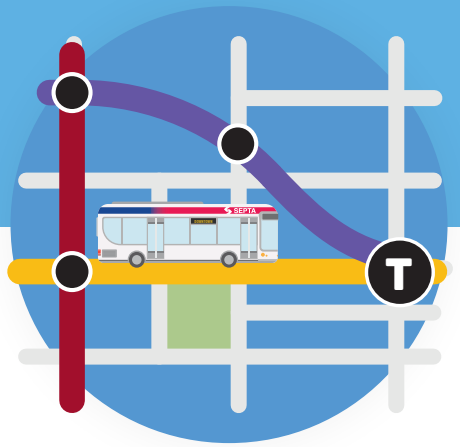
SEPTA

SEPTA Bus Revolution
State of the Bus System and Market Analysis

Executive Summary

January 2022



SEPTA FORWARD >>>
Bus Revolution

PART I

Setting the Stage

1

What is the Bus Revolution?

2

Bus Service Today

3

Where is the Demand for Transit?

Setting the Stage provides an overview of this SEPTA Bus Revolution effort, the SEPTA bus system today, and the communities we serve.

What is the Bus Revolution?

SEPTA Forward: Bus Revolution aims to make riding the bus an easier, faster, more reliable and more competitive option for more people. Launched in 2021, It is our first ever comprehensive redesign of the SEPTA bus network. This effort builds on the direction and momentum established by our strategic plan, SEPTA Forward: A Vision for a Stronger Future.

Through the Bus Revolution process, we are evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the bus network by doing a blank slate, top-to-bottom review.

- **Bus Revolution is a three-year process.** The first two years are dedicated to technical work and community engagement; the third year will focus on implementation.
- **Extensive and detailed technical analysis** of transit markets, ridership patterns, and service productivity are pointing us to what's working well today and revealing opportunities for system improvement.
- **Ongoing conversations with stakeholders, riders, and bus operators** about what they want and need are crucial to the plan. We've already talked with over 10,000 riders, residents, and community stakeholders. We will keep these conversations going throughout the project.
- **Bus Revolution is about equity.** Improving SEPTA's bus network will increase opportunities for people with low incomes and people of color, who rely on public transportation to meet their needs more than the population at large.
- **Bus Revolution will work within SEPTA's available resources.** Any recommended changes to the bus network will have to work within SEPTA's resources—this includes budgets, but also resources like staff and vehicles. So, while the number of routes or the frequency of service on some routes may change, the amount of service will not.

Why is SEPTA important?

Before the pandemic, over half a million riders used SEPTA bus services every weekday—to get to and from work, to shop, for medical appointments, to see friends, and to do all the other things that are important to our lives. Many riders use SEPTA because it is the travel option that works best for them. For others, SEPTA provides a lifeline that connects them to daily needs that otherwise would be difficult to reach.

How is transit changing in Southeast Pennsylvania?

While SEPTA's ridership ranks the agency as the 5th largest transit agency in the U.S., ridership has been in decline even before the pandemic. In 2014, SEPTA buses carried over 177 million passenger trips. By 2019, annual ridership had dropped by 13% to 154 million passenger trips. This means that **our buses carried 23 million fewer passenger trips** in 2019.

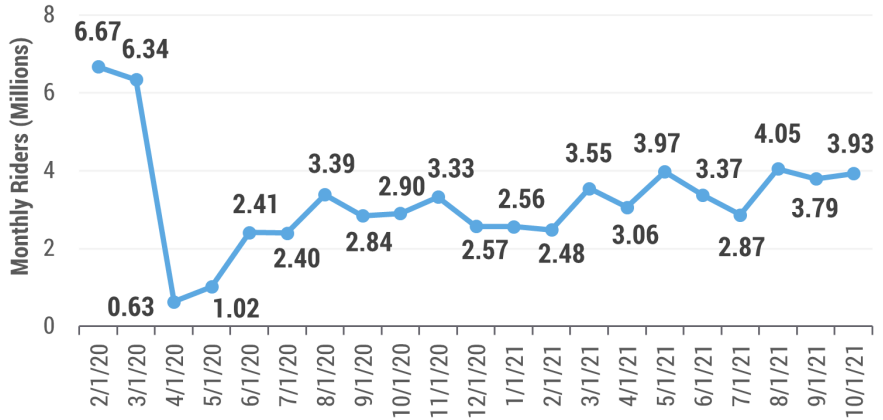
Why has bus ridership been declining?

- As many parts of our region grow, some neighborhoods and activity centers are quickly emerging as new destinations that need service.
- Increasing congestion has been making buses slower and less reliable over time.
- Uber and Lyft provided people with a new travel choice that, while more expensive than SEPTA, was faster and more convenient.
- Bike ridership has been increasing rapidly over the past decades, as expanded bike lanes make biking a safer and more attractive option.

We have made some changes to our bus network, but this has not kept pace with changes in the region or technological advances, making other travel options more attractive. **A key goal of the Bus Revolution is to bring riders back to the network.**

Ridership fell sharply due to the pandemic, but riders are starting to return.

Like many transit systems, ridership on SEPTA services dropped dramatically due to the pandemic; by September 2020, monthly ridership was down by 58% from pre-pandemic levels. Ridership has slowly risen over the past year, but as the pandemic continues to arrive in waves, it has remained low. By October 2021, monthly ridership was still down by 41% relative to January 2020.



Future trends are still emerging, but travel patterns are not expected to return to exactly what they were before the pandemic. **SEPTA's bus network will need to adapt to serve a permanently changed economy and evolving travel needs.**

Making transit work better

Like many transit agencies across the United States, SEPTA's ridership was declining even before the pandemic. However, some transit systems have reversed or avoided ridership losses by making transit more competitive and attractive. Before the pandemic, transit agencies in Seattle, Pittsburgh, Austin, San Antonio, and Las Vegas made changes to their services to increase ridership.

Over time, these systems grew ridership by investing in a variety of strategies, such as redesigning their networks, creating networks of frequent bus routes, expanding service to new areas, and upgrading high ridership routes to premium services like Bus Rapid Transit and Rapid Bus.

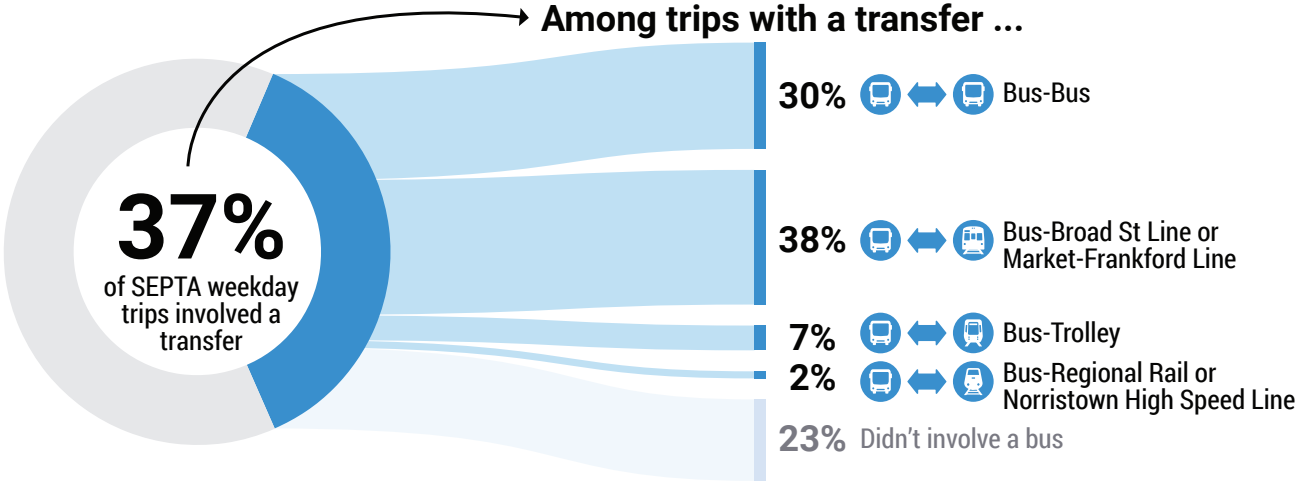
Bus Service Today

Buses are the lifeblood of the SEPTA system. They carry nearly half of all SEPTA riders, and make up the majority of "service hours". The share of riders who took the bus—relative to rail—increased during the pandemic and, looking forward, our models suggest this percentage will increase in the future.

SEPTA's bus network is extensive and well connected.

Our transit system truly functions as a network, and connections between routes and services allow riders to reach destinations across the service area.

In Center City, North Philadelphia, and South Philadelphia, bus services operate as a grid. Outside of the urban core, the road network is more radial and bus services are focused around nine transportation centers.



In the fall of 2019, SEPTA bus services carried on average:

600,000
passengers per weekday

245,000
passengers per Saturday, or **54%** of weekday ridership

200,000
passengers per Sunday, or **39%** of weekday ridership

SEPTA runs one of the largest transit systems in the U.S.

- **125** bus routes
- **3** trackless trolley routes
- **2** rapid transit lines (Broad Street and Market-Frankford lines)
- **8** rail trolley lines that provide a combination of surface and subway service
- **1** interurban heavy rail line (Norristown High Speed Line)
- **13** Regional Rail lines
- Complementary ADA Paratransit (CCT)

SEPTA's bus routes provide high levels of service.

A large share of SEPTA's bus routes operate frequent service and run for long hours. Nearly a quarter provide all-day frequent service, with buses scheduled at least every 15 minutes from at least 6 AM to 9 PM. Many routes also operate almost-frequent service, falling just short of the 15-minute threshold.

