## Chicagor Better Streets for Buses Plan

Chicago Transit Authority Chicago Department of Transportation









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Better Streets for Buses









The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) present the City's first comprehensive framework plan to improve street infrastructure for public bus service: the Better Streets for Buses Plan. This plan lays the groundwork for ongoing bus infrastructure improvements by establishing a network of corridors to prioritize, and a toolbox of street treatments to consider as solutions.

#### Introduction

In Chicago, communities of color often have unmet travel needs, fewer transportation options, a harsher experience accessing bus stops and rail stations, and endure longer commutes. Public transit, and bus service in particular because of its broader geographic coverage, is a critical transportation option for many of Chicago's historically marginalized communities. The Better Streets for Buses Plan can help prioritize the transportation needs of these neighborhoods and their residents. It is by no means the only change needed to achieve mobility justice, but it is an important piece of the puzzle. Making investments in our streets that improve the walk to the bus, the wait for the bus, and the trip on the bus can improve overall economic access for people who most need it. And importantly, such investments show Chicago's bus riders that they are respected, and that the City supports and encourages the decision to take the bus.

#### **Guiding Values**

Equity: Leverage our transportation infrastructure to address systemic and historic injustices.

**Safety:** Support freedom from personal harm when traveling.

Accessibility & Comfort: Design transportation infrastructure for all ages and abilities.

Sustainability: Reduce the burden on the environment from transportation

#### **Plan Goals**

- Establish a citywide framework that guides how CTA and CDOT utilize infrastructure to achieve faster and more reliable bus service, improved access to bus stops, and better bus stops.
- Prioritize bus performance and access to transit for people and in places with the highest needs.
- Improve the bus experience for current riders and make it more attractive to prospective riders.

#### Why Do Buses Matter?

Buses matter because the people who ride them matter. In 2019, the CTA supplied more than 237 million bus rides, providing vital connections to Chicagoans of all income levels, and constituting 52% of all CTA ridership. In 2020, public transit ridership declined steeply nationwide as a result of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and has since risen and fallen with the pandemic's various stages. But throughout it all, CTA buses continued to provide hundreds of thousands of rides a day, including to essential workers across the City. During the lowest-ridership points of the pandemic, buses retained more ridership than either CTA rail or Metra rail, with heaviest ridership on the South and West Sides. This is likely due to the fact that CTA bus service is unique in providing accessible, affordable rides to and from almost anywhere in the City, including neighborhoods that have no direct access to rail. CTA bus service is essential to those who cannot drive, walk, roll, or bike to their destinations, and is critical for providing access to resources and opportunities for populations who need them most.

In addition, buses make significant contributions to the livability, health, and sustainability of the City of Chicago and the surrounding region. Buses mitigate traffic by making efficient use of a finite and valuable resource: Chicago street space. CTA's standard and articulated buses can comfortably carry around 50 and 80 people per bus, respectively. When transit provides a competitive experience, it can attract more people from lower occupancy modes such as personal cars and ride-hail, reducing car dependency and demand for parking. A trip taken by bus has a smaller environmental footprint in terms of both health-impacting air pollutants and climate-changing pollutants, compared to cars and ride-hail. These benefits are compounded by the fact that public transit supports more compact land use patterns that have a range of environmental benefits. These benefits include conserving



This map shows the distribution of bus and rail commuters throughout the City of Chicago between 2015 and 2019.

These maps show the demographic composition of Chicago between 2015 and 2019. The City is largely segregated by income, race and ethnicity.

#### Buses Are...



#### Affordable.

CTA base bus fare is \$2.25 per ride (as of Spring 2023), regardless of distance or time of day, with reduced or free fares available for eligible groups including seniors, Medicare recipients, people with disabilities, and military personnel. Various pass products can also help reduce the cost to ride for frequent riders, which allow for unlimited rides for 1-, 3-, 7-, or 30-day periods.



#### Accessible.

Since 2005. CTA's entire bus fleet has been accessible to people with disabilities. Today's bus models are designed specifically with accessibility in mind, including low-floor designs and ramps that flip outward, rather than steps and complex lift mechanisms that took longer to deploy and were more difficult to maintain.

#### Everywhere.

For most Chicagoans, the CTA bus is the public transit service in their neighborhood. About 96% of Chicago residents live near CTA bus service, meaning they are within a half-mile, or about a ten-minute walk of a CTA bus stop. This compares to around 30% of Chicago residents who live similarly close to CTA rail stations, which means that about two-thirds of Chicagoans live close to buses but far from CTA rail. CTA buses connect more people to rail lines, and they connect neighborhoods to each other, to employment, education, medical services, shopping, entertainment, parks, recreation, and other opportunities.

land and habitat, reducing impervious surfaces that contribute to water pollution, reducing overall transportation energy use by reducing travel distances, and more.

While the pandemic has impacted both bus ridership and bus operations, the long-term need for a successful bus system remains unchanged: to increase equity through increased economic access, to enable reductions in climate changing emissions and other air pollutants, and to support the City's overall sustainability and livability.

#### Why Develop a Better Streets for Buses Plan?

While buses provide vital connections and other benefits citywide, bus travel can be impacted by traffic delays, making some trips slow and inconvenient and causing longer waits between buses. Bus stop conditions, nearby sidewalks, and pedestrian crossings to access a bus stop do not always feel comfortable and safe.

Chicago's bus riders deserve better, and the design of street, sidewalk, and signal infrastructure can improve the bus riding experience. CTA and CDOT, in collaboration with Chicago residents, have developed the Better Streets for Buses Plan to help identify, prioritize, and leverage these opportunities.



The map on the left shows the proportion of people traveling in buses, as a percentage of the total number of people traveling in motor vehicles (cars and buses) for each street segment, as of 2017. The map on the right shows a snapshot of how many people typically ride buses across the City. Bus ridership is generally highest along parts of the lakefront and many key arterials.



# Chapter 2: Plan Components & Development

#### Plan Components

The Better Streets for Buses Plan includes two primary components:

#### Citywide Network of Corridors

The network of corridors identified as part of the Better Streets for Buses Plan will help guide implementation and prioritization of street treatments to benefit bus riders and improve the bus experience. More information about the network can be found in

#### Toolbox of Street Treatments

The Better Streets for Buses Toolbox includes a variety of street treatments that can help improve the bus riding experience. It is presented in detail in **Chapter 5** and includes street design elements and technologies like enhanced traffic signals, better bus stops, dedicated bus lanes and more. Some of these elements already exist in Chicago in bus enhancement projects like Jeffery Jump, Loop Link and Bus Priority Zones (see Chapter 6: Bus Priority Examples on page 66).

The Better Streets for Buses Plan does not assign specific street treatments to corridors. As individual corridors and segments move into design phases, the specific treatments to enhance bus operations and the customer experience will be identified.





#### Definitions



#### **Bus Priority**

An umbrella term for the variety of street treatments that gives an increased degree of priority to bus riders and buses in order to improve travel time, reliability, and/or comfort.



#### Street Treatments

Enhancements to streets, sidewalks, signals, or other public infrastructure. Examples of bus priority street treatments include expanded sidewalk space for bus riders waiting at a stop, a dedicated bus lane to keep buses separate from traffic delays, or a traffic signal that gives buses a head start at an intersection.



#### **Bus Corridor**

A street or related set of streets that are used by one or more related CTA bus routes. For example, the Western Avenue bus corridor is the segment of Western Avenue that is served by the #49 Western Avenue, the #X49 Western Avenue Express, and/ or the #49B North Western bus routes. The DuSable Lake Shore Drive bus corridor includes the portions of DuSable Lake Shore Drive used for CTA bus service as well as close parallel streets that the Lakeshore Express bus routes utilize to board and alight passengers, such as "Inner" Lake Shore Drive.

CTA and CDOT initially connected with community organizations and stakeholders across the City to get initial recommendations on how best to reach individuals from communities they help represent, including input from the Transportation Equity Network (TEN). A proposed set of bus corridors to be included in the Better Streets for Buses Network, and a proposed set of bus priority street treatments to be included in the toolbox were developed for stakeholder and public feedback.



#### **Plan Development Process**

The main public engagement period kicked off on April 19, 2022 and ended on June 10, 2022. Following this, the project team reviewed and synthesized the comments received and met with key advocates and community stakeholders to discuss how to best incorporate the feedback into the final Better Streets for Buses Plan. **Chapters 4 and 5** include more information about how public input was used to develop the final network and toolbox.





#### **Public Engagement**

Public engagement has been a primary focus of the overall effort to develop the Better Streets for Buses Plan, and will continue to be as CDOT and CTA move into implementation phases. The Better Streets for Buses Network and Toolbox have been identified based on collaboration with community representatives, agency partners, and Chicagoans across the City during the eightweek citywide engagement effort in 2022.

The goals of the 2022 citywide phase of public engagement were to provide information about the project, listen to the needs and aspirations of Chicago's diverse communities, and gather feedback that we could incorporate into a final version of the Better Streets for Buses Plan. The outreach campaign was designed to be largely virtual due to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic and changing guidance regarding in-person gathering, utilizing a project website with interactive tools (**www.betterstreetsforbuses.com**) and a series of virtual public meetings. This was supplemented with hard copy material distribution through ward offices and libraries, and some in-person distribution of flyers.

Overall, participants were excited about Better Streets for Buses and willing to share feedback about which corridors should be prioritized and which tools should be included in the toolbox. More than 1,300 individuals from at least 56 out of Chicago's 60 zip codes gave feedback on the draft plan. This came in the form of more than 2,000 "pins" dropped on virtual maps indicating opportunities to enhance bus service, more than 900 responses to a survey asking people about their bus-riding experience, comments and questions from among the 180 people who attended public meetings, and hundreds of emails, calls, and texts. Finally, nearly 400 comments and 53 new ideas were submitted via an interactive "ideas wall" that invited "Please implement transit signal priority! This will be an important step in keeping bus traffic flowing smoothly..".

"The next generation of transit improvements should serve neighborhoods or corridors that aren't served by the L today."

"One parked car that can fit 5-7 people should not impede the flow of a bus with dozens of people."





#### **Public Engagement**

people to comment and brainstorm about what types of bus enhancements they hoped to see implemented in Chicago.

Participants expressed desire for more reliable and frequent bus service, better enforcement of bus lanes and bus stops, and measures to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety. We also heard a strong sense of urgency to accelerate the implementation of bus priority projects including both small-scale improvements and more robust and transformation projects. Finally, participants expressed the importance of prioritizing implementation on the South and West sides of Chicago; the areas that have the greatest need and would benefit most from bus improvements.

CTA and CDOT will continue community dialogue to better understand overall mobility needs, including for those who ride the bus and those who do not. As more specific proposals and designs for bus priority street treatments are developed, solutions will need to be tailored appropriately to each community and the context of each neighborhood block. Additional stakeholder engagement to gather information about a specific corridor and vet any proposed designs that significantly affect the use of the street will take place as part of future project planning.





for different modes and uses.

The Better Streets for Buses website presented the draft toolbox as an "ideas wall," where participants could learn about, indicate support, and comment on proposed street treatments, as well as post their own ideas.



Materials inviting comment on Better Streets for Buses were distributed to all Chicago Public Libraries and aldermanic offices across the city as part of the 2022 citywide public outreach phase.



The Better Streets for Buses website had two interactive maps, where participants could view the proposed network and drop "pins" on specific locations. Participants could then comment about whether a street/location should or should not be prioritized for buses, and leave feedback about how well it is working



What would you like to see more of in your neighborhood? Please pick your top one or two choices.



Virtual public meetings held during the 2022 citywide public outreach phase included live polls asking partic-ipants questions about what they wanted to see in Better Streets for Buses Plan, and what results they were hoping for.



## Chapter 3: The CTA Bus Experience

#### The CTA Bus Experience

When a person is deciding whether to take the bus, the experience during all stages of the trip can factor in, and street infrastructure plays a role at every stage.

#### Traveling to the Bus Stop

Creating safer street crossings, ensuring well-maintained and accessible sidewalks, and expanding cycling infrastructure can improve the trip between the bus stop and destinations.

#### Waiting for the Bus

Implementing bus priority street treatments that help reduce service delays can make wait times at bus stops more consistent. Adding more amenities to bus stops can improve the overall wait experience too.

#### Boarding the Bus

Ensuring sufficient and accessible space at stops and designing stops to minimize conflicts with other street or sidewalk uses can improve the boarding experience.

#### Traveling on the Bus

Implementing bus priority street treatments that improve travel times and help reduce service delays can make bus trips faster and make bus travel times more consistent.

#### Getting Off the Bus

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Ensuring sufficient and accessible space at stops and designing stops to minimize conflicts with other street or sidewalk uses can improve the experience of getting off the bus.

#### Traveling to the Destination

Creating safer street crossings, ensuring well-maintained and accessible sidewalks, and expanding cycling infrastructure can improve the trip between the bus stop and destinations.

Other things people consider when choosing to take a CTA bus trip include proximity and directness of the route, bus service hours of operations, frequency of bus service, cost and availability of other options, and bus fares and transfer policies--but these factors are largely outside of the scope of the Better Streets for Buses Plan, which focuses on how street, sidewalk, and signal infrastructure can improve bus service. Other CTA efforts to address some of these factors are described in the "Concurrent Bus Improvement Initiatives" section.



