

Purpose and Need Statement

South Halsted Bus Corridor Enhancement Project

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Prepared for:



Prepared by:



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1. Introduction

The South Halsted Bus Corridor Enhancement Project was initiated by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) in partnership with Pace Suburban Bus to improve transit along approximately 11 miles of South Halsted Street, from the Pace Harvey Transportation Center to 79th Street. The corridor also includes segments of 79th and 95th Streets that provide connections to the CTA Red Line 79th and 95th Street Stations. For study purposes, the project area includes a half mile catchment area around the corridor as shown in Figure 1.1. The Purpose and Need Statement provides a foundation and justification for the project and is required for all projects going through the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.¹

The South Halsted Bus Corridor serves the communities of Harvey, Phoenix, Dixmoor, Riverdale, Calumet Park, and the City of Chicago neighborhoods of West Pullman, Morgan Park, Roseland, Washington Heights, and Auburn Gresham. The project corridor aligns or intersects with multiple east-west and north-south arterial roadways, CTA and Pace bus routes, CTA and Metra rail stations, and shared-use paths. Transit improvements would complement CTA's planned extension of the Red Line from 95th Street to 130th Street, as the preferred alignment is located a half mile or more from the Halsted Corridor. The Red Line Extension is currently undergoing the federal environmental review and planning process.

The corridor is populated with mainly commercial businesses, surrounded by residential communities. Figure 1.1 shows the project area including existing transit services. Currently, CTA Routes 8A and 108 and Pace Routes 352 and 359 provide the primary service along the South Halsted Corridor. As shown in the figure, CTA Route 108 operates between the 95th Street Red Line Station and 127th Street; CTA Route 8A operates between 79th & Perry (just west of the 79th Street Red Line Station) and 127th Street. Pace Route 352 operates service from 95th Street Station to the Pace Chicago Heights Terminal via 95th and Halsted Streets; approximately 60% of trips short-turn at the Pace Harvey Transportation Center. Pace Route 359 provides service from the 95th Street station down Halsted to 124th Street, then continues south, beyond the study area, to Homewood.

As shown in Table 1.1, the typical frequency of each route along the corridor generally provides service every 5 to 20 minutes during the morning (6 to 9 am) and afternoon (3 to 6 pm) peaks and 10 to 30 minutes off-peak, though transit schedules include some variability to ensure efficient bus operations. In general, CTA buses provide a shorter span of service with most bus service on the corridor stopping by approximately 8:30pm. Pace service runs from the early morning to late evening. Route 352 provides 24-hour service between 95th/ Dan Ryan Red Line Station and Harvey Transportation Center.

¹ NEPA requires all federal agencies to consider impacts of their actions on the environment. Guidance available at: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2012-title40-vol34/pdf/CFR-2012-title40-vol34-sec1502-13.pdf>

