

Mayor, VIA Propose Splitting 1/8-Cent Sales Tax

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Mayor Ron Nirenberg/KTSA Photo-Elizabeth Ruiz

SAN ANTONIO (KTSA News) – Mayor Ron Nirenberg has announced that the City of San Antonio and VIA Metropolitan Transit have reached an agreement that would use money from a 1/8-cent sales tax for economic recovery programs and transit, if approved by voters.

The proposal to put the plan on the ballot in November is pending approval from City Council and the Advanced Transportation District. If the agreement is okayed by both entities, voters would be asked to approve separate measures for use of the existing 1/8-cent sales tax revenue.

The existing 1/8-cent sales tax currently funds protection of the Edwards Aquifer and linear parks and greenways. The Aquifer protection tax is expected to expire next summer, when the amount of money approved by voters five years ago has been collected. Advocates for protection of the Edwards Aquifer were hoping to extend the sales tax to continue funding projects that protect San Antonio's primary source of drinking water.

The tentative agreement between city officials and VIA asks voters to approve funding first for a workforce development/economic opportunity program. After a certain time, which has not been determined, the sales tax revenue would then be diverted to VIA's transportation system. The details of the ballot measures will be developed in coming weeks.

"By working together, we have crafted a framework for recovering from the economic ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has dramatically changed our community's employment landscape," said Mayor Ron Nirenberg. "This approach will prepare San Antonians for jobs with a future while ensuring the long-term health of our transit system."

VIA Board Chair Hope Andrade thanked City and Bexar County leaders for their support.

"By asking voters to prioritize long-term funding for public transportation, we can secure a viable resource that provides access to lifeline services our community needs and deserves."

For an initiative to be on the Nov. 3 ballot, the election must be called by Aug. 17. City Council likely would consider the city's ballot measure Aug. 13.