



ACTIVE
TRANSPORTATION
ALLIANCE

BACK ON THE BUS: SPEEDING UP CHICAGO'S BUSES



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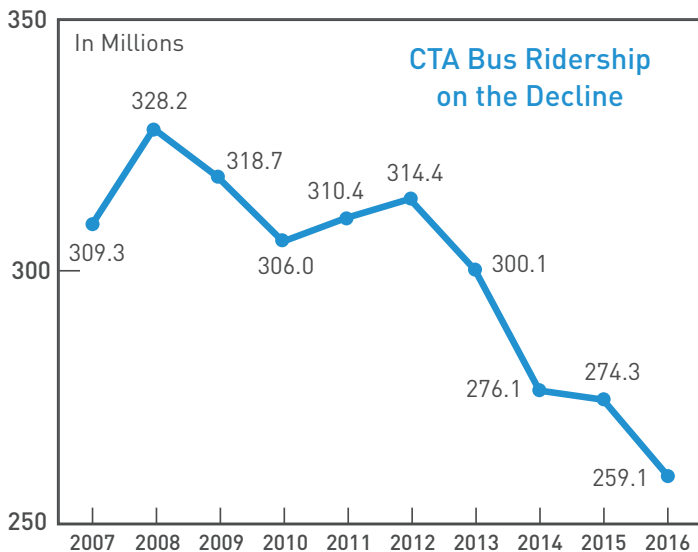
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY >>

As Chicago strives to become a more connected, prosperous, and equitable city, elected officials and transit agency leaders must take action to improve bus service. More than half of CTA trips in Chicago are made by bus and it's one of the most affordable transportation options in many neighborhoods where people can't easily access the El train. Every day, buses are connecting people to jobs, schools, and other critical services while taking up far less space on the road than private vehicles. While buses continue to play a central role in the city's transportation system, there are signs that quality bus service is under threat in a changing transportation environment.

From 2015 to 2016, bus ridership in Chicago fell by more than 15 million rides (5.8 percent), continuing a recent trend of fewer Chicagoans riding the bus. Since 2012, bus ridership has declined in Chicago by more than 17 percent, and it's dropped by more than 21 percent since pre-recession levels in 2008. Of all CTA trips, buses still account for 52 percent of rides, but this proportion has dropped steadily as rail ridership has increased, despite reaching far fewer neighborhoods than the bus network.



Source: Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

Chicago needs a healthy and growing bus system. Fewer Chicagoans riding the bus means more people driving and more cars on our already congested streets, especially in and around downtown during peak periods. Our hub-and-

spoke rail system continues to be a good option for people who live and work along the CTA train lines and in the Loop, but many neighborhoods lack access to it. Without more investment in bus service, Chicago risks more people abandoning transit for transportation options that are more expensive and less efficient, healthy, and green.

In an era of limited funding at all levels of government, bus upgrades are cheaper and can be implemented faster than rail modernization and expansion. The next several years present an opportunity to make timely, cost-effective improvements to bus service while continuing to pursue long-term investments in rail modernization and expansion.

Upgrading bus service requires leadership from elected officials and city agencies, and a strong and unified push from advocates and community leaders. This report lays the foundation for a multi-year effort for a renewed focus on improving bus service and getting Chicagoans back on the bus.

Without more bus investment, Chicago risks falling further behind its peers in transit growth. Currently, transit accounts for just 28 percent of work trips in the city of Chicago, which is low in comparison to peer cities. This is in part because the Chicago region trails its peers in system expansion, transit-friendly development, and per capita transit spending.¹

Percentage of residents riding transit to work (2016)

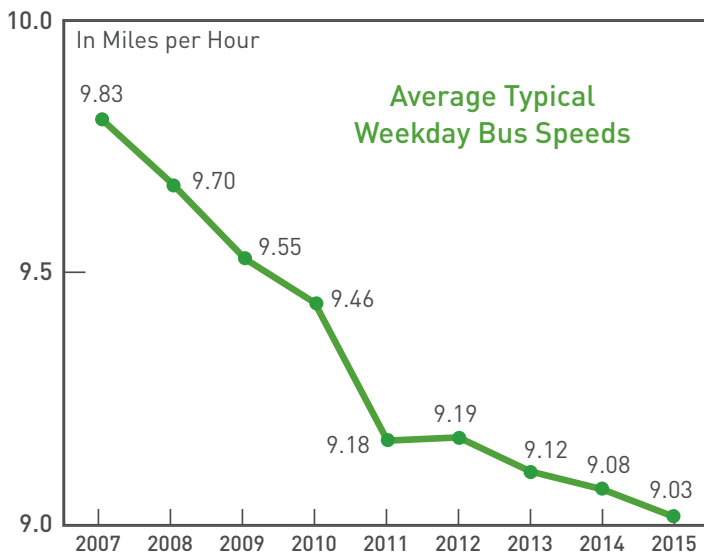
- New York City – 57%
- Washington, D.C. – 36%
- San Francisco – 34%
- Boston – 33%
- Chicago – 28%
- Philadelphia – 24%

Source: 2016 American Community Survey (ACS)

¹Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Metropolitan Governance of Transport and Land Use in Chicago, 2014

There are many reasons for declining bus ridership, including an underinvestment in bus service, declining gas prices, growing transportation options, and the proliferation of jobs and sprawling development in suburban areas that are difficult to reach by transit. Budget cuts also forced CTA to institute significant service cuts in 2010, which naturally leads to declines in ridership. In 2013, the agency also changed its fare structure to increase the price of unlimited ride passes while maintaining the base fare price.

Another central cause is that service on many bus routes is slow and unreliable. And with gas prices low and new options like ride-hailing services available, Chicagoans are increasingly choosing other options. Many local buses frequently get stuck in traffic – especially during rush hour. Traffic congestion has contributed to a consistent decline in average bus speeds in Chicago since 2007, along with service cuts and changes. Meanwhile, the quality of bus service is often overlooked in the public discussion in favor of flashier transportation options like rail, bikes, Uber, and Lyft.



Source: National Transit Database

Lower quality bus service has major equity impacts. A disproportionate number of bus riders live in low-income communities or work in places that lack access to the rail transit system. Substandard bus service hurts these Chicagoans the most while discouraging higher-income residents otherwise inclined to ride transit from riding the bus more frequently.

Public buses carry exponentially more people than private vehicles with one or two passengers, and deserve priority on our streets. The CTA has 1,888 buses that operate on 130 routes and 1,301 route miles. Buses make about 18,843 trips a day and serve 10,813 bus stops, carrying about 46 people per trip on average – and many more on the high ridership routes, which are the focus of this report.

Active Trans launched *Back on the Bus: Speeding Up Chicago's Buses* to rally Chicagoans, our elected officials, and transit agencies to work together to increase investment in the bus network and boost ridership. This report advocates for the city to invest in the following long overdue **bus service upgrades**:

- **Dedicated bus lanes** – Create a network of Transit Priority Streets, as outlined in the Chicago's Complete Streets policy, including at least 50 miles of dedicated bus lanes and other on-street infrastructure to give crowded buses priority;
- **Traffic signal improvements** – Move buses more smoothly through busy intersections by changing signal timing or using technology that gives buses an extended green light to get through intersections;
- **Faster boarding** – Allow riders to pay their fare at the bus stop before boarding and enter the bus through the front or rear doors.

