



Senate Bill 52 Talking Points

Last Updated 2/7/2024

Senate Bill 52: (current version, amended 1.26.24): Prohibits a public transportation project, including the Blue Line, from dedicating or enforcing vehicular lanes for the exclusive use of public transportation vehicles until July 1, 2025 and requires a task force (Indiana's Roads for a Stronger, Safer Tomorrow Task Force) to study the impact of repurposing vehicular traffic lanes into dedicated lanes for mass transit.

Bill Impacts:

- The Blue Line does not move forward, or at the minimum, design would start over.
- While this amendment does not directly affect the Red and Purple Lines, it does indirectly impact the service. All three lines were designed to work together, and if this bill is passed, it will effectively kill the Blue Line and therefore not allow IndyGo to complete the network as designed.
- There is no guarantee the FTA will support a design that does not include dedicated lanes or designate the same amount of funding for an altered design. One of the reasons the Blue Line was designed with dedicated lanes was to remain competitive in the grant process.
- If this bill passes, more than \$230 million of infrastructure investment is at risk for the Blue Line corridor.
- DPW stated that the investment planned along the Blue Line for infrastructure improvements is the same amount the city has budgeted for the entire county's transportation projects.
- While at one time shared lanes were discussed and reported on by IndyGo's third party consultant, the appetite for dedicated lanes by the community and the FTA to improve transit operation shifted when it became clear that dedicated lanes offered the most competitive advantages. The benefits of dedicated lanes have been part of the community conversation since before the 2016 referendum. To change this design feature so late in the design stage would waste the \$14 million already spent on the Blue Line.
- The three BRT corridors were selected to take advantage of corridors where IndyGo already has high ridership. The Blue Line is a proven transit corridor. It will replace Route 8, which provided more than 1M trips last year – second only to the Red Line. Route 8 ridership was up 18% over the previous year.

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What is the Blue Line?

- Third Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line for IndyGo
- 24 miles long
- Connecting Cumberland west to the airport along dedicated bus lanes

What are the benefits of dedicated bus lanes?

- They improve transit reliability, which means the bus arrives at the same time at predictable intervals, regardless of the time of day.
- They provide enhanced safety through traffic calming to include the following:
 - Center bus lanes reduce vehicle collisions at intersections, reducing crashes overall.
 - Narrower vehicle lanes reduce speeds and therefore crash severity.
- They improve safety for all modes of transportation.
- They allow a dedicated lane for emergency vehicles to use.

What are the benefits of the Blue Line?

- It will mean faster, more efficient transit along one of IndyGo's highest ridership routes.
- More than \$399 million in economic development planned along the Blue Line corridor.
- Beyond transit, it's a major infrastructure project, including the following:
 - 9 miles of new or replaced sidewalks.
 - 7 miles of new street paving.
 - 340+ new or replaced ADA curb ramps.
 - Stormwater drainage improvements.

What happens if dedicated bus lanes are banned?

- The Blue Line will not move forward with fully shared lanes.
- The Blue Line BRT is a competitive project with transit benefits that **won't** be done with shared lanes. We already have shared lanes along this route in the existing Route 8. Without dedicated lanes, we would not be improving service to our customers on that route to an extent that would justify that level of investment.
- Without the Blue Line, the community loses all infrastructure improvements, including the new sidewalks, street paving, ADA curb ramps and stormwater drainage upgrades.

What happens if a moratorium is put in place?

- The FTA is preparing to execute a \$150M grant with IndyGo to build the Blue Line as designed, with dedicated lanes. But, the grant is contingent upon IndyGo being able to pass an ordinance to dedicate transit-only lanes, which this moratorium prohibits.
- The FTA will not execute this grant if IndyGo is prohibited from establishing transit-only lanes.
- This bill requires a study to review the effectiveness of dedicated lanes. Those studies have already been done nationally, internationally, and specifically for the Blue Line. Engineering analyses have shown that dedicated lanes reduce crashes along the route and will not significantly impact vehicular traffic. In fact, a recent analysis of Red Line conditions found that the areas where dedicated lanes are in place on the Red Line (Meridian Street and College Avenue), the area has experienced nearly 40% fewer crashes than before the Red Line was constructed. Additionally, vehicular speeds on those two roadway segments were slightly higher (2-8 mph) with dedicated lanes in place.

