

Bus Priority Corridor Study Virtual Meeting: Frequently Asked Questions

The **Bus Priority Corridor Study** (BPCS) is exploring ways to make bus travel faster, more convenient, and more comfortable for riders on five key bus corridors: Pulaski Road, Western Avenue, Cottage Grove Avenue, Fullerton Avenue, and 55th Street/Garfield Boulevard.

The study is a major next step toward implementation of the Better Streets for Buses Plan—a framework developed by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) to enhance the bus riding experience through infrastructure improvements to streets, sidewalks, and signals.

Public Meeting Questions

In late 2025, CTA and CDOT hosted a series of three in-person, open house-style public meetings, supplemented with a virtual public meeting webinar, to introduce the Bus Priority Corridor Study. We received questions on a range of bus planning topics and have posted our responses to these frequently asked questions, grouped by topic—if you have additional questions, you may send them to betterstreetsforbuses@transitchicago.com or call 1-888-YOUR-CTA.

Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail

During public engagement for the Better Streets for Buses Plan, many participants voiced strong interest in “true BRT” and asked about this at the public meetings.

I. Will this project result in “gold-standard” Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)? What is BRT?

BRT, or Bus Rapid Transit, usually includes a significant length of dedicated bus lanes and robust bus stop amenities, with the goal of making the bus look, feel, and move more like a train. Specific definitions about what characteristics must be included to qualify as BRT vary, but all the common BRT elements are included in the Better Streets for Buses Toolbox and will be considered as we develop designs.

An important goal of this project is to understand what benefits and BRT characteristics are most important to the community and identify the best set of infrastructure improvements for each corridor.

2. **Have there been discussions or considerations about light rail?**

Light rail—commonly understood as streetcars and trams—is not currently under in the scope of this project. Light rail systems require major financial investment, as entirely new rights-of-way (rails) and signaling infrastructure must be built. Light rail vehicles can operate in dedicated rights-of-way or in mixed traffic; in both situations, high-quality BRT can provide similar benefits and service levels at significantly less upfront capital costs.

Corridor Selection

Attendees asked questions about how the five corridors were chosen.

1. **Why are you starting with these five corridors?**

The five corridors—Pulaski Road, Western Avenue, Cottage Grove Avenue, Fullerton Avenue, and 55th Street/Garfield Boulevard—were among the 17 corridors identified as part of the Better Streets for Buses Plan. These five were chosen by CTA and CDOT to advance first due to a combination of factors including their broad geographic reach, ridership, and public support expressed during the development of the Better Streets for Buses Plan, and in consultation with the [Transportation Equity Network](#). Together, they serve more than 80,000 riders on an average weekday and connect a wide range of communities and destinations across the city.

2. **The bus I use most is not on any of these 5 corridors. Can you speak to how CTA will pursue improvements outside of these 5 priority corridors?**

CDOT and CTA will continue to strive to make changes to ensure full accessibility and pedestrian safety around all bus stops across the entire bus system.

For bus routes outside of the five corridors currently being studied, improvements to bus-related infrastructure may still be made as part of other projects. For example, CTA and CDOT have coordinated several bus priority infrastructure installations on Chicago Avenue and 79th Street over the last six years as part of the Bus Priority Zone program. CTA and CDOT plan to study each of the 17 corridors identified in the Better Streets for Buses Plan for potential bus priority improvements at some point in the next several years.

For bus routes that do not use the 17 corridors in the Better Streets for Buses Plan, improvements can also be made to address critical needs, or as part of other projects such as the arterial resurfacing program, but these would not typically include long stretches of continuous bus lanes.

Implementation Timeline

Attendees asked questions about how future timelines for implementation and selection would work.

- 1. When can I expect to see results?**

CTA and CDOT anticipate finalizing recommended design concepts for each corridor by the end of 2026. The implementation of the recommended design concepts will vary based on a number of factors, including the nature of the design and the availability of funding. As we work together through public outreach to define the priorities and determine the right type of design improvements, we'll develop a more detailed implementation timeline. Smaller changes can likely be made sooner, while larger projects may take several years.