Each of these improvements has the potential to help boost bus **speed** and **reliability**, and get people in Chicago back on the bus. A 2016 national report by TransitCenter, a national foundation working to improve urban mobility, found that speed and reliability are two of the most important factors in bringing new and more consistent riders to transit service, in addition to service frequency and walkability. The findings were based on focus groups with riders in several cities and a statistically significant sample of more than 3,000 riders across 17 regions.

Chicago has already installed or piloted the three improvements listed above on a few routes, but there's potential for broader, permanent implementation of these relatively affordable upgrades if the CTA, Chicago Department of Transportation, mayor's office, and the city



Public buses carry exponentially more people than private vehicles and deserve priority on our streets. *Photo: Anne Evans*

council further prioritize bus service and work together to overcome planning, funding, and political challenges. The upgrades would bring immediate benefits to millions of Chicagoans who already ride the bus while helping attract new riders who frequently will use the network.

This report focuses on six of the busiest routes in the system with potential for improvements: #4 Cottage Grove, #8 Halsted, #53 Pulaski, #66 Chicago, #79 79th, and #80 Irving Park. These routes were selected because they serve millions of riders annually and each has experienced a dip in ridership in recent years. The level of service is already robust, with frequencies of 10 minutes or less during peak periods and often less than five minutes. They run through diverse neighborhoods across the city and connect to many popular destinations, such as schools, hospitals, job centers, and retail corridors. They fill in gaps in the city's rail network and are generally the only public transit option for many people.

Beyond pushing for service upgrades on individual routes, this report aims to start a citywide dialogue about how we can prioritize bus service and pursue policy changes that support bus ridership growth. Our policy objectives are:

(1) Create a plan for Transit Priority Streets with 50 miles of new bus lanes

Chicago's Complete Streets policy identifies transit riders as second only to people walking in terms of priority modes for all transportation projects and programming. It also establishes the typology of Transit Priority Streets, which CDOT

and CTA can identify as corridors where transit will be prioritized ahead of all other modes. However, outside of the Loop Link and Jeffery Jump bus routes, the city has yet to implement this portion of the Complete Streets policy.

CDOT and CTA have been analyzing additional corridors for bus transit priority, but there are no definitive plans for implementation. Moving plans into reality will require growing public and political will for improving bus service and greater coordination between the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT).

ACTION: *CDOT and CTA develop plan for transit priority streets within two years that includes at least 50 miles of new bus lanes*

(2) Create effective ways to enforce bus-only lanes

The city needs a better way to keep bus lanes clear of other traffic and maximize the impact of public investment in bus infrastructure. Currently, this requires more in-person enforcement by the police department and other city agencies. But with police resources already stretched thin and equity concerns about more in-person enforcement, a new state law is needed that enables photo enforcement of bus lanes, which has proven successful in other cities such as New York and San Francisco.

ACTION: *Illinois General Assembly establishes state law enabling photo enforcement of bus lanes*

(3) Incentivize purchase of multi-day passes

In 2013 CTA increased the price of one-, three-, seven-, and 30-day passes. These unlimited passes encourage people to ride transit frequently and can be particularly relevant for bus trips, which are often shorter and easier to replace by walking, biking, or taking Uber or Lyft. CTA should assess whether these price increases have contributed to losses in ridership and revenue while looking for new ways to incentivize the purchase of passes.

State leaders should also pass proposed legislation (House Bill 2802) that would require Chicagoland companies with 25 or more

employees to offer the transit benefit program. State Rep. Theresa Mah and others sponsored this bill in the 2017 legislative session but it stalled in committee.

The agency must consider the impact of any changes to fare policy on low-income riders and consider equity strategies like “fare capping,” which prevents riders from spending more on multiple single ride passes than they would have if they had purchased a daily or monthly pass. Once a rider using a transit card taps enough times to reach the cost of a daily or monthly pass, they are no longer charged for any additional trips.

ACTION: *CTA further incentivizes the purchase of multi-day passes in a new pricing structure and analyzes a potential fare capping policy. State legislators pass House Bill 2802 requiring Chicagoland employers to offer the transit benefit program*

(4) Establish a new local dedicated revenue stream to fund transit improvements and expansion

Active Trans will continue to advocate for more state and federal transit funding, which is a very effective investment in the region’s mobility, health, economy, and environment. Still, with less reliable and consistent state and federal transit funding, the Chicago region needs a new, local dedicated revenue stream to fund transit operations, improvements and expansion – both bus and rail.

The cities that are most actively upgrading and expanding their transit networks – like Los Angeles, Denver, and Seattle – all recently made significant local commitments that allow them to access more federal funding. Chicago recently took this approach when it established a transit TIF to fund the Red Purple Modernization project on the North Side, and this mechanism could potentially be used for more projects. Transit agencies also receive a portion of local sales tax revenue to help fund operations, although this funding has been cut in recent state budgets, including the budget agreement in July 2017. To make progress long term, the Chicago region needs a new, more consistent and reliable revenue stream.

The mayor took an initial step towards more local funding for transit by including a ride-hailing fee increase in his 2018 budget proposal. If approved by city council, the current 52-cent fee would be increased by 15 cents and all the new revenue would go to CTA for public transit. This is a small but important step in addressing our public transit funding crisis and how ride-hailing is affecting our transportation network.

ACTION: *The City of Chicago, Cook County, or State of Illinois establish a new dedicated revenue stream for public transit improvements and expansion*

(5) Push for more data sharing and analysis of ride-hailing trips

Evidence from studies in New York and San Francisco suggests the growth of Uber and Lyft has increased congestion and contributed to declines in public transit ridership. A recent UC Davis study² surveyed transportation users in seven major cities – including Chicago – and found that ride-hailing may be attracting riders away from public transit, buses in particular, and leading to more vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Unfortunately, we currently have little more than anecdotal evidence about where and how people currently use ride-hailing in Chicago. Greater data sharing from ride-hailing companies – whose business relies on smooth operations in the public right of way – would allow policy makers and researchers to more fully understand how the changing transportation network is working for all its users, and to pinpoint where intervention is needed.

ACTION: *Chicago City Council passes an ordinance mandating that ride-hailing companies make anonymized trip data publicly available*

²UC Davis Institute for Transportation Studies, Disruptive Transportation: The Adoption, Utilization, and Impacts of Ride Hailing in the United States, 2017

WHAT RIDERS ARE SAYING ABOUT CHICAGO'S BUS SERVICE >>



Overwhelmingly, riders said speed, frequency, and reliability were the principal factors in determining whether they ride the bus.
Photo: Anne Evans

The first step to upgrading Chicago's bus network is better understanding how riders are currently using the system and which issues are most affecting their transportation decisions. In partnership with community organizations and fellow advocates from across the city, we connected with more than 2,100 riders about their experiences riding the bus and how it could be improved. We supplemented our online outreach by conducting in-person engagement with hundreds of bus riders at stops along each of our priority routes.

Respondents said they ride the bus for several types of trips, with work commutes (60 percent), shopping (58 percent), and entertainment (60 percent) being the most common. Most respondents were frequent riders, with 35 percent taking the bus four or more days per week, and 23 percent riding two to three days per week.

