

# TTLs: A PRIMER

## WHAT ARE TTLs?

Tactical Transit Lanes are bus only lanes installed in dense, congested “problem areas” specifically to improve bus speeds and reliability. Typically short (1 mile or less), TTLs are quick to install, low-cost, and reversible. Many TTLs are bus-only during peak hours; at other times, their widened lanes provide on-street parking and the safety benefit to cyclists of a buffer lane. Several recent TTLs have been low-stakes pilot projects, installed temporarily to test operations and provide a “proof of concept” to the public.

The first true TTL appeared in 2014; since then TTLs have been installed or piloted in 17 cities across the country.



*This peak-hour TTL has red-painted lanes for bus only hours, marked parking spaces for other hours, and a marked cycling lane for use at all times. Photo courtesy of City of Everett, MA.*

## WHAT BENEFITS DO TTLs OFFER?

**Increased transit vehicle speeds:** Recent TTLs have reduced their corridor peak congestion travel times by 20-28 percent and up to 50% in one case.

**Decreased variability in travel times:** TTLs can produce dramatic decreases in the variability of transit travel times in peak-hour congestion, leading to better schedule adherence and more efficient transit vehicle dispatching.

**Enhanced safety for cyclists:** Because TTLs create lanes wide enough for buses, they create a buffer between parked and moving cars that benefits cyclists when TTLs are not bus only. Cyclists also benefit when they are permitted to share the TTLs with buses.

**Improved rider and driver safety:** Two studies in San Francisco found that red-painted TTLs result in fewer collisions and safer driving overall.

**Quick implementation and pilotability:** TTL pilots that mark lanes with traffic cones and signs can be organized within weeks and installed within days, an approach pioneered by the City of Everett, MA. Red-painted lanes can also be installed in as little as two weeks, as demonstrated by the City of Cambridge, MA.

**Low cost:** Many TTLs have been installed at cost of \$100,000 or less. TTL pilots that use only cones and signs require minimal capital expenditure.

## WHAT ABOUT PARKING?

TTLs often (but not always) require a lane used for on-street parking, and changes to parking are usually a top community concern; however TTL impacts to parking are usually overestimated. Planners have used targeted public engagement, parking utilization studies, and pilot projects to identify and resolve concerns successfully.

**Public engagement works:** Planners in several cities explained the project and worked out issues by doing door-to-door outreach, feasible since TTL project areas are small.

**Parking utilization studies help:** Where parking might be an issue, utilization studies help to identify solutions such as moving metered spots, adjusting nearby parking permit programs, and shifting restricted parking or loading hours. In some cities, changes informed by parking studies yielded a net increase in available parking.

**Pilot projects lower the stakes:** Pilot TTLs can show where parking changes are or are not an issue. Pilots can be as short as a few weeks or even a few days.

**Sometimes parking is not an issue:** In some areas, TTLs that are bus-only during morning peak hours use on-street parking lanes in front of businesses that do not open until later.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

TTLs can significantly speed up transit vehicles: recent TTLs have reduced corridor travel time by 20-50%.

TTLs are very popular with riders: surveys indicate riders' perceptions of travel time savings are often even greater than the measured improvements.

TTLs improve cyclists' safety and roadway experience: TTLs typically open up 4-5 feet of roadway space for cyclists to use, and make cyclists feel safer.

Parking changes may not be needed and where they are, their impacts are often lower than assumed; utilization studies enable creative solutions for minimizing or avoiding losses in parking.

Enforcement is critical for making the lanes work. Keeping track of "hotspots", or areas of repeated delay, enables the most efficient use of enforcement resources.

## MORE ABOUT TTLS

A full report, *Best Practices in Implementing Tactical Transit Lanes*, outlines strategic considerations for transit decision-makers and provides case study examples of recent TTLs; it is freely available at <http://www.its.ucla.edu/ttl>.

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