## **Getting To and From the Bus**

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Ensuring safe and comfortable access to and from CTA bus stops is often overlooked but is fundamental in making the bus a viable and attractive option. If the walk is too far, too unpleasant, or feels unsafe for any reason, the overall experience of riding the bus becomes negative.

In Chicago, accessing the nearest bus stop typically means traveling a half-mile or less, and walking is the most common way Chicagoans get to their bus stops. CTA runs 127 bus routes in the City of Chicago, along more than 800 miles of streets serving nearly 10,000 bus stops. Bus stops are typically spaced between 1/8 and <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> of a mile apart along a route. As a result, about 96% of Chicago residents live within a half-mile walk of a CTA bus stop and most live even closer. However, not all experiences accessing bus stops are equal even when access distances are the same. Ideally, accessing or departing a bus stop should feel safe and comfortable. But the reality of physical constraints and barriers, such as viaducts, narrow sidewalks, and long crosswalks across busy streets may present challenges that are unequally distributed across the City.

To help address the disparity, CDOT's Strategic Plan for Transportation includes an explicit goal to make it safer and easier to walk in Chicago and commits to focusing efforts on the locations where pedestrians face the most risk, taking equity into account. To meet this goal, CDOT is improving the condition and accessibility of existing sidewalks and enhancing crossings near transit stops. For example, CDOT is improving access to bus stops by implementing pedestrian safety improvements at over 400 intersections and upgrading thousands of curb ramps every year.



Waiting for the bus tends to be everyone's least favorite part of their trip. In fact, research shows that people perceive waiting for the bus as 20% longer than actual wait time. Bus stop conditions can make the experience of waiting for the bus better or worse. Typical bus stop amenities include:

Bus Tracker information is available through CTA's website (www.ctabustracker.com), the Ventra app, and a number of other third-party apps. Since the onset of the pandemic, the reliability of real-time arrival information has been a significant issue, in part related to challenges with fulfilling service schedules due to labor shortages. CTA recognizes that the accuracy of real-time information is just as important as its availability. More information on CTA's ongoing efforts to overcome pandemic-related impacts to the reliability of both service and real-time arrival information can be found at www.transitchicago.com/meetingthemoment

All of CTA's buses are fully accessible, with the ability to deploy a ramp for wheelchair boarding, but currently about 14% of all bus stops in the City of Chicago have adjacent conditions that make it challenging to deploy bus wheelchair ramps. Roughly 71% of these problematic stops only require installation of a concrete sidewalk pad to facilitate ramp deployment. The remaining stops have other issues—the area for ramp deployment may be too narrow, uneven, or constrained by other infrastructure.

## Waiting for and Boarding the Bus

 Shelters, which typically include seating, can make waiting in poor weather conditions more comfortable. Currently, 21% of CTA bus stops in the City of Chicago have shelters. Most of these shelters are provided and maintained by a private contractor, managed by the City.

 Installation of concrete pads in the roadway where a bus stops helps prevent deterioration of the roadway and the bumpy ride, pooling water, and potholes that come with it. About 32% of the City's bus stops currently have concrete pads.

• The availability of accurate real-time arrival information can help bus riders plan their trip and know what to expect while waiting for the bus. Around 17% of Chicago bus stops with shelters are equipped with CTA Bus Tracker signs, to make it easy and obvious for anyone-regardless of what devices or apps they have or how familiar they are with the system-to see when the bus is coming.



#### **Bus Stop Conditions**

Bus stop conditions were assessed using a point system that indexes various features that contribute to overall bus stop quality. Points were assigned as follows:

- Sufficient clear space for ramp deployment: 4 points
- Shelter: 3 points
- Bus Tracker (real-time arrival info) display: 2 points
- Concrete bus pad: 1 point

Other features such as benches and nearby curb ramps also contribute to overall stop quality, but were not included because complete data for all bus stops was not available.





CDOT and CTA have been working together to implement accessibility improvements at these stops. In 2022, the Chicago Works capital program funded the installation of improvements at over 100 stops, and another 100 were budgeted for 2023. The initial round of bus stop locations are primarily in the neighborhoods of Belmont Cragin, Austin, and Chatham, and were identified and prioritized through analysis that looked at populations with higher rates of disability and their key destinations. Additionally, bus stops near hospitals and with high ridership trends were also prioritized for improvements.

Infrastructure at bus stops can also help alleviate personal safety concerns. While the presence of other riders and pedestrian activity may be most important to creating a sense of security with respect to crime, having good lighting and cameras can also help. Infrastructure and street design can also help reduce traffic-related injuries. Combined with calming traffic, providing adequate space for bus stops puts more distance between people and moving traffic, making the wait safer and more comfortable.

Regardless of bus stop conditions, no one wants to wait a long time for a bus. Research and surveys consistently show that high frequency service, which means shorter wait times, is a top priority for bus rider satisfaction, and an important consideration to make the bus an attractive option to prospective customers. Service frequency is not explicitly within the scope of the Better Streets for Buses Plan because it is mainly a function of CTA's schedules and operating resources, rather than street design. Compared to other US cities, Chicago has relatively frequent bus service regardless of time of day or day of the week.

Although some schedules have been temporarily adjusted while operator shortages are addressed in the wake of the pandemic, CTA's schedule normally includes 20 major bus routes that run every 2-8 minutes during the weekday peak hour and at least every 12 minutes in the midday. However, some street treatments in the Better Streets for Buses Toolbox can help keep buses more reliably on schedule—helping to prevent bus bunching and big gaps between buses that can happen because of unpredictable conditions, including traffic congestion.

## ₩ Waiting for and Boarding the Bus





#### Waiting for and Boarding the Bus

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CTA has designated a network of 44 "key routes" that cover the City. Key routes are typically spaced one mile apart and have frequencies of at least every 10 minutes during the weekday peak and at least every 15 minutes in the midday. But even the most frequent routes tend to be less frequent in the late evening or on weekends, which diminishes their attractiveness compared to other options. CTA's established service standards, which account for ridership demand and set minimum levels of service, guide decisions about a route's frequency. CTA's overall service levels are ultimately determined by its available operating budget, which is governed by state statute and regional regulatory authorities and is affected primarily by fare revenue and sales tax receipts. Service levels are also impacted by CTA's ability to invest capital dollars in sufficient fleet and support facilities. More information on CTA's annual budgeting process can be found at www.transitchicago.com/finance.



detail below.

#### Speed

## **Riding the Bus**

The quality of a person's experience riding the bus is a combination of conditions on board and the degree to which it feels like the bus is efficiently getting you where you want to go, on time. The various factors that feed into this experience are described in more

One of the most common complaints that people have about the bus is that it is slow. Bus speeds vary based on location, time of day, day of the week, traffic conditions, and weather. Typically, the downtown area experiences the lowest bus speeds, and the morning and evening rush hour periods are the slowest and most variable times to travel. But congestion and other delays can affect buses at other times of day and in other parts of the City.

#### **Reliability, Bunching, and Service Gaps**

Bus service "reliability" refers to the degree to which the bus is able to operate on its regular schedule, arriving at consistent frequencies without bunching or big gaps between buses, and whether or not travel time on the bus is consistent. Reliability is another primary concern for bus riders because it influences both the overall travel time and the extra time that needs to be planned into a trip to account for variability. For example, a particular bus trip may typically take 20 minutes, but regular riders know that it's not uncommon for it to take 30 minutes because of unpredictable traffic conditions. So those riders will build in an additional 10 minutes to their trip planning if they need to make sure they arrive on time. Consistent travel times are fundamental to providing current riders with a good CTA bus experience and important for attracting prospective riders.

Poor reliability can be experienced as variable travel times for the same trip while on board, but also results in two common types of disruptions that affect wait times: bus bunching and big gaps in service. Bus bunching is when several buses cluster together along a route and arrive at bus stops at or about the same time-because the first bus was delayed, and the following bus has caught up to it. When bus bunching occurs, big gaps in service are often created. If the first two buses that were scheduled to come five minutes apart have bunched together, that means there may now be a 10-minute gap between the second and third buses, and wait times get longer for some riders.

There is no single cause of bus bunching and big gaps, but any significant delay to one bus on a route can potentially trigger both. This also means the number of people waiting to board at the next bus stop may grow because of the delay. Uneven passenger loads between the first bus and the followers can result. This can create a downward spiral of reliability; boarding times will increase for the first bus, further contributing to more delay, more bunched buses, and bigger gaps.

#### Personal Safety Onboard and Vehicle Cleanliness

Surveys show that personal safety while on board and cleanliness of vehicle interiors are also top of mind for bus riders. These aspects of the bus riding experience are very important, but are largely outside the scope of the Better Streets for Buses Plan.

You can learn more about CTA's cleaning protocol and safety campaigns at www.transitchicago.com/coronavirus/ cleaning and www.transitchicago.com/ safety, respectively.

You can also read about additional protocols related to keeping riders safe and healthy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic at www.transitchicago.com/ready

You can read more about CTA's efforts to address personal security issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic at www.transitchicago.com/ meetingthemoment **Riding the Bus** 



#### Crowding

In 2019, about 2% of all CTA bus trips were crowded, defined as carrying more than 53 riders on a standard (40-foot) bus or more than 79 riders on an articulated (60-foot) bus. That same year, about 4% of peak period bus trips were crowded. When a route is chronically crowded, CTA seeks to reallocate some service from a less crowded route. Certain bus priority treatments can also help prevent or mitigate crowding by helping buses to stay on schedule and facilitate even passenger loads, despite variable traffic conditions. In response to the pandemic, CTA created an online dashboard to help riders know when specific bus routes tend to be most and least crowded, available at **www.transitchicago.com/coronavirus/dashboard** 



The street treatments proposed in the Better Streets for Buses Toolbox can help mitigate some, but not all, operational and traffic congestion issues that delay buses and contribute to all of the issues described above. These tools are explained more in **Chapter 5**. Several other strategies and initiatives to address other aspects of bus delay and bus service are discussed in the "Other Strategies" and "Concurrent Bus Improvement Initiative Projects" sections.



#### What Street Conditions Can Contribute to Bus Delays?

Buses are typically delayed by traffic congestion caused by too many vehicles for the available road space and intersection capacity. Additional factors that can make traffic congestion worse and sometimes disproportionately impact bus travel times and reliability include:

- roadway bottlenecks, such as where two lanes narrow to one at a highway or rail overpass,
- non-compliance with traffic laws, especially double-parking, blocking bus stops, or "blocking-the-box" at signalized intersections,
- partial or full street closures due to construction or special events,
- crashes and related emergency response activities, and
- obsolete signal technology and signal timing.

This map shows a snapshot of bus speeds across the City. Bus speeds are generally slowest downtown and along parts of the lakefront, but also slow at many major intersections across the City.



# Chapter 4: **Better Streets for Buses** Network

## **Better Streets for Buses Network**

page 27.

The network was developed based on feedback about which specific corridors to include, as well as the following overarching themes that we heard throughout the public engagement process:

- inequity.
- opportunity.

More information about the key characteristics of each corridor in the network and why it was selected is included on pages 35 - 52.

The Better Streets for Buses Network is comprised of seventeen corridors across the City, shown on the map on

• Improve bus service, streetscape infrastructure, and the pedestrian environment in areas that have experienced a history of underinvestment, and where populations continue to experience impacts of racial and economic

• Ensure the network serves populations that are most dependent on transit and better connects them to

• Ensure the network serves areas that do not have nearby rail transit options.

• Consider data on ridership, bus speeds, and mode share, as well as feasibility of implementation.

• Design a network with a sufficient number of corridors to provide overall geographic completeness and connectivity, but not with so many corridors that it inhibits focused implementation of meaningful improvements.



#### Better Streets for Buses Network

The seventeen Better Streets for Buses corridors form a network that stretches across the City. It includes about 185 miles of Chicago streets, which constitutes ~8% of all City streets and ~26% of the City streets that serve CTA bus routes. The network encompasses many of the system's highest-ridership routes, and every corridor has some segments that experience delays or could benefit from improvements to bus stop areas and pedestrian connections. The selected corridors align with those included in the City's 2022 Connected Communities Ordinance, and many of them overlap with other projects and priorities for CTA, CDOT, Pace and Metra.

The following page includes a little more about how each corridor functions, the places it serves, how it is used by bus riders, how its ridership has changed since the pandemic, what community stakeholders have said about it, and other contributing factors.



