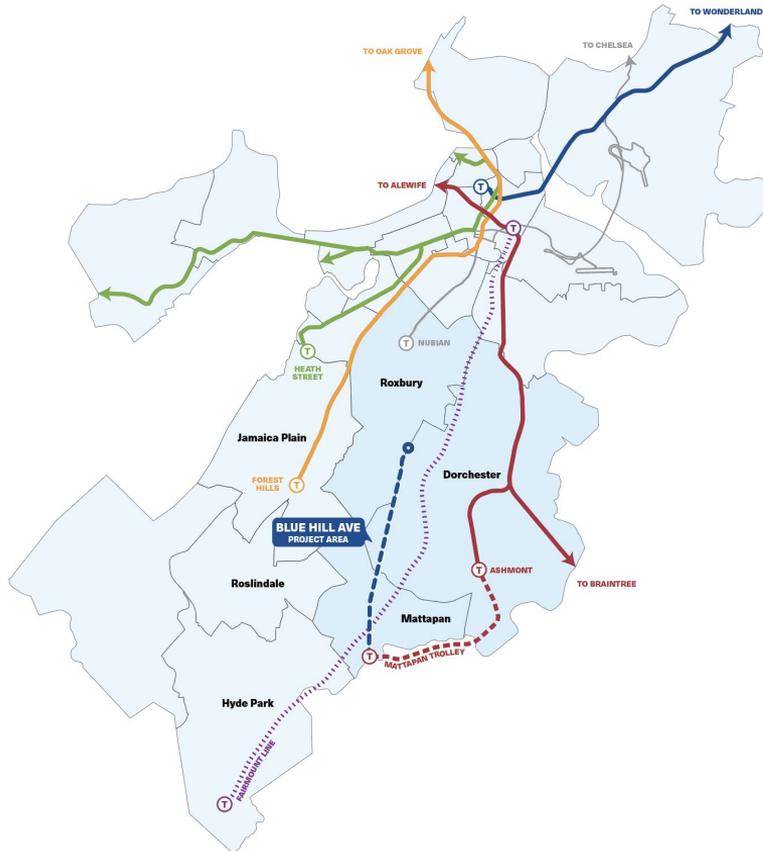




**Blue Hill Avenue**  
**Transportation Action Plan**  
Putting equitable engagement  
values to the test

March 13, 2024 - ITDP

# Some important project context



## Before

- Blue Hill Avenue had streetcars running down the middle
- Streetcar was removed to increase the number of travel lanes



## Today

- Buses on Blue Hill Avenue are a public transit lifeline
- BHA's design encourages car driving

# There are safety and equity issues along BHA



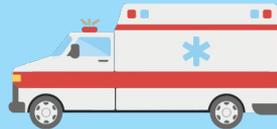
- **52%** of the travelers on BHA during rush hour are riding buses!
- The **28 bus** carries more passengers than any other bus in New England!



- **45% of Grove Hall households** do not have access to a car.



- **3,056 hours/weekday** are lost collectively by bus riders on BHA due to traffic and delays.
- **64 more hours** per year are spent by Black bus riders on MBTA buses compared to their fellow White passengers.



- There is, on average, **a crash requiring EMS every three days** on Blue Hill Ave.
- The number of motor vehicle crashes per half mile is in the **top 3%** of Boston's streets.

# Relationship building is transportation planning

This process marked a lot of firsts for BTD!

Putting engagement & partnership-building before design.

Facilitating community-supported data analysis.



Providing data transparency at every stage.

Supporting holistic planning & collaboration, not just transportation.

- The history of transportation injustice on Blue Hill Avenue has led to an understandable lack of trust in planning processes
  - Mistrust showed up in many ways
- We strove to conduct an **equitable, accessible, transparent, and trust-building** engagement process

# To realize equity values, make it easy to engage



Months of continuous engagement



Community members reached through passive and direct outreach



Engagement methods



Recorded comments



Local and State agencies engaged



People directly engaged

- City provided **time & resources** for engagement
- Went beyond large public meetings - **in-person, direct outreach**
- For BHA, it was especially crucial to reach **young people, bus riders, and bus operators**



I'm a bus operator!



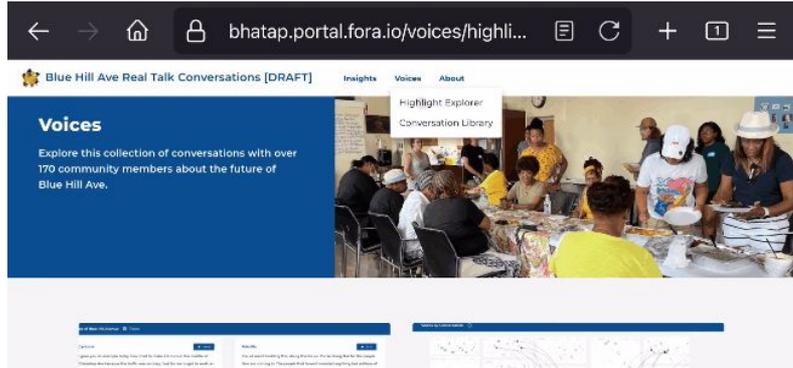
I'm a young person!

