



# ROUND 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

April 2023

Community engagement for this project exists at three levels: a steering committee, a stakeholder advisory group, and the public at-large.

## Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is comprised of PRT staff and other key agencies including the Pennsylvania Downtown Partnership (PDP), Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), City of Pittsburgh Department of City Planning (DCP) and Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI), and ACCESS. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to provide oversight and guidance to the planning process.

The fifth steering committee meeting, which was the only SC meeting held during round 2 of engagement, was held on Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. The meeting covered the findings from the second round of community engagement, recommended Downtown routing (based on public feedback), evaluations of the route changes, and recommended stops and stop changes.

- Conversations with property owners who will be impacted by the changes to the bus routes
- We need to present this final proposal very clearly to the public- it is a ton of information which can be overwhelming
- The perception of traffic volume needs to be communicated in a way that the public can understand. Daily usage, or even the number of people during peak times can be confusing.
- The proposal needs to be watertight- there cannot be an element that seems to be a no brainer that opponents to public transit can target

## Stakeholder Advisory Group

The purpose of the stakeholder advisory group (SAG) is to present ideas and concepts for review and refinement before presenting them to the public. The SAG will also help publicize and promote public meetings and input opportunities.

The second SAG meeting of the project was held virtually on Friday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at noon. The meeting provided a project update which covered the two scenarios, the evaluation measures for the scenarios, an introduction to transit stops and hubs, and the upcoming public engagement.

The SAG raised the following items for discussion:

- How will the regional transit providers fit into the new routing scenarios?
  - Discussions will happen with the regional transit providers. Because there are a low number of buses and riders compared to PRT, there should not be too much conflict.
- How do these scenarios interact with other forms of transportation, such as cycling, driving, and walking?

- While the mission of the project is to not break anything, analysis of interaction with other forms of transportation has not been done yet. Much of the data used in the project is pre-pandemic and has not taken into account the changes in commuter behavior.
- A comprehensive view of Downtown needs to be taken under consideration, including other initiatives and infrastructure needs
  - The bus network interacts heavily with loading zones, the project team has taken that into account when considering dedicated travel lanes and possible stop locations
  - Maintenance plans need to be created to upkeep bus infrastructure in the area
- Comments around the metrics and their usability
  - The metrics might not match the goal areas or what is important to the public
  - It can be difficult to compare the metrics because they do not have a one-to-one comparability
  - The metrics do create a comprehensive look at the scenarios

## Public Engagement

The goals for the second round of engagement were to present options for the Downtown bus network and gather feedback. The scenarios presented to the public were built using both input from the public during the first round of engagement as well as professional expertise and data analyses. Several different engagement methods were used to reach as many people as possible, including online interactive elements, a weeklong pop-up, and virtual meetings.

## Engagement Methods

### Downtown Pop-Up



The project team hosted a pop-up in Downtown, located at Smithfield Street and Sixth Avenue, adjacent to the PRT Service Center. From Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, project teams members talked to members of the public about possible changes to their bus routes. They learned about what might be changing and why, as well as one-on-one discussions about their individual bus routes and commutes. Conversations with community members also provided feedback on the proposed changes, and what elements they appreciated or did not agree with. The pop-up was held during different hours every day in an attempt to reach as many people as possible with varying schedules.

## Virtual Meetings



### Do you ride buses Downtown?

PRT will be presenting two scenarios that reconsider bus routes within Downtown Pittsburgh and we want to know what you think.

## Join an upcoming online meeting to give input!

Meetings are held via Zoom with a call-in option. Register to receive the meeting link via email.

**Tuesday 2/28**  
**at 5 PM**

To join by phone, dial: **646-931-3860**  
Enter meeting code: **814 1715 0379**

**Wednesday 3/1**  
**at 12PM**

To join by phone, dial: **309-205-3325**  
Enter meeting code: **899 0937 5044**

Register at [nextransit.network/downtown](https://nextransit.network/downtown)

Two virtual meetings were hosted on Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup> and on Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>. These public meetings presented the same information as the pop-up, and community members participated in conversations to discuss the proposed changes and what may have been overlooked. In the virtual meetings, after discussing the scenarios and the project goal areas, the following questions were asked in a poll format:

1. For Goal 1, please choose the metric that is MOST important to you in evaluating the scenarios
2. For Goal 2, please choose the metric that is MOST important to you in evaluating the scenarios
3. For Goal 3, please choose the metric that is MOST important to you in evaluating the scenarios

## Project Website & Online Survey Input

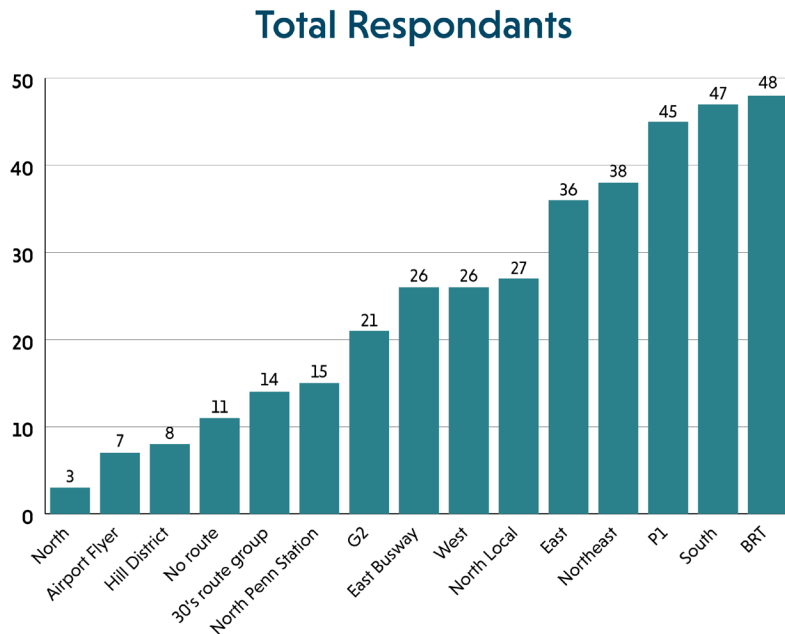
The project website has been used for the duration of the project to provide regular updates and information, as well as collect feedback from the public, especially those who were not able to attend the Downtown pop-up or the virtual public meetings. Past phases of this project have asked for feedback on an interactive map, but this phase used a short survey. The questions asked were:

1. Which scenario do you feel best meets YOUR goals?
2. Why or why not?
3. Metrics ranking
4. What route(s) do you most frequently use?
5. Additional comments?

## Engagement Findings

After completing all of different forms of community engagement for round two, the project team compiled the feedback to incorporate it into the next iteration of Downtown routing scenarios. During round two of engagement, the project team was able to hear from almost 400 people and received hundreds of comments from PRT riders. The different methods of feedback collection were synthesized into the following analyses, regardless of collection method (survey, discussion, etc).

## Routes represented



Through the zoom meetings, pop-up days, and online survey, the project team was able to hear from every route group that comes Downtown. For people that take routes in multiple route groups (for example, someone who takes the 20 or 22 into Town from McKees Rocks and transfers to the 87 or 88 to East Liberty), they were counted multiple times, for each bus route group they took. The Airport Flyer, North, and Hill District Route groups had the lowest representation, and the P1, South, and BRT route groups had the highest representation.

## Preferred Scenario

While the project team was not able to discuss preferred scenarios on the virtual meeting, people were asked at the pop-up and in the survey which scenario they preferred. They are equally preferred, with Scenario A barely surpassing Scenario B. Scenario A was preferred because of the longer routes through Downtown (specifically the West and South route groups), the quick transfer between East and West Busways, and the alleviation of traffic within some internal Downtown streets.

### Why did people prefer Scenario A?

- "Makes sense to get straight on bus way from Liberty without the turns and traffic delays on Grant."
- "Every route in downtown should have the shortest loop, especially along Liberty Avenue."
- "Scenario A seems to not have me potentially hauling across town to make a tight transfer."
- "I like Scenario A because it's not too many alterations and seems efficient."

### Why did people prefer Scenario B?

- I prefer "Scenario B specifically for the P1 makes much more sense to actually get out of Downtown faster."
- "Option B sounds like it would run smoothly."
- "I like the idea to combine all high-speed, high-frequency routes together to increase boarding time efficiency."

## Ranked Metrics

### Ranked Metrics

1. Travel time savings
2. Access to key destinations
3. Total bus volume on each street
4. Total number of blocks with bus service
5. Ease of transfer between routes
6. Number of bus route groupings
7. Number of turns buses have to make
8. Operating cost savings

Simple & Accessible  
Fast & Reliable  
Safe & Efficient

A number of metrics were used in three categories to determine how well the two scenarios performed. Bus riders were asked to rank the metrics from most important to least important. The overwhelming favorite was travel time savings, while the overwhelming lowest prioritized metric was operating cost savings.

### Comments on the changes

The comments in the matrix below show the general sentiment heard about each route group and scenario. While some routes and scenarios heard plenty of feedback, there were still gaps which needed to be filled. Overall, several routes stood out in terms of feedback. The changes to the East Busway routes (not including the P1, P2, and P3) were subtle, but alleviated a lot of issues that riders have issues with, including issues turning and access to key Downtown destinations. The changes to the South routes in both scenarios were the least well liked, with confusion around the changes of Downtown entry for the 31, 36, and 38, and the short loop being very concerning for riders. Although the North Local and North Penn Station routes had decent representation at all of the events, there were very few comments about the changes. The changes were minimal and non-concerning.

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	Scenario A	Scenario B	General
East	The buses don't go far enough down Boulevard of the Allies		Many riders are concerned about the length of the route group in both scenarios
East Busway	Some people like this to alleviate congestion from Smithfield, others worry about congestion on Liberty	Some people like that this option travels further into Downtown	No strong preference for A or B, but both are better than the current route
G2			The overlap with the East Busway buses is good part of the design
Hill District			The overlap with the East Busway buses are well liked, but there are concerns about access to key destinations.
North Local			While the North routes were well represented, there were few comments
North			
North Penn Station			
Northeast		There is approval for these routes going further into Downtown, and will also alleviate congestion and increase efficiency	No strong preference for A or B, but both are better than the current route
P1	The P1 on Liberty is preferred to reserve the BRT loop for the BRT buses		Both scenarios offer better connections to other bus routes.
South	Scenario A is overwhelmingly preferred, for the distance traveled into Downtown	Scenario B does not go far enough into Downtown	
30's		It's confusing that the 31, 36, and 38 are moving, and there is concern for the routes outside of Downtown	
West			
BRT			There is a lot of concern for the buses no longer coming into Downtown
General	Scenario A preferred because the routes go further into Downtown, but there are concerns about congestion on Liberty.	The purpose of the bus lane reversal isn't clear/doesn't matter to riders and the all door boarding and other amenities are well liked.	