Overwhelmingly, riders said speed, frequency, and reliability were the principal factors in determining whether they ride the bus. Nearly half (45 percent) of riders said, "how long you have to wait at a stop for the bus to arrive" was extremely important, and the numbers were similarly high for speed (31 percent) and reliability (26 percent). The numbers grow when you add respondents who rated those factors as very important, reaching 88 percent of respondents for frequency, 72 percent for reliability, and 71 percent for speed.

On-board and off-board amenities were not nearly as important. Only 10 percent of respondents said it was "extremely important" whether the bus stop had a bench or shelter, and only 14 percent said it was "extremely important" for them to be able to sit comfortably aboard the bus. Riders generally rated these criteria as "neutral" to "not at all important" in determining whether they ride the bus.

This data shouldn't be taken to mean that ensuring riders feel comfortable and safe while riding the bus isn't important. Public transportation should be welcoming and accessible to everyone, and transit agencies must be responsive to rider concerns. Investing in speed, frequency, and reliability is more likely to spur ridership growth, however, than upgrades like more comfortable seats or WiFi access on buses. This is consistent with local and national analysis on how and why people choose to ride public transit.

In open-ended responses to the question of "why do you ride the bus and how do you think bus service could be improved," the critical role the bus network plays in people's lives is clear. People rely on the bus to get to work, school, medical appointments, and other vital destinations. For many, it's the only transportation option for longer trips because the cost of owning and maintaining a car is beyond their reach. For others, the bus is just one of a growing list of transportation options, so if it's not competitive with services like Uber and Lyft, they'll continue to ride less frequently.

SERVICE UPGRADES >>

The most frequent suggestion from riders we surveyed for improving service was to eliminate bus bunching. Nearly every rider has had the frustrating experience of waiting at a stop for a bus to arrive for an extended period, only to see multiple vehicles arrive at the same time with excess capacity. This problem resonates with Chicagoans at a visceral level and represents much of the city's challenge in making service faster and more reliable.

Unfortunately, it's not just a matter of scheduling buses differently or holding a bus back to prevent bunching. Chicago buses are equipped with GPS units and CTA can monitor bus bunching. However, if the travel time between stops is unpredictable due to traffic congestion or other factors on the street, bunching will continue to occur. One double parked car or construction blockage can have ripple effects throughout an entire route. Preventing bunching is about more than adjusting timing and coordination; it is about designing streets and policies to keep buses moving consistently.

The best way to limit bunching is to give buses priority on the street, with bus lanes and better signal timing. If buses can move more predictably through a corridor, they're more likely to stay on schedule and remain a consistent distance apart. This requires investing in service upgrades like the ones highlighted in this report, and giving buses priority on the street. Without more dedicated lanes, better signal timing and transit priority signals, buses will keep bunching, and riders will remain frustrated.

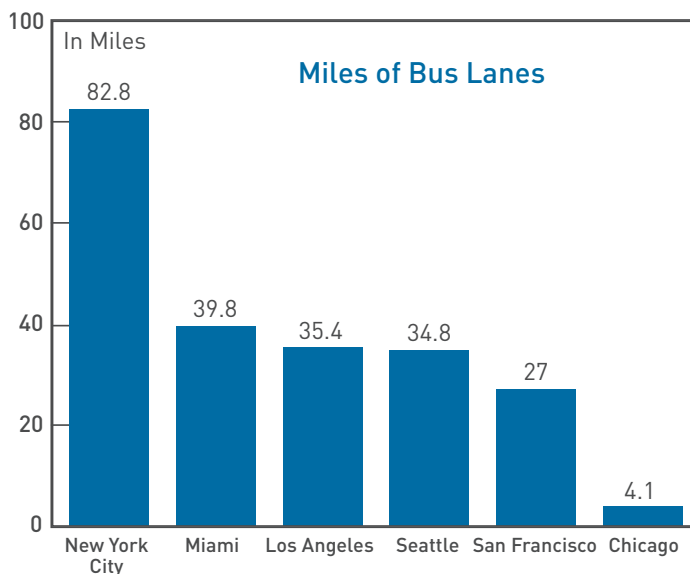


Dedicated bus lanes

Creating bus-only lanes is perhaps the most obvious and beneficial way to speed up bus service. Freeing buses from traffic congestion reduces travel time and increases reliability.

Depending upon the design, bus lanes can be relatively inexpensive. Often, just paint and pavement markings are required to designate them.

The longer the bus lanes, the greater the benefit. They are most needed on busy, congested corridors that serve popular destinations like job centers, schools, retail districts, and healthcare services.



Source: National Transit Database, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, City of Seattle Department of Transportation, Chicago Transit Authority

When installing bus lanes, design considerations should be made for other travel modes, especially vulnerable people who are walking and biking and often feel less safe traveling next to fast moving buses.

Creating bus lanes in Chicago usually requires removing parking or converting a general-purpose lane to bus-only. Parking removal is simplest where there is low demand for on-street parking or other parking is available nearby. Whether the parking is metered and what type of businesses are located along the corridors are also factors. Under the city's parking meter lease agreement, any removal of metered parking results in the city paying the vendor to make up for lost revenue or placing new meters at another location – further complicating the situation.

A common strategy is to convert parking lanes to bus lanes only during the morning and evening rush periods. Peak periods are when bus ridership and personal vehicle traffic is highest, and this strategy preserves at least one lane of street parking at all times. During non-peak



Freeing buses from traffic congestion reduces travel time and increases reliability. *Photo: Anne Evans*

periods, traffic volumes may be low enough to keep buses moving without bus-only lanes. If parking is sometimes allowed in these lanes, however, education and enforcement is needed to ensure they're clear during peak periods.

Critics of bus lanes typically predict huge increases in congestion for people driving, but the data shows that's not generally the case when analyzing before and after travel times. On a street grid like Chicago's, usually many alternative routes exist. Traffic is also more organized on streets with bus lanes; buses don't need to weave in and out of a travel lane to access stops, so other traffic can move more smoothly.

Most importantly, public buses carry exponentially more people (46 people per trip on average) than private vehicles and therefore deserve priority on our streets. Dedicated lanes have the potential to attract new and more frequent riders to busy routes. By giving transit riders an advantage and making it clear that the city prioritizes transit, bus lanes are a more efficient use of public space than streets filled with all general purpose lanes that are constantly clogged with cars.

Dedicated bus lanes in Chicago

The #J14 Jeffery Jump route has the longest bus-only lanes in Chicago. The route extends from 103rd Street and Stony Island Avenue to the downtown transit stations (Ogilvie and Union Stations) with dedicated lanes in some segments. On weekdays from 7am to 9am inbound and 4pm to 6pm outbound, buses travel in bus only lanes along Jeffery Avenue between 67th and 83rd

Streets and downtown. Outside of rush hour, parking is permitted in these lanes.

More recently in 2015, CDOT and CTA debuted bus lanes as a key feature of Loop Link, connecting the transit stations in the West Loop with job and entertainment centers across downtown that connect to neighborhoods all over Chicago. The corridor serves seven popular routes with bus lanes on Washington, Madison, Clinton, and Canal. It also features raised boarding at enhanced bus boarding platforms and protected bike lanes on Washington, Randolph, and Clinton. Despite challenges in enforcing the lanes and limiting non-transit vehicles in the lanes to crossing traffic, data shows the corridor has boosted bus speeds.