53% of riders are within a **15-minute** (1/2-mile) walk of all-day frequent service

49% of riders are within a **10-minute** (1/4-mile) walk of all-day frequent service

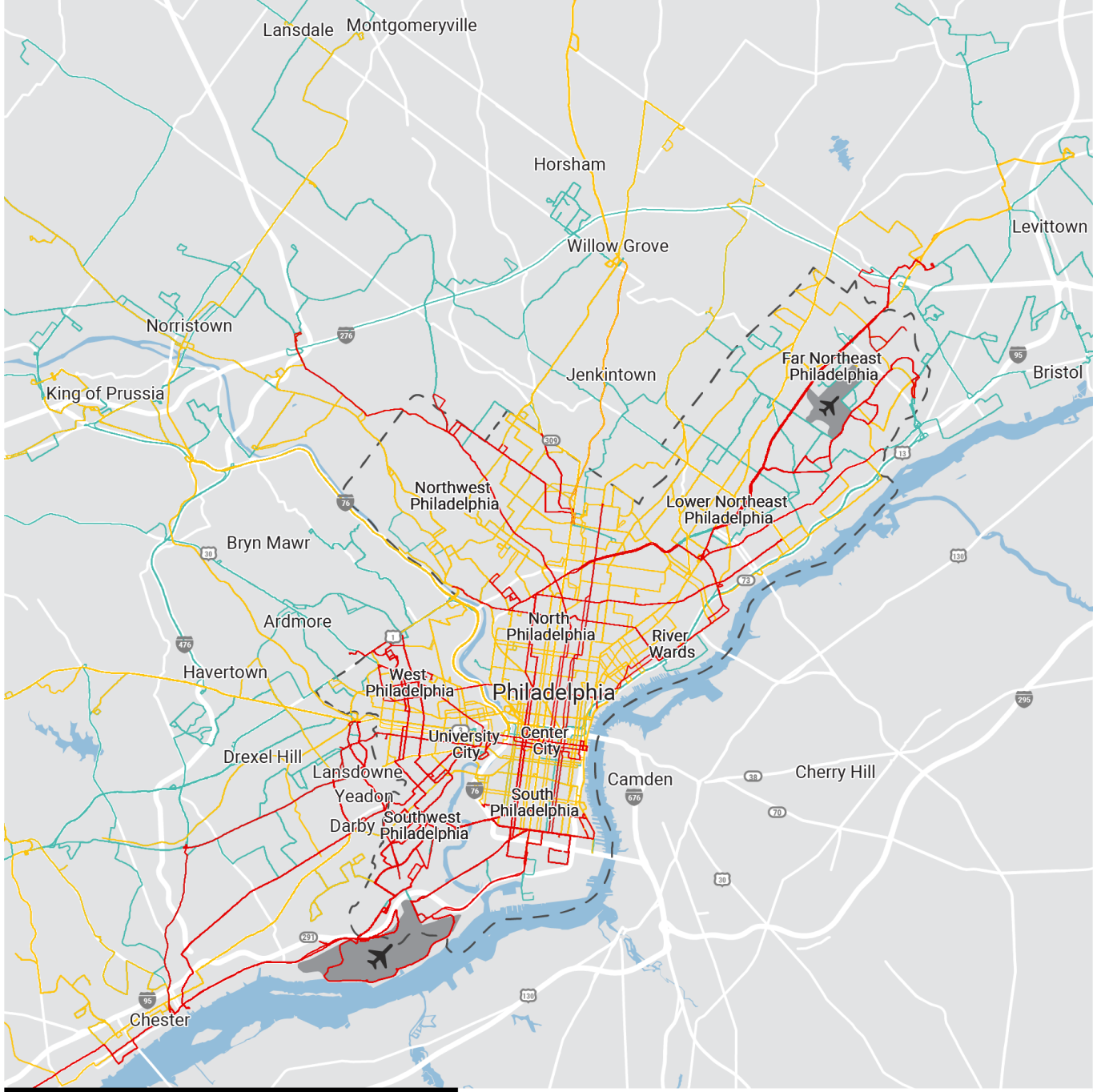
Most SEPTA services operate for long hours from early morning until late night.

A core set of SEPTA bus routes provide a 24-hour network for riders that covers a significant share of the city of Philadelphia and extends to other parts of our service area.

62% of the bus network runs for **at least 20 hours a day** on weekdays.

18% of the bus network runs **24 hours a day**.

On weekends, **85%** of bus routes run on **Saturdays** and **78%** of routes run on **Sundays**.



Weekday Span of Service

Span of Service

- 24 hour service
- At least 20 hours of service
- Less than 20 hours of service

* Select route segments may have shorter spans of service than shown (due to patterns with limited service)

Bus Revolution

Miles 0 1 2

Where is the Demand for Transit?

Transit exists to get people where they want to go, such as home, work, school, a friend's house, or an appointment. In other words, there must be a market for transit to serve.

The Bus Revolution aims to make bus service faster, more reliable, easier to use, and more competitive relative to other transportation options. To do this, we need to understand the current and potential demand for transit in our region.

Transit demand is strongly related to six factors:

Population and Population Density: Transit relies on having more people in close proximity to service. Higher population density makes it possible to provide higher levels of transit service.

Socioeconomic Characteristics: People may be more or less likely to use transit based on socioeconomic characteristics. For example, households with one or no cars are much more likely to use transit than households with several cars.

Jobs and Job Density: Traveling to and from work often accounts for the most frequent type of transit trip. As a result, the location and density of jobs is a strong indicator of transit demand and the level of transit service that is possible.

Land Use Patterns: In all cities, there is a strong correlation between land use patterns and transit ridership. In areas with denser development, mixed-use development, and a good pedestrian environment, transit can be very convenient for more people.

Major Activity Centers: Large employers, universities, tourism destinations, and other high-activity areas attract large volumes of people and can generate a large number of transit trips.

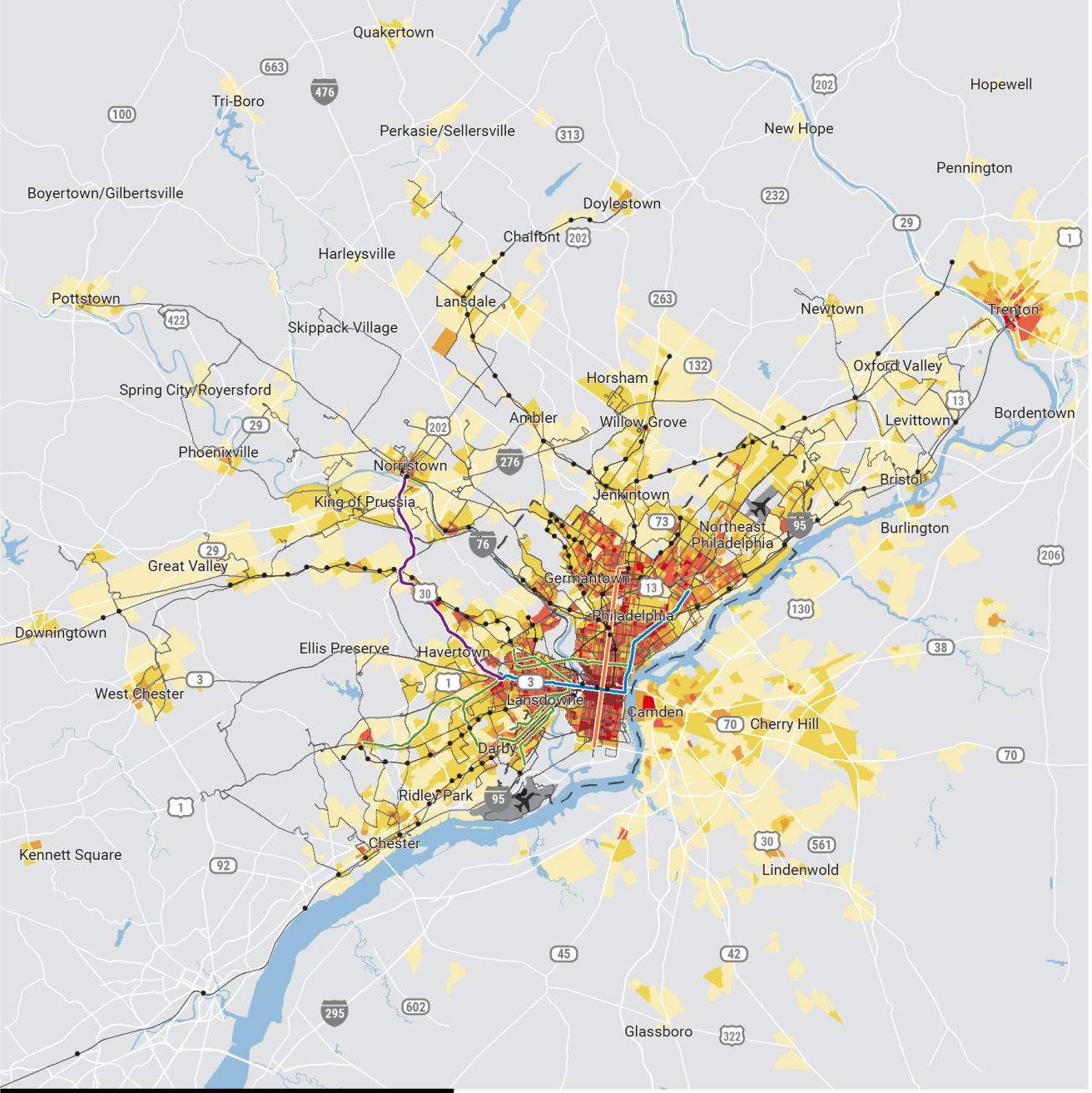
Travel Flows: People use transit to get from one place to another. Major transit lines such as rapid transit services or high frequency bus routes are designed to serve trips or corridors with high volumes of travel.

Of these six factors,
population and job density are the most important when it comes to demand for transit and how much service is feasible to provide.

This is because:

- The reach of bus transit is generally limited to one-quarter mile of a bus stop.
- As a result, the size of the transit market depends on how many people or jobs are within that area. Higher densities near a transit stop mean that there are more people or jobs within that area, which means that there is a larger market for transit service.
- Larger markets support more frequent service, while smaller markets with fewer people or jobs can support only less frequent service.

Land Use	Frequency Level
 45–90 residents/acre 25–50 jobs/acre	 <10min
 30–45 residents/acre 15–25 jobs/acre	 10-20min
 15–30 residents/acre 15–25 jobs/acre	 30min
 10–15 residents/acre 5–10 jobs/acre	 60min



Composite Transit Demand

Estimated demand for transit services calculated by adjusted employment and adjusted population per acre

Transit Frequency Demand

- 60 min.
- 30 min.
- 15 min.
- 10 min.
- 5 min.

Transit Routes

- SEPTA Rail
- SEPTA Bus
- SEPTA Trolley
- Market-Frankford Line
- Broad Street Line
- Norristown High Speed Line

Bus Revolution

Miles 0 2 4

Data Sources: Census Transportation Planning Products, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.
Map Created June 2021

Greater Philadelphia is one of the best markets for transit in the United States.

The City of Philadelphia has a high proportion of transit critical populations, dense housing and job centers, and activity centers that make it one of the most transit-supportive areas in the country. As a result, the city has high transit demand, and many areas can support transit running as often as every 15 minutes or more frequently throughout the entire day.

Select suburban areas surrounding Philadelphia also have strong transit markets. These areas need more focused, frequent services that are tailored to underlying demand.

Underlying transit demand is strong across the SEPTA service area, but *where* and *when* people want to travel is also important.

