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Better Buses Restart

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 to 2021
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

Phase 1
• June 8
• Approx. 300k workers returned
• Construction, manufacturing, some retail

Phase 2
• June 22
• More retail
• Outdoor dining
• Some office

Phase 3
• Timing TBD
• Hospitality focus

Phase 4
• Timing, TBD
• Schools, Entertainment
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%

9 busway & bus lane projects announced, focused on:

- Vulnerable populations, essential workers
- Number of bus passengers served
- Ability to implement quickly
- Geographic equity
14th Street Busway

- Implemented in Oct 2019
- Made permanent in June 2020
- Significant gains for bus riders
- Very small impact on vehicle travel times (<1 minute)
- 4% decrease in crashes with injuries

**BUS OPERATIONS**

**WEEKDAY AVERAGE TRAVEL TIME**

24% improvement in travel times

2.9 minutes faster

Combined for both directions: 3rd Avenue to 8th Avenue from January 2018 to January 2020

**WEEKDAY RIDERSHIP**

14% increase in bus ridership from January 2018 to January 2020, up to 29,568.

3,526 riders
Background
Background

5th Avenue – 57th Street to 34th Street

- Major commercial/retail corridor and tourist destination
- Critical bus corridor for commuters from across the city
- High pedestrian and cyclist volumes
- Safety concerns
- Community requests for improvements
Background

Citywide Bus Connections

- **41 different bus routes coming from all 5 boroughs**
  - 9 from Brooklyn
  - 9 from the Bronx
  - 6 from Manhattan
  - 4 from Queens
  - 13 from Staten Island

- **50-130 buses per hour throughout the day**

- **Bus delays here can impact reliability citywide**
Background

Citywide Bus Connections

Routes connect to outer areas of the city ranking high on CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index

• Includes:
  – high poverty
  – low vehicle access
  – aged 65 or older
  – civilians with a disability

• Vital transportation links for communities with limited options
Background

Bus Ridership

110,000 daily bus riders on routes serving 5th Av (2019)

- 51% from Manhattan routes
- 49% from routes originating in other boroughs
Background

Previous Bus Priority Treatments

Double bus lane implemented in 2018
(61st Street to 34th Street)
• From 2017 to 2019:
  – Local routes have had a speed increase of 6-12%
  – Express routes have had a speed increase of 11-20%
Background

Bicycle Volumes

On average, 1,800 cyclists use 5th Av daily (at 51st Street)
• Highest ridership on a Manhattan corridor without a bike lane
• There are 35 Citibike stations with ¼ mile of 5th Av and 34th St
• Low percentage of female riders
  – Less than 10% of riders were women
  – Protected bike lanes in Midtown see approximately 25% women riders
Background

Safety and Crash History

- High crash rates among all road users – pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles
- Underscores need for design improving safety for all modes
- Cyclist fatality in June of 2020 on 5th Av near 59th St in bus lane

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Source: Fatalities: NYCDOT
Injuries: NYSDOT
KSI: Persons Killed or Severely Injured
Public Requests for Complete Streets Improvements

• Broad support, including from CB5, for double bus lanes implemented in 2018
• Multiple longstanding requests for a Complete Streets design, including protected bike lane
• Requests to accommodate high pedestrian volumes, especially during holidays
Proposed Treatments
Proposed Treatments: Busway

Through Traffic Restrictions

- Traffic restrictions prioritize bus travel while maintaining local access (Hours TBD)
  - Only buses and emergency vehicles allowed to drive continuously along the busway
  - Other vehicles are allowed to turn onto busway for local trips, pick-up/drop-off, and garage access but must make the next available turn off busway

- Traffic diversion strategies prior to start of busway at 57th St

- Traffic operations adjusted as needed (turn bays, turn bans, or signal timing changes)
Proposed Treatments: Busway

Dedicated Bus Lanes

Existing double bus lanes on west curb are well used

- Safe & accessible curbside boarding at bus stops
- Right turns can still be made from bus lanes where permitted

5th Av at 46 St
Proposed Treatments: Curb Regulations

Local Traffic Access and Pickup/Drop-off Zones

Maintaining local traffic access allows taxis, FHVs, and other vehicles to serve 5th Av

- Could add floating parking, pickup/drop-off or loading zones
Proposed Treatments: Complete Street

Providing Safe & Accessible Options

- Reduced vehicular volumes on Busway can help create space for other modes including walking and biking
- Provide safe and accessible options for all travel modes and people of all ages and abilities
- Support City’s Vision Zero Initiative
Potential Treatments: Pedestrians

Sidewalk Extensions

Painted curb extensions can create more space for pedestrians where volumes are high

- Allow for better social distancing
- Bollards, planters, or other elements can provide separation
- Can shorten crossings, increasing pedestrian safety
Potential Treatments: Bikes

Protected Bike Lane

Curbside bike lane can be protected by parked cars or vertical elements

- Accommodate increases in cycling associated with Citi Bike expansion and COVID-19 pandemic
- Designs can accommodate adjacent loading of people and goods

1st Av Protected Bike Lanes (60-72 St)
Potential Treatments: Bikes

Interim Designs

- In early phases of project rollout, temporary materials could be used to provide physical separation from vehicles for cyclists and pedestrians.

- City Council rule requires 45 day notice of new bike lane proposal.
Next Steps
Next Steps

Stakeholder Engagement

• Community Advisory Board (CAB)
  – Elected officials
  – Community Board members
  – Representatives of local institutions and organizations
  – Property owners
  – Transit advocates and bus riders

• Meet regularly throughout the 12-month pilot period
  – Planning
  – Design
  – Implementation
  – Monitoring
Next Steps

Project Timeline

June 2020
• Begin outreach
• Begin project coordination

July 2020
• First Community Advisory Board (CAB) Meeting
• Project design and coordination
• Ongoing stakeholder engagement and outreach
• Phased implementation begins

Late July & Early August
• Ongoing CAB Meetings
• Project design and coordination
• Ongoing stakeholder engagement and outreach

Summer 2021
• Busway performance evaluation through pilot end date
• Ongoing stakeholder engagement and outreach
Next Steps

Tracking Project Effects

NYC DOT is developing a Monitoring Plan to track bus speeds, traffic flow, and travel time

• Midtown in Motion, a monitoring system for Midtown Manhattan, captures traffic, congestion and travel times

• Allows for regular reporting before, during and after implementation
Thank You!

Questions & Discussion