

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

BETTER BUSES RESTART: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF MAIN STREET BUSWAY PILOT ON JANUARY 19TH

Transit-and-truck-priority project will serve 155,000 riders daily, bringing faster and more reliable service to downtown Flushing

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced that the Main Street busway pilot in Downtown Flushing, Queens will launch Tuesday, January 19th. The project will provide faster and more reliable bus service for 155,000 daily bus riders. Flushing-Main Street is one of the busiest and most congested corridors in Queens, and the busiest subway-to-bus transfer point in the United States.

Mayor Bill de Blasio first [announced](#) the busway last June as part of his Better Buses Restart, which became the largest one-year bus lane installation project in New York City history.

“Mass transit is the present and future of this city. New Yorkers deserve better bus service, and today I’m proud to transform the way New Yorkers access an iconic Queens neighborhood,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Successes like the 14th Street Busway in Manhattan and the Jay Street Busway in Brooklyn have proven that these initiatives work. I can’t wait to build on this project and expand faster, more reliable transit options to even more neighborhoods this year.”

“Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, one of the most important objectives of this Administration is to keep New Yorkers moving safely, and buses have played a critical role,” said **New York City Department of Transportation Acting Commissioner Margaret Forgiione**. “Since the start of the pandemic, buses have transported commuters, including essential frontline workers, between their homes, workplaces and vibrant commercial districts around the five boroughs. After productive work last year speeding up buses — on Staten Island, in downtown Brooklyn and in the South Bronx — we look forward to Queens now seeing the benefits of the Better Buses Restart — for everyone who lives, works, shops and commutes along Main Street.”

“We have seen over and over that as bus speeds go up, ridership goes up,” said **Craig Cipriano, President of the MTA Bus Company and Senior Vice President for Buses, MTA New York City Transit**. “Bus priority is essential throughout the city. New Yorkers demand and deserve more efficient commutes with shorter travel times.”

The busway in Downtown Flushing will bring transit and truck priority to Main Street and part of Kissena Boulevard between Sanford Avenue and Northern Boulevard. Other through traffic will not be allowed along the corridor. All other vehicles will need to take the next available right turn.

The new busway pilot along Main Street in Flushing will:

- Provide better access to the terminus of the 7 train, as well as to New York Presbyterian Queens Booth Memorial Medical Center;
- Help businesses by improving truck loading and unloading, with no parking loss;
- Clarify regulations for local vehicles; and
- Allow for emergency vehicle access on the corridor with less congestion.

In 2017, DOT installed a southbound busway with transit and truck priority on a section of Main Street between 37th Avenue and 40th Road, which led to a 23% increase in bus speeds. The new busway will bring similar improvements to the 11 MTA bus routes that travel northbound between Sanford Avenue and Northern Boulevard on Main Street and a section of Kissena Blvd. The new pilot will also upgrade regulations in the southbound direction to similarly allow only buses, trucks and local access.

NYPD will provide traffic enforcement and inform motorists about the new regulations with the launch of the busway. At a later date, DOT will install bus lane cameras, which for the first 60 days will issue warning letters to registered vehicle owners who violate the new regulations, before beginning to mail out violations with fines.

Priority bus improvements include the installation of Bus Truck Only markings and signage to limit through traffic to buses, trucks, and local access. Vehicles can still access every block via side streets but generally must make the next right turn.

DOT put community engagement at the forefront of its unprecedented outreach efforts for this project. The agency formed Community Advisory Boards to guide projects during and after implementation. DOT also held community meetings and other conversations with stakeholders including the Flushing BID, the Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce, the Asian American Federation, local elected officials, small businesses, and other community partners through the CAB, with informational materials and interpretation available in [English](#), [Chinese](#), [Korean](#), and [Spanish](#). DOT will continue to hold CAB meetings following implementation.

By limiting through traffic on Main Street, buses will no longer be stuck in congestion on one of the busiest bus corridors in New York City. Previous congestion on Main Street resulted in buses moving at walking speed or slower most of the day, averaging under 3 mph for much of the day, causing backups across the entire route, sending buses off schedule or causing them to arrive two or three at a time.

According to the [Downtown Flushing Queens Commercial District Needs Assessment](#) conducted by NYC Small Business Services, 61% of those surveyed said they got to the area by means other than private car.

“The Main Street Busway will provide a 23 percent increase in bus speeds, benefiting 155,000 bus riders commuting through Flushing every weekday,” **said Liam Blank, Policy & Communications Manager for Tri-State Transportation Campaign.** “Our buses and subways play a critical role in ensuring essential workers can get to work safely and that New York City isn’t paralyzed by gridlock. This busway will connect riders with six hospitals and over 3,400

essential worksites like pharmacies, grocery stores, and delivery services. Though a small group of well-resourced opponents attempted to block this basic and necessary transit improvement, the city has proven that it will do what it takes to help New Yorkers who need it the most. We commend Mayor de Blasio and NYC DOT for challenging the status quo and pushing ahead with this major bus improvement project.”

"Our streets need to be built for people - not cars - and that's been made even more clear during the pandemic," said **Danny Harris, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives**. "The Main Street busway will put bus riders and pedestrians first, and build upon the soaring success of other busways across the city. Transportation Alternatives looks forward to working with the de Blasio administration and the MTA on building out better bus service across the five boroughs, and we applaud their determination to get this critical project across the finish line."

"The Main Street-Flushing busway will deliver major time savings to 150,000 daily riders from across Queens. By prioritizing bus riders on one of the city's busiest streets, the busway will also serve as a beacon of equity in a diverse community. City officials worked closely with a broad spectrum of leaders to make the busway a reality. We are grateful for the energy and vision of the Department of Transportation and the support of Mayor de Blasio," said **Riders Alliance Senior Organizer Jolyse Race**.

Better Buses Restart:

DOT continues to deliver on the Mayor's record-setting Better Buses Restart plan, which aims to increase bus speeds and reliability along major corridors in all five boroughs. In 2020 the agency continued implementing bus priority projects throughout the city, including Jay Street in Brooklyn (0.8 miles), Malcolm X Blvd in Brooklyn (0.1 miles), 14th Street extension in Manhattan (0.8 miles), Hylan Boulevard (4.7 miles) on Staten Island, E.L. Grant Highway (1.2 miles), University Ave (0.1 miles) and 149th Street (2.7 miles) in the Bronx and Merrick Blvd in Queens (5.9 miles). DOT ended 2020 with 16.3 miles of bus priority, more than any previous year in this administration.

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