While many places with high demand are served by transit, this service doesn't always match actual travel patterns or get people where they need to go. **Service quality is high for trips to and from Center City, but crosstown trips are underserved.**

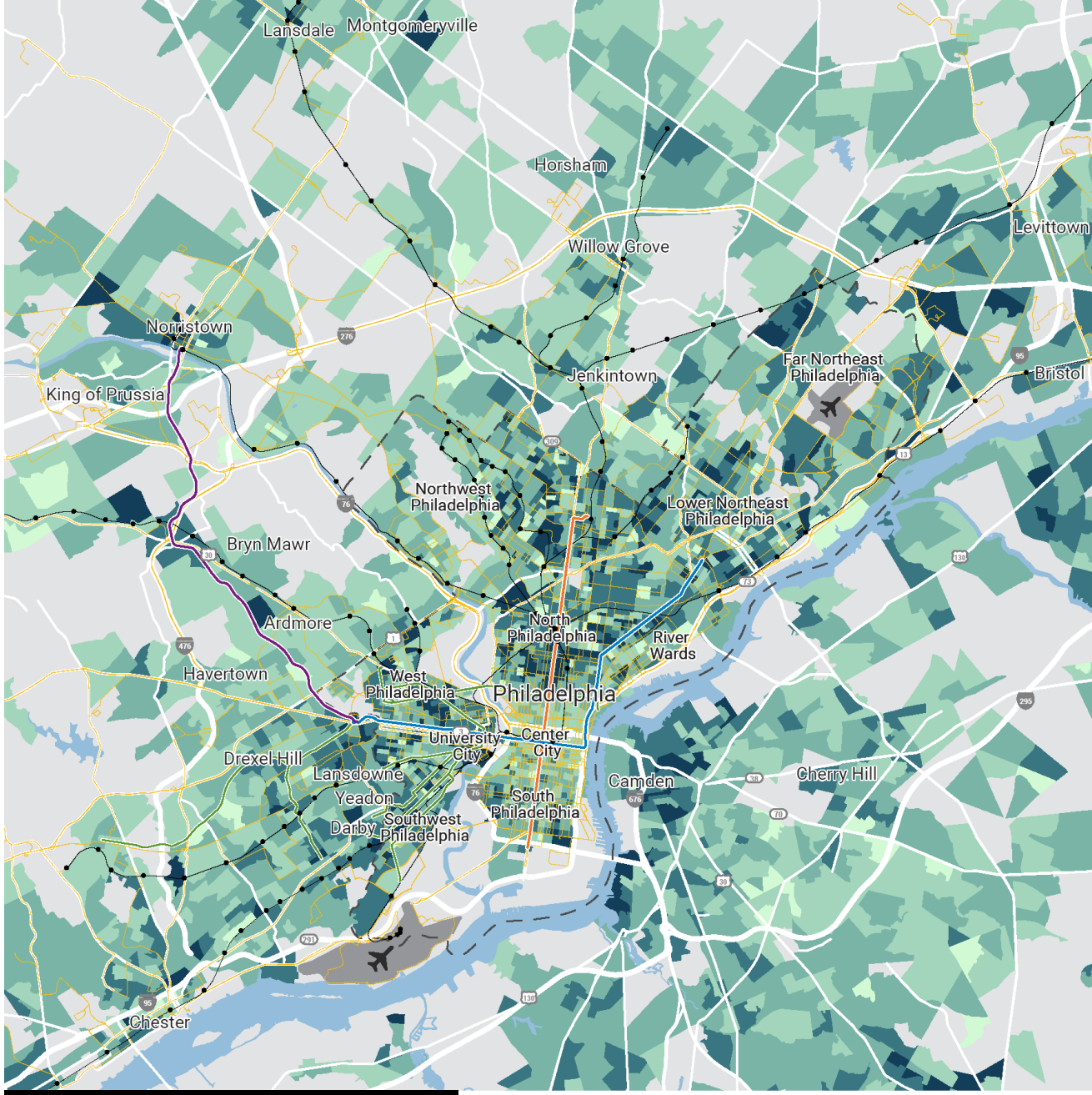
Despite having a high demand for transit, neighborhoods outside of Center City such as North Philadelphia and Lower Northeast Philadelphia have relatively low transit mode splits. This is because connections between neighborhoods are not as well served, with low service frequencies, indirect routes, and more transfers needed to make those trips.

Peak-period service is strong, but many riders rely on off-peak and weekend service.

Nearly two thirds of workers in SEPTA's service area travel to work during AM peak hours, and SEPTA provides its most frequent service during peak periods. However, **36% of workers commute at other times of day**, when bus service is less frequent. Workers who commute outside of peak periods are more likely to have lower incomes and are also more likely to have works shifts that change day-to-day or week-to-week.

Many people who are more likely to use transit are also more likely to rely on service outside of traditional peak hours:

- Residents with no or limited access to a vehicle rely on transit for most types of trips, not just work trips.
- Low-wage, Black, and Hispanic workers are more likely to have varying schedules, less likely to work from home, and less likely to adhere to a "9 to 5" work schedule.
- Women, especially those with children or other dependents, make more trips in general, are more likely to chain multiple trips together, and are more likely to work multiple jobs.



Non-Traditional Commuters

Share of commuters leaving for work outside the A.M. peak (before 6 a.m. or after 9 a.m.)
Regional mean: 34%

Off-peak commuters proportion

- 0% - 14%
- 14% - 29%
- 29% - 43%
- 43% - 57%
- 57% - 70%

Transit Routes

- SEPTA Rail
- SEPTA Bus
- SEPTA Trolley
- Market-Frankford Line
- Broad Street Line
- Norristown High Speed Line

Bus Revolution

Miles 0 1 2

Data Sources: American Community Survey 2019 5-year estimates

PART II

Opportunities

1. Make Service Faster and More Reliable

2. Improve Service Design

3. Better Match Service with Demand

4. Provide More Frequent Weekday Off-Peak and Weekend Service

This section presents four key opportunities to improve the SEPTA bus system. For each opportunity, we explain why it's important, what it means for riders, and how we can get it done.

OPPORTUNITY 1

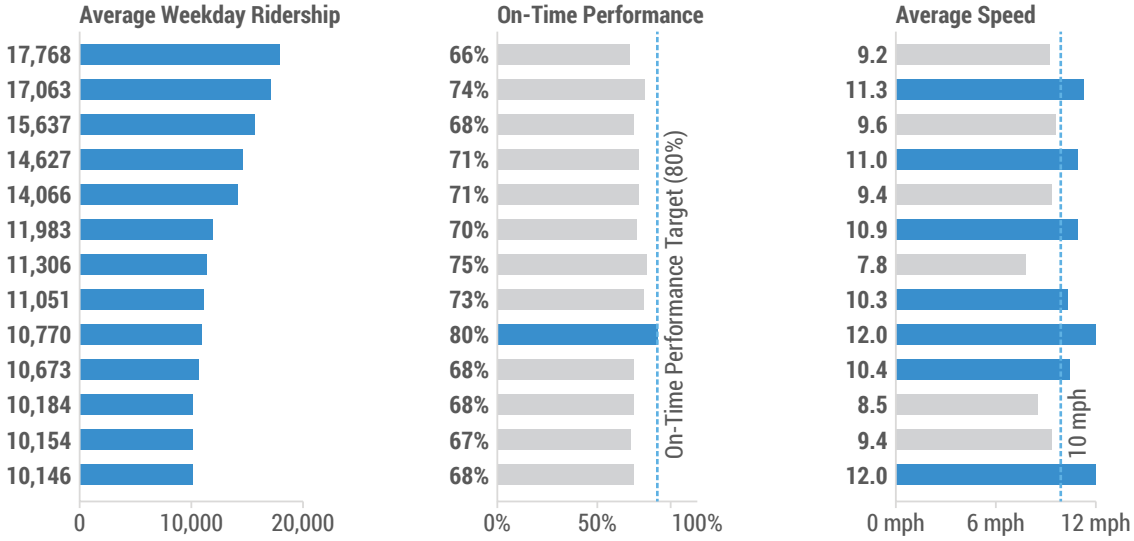
Make Service Faster and More Reliable

Faster, more reliable service is important because it helps people get places quickly and on time. This is underscored by community input: The most common complaint we get about SEPTA bus service is that it is slow and unreliable. Our data bear this out:

Among the 13 busiest bus routes (10,000+ daily boardings) ...

1 ... only 1 passes our reliability target ...

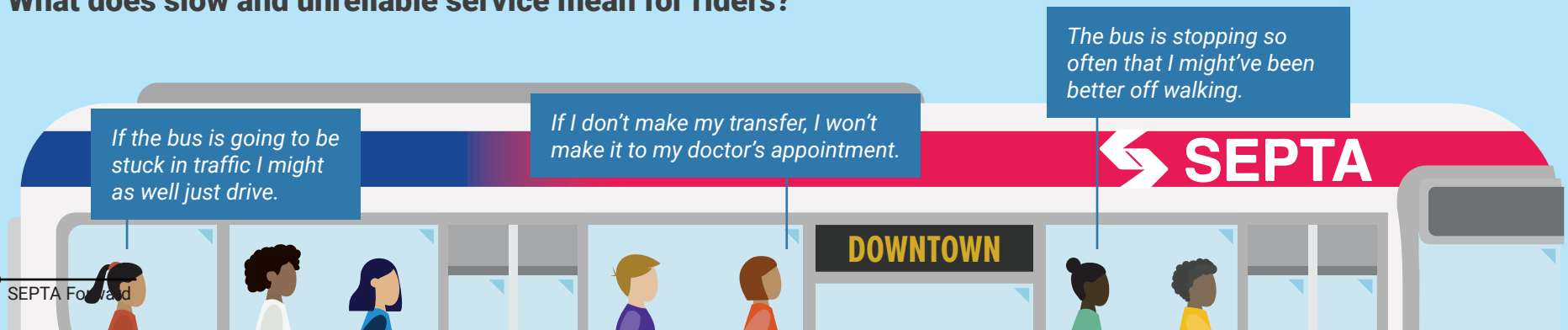
7 ... and only 7 have an average speed greater than 10 mph.



