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Camilo Espitia
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas A. Golden, Jr., City Manager 

FROM: Yovani Baez-Rose, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

CC: Elizabeth Oltman, PE, City Transportation Engineer

SUBJECT: UPDATE MOTION RESPONSE: 1/23/2024– Councilor Descoteaux – Request City Manager Request LRTA Give An Update On The Current Volume Of Bus Only Usage And Expected Usage

The Thorndike Street (Lord Overpass) project was completed and fully opened in Fall 2023 after three years of construction. This transformative project removed the aging overpass bridges that divided the City of Lowell, improved safety for pedestrians and bicycles, and added attractive and welcome landscaping. The bus lanes that travel through the project are an innovative technology that was a highlight of the project design. The City of Lowell and the LRTA are actively working together to establish traffic signal operations that enhance the bus routes that use Thorndike Street, maintain pedestrian crossing safety, and minimize vehicle delay.

Through discussions between the City Transportation Engineer and the LRTA operations division, it has been determined that the regular LRTA bus routes along Thorndike Street do not require turns into or out of the bus lanes. Therefore, the traffic signals for the bus lanes could operate with the regular vehicle through movement phase, which will be more efficient than the original design that required a separate bus signal phase. However, this means that the signal timings and some equipment will need to be changed, requiring revised signal plans from the project designer, VHB. Further, the traffic signal requires connection with Verizon internet to operate most efficiently. The traffic signal equipment changes will be installed when the Contractor for the project returns to make the Verizon connection. This is anticipated to occur in the next two months. There will be another 30-day test period after this change for any final adjustments of the system.

At that time, LRTA, Lowell Public School, and MEVA buses will be able to use this lane to travel along Thorndike Street for the straight-line travel between the Gallagher Terminal and Downtown, improving the operations of any bus routes that need to traverse Thorndike Street. Emergency vehicles are currently using the bus lane and will continue to be able to do so.

The City Manager's Office requested information from LRTA about their anticipated future use of the bus lanes once the timings are revised. Their response is attached.

EMO

Current Volume of Bus Usage

Currently, the LRTA is not utilizing the dedicated bus lanes due to delays with the signal timing.

At the start of the project, we utilized the dedicated bus lanes for several days. The timing of the lights was not in sync with traffic flow resulting in significant bus route delays of eight or more minutes.

Expected Volume of Bus Usage

We anticipate ten LRTA fixed bus routes to utilize the dedicated lanes Monday through Saturday, when the timing issue is resolved.

These ten bus routes will travel both inbound and outbound, between the hours of 6am and 8pm. With fourteen total estimated hourly trips. (These trips are scattered throughout the hour.)

The LRTA is available to assist the city with future signal testing.