



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Item Number: 2

Agenda Date: October 17, 2023

In Control: Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

DEPARTMENT: Transportation Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Catherine Hernandez

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Briefing on current VIA transit projects, to include information on the on the Advanced Rapid Transit Program, VIA Link and the Better Bus Network Plan.

SUMMARY:

To provide an update to the City of San Antonio Transportation & Infrastructure Committee on the status and schedule of current VIA transit projects, to include information on:

1. VIA's Advanced Rapid Transit Program (known as VIA Rapid)
 - a. Green Line Project
 - b. Silver Line Project
2. VIA Link
3. Better Bus Network Plan

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1) Advanced Rapid Transit Program:

VIA Rapid Green Line

The Green Line Project is in the second year in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program. Since entering the Project Development phase of the program, the Green Line Project has:

- received an initial rating of "Medium-High,"
- been recommended for a \$158M grant via the President's FY 2023 Budget,
- held two rounds of Public Meetings with the community,
- been assigned a Project Management Oversight Consultant (PMOC) from the FTA, and
- completed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation with a Categorical Exclusion.

The Green Line Project has finalized 30% of engineering plans and has been reviewed through the FTA and PMOC risk workshop. During this period, staff continues to coordinate with the City of San Antonio and other agency stakeholders to ensure a successful project with mutual benefit. This has resulted in successful Interlocal Agreements being approved by VIA and the City of San Antonio for both the project and funding elements foundational to implementation success.

As a result of the risk workshop in June 2023, the FTA recommended the Green Line Project cost estimate to be \$423 million Year of Expenditure (YOE), excluding finance charges of \$23.3 million. The FTA received an updated Financial Plan, including a 60% CIG federal share request. Once Entry into Engineering is approved, VIA can begin final design for the Green Line Project.

VIA Rapid Silver Line

The Silver Line Project is in the first year in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program. Since entering the Project Development phase of the program, VIA has submitted a Ratings Package to the FTA. A very high-level conceptual plan was developed to serve as the basis for the initial cost estimate at \$289.2 Million YOE. VIA submitted a Small Starts ratings package, including an updated financial plan in August 2023. An initial rating from the FTA is expected before the end of the 2023 calendar year.

VIA staff has also begun long-term coordination with the City of San Antonio and other agency stakeholders, to ensure a successful project, with mutual benefit and alignment with City and VIA goals.

2) VIA Link:

VIA Link service, the on-demand, app-based transit service available within each of three specific zones (Northeast, Northwest and South) and links to VIA's larger transit network, will be launching a new zone in the Northeast area – VIA Link Randolph - just east of I-35, on October 23, 2023.

VIA Link typically serves low-density areas where bus service is not a viable option, uses the same fares and discounts as VIA bus service, and is separate from underlying ADA paratransit services. The area coverage within each zone ranges between 12.5 to 18.5 square miles, serving a total of 166,000 residents. Service is provided by five-passenger minivans with wait times of approximately eight to ten minutes, and a sixth of the time previously spent when waiting for

hourly bus service.

The new VIA Link Randolph will serve 59,000 residents within the zone. It will operate from 5 AM to 10 PM to allow for continued access to jobs in the area and make connections to the VIA Randolph Transit Center and the future Eastside Mobility Hub.

3) Better Bus Network Plan:

A new comprehensive effort to study the VIA fixed route and VIA Link service - called the Better Bus Plan – will evaluate current route operation with the goal of developing a new network of transit options that meets the needs of VIA’s customers and San Antonio residents and employees. The process includes a thorough review of operating and ridership performance, an assessment of the socio-economic and demographic condition within the current VIA service area, and an explorative search for stakeholder and public input that will truly impact transit solutions, in a phased implementation plan which will allow VIA to offer a realistic timeline for service improvements.

The transit system network goals have been drafted, and VIA will continue collaborating with regional partners, stakeholders, and the public before finalizing. The draft project goals include:

- Prioritizing the needs of the community,
- Addressing transportation disparities and enhance accessibility for everyone,
- Strengthening community mobility, affordability, and fiscal health through improved transportation options,
- Aligning with community efforts to grow a sustainable economy and achieve prosperity for all,
- Providing comprehensive and accessible service and route options that connect members of the community to opportunities across the region and
- Incorporating smart transit solutions to enhance the customer experience.

The work is being funded by a combination of a Federal Transit Administration Route Restoration Grant and VIA funding and is estimated to be completed by December 2024.

ISSUE:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact. This item is for briefing purposes only.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.