

Government of the District of Columbia

Department of Transportation



Transit Delivery Division

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Dear Chairpersons,

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) installed bus lanes on Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr Ave SE as a pilot project in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Fall of 2020 to relieve crowding onboard buses and at bus stops (see typical sections in Figure 1). In January 2021 DDOT initiated the MLK Jr Ave Bus Priority project to evaluate the bus lanes' impact, follow-up on the community engagement, and develop further improvements on that pilot. MLK Jr Ave SE is also part of the Vision Zero high injury network, so this planning project was also focused on improving safety in addition to bus speed and reliability.

Needs Assessment and Existing Conditions Analysis

As with all DDOT Bus Priority projects, this planning effort began with a needs assessment to determine the cause of bus delay and traffic crashes in the corridor. The assessment uncovered the following key findings:

- MLK Jr Ave SE is among the highest bus ridership corridors in the District, but congestion causes severe delays especially between Howard Rd SE and Good Hope Rd SE (Downtown Anacostia) in both directions, particularly during the midday and PM peak periods.
- There is a need for improved pedestrian safety in Downtown Anacostia based on field observations of pedestrian activity, comments received during public outreach, and the volume and nature of crashes in this area.
- All bus lines serving the project area enter the bus transfer center at Anacostia Metro Station (AMS) and signal delay and complex circulation movements increase travel time. Related to this, buses are not able to utilize the northbound bus lane on the Howard Rd SE approach because all the buses are moving to the left lane on that segment so they can access AMS.
- The spacing and positioning of bus stops is not optimized for support of transit signal priority (TSP), pedestrian safety, and bus efficiency.

