

Madison East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Planning Study

Public Meeting #5: Downtown Route Alternatives Workshop

6:00-8:00 PM, October 29, 2019

Madison Senior Center - 330 W Mifflin St

Total Participants: 58+

Format

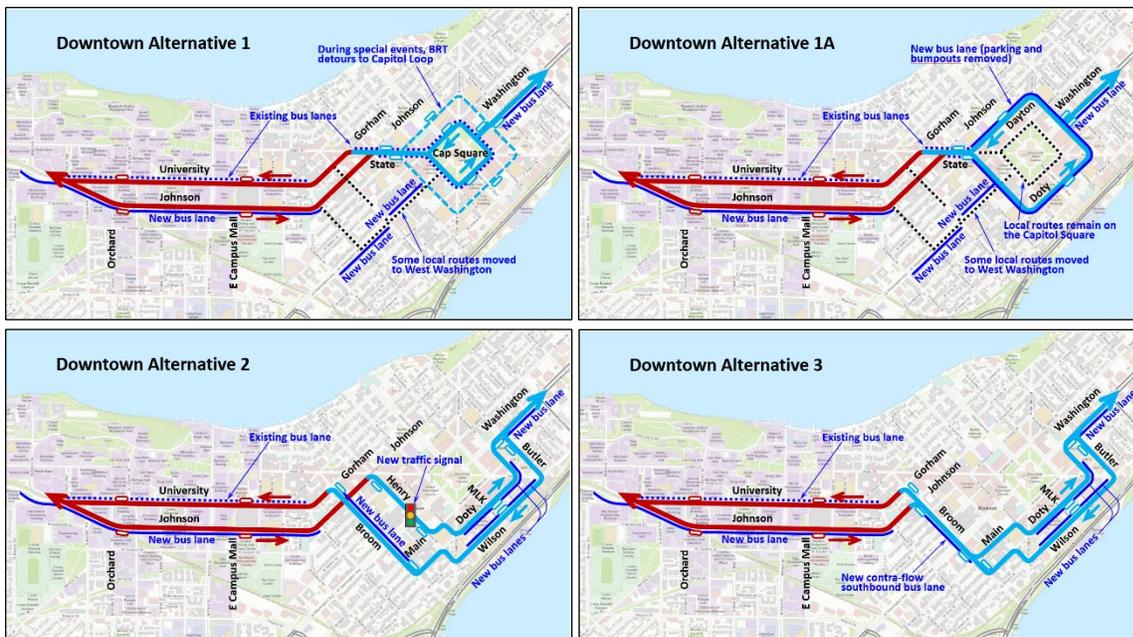
The meeting began with a presentation by City staff and the consultant team, to share information about the project background, planning process, and the East-West BRT downtown route alternatives.



Following the presentation and Q&A, participants were given the opportunity to provide input directly to the project team regarding downtown route alternatives.

Downtown Route Alternatives Worksheet

The following responses were collected from worksheets that asked participants to provide input on the downtown route options.



Downtown Route Alternatives Worksheet Input

- Alternative 1 does seem to be the best, as your objective analysis already seems to indicate.
- Excellent planning + presentation! After seeing all the pros + cons, I agree that alternative 1 is the best.



