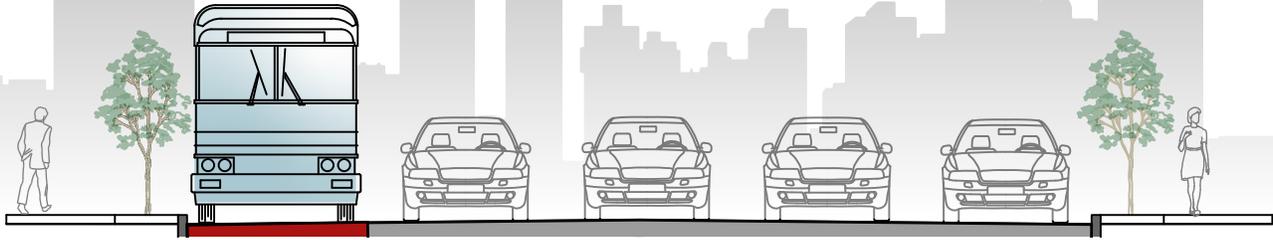


# Courtland Street Bus Lanes



## Project Summary Report



432 DOWNTOWN

4022

Xpress

## Acknowledgments

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### City of Atlanta

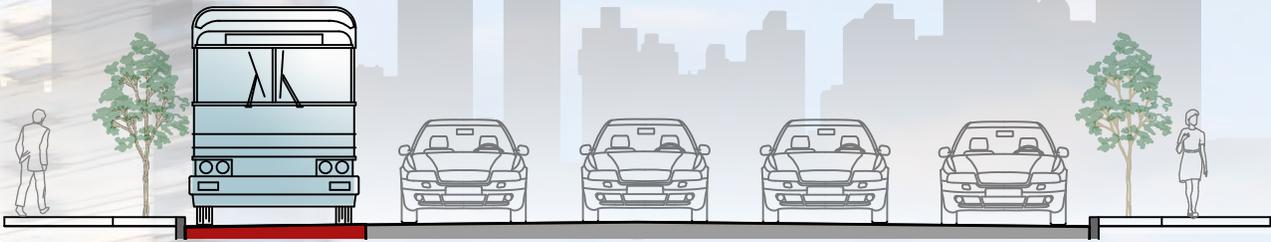
Department of City Planning  
Department of Transportation

### Consultants

Jacobs  
Alliance Strategies

### Agencies

Central Atlanta Progress /  
Atlanta Downtown Improvement District  
ATL Transit  
Xpress  
CobbLinc  
Gwinnett County Transit



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# 1. Background

There are currently three major commuter bus operators with stops along Courtland Street in Downtown Atlanta:

Cobb Linc



Gwinnett County Transit



Xpress



MARTA and Georgia State Panther Express also travel along Courtland Street. Per the recommendations of the Downtown Commuter Bus Route Consolidation Study (2021), the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District (ADID) proposes construction of a southbound bus lane on Courtland Street. Existing bus travel along Courtland Street is subject to congestion and delays during peak periods. The addition of a bus lane on Courtland Street will improve travel times and increase transit reliability.

## 1.1. Downtown Atlanta Master Plan & Downtown Transportation Plan

The vision presented in the [Downtown Atlanta Master Plan](#) (2017) and the infrastructure projects and policies in the [Downtown Atlanta Transportation Plan](#) (2018) were developed through the consensus building of 45 organizations and 2,800 individual survey responses. These plans build upon the momentum of the previous planning efforts to update and adapt to the current vision and goals for Downtown into 2030.

To ensure widespread and active participation in developing this plan, the public outreach included multiple and varied opportunities for the Downtown community to get involved and lend their voice and vision to the plan. In all, the planning process engaged with more than 5,000 people.

The [Downtown Atlanta Master Plan](#), which is the adopted Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) plan for Downtown Atlanta and is adopted by reference into the City of Atlanta's Comprehensive Development Plan, lists six major goals that define the overarching vision. One of the six major goals identified is ...



## “Offer real choice in transportation”

One of Downtown's strategies for this goal is to “improve transit service and experience Downtown.” Prioritizing bus routes by making Central Avenue/ Peachtree Center Avenue a two-way bus priority corridor is a specific project identified in the [Downtown Atlanta Master Plan](#).

The [Downtown Atlanta Transportation Plan](#) identifies the Central Avenue / Peachtree Center Avenue Bus Priority Corridor (Project T-13) as “a high-quality bus corridor for regional and local service with two-way vehicular operations.”

