

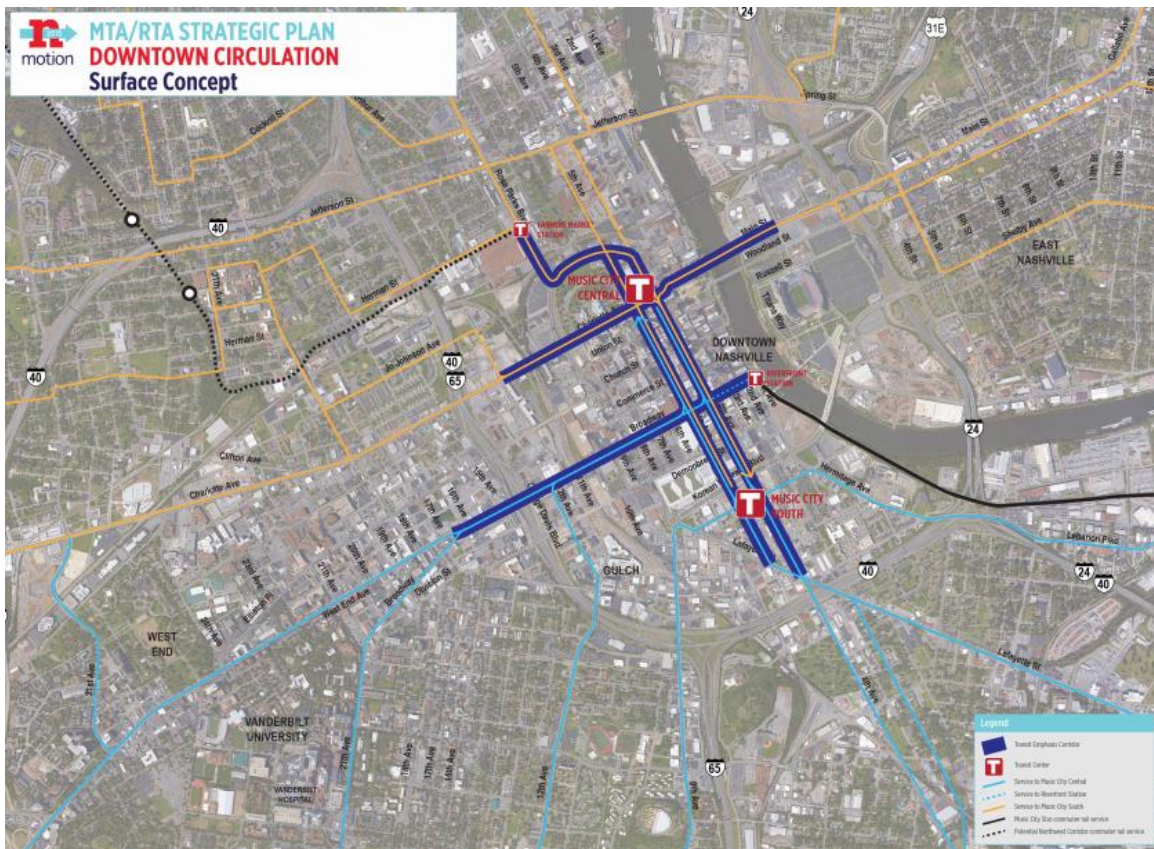
## The Downtown Opportunity

A critical barrier to improving transit speed, reliability, and convenience is downtown congestion. We all know it, we all loathe it, we all share frustrations over the gridlock, whether we're trying to get home from work, leaving a Preds game, or a concert at the Ryman.

Even with more emphasis on crosstown connectors and neighborhood transit centers, a high-quality bus system for all of Nashville will still need to have a lot of service going downtown. That is partly because a lot of people need to go downtown; it's the neighborhood with the single highest concentration of employment in our region. It's also home to a lot of other major destinations including shopping, entertainment, museums, and more. And even if your destination isn't downtown, the most direct path from one side of town to the other sometimes goes right through it.

Unfortunately, right now our buses often slow to a crawl during rush hour. Service reliability is also a problem, especially with special events and construction projects that create additional traffic and road closures. That can make it nearly impossible for us to stay on schedule. Even if you never go downtown, these reliability issues quickly cascade to other parts of the system; if a bus is 10 minutes late by the time it leaves downtown it will have a hard time getting back on schedule, which can result in our riders missing connections elsewhere.

One might look at all these issues and say that we have a downtown problem. And while that's one way to look at it, we prefer to see it as an opportunity. With downtown being such an important part of our city and our bus system, implementing strategies to provide better service there can have huge benefits for the whole city. We first introduced a concept for this during nMotion with what came to be referred to as 'the Blue H' (if you squint and tilt your head, it kind of looks like an H).



This is just a concept, but the general idea is to have a plan for downtown transit that makes our service:

- Simple: streamlined routing of buses that is easy for riders to understand
- Frequent: bus routes consolidated on a few key 'transit emphasis' corridors where a bus is always coming soon
- Fast: transit priority measures along those transit emphasis corridors to keep buses moving

A plan that incorporates these elements will ensure that our whole bus system works better; we'll have faster and more reliable service that gets riders where they need to be. That also helps make our services more appealing to new riders, which will be important as Nashville continues to grow. After all, we can move a lot more people around the city in our buses than any Uber or Lyft can.

Here's another thing: all that extra time in traffic increases our costs to provide riders the service they need. So, speeding up transit downtown makes us more cost-effective and enables us to invest in other things we know are important to riders, like more frequent service, new routes, extended hours, etc.

Obviously, we love the idea of transit priority measures, such as bus-only lanes. But coming up with the right plan for downtown isn't that easy: there's limited street space available and every transportation mode you can think of (and yes, we're including tranpotainment in there), all competing for that space. So, this isn't a WeGo project: it's a community project that will require everyone working together to find a solution that fits our city and gives all Nashvillians better access to our city. That's hard work, but it's a huge opportunity.

Information on the rest of the Better Bus Plan is available on our website and you can [click here](#) to learn more about the Mayor's Transportation Plan.