- 2. Should we expect that each of the five corridors being studied will see at least some level of improvement, or would CTA and CDOT prioritize funding for one or more corridors?**

The study will result in one or two recommended alternatives for each corridor. CTA and CDOT will then look to implement the recommendations which will advance the study into Phase 1 (preliminary engineering) and Phase 2 (final engineering). They also will seek funding for construction. The study recommendations will also help identify near-term opportunities to add bus priority features during routine roadway resurfacing and other projects. CTA and CDOT will be able to pursue different projects on the five corridors independently and simultaneously. This may mean pursuing federal funding for a BRT-style project on one corridor and using CDOT's Arterial Resurfacing program to implement a stretch of bus priority infrastructure on another.

Bus Stops and Boarding Policy

A number of questions were asked related to bus stops, their amenities, and CTA's boarding policies.

- 1. What type of bus stop amenities are under consideration?**

At this stage in the project, the full range of bus stop amenities are being considered, including shelters, heat lamps, additional seating, additional real-time arrival information, bus schedules, snow-melt systems, and landscaping. As illustrated in the presentation, while there are often physical-space limitations that influence what type of bus stop amenities might fit at a specific bus stop, we are not limiting the corridor planning process to exclude any specific amenity at this point, and we want to hear about what is most important to riders and potential new riders.

- 2. Is there a significant difference in the timeline if more extensive bus shelters are pursued?**

Depending on the level and type of funding pursued for a recommended design, some projects will have a longer planning and funding timeline than others. The size and

complexity of the associated bus stops is one factor that will determine that overall funding need, but not the sole factor.

3. In addition to different bus stop designs, are changes to CTA's bus boarding and fare payment policies under consideration?

Yes, CTA is considering how this project might incorporate all-door and/or off-board fare collection. All-door, or "rear-door," boarding would involve CTA adding fare readers to the back doors of the buses, enabling passengers to use both sets of doors to board the bus once alighting passengers have stepped off. Off-board fare collection can be thought of similarly to how the rail system works, where you tap your fare payment at the station before boarding the train. For the bus system, this would not need to include fare gates, instead relying on specialized fare validation enforcement. Both options have physical considerations—where the fare readers would be placed—and policy implications related to compliance and enforcement. In both cases, the benefit, particularly for stops with significant crowding, would be to speed up the boarding process, allowing more people onto the bus quicker, without having to board only through the front door.

Bus Lane Design and Enforcement

A number of questions were asked related to bus lanes, their enforcement, and configuration.

1. How will bus lanes on these corridors be enforced?

Bus lanes, like any other element of the roadway signage, are only as effective as they are kept clear for buses to use. Bus lanes can be enforced via ticketing by designated City and CTA personnel, but there are a limited number of personnel available, and they often have additional duties which limits their ability to enforce bus lane regulations. Recognizing this, the Chicago City Council passed legislation allowing CTA, CDOT and the Department of Finance to pilot the use of automated vehicle-mounted cameras to issue fines for parking in bus lanes, bike lanes, and bus stops. This legislation, known as the [Smart Streets Ordinance](#), is currently in effect for the area bounded by Ashland, North and Roosevelt. The city has deployed eight vehicles, and CTA has equipped six buses with Automated Bus Lane Enforcement (ABLE) technology on a pilot basis. If successful, the city may expand the area covered by the legislation and/or make the authority to use camera enforcement permanent.

2. Are CTA and CDOT currently considering closing any of these corridors to car traffic?

No, none of the proposed designs include closing streets to general traffic entirely (otherwise known as a busway).

3. Will bus lane be in effect 24-hours a day?

This has not been determined yet. CTA and CDOT are exploring all options for bringing bus priority infrastructure to these corridors. In some cases, that may mean taking advantage of existing rush-hour parking restrictions and using the curb lane as a rush-hour bus lane; this

model exists on parts of Western Avenue already. Chicago also has examples of 24-hour bus lanes, such as on Washington and Madison Streets downtown. Traffic modeling and community feedback will inform whether a bus lane is proposed as 24-hours or limited hours in refined design concepts.

4. What about left turn bans?

Whether or not left turns would be restricted in some locations has not been determined yet. Certain bus lane configurations presented in the preliminary concepts would require CDOT to restrict some existing left turn access. These configurations do not fit everywhere along all five corridors, and so this would only apply to certain, wide segments of some corridors. Traffic modeling and community feedback will inform whether any turn restrictions are proposed in refined design concepts.

