

Bus Stop Seating Installation

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CEE8900 Tactical Urbanism



Background and Hypothesis



Buses are the foundation of Atlanta's public transit system, carrying more passengers and covering more geographic area while *also* serving a demographic more economically and racially-diverse than rail



Despite this, buses are often underutilized and underappreciated, due in part to longer perceived waiting times: **a 10 minute wait at a stop with no amenities will “feel” 21 minutes long**



Our project's hypothesis: by installing a seating amenity at certain high-volume bus stops, **we can increase MARTA bus ridership and improve public perception of MARTA buses**

The *Real* Reason Why We're Doing This

“These nurses... they're holding people's hands as they die, every day, making sure they don't die alone... the least we can do is make sure they have a damn bench to sit on as they wait to take the bus home at the end of their shift.”



A real quote from a real concerned citizen / activist who came in to MARTA to lodge a formal complaint and request a bench at a stop in Roswell

Process



Identify Locations

Narrow down a list of bus stops to install seating at using a mix of data and in-person inspections



Choose Seating

Select a single seating option that is safe, durable, and compact enough to fit at all locations



Install and Monitor

Build the seating, put out at the bus stops, and monitor data (hopefully without getting caught!)

Identify Locations

~9,000 total MARTA bus stops

Take out stops with existing amenities

7,513 remaining stops

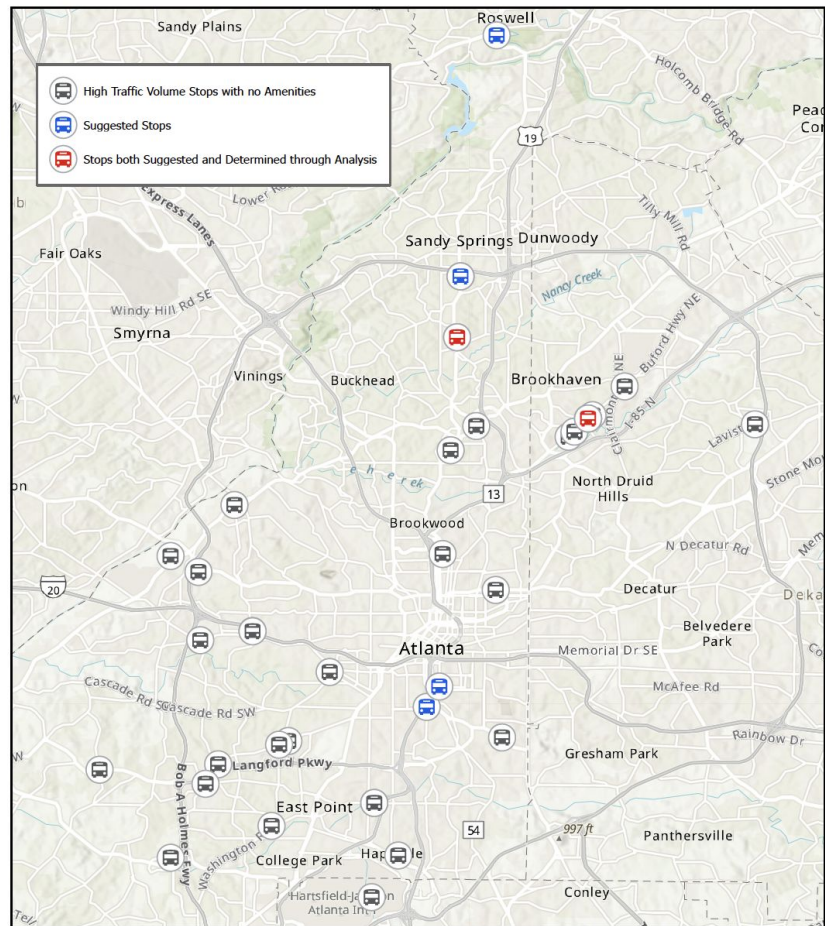
Identify stops with highest rider boardings

Cross-reference with list of stops facing jurisdiction conflicts

Brief scan on Google Street View for feasibility

31 on shortlist

High Ridership MARTA Stops without Benches



Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS

Identify Locations

2 Rounds of
site visits

10 Sites evaluated
in person



Qualifying criteria:

- ☐ Is there space for our bench?
- ☐ Is there alternative seating already in place?
- ☐ Is the stop high in OFF counts but not ON counts?
- ☐ Logistically, can we realistically drive to each stop in a reasonable timeframe?

Honorable Mention: Cascade @ Westhaven – a very good candidate, but limited space for bench because of overreaching driveway and several metal poles sticking up from the ground.