Highest Ridership Routes *(10,000+ Average Weekday Boardings)*

47	Whitman Plaza to 5th-Godfrey
G	Overbrook to Columbus Commons or Food Distribution Center
23	Center City to Chestnut Hill
18	Fox Chase to Cedarbrook Plaza
52	49th-Woodland to 54th-City or 50th-Parkside
56	23rd-Venango and Bakers Centre to Torresdale-Cottman
33	Penn's Landing to 23rd-Venango
26	Chelten Av Station to Frankford Transportation Center
66	Trackless Trolley/Frankford-Knights to Frankford TC
57	Whitman Plaza to Rising Sun-Olney or Fern Rock TC
21	Penn's Landing to 69th Street TC
60	35th-Allegheny to Richmond-Westmoreland
R	Henry-Midvale and Wissahickon TC to Frankford TC

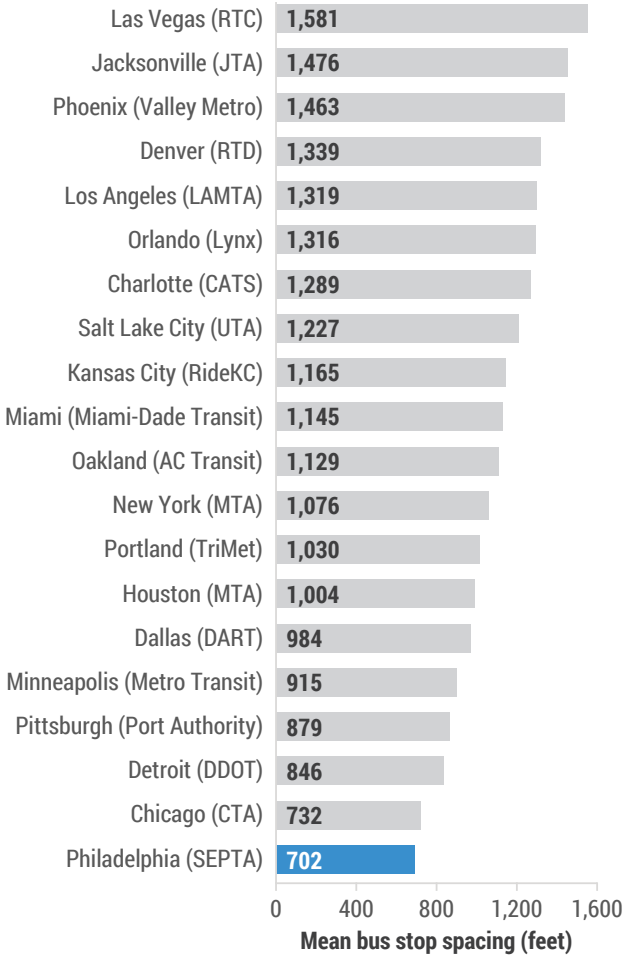
What does slow and unreliable service mean for riders?



What makes buses slow and unreliable?

1. FREQUENT STOPS

SEPTA bus stops are spaced very close together relative to other transit agencies. This close spacing leads to slower, less reliable service.



2. STREETS AND TRAFFIC

Many SEPTA bus routes run on congested, narrow streets with frequent stops, particularly in Philadelphia.

PM Peak Corridor Speeds

Average weighted speed on corridor during Weekday PM Peak hour of 5pm

Corridor Speed (mph)

- < 8
- 8 - 10
- 10 - 12
- 12 - 15
- > 15

Bus Revolution

Miles 0 1 2

Data Sources: SEPTA, Swiftly

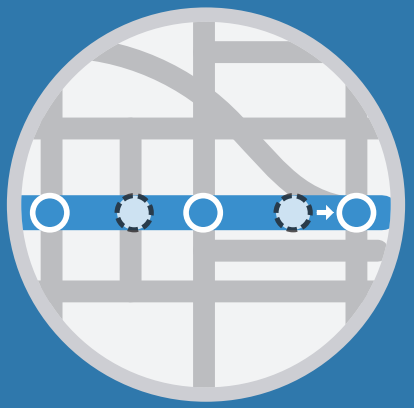
How Could We Get it Done?

Upgrade High-Ridership Routes to Bus Rapid Transit and Rapid Bus

Bus Rapid Transit and Rapid Bus are packages of improvements that make buses faster and more reliable, and improve the overall customer experience. They often include capital investments such as station-like stops with real-time information displays, fare machines, and level boarding.

Implement Transit Priority Measures

Transit priority measures help buses move more quickly along streets and through intersections. Along streets, this means dedicated bus lanes. At intersections this means special traffic lights that prioritize transit ("transit signal priority") and lanes that let buses bypass car traffic ("queue jump lanes").



Consolidate and Rebalance Stops

Consolidating and rebalancing stops means increasing the space between them—by removing or relocating stops—so buses run faster and don't have to stop as often. This aligns with public opinion: roughly two-thirds of people who have participated in SEPTA community engagement have said they are willing to walk slightly farther to a faster bus.

Partnerships are Critical

We can't make bus service faster and more reliable alone. Many of the opportunities to improve speed and reliability require help from the communities where buses operate, such as the City of Philadelphia, and other partners like the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

	SEPTA	PARTNERS
Service upgrades to BRT and Rapid Bus	✓	✓
Development of transit priority	✓	✓
Stop consolidation	✓	
Bus bulbs/curb extensions	✓	✓
Intersection improvements	✓	✓
More direct alignments	✓	
Scheduling improvements	✓	

Regular Bus, Rapid Bus, and BRT

What's the difference between them?

✓ Typical features
✓ Other common features

	Regular Bus	Rapid Bus	Bus Rapid Transit
Service design			
Simple route design	Varies	✓	✓
Less frequent stops		✓	✓
Frequent service	Varies	<15 min	<10 min
Early morning to late night	Varies	✓	✓
Branding			
Special branding		✓	✓
Transit priority			
Transit signal priority		✓	✓
Queue jump lanes		✓	
Exclusive bus lanes			✓
Stops			
Enhanced stops		✓	✓
Real-time passenger information		✓	✓
Off-board fare collection		✓	✓
Level platform boarding			✓
Vehicles			
Unique vehicles		✓	✓
High-capacity buses		✓	✓

Transit Priority Measures

The Philadelphia Transit Plan has identified 21 corridors for bus priority, and this project will likely identify more. Common transit priority measures include dedicated bus lanes, and intersection priority—queue jump lanes and transit signal priority (TSP).

Dedicated Bus Lanes

GRADE-SEPARATED LANES

Grade-separated lanes are fully separated from other motor vehicle traffic—whether elevated, underground, or on rights-of-way reserved only for buses. They are the most effective form of dedicated lane because of virtually no conflicts with other traffic. Grade-separated lanes are the most difficult to implement.

MEDIAN LANES

Median lanes are in the center of the roadway. They're more effective than curbside lanes because there is less conflict with other traffic (e.g., vehicles making right turns). Median lanes are less difficult to implement than grade-separated lanes, but more difficult than curbside and offset lanes.

CURBSIDE LANES

Curbside lanes are dedicated bus lanes along the curb. They can be full- or part-time. Relative to median lanes, they have more conflicts with car traffic turning right. However, they have fewer conflicts than offset lanes. Curbside lanes are relatively easy to implement.

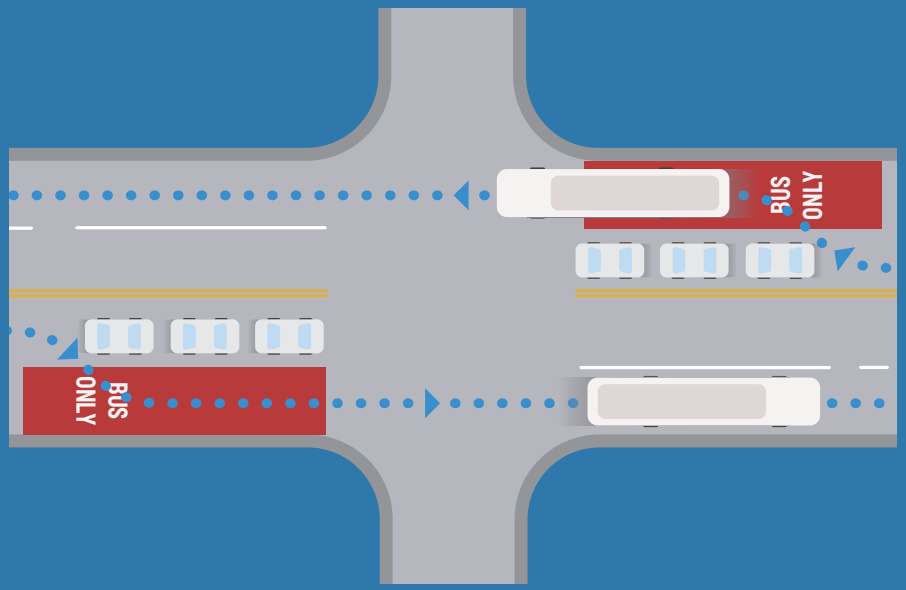
OFFSET LANES

Offset lanes are bus lanes adjacent to curb parking. Relative to curbside lanes, they have more conflicts with cars turning right, as well as cars pulling into and out of parking spaces. Offset lanes are relatively easy to implement.

Intersection Priority

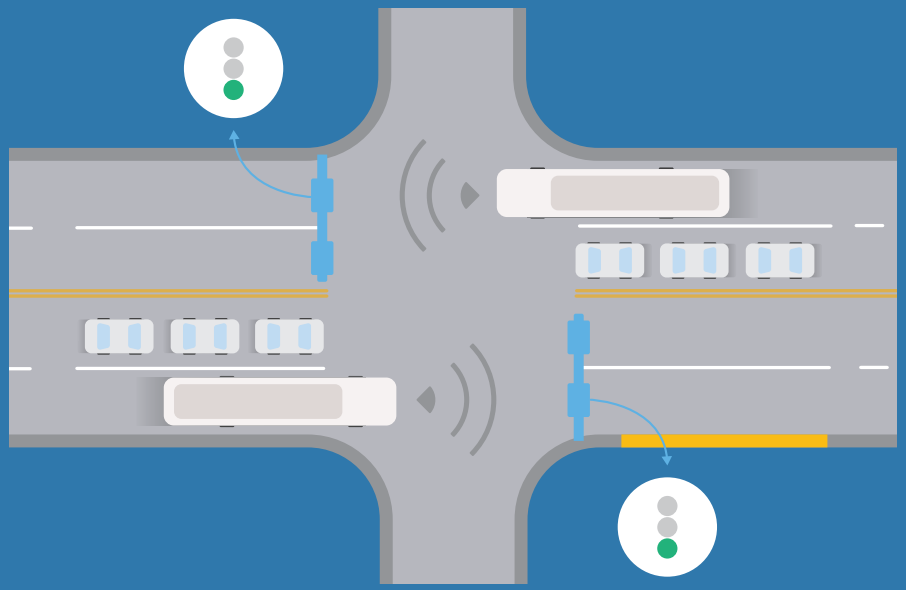
QUEUE JUMP LANES

Queue jump lanes are short, bus-only lanes—or right-turn lanes shared with general traffic—that allow buses to bypass general through traffic. Queue jump lanes are often combined with dedicated transit signals, which give buses a head start on green lights.



TRANSIT SIGNAL PRIORITY

Transit signal priority extends green time for buses so they can make it through an intersection and continue running. This reduces stop time, and leads to faster and more reliable service.

