



Bus trips on north Mass Ave faster, more consistent with bus lanes

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The information on this page may be outdated as it was published 2 years ago.

Bus riders on north Massachusetts Avenue experience faster, more consistent travel times after the City of Cambridge installed bus lanes in 2021, according to a new analysis.

The analysis shows that average travel time for Route 77 buses between Dudley Street and Alewife Brook Parkway significantly decreased after bus lanes were added. Bus travel times also became more consistent and predictable throughout the day.

Read the Analysis



[View larger map.](#)

The City of Cambridge installed dedicated bus lanes and separated bike lanes between Dudley Street and Alewife Brook Parkway on North Mass Ave in late 2021.

Between May 2019 and May 2022, bus travel times along this route decreased significantly, according to MBTA data.

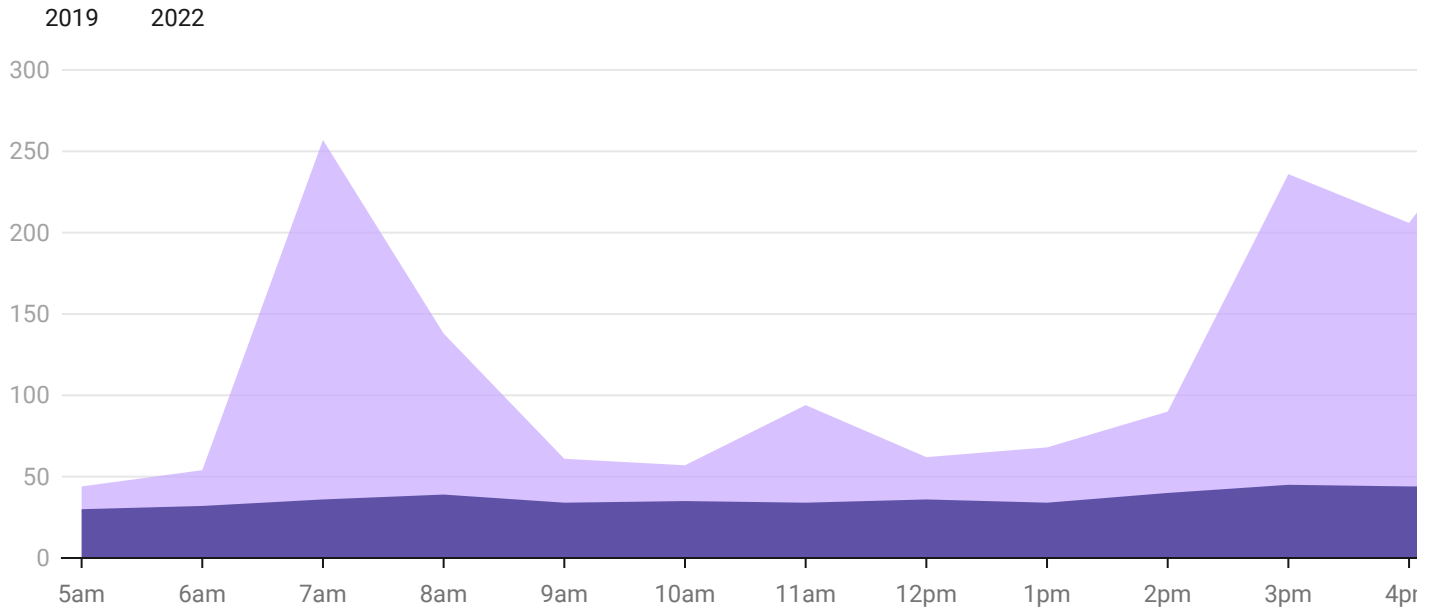
- Inbound buses (headed toward Harvard while the dedicated bus lane was in effect) traveled **31 percent faster** on average
- Outbound buses (headed toward Arlington in the dedicated bus lane) traveled **40 percent faster** on average.

Travel times also became less variable—meaning that the time spent sitting on the bus was more consistent and predictable for riders.

- In May 2019, a bus traveling the quarter mile between Cameron Avenue and Churchill Avenue could take anywhere from 44 seconds to over five minutes on a typical day, depending on traffic levels.
- In May 2022, about six months after the City installed bus lanes, the same trip ranged from 23 seconds to 45 seconds on an average day.

Typical Travel Times from Cameron to Churchill Improved

Median outbound travel times, in seconds, from the Cameron Avenue bus stop to Churchill Avenue bus stop.



Source: [Cambridge Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Improved Service

The MBTA calls Route 77 a “[key route](#)” and the current [Bus Network Redesign proposal](#) includes more frequent service in the future. But [data from 2017](#) showed trips frequently running behind schedule.

