

# The Daily Free Press

## Advocates urge City to open bus-only lanes

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The 57 bus line along Brighton Avenue is one of the busiest bus rides in the MBTA network. LivableStreets Alliance is pushing for the City of Boston to create bus-only lanes in order to mitigate congestion on the roads. COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

By Jennifer Suryadjaja

A local transportation advocacy group is pushing to improve Boston's bus system by urging the City to implement bus-only lanes.

LivableStreets Alliance, a Boston-based transport organization, is targeting highly congested places around in the city as examples of the need for improvement. The City's [Go Boston 2030](#) action plan for improved transportation identified Brighton Avenue as a road that needs bus improvements.

Kristiana Lachiusa, community engagement coordinator at LivableStreets, said she has heard many bus riders say their biggest frustrations are unreliable service and overcrowding of buses.

One frequent bus rider, Ann Murray, 60, said she finds that buses in the city are often behind schedule.

“Buses are really unreliable at the time slots, mostly because of the games,” the Roxbury resident said, referring to Boston Red Sox games at Fenway Park. “When you have games interfering with the traffic, it can delay busses.”

Lachiusa said that through research LivableStreets conducted, the organization found that the 57 and 66 busses that operate along Brighton Avenue are in the top 10 busiest bus rides in the entire MBTA network. Combined, they carry more than 20,000 people every day, she said.

LivableStreets surveyed community members to learn about the challenges they face using the bus system, Lachiusa said.

“We want to get buses to move quickly and do the rounds quickly and more of them will be on the streets,” Lachiusa said. “... this one simple fix can very quickly make it easier for people to move around.”

The organization has been partnering with authorities, community groups, residents and businesses to improve the current bus system.

Anna Leslie, director of the Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, said her organization works with LiveableStreets for advocacy and feedback from commuters and residents. She said ABHC believes public transport affects public health and the wellness of a neighborhood.

“From a public health perspective, how you move around the transport system impacts your health,” Leslie said. “Not only how clean the system is but how efficient or dignified the system is.”

LivableStreets is in the process of deploying street ambassadors at bus stops along Brighton Avenue to engage with community members and encourage community interest for bus-only lanes, Lachiusa said.

Jai Dev Karanam, 23, of Kenmore, said he is in favor of implementing a better bus system because he thinks it will help the environment.

“I like to be environmentally-friendly,” Karanam said, “and I think public transportation system[s] will reduce the pollution.”

For residents who do not live in close proximity to a T stop, buses are one of the few accessible transportation systems available. Lachiusa said LivableStreets wants to make busses a reliable and fast choice for those with limited options.

Director of Planning at the Boston Transportation Department Vineet Gupta said the City has been involved in several discussions about bus system improvements.

“The City proposes projects,” Gupta said, “but we work hand-in-hand with local neighborhood groups because they’re the most affected and they tend to benefit from our projects the most.”

Gupta said the immediate next step for the City is to repaint the lines of the streets because parking lanes are currently too narrow. Traffic lanes will be narrower and a morning bus-only lane can be wide enough to fit a bus, Gupta explained.

Last spring, Lachiusa said LivableStreets conducted a similar initiative for a bus-only lane on Washington Street in Roslindale. The organization is hoping to start its bus-only lane pilot program in Allston-Brighton this fall.

“It’s a pretty straightforward aspect for both ends on what they need to do,” Lachiusa said. “There’s no reason that it has to wait for longer.”