



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Mayor De Blasio Announces The Formation Of Better Buses Advisory Group, Which Takes A Ride On B35 Along Church Avenue

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NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced the formation of an advisory group for the administration’s Better Buses Action Plan to increase bus speeds by 25% across the five boroughs by the end of 2020. City agencies, the MTA, elected officials, transit advocates and others represented in the advisory group will share thoughts about how to improve service along critical corridor around the city. To kick off the group’s work, they took a ride on the B35 bus along Church Avenue in Flatbush, Brooklyn – among the plan’s priority corridors.

“We are taking action to get New Yorkers moving and saving them time for the things that matter,” said Mayor de Blasio. “With guidance from riders, our new Better Buses advisory group will come up with innovative solutions to get our bus routes up to speed.”

“Church Avenue is a bustling corridor, where keeping buses moving is a persistent challenge —as we try to strike a balance among the needs of commuters, shoppers, merchants and delivery trucks in one of Brooklyn’s densest neighborhoods,” said DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg. “I look forward to working with the members of the Better Buses Advisory Group officially named today. The Mayor’s Better Buses plan will bring sensible changes to Church Avenue that will not only make commutes faster and more reliable, but will make one of Brooklyn’s most crash-prone streets safer for everyone.”

“NYC Transit is working hard with our partners to improve bus performance throughout the city, which begins with unclogging congested streets and we welcome the attention that NYCDOT, the NYPD and City Hall are giving this critical matter,” said New York City Transit President Andy Byford.

New York City has 2.5 times more bus riders than any other city in the country, but also the nation’s slowest buses, with a current average speed of just eight miles an hour. Despite the City’s expanding population, bus ridership has declined by 13% in the last four years.

As part of the Better Buses Bus Action Plan, the New York City Department of Transportation has identified 20 projects to improve bus travel times. To highlight one key corridor in the City’s initiative, NYC DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg joined local elected officials and advocates today for a ride on the B35 bus along Church Avenue in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Plagued by slow bus speeds and a high crash rate, the busy east-west corridor is a top 2019 project location identified by DOT in the Better Buses Action Plan.

Commissioner Trottenberg was joined today by MTA New York City Transit President Andy Byford, Assembly Member Robert Carroll and members of the Better Buses Advisory Group, including representatives of the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, the Community Service Society of New York, The Riders Alliance, TransitCenter, the Straphangers Campaign, ABNY and AARP.

Better Buses -- First Stop, Church Avenue: The planned changes along Church Avenue, which DOT presented this month to local community boards, help connect Flatbush to Kensington – by introducing new curbside dedicated bus lanes and updated curb regulations to optimize bus and traffic flow, as well as better organize activity at the curb.

This 0.9- mile of roadway between Flatbush Avenue and Ocean Parkway carries four different MTA bus routes with a combined daily ridership of 45,000. The B35, which travels across Brooklyn from Brownsville to Sunset Park, has an average speed of only 4.9 MPH during the morning commute and 3.6 MPH in the evenings, among the slowest in the entire City. (The B103, BM3 and BM4 lines also travel along portions of Church Avenue.) The street is plagued by traffic issues common to others identified in the Better Buses report: double parking, truck loading and long traffic queues – delays often caused by turning vehicles. Safety along the corridor has also long been a concern: over the last five years, this portion of Church has seen 481 serious injury crashes, including two fatalities.

DOT is looking at several improvements to the Church Avenue corridor including:

- Curbside red bus lanes that give dedicated space to buses, increasing travel speeds and reliability.

- Updated curb regulations along Church Avenue and side streets, including new and adjusted truck loading zones and metered parking, to accommodate deliveries and parking activity along Church Avenue.

Vision Zero Changes at Ocean Parkway/Church Avenue – Today's bus ride ended at the intersection of Church Avenue and Ocean Parkway. This Vision Zero priority intersection has been among the most crash-prone in Brooklyn, as vehicles leave a pedestrian-heavy neighborhood to enter the Prospect Expressway. Over the last five years, 102 people have been seriously injured at this intersection, with one pedestrian struck and killed here in February 2018.

Over past years, DOT has made a number of safety improvements to this intersection, including the addition of pedestrian refuge islands, flashing yellow turn arrows, leading pedestrian intervals (LPI) that give those crossing Ocean Parkway by foot a head-start, countdown clocks, and a red-light camera. Along with the Better Buses improvements to Church Avenue, DOT also plans the addition of several Vision Zero-related changes that will be made this summer at this intersection,

including: new curb extensions and widened concrete medians to expand pedestrian refuges; new turn restrictions; and an extension of the time for the pedestrian LPI. (see rendering of proposed changes below).