CORRIDORS	FROM/TO	MAIN ROUTE(S)
35th Street	31st/Cicero to 35th/Cottage Grove	35
55th Street/Garfield Boulevard	Cicero to S Hyde Park	55
63rd Street	Cicero to Stony Island	63
79th Street	Cicero to South Shore	79
95th Street	Western to 92nd/Buffalo Avenue	95/100/112/N9/N5; Pace 353/381
Ashland Avenue	Irving Park to Beverly/Vincennes	9/X9
Chicago Avenue	Austin to Fairbanks	66
Cottage Grove Avenue	35th to 115th	4/X4/115
Fullerton Avenue	Grand/Nordica to Halsted	74
Halsted Street	Waveland to 127th	8/8A/108; Pace 352/359
Irving Park Road	Cumberland to Marine Drive	80
Jeffery Boulevard	67th to 103rd/Stony Island	J14/15
Michigan Avenue	Oak St to Chicago Avenue	143/146/147/148/151
	Roosevelt to 35th	1/3/4/X4
DuSable Lake Shore Drive (DLSD)	Grand Avenue to Foster Also includes Marine Drive from Foster to Irving Park and North Lake Shore Drive (Inner Drive) from Irving Park to Belmont	134/135/136/143/146/147/148
	Columbus to 67th Also includes Columbus from DLSD to Roosevelt	6/J14/26/28; Pace 850/851/855
Pulaski Road	Peterson to 87th	53/53A
Roosevelt Road	Central to Columbus	12
Western Avenue	Howard to 79th	49/X49/49B

The table above lists the seventeen Better Streets for Buses corridors along with their geographic extents and the main bus routes that serve them. Additional bus routes serve shorter segments of many of these corridors as well, and in some cases these additional routes informed the selection of geographic extents. The Michigan and DuSable Lake Shore Drive corridors each include two segments, because they both travel through the downtown area, discussed further on pages 48 and 51. A more detailed list of all the specific street segments included in the network is included in the Appendix on pages 79 and 80.



### **Bus Priority in Downtown**

The revised Better Streets for Buses Network does not identify corridors within the downtown area. defined here as the area bounded by Chicago Avenue, Halsted, Roosevelt, and Lake Michigan. This is not because bus priority improvements in downtown should not or will not be considered: on the contrary. there are so many streets in this area that carry high volumes of bus riders impacted by congestion delays, that almost any corridor could warrant some degree of bus priority infrastructure Furthermore, the density of downtown necessitates a robust network of public transit options that provide competitive alternatives to driving, in order to keep traffic congestion and demand for parking at bay.

CTA and CDOT will continue to identify opportunities to improve bus service on key bus corridors downtown, with more specific determinations as to where and how to implement bus priority elements coordinated with various overlapping visioning and planning exercises upcoming or underway. These include corridor-specific studies being conducted by third parties like the Urban Land Institute, as well as the broader Central Area Plan update being led by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development. At a later point, the Better Streets for Buses Network may be revised to include a downtown network.

This approach is meant to fully recognize how interwoven bus service is with the full ecosystem of modes, traffic patterns, and land uses in the downtown area. Because of the intensity of development and variety of activities downtown-office, residential, retail, tourism, and more-downtown sees some of the highest bus ridership in the City, as well as some of the highest frequencies of bus service. But for these same reasons, bus service downtown also faces some of the most congested streets and intersections, most competition for the curbside, and most significant and chronic delays from special events. Bus priority projects that involve major changes to roadways downtown need to be considered in the context of this additional complexity.





#### **Bus Priority in Downtown**

To give a sense of the vital role bus service plays in downtown, the map on page 29 shows bus passenger volumes throughout the downtown area along with some specific examples of bus service levels-expressed as the volume of buses passing by specific points on key corridors all day, and at peak hours.

Bus ridership levels in downtown declined steeply at the start of the pandemic and have generally been climbing back since, but have not returned to 2019 levels. Ridership data from Fall 2022 is displayed on the map to represent a point in time after the worst waves of the pandemic when ridership had begun to recoverthese numbers however, should not be considered a stable "new normal," as ridership has continued to increase and trends are still emerging. The examples of bus volumes represent scheduled service levels in Fall 2019, before the pandemic. Since then, schedules have been temporarily adjusted to align with CTA's available workforce and will be realigned as CTA's hiring efforts continue.

If a corridor is part of the Better Streets for Buses Network, it means that CTA and CDOT will prioritize it for analysis and implementation of bus priority street treatments. CTA and CDOT will pursue future changes to the street's infrastructure to improve bus performance and the bus rider experience while considering the needs of vulnerable roadway users, including people walking and biking. However, no specific designs are proposed as part of the Better Streets for Buses Plan. Each corridor varies along its length, and may include different roadway widths, land uses, community contexts, and network functions for various users that need to be assessed in more detail. Further decisions on where to prioritize implementation first and what street treatments to utilize will be informed by public and stakeholder feedback, as well as data analyses and assessments of feasibility.

#### What does it mean if a corridor is in the Better Streets for Buses Network?

#### What does it mean if a corridor is NOT in the Better Streets for Buses Network?

If a corridor is not part of the Better Streets for Buses Network, improvements to busrelated infrastructure may still be made as part of other projects and to address critical needs. In particular, 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, and will prioritize these types of projects based on need. However, corridors that are not part of the Better Streets for Buses Network are not anticipated to be the focus for projects that include more robust treatments to improve bus roadway operations, such as long continuous segments of bus-only lanes.

Examples of the types of improvements that have recently been made or are coming soon to streets that are not in the Better Streets for Buses Network include: bus stop bump outs that were incorporated into a project along 87th Street that will enhance both pedestrian safety and bus boarding; queue jump lanes on Clark Street to be installed as part of other streetscape improvements; and bus boarding islands along Milwaukee Avenue and Laramie Avenue that reduce potential conflicts and delays for bicyclists, buses, and bus riders alike.



#### **Better Streets for Buses Corridors**

One important consideration in selecting the network was ensuring that the network helps connect areas experiencing mobility and economic hardship. To help with that analysis, CDOT's existing Mobility and Economic Hardship Index (MOBEC) was used. MOBEC is a quantitative metric developed by CDOT to gauge the relative difference in how easy or difficult it is for Chicagoans to get around the City to access jobs and other opportunities. The MOBEC Index is based on combining a mobility hardship score and an economic hardship score.

The mobility hardship score was developed using U.S. Census and other data from the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Affordability Index. It is based on a combination of 1) the percent of workers who spend 90 minutes or more on their work commute, 2) the percent of the population identifying as having a disability, and 3) the percent of household income spent on transportation.

To incorporate direct measures of economic hardship, CDOT utilized a metric developed by the Chicago Department of Public Health and researchers at University Illinois Chicago, which generates an economic hardship score for each census tract using variables such as unemployment, education, income, poverty status, housing conditions, and number of children and seniors.

CDOT then averaged the mobility hardship score and the economic hardship scores together and combined census tracts into their respective community area; this produced MOBEC scores for each of Chicago's 77 community areas that could then be assigned into one of thre e groups: low, medium or high. The results are shown in the map on the right, with the Better Streets for Buses Network overlaid.



#### Mobility and Economic Hardship Index

#### 95th Street





The 95th Street corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #95, #100, #112, #N9 and #N5, as well as Pace routes 353 and 381. CTA service along 95th normally runs approximately every 14 to 15 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service during the peak hours.<sup>1</sup> Between the Red Line and Vincennes, 95th has higher frequency service, normally between 7 and 9 minutes during the midday. Together, the CTA routes provided an average of about 4,500 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is ~57% of pre-pandemic levels—similar to the CTA system as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #108 Halsted/95th, #28 Stony Island, #30 South Chicago, #4 Cottage Grove, #X4 Cottage Grove Express, #111 111th/King Drive, #115 Pullman/115th, #3 King Drive, #103 West 103rd, #106 East 103rd, #119 Michigan/119th, the #34 South Michigan, and three other Pace routes.

The 95th Street corridor connects with CTA's Red Line and Metra's Rock Island and Electric Lines. It connects to and serves the South Side community areas of Beverly, Washington Heights, Roseland, Pullman, Chatham, Burnside, Calumet Heights and South Chicago. The 95th corridor also connects to community destinations such as Woodson Regional Library, Trinity Church, CICS Loomis-Longwood High School, Olive Harvey College South Chicago Learning Center, and Chicago State University. Around seven miles of the 95th Street corridor serve parts of the City that CDOT has identified as having higher mobility and/or economic hardship (see MOBEC map on page 34).



95th Street is an important bus corridor, offering both local and regional connections. The 95th Red Line Station offers a direct trip to the dense employment centers in and near downtown, while numerous bus route connections at the station provide important links to and between Far South Side communities. In addition, Pace is planning for improvements to its 95th Street service through the Pulse Arterial Rapid Transit program.



95th Street was the second-most supported east-west corridor on the South Side, based on feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses.

"The busy stretches of 95th Street that serve multiple routes as they approach the Red Line terminus should be prioritized for improvements."

<sup>1</sup> Service frequencies cited throughout this section are based on Fall 2019 schedules.

"95th is a perfect route for BRT: wide lanes, connects neighborhoods without train stations to the Red Line and 3 Metra stations. Take some lane space and make it bus-only!"

<sup>2</sup> Pre-pandemic ridership levels cited throughout this section are based on October 2019 levels. As of October 2022 ridership of the CTA system as a whole had recovered 57% of October 2019 levels.

## 79th Street



The 79th Street corridor is served primarily by CTA Route #79, which normally runs approximately every 7 to 15 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service during the peak hours. Route #79 provided an average of about 13,000 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is ~55% of pre-pandemic levels—a few percentage points lower than the CTA system as a whole. Short sections of the corridor west of the Dan Ryan are used by other CTA routes, including the #8A South Halsted, #24 Wentworth, #75 74th/75th and the #169 69th/UPS Express.

The 79th Street corridor connects with CTA's Red Line, Metra's SouthWest Service and two branches of the Metra Electric Line. The corridor serves the South Side community areas of Ashburn, Auburn Gresham, Chatham, Greater Grand Crossing, Avalon Park, South Shore and South Chicago. The 79th Street corridor also serves several South Side commercial areas and connects to community destinations such as Bogan High School, Simeon High School, Ford City Mall and the Lakefront. Around seven miles of the 79th Street corridor serve parts of the City that CDOT has identified as having higher mobility and/or economic hardship (see MOBEC map on page 34).

79th Street is a major bus corridor and is consistently among the top five highest ridership corridors in the CTA bus system. Recognizing its importance, CTA and CDOT have already implemented several Bus Priority Zones along this corridor. A Bus Priority Zone at the 79th Red Line station includes a short stretch of red bus lanes, pedestrian refuge islands in the median and a queue jump signal for westbound buses at 79th/Lafayette. At Halsted, short segments of peak-hour bus lanes were installed and the traffic signal at 79th/King Drive was optimized to help the traffic flow for CTA buses. A third Bus Priority Zone is expected to be complete by the end of 2023 at the complex intersection of 79th/Kedzie/Columbus. This project includes segments of red bus lanes, a queue jump for eastbound buses at 79th/Kedzie, and a new cul-de-sac at Sawyer to expand pedestrian space and improve overall safety at the intersection. In addition, early in the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary bus lanes on the corridor between Cicero and Western were installed to prioritize bus service and reduce delays and crowding for essential workers and other transit riders.

With a relatively wide right-of-way, the section of 79th between Cicero and Western Avenue has more geometric potential to integrate robust bus priority features than many other streets. The #79 also serves a relatively high number of longer-distance trips, which means there is good potential to significantly reduce overall travel times with bus priority treatments.

79th Street was the third-most supported east-west corridor on the South Side, based on feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses. 79th was also consistently noted as a strong contender for Bus Rapid Transit by those commenting.

"Route 79 is extremely well used. It should be a top priority for transit improvements."

"Buses often bunch up. 79th street is very stop and go."

### **63rd Street**



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The 63rd Street corridor is served primarily by CTA Route #63, which normally runs approximately every 7 to 15 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service during the peak hours. Route #63 provided an average of about 8,300 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is ~55% of pre-pandemic levels—a few percentage points lower than the CTA system as a whole.

The 63rd Street corridor connects with CTA's Red and Green Lines, as well as the Metra Electric Line. The corridor serves the South Side community areas of Clearing, West Lawn, Chicago Lawn, West Englewood, Englewood, Greater Grand Crossing, Washington Park and Woodlawn. The corridor connects to community destinations such as Jackson Park, Hyde Park Academy High School, Kennedy-King College, and the Barack Obama Presidential Center. Additionally, the #63 is extended east in the spring and summer to provide a direct connection with the 63rd Street Beach. Around six miles of the 63rd Street corridor serve parts of the City that CDOT has identified as having higher mobility and/or economic hardship (see MOBEC map on page 34).



63rd Street is an important corridor, connecting several South Side neighborhoods to CTA rail and the employment center and transportation hub of Midway Airport. At Midway, the #63 connects to fourteen other CTA and Pace bus routes, the CTA Orange Line, and the airport itself.



Feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses included several references to long wait times experienced on this corridor.

"Many residents of Englewood rely on this route, but wait times can be very long and buses get crowded."

"The 63rd St stop at Wentworth, a main way of changing to the Red Line, has no lights, shelter, and poor crossings."

## 55th Street/Garfield Boulevard



The 55th/Garfield corridor is served primarily by CTA Route #55, which normally runs approximately every 12 to 13 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service during the peak hours. Route #55 provided an average of about 5,200 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is ~56% of pre-pandemic levels—similar to the CTA system as a whole. Short sections of the eastern end of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #24 Wentworth, #59 59th/61st, #171 U. of Chicago Hyde Park and the #192 U. of Chicago Hospitals Express.

