Coalition for Smarter Growth
DC • MD • VA

How to get better bus service for 16th Street

Rush hour bus lanes

16th Street NW buses are plagued by overcrowding and delays
A rush hour bus lane would greatly improve service

What would a rush hour bus lane on 16th street NW do?

A dedicated bus lane operating during rush hour in the peak direction would keep buses from getting stuck in traffic. Buses in dedicated lanes would avoid traffic delays, move at increased speeds, and arrive on time. This means more reliable, regular service, and less overcrowding for riders.

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) 2013 study **recommended a rush hour bus lane** as the best way to speed up commutes and get people where they want to go quickly on 16th Street. But implementation is stalled. We need to tell DC officials that we want better bus service NOW.

Did you know?

- Half of all people traveling during rush hour on 16th Street are riding in a bus.
- While Metrobus carries half of all travelers on 16th Street, buses make up only 3% of the traffic during rush hour.
- The 16th Street bus line is one of the biggest bus lines in the entire region. It carries more than 21,000 weekday riders.
- Riders experience chronic overcrowding, delays, bus bunching, and buses not stopping to pick up passengers.
- A dedicated bus lane would increase travel speeds by 30% and reduce overcrowding.

Sign the Petition

www.smartergrowth.net/buslanespetition

Questions?

Contact action@smartergrowth.net

Frequently Asked Questions

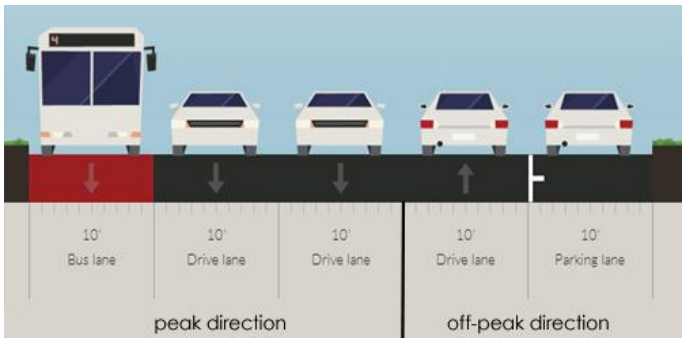
Q: Is this ever really going to happen?
A: With your help, yes! A dedicated rush hour bus lane is already identified as the best next step for 16th Street by a DDOT study. It's also part of the long term vision in the city's MoveDC transportation plan.

Q: How long would the bus lane be? Will it fit along the whole corridor?
A: The proposed bus lane would run from Arkansas Avenue south to downtown (H Street NW) for 2.7 miles. The road width can accommodate 3 peak-direction travel lanes and 2 non-peak direction lanes along the entirety of this stretch.

Q: Will bicycles be allowed? How about taxis? Can cars turn right?
A: Yes for bikes; probably no for taxis; and yes for right turning vehicles. For taxis, a more detailed study will determine if they would interfere with the purpose of the transit lane to reduce delay for buses.

Q: What else is being done or could be done to make bus service work better on 16th Street?
A: The big improvement started when Metro added the limited-stop S9 bus in 2009. With this service, ridership soared by 25%. Recently, more buses were added for the lower and most crowded segment of the route. Metro is also beefing up supervisors along the route who help smooth out service. Within 2 years, DC will implement transit signal priority, which keeps buses from getting stuck at intersections by red lights. Off-board fare collection, starting and enforcing rush hour parking restrictions sooner, and running more articulated (extra long) buses would also reduce delay and increase capacity.

Q: Will it take lanes away from cars? Will it take away parking?
A: From Arkansas Avenue to U Street, during rush hour, the curb lane would be repurposed as a dedicated bus lane, while keeping the other 2 lanes for mixed traffic in the peak direction. Since there's no parking in either direction during rush hour now, this doesn't take any parking away. South of U Street, the street could be restriped from the current 4 lanes to 5 lanes to allow 1 bus lane, 2 lanes of mixed traffic, and keep the non-peak side the same – with one lane for traffic, and one lane for parking (see picture).



Q: How will it impact traffic congestion for cars and trucks?
A: Motorists will experience slightly more traffic congestion at some intersections, but overall capacity for people using the corridor will increase and will serve unmet demand. Cars and trucks will still move through 16th Street corridor within acceptable congestion levels, based on DDOT and industry standards for levels of traffic delay.

Q: How will the transit lanes be enforced?
A: First, a bus-only lane is distinguished by running enough buses on it. The current number of 16th Street rush hour buses is 27-37 buses per hour, which is considered to be sufficient to claim the lane from mixed traffic. Signage and pavement markings will tell all users that the bus lane is for buses only (bikes will be okay). Second, traffic control officers (TCOs) and police patrol-based enforcement are generally used for enforcement which results in a moving violation for the offender. Automated photo enforcement is used in London, New York and Sydney. New York, Paris, and San Francisco are piloting on-board bus cameras. The current fine for parking in a bus lane or zone in DC is $100. However, DC does not have a law against driving in bus-only lanes. This would need to be changed to ensure enforcement of bus lanes.