## 1.2. Atlanta Downtown Commuter Bus Routing and Infrastructure Study

To validate the proposed siting for the bus lanes recommended in the [Downtown Atlanta Transportation Plan](#), CAP/ADID commissioned the [Atlanta Downtown Commuter Bus Routing and Infrastructure Study](#) (Cambridge, 2021).

### Recommended Projects

The [Downtown Commuter Bus Route Consolidation Study](#) confirmed the need for dedicated bus infrastructure and had a number of recommendations designed to improve operations of the commuter buses in Downtown Atlanta.

- **Southbound bus lanes on Courtland Street**
- **Northbound bus lanes on Peachtree Center Ave with Transit Signal Priority (TSP)**
- **Staging location at Civic Center**
- **Streamline travel paths**
- **Consolidate bus stops**

## COURTLAND STREET BUS LANES

The study found there is limited right-of-way width on Peachtree Center Avenue for a two-way bus facility. An evaluation of potential locations based on street geometry, transit operator feedback, and the proximity to major employment locations within Downtown, found that the largest gains in bus reliability and speed will be from an installation of a southbound bus-only lane on Courtland Street and transit signal priority (TSP) technology for northbound buses on Peachtree Center Avenue.

Based on the volumes and schedules of the commuter buses, the study identified that bus lanes would only be required during the peak periods. During the off-peak hours, the lanes could be used for on-street parking and/or loading zones. However, the operation of time-dependent bus lanes can be a challenge for enforcement, and the efficacy of various enforcement techniques will need to be considered before a final decision can be made on the operation of the bus lanes.

### Benefits

The recommendations in the Downtown Commuter Bus Route Consolidation Study will lead to operational benefits for the operating agencies, as well as benefits to their customers and other stakeholders.

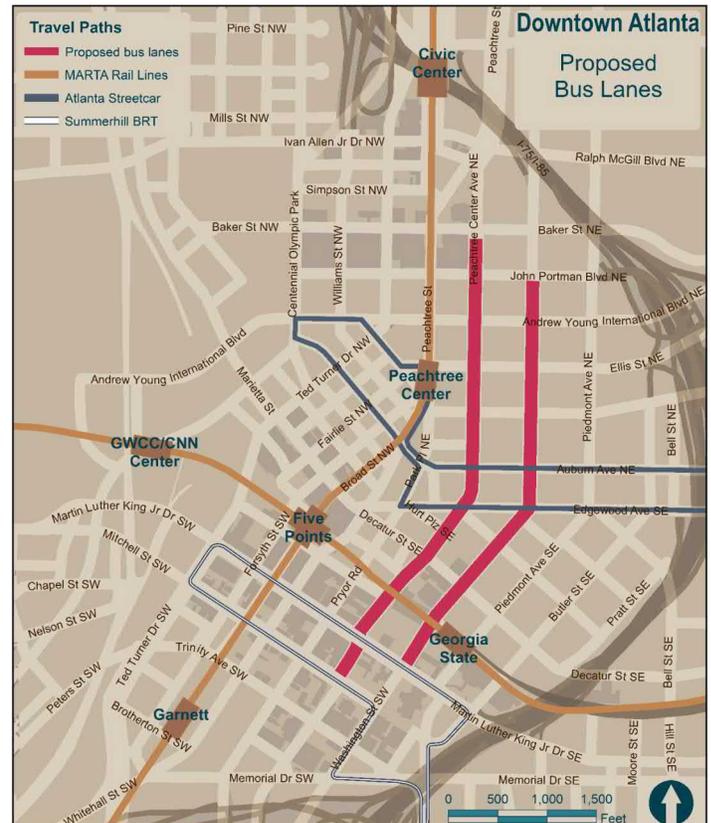
#### Commuter Bus Routing and Infrastructure Benefits:

	Increase visibility of transit while meeting high demand
	Organize travel lanes to streamline routes and reduce conflicts between vehicles and buses
	Decrease bus travel times by 4-6 min / trip
	Decrease total transit running times 4+ hours per day

“Development of bus lanes along Courtland Street in the southbound direction and Central Avenue/Peachtree Center Avenue in the northbound direction to help keep buses out of general traffic in order to make travel speeds faster and more reliable for passengers. The bus lane along Courtland Street should be developed first due to the relative ease of constructing the bus lane and the projected impact the bus lane will have on bus speeds.”