Bus only lanes were also proposed as part of the bus rapid transit (BRT) proposal on Ashland Avenue in 2012. The 16-mile corridor cuts through diverse neighborhoods, connecting job centers, retail, schools, residential areas, and hospitals. Traffic modeling showed the design would increase bus speeds by 83 percent, with only a moderate dip in car speeds (between one and three percent). Despite this analysis, some community leaders had concerns about the removal of a travel lane and left turns, and the city paused work on the project until it could be determined how to address these concerns.

In the meantime, the city has advanced improvements on Ashland that have benefited riders – including transit signal priority and stop optimization – but the conversation around dedicated bus lanes and further improvements has stalled.

CASE STUDY: CLEVELAND

In building the HealthLine corridor with dedicated bus lanes, Cleveland embraced the reality that buses are moving many more people much more efficiently than cars with one or two passengers.

The HealthLine runs 6.8 miles along Euclid Avenue, connecting Cleveland's two biggest employment centers – downtown Cleveland and University Circle – through the eastern section of the city. The route uses hybrid-electric buses that have doors on both

sides to allow for use at curbside stops and stops in the center median. The dedicated bus lanes also have protected bike lanes on their outer edges to complement service.

According to the Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, ridership boomed during the first year of operation – a 48 percent increase. Annual ridership has increased about 60 percent over the previous Number 6 bus line, which was the Cleveland’s highest ridership bus line before HealthLine service began. Within the first six years of service, 30 million customers used the HealthLine.

The HealthLine was a \$200 million-dollar investment that paid off. Since 2009, the HealthLine has been credited with \$6 billion in economic development along the Euclid Corridor: 4000+ new residential units, 7.9 million square feet in commercial development, and 13,000 new jobs.



Traffic signal improvements

In dense urban environments like Chicago, getting buses moving between intersections will only get you so far if you don’t address delays at traffic signals. Backups at signals can lead to bus bunching and throw multiple buses off schedule. Transit and city planners have a range of potential fixes at their disposal, some more costly and beneficial than others.

Sometimes simply adjusting the timing of signals at key corridors can benefit buses and other vehicles. For example, at a major intersection of two arterial streets, the street with a high ridership bus route could be given a slightly longer green per signal cycle than the street without a bus route. On streets with dedicated bus lanes, such as Chicago’s Loop Link, buses can be given a slight headstart on other vehicle traffic that needs to cross the bus lane to access right turn lanes, to help ensure they maximize the benefit of the dedicated lane. When done across an entire route, these small adjustments in timing can lead to significant benefits.

The benefit can be even greater when the signals are equipped with technology that allows them to communicate with buses. Transit signal priority (TSP) systems can be triggered if a bus is running late, as it approaches an intersection. Depending upon where the traffic light is in its cycle, the bus could be granted a green extension or an early green light.

Generally, the signal timing is only adjusted by five to 10 seconds so impact on cross traffic is minimal. The system is most beneficial with far-side bus stops that allow buses to move through the intersection before dropping off and picking up passengers. Parameters vary along each corridor depending upon the context, and can be adjusted over time. The technology is most beneficial when it’s installed at many intersections along a route, although even a few upgrades in a busy corridor can provide benefit.

Traffic signal improvements in Chicago

The CTA implemented transit signal priority at seven intersections along the Jeffery Jump in 2014. The agency then worked with CDOT to secure funding for implementation along Ashland and Western Avenues – two of the busiest bus routes in the city. The system was activated at 40 intersections on South Ashland in 2016, and will be fully activated on more than 100 intersections on Western in 2018. Central and North Ashland intersections will have TSP starting in 2019.

After TSP was installed on South Ashland along with other improvements including stop optimization, preliminary data shows bus travel times for the local #9 dropped by as much as 7 percent. Preliminary data showed that the time savings for the express service (#X9), which was implemented around the same time as TSP, had time savings as high as 25 percent when compared with the local service before TSP. The upgraded signals have also improved overall traffic flow and safety by strengthening communication with the Office of Emergency Management and Communications.

The biggest barrier to further implementation of TSP in Chicago is funding. Many of the city’s traffic signals are decades old and need to be replaced before TSP can be added. Neither CDOT nor CTA have funding dedicated to replacing these

signals, so they're left to pursue competitive grant opportunities. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) secured a \$40 million federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) grant for CTA to implement TSP on South Ashland and Western, and for Pace to install the technology on select suburban routes. The CTA secured an additional grant to implement TSP on Central and North Ashland.

CASE STUDY: LOS ANGELES

Seventeen years ago, when Los Angeles County decided to give its buses priority at traffic signals, the buses experienced huge gains in speed and reliability. The system gained nationwide attention after significantly improving the quality of service along two of the busiest corridors in the city – Wilshire and Ventura Boulevards. It cost \$10 million and was deployed at 211 intersections.

The system grants buses early green lights or brief extensions of green lights before turning yellow and red. Buses are dispatched every 3-10 minutes and can be instructed to slow down or speed up to avoid bunching with other buses. In order to reduce delay to non-transit traffic, the software creates limits on any green extension to ten seconds.

The results of the investment are very promising, with time savings of about 25 percent in each corridor and a reduction in delays caused by traffic signals of 33 percent. Overall travel speeds for the buses increased from 11 to 14 mph on Wilshire and 15 to 19 mph on Ventura. The impacts to cross-street traffic have been minimal, typically averaging about one second of delay per vehicle.

The improvements were deemed so successful that TSP has been implemented in several other corridors in Los Angeles.



Faster boarding

Speeding up the boarding process is one of the best ways to increase speed along a bus route. Generally, buses spend about 20 percent of their time picking up passengers. Often, the bulk of this time is at a few of the most popular stops along a route, such as major transfer points at L stations or popular destinations like schools or hospitals.

Long waits frustrate passengers and can deter people from riding the bus more frequently. These stops are logical places for the CTA to invest in upgrades to the boarding process that could create spillover benefits along the entire route.

Fare payment is one of the biggest contributors to boarding delays. The adoption and growth of the Ventra card has helped in Chicago as most riders can tap as they board. Still, it's important to preserve the cash payment option since low-income riders are often "unbanked" and pay with cash.

Several transit agencies have minimized these delays by allowing customers to pay before they board. This way, when a bus arrives at a station, riders can quickly board – often through multiple doors – without having to pay while they board. For example, on some routes in New York City, riders pay before boarding and receive a receipt as proof of payment. The transit agency uses enforcement inspectors to periodically check for receipts on buses and assess fines to individuals who boarded without paying. This type of enforcement could be used to unfairly target people of color and low-income riders so policies must be in place to prevent discrimination and abuse.

Another potential upgrade is all-door boarding with fare collection on board, which is being used in San Francisco. Riders can board through the front or rear doors – cutting the line in half. This requires installing a card reader at the rear of the bus, like what's already in place up front. Inspectors periodically check the cards to verify payment. Riders wishing to pay with cash board and pay at the front.

