

Public Comment
Transportation Policy and Planning Board
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Routing Buses Off the Square The Transportation Policy and Planning Board should make a clear policy on when buses should be rerouted off the Square. At present, there is no clear policy, leaving Metro to reroute buses for short-term gain on an ad hoc basis without any clear guidance as to how its actions fit into a larger scheme of things. This is hurting Metro service while a policy could strengthen it.

Transportation planners have long punted the issue, creating an unfair situation for Metro planners. A prime example was outlining possible BRT routes back in 2013 or so with the assistance of Nelson/Nygaard. The Metro planner at the time wanted the BRT route to bypass the Square, noting a variety of reasons to do so. The BRT oversight committee demurred, arguing that the square was too important not to include despite problems associated with including it. But the planner was already bypassing the Square under the radar with other routes such as the #10, 28 and 38 and had neither expected opposition nor recognized why people wanted service on the Square. He had just expected his plan to get adopted.

The latest example of which I am aware refers to the rerouting of the peak hour #11. Without going into detail, the bus would be rerouted on the Near West side to provide residences greater access. But the same plan would reroute the bus off the Square to make up for the extra time that required, thereby restricting access to employment centers downtown and undermining its intent of providing greater access. The net change is therefore negative whereas a broader, system-level view would enhance access everywhere. The TPPB needs to provide that larger perspective.

This is not a simple issue because there are pros and cons of rerouting buses away from the Square. An ad hoc committee that met a few times before issuing a report might be in order. There are issues of speed, parking, the importance of transit as an employment facilitator, the importance of downtown as a transfer point and more. Metro planners need to follow a clear policy based on a system approach, not an ad hoc one-by-one shortsighted approach.