

### What is bus rapid transit and how is it different from a regular bus?

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) provides commuters with a fast, affordable and easy way to travel. Regular buses compete with general traffic on congested roadways. This often causes delays and slow travel speeds.

BRT is different as it offers the travel qualities of a rail system on a bus. While regular buses average nine miles per hour, BRT's limited stops and dedicated lanes with signal priority allow vehicles to travel faster while largely avoiding street congestion. Sleek design and modern technology improve the customer's experience at a much lower construction cost than rail.

The most effective bus rapid transit systems include four critical elements, each of which offers a number of benefits for both transit riders and local communities:

#### Dedicated Lanes



Bruce Fingerhood

**Transportation:** faster trips; less traffic congestion; dependable, on-time service

**Community:** more people connected to local destinations, fewer conflicts between modes

#### Signal Priority



Aimee Gauthier

**Transportation:** faster trips, reduced bunching, safer travel

**Community:** improved pedestrian crossing signals and timing

#### Pay-Before-Boarding Stations

**Transportation:** reduced boarding time, faster trips

**Community:** permanence of stations sends positive signal to investors, iconic station design can reinforce community identity



Lucho Molina

#### Level Boarding

**Transportation:** reduced boarding time, faster trips, more spacious buses

**Community:** greater accessibility to the elderly, people with disabilities, parents with strollers, etc.



Rob Wrenn

### BRT in Chicago

MPC's report *Bus Rapid Transit: Chicago's New Route to Opportunity* lays the groundwork for a **10-route BRT network in Chicago** that would provide more equitable transit service to help people access jobs, shops, schools, hospitals, and other destinations across the city.

Chicago is piloting elements of BRT on the South Side along the Jeffery Corridor in 2012 and in Chicago's Central Business District in 2014. Jeffery, an existing high-ridership bus route, will be enhanced between 103rd and Stony Island and the Loop, including dedicated lanes, limited stop spacing, and enhanced stations between 67th and 83rd streets; and transit signal priority between 73rd and 84th streets. Downtown's East-West Corridor, an enhanced circulator service between Union Station and Navy Pier, will feature dedicated lanes and enhanced stations along Washington, Madison, Canal, and Clinton streets, as well as protected bicycle lanes and a CTA bus transportation center at Union Station.

A 2012 Western/Ashland Alternatives Analysis is the next opportunity to explore the potential for BRT. MPC's report demonstrated significant potential on these two corridors. To read MPC's report, visit [metroplanning.org/brt](http://metroplanning.org/brt).



Booth Hansen/MPC photo illustration

### BRT around the U.S.

#### Los Angeles, California



LACMTA

The Metro **Orange Line** opened in 2005, spanning the sprawling San Fernando valley on a 14.2-mile dedicated right-of-way. The line connects to the Red Line subway, allowing riders to continue to downtown Los Angeles, Hollywood, and the rest of metropolitan area. The line's articulated vehicles have three large doors for fast boarding and are powered by compressed natural gas. The Orange Line's 14 stations include sidewalk-level platforms, canopies, information displays, public art, and park-and-ride lots. Ridership has exceeded expectations, and a 4-mile extension is under construction.

#### Eugene, Oregon

Eugene's **Emerald Express (EmX)** system began in 2007 with a 4-mile route connecting Eugene and the University of Oregon to Springfield, Ore. The BRT route replaced an existing, regular bus, spurring a ridership increase of 74 percent. Signal priority and 1.6 miles of dedicated bus lanes reduced trip times by 30 percent. A 7.8-mile extension north from Springfield with new dedicated lanes opened in 2011, and an extension west of Eugene is being planned.

#### Cleveland, Ohio

Cleveland's **HealthLine**, in operation since 2008, covers 6.8 miles and connects the city's cultural and educational institutions, medical centers, and a rapid transit line. There is more than \$4 billion in new development and redevelopment along this corridor. Travel time has improved by an estimated 25 percent, while ridership has increased by 47 percent since the line opened. The corridor also includes dedicated bicycle lanes.