Better Buses Restart – 181st Street Busway Pilot
Community Advisory Board Kickoff – July 7, 2020
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Better Buses Program

- **Mayor’s 2019 State of the City:** *Improve bus speeds 25%*

- **Better Buses Action Plan**
  *Released April 2019*

- **Bus Priority Projects**
  - 22 projects implemented in 2019
  - 24 projects were planned for 2020, heavy focus on coordination with NYCT Bronx Bus Network Redesign
Better Buses Restart

Impact of COVID-19

2020 Work Program was disrupted by the pandemic

• Limited ability to conduct data collection and outreach starting in March

• Bronx Redesign implementation postponed
**Better Buses Restart**

**Bus Service During the Pandemic**

- **Speeds increased by over 20%**
- **Ridership decreased about 70%**
- **Highlighted areas of particular need**
  - Essential workers using transit
  - Underrepresented communities hardest hit by virus
- **Good bus service needed for restart**
  - Support essential workers
  - Attract people back to transit

**NYC Reopening**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>Phase 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 8</td>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>July 6</td>
<td>Timing TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. 300k workers returned</td>
<td>More retail</td>
<td>Personal care services, some outdoor recreation</td>
<td>Schools, entertainment, Indoor dining</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Better Buses Restart

Recovery Plan

In June, Mayor de Blasio announced a plan for fast, reliable transit service during reopening

- Buses played a vital role during the shutdown and continue to during recovery
- Bus ridership is already at 50% of pre-COVID levels, while subway ridership is only at 20%
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Recovery Plan

9 busway & bus lane projects announced, focused on:

- Vulnerable populations, essential workers
- Number of bus passengers served
- Ability to implement quickly
- Geographic equity
Previous Studies and Outreach
**Congested Corridors Study**

- DOT “Congested Corridors” study conducted 2008-2011
  - 3 public meetings, community walk-thru, and 4 Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings
- Identified issues: traffic safety, congestion, and poor curb management
- Implemented improvements in Summer 2011, including:
  - Eastbound PM Rush Hour Bus Lane
  - Left turn bays
  - Loading zones and additional parking meters
- Pedestrian safety improvements recommended in study will be built as capital projects starting in Spring 2021, including curb extensions at:
  - 181 St & Broadway
  - 181 St & St. Nicholas Ave
Washington Heights Neighborhood Transportation Study

- DOT study conducted 2014-2017 looking at 3 areas in Washington Heights, including 181 St corridor
- Projects developed based on feedback received during open houses and workshops
- Issues identified for 181 St corridor:
  - Slow, unreliable bus service (even with PM rush hour bus lane)
  - Bus stops with no shelters and/or benches
  - Lack of pedestrian safety amenities
  - Traffic congestion
Outreach

In November 2019, NYC DOT Street Ambassadors surveyed businesses on 181 St corridor to learn about loading and delivery needs.

Issues identified:

- Double parking
- Lack of access to the curb for deliveries and loading
- Traffic congestion
181st St – Neighborhood and Regional Hub

- Commercial destination with hundreds of businesses
- Government, medical, and educational institutions
  - USPS, FDNY, New York Presbyterian
- Regional transportation connections
  - Bronx via Washington Bridge
  - New Jersey via George Washington Bridge
  - Cross Bronx Expressway
181st St – Neighborhood and Regional Hub

Busway Project Extents: Broadway to Amsterdam Ave
The majority of residents do not have access to a car and rely on public transit to get them to work, shopping, and recreation
  - 69% of households are carless and commute via public transit. 16% commute via car/carpool
  - About half of residents have commutes of 45 minutes or longer

Median Household Income is $52k (vs. $61k for NYC), which makes owning a vehicle cost prohibitive for many residents

The busway proposal would directly benefit residents by shortening the time they spend traveling on transit to and from work and running errands

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey
181<sup>st</sup> St - Transit

- 181<sup>st</sup> St is one of the busiest corridors for buses in the city
- 5 NYCT Routes carrying over 47,000 daily passengers on 181<sup>st</sup> St
- 50+ NYCT buses per hr during peak hrs
- Connections to 6 bus routes, 1 and A Trains, and GWB Bus Station
181st St – Regional Transit

- Buses on 181 St provide critical connections between Washington Heights and numerous Bronx neighborhoods and destinations
- Connects to major transportation, commercial, and institutional hubs
  - 1,2,4,5, B, and D trains
  - Metro North (Melrose, Tremont)
  - VA Medical Center
  - Yankee Stadium
  - Bronx Terminal Market
Supporting Essential Workers

- Areas directly served by 181 St routes have high concentrations of frontline workers
- Frontline workers (e.g., nurses, transit workers, postal/courier workers, grocery store workers) make up 38% of transit riders in New York City
- 79% of the city’s frontline workers are black, Hispanic, or mixed race

Source: NYC Comptroller, Bureau of Policy and Research
181st St – Transit Speeds

- Buses are slow and unreliable on 181 St
- Average bus speed is 3.7 mph
- Bus “bunching” causes long waits and overcrowding on buses and at stops

Data Source – MTA NYCT, May 2019
181st St – Transit Ridership

- Ridership is consistently high throughout the day in both directions
- Westbound spike in the AM Peak hour

Directional Split of Bus Ridership at Amsterdam Ave Stop

- Manhattan Bound (Arriving at Amsterdam Ave)
- Bronx Bound (Leaving Amsterdam Ave)
181st St – Mode Split

Bus passengers comprise 62%-70% of roadway users on 181 St*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Day</th>
<th>AM Peak Hour</th>
<th>PM Peak Hour</th>
<th>Weekend Peak Hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bus Passengers</td>
<td>34,120</td>
<td>2,972</td>
<td>2,506</td>
<td>2,998</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truck Passengers</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle (Non-Truck)</td>
<td>18,476</td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bikes</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Between Audubon Ave and St Nicholas Ave

Data Sources: MTA NYCT, DOT Traffic Counts
Buses move the majority of people on 181st Street, but only street space dedicated to transit is an eastbound PM rush hour lane, which is frequently blocked by parked vehicles.