- Atlanta Downtown Commuter Bus Routing and Infrastructure Study

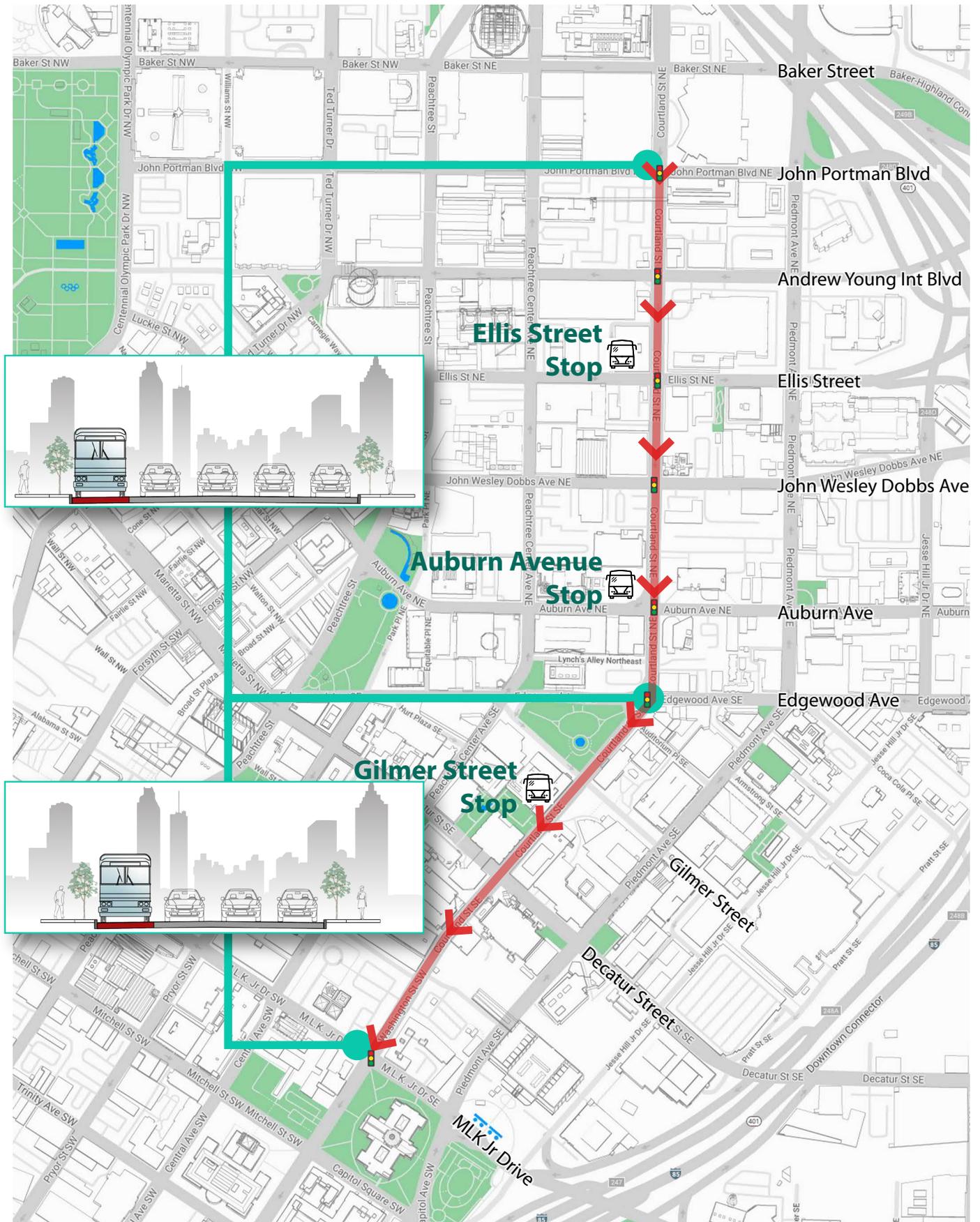
## Proposed Bus Lanes from Commuter Bus Routing and Infrastructure Study:



The main benefit of the infrastructure improvements and the associated operating improvements will be faster, more cost efficient, and more reliable bus service for customers and operators.

Faster, more reliable buses should in turn help attract more passengers to transit. A dedicated space allows transportation operators to move through Downtown faster and more reliably. These benefits align with goals of the Downtown Atlanta Master Plan to “offer real choice in transportation” and the One Atlanta Strategic Transportation Plan to “Build a 21st century transit network for Atlanta”.

