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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
Better Buses Restart

Bus Service During the Pandemic

• **Speeds initially increased by over 20%**

• **Ridership initially 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**
- July 6
- Personal care services, some outdoor recreation, no indoor dining

**Phase 4**
- July 20
- Schools, entertainment
- No indoor dining
Better Buses Restart

Why New York Buses Are on the Rise in a Subway City

During the coronavirus pandemic, daily ridership on buses has surpassed the subway for the first time in over half a century.

Buses more popular than the subway in NYC during coronavirus crisis

By David Meyer

Carmageddon' if returning workers avoid mass transit

“Traffic could come to a standstill.”

By Glo Benitez and Mina Kaji

June 15, 2020, 12:12 PM • 5 min read

Coronavirus Updates: Bus And Subway Riders Jump By More Than 213,000 On First Day Of Reopening

By Elizabeth Mtn

June 5, 2020 1:30 P.M. • 35 comments
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 56% of pre-COVID levels, while subway ridership is only at 21%
Better Buses Restart

Recovery Plan

9 busway & bus lane projects announced, focused on:

• Vulnerable populations, essential workers
• Number of bus passengers served
• Potential to implement quickly
• Geographic equity
Merrick Blvd
Background
Background

- Examining Merrick Blvd and 168 St between Hillside Ave and Springfield Blvd
- 3.2 mile, mostly commercial corridor
- Served by Q4, Q5, Q84, Q85, X63, N4 and N4X routes south of Archer Ave
- Many more routes circulate on Merrick/168 St north of Archer Ave
- Provides critical subway connections to E, F, J and Z subway lines
- Identified as a bus priority corridor during Queens Bus Network Redesign
Merrick Boulevard/168th Street Characteristics

- Merrick and 168th St function as one-way pair north of Liberty Ave
  - Both streets will be explored for bus lanes between Hillside Ave and Liberty Ave
- Dozens of bus routes on both streets in the core of Jamaica
- Wide right-of-way south of Liberty Ave
- Curbside bus lane proposed for Merrick Blvd in mid-2000s, but DOT toolbox has been refined since then
Recent DOT Projects

2017 Vision Zero Project
Merrick Blvd from Hillside Ave to Hook Creek Blvd
• Extended median tips and improved markings
• Added pedestrian crossings

2019 Transit Signal Priority
Archer Ave & 160th St to Merrick Blvd & Farmers Blvd
• Studied 30 intersections
• An estimated 2%-6% faster service
Bus Ridership

Bus routes on Merrick Blvd serve approximately 77,000 customers daily

- 72,000 on MTA & NYCT Buses
- 5,000 on NICE Buses
- Several more routes use Merrick Blvd/168 St for circulation.
### Bus Speeds

- Overnight bus speeds are essentially buses in “free flow” traffic conditions
- Overnight bus speeds are 20%-47% faster than peak hour travel speeds
- Merrick Blvd bus lane project aims to get bus riders out of traffic and closer to ”free flow” trips

#### Current Bus Speeds (mph)

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>AM Peak</th>
<th>PM Peak</th>
<th>Overnight</th>
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<td>10</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Vulnerability Index

- Passes through areas that scored highly on the CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index
- SVI describes community resiliency to stresses on human health like disease outbreaks
Community Concerns

What we’ve heard already

General state of good repair
- Pavement conditions

Need for further safety upgrades
- Illegal U-turns across median near Hendrickson Pl

Need for better curb management
- Placard abuse in downtown Jamaica
- Double parking
- Parking on sidewalk
Merrick Blvd
Proposed Project
DOT Toolkit to Improve Bus Service

Curbside Bus Lanes

Offset Bus Lanes

Turn Bays

Curb Management
DOT Toolkit to Improve Bus Service

**Bus Lanes**
- Potential bus lanes on Merrick Blvd and 168th St would increase speed and reliability of bus service
- Benefits high number of bus riders traveling through the corridor as the City continues with reopening efforts
- Would eventually be camera enforced

**Turn Bays**
- Right turn bays at selected intersections would separate buses from right turning traffic, benefiting both
DOT Toolkit to Improve Bus Service

Curb Management

Existing

• Alternate Side Parking south of Liberty
• No Standing/No Parking areas north of Archer Av

Potential Reg Updates

• Commercial loading zones
• Additional metered parking to encourage turnover
Improved Bus Stop Spacing

- Better, more consistent stop spacing can improve speed and reliability
- Adjusting stop location at critical intersections can improve reliability, traffic flow
Next Steps
Next Steps

• Additional Community Advisory Board (CAB) meetings
• Next CAB meeting – mid August
• Complete corridor analysis
• Draft bus lane design
Thank You!

Questions?