The 55th/Garfield corridor connects with CTA's Red and Green Lines, as well as the Metra Electric Line. The corridor serves South Side community areas such West Elsdon and Gage Park that lack direct access to CTA rail service, and further connects to and serves the community areas of Garfield Ridge, West Englewood, Englewood, New City, Fuller Park, Washington Park and Hyde Park. The corridor also connects to community destinations such as Washington Park and Kipp Bloom College Prep High School, as well as major regional destinations such as the University of Chicago, the DuSable Black History Museum and the Museum of Science and Industry. Around nine miles of the 55th/Garfield corridor serve parts of the City that CDOT has identified as having higher mobility and/or economic hardship (see MOBEC map on page 34).

55th/Garfield is an important bus corridor, making connections to the two major employment centers of the University of Chicago and Midway Airport. At Midway, the #55 connects to fourteen other CTA and Pace bus routes, the CTA Orange Line, and the airport itself. The boulevard system west of Washington Park provides geometric opportunity for future bus prioritization efforts.

55th/Garfield was the most supported east-west corridor on the South Side, based on feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses. Comments included requests for shelters and other bus stop improvements along the stretch of 55th east of Washington Park.



"The western stretch of the #55 run takes too long. Signal priority, queue jumps, and other treatments should be added."

### **35th Street**





The 35th Street corridor is served primarily by CTA Route #35, which normally runs approximately every 20 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service during the peak hours. Route #35 provided an average of about 2,750 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is ~57% of pre-pandemic levels—similar to the CTA system as a whole. Short sections of this corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #4/X4 Cottage Grove and #31 31st near the eastern end, and the #39 Pershing, #50 Damen, #52 Kedzie, #53 Pulaski, #53A South Pulaski, #62 Archer, #82 Kimball/Homan and #94 California along the western end.

The 35th Street corridor connects with CTA's Red, Green and Orange Lines, as well as Metra's Rock Island District. The corridor serves the West and South Side community areas of South Lawndale, Brighton Park, McKinley Park, Bridgeport, Armour Square and Douglas, and the neighborhood of Little Village. 35th connects to community destinations such as the Illinois Institute of Technology, Little Village Lawndale High School and the Chicago Military Academy at Bronzeville, as well as the major tourist destination of Guaranteed Rate Field. Additionally the #35 is extended east in the spring and summer to provide a direct connection with the 31st Street Beach.



35th Street provides important east-west connections across industrial areas where the street grid is fragmented and between West Side neighborhoods and key rail lines.



Feedback received during the Better Streets for Buses comment period included several statements that wait times for the bus can be long and unreliable.

"Please improve access to city amenities on the South Side. Dedicated, enforced lanes and express buses along 35th to get people to Sox games and 31st Street Beach could go a long way to improving quality of life in summer months. Everyone deserves to enjoy the lake!"



"Buses here (particularly west of King, up until Indiana or so) are routinely backed up in traffic on 35th Street. Speeding up buses here would be a huge improvement."

### **Roosevelt Road**



The Roosevelt corridor is served primarily by CTA Route #12, which normally runs approximately every 10 to 11 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service during the peak hours. Route #12 provided an average of about 7,000 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is ~54% of pre-pandemic levels—a few percentage points below the CTA system as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including: the #18 16th/18th, #128 Soldier Field Express, #130 Museum Campus, #146 Inner Lake Shore/Michigan Express, and #192 U. of Chicago Hospitals Express on the eastern end, and the #50 Damen through the Illinois Medical District (IMD).

The Roosevelt corridor connects with CTA's Red, Green and Orange Lines, in addition to the Metra Electric Line. The corridor serves the West Side community areas of Austin, North Lawndale and the Near West Side, as well as the Loop and Near South Side. Roosevelt connects to the high density employment center of IMD as well as jobs in the South Loop. The Roosevelt corridor connects to community destinations such as St. Ignatius High School, Douglass Park, the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), and Grant Park. Several of the routes that utilize the east end of Roosevelt also provide connections to Museum Campus and Soldier Field.

The Roosevelt corridor provides an important east-west connection between neighborhoods and major transportation, educational and medical facilities across the City. The corridor serves multiple commute patterns, with riders using it to access CTA rail, the South Loop, and IMD. This corridor currently has several blocks of bus lanes and bus-bike lanes between the CTA Roosevelt Station and the bridge over the South Branch of the Chicago River.

Roosevelt was the fourth-most supported east-west corridor on the South Side, based on the feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses.

"The 12 Roosevelt line is always subject to mixed traffic. Having a bus/bike only lane here will make it easier for crosstown service between the West Side and downtown."



"This intersection (Roosevelt/ Canal) is very wide for a pedestrian, and makes me nervous to cross especially at night."

#### Chicago Avenue





The Chicago Avenue corridor is served primarily by CTA Route #66, which normally runs approximately every 9 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service during the peak hours. Route #66 provided an average of about 13,900 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is ~63% of pre-pandemic levels—roughly six percentage points higher than the CTA system as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #3 King Drive, #10 Museum of Science and Industry, #26 South Shore Express, #37 Sedgwick, #157 Streeterville/Taylor and #125 Water Tower Express along the eastern end and the #52 Kedzie and #94 California on the western end.

The Chicago Avenue corridor connects with CTA's Blue, Purple, Brown and Red Lines. The corridor serves the community areas of Austin, Humboldt Park, West Town and the Near North Side. The corridor also connects to community destinations such as Humboldt Park, Northwestern Memorial Hospital and the West Town commercial corridor, while also serving major tourist destinations like the Magnificent Mile, Navy Pier and the coming casino development.



Chicago Avenue is a major bus corridor and is consistently among the top five highest ridership corridors in the CTA bus system. Recognizing this, CTA and CDOT have already implemented several Bus Priority Zones along this corridor. Several stretches of peak-hour bus lanes were added at pinch points, including a short segment near the Chicago Blue Line Station and a longer stretch through River North. These Bus Priority Zones also included queue jump signals at two intersections, and a cul-de-sac of May Street near the intersection at Milwaukee and Ogden to improve pedestrian safety and expand the bus stop boarding area. In addition, early in the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary bus lanes were installed between Laramie and Ashland to prioritize bus service and reduce delays and crowding for essential workers and other transit riders. The segment of this bus lane between Ashland and Western Avenues was converted to a permanent bus-bike lane in 2022. The #66 serves a relatively high number of longer-distance trips, which means there is good potential to further reduce overall travel times with additional bus priority treatments.



Chicago Avenue was the most supported of all east-west corridors, based on the feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses. Commenters noted that they often experience delays while riding the bus.

"Even though a pedestrian island was installed at Chicago and Hudson to try to make it a little better, this crosswalk is really unsafe. Cars accelerate down Chicago Ave and just do not stop, even if you're in the street...I see children getting off at this stop after school, so I hope something can be done to make cars slow down."

"I support keeping and extending CTA bus only lanes as far west/east as possible on this corridor. The Chicago bus is essential to get downtown since this area (Chicago/Leavitt) has limited access to trains." 1



The Fullerton corridor is served primarily by CTA Route #74, which normally runs approximately every 12 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service during the peak hours. Route #74 provided an average of about 8,100 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is ~68% of pre-pandemic levels—roughly ten percentage points higher than the CTA system as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #37 Sedgwick on the eastern end and the #65 Grand on the western end.

The Fullerton corridor connects with CTA's Red, Brown and Purple Lines and Metra's MD-N Line. Fullerton serves community areas such as Montclare and Belmont Cragin that lack direct access to CTA rail service, as well as the community areas of Hermosa, Logan Square and Lincoln Park. It connects to community destinations like DePaul University, Brickyard Shopping Center and Riis Park.

Fullerton is an important east-west corridor that also provides broader regional transit connections through its connections to multiple rail lines. With a relatively wide right-of-way west of Western Avenue, the corridor has more geometric potential to integrate robust bus priority features than many other streets. The #74 also serves a relatively high number of longer-distance trips, which means there is good potential to significantly reduce overall travel times with bus priority treatments.

Fullerton was the third-most supported east-west corridor, based on the feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses. Commenters noted that they regularly wait a long time for buses at major intersections including Damen, Ashland and Halsted.

"Roads that run West-East are especially important since the L generally does not run that direction."



"The Fullerton Bus is regularly affected by bus bunching where multiple buses will come within a few minutes of each other, and then no buses will come for 20-30 minutes."

### **Irving Park Road**





The Irving Park corridor is served primarily by CTA Route #80, which normally runs approximately every 12 to 14 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service during the peak hours. Route #80 provided an average of about 7,100 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is ~67% of pre-pandemic levels—roughly ten percentage points higher than the CTA system as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #9/#X9 Ashland, #54A North Cicero/Skokie Blvd., #135 Clarendon/LaSalle Express, and the #148 Clarendon/Michigan Express. The corridor has also been used by Pace's special event service, Routes #282 and #779, serving Wrigley Field.

The Irving Park corridor connects with CTA's Blue, Brown and Red Lines and Metra's UP-NW Line. The corridor serves community areas such as Dunning and Portage Park that lack direct access to CTA rail service and connects to other community areas including Irving Park, North Center, Lake View and Uptown, along with community destinations like Schiller Woods, Portage and Horner Parks, Lake View High School, Thorek Memorial Hospital, and the lakefront.



Irving Park provides a critical east-west connection between the lakefront and far northwest communities. The corridor is also an important regional connector, with a high number of transfers to the O'Hare branch of the Blue Line and to Metra service. With a relatively wide right-of-way, the corridor has more geometric potential to integrate robust bus priority features than many other streets. The #80 also serves a relatively high number of longer-distance trips, which means there is good potential to significantly reduce overall travel times with bus priority treatments. As part of recent safety improvements, CDOT is planning on adding curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands and new crosswalks—all of which can help people get to and from CTA bus stops in the project area.



Irving Park was the fourth-most supported east-west corridor on the North Side based on the feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses. Commenters noted that they often experienced delays while riding the bus, and that traffic is worse near DuSable Lake Shore Drive and in the peak periods.

"Irving Park is often a very slow bus ride, which is a huge disappointment, because I take it often to get to the Irving Park Blue Line to go to O'Hare. ...I think having bus and bike lanes would both make the bus much more efficient and faster, as well as make biking safe and speedy." "East-west travel should be given high priority as it is PAINFULLY slow across the entire northside. It is essential to help people travel between neighborhoods and reach rapid transit lines."



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## Pulaski Road



The Pulaski corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #53 and #53A. The #53 normally runs every 8 to 12 minutes in the midday, while the #53A normally runs every 12 to 18 minutes south of 31st Street. Both routes have higher frequencies in the peak. Together, these routes provided an average of 17,300 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is about 67% of pre-pandemic levels—or approximately ten percentage points higher than the CTA system's recovery as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #67 67th/69th/71st and #157 Streeterville/Taylor.

The Pulaski corridor connects with CTA's Blue, Green, Pink and Orange lines, as well as Metra's UP-NW and MD-N Lines. Pulaski connects to and serves many community areas that lack direct access to CTA rail service, including Ashburn, West Lawn, West Elsdon, South Lawndale, Hermosa and North Park, and further connects to and serves Archer Heights, North Lawndale, West Garfield Park, Humboldt Park, Logan Square, Avondale, Irving Park and Albany Park. The corridor connects to community destinations such as Daley College, Saint Xavier University, Bogan High School, Curie High School, Northtown Academy High School, Gompers Park and several community commercial corridors across the City. Around six miles of the Pulaski corridor serve parts of the City that CDOT has identified as having higher mobility and/or economic hardship (see MOBEC map on page 34).

Pulaski is a major north-south corridor and serves a vital role as an alternative to rail for the West Side. A significant portion of the corridor, particularly south of 31st Street, has a relatively wide right-of-way and multiple travel lanes; this provides more geometric potential than many other streets to integrate robust bus priority features. Pulaski also serves a relatively high number of longer-distance trips, which means there is good opportunity to significantly reduce overall travel time with bus priority treatments.

Feedback received during the Better Streets for Buses comment period included several mentions of regularly waiting a long time for the bus.

"Pulaski has a high concentration of jobs but the buses can be extremely unreliable. This is a crucial corridor for public transit in the area to be a reliable means of transportation and to provide equitable access to the jobs along the corridor."

"Pulaski is frequented by so many students who rely on the buses, so this corridor should be a priority for Bus Rapid Transit plans and enhancements."

#### Western Avenue





The Western corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #49, #X49 and #49B. The #49 runs every 8 to 9 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service in the peaks including the addition of #X49 service. The #49B runs every 10 minutes in the midday, also with more frequent service in the peaks. Altogether, all three routes provided an average of 19,400 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is about 67% of pre-pandemic levels—or approximately ten percentage points higher than the CTA system's recovery as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #11 Lincoln on the northern end and the #18 16th/18th, #48 South Damen, #67 67th/69th/71st, #94 California and #157 Streeterville/Taylor on the southern end.