# Courtland Street Bus Lane Project Location Map:



## 2. Overview

The Courtland Street Bus Lane project will extend along Courtland Street from John Portman Boulevard to M.L. King Jr. Drive. It will encompass three existing commuter bus stops near Ellis Street, Auburn Avenue, and Gilmer Street. In order to accommodate the bus lane, the following adjustments would occur, with only minor changes to general traffic:

- One curbside travel lane will be marked as a bus-only lane. Four auto travel lanes will remain where there are currently five travel lanes (between John Portman Boulevard and Edgewood Avenue). Three auto travel lanes will remain where there are currently four travel lanes (between Edgewood Avenue and M.L. King Jr. Drive).
- Automobile usage of right-side curb lane will be limited to right turns only in the peak periods. No loading or parking will be allowed while the bus lane is in operation.

### 2.1. Why are Improvements Needed?

Downtown is a major employment center with numerous commuter bus routes operated by multiple agencies. **These buses operate in a constrained space with little to no dedicated infrastructure, resulting in congestion, operational conflicts, and delays for buses and passenger cars alike.**

Downtown has over 21 commuter bus routes serving over 6,400 passengers daily

- Atlanta Downtown Commuter Bus Routing and Infrastructure Study

The Commuter Bus Routing and Infrastructure Study identified 23-30 buses utilizing Courtland Street in the morning peak hour and 31-37 buses utilizing Courtland Street in the afternoon peak hour. If the study's recommendations for routing were

implemented, the number of buses is estimated to increase to 48 buses per hour in the evening peak. For context:

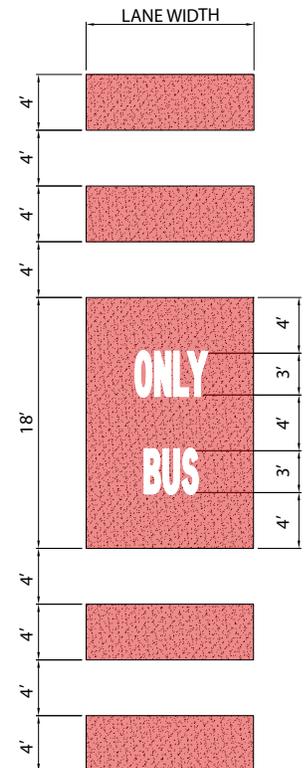
- From the standpoint of person-capacity, 20 to 30 buses per hour (800 to 1,200 seats) can accommodate more people than are usually carried in cars in an equivalent arterial street lane (600 to 700 persons per hour).<sup>1</sup>
- A general curb bus lane can generally accommodate 30-40 buses per hour (1,200-1,600 passengers).<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2. Physical Changes

Bus lanes are roadway lanes dedicated to bus use. The Courtland Street bus lanes will be designed as Business Access and Transit (BAT). These curb lanes, located along the route, are expressly reserved for turning vehicles and buses. This will help buses and other vehicles move more efficiently through traffic and provide better access to businesses.

#### Lane Reconfigurations

Red-colored pavement (per FHWA and MUTCD criteria) is used to highlight the prominence of the transit system, while at the same time visually enforcing dedicated transit space. To save the expense of applying and maintaining red color for entire road segments, a painted backing can be applied around the "BUS ONLY" lane markings. The backed message may not have the passive enforcement value of a completely red lane, but can increase the visibility of the restriction and may be used to differentiate 24-hour bus



Red Bus Lane Markings (Source: City of Seattle)

1 Bus Use of Highways: Planning and Design Guidelines (National Cooperative Highway Research Program, Report 155)

2 Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual, Third Ed (Transportation Research Board).

lanes from those with time-of-day operations. The concept plans use Seattle DOT standard markings, which have been placed according to the following guidance:

- Beginning of each block
- Major driveways and alleys
- Max 200 feet spacing desirable

The concept plans show lane marking and signage locations to assist with the evaluation of the proposed improvements. These are still preliminary, but they include enough engineering detail to evaluate the impacts of the proposed improvements. The concept plans utilize of the existing 10-foot curb lane without modifications to the remaining general purpose lanes. A 10-11 foot lane is the minimum width necessary for a bus lane.