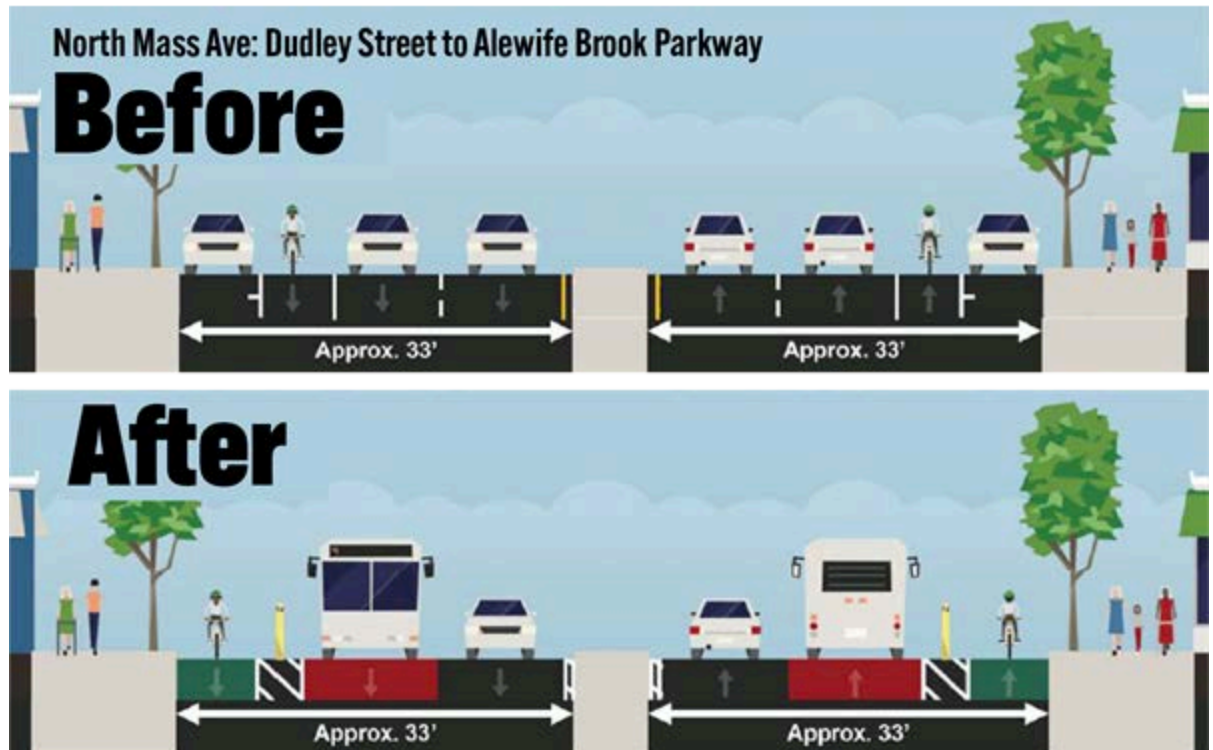
Before lanes went in, buses carrying dozens of people were stuck behind cars typically carrying one or two people. Bus riders had to plan for delay and leave early to get to their destinations on time. Taking away some of that uncertainty with a bus lane gives riders back extra time at home and reduces the stress of missing transfers or being late to important appointments.

And the bus lanes aren’t only used by MBTA buses– school buses, emergency vehicles, and commuter shuttles are also reaping the time-savings benefits. School bus pick up and drop off times are more consistent and it’s easier for emergency vehicles to respond without delay.

Reimagining the Street

Cambridge redesigned North Mass Ave as part of the [Cycling Safety Ordinance](#), which requires the installation of about 25 miles of separated bike lanes, including along all of Mass Ave. When the City started planning to put quick-build separated bike lanes on the part of the street leading to the Alewife Brooke Parkway, there was also an opportunity to improve reliability and reduce delay for Route 77 buses.

Before
the
North
Mass
Ave



project, each side of the street had two travel lines, a conventional bike lane, and a curbside parking/loading lane.

After changes, each side of the street includes a separated bike lane, a single general-purpose travel lane, and a dedicated bus lane.

- The inbound bus lane (headed toward Harvard) is bus-only in the mornings before 9 a.m. and can be used for parking and loading from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- The outbound bus lane (headed toward Arlington) is bus-only 24/7.

Making Transit a Reliable, Easy Choice in Cambridge

Cambridge has a policy of improving transit so that it is a reliable, easy choice. [Bus priority projects](#) like this one improve the experience for people who rely on transit to get around. Essential workers, people with low incomes, people of color, older adults, students, and people with disabilities disproportionately rely on bus service.

Cambridge works to improve the transit experience not only to serve existing riders, but also to add new ones. Making it more attractive to ride the bus encourages people to take transit instead of drive – and fewer people driving means lower greenhouse emissions, improved air quality, and less traffic congestion.

Learn More

Interested in digging in more? [Read the full analysis](#) for more data and visit the links below to learn more about:

- [North Mass Ave Project](#)
- [Bus Priority in Cambridge](#)
- [Cycling Safety Ordinance](#)

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