, transit travel times and reliability, and passenger facilities in this heavily transit reliant corridor.

Proposed BRT Configuration

Before **image**: Photograph of typical No-Build Alternative conditions along Ashland Avenue.

After **image**: Photo-simulation of proposed typical Build Alternative (Preferred Alternative) conditions along Ashland Avenue at a station.

How it Works

BRT offers riders faster, more reliable service and new, amenity-filled stations with enhanced, landscaped medians between stations. Local bus service will remain in addition to the BRT service

- Other features include:
 - Center running bus-only lanes (one in each direction) to keep buses moving fast and on-schedule, out of general traffic
 - Limited stops: approximately every half mile and at CTA ‘L’ stations
 - Transit Signal Priority intersections and longer green lights to keep traffic moving
 - Potential for paying fares at the station before boarding to make boarding faster
 - Wide doors on left side of new, high-capacity vehicles to make boarding easier
 - Improved lighting, ADA ramps and real-time bus arrival information at stations
 - Maintains most existing medians and adds more than 75 blocks of new landscaped medians
 - Approximately 90% of parking and loading zones retained on both sides of the street
- In order to accommodate BRT, the following adjustments would occur:
 - Two general travel lanes (one in each direction) dedicated as center running bus-only lanes
 - Most left turns removed to keep buses and general through traffic moving

Why Ashland?

- Demand: Ashland Avenue has the highest bus ridership of all CTA routes with 10 million boardings in 2012, over 31,000 per weekday
- Access to Jobs: Provides access to nearly 133,800 jobs, including large employment centers such as the Illinois Medical District
- Popular Destinations: Serves UIC, Malcolm X College, United Center, and 99 grammar/high schools
- Connections to Transit Network: Provides access to seven CTA ‘L’ stations, two Metra stations, and 37 bus routes
- Need: Provides much-needed non-downtown, north-south connection

- Residents: 1 in 4 households located within walking distance of Ashland Avenue do not have a car
- Speed/Time: Up to 83% increase in bus speeds
- Width: At 70-foot curb-to-curb, road is wide enough to construct BRT
- Safety: Improved lighting, ADA ramps, center station platform to provide pedestrian refuge when crossing, and fewer left-hand turns, which are a major cause of vehicle accidents
- Investment: BRT can be a development magnet for residents and business and increase retail sales
- Reliability: 50% more reliable than the local bus

Image: Riding BRT would save the average commuter 65 hours per year, compared to current buses. This adds up to \$820 for each bus commuter each year or \$17 million annually for Ashland bus commuters combined. The source is CDM Smith's "Screen 2 Alternatives Report – Western and Ashland Corridors Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project, Prepared for CTA," 2013; CTA Annual Ridership Report: Calendar Year 2012. Calculations utilize average Ashland trip length of 2.5 miles; current Ashland bus speed of 8.7 MPH; projected speed for center-lane Ashland BRT of 15.9 MPH; average hourly wage for the area (\$12.65 per hour, from FTA's "Capital Investment Program FY 2013 Annual Report Evaluation and Rating Process"); and assumes average commuter makes 500 trips per year.

How to Stay Involved

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Project Web Site | www.transitchicago.com/AshlandBRT
For more information about other BRT projects & events in Chicago: www.brtchicago.com
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The Ashland Avenue BRT design is still being developed. CTA and CDOT are considering options and modifications, including the addition of some left-turns to the design, and we want your feedback on the current proposal.