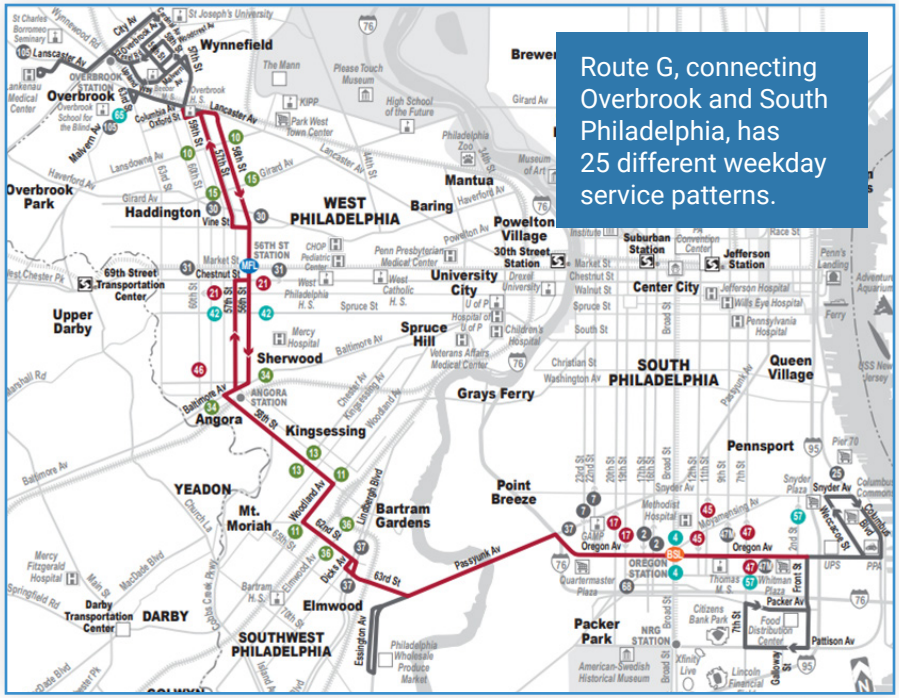


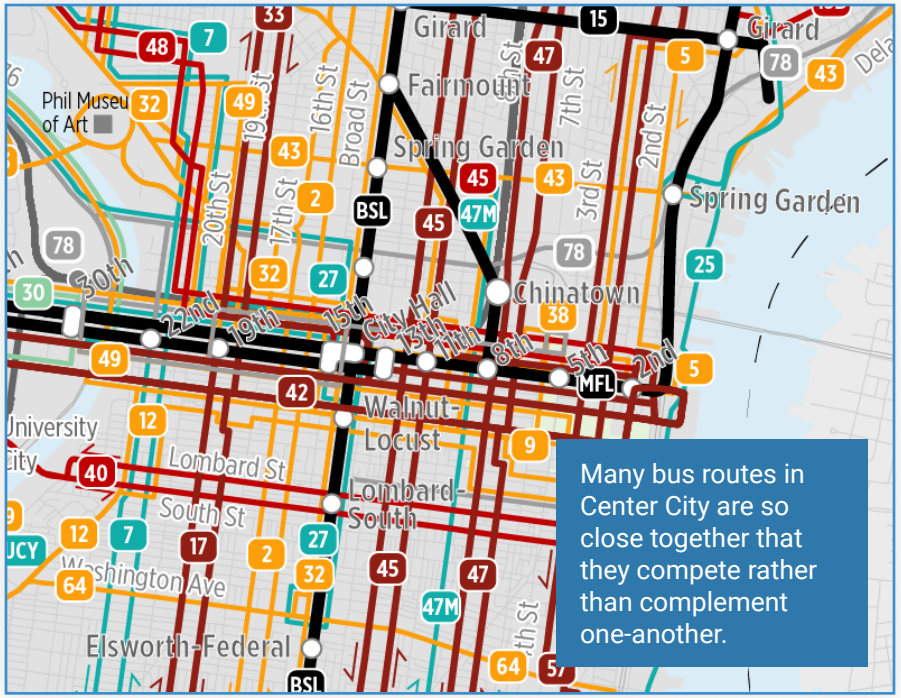
OPPORTUNITY 2

Improve Service Design

Service design is about determining where buses go–and when they go. Improving service design means making bus routes easier to understand, less circuitous, faster, and ultimately more useful.

What are the main service design challenges today?



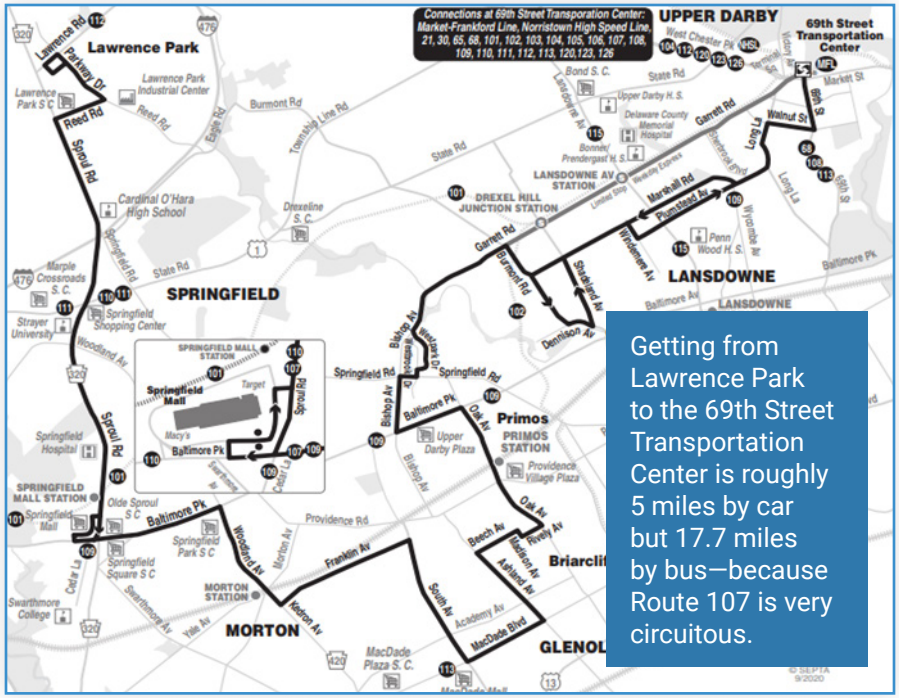


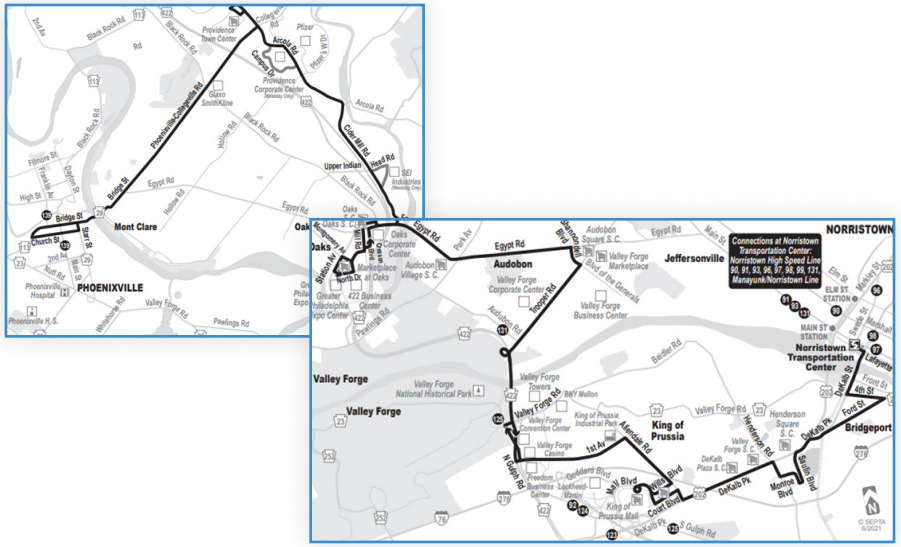
1. ALTERNATIVE SERVICE PATTERNS ARE OFTEN CONFUSING

Many bus routes have alternative service patterns. This means they run on different streets depending on the direction of travel, time of day, or day of the week. These sometimes exist for a good reason, e.g., serving a campus only when it is open. However, they make routes and schedules hard to understand.

2. DUPLICATION CAN MEAN MORE OPTIONS, NOT BETTER OPTIONS

Many SEPTA bus routes run very close to one-another or have long overlapping segments. This usually reduces the time to get to stops, but means buses come less often. Duplicative routes can also compete with one-another, and make the network less legible at a glance.



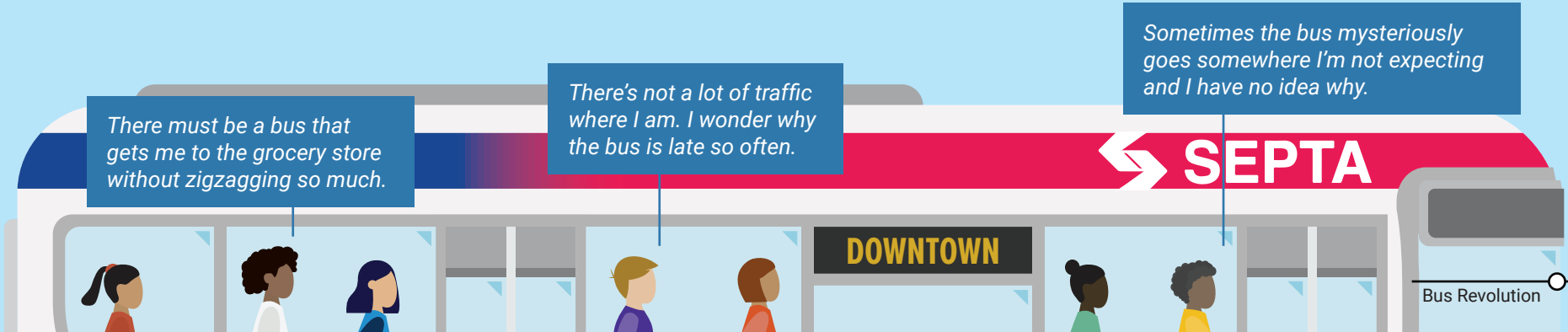


3. CIRCUITOUS ROUTES MAKE TRAVEL TIMES MUCH LONGER

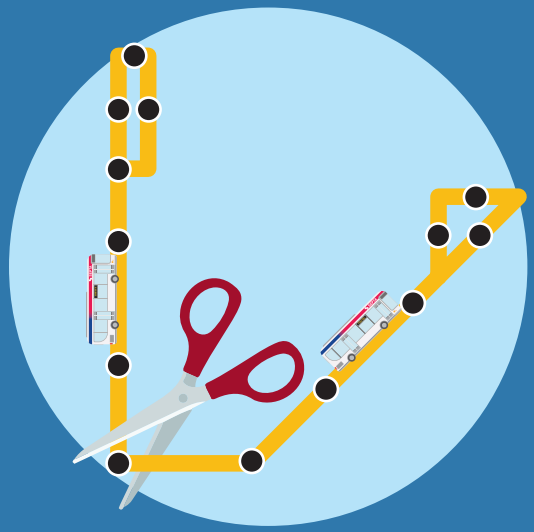
Many bus routes are circuitous: they meander in several directions. This often benefits a small number of passengers by stopping very close to certain destinations. However, circuitous routes make trips much longer and more inconvenient for most passengers.

4. LONG ROUTES ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO DELAYS

Several bus routes are very long, in part due to a legacy policy requiring riders to pay for transfers, which has since been eliminated. However, long routes make service less reliable because delays at the beginning of a trip can persist for the full length of the route.



How Could We Get it Done?