SB 52 Senate Appropriation Hearing

- SB 52 passed the Senate Appropriations Committee Hearing by a vote of 7-5.
- The number of opposing testimonies outweighed the support 4 to 1 with more than 40 organizations, business owners and individuals opposing the bill and supporting the Blue Line as designed, with dedicated bus lanes.
- Testimony included representatives from Visit Indy, Indy Chamber, City of Indianapolis, DPW, Indiana Restaurant and Lodging Association and several residents.
- The bill was amended at this hearing to exclude the dedicated lanes on the Red and Purple lines. It also modified the original language of the bill, from a ban on dedicated lanes statewide to a one-year moratorium on dedicated lanes on the Blue Line or any other transit project statewide.

Since the hearing

- Several businesses that previously supported SB 52, including some who spoke in favor of it at the Senate Appropriations Hearing, have publicly submitted statements now opposing it, stating they were misled around the original intent of the letter of concern. IndyGo is committed to continuing the conversation and education around their concerns and offering ways to ensure their success during construction.
- Black Sheep, Jockamos, Irvington Wellness Center, Deb Kent Realtor, Market Village, and Irvington Picture Frame are businesses that now oppose SB 52.
- The full Senate passed SB 52 by a vote of 35-14 and has now been moved to the House Roads and Transportation Committee.

Next Steps

- The bill has been assigned to the House Roads and Transportation Committee and is expected to have a hearing in February.

For more on the benefits of BRT, check out the [2024 IndyGo Transit is Essential Guidebook](#)

For more on the Blue Line, visit www.indygo.net/blue-line/

CLAIMS AND REBUTTALS

CLAIM:

According to a 2013 Alternative Analysis (AA) study, a consultant advised against dedicated bus lanes on the Blue Line because the existing bus line didn't have enough ridership to support them.

REBUTTAL:

- The AA Study focused on the Blue Line as a single corridor project, but it will also play an important role in the full system. Interconnectivity and consistency of the Blue Line design with the Red and Purple lines will be key to providing the full mobility benefits of an improved transit system for the community.
- Also, it should be noted that Senator Freeman was citing an AA study for an east-west rapid transit corridor. It was done in 2013 and had many objectives, including to identify what roads an east-west corridor should run along, where stations should be located, what vehicle type should be used (light rail was still in consideration back then), and what the preliminary lane configuration for the route should be. That study was based upon 2013 traffic volumes and 2013 community plans and conversations.

CLAIM:

The public was never made aware of dedicated bus lanes prior to voting on the referendum.

REBUTTAL:

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- The Marion County Transit Plan was published prior to the referendum and clearly identified that dedicated transit lanes should be priority. In a section of the exec summary titled **“Why are dedicated lanes recommended for rapid transit lines?”**, it **said there was a tendency of the rapid transit plans in some cities to be “dumbed down” to the point that the service is no longer “rapid” and is instead a slightly enhanced version of local bus service. In order to compete with other cities nationally, and to influence housing choices and developer investments locally, the infrastructure investment for rapid lines must be significant and permanent.**

*To proceed with a Blue Line without dedicated bus lanes isn't much different than what we have now with the current Route 8 that runs along the same corridor, utilizing shared lanes.

CLAIM:

- Since the launch of the Red Line, dedicated bus lanes have not shown to be an improvement to transit in Indianapolis.

REBUTTAL:

- In the 10 years since the publication of the Study, IndyGo has conducted additional engineering studies of the corridor as well as extensive additional engagement with residents and businesses in the corridor. The implementation of the Red Line has provided Indianapolis with documented benefits of dedicated lane BRT and has changed the community conversation about BRT. There is now a greater recognition of dedicated lane BRT as an amenity that can not only improve transit service safety, schedule reliability, and system integration, but also help to reshape and revitalize a community. IndyGo is currently working on a traffic study that will give even more information on traffic patterns and timing.
- With one dedicated lane BRT line in operation and a second dedicated lane BRT line soon to open, assumptions about the acceptability of dedicated transit lanes on Washington Street are different today than they were a decade ago.