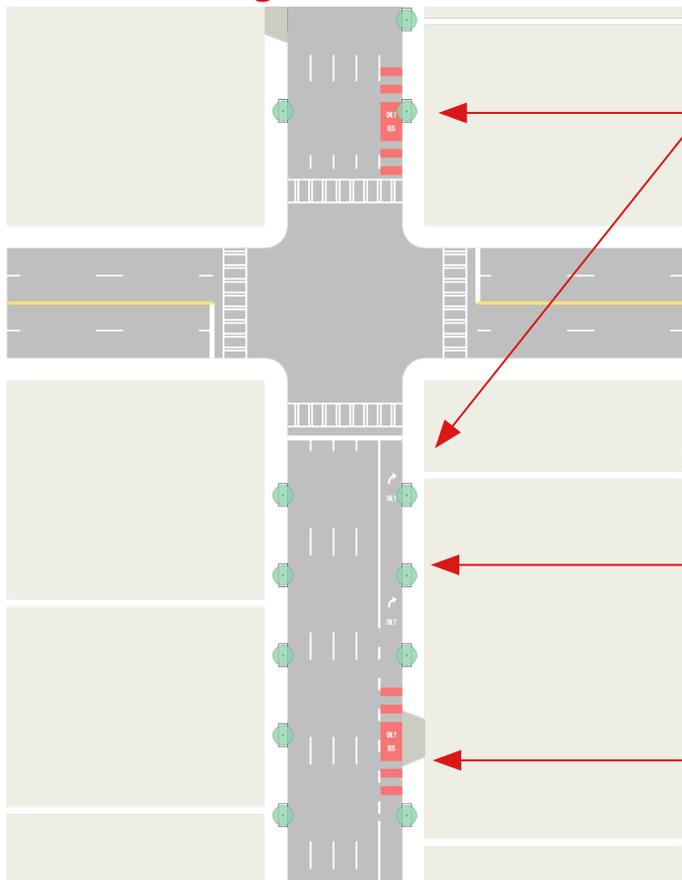
The desired width of a curbside bus lane next to a mixed-traffic lane is 10–12 feet, including a gutterpan if present. Bus-only lanes should not typically exceed 12 feet in width.

- *Transit Street Design Guide (NACTO)*

## Bus Lanes on Spring Street at 4th Avenue in Seattle, Washington:



### Bus Lane Design Elements:



#### Signage:

- Designating lane to be used by buses only with right turns permitted



#### Right Turn Arrow

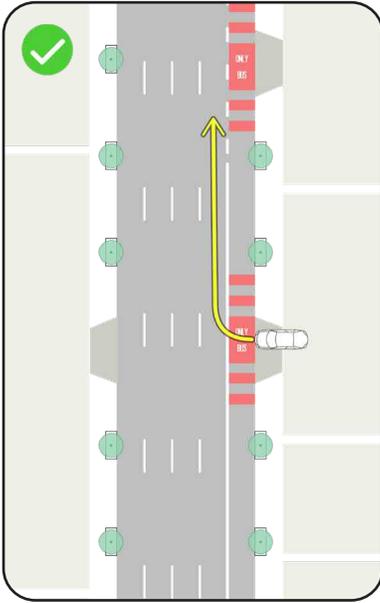
- Indicates to drivers that traveling through the intersection in the bus lane is not permitted

#### Red bus lane markings

- Includes "BUS ONLY" markings
- Located at start block and major driveways

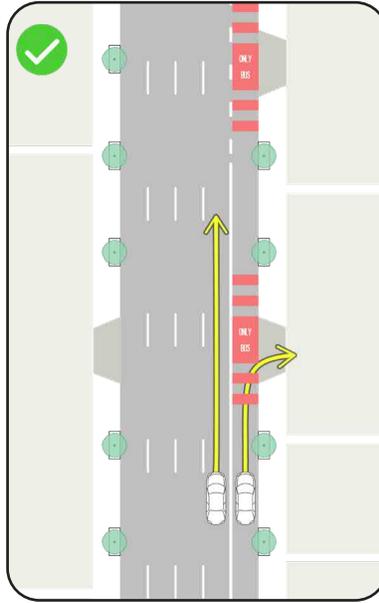
## BUSINESS ACCESS AND TRANSIT (BAT) LANES AT A GLANCE:

When turning onto Courtland...



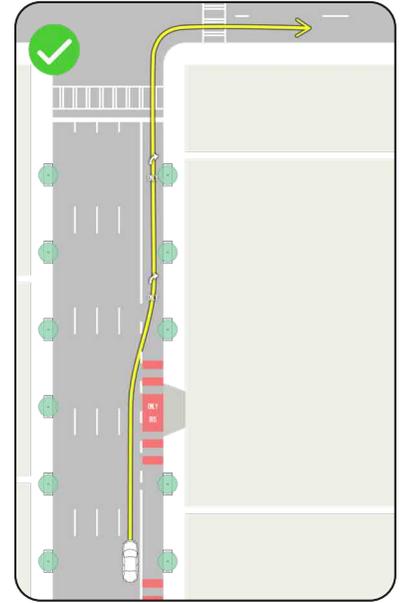
Yield to buses and turn into the general purpose lanes, not the bus lane.

