

Bus-Only Shoulders –A Transit Advantage

What are Bus-Only Shoulders?

- Bus-Only Shoulders look and operate like any other shoulder but we permit certain buses to use the shoulders in designated areas in order to bypass congestion.
- Bus-Only Shoulders are not lanes for the following reasons:
 - The width of a traveled lane is 12 ft and the width of a bus-only shoulder is 10 ft.
 - The shoulder provides a refuge area for stranded vehicles and crashes.
 - The clear zone is a lateral distance kept free of hazards to allow approximately 80% of all run-off-road vehicles to recover or come to a stop. A shoulder is part of the clear zone. If cars use the shoulder as a lane, they will have a narrower clear zone (less room to recover).
- They are transit advantages designed to provide faster and more reliable transit commutes in congested corridors in order to promote and increase transit ridership.
- As per the Operational Guidelines an authorized transit bus:
 - must not use the shoulder when mainline speeds are greater than 35 mph.
 - may not exceed the speed of traffic by more than 15 mph. The maximum allowable speed is 35 mph.
 - must yield to any vehicle that enters the shoulder as well as any vehicle merging or exiting at an interchange ramp or intersection.
 - must re-enter the mainline at exception areas and in places where the shoulder is obstructed (parked vehicle, debris, etc.).

Where are Bus-Only Shoulders located?

- There are over 250 miles of Bus-Only Shoulders in the Metro Area.
- Usage of Bus-Only Shoulders varies by location from 6 to 250 buses per day.
- The only locations with more than 50 buses using the shoulder per day are:

I-94 between Minneapolis and St. Paul
I-35W in South Minneapolis (both directions)
I-94 3rd Street Ramp out of downtown Minneapolis
I-94 4th Street Ramp into downtown Minneapolis

Why do we limit the use of the Bus-Only Shoulders?

The issue of safety continues to be a concern for The Department of Public Safety, MnDOT, and the FHWA. Currently, transit buses are allowed to drive on the shoulder because the following factors diminish the safety concerns:

- Transit bus drivers are professional drivers who are held accountable to the operating rules and are able to handle complex driving decisions while driving on the shoulder.

- Large transit buses can be seen by other motorists and the drivers sit high enough to see potential hazards.
- Shoulder use is limited to a small number of vehicles and those vehicles are transit buses that directly help to reduce congestion.