- Alternative 1 appears to be the most optimal among the 4 alternatives proposed. Otherwise, alternative 3 seems like a good one, though its cost of parking removed seems high.
- We like alternative #2: good to not keep parking on N Henry Street and to not have a bus stop behind Parthenon. Late night bus routes – employees finish at 4am, keep local buses on State Street and move BRT off State St. Our staff want their stops on state.
- Do not use the square or State Street. All of the square + State Street need to be used for people + people activities. It is so important that people spaces have their own space 100% of the time, plus, to operate the BRT on State St. will drive property values and rents up. Downtown alternative 2 is best, but alternative 3 is acceptable. The frequency of buses on State St. is not the question. The fact that the BRT + other buses are there is the problem – a big problem. The long-range plan should be to get all the buses off the square + state street. This is a long-term proposal; the number of parking spaces lost is material.
- I prefer 1 and very much dislike 2 + 3. 1A is ok but I think it's not so necessary to worry about needing to detour. The main need for improvement is better signs to notify people of the detour.
- 1A is the best option for BRT. Why aren't we looking at putting a light rail system on existing rail corridors and get traffic off the street system? What is the change in ridership on public transit as a total when BRT is implemented versus a light rail system? There are no tentative transit schedules for BRT posted, when will that be available? I will go out of my way to ride light rail but, buses are not something I get excited about.
- Strongly prefer 1A due to more consistent travel (less detours than 1) and more equally servicing the entire square than 2 or 3 + providing closer access to rides off square as well as on the square (e.g. Johnson Street).
- I like 1A the best because it's the most consistent and reliable route for accommodating square events and would be the least disruptive and complicated for people to use it seems to have the most access to the stations and buses the next best alternative I think would be 1.
- My concern with E/W Wilson is that we have been trying for years to get safe/comfortable 2-way bike facilities on the South side of the square. How are you going to get that with BRT? The lake Monona path does not serve destinations on W. Wilson. The outer loop would be ok except it can get very dark and isolated at night. I would worry that will be a safety concern for many people.

“My three top preferences for BRT route: 1A, 1A, 1A. Putting BRT on the entire outer loop makes most sense!”

“Every criterion favors Alternative 1 for the frequent detours for special events. Moreover, those detours almost always occur during non-rush hours. The choice seems clear.”

- You can't have traffic signals giving preference to buses if you do the State St. option. A nationally accepted component of BRT is preferential signals. Even if not initially implemented, Alt 2/3 could feasibly have these signals in the future.
- I prefer the Alt 1 & 1A Points I think important: Early morning runs are essential for working people who work in retail/service jobs. Late night runs are essential for working people who work 2nd and 3rd shifts. Need infrastructure for riders on the outer loop for those 10% and times when buses must be detoured from the cap and sq. Loved hearing that the intercity buses are going to be in a rebuilt Lake St. Parking ramps!!!



Remember "Nobody who doesn't live in Madison wants to drive on the Isthmus- they will take the BRT".

- Alternative 2 seems insufficient + compulsive for people to know whether they're supposed to be on Henry vs. Broom Street to go the correct direction. Alternative 3 is preferable to 2. I have missed the bus many times when it detoured to the outer loop, as a regular rider who uses the apps – I think Alternative 1 is bad for that reason. If the stations are so important, why is it ok to detour it? Aren't the big events that would cause detours exactly when we want people to use BRT?!!
- Thank you for listening to public input. Route alternative 1A – the outer loop. The capitol square is too valuable community asset to sacrifice it to BRT. Predictability and consistency are vitally important for maximizing ridership. Having BRT permanently on the outer loop will allow for such consistency. Agree with gentleman's comment, "riders don't like surprises". If a station exists, it should be used as close to 100% of the time as possible. I would encourage the city and Metro to study harder moving all buses (BRT & local) off state Street completely and off the capitol square permanently. Alternative 1A (permanent outer loop) is vastly superior to the other 3 alternative routes – much more intuitive. I'm sure any issues w/ station size & location can be solved with the City's and metro's expertise. I would encourage the city and metro to think harder about integration and timing of first BRT route. Further BRT routes, and local routes, and intercity buses.
- I like the idea of getting buses off state Street and the capitol square. I'd like to have confidence that the BRT will be where I expect it without detours for events. The buses also make State St. unpleasant. So, that being said, If the buses can run quietly on State, I like 1A. It's easy to picture. 2 & 3 might be good too. I am concerned how far they are from Lake Mendota. Sorry I had to leave early. The bus I have to take only runs every hour! We need BRT.
- Every criterion favors Alternative 1 for the frequent detours for special events. Moreover, those detours almost always occur during non-rush hours. The choice seems clear.
- My three top preferences for BRT route: 1A, 1A, 1A. Putting BRT on the entire outer loop makes most sense! The station pairings will NOT be too far apart. We are Madisonians. We understand how the square works. Thank you!