# Equitable engagement is not as simple as a poll

- The project team was often asked the % of people who support (*fill in the blank*)
- This interpretation of engagement is too simplistic and not equitable
- Instead, we asked: **What question do you have about the future of Blue Hill Ave? Tell us a story about how you got to that question.**



# Consensus isn't the goal - transparency & capacity-building are



**Real Talk BHA:**  
Scan me to hear  
directly from Blue  
Hill Ave community  
members!

- City officials had an opinion on preferred design - **we made this clear upfront**
- Focused on **transparency** around:
  - Decision-making & and decision-makers
  - Funding sources & tradeoffs
  - Data collection & analysis

## Listening to under-heard perspectives is crucial for equity, resilience, affordability



“So kind of hearing people want a lot of change, something new, new buses and stuff. Just a lot of change. People are tired of seeing the old same thing over and over again.”



Darell (Youth Real Talk)

“I don’t have a car, so it’s very important to have access to buses and be able to go someplace nearby where you can buy your food. People with low incomes, they have small children.”



Suzanne (Real Talk)



# City of Boston & MBTA committed to redesign

CITY of **BOSTON**

## MAYOR WU ANNOUNCES \$44 MILLION INVESTMENT TO TRANSFORM BLUE HILL AVENUE

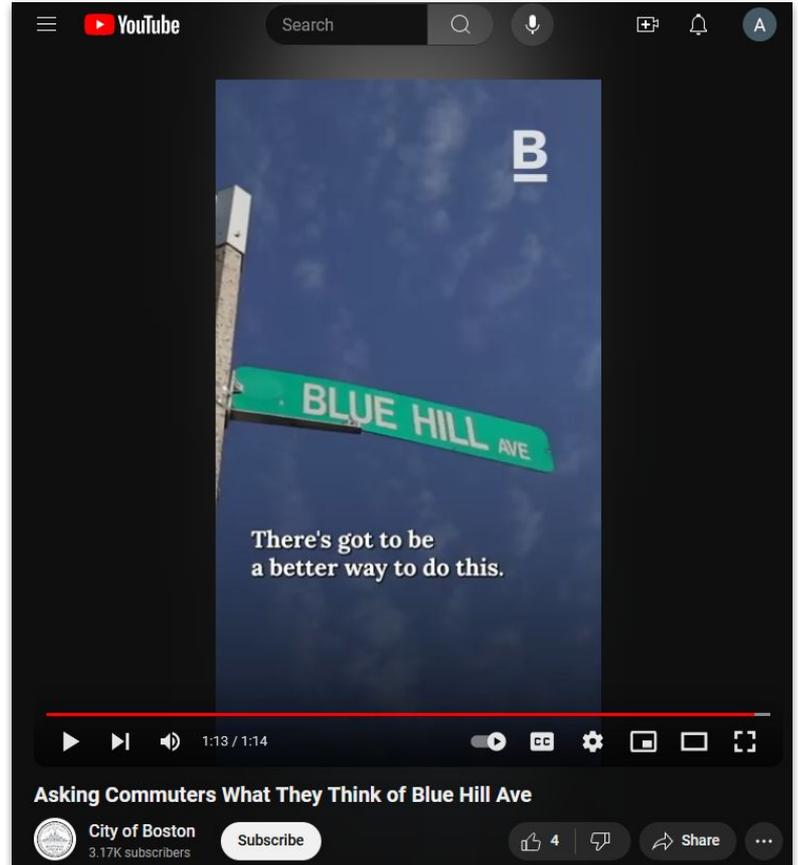
*Multimodal redesign, informed by community process, to make bus corridor safer, greener, and more efficient*

≡ **wbur**

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## Blue Hill Avenue is getting a \$44 million redesign, including a center-running bus lane



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top, there's a search bar and navigation icons. The video content features a green street sign for 'BLUE HILL AVE' against a blue sky background. A large white letter 'B' is in the top right corner of the video frame. Below the sign, the text reads: 'There's got to be a better way to do this.' The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, a progress bar at 1:13 / 1:14, and various settings icons. Below the video, the title 'Asking Commuters What They Think of Blue Hill Ave' is visible, along with the 'City of Boston' channel name and a 'Subscribe' button. There are also icons for likes (4), comments, and share.

# Some closing thoughts

- **Context matters!** Teams must know the history of a community and their streets to move forward, give important context to the diversity of community thoughts and opinions
- **Documentation matters!** Keep a public record of all engagement efforts and conversations

**At the end of the day, transportation is primarily a connector.**