5. For center-running bus lanes, how will passengers get to the bus stops in the middle of the road? I am worried about having to cross lanes of traffic to get to my bus stop.

While Center-running bus lanes offer many operational advantages to buses, they require passengers to board and alight the bus onto custom-built median islands, reached by crossing one half of the street. The addition of the median, however, provides a benefit to all crossing pedestrians, and the bus lane and station can act as a traffic calming strategy. Both center-running stop concepts CTA and CDOT are exploring would provide ample, concrete-protected space for waiting passengers.

Signal Priority and Other Designs

A number of questions were asked that relate to traffic signals and their effect on bus priority.

1. What is Transit Signal Priority? Are traffic signals that can be controlled by buses under consideration?

Transit Signal Priority (TSP) is a technology that allows the bus to send a request to an upcoming traffic signal to modify light timing (for example, extending the green light for a few seconds) and is under consideration for all five corridors. This tool can be programmed in several ways and is often triggered only when buses are behind schedule. Currently, TSP-enabled traffic signals exist along Western, Ashland and a few other corridors throughout the city, installed as part of other roadway rebuilding work.

Traffic signal *preemption* allows a vehicle or other operator to override the normal operation and timing of a traffic signal. This may be most familiar to people at railroad crossings, where an approaching train causes lights to change, helping hold cross-traffic and allowing vehicles to clear the tracks before the warning arms come down. This type of signal priority is not generally given to transit buses and is not currently under consideration for this

project, as the traffic impacts to intersecting corridors and overall signal timing would be much greater.

2. Are there other types of signal improvements that can be made as part of the Bus Priority Corridor Study?

“Queue jumps” are another type of Transit Signal Priority that are being considered at intersections along these corridors. A queue jump is a bus-only traffic signal that gives the bus an early “go” light, allowing it to jump ahead of waiting traffic at an intersection. These are usually paired with short sections of bus-only lanes on the near side of the intersection, so that buses can get to the “front of the line” before the light changes. You can find queue jumps at various intersections along Loop Link routes on Washington and Madison, and on Chicago Avenue at Franklin Street.

Bus Fleet Planning, Procurement and Electrification

A number of questions were asked regarding what this project means for future bus procurements and fleet planning.

1. Some of the designs CTA and CDOT are proposing would require buses with doors on the left-side of the vehicle—how will this be accomplished?

If a design requiring left-side doors is selected to advance, CTA would be able to incorporate that into vehicle design specifications and leverage future bus procurements to ensure these buses were available by the time the infrastructure was in place. Most likely, buses with doors on both sides would be purchased, so that vehicles would be compatible with both typical right-side bus stops and stops on the left side.

2. How does this project tie into fleet electrification? Are CTA or CDOT considering on-route charging for electric buses on these corridors?

The bus priority infrastructure under consideration for these five corridors would be designed to be compatible with the existing fleet and future fleet, regardless of fuel type.

Currently, CTA has several on-route electric charging facilities in place. As the electric fleet expands, however, the goal is to limit as much charging activity as possible to bus garages, and so identification of on-route charging locations is not part of the scope of this study. For more information on CTA’s bus fleet electrification planning, visit CTA’s [electric bus webpage](#) and the associated [Charging Forward](#) report.

Land Use, Transit-Oriented Development & Gentrification

A number of questions were asked about the potential for the implementation of bus priority infrastructure to be coordinated with or otherwise impact local land use.

1. Will CTA and CDOT coordinate with other city agencies and community-based organizations?

CTA and CDOT have, and will continue to, coordinate closely with the Department of Planning and Development, local community-based organizations (CBOs), and Aldermen along the five corridors.

2. How does this project support equitable transit-oriented development throughout the city?

All five corridors under study are currently included in the list of transit-served locations, as defined in the Connected Communities Ordinance, and developers along these corridors can already take advantage of the flexibility offered by the city's TOD policy. Implementation of bus priority infrastructure supports increased speed, reliability, comfort and convenience of the bus service, which can increase transit use and facilitate further transit-oriented development.

3. Is there a risk this project will lead to gentrification/displacement? How will any risk be mitigated?

The study will include conversations with residents and community organizations to understand concerns and identify potential risks about gentrification, so that we can help ensure improvements are made with communities, not at their expense. If concerns about gentrification do arise, CTA and CDOT will coordinate closely with the Department of Planning and Development to understand and address any risks of gentrification or displacement and make all stakeholders aware of relevant policies and tools available.

