Back on the Bus: A Campaign for Transit Priority Streets

#backonthebus

June 14, 2019

Moderator:
Maggie Melin, Active Transportation Alliance

Panelists:
Mary Buchanan, TransitCenter
Julia Gerasimenko, Active Transportation Alliance
Jessica Vazquez, Six Corners Association
Julio Rodriguez, Northwest Side Housing Center
What we can learn from Chicago riders about getting them #BackOnTheBus

Mary Buchanan, Research Associate
@Mary_LBee // @TransitCenter // #BackOntheBus
FYI: About TransitCenter’s work

Who’s on Board 2019

• 6 transit rider focus groups in late 2017 (incl. Chicago)

• 1,700 current or former riders surveyed in 2018
  • NYC, Chicago, Seattle, LA, Pittsburgh, New Orleans, Denver

• How do you travel now (2018) & how did you travel two years ago (2016)?

We are a national foundation improving public transit with research, advocacy, technical assistance, & grant-making. Learn more at [www.transitcenter.org](http://www.transitcenter.org)
What’s happening to transit ridership?

Source: National Transit Database
Transit ridership *is* decreasing in many cities across the country.

Source: TransitCenter 2018 Who’s on Board survey
 Everywhere, transit riders are choosing car travel over taking transit
In cities designed for many modes (like Chicago!) riders only cut transit use a little.
Riders who cut back, but still ride, on transit spur overall ridership decline.

Source: TransitCenter 2018 Who’s on Board survey
Chicago-area riders with lower incomes move farther from good transit, which makes using it inconvenient.

Access to Transit for Chicago transit riders who’ve moved

AllTransit Performance Index (0-10)

Source: TransitCenter 2018 Who’s on Board survey
Chicagoland bus & train riders want better basics: safety, frequency, reliability

What is most important for improving transit service, according to Chicago riders?

Source: TransitCenter 2018 Who’s on Board survey
Transit’s competitiveness impacts Chicagoans’ decisions to take the bus or train (or not)

If I’m going out on weekends, if I need to get somewhere by a certain time I’d rather take an Uber or Lyft.

I can carpool on Uber or Lyft for the same or less and I don’t have to be around a bunch of people.

It took me longer on the bus or train to go to work than on my bike.

I use the trains less because there’s always something wrong and you wind up being late.

When the bus finally comes, it’s so crowded you can’t even get on.

I moved closer to public transit, and now it’s easier to take.

I use transit because it’s convenient.

I used to drive 40 minutes to work and now it’s a 40 minute train ride - I prefer it.

[Transit’s] cheaper than driving and parking downtown, and it’s faster than driving during rush hour.

The bus is better than it used to be, since you can look up when it’s coming [with real-time info].

Source: TransitCenter 2017 Who’s on Board Chicago focus groups
What should Chicago transit stakeholders do about this?

Sources: Igor Studenkov, Chicago Tribune, Block Club Chicago, CTA
About Us

- Chicagoland’s advocacy voice for better walking, biking and public transit
- Member-based not-for-profit organization
- Founded 1985 as Chicagoland Bicycle Federation
- Serve Chicago metro region
- 20,000 members & supporters
- 20 full-time staff, plus part-time and seasonal
Our mission

The mission of Active Transportation Alliance is to advocate for walking, bicycling, and public transit to create healthy, sustainable and equitable communities.
Chicago transit is falling behind

Among the six largest metro areas with “legacy” transit systems plus Los Angeles, the Chicago region is last in all of the following categories:

- ridership growth
- system expansion
- transit-friendly development
- per capita transit spending.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Metropolitan Governance of Transport and Land Use in Chicago, 2014
Making the case for investment in bus service

CTA Bus Ridership on the Decline

Source: Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

Average Typical Weekday Bus Speeds

Source: National Transit Database

Miles of Bus Lanes

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

Dedicated bus lanes

Traffic signal improvements

Faster boarding

Prepaid fare payment at select bus stops

As part of our continued efforts to improve service and reliability for riders, we’re piloting prepaid fare payment at several locations around town.

