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# University Avenue Bus Lane

## Metro Bus Accident Prevention Project



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# University Avenue Bus Lane & Intercity/Metro Bus Conflicts

Metro & Traffic Engineering Report

## The Situation:

Currently, the dedicated bus/right turn only lane on University Ave. between Lake and Park St. is used as a loading and unloading zone by several intercity bus companies. This poses several safety concerns and hazards for both Metro Transit buses traveling through the area in-service and westbound bicyclists on University Ave.

## Background:

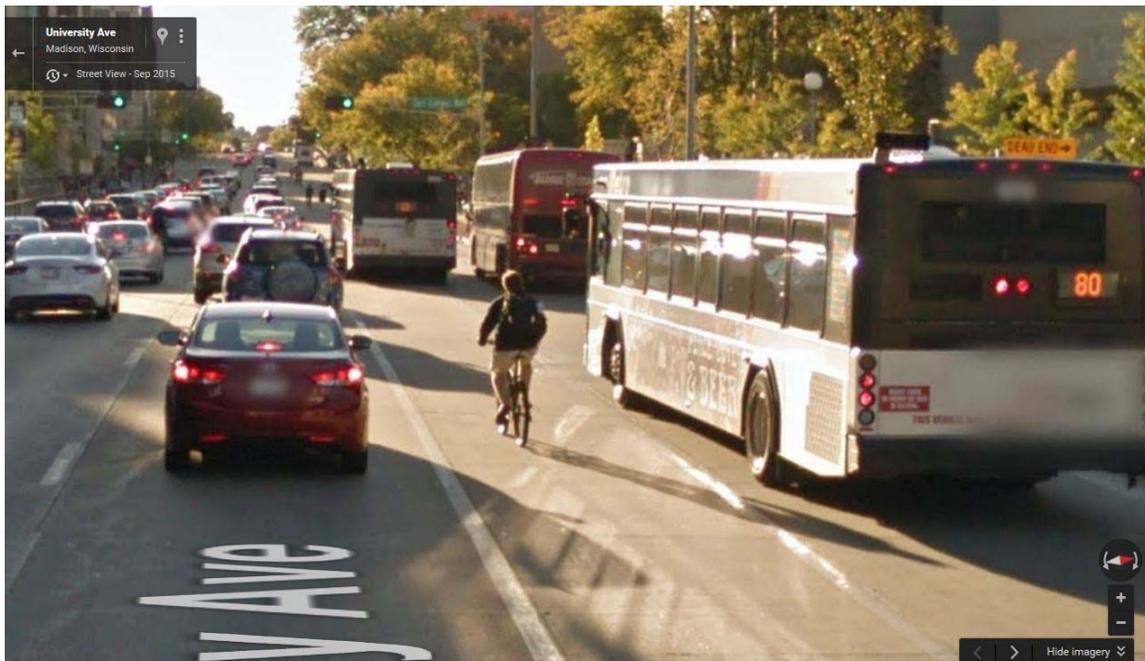
Historically, intercity bus companies utilized the Memorial Union on Langdon St. as a bus stop location. Due to significant, ongoing construction at the Union and on Langdon St, the intercity companies relocated. The nearest and most convenient location was determined to be on University Ave. between Lake St. and Park St. The City and University agreed to allow the buses to stage at this location. In 2015, Metro Transit began analyzing safety hazards and taking a proactive approach to crash prevention as part of building a positive safety culture not only amongst employees but also passengers and members of the community. The University Ave. bus lane hazard was identified both from driver feedback and supervisor observation as a significant risk.

## The Street:

University Ave. is a one-way (westbound) three lane arterial street with a westbound bike lane and a shared bus and right turn only lane. On the South side of University Ave. a contraflow bike lane is provided for eastbound bicyclists. Year 2015 traffic count data for University Ave. provides that approximately 25,350 vehicles, including buses, use this segment of University Ave on an average weekday.

## Current Hazards:

- **Significant safety hazard to bicyclists**
  - Below is a photo from Google Street View. This demonstrates the increased risk to cyclists when buses are forced to move out of the bus lane and into the bike lane. Minimizing the number of times buses are forced to merge, decreases risk of a significant crash.



➤ **Increased risk for traffic crashes**

- There are Metro buses traveling on University Ave between Lake and Park St. about 425 times per day. The University at Park bus stop serves 25 different Metro bus routes. The heavy Metro volume means that generally all staged intercity buses encounter a Metro bus.
- Increased motor vehicle traffic entering and leaving the Chazen parking area dropping and picking up people catching intercity buses. This creates unusual traffic scenarios and increases sudden right turn movements from the traffic lane in front of moving buses.
- Operating buses in the bike lane which is not the same width as a standard traffic lane puts traffic in the general traffic lanes in very close proximity to buses. This can cause some motorists to make sudden lane changes believing that a bus is close causing a “sideswipe” crash.

➤ **Increased line of sight issues around intercity buses**

- Staging intercity buses on both sides of the Chazen driveway approaches creates line of sight issues for motorists attempting to depart the parking area. Motorists are forced to “creep” out between buses and generally are blindly crossing into the bike lane before they are able to see if there are cyclists and or other vehicles approaching.
- Pedestrians are also faced with the same type of visibility issues but the risk is lower due to the East Campus Mall pedestrian crossing.

**Summary:**

Relocation of the intercity bus stop from University Ave. greatly reduces the risk of a crash with significant injury or fatality. The operation and design of the bike lane next to the bus lane was not to provide space for frequent merging and crossing bus movements. Merging into/across the bike lane significantly increases the risk of crashes with both bicyclists and automotive traffic. Cyclists are vulnerable users of the street system the risk for significant injury or death is high with bus-bike crashes. The intent of the University Ave bus lane was and remains to move buses through a high volume corridor in the safest, most efficient way possible. The lane should be restricted to Metro Transit bus usage and right turns only. The relocation of intercity buses will lower the risk of a severe crash, improve traffic and bus operational efficiency, and help create a better, more equitable, transit system.