Transit agencies are understandably concerned that new boarding procedures could make it

easier for riders to avoid paying their fare. This is particularly salient in a time when transit operations funding is limited and under threat to be cut further. The experience of other cities, however, demonstrates that it's possible to reduce fare evasion when implementing changes to boarding procedures. Further planning, testing, and analysis is needed to determine what specific changes would work best in Chicago.

Faster boarding in Chicago

In recent years, CTA has pilot tested faster boarding at a few busy stops, and the agency launched two more 4-month pilots in July 2017. Current locations include the Belmont Blue Line stop in Avondale, Inner Lake Shore Drive/Belmont in Lakeview, and the 69th Street Red Line Station in Park Manor. At these stops, CTA has set up a designated paid boarding area that riders can enter after paying their fare. A CTA staffer is on hand to verify payment. The designated boarding area is only active during the morning or evening rush, depending on when bus boardings are highest at the location.

This model using CTA staff and physical barriers is intended as a proof of concept for the agency to analyze the impact of prepaid boarding on bus speeds and reliability. Given encouraging early results, CTA should consider larger investments in technology that would make faster boarding easier to implement across the system – such as adding card readers to the rear doors so customers using Ventra could board the bus through either door. Support from advocates

and community leaders for faster bus boarding and other service upgrades will be critical to helping secure more funding and implement policy changes.

The initial pilot program has shown positive results. CTA reports the Belmont Blue Line pilot resulted in an average time savings of 38 seconds per bus, down from an average boarding time of 68 seconds, reducing boarding time by 56 percent. The agency plans to make prepaid boarding permanent at the Belmont Blue Line stop as part of station renovations over the next few years. They also are considering expanding the program to other busy stops.

CASE STUDY: SAN FRANCISCO

In 2012, San Francisco's MUNI transit system implemented a revolutionary concept to America's bus systems – all-door boarding for all street vehicles, including buses and trolleys.

Bus riders can now enter through any door and tap their transit card on a reader that's adjacent to the door to verify payment. Riders paying with cash can still pay their fare after boarding through the front door.

Like all other bus systems in the country, MUNI riders were previously expected to only enter the bus through the front door so the operator could verify a fare was paid. This process proved to be time consuming, especially with cash fares and particularly at busy transfer points, like rail stations. The agency found many riders were boarding



Speeding up the boarding process is one of the best ways to increase speed along a bus route. Photo: Anne Evans

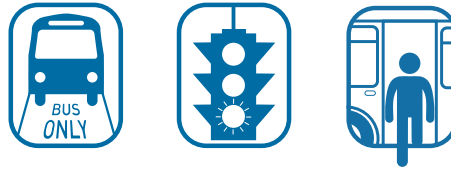
illegally through rear doors to speed up the boarding process.

One of the primary concerns with this switch was more riders avoiding paying a fare. To prevent this and preserve revenue, MUNI increased its fare enforcement staff from 41 to 54 employees. A fine of up to \$110 can be levied against customers who do not have proper proof of payment. It also focused on improving fare compliance, rather than recovering lost fares through citations.

These strategies proved successful as fare losses due to fare evasion dropped from \$19.2 million in 2009, when all-door boarding wasn't officially encouraged or enabled with fare card readers on rear doors, to \$17.1 million in 2014 after it was implemented. Fare evasion rates decreased from 9.5 percent in 2009 to 7.9 percent in 2014.

Most importantly, all-door boarding has reduced dwell times 38 percent on average in San Francisco.

Route Profiles & Recommendations



To begin applying the principles laid out in the report, Active Trans selected six of the highest ridership bus routes in the city. Each of these routes travels through a diverse set of neighborhoods and already carries thousands of riders daily, with potential to carry even more. The study team selected routes that are evenly distributed geographically to demonstrate the need for upgrades citywide. We also identified and engaged at least one community partner along each route to collect feedback and build support for improvements. The characteristics of these routes are shared by many other routes across the city, showing the potential to implement bus service upgrades at scale throughout the network.

For each route, we identified locations where each of the priority upgrades could be implemented. These are not the only locations where each upgrade could occur, rather, they are prime candidates based upon initial review. We recognize the agencies would need to conduct further analysis before determining where best to invest limited resources.

The faster boarding stops were chosen based upon where the most people were entering the bus. The dedicated bus lane segments are in congested areas with multiple travel lanes in each direction or where on-street parking is already limited so bus lanes would be simplest to implement. The top intersections for signal improvements are some of the busiest intersections in each corridor, based upon average daily traffic counts and Google data on daily traffic.

Each of these routes could also benefit from further analysis of the location and frequency of stops. The CTA removed stops on two of its busiest routes – Ashland and Western – in 2015 and that, along with other improvements



The most frequent suggestion from riders surveyed for improving bus service was to eliminate bus bunching.
Photo: Anne Evans

like transit signal priority, has contributed to increases in bus speeds. Other cities are moving towards a one-quarter mile standard for bus stop spacing to speed up trips, rather than every block or one-eighth of a mile spacing as often exists in Chicago's bus network. Any stop removal must be done carefully with a full analysis of ridership and community impacts.

Note: Number of stops per route and the peak frequencies for each direction are accurate as of October 2016. CTA service standards define AM peak as 6-9 am and PM peak as 3-7 pm.

#4 COTTAGE GROVE

Stops: 260

Northbound: 149 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 4 minutes from 95th Street/Chicago State University and every 15 minutes from 115th/Cottage Grove

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 6 minutes from 95th/Chicago State University and every 14 minutes from 115th/Cottage Grove

Southbound: 142 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 8 minutes from South Water/Columbus to north of 95th

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 6 minutes from South Water/Columbus to north of 95th

- End-to-end Distance: ~ 15 miles
- Neighborhoods: Loop, South Loop, Bronzeville, Oakland, Kenwood, Hyde Park, Woodlawn, Grand Crossing, Chatham, Pullman
- Wards: 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 20, 42
- Points of Interest: Illinois Center, Millennium Park/Art Institute, Grant Park/Museum Campus, McCormick Place, Dunbar HS, de LaSalle HS, Chicago Military Academy, CPD Headquarters, King HS, Washington Park/DuSable Museum, Cottage Grove Green Line station, Chicago State University, 95th ME station, Pullman National Monument, Kensington Metra Electric, Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep.

- Annual Ridership: 2016 - 6,424,582 boardings (5th highest in system)
 - 2015 - 6,747,771 boardings
 - Change in year-to-year: -4.8%

POTENTIAL SEGMENTS FOR DEDICATED BUS LANES

1. Between 60th and 79th Streets
2. Between Pershing and 47th Streets

POTENTIAL INTERSECTIONS FOR TRAFFIC SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. 79th (16,300 vehicles per day) and Cottage Grove (27,300 vehicles per day)
2. Midway Plaisance (2 intersections – 16,700 and 14,000 vehicles per day) and Cottage Grove (25,500 vehicles per day)
3. 47th Street (17,200 vehicles per day) and Cottage Grove (14,200 vehicles per day)

POTENTIAL STOPS FOR FASTER BOARDING

1. 63rd and Cottage Grove - Green Line Station (1,467 daily boardings)
2. 79th and Cottage Grove (1,591 daily boardings)
3. 47th and Cottage Grove (920 daily boardings)

#8 HALSTED

Stops: 211

Northbound: 124 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 5 minutes from 79th/Halsted