The Western corridor connects with CTA's Brown, Blue, Pink and Orange Lines, as well as Metra's MD-N, MD-W, NCS and BNSF Lines. Western connects to and serves many community areas that lack direct access to CTA rail service, including Ashburn, Chicago Lawn, Gage Park, Brighton Park and West Ridge, and further connects to and serves New City, McKinley Park, the Lower West Side, Near West Side, West Town, Logan Square, Avondale, North Center and Lincoln Square. The corridor connects to community destinations such as McKinley Park, Warren Park, the West Ridge Nature Park, the new Park District Headquarters, Lane Tech High School, Roberto Clemente High School, as well as several hospitals and commercial corridors across the City.

Western Avenue is the longest continuous street in the City and along the way provides a direct connection to nearly every CTA rail line. Western is also consistently among the top five highest ridership corridors in the CTA bus system. Recognizing its importance, CTA and CDOT studied the corridor for potential implementation of Bus Rapid Transit infrastructure in 2012, and have implemented several Bus Priority Zones along it. These include stretches of peak-hour bus lanes at chokepoints near the Western Blue Line Station on the O'Hare branch, and near Logan Boulevard and the entrance to I-90/94. A future Bus Priority Zone is also in the planning stages for the area around the Western Brown Line Station.

In addition to the Bus Priority Zone investments, Western was one of the first corridors in the City to receive installation of Transit Signal Priority infrastructure, with traffic signal upgrades between 79th and Howard Streets. In 2022, the Department of Planning and Development published a Western Avenue Corridor Study focusing on land uses on the northern portion of the corridor, which included recommendations for the addition of bus priority infrastructure.

The corridor provides important regional connections, with a high number of transfers between the bus and Metra, particularly at the Western station near Hubbard Street. The corridor serves a relatively high number of longer-distance trips, which means there is good potential to significantly reduce overall travel time with additional bus priority treatments.



Western was the second-most supported corridor overall, based on the feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses. Comments expressed support for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on the corridor, concerns about crossing the street safely, and a desire for more bus shelters, benches and other improvements.

"This stretch of Western Ave/Blvd (near 53rd Street) has 8 lanes of traffic AND a lane for parking. That's more lanes than many highways. As a major connector of many neighborhoods, Western should be prioritized." "The Western bus is one of the best North/ South connectors of the city west of the Red Line. CTA should continue to invest in improving speed and service on this route."

#### **Ashland Avenue**



The Ashland corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #9 and #X9. The #9 normally runs approximately every 6 to 13 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service in the peaks including the addition of #X9 service. Together, both routes provided an average of 17,000 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is about 67% of pre-pandemic levels—or approximately ten percentage points higher than the CTA system's recovery as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #126 Jackson on the northern end and the #31 31st and #63 63rd on the southern end.

The Ashland corridor connects with CTA's Blue, Green, Pink and Orange Lines, as well as Metra's UP-N, UP-NW and Rock Island Lines. Ashland connects many neighborhoods all along the corridor to employment centers in the Near West Side, Illinois Medical District and the Back of the Yards Industrial Corridor. Other community areas served by Ashland include Washington Heights, Auburn Gresham, West Englewood, New City, McKinley Park, the Lower West Side, West Town, Logan Square, Lincoln Park and Lake View. The corridor connects to community destinations such as Lake View High School, Benito Juarez High School, Union Park and several commercial corridors across the City, in addition to the United Center. Around eight miles of the Ashland corridor serve parts of the City that CDOT has identified as having higher mobility and/or economic hardship (see MOBEC map on page 34).

Ashland is an essential bus corridor and is consistently among the top five highest ridership corridors in the CTA bus system. Ashland is one of the first corridors in the City to receive installation of Transit Signal Priority, with traffic signal upgrades between 95th Street and Cermak, and additional installation upcoming for signals between Cermak and Irving Park. Work is ongoing to expand Transit Signal Priority on the corridor from Cermak Road to Irving Park Road. The Ashland corridor serves a relatively high number of longer-distance trips, which means there is good potential to significantly reduce overall travel time with further bus priority treatments. The corridor also provides and important regional connection, with a high number of transfers between the bus and Metra's service at Clybourn Station.

Because of its importance, the corridor has been discussed as a potential candidate for larger-scale, transformative changes to the street to prioritize bus travel; in 2013, an alternatives analysis process resulted in a recommendation to advance a center-running Bus Rapid Transit design for Ashland. Ashland has also been identified as an important corridor in the North Branch Framework Plan and is anticipated to serve the growing population and activity centers associated with Lincoln Yards.

Ashland was the most supported corridor overall, based on feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses. Comments expressed support for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on the corridor and noted long wait times for the bus. Other comments expressed a desire for more shelters, benches and other bus stop improvements.

"Ashland is so wide and so long, covering so much of the city, it's a no-brainer for priority improvements."



"47th & Ashland is the big commercial spot in Back of the Yards...Would love safer crossings, wider sidewalks, and better bus stops here."

#### Halsted Street





The Halsted corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #8, #8A and #108. The #8 normally runs every 10 to 11 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service in the peaks. The #8A normally runs every 15 to 19 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service in the peaks including the addition of #108 service. Combined, all three routes provided an average of 15,500 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is about 58% of pre-pandemic levels—similar to the CTA system's recovery as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #74 Fullerton on the northern end, and the #18 16th/18th, #20 Madison, #43 43rd, #44 Wallace/ Racine and #62 Archer, in addition to Pace Routes #352 and #359, on the southern end.

The Halsted corridor connects with CTA's Red, Blue, Green and Orange Lines, as well as Metra's BNSF and Electric Lines. Halsted connects many neighborhoods all along the corridor to employment and recreation opportunities in the West Loop and serves the community areas of West Pullman, Roseland, Morgan Park, Washington Heights, Auburn Gresham, Englewood, New City, Fuller Park, Bridgeport, the Lower West Side, Near West Side, West Town, Near North Side, Lincoln Park and Lake View. The corridor connects to community destinations such as the University of Illinois Chicago, DePaul University, Fulton Market District, and several commercial corridors across the City. It will also serve the planned casino and entertainment development at Chicago Avenue. Around 14 miles of the Halsted corridor serve parts of the City that CDOT has identified as having higher mobility and/or economic hardship (see MOBEC map on page 34).

Halsted is a critical north-south bus corridor and is consistently among the top five highest ridership corridors in the CTA bus system. Halsted serves a relatively high number of longer-distance trips, which means there is good potential to significantly reduce overall travel time with bus priority treatments.

Additionally, Pace and CTA, in coordination with CDOT, have studied the South Halsted corridor between the Harvey Transportation Center and 79th Street. Service along this corridor connects the Far South Side and South suburbs to downtown and beyond via two CTA Red Line stations. Informed by public outreach and stakeholder conversations, a series of bus priority treatments have been identified to improve travel and shorten commutes, increase service reliability, and improve bus infrastructure and amenities. As part of this project, Pace plans to implement a Pulse Arterial Rapid Transit line along the southern part of this corridor.



Halsted was the fourth-most supported corridor overall, based on feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses. Commenters noted that they experienced delays while riding the bus, especially near major intersections.

"The Halsted bus is a convenient way to get from Bridgeport to UIC, West Loop, Goose Island and Lincoln Park, but too often the bus is stuck in traffic."



"Halsted is a crucial N/S connector in an area (near 18th Street) where there isn't L coverage but service/traffic is unreliable."

## Michigan Avenue

The Michigan corridor differs from many of the other Better Streets for Buses corridors, both in how the corridor is defined, and how many routes utilize it. Because it runs through downtown, which is treated differently than the rest of the City for the purposes of this plan (see "Bus Priority in Downtown" on page 30) the Michigan corridor has two segments: (1) between Oak Street and Chicago Avenue, and (2) between Roosevelt Road and 35th Street. Unlike most other corridors which are primarily served by one or two routes, long segments of the Michigan corridor are used by nine different CTA routes, with many more routes utilizing small parts of the corridor as well.

The northern section of this corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #146, #147, and #151 which run all day, and Routes #143 and #148 during peak hours only. Altogether, the segment between Chicago Avenue and Oak Street normally sees buses about every two minutes during the morning rush hour, and every two to four minutes in the midday. The southern section of the corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #3 and #4 which run all day, and Routes #1 and #X4 during peak hours. Altogether, the segment between Roosevelt Road and Cermak Road normally sees buses about every three minutes during the morning rush hour and every four minutes in the midday. Combined, all of these routes provided an average of 53,000 rides per weekday in October 2022. Compared to pre-pandemic levels, October 2022 ridership recovery on the northern section of this corridor ranged from 33% on the #143 to 76% on the #147, while the southern half of the corridor had recovered between 44% on the #1 and 59% on the #3.

Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #10 Museum of Science and Industry and #125 Water Tower Express on the northern section, and the #12 Roosevelt, #21 Cermak and #192 U. of Chicago Hospitals Express, in addition to Pace's I-55 Express Routes, 850, 851 and 855, on the southern section.

Both segments of the Michigan corridor provide important links to and from downtown and neighborhoods further north or south. The corridor is important for routes connecting to regional destinations like the Northwestern Hospital campus, and major tourist destinations such as McCormick Place, the Magnificent Mile and Grant Park.

The Michigan Avenue corridor is unique in several ways. It is one of Chicago's most visible, well-known, and well-used corridors, with the downtown segment connecting to some of the City's most famous tourist destinations and highest-density employment centers. This means that improving bus operations anywhere along the corridor can have an outsized effect on how both local Chicagoans and tourists interact with the City's transit network. In addition, because of the high number of frequent routes that utilize Michigan to connect with other neighborhoods, parts of this corridor see some of the highest levels of overall bus service in the City, State, and Midwest.

Feedback received during the Better Streets for Buses comment period included strong support for including Michigan Avenue in the network. Overall, it was the fourth most-supported corridor, with many commenters also noting that buses on Michigan often experience delays.

"There are 10+ bus routes along Michigan Ave, and yet there is no priority for buses. I'd love to see BRT-style bus lanes along Michigan from Oak St all the way to the Indiana Green Line station or even beyond."

"With the amount of car traffic and buses converging at this location (at Michigan and Walton), it's extremely hectic. It would be great if protected bus lanes could be implemented to avoid cars mixing with bus traffic."

CTA 1 3 4 X4 143 146 147 148 151





The Cottage Grove corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #4, #X4 and #115. North of 95th Street, the #4 normally runs every 7 to 11 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service in the peaks including the addition of #X4 service. South of 95th Street, the #115 and the #4 together provide service approximately every 7 to 9 minutes. Combined, all three routes provided an average of 13,300 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is about 60% of pre-pandemic levels—or about three percentage points higher than the CTA system's recovery as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #2 Hyde Park Express, #111A Pullman Shuttle and #192 U. of Chicago Hospital Express.

The Cottage Grove corridor connects with CTA's Green Line and Metra's Electric Line. It serves the community areas of Roseland, Pullman, Burnside, Chatham, Greater Grand Crossing, Woodlawn, Hyde Park, Washington Park, Kenwood, Grand Boulevard and Oakland. It connects to community destinations such as the University of Chicago—and its extensive hospital network—in addition to Chicago State University, Washington Park, the Midway Plaisance, Pullman National Historical Park and the DuSable Black History Museum and Education Center. Around eight miles of the Cottage Grove corridor serve parts of the City that CDOT has identified as having higher mobility and/or economic hardship (see MOBEC map on page 34).



C

Cottage Grove is an important north-south corridor, connecting several Far South Side neighborhoods to high-density employment centers in Hyde Park and downtown, and is an important regional connecter, with a high number of transfers between the bus and the Metra Electric Line. The corridor serves a relatively high number of longer-distance trips, prompting CTA to add express route service (Route #X4) in 2022. Building upon this service investment, additional bus priority infrastructure could help further reduce travel times.



Feedback received during the Better Streets for Buses comment period included several references to experiencing delays often, particularly around the Midway Plaisance and near Pershing Road.

"As development continues on Cottage Grove here, packed #4 buses get slowed down in traffic more often."



## **Jeffery Boulevard**



The Jeffery corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #J14 and #15. Between 67th and 103rd Streets, these routes together normally provide service every 7 to 9 minutes in the midday, with more frequent service in the peaks. Together, both routes provided an average of nearly 10,000 rides per weekday in October 2022, which is about 55% of pre-pandemic levels—or about the same as CTA system's recovery as a whole. Short sections of the corridor are used by other CTA routes, including the #5 South Shore Night Bus, #26 South Shore Express and #100 Jeffery Manor Express.

The Jeffery corridor connects with Metra's Electric Line, and north of the Jeffery Boulevard section, the #J14 continues north with express operation on DuSable Lake Shore Drive to connect to high-density employment in the Loop. Other community areas served by the Jeffery corridor include South Deering, Calumet Heights, Avalon Park, South Chicago, South Shore and Woodlawn—many of which lack a direct connection to the CTA's rail system. The corridor connects to community destinations such as Jackson Park and several South Side commercial corridors.

In 2012, CTA debuted the #J14 Jeffery Jump, bringing bus priority features to this important corridor in order to offer a faster, more reliable trip from the South Side to downtown. These features included a stretch of peak-hour bus lanes between 67th and 83rd Streets, transit signal priority, a queue jump at Anthony Avenue and improved bus stops with enhanced shelters, real-time arrival information, and specialized design.