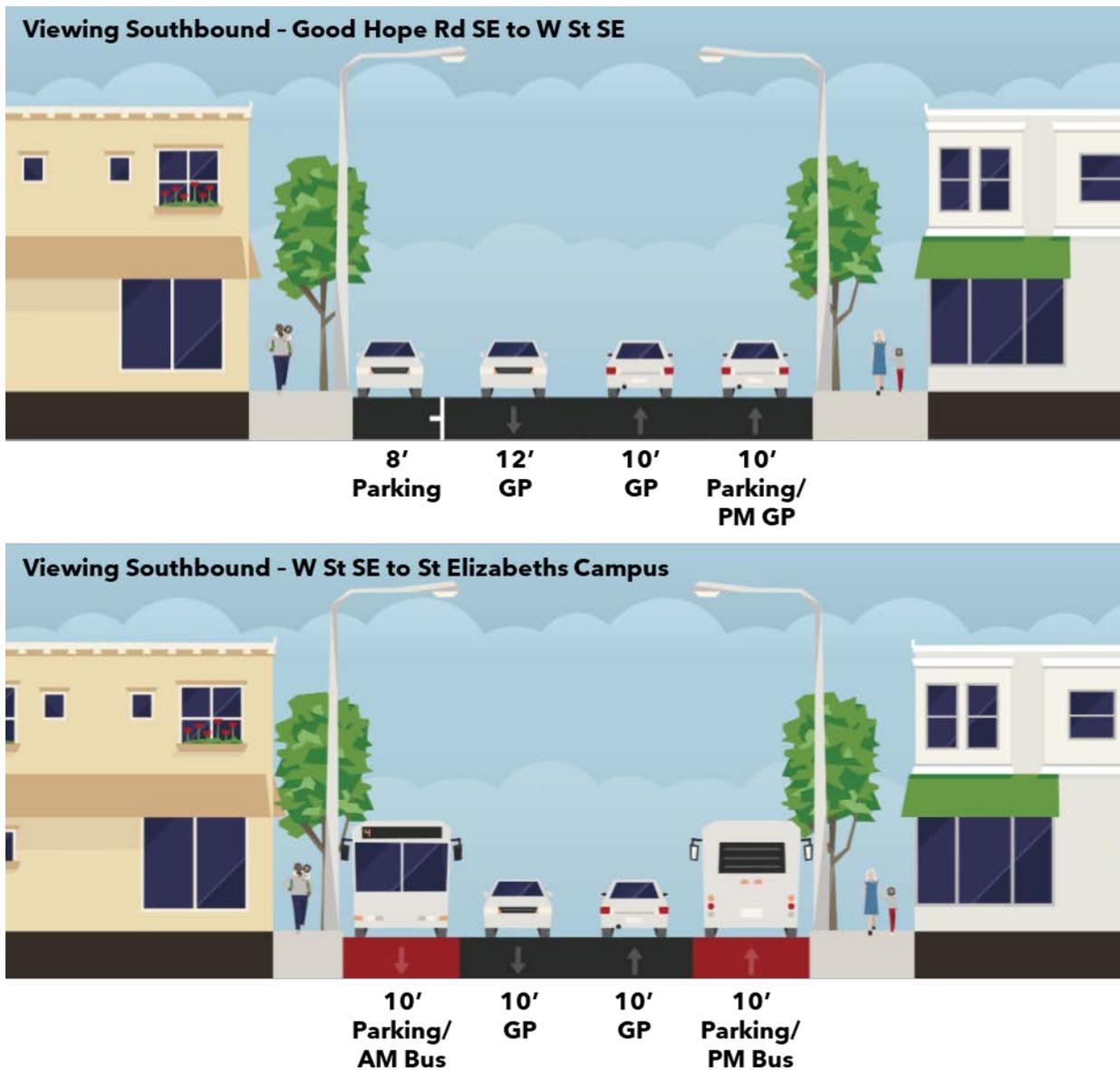


Figure 1: MLK Jr Ave SE is a 40' roadway that between Good Hope Rd and W St SE has two fulltime general purpose (GP) lanes, fulltime parking in the northbound curbside lane and PM peak hour restricted parking on the southbound side of the street. Between W St SE and St Elizabeths Campus (Gate 2) there are two 10' GP lanes and two 10' bus lanes where parking is permitted outside hour (AM northbound and PM southbound bus lanes).

RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE

During the planning process, DDOT developed two alternatives to address the deficiencies identified in the needs assessment and introduced those options to the public beginning in September 2021. The agency recommends for advancement a “hybrid” concept that combines aspects of both alternatives for design and construction (see Figure 2.).

- **Alternative 1** focused primarily on pedestrian safety improvements to enhance the “main street” feel of Downtown Anacostia by converting peak-restricted parking to full-time and constructing curb extensions on many of the crosswalks.
- **Alternative 2** extended the northern terminus of the existing bus lanes from W St SE to Good Hope Rd SE, which is currently the most congested segment of the corridor.
- The **recommended alternative** combines these alternatives to extend the existing southbound bus lane to Good Hope Rd SE and provide curb extensions on the northbound side of MLK Jr Ave SE.

