In the early 2000s an urban transport policy branded “bus rapid transit” experienced a surge in global popularity, particularly in parts of Asia and Latin America. Many papers have been published on bus rapid transit policy and its mobilization, but little attention has been directed to one particular aspect; the rise of bus rapid transit policy’s popularity was facilitated by increased promotion and lending from the World Bank headquarters in Washington, and promotional activities of Bank-supported intermediaries including non-profit institutes in New York and Washington. However, the World Bank’s role has been omitted or mentioned only in passing from the promotional narratives and inter-urban referencing surrounding the policy, as well as research on mobilization of the policy. This paper provides an explanation for these omissions, which serve both ideological and practical purposes. It argues that a narrative that omitted the World Bank’s central role was a necessary condition for the widespread emulation of bus rapid transit.