Feedback received during the Better Streets for Buses comment period included riders who noted long waits for the bus along the corridor.

"The J14 has high ridership along a busy corridor. As the route goes further north along Jeffery, traffic increases. There should be increased service, signal prioritization and continued use of dedicated bus lanes along this route."



"The J14 rush hour bus lanes are a good start, but Jeffery should really have all-day bus lanes."



The DuSable Lake Shore Drive (DLSD) corridor is unique among the corridors in the Better Streets for Buses Network, and because of its more highway-like nature, bus service operates differently on it. CTA lakefront express bus routes make stops along nearby local roads that act as "collector" segments of a route, including roadways that are sometimes referred to as the "inner drive." They use the "outer drive" to provided nonstop service to and from downtown. To reflect this, the corridor has been defined to be inclusive of segments of DuSable Lake Shore Drive used by express buses as well as some of the key local street segments used by these buses that closely parallel DLSD, such as Marine Drive.

The northern section of this corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #146 and #147 which run all day, and Routes #134, #135, #136, #143 and #148 during peak hours. Between Oak Street and Fullerton, North DuSable Lakeshore Drive normally sees a bus about every two minutes during the morning rush hour, and a bus every four to six minutes during the midday. The southern section of the corridor is served primarily by CTA Routes #6, #J14, #26 and #28 which run all day, and Route #2 during peak hours only. Between Columbus Drive and 47th Street, South DuSable Lakeshore Drive normally sees a bus about every two minutes during the morning rush hour, and a bus every four to six minutes during the midday. Combined, all of these routes provided an average of 40,100 rides per weekday in October 2022. Compared to pre-pandemic levels, October 2022 ridership recovery on the northern section of this corridor ranged from 32% on the #134 to 76% on the #147, while the southern half of the corridor had recovered between 32% on the #2 and 58% on the #26.

The #151 Sheridan uses many of the same local parallel roadways that the express routes on the North Side use. The southern part of the corridor is used by seasonal and peak-hour only routes including the #10 Museum of Science and Industry, #128 Soldier Field Express and the #192 U. of Chicago Hospitals Express, while the #67 67th/69th/71st route uses a short portion to turn around in Jackson Park.

Various connections are made by routes using this corridor with CTA and Metra rail service in the downtown area, including with CTA rail stations in the Loop, Ogilvie and Union Stations, and the Metra Electric stations in Grant Park. The DuSable Lake Shore Drive corridor connects to and serves the community areas of Woodlawn, Hyde Park, Kenwood, the Near South Side, the Loop itself, the Near North Side, Lake View and Uptown. The corridor provides a direct connection between these communities and the high-density employment and other opportunities downtown. Routes using the corridor also connect with major tourist destinations such as the Museum of Science and Industry, Museum Campus, the Barack Obama Presidential Center, Grant Park and the Magnificent Mile.





DuSable Lake Shore Drive is perhaps the highest profile roadway in Chicago, and provides a direct (and scenic!) corridor for 12 of CTA's express routes. When these buses travel without congestion or other delays, they offer travel times that are competitive with rail options, to lakefront communities on both the North and South Sides-some of which lack direct access to CTA rail. The corridor is also well served by bus service, with frequencies that are on par or higher than what is typical for rail. However, the variable travel times that these express buses experience makes the service far less reliable than rail; bus priority infrastructure could help address this. The highway-like nature of DLSD means higher potential speeds over longer trip distances as well as more geometric opportunity for implementation of bus priority features.

During special events-games at Soldier Field, major festivals, concerts, and races in Grant Park and other parts of the lakefront-buses are often negatively impacted by increased traffic, especially those coming northbound from points south of downtown as they merge off DLSD onto Columbus Drive. Targeting bus priority infrastructure at key points to address this could improve service for these bus riders significantly.

The portion of DLSD between Hollywood and Grand is currently undergoing extensive study and design work by IDOT and CDOT for a future rebuild. Design alternatives have been developed that include different levels and types of bus priority infrastructure; more information can be found at www.northdusablelakeshoredrive.org.

The DuSable Lake Shore Drive corridor was the third-most supported corridor overall, based on feedback received during the comment period for Better Streets for Buses, with many commenters expressing support for a bus lane and/or BRT on the corridor. Throughout the full length of the corridor, commenters noted that buses often experience delays. Commenters on the northern portion also noted that they do not feel comfortable waiting at some sidewalks, crosswalks or intersections.

"Buses should never be caught in traffic on an 8-lane road."





### Focus: Red Line Extension

CTA is planning to add transformational new transit service on Chicago's Far South Side by extending the Red Line south from the 95th/Dan Ryan terminal to the 130th Street area. The planned 5.6-mile rapid transit extension, known as the Red Line Extension (RLE) Project, will include four new fully accessible stations near 103rd Street, 111th Street, Michigan Avenue, and 130th Street. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2025 and the project is planned to begin revenue service in 2029. When complete, the extension will directly connect Chicago's Far South Side to the rest of the City and unlock opportunities throughout the Chicago region.

Once operational, the Red Line Extension will be accompanied by some service adjustments to existing bus routes to directly serve the new rail stations. This will establish more grid-oriented bus service south of 95th Street, since the 95th/Dan Ryan station will no longer be the rail line terminus. These adjustments will intentionally expand the intuitive pattern of arterial grid bus service and bus connections to rail that already serves many other parts of the City, leading to more direct connections to the Red Line for many communities on the Far South Side.

The corridors in the Better Streets for Buses Plan were selected based on existing transit service patterns. However, once the Red Line Extension is in place and bus service adjustments have been made, corresponding changes to the Better Streets for Buses Network to align with these new patterns will be considered.

# Chapter 5:

# **Toolbox of Street Treatments**



#### **Toolbox of Street Treatments**

The purpose of the Toolbox of Street Treatments is to create a menu of infrastructure changes that can help make buses faster, more reliable, more comfortable to wait for, and easier to access. The toolbox includes treatments like enhanced bus stops, dedicated bus lanes, improved traffic signals, and more.

The toolbox initially proposed by CDOT and CTA was developed by reviewing other cities' planning programs and guidance from the National Association of City Transportation Officials, and by evaluating the experience and success of projects and pilots in Chicago. The public feedback received during the public comment period was broadly supportive; every tool that was initially proposed by CDOT and CTA received at least some support, with bus lanes and priority signals for transit receiving the most positive comments. As a result, the changes made to the toolbox are relatively minor. No new individual tools were added and none were removed, but a new design option for bus boading islands was added, an additional bus lane configuration option was added, and more description of accessibility improvements was included. Additional detail was added about the potential to improve wayfinding at transfer locations and the potential to include barrier protection as part of bus lane design. Participants also suggested a number of additional ways to improve bus service, such as other ways to expedite the boarding process, and automated enforcement of bus lanes. A number of these are discussed in the "Other Strategies" section.

The list of possible street treatments included here are the primary tools that CTA and CDOT may consider for future bus priority improvements. Many of the tools can be used in combination with others to increase their effectiveness. Each one has important considerations and tradeoffs that would be evaluated in the context of specific locations.

## categories:

The Better Streets for Buses Plan does not assign specific street treatments to specific corridors or locations. Decisions as to what tools to use on different corridors will be informed by feedback gathered as part of the Better Streets for Buses public outreach, as well as data analysis and assessment of feasibility. Additional public and stakeholder engagement to vet any proposed designs would take place as part of a future planning phase, before any changes that would significantly affect the use of the street would be implemented. Read more about the implementation of the Better Streets for Buses Plan in Chapter 8: Looking Ahead. Future design and analyses of a location may also result in additional solutions not featured in the toolbox, especially as technology and street design innovation continue to evolve.

The Better Streets for Buses Toolbox includes 19 tools, grouped into three





#### **Bus Stop Treatments**

#### What tools can help improve the experience at the bus stop?

- Accessible Pedestrian Facilities: A designated paved area in good condition for wheelchair access makes the bus a more viable option for riders with limited mobility. Other accessibility enhancements can include tactile signage for the visually impaired, or the ability to trigger audible announcements of bus arrival times.
- Add or Improve Nearby Sidewalks and Crosswalks: Bus stops are safer and more accessible when they connect to safe and accessible pedestrian networks, including sidewalks, wellmarked crosswalks and curb ramps. Coordination of bus stop locations with opportunities to provide safe and comfortable crossings is also important.
- Reduce Conflicts with Driveways: Buses and motorists will encounter fewer conflicts when underutilized or duplicative driveways near bus stops are consolidated or removed. This can make the bus stop more accessible, more comfortable, and safer for pedestrians.
- Bus Stop Improvements: Overhead shelter, seating, lighting and signs that track the arrival time of the next bus improve the overall bus stop experience. In locations where a high number of riders may need additional assistance locating key nearby destinations or be seeking to transfer to connecting transit services, additional wayfinding signage can be added.
- Level or Near-Level Boarding: Raising the height of the sidewalk and curb at a bus stop can make boarding easier because passengers do not have to step up or down as much as they would at a typical bus stop in order to get on and off. This can also improve boarding with a stroller or walker.
- **Bicycle Parking**: Providing space for people to park and lock their bicycles helps to expand access and provide people with options for traveling to a bus route or stop.

A rendering of bus stop improvements displays pedestrian friendly street lighting, real time bus information sign on a covered bench bus shelter.



# Improved Sidewalks and Crosswalks



#### Why are bus stop treatments important?

 Safer and more comfortable experiences getting to and from bus stops, waiting for the bus and boarding the bus make it a more attractive travel option, and can be especially important for older or disabled riders.

 While all CTA bus vehicles are accessible, sidewalk conditions and other factors can sometimes make for a challenging pathway to get to the bus. The bus stop is only as accessible as the area around it; nearby sidewalks, curb ramps and crosswalks are critical to safe access.

 Safety improvements help achieve Chicago's Vision Zero goal of eliminating fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes.

• Easier and faster boarding makes overall travel time faster.

#### Where are these treatments typically used?

• Improvements to pedestrian connections and facilities are used where problems have been identified; safety improvements are particularly important where crashes have occurred in the past or along higher speed streets.

· Level or near-level boarding is usually targeted at high ridership stops where many riders get on and off the bus, such as transfer points. This can also be particularly helpful in areas where a high number of riders have limited mobility.

#### What are some of the other considerations?

• Level or near-level boarding usually requires rebuilding the bus stop curb and sidewalk. In addition, sufficient space for an ADA-compliant sloped transition to the higher area is needed.

• Shelters require sidewalk space and electrical connections are required for lighting and bus arrival time signage.

• Consolidating driveways is not always feasible, especially if this would limit sufficient access to a property.







## **Bus-Friendly Streets**

**Bus-Bike** 

Lane

to the curb.

#### What tools relate to bus-friendly streets?

Better Streets for Buses

- Bus Lane: This is a travel lane dedicated to bus use, with restrictions on use by other vehicles. It can be a short or long length of a street and can be reserved for buses at all times of day or just during specified times, such as rush hour. A bus lane can also be shared with general traffic turn lanes near intersections.
- Bus-Bike Lane: This is similar to a bus lane, but is shared with people biking. Similar to bus lanes, they can be in effect at all times or just during specified times of the day or week, such as rush hour. Generally, bus-bike lanes use the curbside lane.

#### **Common Bus Lane Configurations**

Curbside

**Bus Lane** 





Median Bus Lane

with Left-Side Boarding

Center lanes run between two raised concrete medians that provide space for riders to board/exit using conventional buses with doors on the right side.

Median Bus Lane

with Right-Side Boardir





Buses and bikes share a travel lane.

- same time.





#### What other tools relate to bus-friendly streets?

• Bus Stop Bump Out: Also called a bus bulb, this tool extends the sidewalk or boarding area into the street, typically aligning with a parking lane, which allows buses to stop in a travel lane and avoid merging out of and back into traffic.

• Boarding Island: Raised concrete islands, with vehicle lane(s) on one side and bike lane(s) on the other, help to minimize conflicts and improve safety and comfort for all users by maintaining separation between cyclists and buses at bus stops. The bike lane typically remains at street level, but where there is not sufficient width for a fully separated accessible island, the bike lane may be raised and connected at sidewalk level-this may be considered a "hybrid" of a bus stop bump out and a boarding island.

• Bus Stop Lengthening: Longer bus stops provide extra space for a bus to merge into or out of traffic. Some stops also need to be longer because they are served by longer articulated (60 foot "accordion") buses, or multiple bus routes that can arrive at the

• Far Side Bus Stop: At intersections with traffic signals, bus stops located on the far side of the intersection can reduce delay because they allow buses to go through an intersection at a green light before stopping to pick up/drop off passengers. Additionally, being far side increases safety for all road users, especially pedestrians, as it prevents vehicles from illegally turning right in front of a stopped bus.

• Bus Stop Marking: Bus stops can be clearly marked on the pavement or curb to help alert other vehicles to keep clear.

• Bus Stop Pad: Concrete road pads, installed in the area where a bus stops, are designed to better withstand the weight of buses compared to asphalt. Over time this helps avoid bumpy pavement, which can impact buses, riders and other road users.