Better Buses Advisory Group: The Mayor's announcement today also named the members of a new Advisory Group, which will help implement the Better Buses plan. The group will contain the following elected officials:

Public Advocate Jumaane Williams
Senator Alessandra Biaggi
State Senator Leroy Comrie
State Senator Andrew Gounardes
State Senator Brad Hoylman
State Senator James Sanders Jr.
Assembly Member Walter T. Mosley
Assembly Member Nily Rozic
Council Member Diana Ayala
Council Member Joseph Borelli
Council Member Fernando Cabrera
Council Member Laurie Cumbo
Council Member I. Daneek Miller
Council Member Donovan Richards
Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez

In addition to elected officials and representatives of MTA New York City Transit, NYPD, NYC Small Business Services and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, the Advisory Group will include the following member organizations:

NYC BID Association
Association for a Better New York
1199 SEIU
Transport Workers Union
Amalgamated Transit Union
Rudin Center
Center for an Urban Future
The Rider's Alliance
Transit Center
Straphangers Campaign

New York League of Conservation Voters
Community Service Society of New York
AARP

"Efficient transportation is a priority for the over 230,000 small businesses across the five boroughs. Local businesses can only continue to support our economy if there are effective transit options available that allow their employees to reliably come to work and customers to easily support their businesses," said Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services. "I applaud DOT's commitment to increasing bus speeds by 25% across the five boroughs by the end of 2020, which will go a long way to positively impact business owners and residents alike."

"A better bus leaves no one behind," said MOPD Commissioner Victor Calise. "As the City develops ways to increase the speed, safety, and efficiency of our bus system, it is important that we include the needs of people with disabilities. MOPD looks forward to working with our City and State partners, elected officials, and advocacy groups including the disability community to create a better and more inclusive mode of transportation that works well for everyone."

"Many of us dream about how much we could do with our time if we never had to wait for a late bus; I'm committed to fixing our broken public transit system and improving our glacially paced buses is a big part of that," said State Senator Andrew Gounardes. "On the Better Buses Advisory Board, we have the ability to take concrete action to improve New Yorkers' commutes and quality of life. I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and get things done."

"The Bus Turnaround Campaign has recorded my Senate district as having the slowest bus speeds in the entire city, at an average of 4.6 miles per hour—little faster than walking. This is a crisis for businesses and commuters alike, especially for senior citizens who rely disproportionately on bus service. I thank Commissioner Trottenberg for convening the new Better Buses Advisory Group and I look forward to working with my fellow elected officials, advocates, and community leaders to provide feedback and oversight as the Department of Transportation and the MTA continue their critically important work," said State Senator Brad Hoylman.

"As someone who has used mass transit for most of my life, I know how important reliable bus service can be and I support making it more efficient," said State

Senator James Sanders Jr. "I am proud to be a part of the Better Buses Advisory Group. We hope to create an easier ride for the millions of people who travel daily by bus to work, school, doctor's appointments and more."

"I am glad to see the transit needs of my constituents being addressed; our corridor is long overdue for improvements," said Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte. "The B35 line is a critical line to connect our community to cultural hubs along both Church Avenue and Flatbush Avenue. I hope to see these improvements exhibited through more efficient traffic and better bus conditions for commuters."

"Buses are critical to our mass transit infrastructure and it's essential that they move as safely and efficiently as possible," said Assembly Member Robert Carroll. "The B35 is one the most well-travelled bus lines in my district and also one of the slowest. I am committed to working with NYC DOT and the community to make sure that the Better Buses Action Plan successfully decreases congestion and increases safety and efficiency along Church Avenue."

"The B35 bus is an important transit connection for my constituents in Kensington," said Council Member Brad Lander. "I am excited for the necessary changes on Church Avenue that will get the bus moving faster and increase safety at Ocean Parkway and Church Avenue. I look forward to working with the Better Buses Advisory Group on this project and future improvements to our bus network, which is a lifeline for so many New Yorkers."