Choose Seating

Numerous options were considered but discarded due to constraints on cost, geometry (size, shape, etc.), weather resistance, and safety



Wide



Expensive



Flimsy



Bulky



Tippable

Choose Seating

Many different seating solutions were considered. Ultimately we selected a single-seat box due to:

- Cost, at only \$56/each plus \$15 for weights
- Flexibility, compact size to fit in all locations
- Modularity, meaning we could place multiple
- Stability, especially when weighted down
- Durability, as it is made of plastic for exterior use
- Light weight, easy to transport and install



Assemble and Install

The bench boxes were assembled on site and filled with sandbags to ensure stability. The boxes were made up of interlocking panels and did not require screws or bolts.

The QR code with the survey was taped onto the side of the boxes.



Our 3 Sites

S Atlanta St @ Marietta Hwy



Weekday ON Count: 3

Buford @ 4075



Weekday ON Count: 39

Ponce @ North Highland



Weekday ON Count: 62

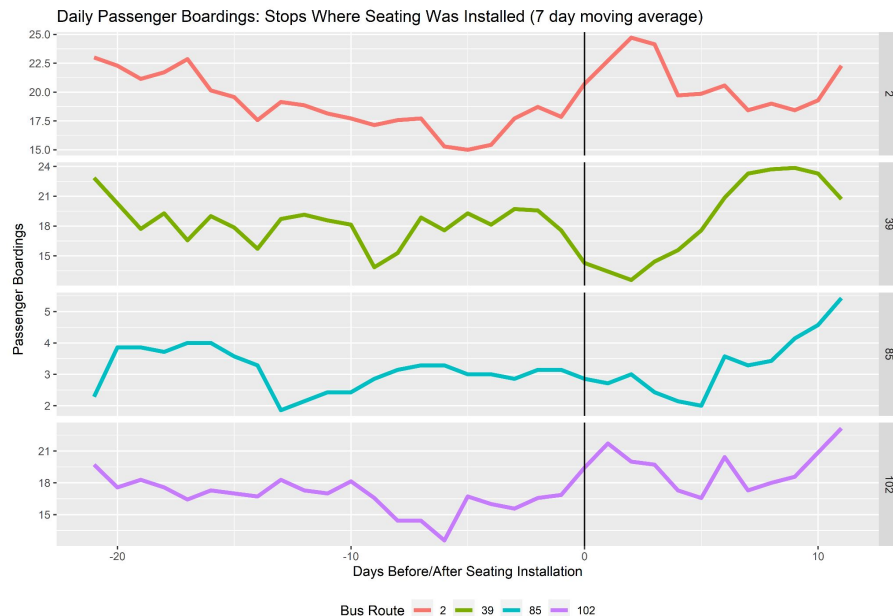
Data Collection: Ridership



Ridership

Passenger counts were collected directly from MARTA's Automated Passenger Counter (APC) system, covering the period from Oct 1 - Dec 1.

Results are inconclusive, with some stops showing increased ridership and some showing decreased.



Data Collection: Survey

Survey Goals:

Collect information on **Behavior**

- Did they use the bench? How do they usually travel?

Collect information on **Attitude** towards the bench

- Did they find it aesthetic, useful, comfortable?

Collect Information on **Emotions**

- How did the bench affect their experience?

Demographic Information

Highlights so far:

Do you have any comments about the seating amenity?
(Tiene comentarios sobre los asientos?)
3 responses

Yes it's good just needs a cover to protect from rain 🌧️

Make it more spacious for more people

It made me laugh, it's better than nothing I guess, the best part was asking for feedback

Do you have any comments about the seating amenity?
1 response

I was the one who called Marta a year and a half ago and asked for a covered seat, and place for us to stay out of the rain and the weather conditions. I live here in the Briarcliff Summit. So the seating was a very nice surprise this Sunday morning at 8:00 on my way to church at World Changers Church International.



Reflections and Potential Next Steps



Smooth process with no pushback from MARTA or other city officials



All 3 sites represent diverse populations, ridership data, and land characteristics



Activation has potential to be turned into permanent installation



Should continue survey data collection as public appreciated engagement efforts



Consider more factors for site selection, such as demographics and proximity to POIs

Questions, Answered

Why doesn't MARTA install seating at these locations themselves?

There could be many reasons: they might not have right-of-way, there might not be space for standard MARTA seating, or maybe it is on their list to install in a few years' time

Was this project officially sanctioned by MARTA?

No, MARTA played no official role in this project