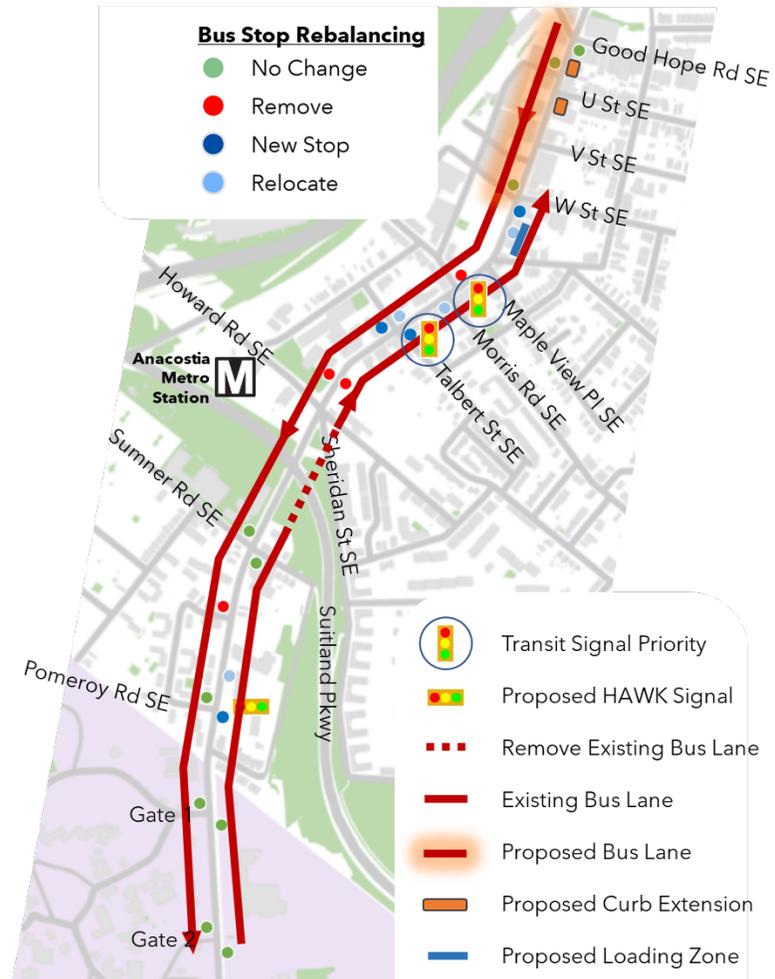


Figure 2: DDOT staff recommends implementation of a "Hybrid Alternative," which includes all elements of the concept described above.

The recommended alternative also includes a suite of further changes that will improve bus efficiency and pedestrian safety in the corridor:

- Several changes near Anacostia Metro Station (AMS) will improve bus operations and pedestrian safety. A portion of this work will take place on WMATA property and will therefore require a building permit from them:
 - New intersection geometry at the intersection of MLK Jr Ave SE with Howard Rd SE and AMS’s “Driveway 3” will improve pedestrian safety and reduce travel time for northbound buses to AMS by allowing them to make left turns directly into the transfer center. (See figure 3.)
 - Coordinating signal phasing and timing between AMS’s “Driveway 2” and the eastbound left turn at the intersection of Howard Rd SE and MLK Jr Ave SE will reduce bus delay for northbound buses from AMS.

- Modifying the geometry of AMS’s Driveway 1 near Howard Road and Firth Sterling Avenue SE will reduce run time for the CH-US DC Circulator line by simplifying its movement inside the transfer station.



Figure 3: Proposed geometric modification at the intersection of MLK Jr Ave SE with Howard Rd SE and AMS’s “Driveway 3”

- Bus stop rebalancing will achieve several project objectives:
 - Locating bus stops nearer to signalized intersections will increase pedestrian safety.
 - TSP is being implemented at Morris Rd SE and Talbert St SE, which requires bus stops to be located on the on the far side or downstream from the traffic signal for optimal travel time savings.
 - Rebalancing the distance between bus stops allows for faster, more reliable, and more efficient bus service.
- Removing the northbound bus lane on the northbound approach to Howard Road SE will remove a redundant segment of the lane and improve general traffic operations.
- Installing a proposed High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) signal at Pomeroy Rd SE will improve safety for hundreds of bus passengers and other pedestrians crossing MLK Jr Ave SE.
- Adding a northbound freight loading zone south of W St SE will diminish the safety risks resulting from frequent blockages of the nearby bus stop.

DDOT completed traffic analysis to compare a no-build alternative with the preferred alternative, and even though the bus priority treatments would reduce some roadway capacity, traffic operations along most of the corridor would not deteriorate. Most intersections and approaches would operate at the same or even better level of service (LOS) when comparing to the no-build conditions (see Figure 4).

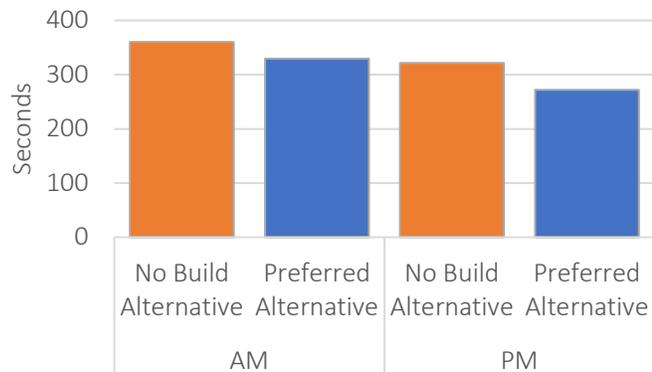


Figure 4: Cumulative intersection delay along whole project corridor.

