

Madison's Central Business Improvement District Bus Rapid Transit Statement

June 2021



Madison's Central BID supports Madison's efforts to build a Bus Rapid Transit System which includes a route to and through Downtown Madison. What the BID questions is whether the current proposed route down State Street is an asset or liability to the future of State Street. Our business owners have told us it is the latter. We need to listen to them.

Downtown businesses, property owners, customers, visitors and Madisonians who love and support State Street are concerned for its future. Many of us believe that the planning of the BRT route downtown needs to be chosen based on its impact to not only Metro's needs; but to the economic, structural and community needs of State Street as well.

We are worried about lost economic opportunities and the ability to plan for a more inclusive, diverse downtown if the current BRT route is not rethought.

We have heard from business owners and the community at large that there are significant challenges with locating BRT on State Street. Most significantly the size and the costs of the stations and infrastructure installed will change the pedestrian and retail experience. If BRT runs on State Street this will set the future of the street for at least the next 50 years, with little to no opportunity to creatively envision an active, vibrant future for all. Many downtown businesses are worried about their future and the impact of taking away the valuable pedestrian experience of State Street. A slightly rerouted BRT can serve residents, employees, the UW and businesses and aid in revitalization efforts for State Street.

Downtown Madison is honored to host hundreds of community events each year. State Street was designed to host these events - events that the BID creates, that other organizations host and that have been a fabric of Madison life for decades. Buses will continue to need to be re-routed for these events to thrive. A BRT that has to be re-routed more than 70+ times a year is not a good plan. Why not chose an alternative close by route that does not require riders to find another bus stop when events are held?

We ask the mayor and city leadership to rethink this small area of the BRT line. Look at the big picture of downtown, not just saving Metro a few minutes of time but one that looks to be inclusive of all needs - for the future of State Street. The last downtown plan was completed in 2012. It is time to revisit this plan, to make sure it is current and to check in on the shared goals. Much has changed downtown since 2012. In particular, the world of commerce has changed tremendously pre and post pandemic. It appears the city recognizes this by its planning for the future of East Towne and West Towne. Why not the downtown?

As a first step, we ask leaders to find alternative locations for the route and stations in the State Street area to minimize the negative and permanent side impacts of the BRT – what should be an exciting and highly-anticipated feature to our downtown.

It is "The Madison Way" to put a plan together; we love to plan for our future, to host meetings and special sessions and to gather feedback from everyone involved. We are asked as a community to think... "Who benefits? Who is burdened? Who does not have a voice at the table? How can policymakers mitigate unintended consequences?" But there is no current plan for the State Street or Downtown areas. Madison citizens should be included in the discussion, would provide valuable input, and can help shape the future of a vibrant Downtown.

A vibrant, welcoming downtown is vital for our future.

From MARCH 2020 and STILL TODAY...

Madison's Central BID is in support of the city's efforts to create a Bus Rapid Transit System.

We acknowledge the City's efforts to study, research and determine the best route possible through the downtown core.

*We look forward to **working together** to create a downtown route and transit system that:*

- *maintains its position as an economic driving force for the region;*
- *will encourage new development;*
- *is energized with people and events;*
- *runs on routes and schedules that benefit everyone;*
- *has well-marked, easy to use and find stations;*
- *eliminates or greatly reduces rerouting;*
- *provides easy to find and access public and private parking;*
- *prioritizes outdoor cafes and brick & mortar merchants;*
- *retains the aesthetic beauty of the Capitol Square;*
- *is carefully planned with input from all stakeholders;*
- *compliments the needs of drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians and other transportation options;*
- *is welcoming and accessible for all.*

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Madison's Central Business Improvement District represents more than 270 properties servicing more than 500 1st floor level retail, restaurant, entertainment and services businesses. Madison's Central BID works to increase the vitality and health of the district and promote business within it. Visit downtownmadison.com