

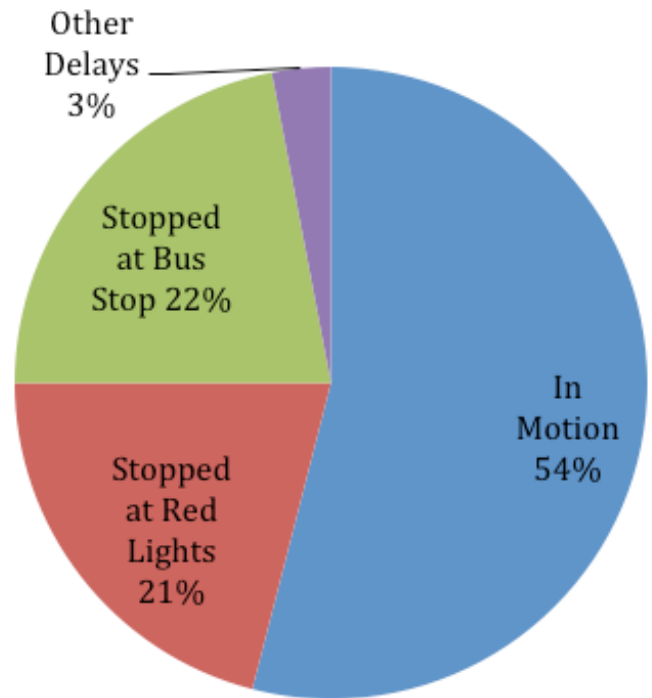
The Bus Turnaround Coalition

Waiting for the Light: Picking up the Pace on Signal Priority in NYC



WAITING FOR THE LIGHT

New Yorkers are stuck spending 21% of their bus rides stopped at red lights—but they shouldn't be: transit signal priority (TSP) can be used to extend green lights or shorten red ones when a bus is approaching, speeding up trips and improving schedule reliability. At a time when New York City's transit system is in crisis and bus performance and ridership are in free fall, MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) and the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) have an opportunity to implement this proven tool quickly and widely. That's because NYCT is now in the process of procuring the software needed to make system-wide implementation possible. As a next step, the NYC DOT and NYCT should issue a joint action plan for ambitious expansion of signal priority to reach riders on at least 20 routes new routes a year starting in 2018.



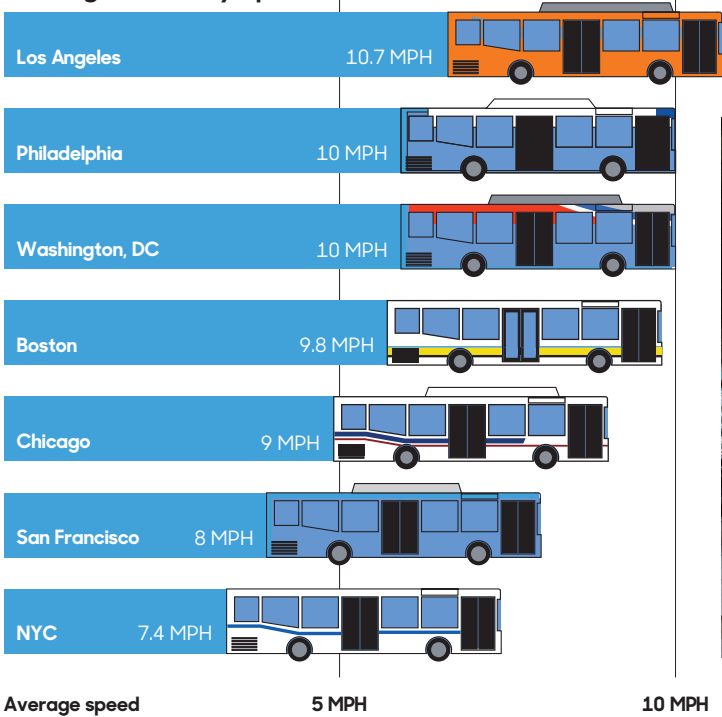
We already know transit signal priority works in New York City: NYCT and the NYC DOT have successfully implemented it on a handful of corridors, improving reliability and reducing travel time on those routes by an average of 18% (NYC DOT). Signal priority was first tried in New York City in 2006 on Victory Boulevard in Staten Island and next applied on the Bx12 SBS route on Fordham Road in the Bronx. Riders on those routes benefitted from time saved and more reliable service, but TSP was discontinued—and those riders are once again waiting for the light.

Following those early successes, the timeline for expanding the benefits of TSP to more New Yorkers has been stalled time and time again. Under Mayor Bloomberg, the City set a target of 11 routes in the PlaNYC 2011 update, but only 5 of New York's 238 bus routes currently have functioning signal priority. Those routes include the M15 South of Houston Street, the B44 SBS on Nostrand Avenue, the S79 SBS on Hylan Boulevard, the B46 SBS on Utica Avenue, and the Bx41 SBS on Webster Avenue.