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 9 minutes from 79th/Halsted and every 5 minutes from Root/Halsted

Southbound: 134 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 4 minutes from Waveland/Broadway

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 7 minutes from Waveland/Broadway

- End-to-end Distance: ~13.5 miles

- Neighborhoods: Lakeview, Wrigleyville, Boystown, Lincoln Park, River West, Fulton Market, West Loop/Greektown, University Village, Pilsen, Bridgeport, Canaryville, Back of the Yards, Englewood, Auburn Gresham
- Wards: 2, 6, 11, 16, 17, 20, 25, 27, 43, 44, 46
- Points of Interest: Wrigley Field, Illinois Masonic Hospital, DePaul University, Lincoln Park HS, North/Clybourn Red Line station, Kendall College, Grand Blue Line station, UIC/Halsted Blue Line station, University of Illinois at Chicago, Halsted Orange Line station, Halsted Green Line station, Kennedy-King College
- Annual Ridership: 2016 - 6,375,502 boardings (3rd highest in system)
 - 2015 - 6,820,599 boardings
 - Change in year-to-year: -6.5%

POTENTIAL SEGMENTS FOR DEDICATED BUS LANES

1. Bus bypass lane at Lincoln/Fullerton/Halsted intersection
2. Between 35th and Garfield
3. Between Harrison and Roosevelt

POTENTIAL INTERSECTIONS FOR TRAFFIC SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Lake Street (14,100 vehicles per day) and Halsted (20,300 vehicles per day)
2. Lincoln (14,400 vehicles per day)/Fullerton (18,500 vehicles per day)/Halsted (18,700 vehicles per day)
3. Roosevelt Road (31,600 vehicles per day) and Halsted (13,400 vehicles per day)

POTENTIAL STOPS FASTER BOARDING

1. 79th and Halsted (2,060 daily boardings)
2. Archer and Halsted – Orange Line Station (1,765 daily boardings)
3. Polk (UIC) and Halsted (749 daily boardings)

#53 PULASKI

Stops: 178

Northbound: 147 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 7 minutes

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 8 minutes

Southbound: 146 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 8 minutes

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 8 minutes

- End-to-end Distance: ~11 miles
- Neighborhoods: North Park, Albany Park, Irving Park, Avondale, Logan Square, West Humboldt Park, West Garfield Park, North Lawndale, Little Village
- Wards: 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 31, 35, 37, 39, 45
- Points of Interest: Northeastern Illinois University, Irving Park Blue Line station, Healy Metra station, Orr HS, Pulaski Green Line stop, Pulaski Blue Line stop, Pulaski Pink Line stop, Little Village HS
- Annual Ridership: 2016 - 5,895,533 boardings (7th highest in system)
 - 2015 - 6,293,990 boardings
 - Change in year-to-year: -6.3%

POTENTIAL SEGMENTS FOR DEDICATED BUS LANES

1. Bus bypass lane at Irving Park
2. Bus bypass lane at Division
3. Bus bypass lane at 31st

POTENTIAL INTERSECTIONS FOR TRAFFIC SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. North Ave (37,300) and Pulaski (21,300 vehicles per day)
2. Roosevelt (23,900 vehicles per day) and Pulaski (23,700 vehicles per day)
3. 31st Street (20,100 vehicles per day) and Pulaski (29,500 vehicles per day)

POTENTIAL STOPS FOR FASTER BOARDING

1. 51st and Pulaski – Orange Line Station (1,330 daily boardings)
2. Roosevelt and Pulaski (970 daily boardings)
3. Lawrence and Pulaski (807 daily boardings)

#66 CHICAGO

Stops: 151

Eastbound: 187 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 3 minutes from Chicago/Kostner and every 6 minutes from Chicago/Austin

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 6 minutes from Chicago/Austin

Westbound: 176 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 6 minutes to Chicago/Austin

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 4 minutes to Chicago/Austin

- End-to-end Distance: ~8.75 miles
- Neighborhoods: Austin, West Humboldt Park, East Humboldt Park, West Town, River West, River North, Streeterville
- Wards: 1, 2, 26, 27, 28, 29, 37, 42
- Points of Interest: Navy Pier, Northwestern University, Michigan Ave/Water Tower/MCA, Chicago Red Line station, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago Brown/Purple Line station, Chicago Blue Line station, Humboldt Park, Orr HS, Oak Park
- Busiest Stops: Chicago/Michigan, Chicago/State, Chicago/Milwaukee
- Annual Ridership: 2016 – 7,088,033 boardings (2nd highest in system)
 - 2015 - 7,399,957 boardings
 - Change in year-to-year: -4.2%

POTENTIAL SEGMENTS FOR DEDICATED BUS LANES

1. Between California and Larrabee
2. Between Brown Line and Fairbanks
3. Bus bypass lane at Western and Milwaukee/Ogden

POTENTIAL INTERSECTIONS FOR TRAFFIC SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Ogden (20,900 vehicles per day) and Chicago (25,500 vehicles per day)

2. Halsted (23,100 vehicles per day) and Chicago (18,800 vehicles per day)
3. Western (32,400 vehicles per day) and Chicago (17,400 vehicles per day)

POTENTIAL STOPS FOR FASTER BOARDING

1. Milwaukee and Chicago – Blue Line Station (2,118 daily boardings)
2. Michigan and Chicago (1,339 daily boardings)
3. State and Chicago – Red State Line Station (1,308 daily boardings)

#79, 79TH STREET

Stops: 192

Eastbound: 249 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 2 minutes from Western and every 6 minutes from Ford City

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 4 minutes from Western and every 8 minutes from Ford City

Westbound: 255 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 3 minutes to Western and every 6 minutes to Ford City

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 4 minutes to Western and every 10 minutes to Ford City

- End-to-end Distance: ~10.5 miles
- Neighborhoods: South Shore, Grand Crossing, Chatham, Auburn Gresham, Ashburn, Ford City
- Wards: 6, 7, 8, 17, 18
- Points of Interest: Rainbow Beach Park, Cheltenham Metra Electric stop, 79th (Chatham) Metra Electric stop, 79th Red Line stop, St. Rita High School, Wrightwood Metra stop, Bogan HS, Ford City Shopping Center
- Busiest Stops: 79th Red Line stop/Cottage Grove & 79th/South Shore & 79th
- Annual Ridership: 2016 - 8,268,367 boardings (highest in system)
 - 2015 - 8,716,277 boardings
 - Change in year-to-year: -5.1%

POTENTIAL SEGMENTS FOR DEDICATED BUS LANES

1. Bus bypass lane at Red Line Station
2. Bus bypass lane at Halsted
3. Between Laflin and Paulina

POTENTIAL INTERSECTIONS FOR TRAFFIC SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Stony Island (61,600 vehicles per day) and 79th (16,300 vehicles per day)
2. King Drive (16,700 vehicles per day) and 79th (17,600 vehicles per day)
3. Columbus (16,900 vehicles per day) and 79th (33,300 vehicles per day)

POTENTIAL STOPS FOR FASTER BOARDING

1. State and 79th – Red Line Station (4,609 daily boardings)
2. Halsted and 79th (1,503 daily boardings)
3. South Shore and 79th (1,152 daily boardings)