FIGURE 1.1: EXISTING STUDY CORRIDOR BUS ROUTES & PROJECT AREA

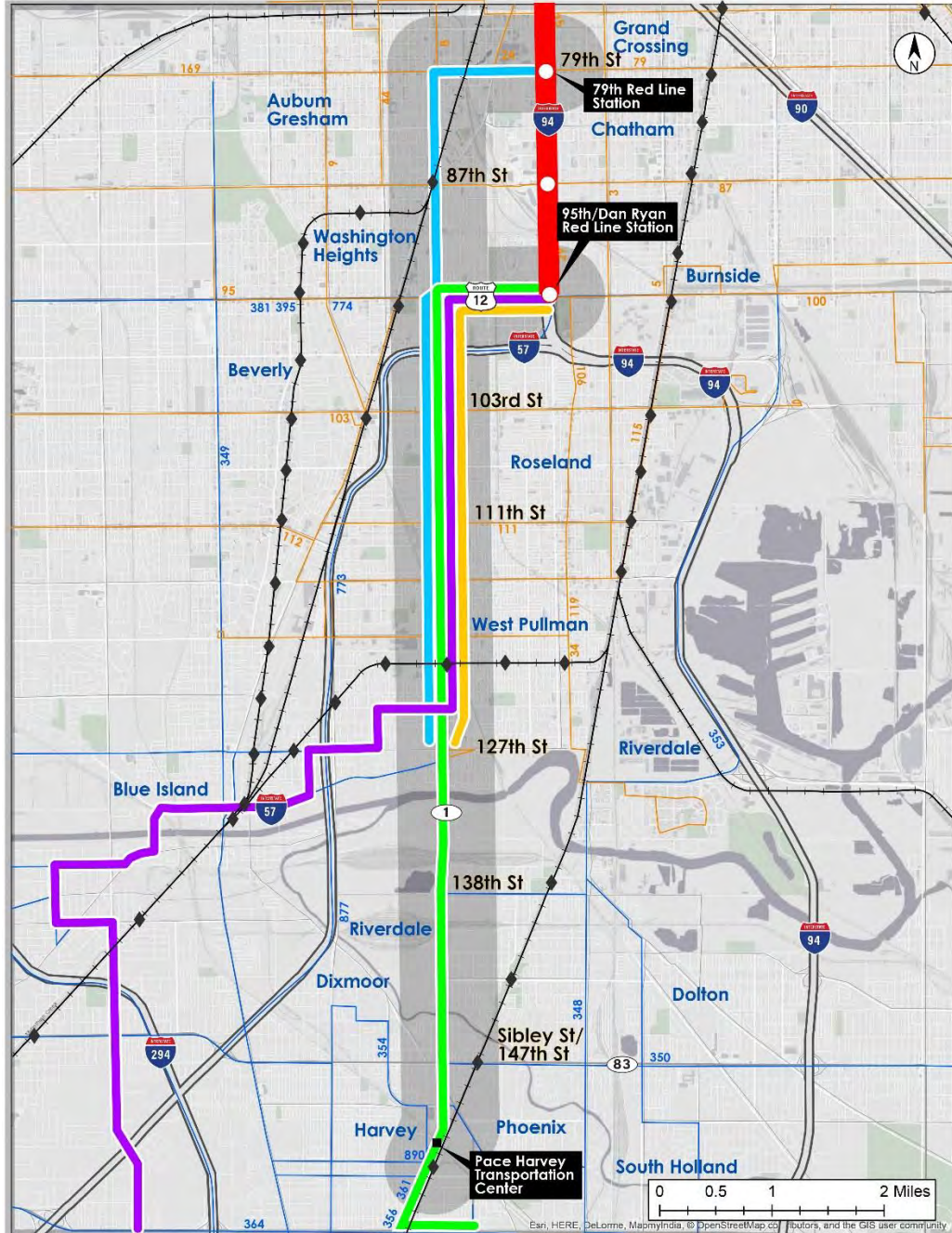


TABLE 1.1: PRIMARY CORRIDOR LOCAL BUS SERVICE

Operator	Route	Terminus	Span	Weekday Peak Headway	Weekday Off Peak Headway	Weekend Headway
CTA	8A	North: 79 th & Perry (near 79 th Street Station) South: 127 th /Lowe	Daily: 5:30am – 8:30pm	15 min	15-20 min	15-20 min
CTA	108	North: 95 th Red Line South: 127 th /Lowe	Weekday: 5:30am – 9:30am & 2pm – 9pm	15-19 min	15-20 min	n/a
Pace	352	North: 95 th Red Line South: Chicago Heights Terminal or Pace Harvey Transportation Center	Daily: 24 hours to Harvey TC; 5am – 1am to Chicago Heights	10 min to Harvey TC 30 min to Chicago Heights	15-30 min to Harvey TC 30-60 min to Chicago Heights	15-30 min to Harvey TC 30 min to Chicago Heights
Pace	359	North: 95 th Red Line South: Metra Homewood Station	Weekdays & Saturdays: 5am – 12am	20-30 min	40-60 min	60 min

Note: Span and headways are approximate

Source: CTA and Pace, 2018

2. Project Background

Improving transit service and facilities in the South Halsted Corridor was identified as part of several previous planning efforts. Pace has explored the improvement of transit service and facilities along the South Halsted and 95th Street corridors (Pace Bus Route 352) starting in 2001, when Pace published Vision 2020². The South Halsted Corridor project was identified in Vision 2020 as one of twenty-four corridors that would provide a regional network of premium transit services across Pace's six-county service area.

The Halsted Corridor was also identified as an early option for the Red Line Extension project,³ to improve transit service for the Far Southside. Subsequent CTA studies identified alternative route options for extending the Red Line. In 2007, CTA decided to pursue additional study to consider alternatives to extend transit service south from the Red Line's 95th Street terminal to 130th Street on either Halsted Street using bus rapid transit or heavy rail rapid transit.⁴ The alternatives for this process continued to be refined, including the results of a second screening in 2009 that recommended either a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or heavy rail option on Halsted Street or a heavy rail option on the UP alignment.⁵ The alternatives analysis concluded in 2009 with the selection of the locally preferred heavy rail alternative on the UP alignment. The Halsted heavy rail option was not selected due to technical analysis and community feedback. While the Halsted heavy rail alternative was eliminated, and the UP railroad was selected as the preferred alternative, BRT on Halsted would not have the same impacts as heavy rail. Therefore, bus improvements are the preferred solution for the Halsted corridor.