Eastbound bus speeds during the PM rush hour are 2.3mph.
181<sup>st</sup> St – Traffic

181 St serves local traffic, but it is also frequently used as a shortcut for access to and from the Cross Bronx Expressway and George Washington Bridge, which creates congestion affecting local residents and businesses.
181st St – Curb Management

- Double parking blocks all roadway users
- 70% of surveyed businesses said that they consistently see double parking in front of their storefront on a typical day
- DOT will analyze time lapse camera data to inform curb regulation and traffic restrictions
181st St – Curb Management

In addition to loading / parking needs for businesses, better curb management is needed near FDNY Engine 93/Ladder 45/Battalion 13 and USPS Washington Bridge Branch.
181st St – Pedestrians

- On weekends and in the PM rush hour, pedestrians make up a significant portion of the activity on 181 St*
  - Weekend Peak Hour: 2,200 peds/hr
  - PM Peak Hour: 3,000 peds/hr
- Sidewalks are often overcrowded, causing pedestrian safety issues

*Screenline counts on both sides of street between Wadsworth and St Nicholas Aves
181st St – Traffic Safety

- Transit improvements also have benefits for traffic safety by reducing the amount of conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles, trucks, and buses.
- After implementation of the busway on 14th St, crashes resulting in injuries decreased 4%.

181 St, Broadway to Amsterdam Ave Traffic Injuries, 2013-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Injuries</th>
<th>Severe Injuries</th>
<th>Fatalities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicyclists</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicle</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example Busways
What is a Busway?

Lessons from Past Projects

• A busway prioritizes bus travel by restricting other traffic traveling through a corridor
  • Includes regulatory signs and bus lane markings
  • Only buses, trucks, and emergency vehicles are allowed to drive continuously along the busway
  • Other vehicles are allowed to turn onto busway for local access, such as visiting a business or pick-up/drop-off, but must make the next available turn off busway
• Thorough evaluation of curb regulations to match the needs of businesses and other entities along the corridor
• Thorough monitoring of bus and traffic operations
• Opportunity for pedestrian safety improvements
14th St Busway, Manhattan

- Thru traffic on 14th St between 3 Ave and 9 Ave is restricted to Buses and Trucks
- Local access permitted. Vehicles must make next right turn off corridor
- Changes resulted in significant gains for bus riders
- While side streets saw slight increases in traffic volumes, vehicle travel times minimally impacted (<1 minute)
- Project was implemented in Oct 2019, made permanent in June 2020
- Similar bus frequency as 181 St
Main St, Queens

- Thru traffic on southbound Main St between 37th Ave and 40th Rd is restricted to Buses and Trucks
- Local access permitted. Vehicles must turn off corridor at next intersection
- Southbound bus speeds improved 23% after implementation
- DOT plans to implement treatment in NB direction on Main St in 2020
Fulton Street, Brooklyn

- Fulton Street between Flatbush Avenue and Adams St is restricted to Buses and local truck deliveries
- Supports commercial district with 230 stores
- 181 St has greater bus frequency than Fulton Mall
Next Steps
181st Street Design Development

- DOT will utilize best practices and lessons learned from other projects
- 181st St has important differences that need to be taken into account, including:
  - Washington Bridge access
  - George Washington Bridge access
  - Port Authority Bus station connections
  - High demand for the curb for business access and deliveries
- CAB can help identify other considerations for DOT to incorporate into analysis
181st Street Process

181st Street outreach and implementation approach

• Community Advisory Board (CAB) will guide project before, during, and after implementation
  – CAB includes elected officials, nonprofit and community organizations, government agency representatives, advocates, and riders

• The design has not been determined. In subsequent meetings, we will show alternatives based on feedback we receive today and future meetings in addition to data analysis

• Additional outreach will be conducted with guidance from CAB (e.g. online surveys, virtual meetings with stakeholders)

• DOT will work with community to gather feedback throughout the project to make timely adjustments as needed

• Project will be a 1 year pilot and will be monitored and evaluated
**Project Timeline**

- **July 7, 2020**
  - CAB and project kick-off

- **July 2020**
  - Additional outreach
  - Data analysis
  - Develop project alternatives

- **August 2020**
  - Present project alternatives to CAB and gather feedback
  - Revise plan

- **September 2020**
  - Present revised plan
  - Adjust design based on feedback and prepare for implementation

- **Fall 2020**
  - Share final plan with stakeholders
  - Project implementation

- **Fall/Winter 2020**
  - Project monitoring and evaluation

- **Winter 2020-2021**
  - Report back to stakeholders on evaluation and determine next steps
Thank You!

Questions?