Public Engagement Timeline

On January 13, 2021, DDOT staff initiated public engagement on the project by sending an advance notification letter to ANC 8A and 8C chairpersons that provided an overview of the public engagement process and an invitation to participate in the project. District Council, Executive Office of the Mayor, and Anacostia Business Improvement District staff were copied on the letter. One of the goals of this project was to do follow-up on the community engagement that was done for the Car Free Lanes project, which was on a compressed timeline due to its nature as a response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Phase 1: Needs Assessment

The purpose of the first phase of community engagement is to learn from the community whether our understanding of the corridor, based on data analysis and site visits, is consistent with the experience of residents.

- April 30, 2021, DDOT staff hung posters at bus stops through the corridor to inform bus riders of the planning process that was ongoing and encourage them to call, email, or submit feedback through a form on the project website.
- June 1, 2021, DDOT staff [presented](#) at the monthly meeting of ANC 8A to understand if their experience in the corridor is consistent with analysis that was performed by DDOT. The presentation content focused on the findings of analysis and examples of design interventions that may address issues in the corridor. Staff also requested feedback from commissioners and residents on issues they have experienced on Minnesota Ave SE. Staff offered to present at monthly meetings or brief the commissioners of ANC 8C as well.
- June 10, 2021, DDOT staff tabled at Anacostia Metro Station to hear from bus riders and share with them information about the project.
- July 14, 2021, DDOT staff visited every business on the corridor conduct a survey of their loading needs, hear what additional challenges they may have on the corridor, and inform them about the ongoing planning project.

Outcome: Most feedback indicated that reckless driving and speeding are major problems in this corridor and that there is a severe need for safety improvements and enhanced enforcement. They also said that the bus lanes are frequently violated, which is undermining their effectiveness.

Phase 2: Concept Development

The purpose of the second phase of community engagement is to collect feedback and arrive at consensus on what changes should be made to the corridor to alleviate problems identified during phase 1.

- September 14, 2021, DDOT staff [presented](#) two alternatives (described above) for improvements to the corridor at a virtual public meeting. Staff offered to present at monthly meetings or brief the commissioners of ANC 8A and 8C.
- November 2, 2021, Flyers were distributed to all residences and businesses in the corridor that described the alternatives and encouraged them to provide feedback.
- November 10, 2021, Presentation to District Department of Housing and Community Development, located on the corridor at the intersection of Good Hope Rd SE and MLK Jr Ave SE, on proposed alternatives.
- November 17, 2021, Presentation to the Anacostia BID Board of Directors on proposed alternatives.

Outcome: Most of feedback we received at these meetings and through other channels was positive. People are broadly supportive of moving buses more quickly through the corridor (more consistent with Alternative 2) and making the street safer and more comfortable for pedestrians (more consistent with Alternative 1). The most common concerns expressed related to the impact of the two alternatives on congestion and concern that bus lanes may not support the walkable environment that many sought on MLK Jr Ave SE.

As described above, the traffic impacts of the two proposals are minimal, so the adoption of a hybrid approach that balances the needs of the corridor, is also a way to balance the viewpoints expressed by the public on the project.

Bus Stop Rebalancing Notice of Intent

DDOT staff has already begun implementation of the bus stop relocation part of the project through a Notice of Intent (NOI) that was sent to ANC 8A on December 17, 2021, and the corresponding comment period closed on February 2, 2022. All comments that were received during this period supported the bus stop relocation.

Initial Implementation and Next Steps

DDOT staff will now begin to advance the design of the recommended alternative and phase 3 of community engagement, “concept refinement.” During this phase, DDOT requests that community members and stakeholders review iterations of the design and provide feedback on how we can make a good project better.

Upon completion of the 30% design, an NOI will be issued to formally seek final comments from the public on the design of the project. Updates and briefings will continue to be offered to ANC’s and other stakeholders at each design milestone thereafter. Construction is currently planned for 2023.

Sincerely,



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