#80 IRVING PARK

Stops: 162

Eastbound: 110 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 4 minutes from Irving/Harlem and every 8 minutes from Irving/Cumberland

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 8 minutes

Westbound: 110 trips per day

AM peak: Buses as frequent as every 5 minutes from Irving/Broadway

PM peak: Buses as frequent as every 6 minutes from Irving/Broadway

- End-to-end Distance: ~10 miles
- Neighborhoods: Lakeview, North Center, Old Irving Park, Portage Park, Dunning
- Wards: 3, 35, 38, 45, 46, 47
- Points of Interest: Wrigley Field, Sheridan Red Line stop, Lakeview HS, Irving Park Brown Line stop, Horner Park, Irving Park Blue Line stop, Six Corners shopping district, Harlem Irving Plaza

- Busiest Stops: Sheridan/Irving, Fremont/Irving, Irving Blue Line, Irving Brown Line
- Annual Ridership: 2016 - 3,757,835 boardings (27th highest in system)
 - 2015 - 4,093,923 boardings
 - Change in year-to-year: -8.2%

POTENTIAL SEGMENTS FOR DEDICATED BUS LANES

1. Between Sheridan and Clark
2. Bus bypass lane at Irving Park/Lincoln/Damen
3. Bus bypass lane at Blue Line Station

POTENTIAL INTERSECTIONS FOR TRAFFIC SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Pulaski (21,100 vehicles per day) and Irving Park (46,500 vehicles per day)
2. Damen (12,500 vehicles per day), Lincoln (14,100) and Irving Park (41,200 vehicles per day)
3. Milwaukee (14,400 vehicles per day), Cicero (31,500 vehicles per day) and Irving Park (37,100 vehicles per day)

POTENTIAL STOPS FOR FASTER BOARDING

1. Irving Park Blue Line Station (1,332 daily boardings)
2. Sheridan and Irving Park (1,194 daily boardings)
3. Irving Park Brown Line Station (716 daily boardings)



Active Trans identified the #80 Irving Park bus route as one that could benefit from dedicated bus lanes, traffic signal improvements, and stops along the route where faster boarding could be implemented. *Photo: Anne Evans*

POLICY CHANGES >>

(1) Create a plan for Transit Priority Streets with 50 miles of dedicated bus lanes

Chicago's Complete Streets Policy identifies transit riders as second only to people walking in terms of priority modes for all transportation projects and programming. It also establishes the typology of Transit Priority Streets, which CDOT and CTA can identify as corridors where transit will be prioritized ahead of other modes. The CTA manages bus service but any changes to on-street infrastructure and traffic movements require coordination with CDOT.

However, outside of the Loop Link and Jeffery Jump corridors, the city has yet to implement this portion of the Complete Streets Policy, despite its relatively low cost. Changing this will require growing public and political will for improving bus service, which would lead to greater coordination between CTA and CDOT.

While the agencies share common goals, and have several major accomplishments in recent years, consistent coordination on improving bus mobility is still lacking. Both agencies should dedicate more resources, including staff time, to creating a plan for Transit Priority Streets and opportunities to boost bus speed and reliability – especially on high ridership routes. With more political will and a relatively modest level of funding, the agencies could develop a plan for transit priority streets within two years that includes at least 50 miles of dedicated bus lanes.

ACTION: *CDOT and CTA develop plan for transit priority streets within two years that includes at least 50 miles of new bus lanes*

(2) Create effective ways to enforce bus lanes

Dedicated bus lanes will be an even better option when Chicago creates more effective ways to keep bus lanes clear of automobile traffic. Today, the city struggles to enforce the bus only lanes on the Loop Link and Jeffery Jump. Buses are often slowed as the lanes are used illegally for pickup and drop-off, private shuttle buses, and people using the lanes to skip ahead of other traffic or make illegal right turns. There was a limited



Local agencies need to work on creating a plan for Transit Priority Streets and opportunities to boost bus speed and reliability – especially on high ridership routes. *Photo: Anne Evans*

education and enforcement campaign when the corridor first opened, but there's been little sustained effort to ticket violators and keep the lanes consistently clear for buses.

One option is for the city to empower non-police personnel to monitor bus lanes. Currently, only police can issue moving violations for people driving in the lane, but Chicago Department of Finance personnel can issue parking and standing violations. These same restrictions apply to bike lanes, where vehicles blocking lanes is also a persistent issue.

The city recently launched a renewed effort to identify hotspots for blocked bike lanes and issue citations to violators. Chicagoans can report blocked bike lanes by calling 311 or filing an online report, where a new category was created for bike lane obstructions. The Department of Finance uses this data to identify priority areas for enforcement and have personnel on site over multiple days. This same coordination should be established for bus lane enforcement, particularly as the city looks to grow the bus lane network.

The city must consider equity and the effects of structural racism as it explores a new bus lane enforcement policy. Leaders in communities of color have legitimate concerns about any policy changes that would lead to more on-street police interactions. Onerous, regressive fines also disproportionately penalize low- and middle-income residents. Chicago should

explore alternatives like warnings, an income-based penalty structure, and restorative justice approaches to changing behavior.

Given equity concerns and limited available police resources, automated enforcement is a better option. This requires a new state law enabling photo enforcement of bus lanes and city council action. Building off this report, Active Trans is committed to working with other advocates and elected officials to explore legislative possibilities.

ACTION: *Illinois General Assembly establishes state law enabling photo enforcement of bus lanes*

(3) Incentivize purchase of multi-day passes

For years, CTA has faced severe budget challenges and effectively managed stagnant or declining funding from all levels of government. The agency has avoided significant increases to the base fare and remained competitive with peer cities on pricing.

However, in 2013 CTA increased the price of one-, three-, seven- and 30-day passes while maintaining the base fare, significantly changing the ratio between the price of a single fare and unlimited passes. These passes encourage people to ride transit frequently and can be particularly relevant for bus trips, which are often shorter and easier to replace with other options. When fewer riders purchase passes, customers are more price-sensitive and may be less likely to ride the bus, especially for shorter trips that are easier to replace by walking, biking, or taking Uber or Lyft.

CTA should assess whether these price increases have contributed to ridership and revenue declines while looking for new ways to incentivize the purchase of passes. For example, when CTA increased the cost of the 30-day pass from \$86 to \$100, it reduced the incentive for frequent riders to purchase the pass. Riders need to take transit twice per workday for a full month for it to be worthwhile, and even then, they would only save a few dollars.

State leaders should also pass proposed legislation (House Bill 2802) that would require Chicagoland companies with 25 or more employees to offer the transit benefit program.

State Rep. Theresa Mah and others sponsored this bill in the 2017 legislative session but it stalled in committee

The agency must consider the impact of any changes to fare policy on low-income riders and consider equity strategies like “fare capping,” which prevents riders from spending more on multiple single ride passes than they would have if they had purchased a daily or monthly pass.

ACTION: *CTA further incentivizes the purchase of multi-day passes in a new pricing structure and analyzes a potential fare capping policy. State legislators pass House Bill 2802 requiring Chicagoland employers to offer the transit benefit program*

(4) Establish a local dedicated revenue stream to fund transit operations, improvements, and expansion

With less reliable and consistent state and federal transit funding, we need a dedicated revenue stream locally to fund transit improvements and expansion – both bus and rail. The cities that are most actively upgrading and expanding their transit networks – like Los Angeles, Denver and Seattle – all recently made significant local commitments that allow them to access more federal funding. To make progress long term, the Chicago region needs to do the same. Transit agencies receive a portion of local sales tax revenue to help fund operations, although this funding has been cut in recent state budgets.