Bus Service Planning and Stop Consolidation

A number of questions were asked related to bus service planning topics and how this project will affect other CTA bus-related initiatives.

1. Is there any consideration of bus stop consolidation on these routes?

Changes to bus stop spacing distances and/or locations will be considered as part of this project and any such changes involve tradeoffs that must be analyzed. CTA's system-wide stop spacing policy is to maintain a distance between stops of between an eighth- and a quarter mile, but certain designs and service patterns that may be developed in coordination with the design concepts could include exceptions to this.

2. I would like to see changes to where a route serves, will that be included as part of this project?

The Bus Priority Corridor Study does not address this question directly, but we are looking to get feedback on this as part of our Bus Vision Project. See Question 4 for more information.

3. I would like to see changes to how late a route runs, will that be included as part of this project?

The Bus Priority Corridor Study does not address this question directly, but we are looking to get feedback on this as part of our Bus Vision Project. See Question 4 for more information.

4. How does this study relate to the Bus Vision Project?

Both the Bus Vision Project and the Bus Priority Corridor Study aim to improve your experience on CTA's buses, but they approach that goal from different perspectives.

The Bus Vision Project focuses primarily on improvements that CTA can make to its schedules and policies that define levels of service. It explores whether bus routes, schedules, or frequencies should be adjusted to provide more efficient and reliable service through the CTA service area. The Bus Priority Corridor Study is being conducted in close partnership with CDOT and focuses on street, sidewalk, and signal infrastructure that can improve bus speed, reliability, and bus stop areas. While the two studies focus on different elements, both are critical to make CTA buses work better for you.

The Bus Vision Project developed a Framing Report that included extensive analysis of the CTA bus system, which supported the implementation of the Frequent Bus Network. After the release of the Framing Report, initial outreach was conducted to learn more about what people like/dislike about the bus and what barriers to riding the bus they face, and additional outreach concluding with a final recommendations report is planned for 2026. For more information, please visit CTA's [Bus Vision webpage](#).

5. What steps is CTA taking to reduce overcrowding on certain routes?

CTA regularly monitors ridership and crowding throughout the bus system. When loads exceed acceptable levels, as outlined in CTA's [Service Standards and Policies](#), improvements are made to the schedule to help alleviate the crowding. However, we are always looking for specific customer feedback to help improve our service; if you notice particularly bad crowding please let us know through our [online](#) feedback portal or by calling 1-800-YOUR-CTA.

6. Will this study introduce new routes or types of service on the five corridors?

We have not yet determined whether any service planning or scheduling changes would be made in conjunction with the implementation of bus priority infrastructure on these corridors. In general, while it is anticipated that the current routing on the corridors would

remain the same or very similar, adding an express route that makes more limited stops may be considered once designs are refined.

Bicycle Infrastructure

A number of questions were asked related to bicycle infrastructure along these five corridors.

I. Are bicycle improvements being considered along with the bus improvements?

For corridors with existing bike infrastructure, bike infrastructure will be maintained. In some cases, refined designs may propose converting bike lanes to “bike-bus lanes,” which are designated lanes that buses and bikes share. These exist in several locations in Chicago, including North Clark Street, from Diversey to Belden and Chicago Avenue, from Campbell to Ashland.

For segments of corridors that do not include bike lanes, proposed designs may or may not include new bike lanes, depending on what designs may fit and what other uses need to be accommodated. In some cases, it may make sense to focus on enhancing bike facilities on adjacent and parallel streets to the five corridors, in-line with CDOT’s [cycling strategy](#) of providing “low-stress” routes that include protected bike lanes and neighborhood greenways. For more information, please visit [CDOT’s complete streets page](#).

Safety and Security

Several questions were focused on bus-operator and passenger safety, as well as emergency responses and training.

I. What measures are being taken for passenger and bus driver safety? Is there any information available online about CTA’s safety and security policies?

The safety and security of public transit riders is the CTA’s top priority. CTA has a number of programs, partnerships, initiatives and campaigns to ensure that riding CTA is as safe as possible; find them at [our security](#) and [safety webpages](#).