

SEPTA YAC STATEMENT ON ERIE AVENUE TRANSIT FIRST STUDY

The SEPTA YAC applauds SEPTA leadership and OTIS for embarking on a plan for a Transit First Erie Avenue. As stated in SEPTA's needs assessment, the current bus service that SEPTA provides to the 9,000 daily riders of Bus 56 is inadequate and turns riders away from transit¹. On weekdays, buses travel a mere 7 miles per hour on the corridor, with just a 70% on-time performance for our customer's jobs, appointments, and activities².

This means that we must redesign Erie Avenue in a way that dramatically improves the performance of Bus 56. The YAC takes concern with the current go-to choice of curbside lanes³, with our members having spent many collective hours stuck behind parked cars on Market and Chestnut streets. On a commercial corridor with a high density of intersections, the YAC believes that curbside lanes will be rendered ineffective through rampant double parking and right turns. **The YAC encourages SEPTA and OTIS to study the feasibility of median transit lanes on Erie Avenue between Old York Road and Kensington Avenue.**

Erie Avenue has a long history of center-running transit, evidenced by the trolley tracks still visible today. From 1907 to 1992 trolleys ran on Erie Avenue, unimpeded by frequent parking and right turns⁴. Using this existing right of way with transit-only lanes, modern signaling, and the operational flexibility of buses allows for the world-class bus corridor the community deserves. This is following years of slowly undoing the former streetcar's transit lanes and island stops in favor of left-turn lanes and curbside stops.

Peer agencies are beginning to reverse course on curbside and offset bus lanes, realizing there are many legal users besides buses frequently using this lane for quick drop-off/pick-ups, for right-turn movements, and for deliveries. Whenever one of these legal uses interferes with the bus, the operator must choose between sitting in traffic or changing lanes, creating points of conflict and inefficiency.

Peer projects to be studied include Columbus Avenue in Boston, Livingston Street in Downtown Brooklyn, or the smaller applications of median lanes in The Bronx on Gun Hill Road and 161st Street. These are simple bus priority projects that are not full fledged BRT, therefore not fetching BRT price tags or construction lengths.

In conclusion, the YAC remains firm in its position that curbside and offset lanes are not true transit priority and hardly a "Transit First" measure. A Transit First Erie Avenue should be designed in a way that precludes buses being delayed by turning vehicles, car congestion, and limited hours of operation of bus lanes. We are excited to support and work with SEPTA for a Transit First Erie Avenue and hope to be consulted at each step of the process.

¹ [12/13/22: Rider-Driven Bus Survey Reveals a Path Forward](#)

² [Erie Avenue Transit First Study](#)

³ The 190-page [Philadelphia Transit Plan](#) does not include center-median aligned bus lanes

⁴ See [PCC 2096 on route 56 eastbound on November 5, 1983](#) from Michael Strauch's photo collection