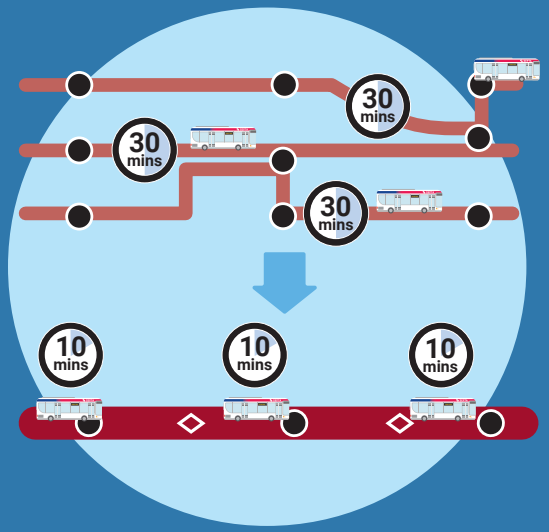


Shorten Routes

Shortening long routes can happen by splitting them into separate routes.

This has two key benefits:

- It reduces the impacts of delays that occur at the beginning of a trip.
- If one half of a long route is much busier than the other half, then splitting the route makes it easier for us to provide more frequent service on the busier half.



Reduce Duplication

Reducing duplication means two separate things:

- Reducing the number of routes that provide overlapping service.
- Relying more on transfers, and less on standalone routes that connect small markets directly.

Reducing both types of duplication enables us to provide more frequent service and better target investments in transit priority measures, like bus lanes and signal priority.

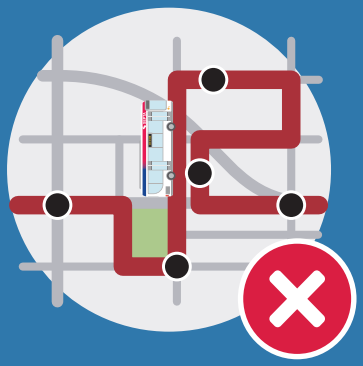
If done thoughtfully, duplication can be reduced without significantly affecting access to transit.

Make Service More Direct

In general, making service more direct means adjusting bus routes to be straighter and easier to understand. This makes them faster and more useful to most passengers.

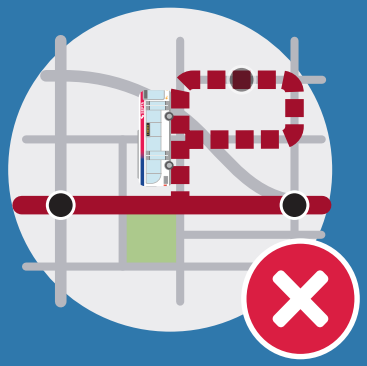
However, some existing passengers rely on circuitous routes precisely because they are indirect. Riders like these can be served by alternative transit models, including microtransit.

What Makes a Good Bus Route?



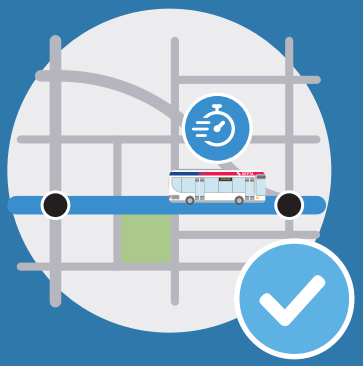
AVOID COMPLICATED ROUTING

A simpler route will attract more riders than a complex one.



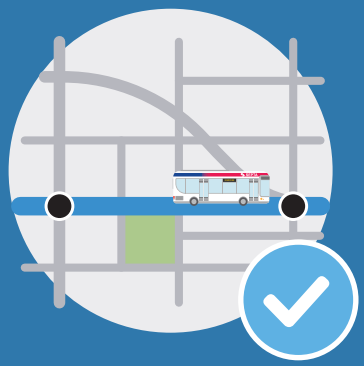
AVOID ALTERNATIVE PATTERNS

Only use alternative patterns when there is a very sound reason



FAST IS BETTER THAN SLOW

Virtually all passengers prefer to get places faster rather than slower



BE AS DIRECT AS POSSIBLE

Avoid deviating from the most direct path unless there is a compelling reason

STAY ON MAIN STREETS WHEN POSSIBLE

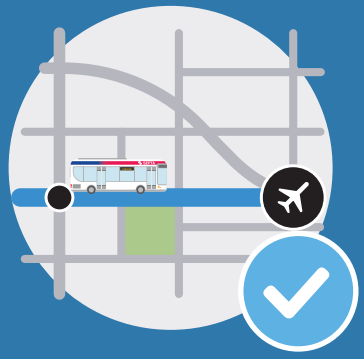
Keep routes on main streets to make transit service easier to understand and operate

BETTER CHOICES, NOT MORE CHOICES

Providing better service on fewer routes provides more riders with better options

SERVE WELL-DEFINED MARKETS

Service configured around clearly defined markets is easier to understand, reduces duplication, and can form the basis for premium services



OPERATE TO AND FROM STRONG ANCHORS

Anchor routes with major destinationsat one or both ends

OPPORTUNITY 3

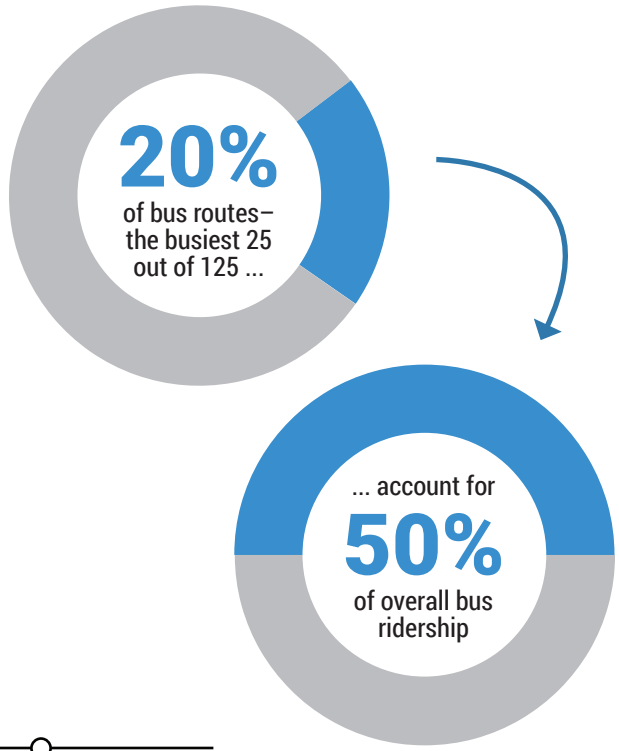
Better Match Service with Demand

Service should typically match demand: buses should come more frequently on routes that many people use, and less frequently on routes that are less busy. Furthermore, the distinction between different types of service–for example, frequent versus less frequent–should be clear to riders.

Why is better matching service with demand important?

THE BUSIEST 25 BUS ROUTES CARRY HALF OF ALL BUS RIDERS ...

Out of 125 bus routes, our 25 highest-ridership routes carry 50% of all bus riders. In most cases (but not all) these routes also have the most frequent service.