"I like the idea of getting buses off State Street and the capitol square... It's easy to picture, [alternatives] 2 & 3... I am concerned how far they are from Lake Mendota."

General Worksheet Input

- What is the biggest proportion of the estimated cost for the new initiative?
- Would the special rapid bus lane slow down other car traffic?
- Recommend minimizing construction of the bus stops is no need for high end stations w/ amenities.
- It's too costly based on the news report. Have you considered the cost/benefit analysis of the projects?
- Can we simply improve the current bus system by incorporating the rapid bus line? I highly recommend considering revamping the current bus system that will minimize unnecessary construction cost.



- One way to solve the bundling of buses on State Street is to better control delivery vehicles from blocking.
- How about “running around a la Phil Donahue” with a battery microphone so that access to speakers is more democratic? I could hear hardly half the speakers.
- I’m concerned that you’ve lost control of the problem you’re trying to solve: what is BRT intended to do that current metro service cannot? Speed and faster access to downtown for commuters on the edge of town. You’re competing with the 10-minute drive from Westmoreland to the capitol – how much more time are people willing to take to get to work via public transit? Visitors are often millennials – they can use Google map transit + figure it out. Make payment easy/ digital boarding fast, wait times short, and help make transit an option for people who live more than 5 miles from the capitol. The FIRST step of policy analysis is to define and quantify the problem the policy is intended to solve. Don’t lose sight of the goal given the detail of people’s feedback.
- Definitely need to consider different needs besides the bus system, parking, biking, pedestrian crossing, etc.
- What problem does BRT solve that metro doesn’t? I think BRT should be designed to serve city periphery neighborhood commuters. Emphasis should be on fastest access to downtown area from further neighborhoods. This may mean dis-incentivizing driving (less parking, less driving lanes) but that’s the point. Don’t sell BRT down the river as a half measure by appeasing interests in downtown parking. BRT is about substituting driving, and appeasing drivers with parking and driving lanes will reduce the quality of BRT, weakening its ability to compete with cars and defeating the point.
- If BRT is a “light” light rail i.e. a train, as mayor Satya says, then it does not belong on the square. You’d never put a train on the square.

Presentation Q&A

The following questions were verbally asked to the project team during the presentation portion of the meeting.

- Does the project team know how many busses would stack on West Washington Ave?
 - Didn’t quantify it, but it should operate better than State Street.
- Is there a better plan for apps/smartphone usage?
 - Yes; better fare payment; real time detour info.
- Would there be two sets of stations with Alternative 1?
 - Yes; likely “partial stations” on the loop for detours.
- Outer loop detours – same parking loss as Alternative 1A?
 - No; less, but still some impact.
- What is cost per station?
 - \$400-500k; partial stations would be somewhat less.
- Impact on businesses along State Street?



- Positive due to less buses? negative due to less people/exposure? Hard to say.
- Economic impacts of BRT vs no BRT/status quo?
 - It is unfair to cite lost revenue due to parking without noting positive overall economic impact of the BRT system.
- Only East-West, or is a North-South route being considered?
 - If E-W is successful, N-S would be Phase 2. Team needs to consider that North-South would use the same station locations as East-West.
- Consider local route restructuring so that it better connects with BRT?
 - Yes; local service is being reviewed.
- Can we get more detailed info/rendering of station locations?
 - Yes; there was a station charrette a month ago. Check madisonbrt.com.
- What is goal for State Street – reduce number of buses?
 - The project team has heard complaints regarding too many buses on State Street. Alternatives 1 and 1A need to free up capacity for BRT. Reducing local service is a must. Alternatives 2 and 3 could reduce buses on State Street, but wouldn't have to.
- Cost estimate for detouring to Loop?
 - Fairly negligible, except for partial stations.
- Will BRT accept cash/coins?
 - Yes.
- Do buses on State Street have to remain to receive a federal grant?
 - State Street will continue to be a busway and receive federal funding.
- Location for regional bus hub?
 - It is being discussed, but the City can't force bus companies to use a specific location.
- Will BRT be pre-pay?
 - Yes, except perhaps for cash.
- Would State still carry route 7?
 - Yes.
- Thoughts on how to avoid shared bus/bike?
 - We're trying our best – competing for space.
- Any opportunity to provide separated bike facilities?
 - The project team will consider them as much as possible.
- Where do rerouted State Street buses go?



