



BRT Moving Slower than Molasses

Posted by [Glenn](#) on April 19, 2006 - 12:31pm in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

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Tonight I attended a forum on Bus Rapid Transit sponsored by [State Senator Liz Krueger's](#) office and co-sponsored by newly elected councilmembers [Lappin & Garodnick](#), [CIVITAS](#) and [Transportation Alternatives](#) as well as other local elected officials and community board members. There was even a representative from Borough President Scott Stringer's office.

First to present their side were a collection of folks from the MTA, city DOT and state DOT. The first disappointment to most of the people in attendance was that despite the broad-based community support for faster, more efficient and higher quality bus services all that is being discussed by city/state/MTA officials is a **STUDY** that will examine 15 routes to pick **JUST 5** in June 2007 and then (assuming the planets are aligned) to implement by late 2008.

They have been dragging this study out for years. People are starting to get frustrated at the lack of progress and continuing uncertainty around the actual implementation. And you could almost understand the time to plan this out if their plan was even semi-ambitious, but alas it's about as minimal as BRT can get and even still honestly call it "BRT".

Their basic proposal would be to reclaim some parking spaces around the station (which would be about half the block). The stations which would offer pre-paid boarding waiting areas will be spaced out even more than the current "limited" bus lines - for the East Side I guess that would be similar to the express 4/5 trains: 125th, 86th, 59th, 42nd, 14th, etc.

And it would only have one dedicated bus lane on the right side of the street. As far as I could see, their plan mostly relied on signage and markings on the street to define the bus lane which is really no better than we currently have and probably unenforcable. Much of the rest of their presentation focused on how important it is to market and brand the BRT system, which is great and all, as long as it doesn't take one more day to implement. In the Q&A, they said the delay had to do with collecting a massive amount of data on parking patterns, which seems to suggest that they seem overly concerned about the dozens of people in cars illegally parking in the bus lane during rush hour over the tens of thousands that take buses on the M15.

Then Paul Steely White from Transportation Alternatives and [Bruce Schaller](#) each gave presentations which looked at international examples of good BRT that mostly have two physically separated bus lanes - one for local stops, one for express stops.

Frankly, it's time for some of the planning to be tested in the real world. It's time for a BRT pilot or two within 6 months and then a planned expansion to all 15 lines within a few year. This would give many underserved areas of the city that mostly rely on cars access to higher quality mass transit and connections to key transportation hubs. This would put into place a more efficient infrastructure as energy prices continue to increase.



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