Prepaid bus fare pilots currently include:

- Westbound 472 buses at the Belmont Blue Line station
  (7am–7pm, weekdays)
Policy Recommendations

1. CDOT/CTA to create a plan for Transit Priority Streets with 50 miles of new bus lanes
   Update: Commitment from Mayor Lightfoot in the Active Transportation Now Questionnaire

2. Create effective and equitable ways to enforce bus-only lanes

3. Incentivize purchase of multi-day passes

4. Establish a local dedicated revenue stream to fund transit improvements and expansion

5. Push for analysis of ride-hailing trips
   UPDATE: We won! Data is now public!
Following the release of our report in 2017…
What is it? Chicago's bus ridership has been falling for a decade, but we know how to get Chicago #backonthebus.

We’re organizing community groups to advocate for faster and more reliable bus service.

Goal: Improve speed and reliability of bus service while growing ridership & improving quality of service for all Chicagoans.
www.activetrans.org/busreportcards
# Methodology

## Grade Thresholds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>Bunching</th>
<th>Expected Wait Time</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>&gt; 13 mph</td>
<td>&lt; 5%</td>
<td>&lt; 2 minutes</td>
<td>&gt; 3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>11.1 - 13 mph</td>
<td>5.1% - 7%</td>
<td>2 minutes - 3.5 minutes</td>
<td>&gt; 2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>9.1 - 11 mph</td>
<td>7.1% - 9%</td>
<td>3.5 minutes - 5 minutes</td>
<td>&gt; 1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7.1 - 9 mph</td>
<td>9.1% - 11%</td>
<td>5 minutes - 6.5 minutes</td>
<td>&gt; 0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 7.1 mph</td>
<td>&lt; 11.1%</td>
<td>&lt; 7.1 mph</td>
<td>&lt; 0.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>Bunching</th>
<th>Expected Wait Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 mph or higher</td>
<td>&lt; 5% / 1 in 20</td>
<td>1 minutes or less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Back on the Bus Advocacy

Ask: Meet with your local elected official using our Bus Friendly Streets Report Cards to ask for a plan for 50 miles of Transit Priority Streets incorporating:

- Bus only lanes
- Faster boarding (all door & prepaid)
- Giving buses priority at traffic lights
We’re on Twitter!
@activetrans + @gerasimenkoju #backonthebus
SIX CORNERS ASSOCIATION
• Mission
  • Economic Development in the Northwest Side
    • Creating an environment that is accessible in multiple forms of transportation.
• Work with Active Transportation Alliance
  • 2015 – Accessibility Action Plan for Six Corners Commercial District
  • 2018 – Back on the Bus Campaign
BACK ON THE BUS

• Survey
  • 80 – Irving Park Bus
  • 305 Participants
• Multiple Modes of Transportation Race
SURVEY RESULTS

• Participants
  • Demographics
  • Destination
  • Frequency
• Rating
• Issues
• Opportunity Cost
• Incentives for More Ridership
MULTIPLE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION RACE

• 6 Modes of Transportation
• November 1, 2018
• 5:30pm
• Six Corners office to Irving Park Blue Line and Back
MULTIPLE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION RACE
Let's Talk TRANSIT
WHO WE ARE

Founded in 2003, the Northwest Side Housing Center (NWSHC) identifies and responds to the needs of the community by leveraging resources to improve the economic well-being and quality of life in Belmont Cragin and the surrounding communities.
Chicago’s Bus Friendly Streets: Route Report Cards

76 Diversey

Wards Included: 1, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 43, 44
11,294 riders a day, with about 6 an hour

Average Speed of 8.2 MPH
YOUTH OWNERSHIP OF PROJECT

SPEAKING OUT ON THE ISSUE
Our youth have been at the table with foundations, local stakeholders, and elected officials to raise their concerns and proposed solutions on transit issues.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITMENTS
Our youth have traveled to DC and Springfield, meeting with Reps, Senators, and holding elected officials accountable through letters of commitment.
AVENUES FOR GROWTH

1. Develop strategies for promoting the local business community and improving the key business corridors.

2. Explore linkages between transportation improvements and economic development.
QUESTIONS?

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BE IN TOUCH!

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