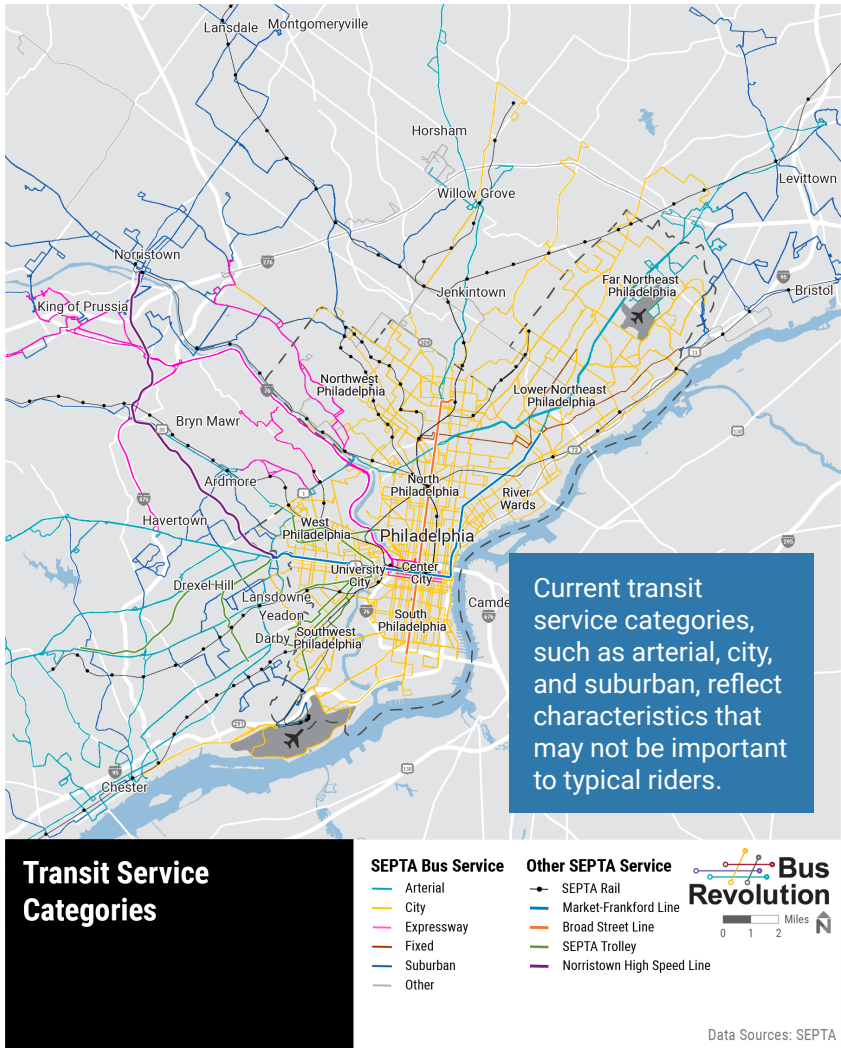


... BUT FREQUENT ROUTES AREN'T IDENTIFIED AS SUCH TO RIDERS

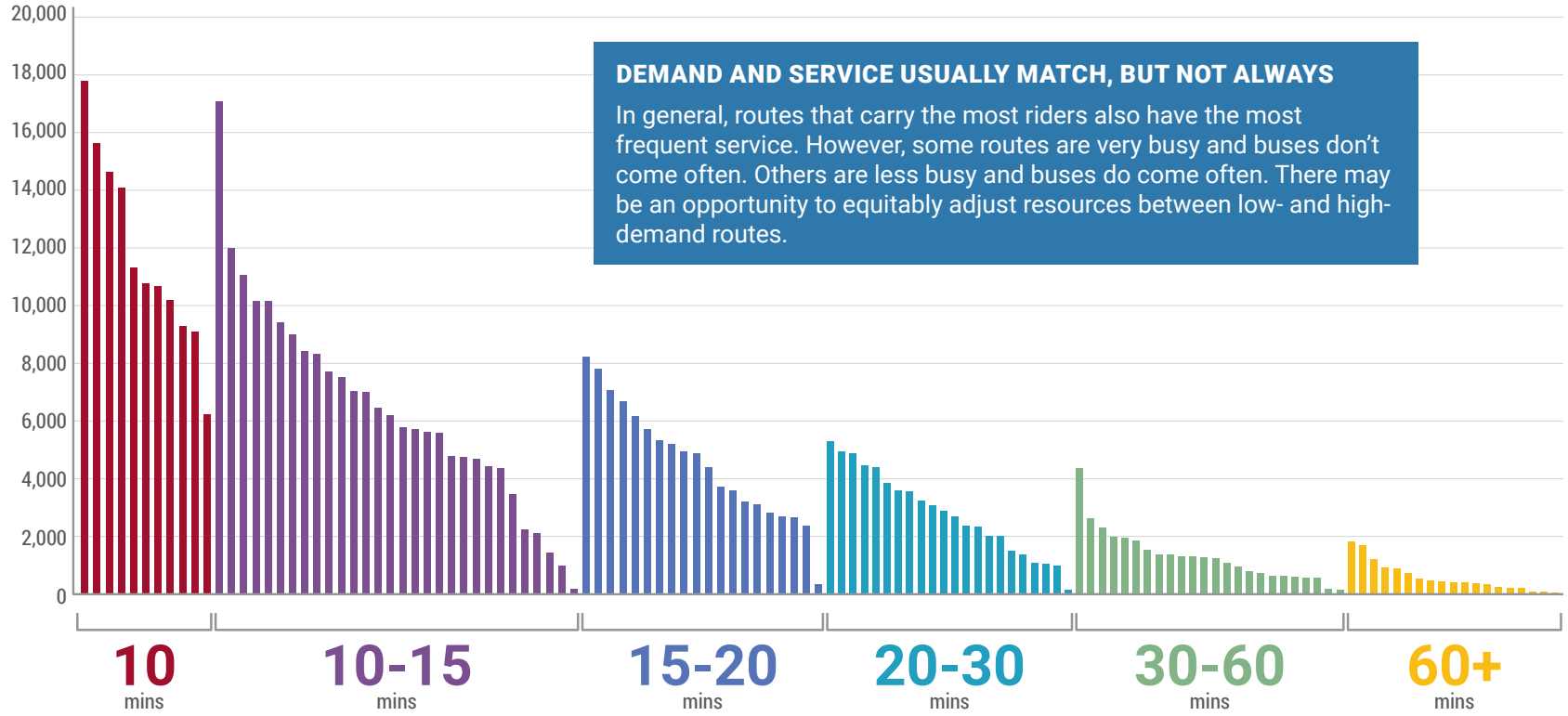
Today, on weekdays between 6 AM and 9 PM, there are 19 routes that continuously provide service every 15 minutes or better. While these frequent routes are mapped, SEPTA has not actively marketed this frequency-based map to riders.

THIS MAKES IT HARD TO DESCRIBE PRIORITIES TO PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The lack of clear definitions and terms about how service names (or brands) work – like frequent, local, express – makes it difficult for us to communicate our priorities to partners and stakeholders.



How many people board the bus on an average weekday?



DEMAND AND SERVICE USUALLY MATCH, BUT NOT ALWAYS

In general, routes that carry the most riders also have the most frequent service. However, some routes are very busy and buses don't come often. Others are less busy and buses do come often. There may be an opportunity to equitably adjust resources between low- and high-demand routes.

How often do buses come on weekdays during midday?

Each bar represents one SEPTA bus route. Individual route numbers are not shown.

What do these challenges mean for riders?

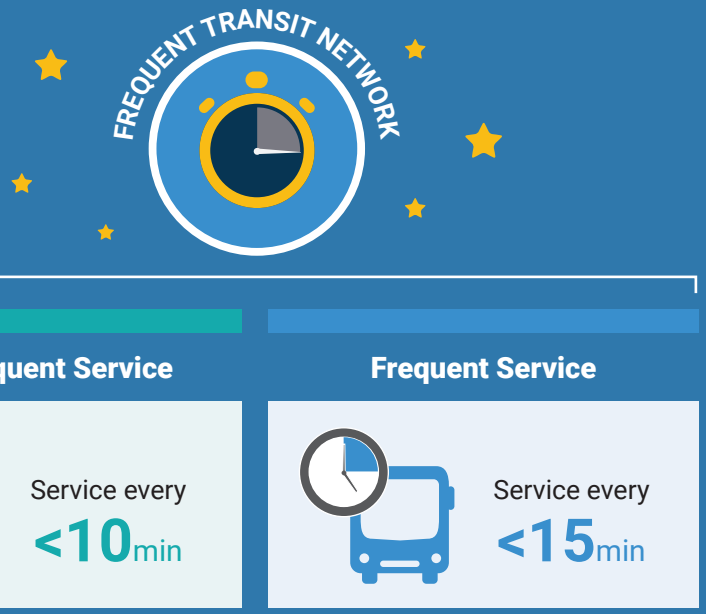
How Could We Get it Done?

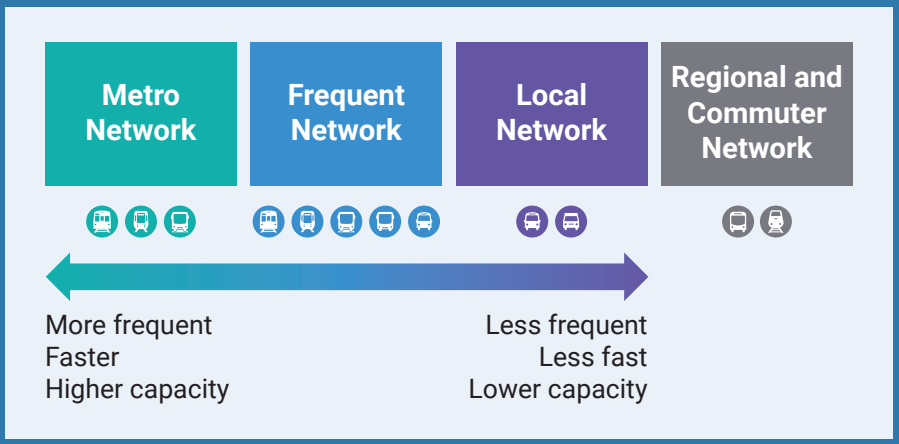
1. Identify and Market a Core Network of Frequent Transit Routes

SEPTA already provides several frequent transit services, including rapid transit lines, rail trolley lines, and bus routes. However, these are not marketed to the community as a cohesive frequent transit network (FTN). Establishing a formal FTN will require two key steps: (1) set definitions of frequent, and (2) communicating the network to riders. Definitions could be, for example:

- **Frequent:** Service every 15 minutes or better, from 6 AM to 9 PM on weekdays
- **Very frequent:** Service every 10 minutes or better, from 6 AM to 9 PM on weekdays

Communicating the network to riders would include changes to rider information materials such as maps, in addition to promotional efforts to increase awareness.





2. Introduce New Service Types and Develop a Family of Services

A "family of services" is a framework for organizing bus routes and services around characteristics like:

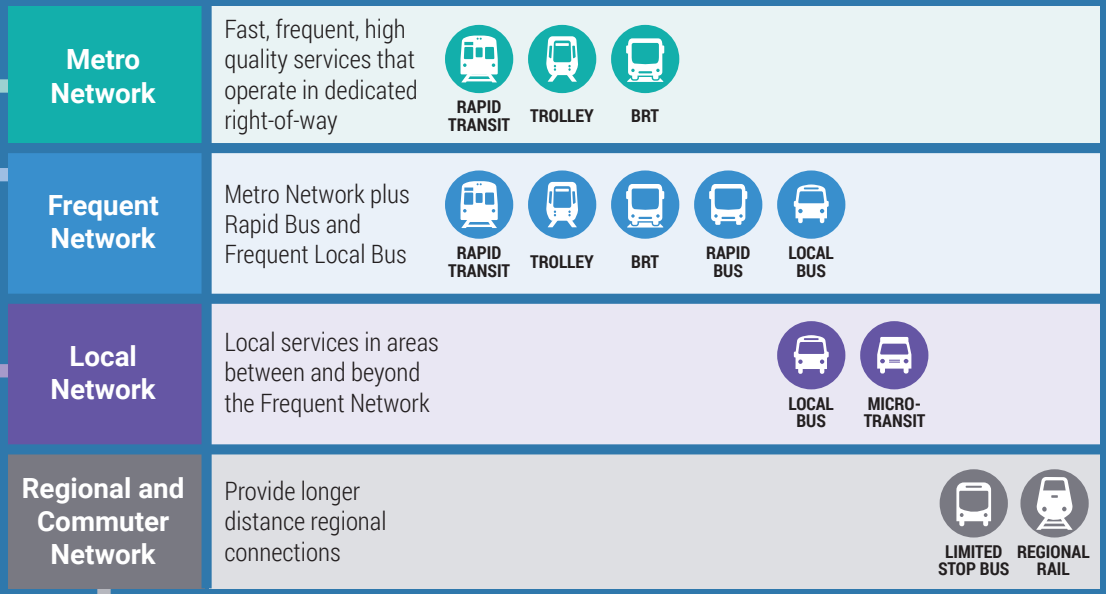
- **Service frequency:** how often the bus comes
- **Speed:** how fast the bus goes
- **Capacity:** how many people the bus can carry

With a family of services in place, riders can more easily understand route features at a glance, such as for example:

- How often the bus typically comes
- Whether service has frequent stops or limited stops
- Whether service is available on weekends
- How late the bus runs at night

It also becomes easier to communicate priorities to partners and stakeholders. For example, it may be easier to justify transit priority measures for a rapid bus route than for a local bus route.

What Might a Family of Services Look Like for SEPTA?



Metro Service

Rapid transit lines (BSL, MFL, NHSL), trolley lines, and possibly bus rapid transit (BRT).

Service every 10 minutes or better for most of the day, running for very long hours, often running 24 hours a day.

Rapid Bus

Routes like BRT but without dedicated travel lanes.

Service typically every 15 minutes or better for most of the day, running for very long hours.

Frequent (Local) Bus

Local bus routes with frequent service.

Service typically every 15 minutes or better for most of the day.

Local Bus

Routes that operate less frequently than every 15 minutes.

This could include subcategories, such as weekday only.

Microtransit

Curb-to-curb service using vans or small buses within a specified service area, such as a neighborhood or local boundary.

On-demand service that operates for designated hours during the day.

Expressway and Limited Stop Bus

Routes that operate less frequently than every 15 minutes.

Service designed around commuter markets with fast, direct service.

