

GPS to help No. 20 bus run on time

Written by

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Buses on the Westchester Bee-Line system's busiest route will slip through congested traffic on Central Avenue more easily with devices that will trigger or extend green lights, starting in a year or so, the county said.

County transportation officials settled recently on a system that uses global positioning technology to signal traffic lights when a bus is running behind schedule, so that it can trigger a green light automatically, said Naomi Klein, principal planner with the county Department of Public Works and Transportation.

"If a bus is behind schedule, it will give it that extra green time that it needs to meet that schedule," she said.

By tripping an early green light, or extending a go signal for an approaching bus, the system could "easily" shave six to 10 minutes or more off a 14-mile trip that now takes an hour to an hour and a half from White Plains to the Bronx, Klein said.

The county hopes to pay for the entire project with a \$2.4 million state grant that required no matching funds from the

county, she said. The new system is expected to be installed in 2012, she said.

The Bee-Line's route 20, which runs the corridor, carries 12,500 riders on weekdays and Saturdays, making it the system's busiest.

"They need to figure out a way to get that bus on time," White Plains resident William Makar said Wednesday, waiting to take a 20 bus north from the Pathmark near Battle Avenue as he was returning home.

Klein said the system would be used primarily to do just that. Once it's under way, transportation officials would consider whether to shorten the times on routes.

The county decided on the GPS with the consultants hired for the project, Parsons Brinckerhoff.

The company has hired Greenman-Pedersen Inc. as subconsultants, Klein said. Other options would use infrared or radio signal technology, she said.

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The adjusted signals would bring the first step toward improved bus services called bus rapid transit, an approach that already carries passengers in New York City and other areas.

Bus rapid transit systems use a range of methods to speed up transportation, including dedicated lanes and stations where passengers buy their tickets in advance, then board buses through two doors.

Klein said the department chose the project to adjust traffic lights first because it could be done the easiest, without requiring new buses. She said the agency would continue to look for funds to pay for the other pieces.

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