Strong leadership is needed from both NYC DOT and the MTA to realize the relatively painless gains transit signal priority offers. The infrastructure necessary for signal priority has already been installed on all traffic signals citywide by the NYC DOT. Once the MTA obtains and installs the needed software for buses, there will be no technological barrier preventing ambitious expansion of signal priority throughout the bus system.

Other cities around the world aren't waiting for the light: New York is behind peers like London and Los Angeles, which have been utilizing signal priority for nearly two decades. There are around 260 intersections providing bus priority in New York today, versus 3200 such intersections in London and 654 in Los Angeles (UITP). Even Geneva, Switzerland, a city slightly larger than Staten Island, has 263 intersections with transit priority. More recently, Seattle and San Francisco have deployed TSP as a part of a focused, multi-strategy effort to improve bus service.

Average weekday speeds



Los Angeles has nearly three times more intersections than NYC with transit signal priority



London has over twelve times more intersections than NYC with transit signal priority



Even Geneva, Switzerland, slightly larger than Staten Island, has more intersections than NYC with transit signal priority

Chairman Lhota and Commissioner Trottenberg should work together to prioritize transit on NYC streets by applying TSP more aggressively and more quickly. TSP should be deployed alongside complementary tactics like bus lanes, queue jumps, adjusting stop spacing, and reducing the time it takes to board. Many current and planned SBS routes are excellent candidates for TSP, but NYC's bus riders on local routes should also be given back the extra minutes in their days and additional peace of mind thanks to the more reliable schedules that TSP can provide.

ACTION PLAN FOR THE NYC DOT & MTA

- (1) Establish an implementation plan and timeline, with annual targets of at least 20 new routes per year starting in 2018
- (2) Determine priority routes for TSP, expanding beyond current and planned SBS routes to benefit riders on all routes that would see significant improvements from TSP
- (3) Reform the slow pace of transit signal priority planning within the NYCDOT to facilitate ambitious expansion, analogous to the agency's dramatic expansion of implementing "leading pedestrian interval" signal strategies for pedestrian safety.
- (4) Create a plan for rapid installation of TSP software on buses, prioritizing depots that house the routes that will get TSP next



TSP TARGET LIST

This targeted route list identifies priority local routes that should be considered for TSP.

TSP is most effectively deployed on routes where the majority of passengers are traveling in one direction at a given time (otherwise, there is potential for conflict with buses approaching from the opposite direction).

ROUTE

WEEKDAY RIDERSHIP

1. Bx1/2 Grand Concourse	36,487
2. Q46 Union Turnpike	21,468
3. B35 Church Avenue	31,886
4. Bx19 149th St and Southern Blvd	29,378
5. Q25 Kissena south of Flushing	20,083
6. Q43 Hillside Avenue	14,853
7. B41 Flatbush Ave	27,082
8. Bx40/42 East Tremont Ave to the Throngs Neck Bridge	25,454
9. Q111 and Q113 Guy Brewer Blvd	16,959
10. Q5 Merrick Blvd	11,728
11. Q12 & Q13 Northern Blvd, into Flushing	19,615
12. B6 Bay Parkway and Flatlands Avenue	41,320
13. Bx28/38 Gun Hill Road to Co-op City	15,750
14. S46/96 Castleton Avenue	7,299
15. S44/94 Richmond Ave	7,016

SOURCES

- City of New York. PlaNYC Update April 2011: A Greener, Greater New York. (New York, 2011, page 92). Available at: http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc/downloads/pdf/publications/planyc_2011_planyc_full_report.pdf

- Gardner, Kevin, Chris D'Souza, Nick Hounsell, Birendra Shrestha, and David Bretherton. "Review of Bus Priority at Traffic Signals around the World." (UITP Bus Committee, 2009, page 52). Available at: <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/interaction-of-buses-and-signals-at-road-crossings.pdf>

- New York City Department of Transportation. Green Means Go: Transit Signal Priority in NYC. (New York, 2017, page 1).

BUS TURNAROUND COALITION MEMBERS:

TransitCenter (www.transitcenter.org) is a foundation that supports advocacy, research and leadership development for transit reform across the U.S.

The Riders Alliance (www.ridersny.org) is a grassroots organization of subway and bus riders, pushing for better service at affordable fares and a stronger public investment in mass transit.

The Straphangers Campaign (www.straphangers.org) a project of the New York Public Interest Research Group, has advocated for New York's public transit system since 1979.

Tri-State Transportation Campaign (www.tstc.org) is a nonprofit advocacy organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation network in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.