- West Washington to Broom/Henry generally.
- Are there other pinch points besides State Street – especially once North-South is added?
 - Other routes should have the capacity.
- Could parking be added to the square with Alternative 1A?
 - No; local buses would still use the square.
- Consider peak only parking restrictions?
 - It's possible, but more desirable to provide dedicated bus lane 24 hours.
- If new BRT stations are installed, will existing bus stops remain?
 - Yes.
- Traffic impact studies?
 - For the most part, negligible impacts because we aren't taking lanes away.
- Would BRT preclude future new square events?
 - No, it shouldn't – ultimately, council will decide.
- concerned about bus stacking on West Wash, if moved from State St?
 - It should not be a problem, given there are signals only at select locations and the blocks are much longer.
- Shared bike/bus lanes cause safety concerns?
 - Staff consider grades bikes will need to navigate (uphill vs downhill) when considering locations for these.
- Are there safety concerns for contraflow lane on Broom Street?
 - It is unusual, autos will try to use it, delivery vehicles, etc.
- What type of infrastructure would be needed for the outer loop, if that was a detour route for BRT?
 - Likely only stations (or less extensive stations).
- Would BRT on the Square preclude future events?
 - It would not; buses would detour like they do for all events; other factors will impact decisions about future events there.

General Comments

The following comments were verbally provided to the project team during the presentation and open house portions of the meeting.

- Detours do not take place during rush hour; need better communications about detours.
- Need clear signage at stations, to direct people to detour locations.



- Need better apps for smartphones, to reflect detours and other real-time data/messaging.
- Need to better understand the economic impact/benefits of having buses directly on State St and the Square.
- Important to restructure the local routes, to better orient to and complement BRT.
- Request to staff to provide station element details and renderings.
- Stations and routes need to be easy to navigate and understand; needs to be as simple as possible.
- For outer loop option (1A), could avoid State St and use West Washington/Broom.
- Intercity bus or rail access should be located in a place close to the BRT; Lake St (garage) would provide very good access to these services.
- Need to serve the residential district north of the Square; alternatives 2 and 3 do not do that well.
- BRT should be designed to get downtown as fast as possible.
- Stress the importance of adding protected bike lanes wherever you can.
- Restricting outer loop parking only during peak hours could mitigate revenue loss during most of the day.
- suggest having park-and-ride lots on the periphery and collecting revenue there, to offset parking revenue loss with some downtown route options.
- It is common today to have to direct people to the opposite side of the square because they are waiting at the wrong stop; Alternative 1A would make it harder to do that.
- Losing parking spaces shouldn't be a major factor – BRT is more important and providing better transit service should reduce parking demand.
- Perhaps loss in parking revenue downtown could be made up with Park & Rides on the periphery.
- With 1A, consider improved stations on detour route (outer loop).
- Alternative 3 presents safety concerns with counterflow bus lane.
- Who is typical BRT user/who are we trying to serve? Is it about getting more people downtown? Yes. Then perhaps team should place more emphasis on getting people from the periphery to Downtown.
- Support for Alternative 1.
- Support for Alternative 1A; there are a lot of riders on the North side of the Isthmus that are poorly served by Alternatives 2 and/or 3.
- Support for Alternative 1A; "rapid" means fastest route.
- Concern over confusion regarding routing and station location give too much emphasis.
- Consider Broom-West Wash-Loop alternative.
- Detours off the square typically not during commuter rush hours, so unfamiliar riders may be confused. But majority of riders will know where to go. Preference for Alternative 1.



- Detours are not always obvious – especially when they are not on the outer loop. Can there be better signage for detours? It doesn't take much inconvenience for people to give up on using transit.