Regional Rail

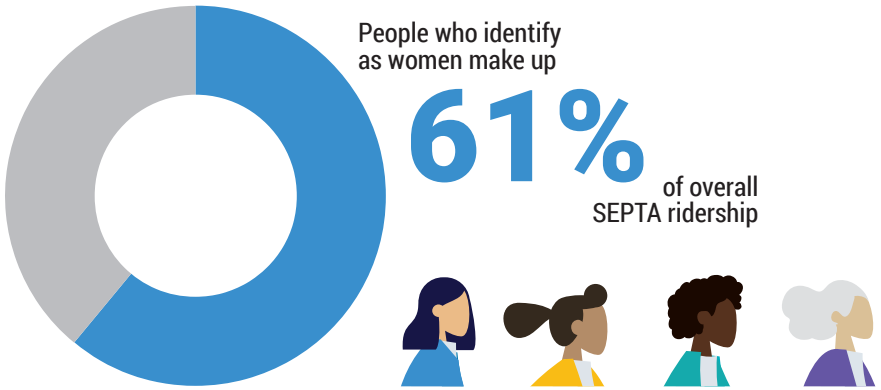
Service determined by our Reimagining Regional Rail Study. Visit planning.septa.org for more information.

OPPORTUNITY 4

Provide More Frequent Weekday Off-Peak and Weekend Service

Off-peak refers to times outside of the typical morning and afternoon rush hour—early morning, midday, evening, night, and weekends. More off-peak service accommodates shifting travel patterns and benefits people who depend on transit most.

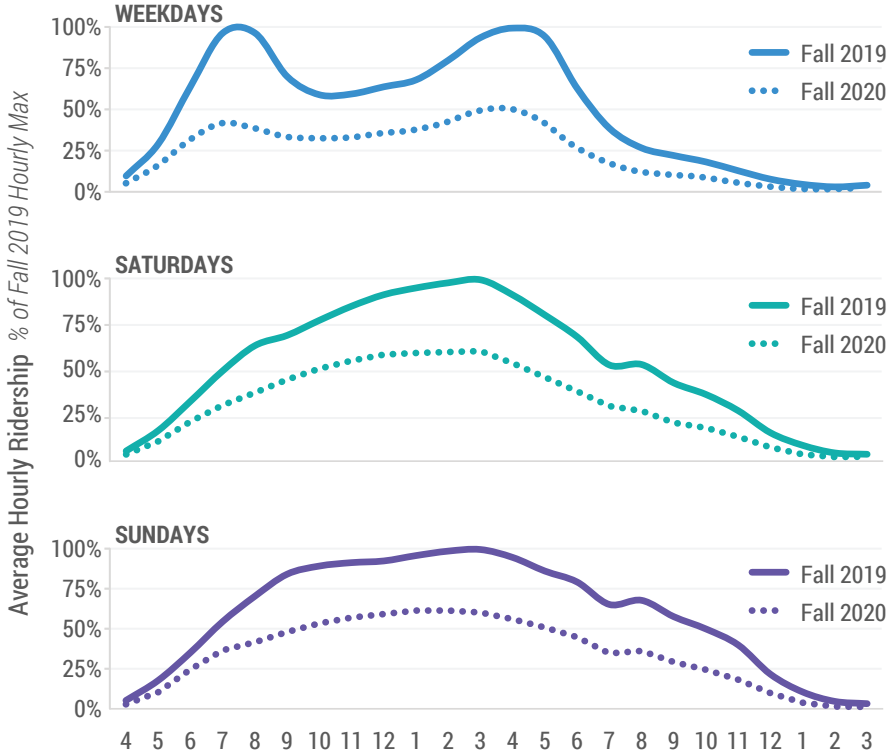
Why is off-peak service important?



WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO TAKE TRANSIT AND TRAVEL OFF-PEAK

The majority of SEPTA riders are women (61%), and women are more likely to be responsible for a greater share of household errands and childcare. Trips for these purposes often take place during off-peak times like midday, evenings, and weekends. Women are also more likely to chain multiple trips together, and more likely to have more than one job.

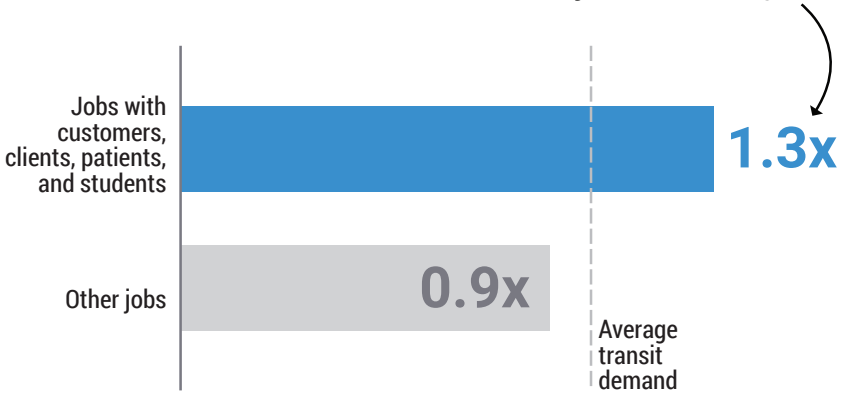
Source: 2017 NHTS



CHANGING WORK-FROM-HOME NORMS ARE EXPECTED TO REDUCE DEMAND FOR TRANSIT DURING PEAK HOURS

Transit demand during peak hours dropped during the pandemic. Many people with traditional work hours will continue to have flexible returns-to-work or permanent work-from-home arrangements. As such, peak period demand is expected to be a lower percent of overall ridership, relative to its pre-pandemic level.

Jobs with customers, clients, patients, and students lead to 1.3x demand for transit relative to jobs on average



OFF-PEAK SERVICE BENEFITS PEOPLE WHO RELY ON TRANSIT

Many people who are more likely to use transit are also more likely to rely on service outside of traditional peak hours:

- Workers who commute outside of peak periods are more likely to have lower incomes.
- Low-wage, Black, and Hispanic workers are more likely to have varying schedules, less likely to work from home, and less likely to adhere to a "9 to 5" work schedule.
- Residents with no or limited access to a vehicle rely on transit for most types of trips, not just work trips.

Source: 2012–2013 DVRPC Regional Household Travel Survey

OFF-PEAK SERVICE BENEFITS CUSTOMERS, CLIENTS, PATIENTS, AND STUDENTS

Jobs that attract customers, clients, patients, and students—which often can't be done remotely—are 30% more likely to attract transit trips than jobs overall. These jobs may not have regular hours, and the trips made by customers, clients, patients, and students aren't associated with AM peak or PM peak times.

Source: DVRPC Census Transportation Planning Products

What does this mean for existing and potential riders?

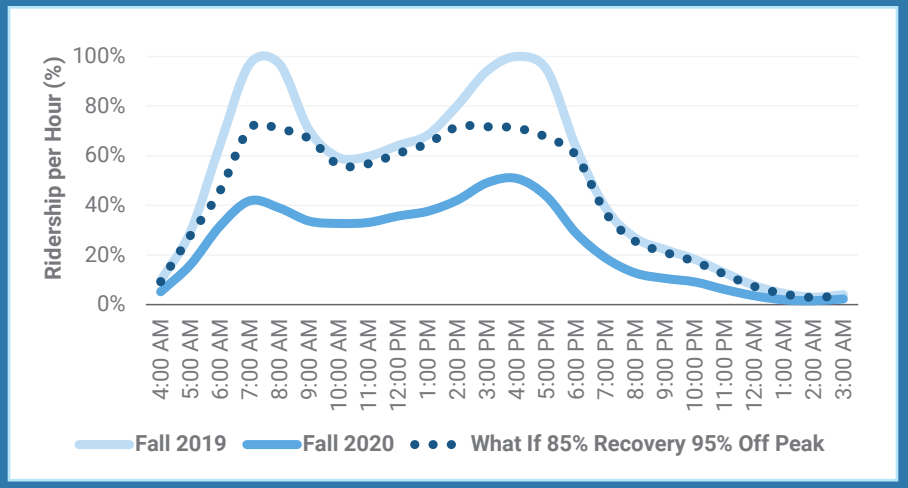
How Could We Get it Done?

We can get this done by investing in more service outside of peak times. This can occur in part by shifting resources from peak hour service. In particular, relative to pre-COVID service, we can focus more resources on:

- The "shoulders" of the peaks, i.e., the time immediately before and after peaks
- Midday
- Weekends

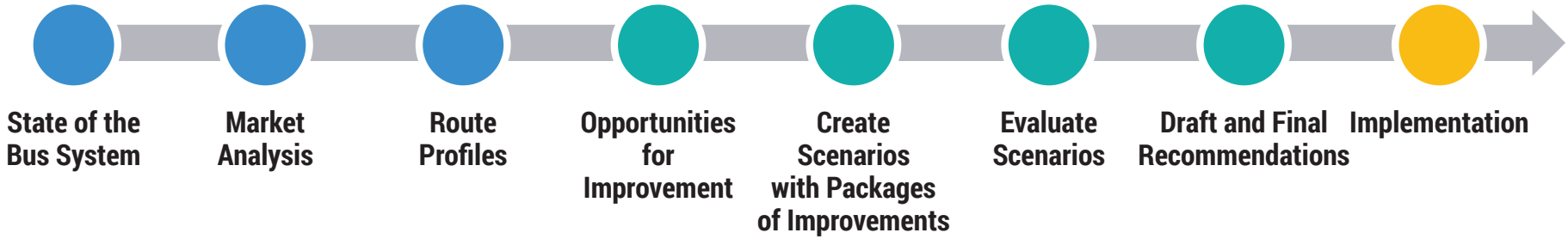
The chart to the right shows a SEPTA model transit demand by time of day, where peak demand is expected to be lower than it was before the pandemic.

Increasing off-peak and weekend service will better match anticipated changes in work and travel patterns, and make transit more attractive for a wide variety of people.



What's Next for SEPTA Bus Revolution?

This summary of the State of the Bus System and Market Analysis—along with detailed profiles of each individual SEPTA route—set the stage for developing Bus Revolution strategies.



Recent Community Engagement

We've begun discussing the Bus Revolution with riders, stakeholders, and SEPTA staff including bus drivers—as part of our preliminary community engagement efforts. These initial conversations focused on understanding core community values regarding how bus services should be organized and structured. To date, we've interacted with over 2,000 bus riders and received over 7,000 surveys.

Next Steps

We will combine this community input with our technical efforts, to refine our opportunities for improvement. Then we will create options (or "scenarios") with packages of improvements.

Following additional community input—plus a technical evaluation of the scenarios—we will move forward with recommended strategies and begin implementation in 2023.

Join the Conversation!

We want to hear from you! There are many opportunities to get involved.

Visit septabusrevolution.com for the latest information on the SEPTA Bus Revolution—including ways to get involved.

Join the Conversation!

We want to hear from you! There are many opportunities to get involved.

Visit septabusrevolution.com for the latest information on the SEPTA Bus Revolution—including ways to get involved.

SEPTA FORWARD >>>
Bus Revolution

SEPTA