When traveling through...



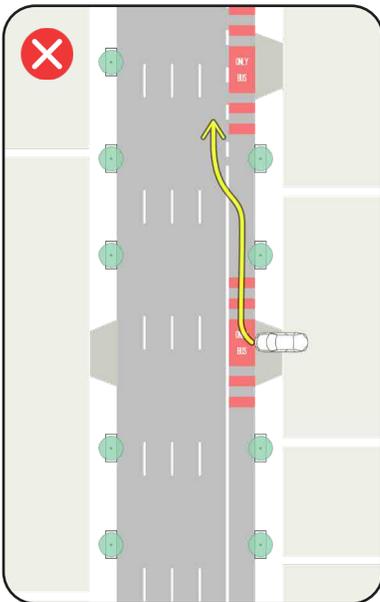
Use the general purpose lanes. If necessary, travel in the bus lane is limited to only access a business or to make a right turn.

When turning right...



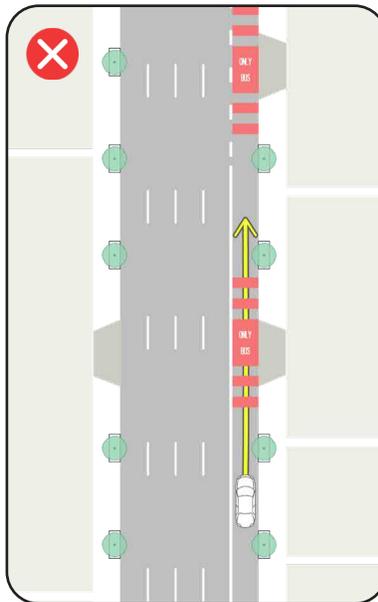
Travel in the general purpose lanes up to the dashed line before changing lanes

When turning onto Courtland...



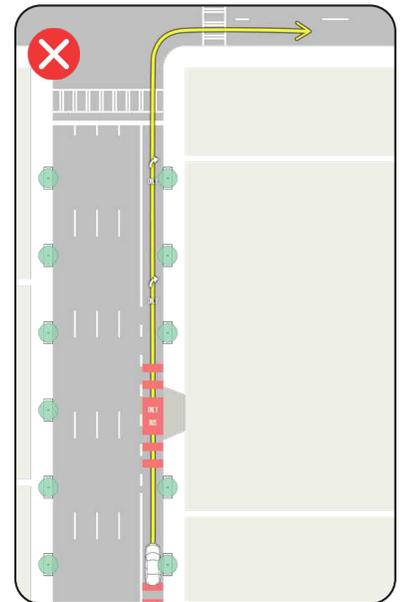
Do not turn into the dedicated bus lane, even though it may be closer.

When traveling through...



Do not drive through or park in the bus lane during restricted times.

When turning right...

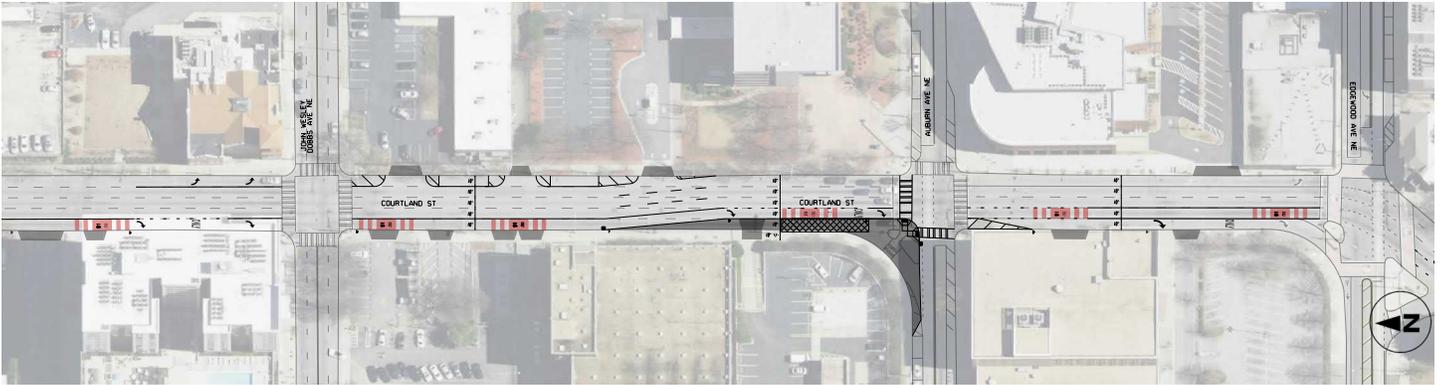


Do not travel in the dedicated bus lane more than necessary (max 1 block) before your turn.

# CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT: John Portman Blvd to Ellis Street



# John Wesley Dobbs to Edgewood Avenue



# Edgewood Avenue to Decatur Street



# Decatur Street to M.L. King Jr Drive



COURTLAND STREET BUS LANES  
**Ellis Street Bus Stop Rendering:**



**Auburn Avenue Bus Stop Rendering:**



**Gilmer Street Bus Stop Rendering:**



## Bus Stops

The existing bus stops will remain at the intersections of:

- Ellis Street
- Auburn Avenue
- Gilmer Street

At the intersection of Auburn Avenue, the project proposes removal of the right turn “slip lane” to increase the bus stop area and improve safety for pedestrian crossings.

At the identified stops, shelters, benches, trash cans should be considered for installation. Ownership and maintenance of these shelters and stop amenities will need to be finalized in the next phases of the project.

### 2.3. Enforcement Strategies

Police enforcement and automated enforcement (such as on-board cameras) are the two most common enforcement tools used to reduce violations. Generally, transit and law enforcement agencies use two types of camera enforcement to automate the enforcement process:

- Stationary cameras
- Cameras on buses

Stationary cameras involve placing cameras at selected locations along the corridors and would work like photo-enforcement cameras which issue tickets for red light violations and school zone speeding. On-board camera enforcement would involve camera systems on the buses themselves to record the violation, similar to those used to enforce school bus passing laws. A few other cities have also implemented camera enforcement of bus lanes:

- NYCDOT uses on-bus cameras for standing violations such as parking, and stationary cameras for driving violations in the bus lane.
- San Francisco uses forward-facing cameras on buses for its Transit-Only Lane Enforcement (TOLE) program.
- Seattle is installing stationary cameras to prevent bus lane and block the box violations.

Camera enforcement usually requires enabling legislation. New York City and San Francisco have robust on-board camera enforcement. Key elements of their enabling legislation include:

- Pilot/demonstration project sunset provision
- Legislative reporting requirements
- Warning periods before fines are issued for violations
- Identification of camera locations (on-board buses or stationary) and locations of corridors with camera enforcement
- Enforcement hours
- Violation types and fine amounts
- Enforcement processes and privacy protections
- Education
- Monitoring

In the absence of automated enforcement, active police enforcement will need to be used. A typical challenge with police use includes budget limitations, authorization to issue moving violations, blocking lane to ticket violators, differentiating permitted right turn vehicles – all of which could lead to diminishing levels of enforcement after the bus lanes are opened.

From the standpoint of enforceability, bus lanes work best when there is generally a bus in view in peak periods (NCHRP Report 155). Ideally, there should be at least one bus per signal cycle (30 per hour) to give buses a steady presence in the bus lane.

### Example Camera Enforcement Signage for Bus Lanes (MTA, New York):



### 3. Process

The team has completed a concept report package including a Conceptual Layout, Traffic Analysis, and Public Engagement Summary to inform the next stages of design.

#### 3.1. City of Atlanta

The project team has been working closely with Atlanta Department of Transportation (ATLDOT), to review and understand existing studies and plans for adjacent projects. A “Walk & Talk” was conducted with the ATLDOT throughout the project corridor to gain a human-centered perspective of the proposed changes and how these would impact all travelers irrespective of the travel mode. City staff was kept abreast of project status through presentation of concept alternatives and traffic analysis findings. The city reviewed and concurred with the findings of the traffic operations study analyzing Courtland Street bus lanes with and without future bicycle facilities.

#### 3.2. Transit System Operators

Courtland Street is serviced by several local and regional transit systems, including CobbLinc, Georgia State University’s Panther Express, Gwinnett County Transit, MARTA, and Xpress. The transit system operators of these systems were critical to the Downtown Bus Corridor LCI Study and helped guide the direction of this project. During the first in a series of three meetings, recommendations and

findings from the Atlanta Downtown Commuter Bus Routing and Infrastructure Study were presented to the Transit System Operators Group (TSOG). Additionally, the project team developed a survey to obtain fleet-specific information and input regarding transit amenities. The feedback was evaluated and incorporated into the concept. Subsequent meetings with transit operators involved review of the survey findings, funding and maintaining selected transit stop amenities, and bus stop consolidations.