Concurrent with CTA's study for the Red Line Extension, Pace completed additional planning studies to develop a specific action plan for implementation of Pace's new rapid transit network, branded "Pulse." The studies completed by Pace helped to better define the infrastructure improvements and design elements that would be feasible and would provide cost-effective transit investments throughout Pace's service area.⁶ Pace identified seven priority corridors that would begin the Pulse network implementation, including Halsted Street between the CTA Red Line 95th Street/Dan Ryan and 159th Street. The South Halsted Corridor was included in this list for priority implementation due to several factors, including high ridership, transit connections, congestion, sufficient right-of-way, and connections from job-deficit areas to job-surplus areas. The study was completed in recognition that the South Halsted Corridor served a distinct travel market which was separate from that served by CTA's Red Line Extension.

² http://www.pacebus.com/sub/vision2020/study_contents.asp

³ See: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)'s 2030 Regional Transportation Plan for Northeastern Illinois in 2003, published in 2003: http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/50135/UpdatedCompiledPlan_20080425_draft.pdf/29aa1aa3-3d3e-451f-bc79-b601ffe892f3

⁴ <https://www.transitchicago.com/assets/1/6/redpubpres200704part2.pdf>

⁵ https://www.transitchicago.com/assets/1/6/Red_Screen_3_Public_Meeting_Presentation_Part_1_%E2%80%93_June_2009.pdf

⁶ Other studies completed by Pace include Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) Study (May 2009) and ART Implementation Plan (December 2009).

3. Purpose Statement

The purpose of the South Halsted Bus Corridor project is to improve access to jobs, education, shopping, recreation and other destinations through improved connectivity to existing transit service at the Pace Harvey Transportation Center, the CTA 'L' system, and locations where CTA, Pace, and Metra routes intersect and overlap the corridor. About half of the existing transit trips made in the corridor involve commuting to or from work. Popular destinations for transit users in the corridor using existing services include, Chicago's Far Southwest Side, Bronzeville, and the Central Loop. Connectivity should be bolstered within and between communities by:

- Decreasing travel time in the corridor;
- Enhancing service coordination;
- Increasing the reliability of service;
- Improving bus infrastructure and amenities, bus stop accessibility, and safety in the corridor, and;
- Improving community connectivity, equity, and economic development through improved job access, inclusive growth and increased resilience.

All improvements should be implemented in a cost-effective manner with design elements that improve and enhance safety.

4. Need Elements

The need for the South Halsted Bus Corridor project is demonstrated by the following existing conditions:

- Despite the corridor's high ridership and a high percentage of residents that are transit-dependent (13 percent)⁷ and/or commute via transit (23 percent)⁸ as compared to the rest of Cook County (10 and 18 percent, respectively), the project area has limited rapid transit options.
- On average, commute times in the South Halsted Corridor are 7 minutes (20 percent)⁹ longer for project area residents than for other commuters in Cook County as employment opportunities in the area are lower than other areas of Cook County. Therefore, residents may commute outside of the local area to access employment;
- Average travel times for buses in the corridor are up to 17 minutes (43 percent) longer during peak periods than other times of the day;
- Transit service is not provided on Halsted Street between 79th and 95th Streets between approximately 8:30pm and 5:30am;
- In some areas, pedestrian connections to transit are missing and some existing transit stops are not fully accessible, making it difficult for customers to safely access these services, especially those with limited mobility;
- Most of the corridor is identified as a Disinvested area, an Economically Disconnected Area (EDA), or both in the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) ON TO 2050 Long Range Plan based on the loss of economic activity for the area, higher levels of poverty, lower median income, and increased distances from employment centers for residents.¹⁰

⁷ US Census 2012-2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates

⁸ US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamic (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), 2015

⁹ US Census 2012-2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates

¹⁰ <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/2050/draft/community/disinvested-areas>

5. Project Goals

The project goals identified below encompass the identified transportation purpose and need to be addressed by the proposed action. They will be used to guide the actions by the project team in developing the scope. The following goals have been identified for the South Halsted Corridor project:

- Improve Transit Connectivity – Encourage transit usage in the corridor through the establishment of higher-quality routes;
- Reduce Travel Times – Build on existing transit signal priority and signal optimization program to reduce travel times for residents in the project area by increasing bus speed and improving reliability to decrease dwell times;
- Improving Station Infrastructure – Construct high quality transit stations with upgraded amenities that increase accessibility, enhance safety, and create anchors for local businesses and the broader community;
- Increase Travel Choices – Realign service to improve transit options to regional and local employment centers as well as local commercial areas;
- Maximize Return on Investment – Develop a project that is fiscally responsible, captures significant ridership, and optimizes transit operations in the area;
- Promote Inclusive Growth – Encourage investment in an Economically Disconnected Area.