



## **ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY CENTER**

**Testimony to the Chicago City Council Committee on Pedestrian & Traffic Safety  
Subject Matter Hearing on Bus Infrastructure  
Lena G. Reynolds, ELPC - Monday July 29, 2024**

Hello, my name is Lena Guerrero Reynolds. I'm a Communications & Policy Advocate with the Environmental Law & Policy Center. I'm here to speak about two kinds of bus infrastructure: the city bus and the intercity bus, which are critical for the future of our city.

Transportation is a leading source of carbon emissions and many other air pollutants in Illinois, led by personal passenger vehicles. Public transportation is the solution, but especially the bus.

By moving 40 people instead of 1 or 2 in cars, a bus creates far less emissions per passenger, and is more space efficient in a dense urban environment. About half of all transit trips in Chicagoland are served by CTA buses alone. That's 5x more trips than all of Metra, and connects many neighborhoods beyond the L. Every time someone takes the bus instead of a car, there's less air pollution, less traffic, and healthier communities.

But when buses get stuck in traffic, they're slow & unreliable. That pushes people to drive & makes more traffic! We must make the bus experience better to break the vicious cycle. Bus Rapid Transit can set the city bus free, with dedicated lanes and accessible stations that are far faster and more affordable to build out than train improvements.

Chicago should know all this already. We've been talking about it for years, but we've yet to see a real BRT route come to life, much less an interconnected network that could improve mobility citywide.

Let's look at some Midwest neighbors. After Cleveland, Ohio launched its Healthline BRT system in 2008, ridership jumped 47% in 1 year. Grand Rapids, Michigan launched the Silver Line BRT in 2014. It decreased travel time from 47 to 27 minutes & increased ridership by 40%. Milwaukee, Kansas City, Columbus, the Twin Cities, and more all have bus rapid transit systems, and we are falling behind our peers and failing our fellow Chicagoans if we neglect to do so.

Next, the intercity bus, which has some of the same benefits to get people out of cars and reduce transportation emissions. But here our existing bus infrastructure is at risk. Our Greyhound station sold to a private developer, so we expect a condo high-rise proposed for the land, once the lease ends this October.

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Greyhound is just one of several intercity bus companies that have used this station. with a peak of 82 daily buses, carrying over 500,000 people, to far more destinations than Amtrak.

Maybe you're not a fan of the current station and think we could find a better spot. But the reality is that there's no viable alternative we can secure by October. There is not enough space at Union Station. If the current one shuts, dozens of bus runs could cease to operate, passengers would be confused and lost, in the rain and snow out on street corners.

Chicago must purchase or lease the station, to at least have time to study the best solution. These buses serve folks with lower incomes, less access to cars, and higher unemployment than average. They deserve dignity and safe travel too. People with disabilities, students getting to school, women seeking reproductive healthcare, LGBT homeless youth, and domestic violence survivors are just a few of the thousands who depend on this station now and don't deserve to be kicked to the curb.

So please, set the city bus free from traffic, and protect the intercity bus as a lifeline for our most vulnerable travelers.