#### Better Streets for Buses **TOODOX**

#### Why are bus-friendly streets important?

- Dedicated lanes for buses help them avoid getting stuck in traffic congestion and help keep other vehicles clear of areas where buses need priority. This helps buses travel faster, stay on schedule, and allows for easier boarding-making riding the bus a more reliable and attractive travel option.
- If no bus lane is present, making small adjustments to the street around bus stops can minimize potential conflicts with other street users and make it easier for the bus to get to the stop and then merge back into traffic, making it smoother and faster to pick up and drop off passengers, which improves overall travel time.
- Bus-friendly stops are passenger-friendly stops too! Tools that create more space for riders to wait for the bus make it easier to board with a stroller or wheelchair, provide for easier street crossings and allow bus riders to avoid conflicts with cars and bikes.
- The location of the bus stop relative to an intersection can improve how buses move through traffic.

#### Where are bus-friendly street treatments typically used?

- Bus lanes are most effective in areas with high levels of traffic congestion. They are usually used on bus routes that run very frequently and have high ridership.
- Best practices for bus-bike lanes are being studied and monitored nationwide. CTA and CDOT will continue to learn from and apply these lessons here in Chicago.
- Tools that make it easier and faster for buses to merge in and out of traffic are most helpful on congested streets, or where access to the curb gets blocked on a regular basis.
- Boarding islands are used in conjunction with bike lanes, to reduce conflicts.
- Bump outs, boarding islands and bus stop lengthening are usually used where there is a parking lane.



Bus Stop Markings

Bus Stop Markings:

Bus stops are

usually marked

with "Éus Stop

markings on the

pavement to indi

cate that space

is reserved for

NISes



- bus.

- Bump outs can allow for more street parking compared to typical curbside bus stops because less space is needed for merging in to access the stop.
- landscaping.

Bus

#### What are some of the other considerations?

• Creating bus lanes usually repurposes some space from another use, such as parking, loading zones, medians or other travel lanes.

• Bus lanes may require some turn restrictions to work well, although in some cases they can also be shared with turn lanes.

• Bus lanes help to visually distinguish the bus and make it clear that the bus has priority over general traffic-both of these factors can increase the appeal of the

· Bus lanes are sometimes implemented with "barrier protection" elements, such as thin concrete curbs or flexible vertical delineators to prevent or discourage other vehicles from using them. This type of barrier can help ensure compliance by making it harder for other vehicles to use the lane illegally, and enhance safety for cyclists. It must be designed to allow buses to exit the lane if necessary, however, in case of blockages or breakdowns.

• Depending on the width and other uses of the street, implementation of bus lanes may mean that there would be insufficient space available for a dedicated bike facility such as a bike lane. In this case, additional signage or pavement markings to clarify where cyclists should ride may be needed.

· Some tools may improve the experience of other users. For instance, bump outs add sidewalk space for pedestrians and can shorten the length of the crosswalk.

• Near side bus stops may be better in some contexts than far side stops depending on things like the location of bus or train transfer points, driveways, light poles and

· Because buses stay in the travel lane when stopping at a bump out (as opposed to pulling over), this tool may impact other traffic. Bump outs have the least impact on other traffic when used on streets with multiple lanes and at bus stops that are not at traffic signals.

• Bus bump outs make it less likely that a bus stop will be blocked by a standing vehicle because the stop area is located in the travel lane.

#### **Curbside Bus Lane**





Streets for Buses



### **Bus-Friendly Intersections**

#### What tools relate to bus-friendly intersections?

- Convert Stop Sign to Traffic Signal: In some cases, where warranted, converting a stop sign to a traffic signal can reduce the number of times buses must stop at the intersection, which improves travel time and makes buses more reliable.
- Add a Turn Arrow Signal: At congested intersections where buses need to turn, adding a green arrow to a traffic signal can help buses avoid delays, which makes buses more reliable. A turn signal can benefit other turning traffic as well, and it can improve pedestrian safety. In some instances, it may make sense to install a bus-activated turn signal. This would mean the green arrow would only "turn on" or be lengthened when a bus is present.
- Traffic Signal Timing: Synchronizing traffic signals and providing more green time for streets that serve buses allows buses and general traffic to travel through a corridor more efficiently.
- Transit Signal Priority (TSP): An approaching bus sends a request to the traffic signal to modify light timing (for example, extending the green light for a few seconds). This tool can be programmed in a number of ways and is often triggered only when buses are behind schedule.
- Queue Jump: Bus-only traffic signals give buses an early "go" light to allow buses 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.



If a bus is behind schedule, it sends a message to the traffic signal to request several extra seconds of green light time.

The bus enters queue jump lane to bypass general traffic. Separate, bus-only signal phase gives the bus a head start at the light. The bus "jumps" ahead of traffic and rejoins general traffic lane.

#### Where are bus-friendly intersections typically used?



#### Why are bus-friendly intersections important?

· Buses move faster when they don't have to stop as often and can navigate through intersections easily. Reducing delay at intersections helps keep buses (and their riders) on schedule

• Transit Signal Priority is generally applied to a series of intersections along a roadway, rather than a single intersection.

· Queue jumps are sometimes used at just one intersection and sometimes as a series along a corridor. They are often used when there are near side bus stops in line with a far side parking lane. Queue jump signals can also be paired with right turn signals if a bus lane is shared with right turns for general traffic at intersections.

• Adding or extending turn arrows is most effective at intersections where turns cause significant delays, for instance where turning vehicles cause traffic to back up, or buses needing to turn often end up waiting a long time for traffic to clear.

#### What are some other considerations?

• Adding green light time on one street usually means more red light time for the cross street, which can impact general traffic, as well as other bus routes. Similarly, adding turn arrows to a traffic signal can add time to the total cycle or take away time from other signal phases.

 Traffic signal timing must always provide adequate time for pedestrians, including people with limited mobility, to cross.

• To accommodate a queue jump, a short bus lane is typically needed, which may reduce street parking near the intersection. Generally if there is a bus stop at an intersection where a queue jump is used, the stop should be located on the near side, so that the bus does not need to stop immediately after getting the advantage of the queue jump.

**Queue Jump Signal** 



A special signal with a vertical white line tells buses to proceed through the intersection from the queue jump lane.



### **Other Strategies**

The tools in the Better Streets for Buses Toolbox are designed to help align street infrastructure with an improved bus experience. But there are some issues that cannot be solved by changes to street infrastructure alone. There are a number of additional strategies that can benefit bus service and do not necessarily require major changes to street infrastructure, but may require investments by and/or coordination between CTA and CDOT or other City agencies.

Expedited fare payment strategies can help customers and buses spend less time at a stop boarding, especially at high ridership stops. This can be accomplished through "prepaid" boarding, where customers pay before boarding, usually by tapping their fare cards on a card reader located at the stop. Another strategy is "all door" boarding, which utilizes both the front and rear doors for boarding, typically with an additional card reader added to the bus near the rear door, so that customers have an additional potential entry point. CTA has piloted prepaid boarding at a number of locations and has installed permanent infrastructure for it on the westbound #77 Belmont bus at the Belmont Blue Line station. Transit agencies sometimes employ "fare checker" personnel who periodically ride buses and ask for evidence of fare payment as part of these strategies to help prevent fare evasion, although this has not been needed for CTA's prepaid boarding deployment because card readers have been staffed. Learn more about CTA's prepaid boarding at **www.transitchicago.com/prepaidboarding** 

Bus stop spacing is an important factor in determining travel times. When stops are spaced farther apart, the bus can move faster on average, because it stops less, but it also means some riders will have longer distances to go to reach a bus stop, which can add travel time, inconvenience, and discomfort. CTA's current standard stop spacing is between ½ and ¼ of a mile, although routes with "express" portions like those that utilize Lake Shore Drive have longer distances with few or no stops. CTA's "X" route overlays on some corridors provide an option to travel that makes fewer stops—approximately ½-mile apart—while also preserving access to the local stops along the corridor via transfers to the local route.

There are also a number of aspects of bus and roadway operations that can impact bus service. Consistent maintenance of bus stops, roadways, sidewalks and traffic signals can make bus operations smoother and the passenger experience more comfortable. Adding resources to help manage and mitigate delays and disruptions to bus service in real time can help improve reliability. Enforcement of bus-only areas such as bus stops and designated bus lanes can make them work better; enforcement of other traffic rules to reduce double parking and blocking intersections can also prevent delays for buses.

## Chapter 6: Bus Priority Examples

Chicago has already implemented a number of bus priority improvements on corridors in various parts of the City. Street treatments like dedicated bus lanes, expanded boarding space, transit signal priority, and queue jumps are in place at various locations. Several examples are described here.

#### Jeffery Jump

Jeffery Jump aims to provide fast and reliable bus service along Jeffery Boulevard. In addition to dedicated rush hour bus lanes between 67th and 83rd streets, traffic signal priority improvements were implemented between 73rd and 84th streets, and a queue jump signal was installed at Anthony Avenue. Jeffery Jump stops are visually distinguishable from other stops with blue curbside markings, distinctive signage, and special shelters at key locations.

#### Loop Link

Loop Link is a downtown corridor that includes bus priority elements on portions of Washington, Madison, Clinton and Canal Streets, designed to move people efficiently through the Loop on routes connecting to neighborhoods throughout the City. The many bus routes that use these streets benefit from dedicated bus lanes and queue jump bus-only traffic signals to help keep buses separate from general traffic and on schedule. Raised boarding platforms make it easier for seniors and people using wheelchairs or pushing strollers to board buses, speeding up the boarding process for everyone. The platforms also have more seating, shelter and CTA Bus Tracker signs to improve the bus rider experience. The Loop Link project also included adding dedicated space for bikes, expanded space for pedestrians, and shortened pedestrian crossing distances at some intersections.

#### **Bus Priority Zones (BPZs)**

The goal of the Bus Priority Zones (BPZ) program is to target pinch points along major bus routes in order to speed up "bus slow zones," which are often caused by traffic congestion, insufficient space for bus boarding, or a major intersection that creates a bottleneck. Bus Priority Zones were implemented in 2019 at several key locations on busy bus corridors, including along Chicago Avenue, 79th Street, and Western Avenue and several additional Bus Priority Zones have been added since. To develop designs for BPZ projects, CTA and CDOT looked at each of the slowest segments on the identified corridors to determine what changes could help reduce delays given the existing street configuration and context. Elements of specific BPZ projects include a mix of the following, depending on the location: designated bus lanes (all day or rush hour only), signal timing optimization, queue jump signals, sidewalk reconfigurations to expand boarding areas and/or shorten crossing distances, and other streetscape improvements, such as street resurfacing, improved pedestrian crossings, or concrete bus pads.

#### **Transit Signal Prioritization (TSP)**

CTA and CDOT have collaborated to install Transit Signal Prioritization (TSP), which can improve reliability by giving buses running behind schedule a longer or earlier green light, along two of CTA's highest ridership corridors. Installation was completed in 2016 on Ashland between Cermak Road and 95th Street, and in 2018 on Western between 79th Street and Howard Street. TSP was also installed on a segment of Jeffery Boulevard as part of the Jeffery Jump project.



This map shows bus priority elements in place across the city as of 2023, including those installed as part of Jeffery Jump, Loop Link, and the Bus Priority Zone program. The location of longer stretches of bus-bike lanes, intersections enabled with Transit Signal Priority equipment, and the temporary bus lanes installed as part of the City's pandemic response are also shown.



## **Planned Bus Priority Improvements**

The Better Streets for Buses Plan lays out a comprehensive citywide framework for improving infrastructure for buses going forward, but there are a number of related efforts concurrently underway as well, to continue progress towards improving and modernizing the bus experience as the plan was developed and finalized. In addition to the projects listed below, several other near-term opportunities for bus priority projects are discussed in the "Bus Priority in Downtown" section on page 30.

#### Additional Bus Priority Zones

As noted, the Bus Priority Zones (BPZ) program launched in 2019, with the goal of targeting pinch points along major bus routes and implementing short stretches of bus priority treatments in order to speed up "bus slow zones," which are often caused by traffic congestion, insufficient space for bus boarding, or a major intersection that creates a bottleneck. Currently an additional BPZ is being designed for the segment of Western Avenue near the Western Brown Line station, with construction anticipated 2023/2024. CTA and CDOT are also utilizing competitive federal grant funds to study a number of key bus corridors in the Better Streets for Buses Network, including 63rd Street, 79th Street, Ashland, Chicago, Halsted, Pulaski, and Western. It should be noted that studying these corridors for BPZ projects does not preclude the development of longer or more robust bus priority projects. For more information on Bus Priority Zones, see www.transitchicago.com/newsprojects/bpz

#### Additional Transit Signal Prioritization (TSP)

CTA and CDOT are working to install additional Transit Signal Prioritization (TSP) for Ashland between Cermak Road and Irving Park Road. In addition, CTA and CDOT received a federal grant in 2022 to develop an approach utilizing new TSP technology and existing infrastructure to allow for faster future expansion of the current TSP network.

#### 79th Street Corridor

#### South Halsted Bus Corridor Enhancement Project

CDOT and CTA are evaluating various segments of the 79th Street corridor and developing recommendations for new infrastructure that would increase pedestrian safety and improve bus service.