"Our buses have some of the highest ridership numbers in the country, yet we see that our buses are limited when it comes to their reliability and frequency," said Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Chair of the Transportation Committee. "Our buses provide New Yorker's with a viable form of transportation where trains are unable to reach them. I will continue working alongside my colleagues, Speaker Corey Johnson and the DOT Commissioner to ensure that we increase the frequency, reliability and quality of our buses."

"The Better Buses Action Plan is a long awaited document, setting forth guiding principles to help bring relief to communities across the city. According to GPS data, transportation deserts such as Southeast Queens have seen some of the most significant declines in bus travel speeds since 2015, and our reality on the ground supports this analysis," said Council Member I. Daneek Miller. "Bus riders in Southeast Queens are only able to connect to other buses and subways through the

commercial hub of Downtown Jamaica. Those lucky enough to commute directly to their destinations by bus must endure nonsensical, antiquated route designs over old trolley lines. In either case, full buses end up snarled in traffic and delayed at curbs, with private vehicles, cabs and commuter vans prioritized on our streets. We look forward to working with the DOT, MTA and our colleagues on the Advisory Group to formulate and advance an intelligent approach that will improve public transportation in our city.”

“The city’s Fair Fares program is making our mass transit system more accessible and affordable to New Yorkers who most rely on our vast network of buses and subways to get around,” said David R. Jones, President and CEO of the Community Service Society of New York and MTA Board Member. “As the implementation of Fair Fares goes forward, it’s good to see the DOT take commensurate steps to improve the reliability and viability of public transportation so it continues to be an efficient means for low and moderate-income New Yorkers to travel to jobs, school and to destinations that make our city a great place to live and raise a family. CSS is pleased to be a member of the Department’s Better Buses Advisory Group, and looks forward to contributing to efforts to improve bus services in high-use transit corridors throughout the city.”

“People with disabilities are frustrated bus users who want better service, just like everyone else,” said Joe Rappaport, executive director of the Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled. “That means more service, not less, including restored inter-borough routes. Beyond that, we look forward to working with the DOT and MTA to ensure that every bus stop has a bench, every bench a shelter, every shelter accessibility features and, finally, that bus stops are located where riders need them, not based on models that don't take our community's needs into account.”

“ABNY is proud to be part of a committee and an initiative that sensibly and thoughtfully addresses our city streets, prioritizes mass transportation over individual car ridership, and promotes accessibility and rapid transit across the five boroughs,” said Angela Pinsky, Executive Director of the Association for a Better New York. “Reliable, safe, and efficient transportation is a critical part of maintaining and promoting a successful growing and equitable city, and we applaud DOT, MTA, and all of our involved elected officials for leading this effort.”

“We are honored to serve on the NYC DOT's Better Buses Advisory Group,” said Julie Tighe, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters. “We look forward to working with the group on improved bus service and streetscape enhancements that will encourage families to ride public transit or walk. When fewer New Yorkers drive, we'll have less pollution and fewer emissions from the transportation sector - the #1 contributor to climate change in the state. We thank DOT Commissioner Trottenberg for her leadership.”

“Reliable public transit is critical to keeping New York City a great place to live for people of all ages,” said Chris Widelo, Associate State Director, AARP New York. “Speed and safety are key to making the bus an effective way for older New Yorkers to get around, and AARP New York supports this plan by Commissioner Trottenberg and Mayor de Blasio to improve bus travel along Church Avenue and across the city. We will continue working to increase the accessibility of subway stations, but many older New Yorkers need the bus.”

“Church Avenue is exactly the type of street where the Better Buses Action Plan can make a huge difference — tens of thousands of people depend on the B35 but it gets bogged down in stop-and-go traffic,” said Ben Fried, Communications Director for TransitCenter. “There are streets like Church Avenue all over the city. Speeding up buses on these streets is a big job, and it’s encouraging that DOT is bringing together a big coalition as it moves forward with these projects.”

About Better Buses Action Plan: Thus far DOT has built 111 miles of bus lanes across the road network, with Better Buses serving as a guide to expand on that progress. In addition to the addition of 300 Transit Signal Priority (TSP) intersections and the increase in both automated camera enforcement and NYPD tow truck teams, the Better Buses Action Plan lays out a plan to:

- Improve five miles of existing bus lanes per year

- Install 10-15 miles of new bus lanes per year

- Pilot up to two miles of physically separated bus lanes in 2019

The MTA also plans to introduce bus network redesigns in all five boroughs, as part of its Fast Forward Plan. This full approach to updating the network is expected to also benefit bus speeds and more.