#### 3.3. Public Engagement

A concerted, multi-channel approach was implemented to create awareness of the Courtland Street Bus Lane among the Downtown community, and a virtual public meeting was held on December 1, 2021. A project overview and an illustration depicting the proposed Courtland Street improvements was published on the CAP/ADID website. The web entry also announced the upcoming public meeting and provided links for registration. Additional targeted outreach to create awareness and illicit input included email blasts, outreach calls and visits to adjacent properties, flyers posted at existing transit stops, and digital advertising on Facebook and Instagram.

The project team also provided project overviews and announced the virtual public meeting at NPU M and ADNA monthly meetings. Further collaboration included outreach and touch points with the City of Atlanta Council members representing the project area.

### Registration Invitations and Flyers:



Given that Courtland Street runs through the heart of Georgia State University, Atlanta’s largest university, specific efforts were implemented to inform its students, staff, and faculty. These included

### Virtual Public Meeting:



creating customized digital communications, collaborating with university officials in public relations, transportation, and facilities, posting flyers in key campus locations, and meeting with leasing representatives at One Courtland, a student apartment complex.

According to social media metrics and email open rates, the project team’s digital strategy reached approximately 20,000 people within the project area and resulted in more than 100 visits to the project website for more information. Ultimately, twenty-five people registered to attend the virtual public meeting and provided input during interactive polls and a robust Q&A session.

### 3.4. Next Steps

The next phase of design will include more detailed roadway plans, including survey, pavement design, and signing and marking plans. This phase of design is anticipated to be completed in 2022. Key elements that are anticipated to carry through from the conceptual plans, public engagement, and agency coordination to the next level of design plans include:

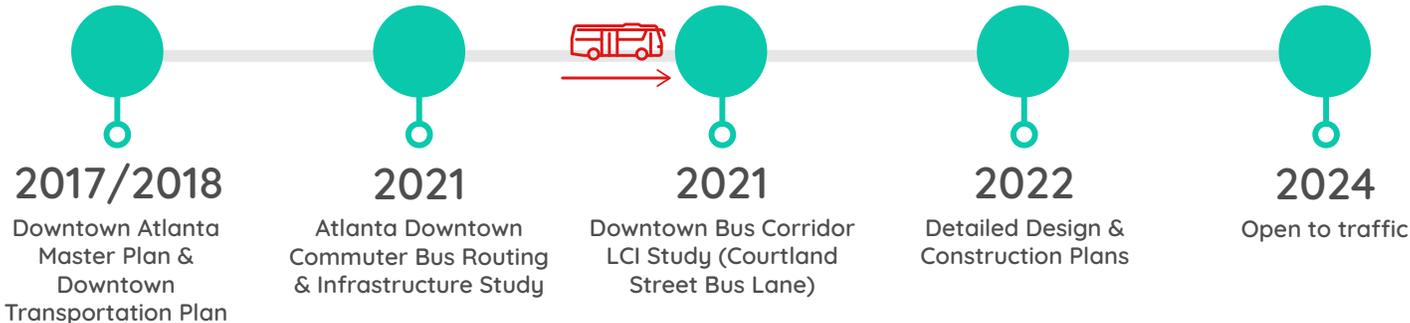
- Designs will not preclude the potential for bike lanes on the east side of Courtland Street.
- Signage and red lane markings will be used to inform drivers of bus lane conditions.
- The right turn slip lane will be removed from Auburn Ave to improve pedestrian safety and increase space for the bus stop.

Additional items to be reviewed in the next phase of the project include:

- Bus lane hours of operation
- Signage standards
- Final location of “Bus Only” lane markings
- Coordination with transit operators, City of Atlanta, and ATL Transit regarding stop amenities and maintenance agreements
- Target funding for final design and construction
- Legislation to allow camera enforcement along Courtland Street

**There are over 20 states and several major cities in the US that have implemented some form of dedicated bus infrastructure, including:**

- Los Angeles, California
- Oakland, California
- San Francisco, California
- Denver, Colorado
- Hartford, Connecticut
- Jacksonville, Florida
- Miami-Dade, Florida
- Orlando, Florida
- Chicago, Illinois
- Indianapolis, Indiana
- Baltimore, Maryland
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Kansas City, Missouri
- Las Vegas, Nevada
- Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Albany, New York
- New York, New York
- Columbus, Ohio
- Cleveland, Ohio
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Austin, Texas
- El Paso, Texas
- Houston, Texas
- Alexandria, VA
- Richmond, Virginia
- Seattle, Washington





## Courtland Street Bus Lanes