Pace and CTA, in coordination with CDOT, have studied the South Halsted corridor between the Pace Harvey Transportation Center and 79th Street, including connections to the 79th and 95th/ Dan Ryan Red Line stations. Informed by public outreach and key stakeholder conversations, a number of bus priority treatments have been identified to improve travel and shorten commutes on this key corridor. Pace and CTA are now developing strategies for funding final design and construction of these improvements. Learn more about the South Halsted project at www.transitchicago.com/planning/southhalstedbus and www.pacebus.com/pulse



# Chapter 7: **Related Planning Efforts**

Better Streets for Buses is included as a key transit initiative in the CDOT Strategic Plan, which sets forth a vision and specific next steps towards achieving greater equity through increased mobility justice. The CDOT Strategic Plan also recognizes Vision Zero Chicago as a core element guiding street design. Vision Zero is the commitment and approach to eliminating fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes impacting all roadway users. Vision Zero is especially relevant for the majority of CTA bus riders who use sidewalks and cross streets to reach CTA bus stops. A commitment to safer streets is a commitment to a better CTA bus experience.

Better Streets for Buses also complements a number of city initiatives to revitalize specific neighborhoods on Chicago's South and West sides, including through transportation infrastructure investments. The revised Better Streets for Buses Network includes corridors in these neighborhoods. Public comments received about these corridors, and additional public outreach as needed, will help guide coordination between CTA, CDOT, and the Department of Planning and Development in developing bus improvement investments in these areas.

Because of the importance of transit in reducing climate changing emissions, completing a Better Streets for Buses Plan was also one of the commitments made by the City of Chicago for the Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge, and its development can inform additional climate related efforts that the City is undertaking as part of its new Climate Action Plan. Released in 2022, the new Climate Action Plan set a goal of reducing the City's carbon footprint by 62% by 2040. It identified the transportation sector as a key area where reductions are needed in order to meet this goal, and included the increase in transit performance as a critical strategy to boosting public transit ridership and reducing emissions.

In order to address the pandemic-related challenges faced by all public transit agencies nationwide, including a drop-off in ridership levels, labor shortages, and resulting issues with delivering reliable service, CTA developed and published "Meeting the Moment: Transforming CTA's Post-Pandemic Future Action Plan" in 2022. It includes specific near-term initiatives to improve reliability while also laying the foundation for a long-term transformation that ensures CTA is a first choice of travel for many riders in the region.

### **City Initiatives**



#### **Regional Plans**

The completion of a Better Streets for Buses Plan also supports goals and priorities highlighted in other regional plans. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's latest plan for the region, ON TO 2050, sets a target of doubling transit ridership. ON TO 2050 notes that to accomplish this, transit must provide fast, frequent, reliable, and affordable service, and that bus priority investments are particularly cost-effective ways to improve transit service.

Aligned with that, the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) recently completed a strategic plan, Transit is the Answer, which identified the need for bus priority improvements to help the region's transit system build on its existing strengths and ensure the system works better for everyone. Transit is the Answer identifies the completion and implementation of Better Streets for Buses as a key component of building more transit-friendly streets and advancing Bus Rapid Transit, which is one of the plan's areas of focus.

In 2016, Cook County adopted a new long range transportation plan, and is now developing its first transit plan with goals that include improving bus, increasing overall transit ridership, and focusing on the needs of transit reliant communities.



The Better Streets for Buses Plan will lay out a comprehensive citywide framework for improving infrastructure for buses going forward, but there are a number of other efforts concurrently underway as well, to make progress towards improving and modernizing the bus experience as the plan is developed and finalized. These include:

- area.

## **Concurrent Bus Improvement Initiatives**

 Comprehensive Analysis of Bus Service: CTA is also undertaking a comprehensive analysis of bus service and operations in the context of changes to population, employment, land use, and travel patterns over the last decade. This will look at how current bus service-things like routing, frequency, span of service, and stop spacing-affect the usefulness of the transit network throughout the CTA service

• Electric Buses: CTA now has ~20 electric buses in service, most of which were added to the fleet in 2022, with several more coming into service later in 2023. CTA also recently completed "Charging Forward," a strategic study of how best to scale up and convert the full fleet of more than 1,800 buses to electric vehicles by 2040. This planning study will serve as a roadmap to guide bus replacement, charging infrastructure installation, garage facility upgrades, and electric bus operations and maintenance. It also includes analysis of where electric bus deployment can deliver the greatest benefits to communities most vulnerable to, and adversely affected by, the health impacts of vehicle emissions. Learn more about CTA's bus electrification at www.transitchicago.com/electricbus

• Tactile Signage: As part of a pilot program to try to make bus service easier to navigate and access for people with visual impairments, CTA installed more than 1,300 tactile signs at stops along 12 major bus routes starting in August 2022. The signs are designed to make the boarding locations for bus stops easier to identify for riders who are blind or low vision, with wording in Braille and raised type face. The program was designed based on feedback from members of the disability community to develop a practical solution to help remove barriers to accessing public bus service. Tactile signs are expected to be installed on several additional bus routes in 2023, and the longer term goal is to install the signs at every bus stop along all routes throughout the system.





## Chapter 8: Looking Ahead

Implementation of the Better Streets for Buses Plan will be shaped by the public feedback we have already received, as well as what we hear going forward. It will inform both where changes should be made first, and what the right design changes for each community may be. Equity considerations will have a primary role in determining how resources are directed.

Better Streets for Buses implementation will not look the same on every corridor, and may differ along segments of a single corridor-depending on the current geometry and uses of the street, and the goals and needs of the communities located along the corridor. A given street could see signal improvements in one segment, short stretches of bus lane in another, enhanced bus stops in another, and a combination of several of these treatments in yet another. Depending on the nature of the potential changes, future planning work may include detailed roadway geometry studies, traffic analyses and other technical work, as well as additional public involvement.

One message we heard repeatedly during the public outreach for Better Streets for Buses is a desire for "true BRT" corridors to be implemented. BRT, or Bus Rapid Transit, has been defined a number of ways in various contexts, but usually includes a significant length of dedicated bus lane and robust bus stop amenitieswith the goal of making the bus look, feel, and act more like a train. BRT projects can be transformational, in terms of increasing the quality of the bus experience, attracting transit ridership, and changing the nature of the streetscape overall. Based on public feedback and the potential benefits, CDOT and CTA intend to develop and advance BRT projects on one or more of the Better Streets for Buses corridors: however.

### Looking Ahead





## Looking Ahead

additional discussion and conversation is needed with communities to determine the best corridors and best designs to advance.

As a major next step towards implementation of robust bus priority projects, CTA and CDOT have successfully secured a competitive grant from Cook County's Invest in Cook 2023 program, in order to conduct additional public outreach and advance design for at least three corridors in the Better Streets for Buses Network. Federal, state, and local funds are all potential sources for bus priority projects, whether the project is considered BRT or smaller scale, and all three have been used for bus projects in the past. In general, however, federal sources are targeted for higher cost projects. CDOT and CTA will work together to identify and update a set of bus priority projects to implement the Better Streets for Buses Plan in the near-, medium-, and long-term, and strategically pursue funding opportunities to optimize the speed, quality, and utility of project delivery.

## How to Get or Stay Involved

One theme we heard loud and clear during the public outreach period was that community members want to have input on implementation priorities, as well as direct involvement with street design, especially for projects in their own neighborhood.

CDOT and CTA will continue to provide and publicize opportunities to weigh in on specific projects and overall implementation strategy. To keep up to date on Better Streets for Buses' implementation and receive notifications of any related public meetings, please sign up for the project email list by sending an email to betterstreetsforbuses@transitchicago.com letting us know you would like to be added. If you are not able or prefer not to use the internet, you can also call 888-YOUR-CTA (888-968-7282) to be connected with someone from the Better Streets for Buses project team.

Another important theme we heard during the public outreach period was that people want to know how they can help make more bus priority projects a reality, soon. In addition to attending any related public meetings, you can help support implementation of bus priority projects by talking to your elected officials, community leaders, neighbors and friends about why you think they are important. Not all Chicagoans use the bus and many are unaware of its benefits and potential to contribute even more to the region's transit system. Because tradeoffs with other street uses are sometimes needed in order to implement bus priority street treatments, it is important that people who may not think much about the bus in their day-to-day lives hear from people they trust about reasons to support these changes.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all the individuals and organizations who have already participated in and supported the development of the Better Streets for Buses Plan. We look forward to continued collaboration and dialogue about how to make Chicago's streets work better for buses, so that buses can work better for people.

In addition, you can sign up for updates and notifications of meetings organized through CDOT's Chicago Mobility Collaborative (CMC) at bit.ly/chicagomobility collaborative. The Chicago Mobility Collaborative is a new public forum related to walking, biking, public transit, public space, mobility justice, and accessibility



#### Appendix: Street Segments in the Better Streets for Buses Network

CORRIDOR	CORRIDOR SEGMENT
35th	31st St from Kilbourn Ave (City Limits) to Kedzie Ave
35th	Kedzie Ave from 31st St to 36th St
35th	36th St from Kedzie Ave to California Ave
35th	Albany Ave from 36th St to 36th Pl
35th	36th PI from Albany Ave to California Ave
35th	California Ave from 36th PI to 35th St
35th	35th St from California Ave to Cottage Grove Ave
35th	Archer Ave from 35th/Archer Orange Line Station to 35th St
35th	Leavitt St from Archer Ave to 35th St
55th/Garfield	55th St/Garfield Blvd from Cicero Ave to Morgan Dr
55th/Garfield	Morgan Dr from 55th St/Garfield Blvd to Rainey Dr
55th/Garfield	Rainey Dr from Morgan Dr to Payne Dr
55th/Garfield	Payne Dr from Rainey Dr to 55th St
55th/Garfield	55th from Payne Dr to S Hyde Park
63rd	63rd St from Cicero Ave to Stony Island Ave
79th	79th St from Cicero Ave to South Shore Dr
95th	95th St from Western Ave to Cottage Grove Ave (east leg)
95th	Cottage Grove Ave from 95th St to 93rd St
95th	93rd St from Cottage Grove Ave to Woodlawn Ave
95th	Woodlawn Ave from 93rd St to 95th St
95th	95th St from Woodlawn Ave to Stony Island Ave
95th	Stony Island Ave from 95th St to 93rd St
95th	93rd St from Stony Island Ave to Exchange Ave
95th	Exchange Ave from 93rd St to 92nd St
95th	92nd St from Exchange Ave to Buffalo Ave
Ashland	Ashland Ave from Irving Park Rd to Beverley Blvd
Ashland	Beverley Blvd from Ashland Ave to 103rd St/Vincennes Ave
Chicago Avenue	Chicago Ave from Austin Blvd to Fairbanks Ct
Cottage Grove	Cottage Grove Ave from 35th St to 95th St
Cottage Grove	95th St from Cottage Grove Ave (west leg) to Cottage Grove Ave (east leg)

CORRID Cottage Fullerton Fullerton Halsted Halsted Irving Pa Jeffery Jeffery Jeffery Jeffery Jeffery Michigan Michigan Michigan DuSable DuSable DuSable DuSable DuSable DuSable Pulaski Pulaski Pulaski Roosevelt Roosevelt Roosevelt Roosevel Roosevel Western

CORRIDOR SEGMENT
Cottage Grove Ave from 95th St to 115th St
Grand Ave from Nordica Ave to Fullerton Ave
Fullerton Ave from Grand Ave to Halsted St
Halsted St from Bradley Pl to 127th St
Archer Ave from Halsted Orange Line Station to Halsted St
Irving Park Rd from Cumberland Ave to Marine Dr
Jeffery Blvd from 67th St to Van Vlissingen Rd
Van Vlissingen Rd from Jeffery Blvd to 100th St
100th St from Van Vlissingen Rd to Torrence Ave
Torrence Ave from 100th St to 103rd St
103rd St from Torrence Ave to Stony Doty Ave
Michigan Ave from Oak St to Chicago Ave
Michigan Ave from Roosevelt Rd to 35th St
Indiana Ave from 31st St to 35th St
North DuSable Lake Shore Dr from Grand Ave to Foster Ave (including entrance and exit ramps)
Marine Dr from Foster Ave to Irving Park Rd
North Lake Shore Dr (Inner Drive) from Irving Park Rd to Belmont Ave
Columbus Dr from Roosevelt Rd to South DuSable Lake Shore Dr
South DuSable Lake Shore Dr from Columbus Dr to Marquette Dr
South Lake Shore Dr from Marquette Dr to 67th St
Pulaski Rd from Peterson Ave to Belden Ave
Belden Ave from Pulaski Rd (east leg) to Pulaski Rd (west leg)
Pulaski Rd from Belden Ave to 87th St
Roosevelt Rd from Central Ave to Ogden Ave
Ogden Ave from Roosevelt Rd to Taylor St
Taylor St from Ogden Ave to Damen Ave
Damen Ave from Taylor St to Roosevelt Rd
Roosevelt Rd from Damen Ave to Columbus Dr
Western Ave from Western & Birchwood Terminal to 79th St