Unlike much of the country, Illinois’ state constitution doesn’t allow for binding ballot referenda to establish a local dedicated funding source. Instead, city or county officials would need to pass legislation after identifying a funding stream, as the city council did when it established a Transit TIF for the Red Purple Modernization project. With growing support for public transit investment across the region, there’s potential for a diverse coalition of business, labor and civic leaders to push our elected officials to act in favor of a more reliable and consistent funding stream for several projects. We can’t afford to wait and let other major metropolitan areas pass us by while we struggle to find the money to maintain our current system, and strategically expand it.



While comprehensive research has yet to be carried out in Chicago, research in other cities and CTA rider surveys suggest that ride-hailing has created more congestion and reduced bus ridership. *Photo: Anne Evans*

The mayor took an initial step towards more local funding for transit by including a ride-hailing fee increase in his 2018 budget proposal. If approved by city council, the current 52 cents fee would be increased by 15 cents and all the new revenue would go to CTA for public transit. This is a small but important step in addressing our public transit funding crisis and how ride-hailing is affecting our transportation network.

ACTION: *The City of Chicago, Cook County, or State of Illinois establishes a new dedicated revenue stream for public transit improvements and expansion*

(5) Push for more data sharing and analysis of ride-hailing trips

Increasingly, conversations about bus ridership and transportation policy include discussions of how transit and congestion are being affected by ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft. It is likely that ride-hailing is replacing some bus trips in Chicago, but we lack sufficient data to draw any firm conclusions. Some researchers have found that transit and ride-hailing are complementary, but they've largely relied upon generic survey data that's already becoming dated. More recently, New York City has found the opposite; that ride-hailing services mainly replace trips on transit.³

There's some evidence many Chicagoans are already choosing Uber or Lyft over the bus. In a 2016 CTA survey, 29 percent of CTA rail customers and 31 percent of CTA bus customers who reduced their CTA ridership indicated using app-based ride-hailing services instead.

To analyze the impact of ride-hailing services and develop appropriate policies and regulations, we need more transparency from providers like Uber and Lyft, and access to anonymized trip data. This would allow researchers to paint a more complete picture of what's happening on our streets and how we should manage all types of traffic moving forward.

Currently, ride-hailing companies are required to submit trip data, including start and end-time with origin and destination of any trips that begin or end within the City of Chicago, to the city's Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP). The problem is that it's not clear what the city does with this data, and it's not publicly available. The city has denied Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for the data, citing "trade secrets or commercial or financial information."

Peer cities have different regulations that require more transparency. In New York, taxicabs and ride-hailing companies are required to share electronic trip logs, including date, time, and origin of each trip. This anonymized data has paved the way for more robust research and analysis of the impact of ride-hailing in NYC than any other American city. Meanwhile, ride-hailing companies continue to operate and grow in the city, seemingly not adversely affected by the public availability of the data.

Researchers in New York found that in 2015 and 2016, growth in taxi and ride-hailing usage outpaced growth in transit ridership for the first time since the 1980s⁴. The analysis found ride-hailing is now the leading source of growth in

non-private auto travel in New York City, adding 600 million miles of vehicular travel to the city's roadway network over three years and worsening congestion.

A study by the San Francisco County Transportation Authority found comparable results in the Bay Area⁵. Ride-hailing vehicles traveled approximately 570,000 miles within city limits on a typical weekday in San Francisco. This accounts for 20 percent of all local daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and includes both in-service and out-of-service mileage. A recent UC Davis study surveyed transportation users in seven major cities – including Chicago – and found that ride-hailing may be attracting riders away from public transit, buses in particular, and leading to increasing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) because of people making more trips on less efficient modes.

We cannot be sure whether the impact on driving and congestion has been similar in Chicago without better data, but anecdotal evidence and CTA ridership and survey data suggest it easily could be. The Chicago City Council should address this data gap and pass an ordinance making anonymized ride-hailing trip data publicly available. This would give leaders inside and outside city government a greater understanding of the effects of ride-hailing on congestion, transit ridership, and other factors critical to the future of our city.

With more local data and analysis available, civic leaders could explore policy changes in response to the growth of the ride-hailing industry, and its impact on public transit ridership. For example, the mayor took an initial step by including a ride-hailing fee increase in his 2018 budget proposal. This could be strengthened as part of congestion pricing structure that applies to all car trips downtown during peak periods, when cars are having the greatest impact on traffic congestion that is damaging the city's productivity and livability. Revenue from this fee could help fund public transit alternatives. There's also potential to use technology and ride-hailing apps to restrict pickups and drop-offs in certain locations where it's negatively affecting public transit service – such as dedicated bus lanes.

ACTION: *Chicago City Council passes an ordinance mandating that ride-hailing companies make anonymized trip data publicly available*

What's next?

Active Trans will work with community partners throughout the city to advocate for implementation of the upgrades and policy recommendations outlined in this report. Working with our partners in the Back on the Bus Coalition, we will continue to meet with elected officials at every level of government to build political will for more investment, innovation, and policy changes on behalf of local bus service.

We plan to develop ward-level reports so residents, community leaders, and elected officials can better understand local needs and how they can work together to push for improvements. We will continue conversations with leadership and staff at CTA and CDOT to help foster better coordination on bus service issues and advocate for additional funding to make it happen. We will monitor opportunities to adjust fare policy and push for changes that will grow ridership without hurting low-income riders.

We will work with partners to further analyze the effects of the continued growth of ride-hailing services, and push for policy solutions that make trip data publicly available so city officials can effectively manage that growth.

At the state level, we will work with our coalition partners to start conversations with legislators about legislation that would enable photo enforcement of bus lanes, in addition to consistent advocacy for protecting and ultimately growing state funding for transit operations and capital projects.

To reverse ridership declines and get people back on the bus, we need sustained advocacy pushing elected officials and agency staff to prioritize bus service upgrades and build a faster and more reliable network throughout the city.

³Schaller Consulting, *Unsustainable: The Growth of App-Based Ride Services and Traffic, Travel and the Future of New York City*, 2017

⁴Ibid

⁵San Francisco County Transportation Authority, *TNCs Today: A Profile of San Francisco Transportation Network Activity*, 2017

BACK ON THE BUS COALITION >>

Active Trans thanks leaders from the following civic and community organizations that provided feedback on this report and agreed to work together to push for implementation of its recommended service improvements and policy changes.



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE



COALITION FOR A BETTER CHINESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY
華埠更好團結聯盟

SOLIDARITY



GREATER AUBURN - GRESHAM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY CENTER



SIX CORNERS SHOPPING DISTRICT



Illinois PIRG Education Fund



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
CHADDICK INSTITUTE FOR METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT



Midwest High Speed Rail Association



SHARED-USE MOBILITY CENTER



Metropolitan Planning Council

Is your organization interested in joining the Back on the Bus Coalition and working together to improve service in Chicago? Contact Active Trans Government Relations Director Kyle Whitehead at kyle@activetrans.org

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