

VIA invests \$735M in advanced rapid transit lines across San Antonio

All kinds of new tech will keep buses flowing in traffic.

By **Zachary-Taylor Wright**, *Trending Digital Reporter*

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Rendering of a advanced rapid transit bus terminal.

Courtesy of VIA

Getting around San Antonio currently can feel like a bit of a hassle. Parking downtown can be expensive and confusing, bus route frequencies can lead to long wait times, and traffic lanes can feel like a parking lot if you're on the road at the wrong time. But VIA Metropolitan Transit is rolling out some new solutions that could appease light rail dreamers and make downtown transport much breezier.

It's been about four years since San Antonio voters approved the Keep SA Moving plan from VIA – the public transportation agency's response to calls from public officials to improve inner-city mobility. This yes vote means that, starting in 2026, a .125-cent sales tax will go toward public transportation funding through VIA. The agency's solution, in part, involves two advanced rapid transit bus lines.

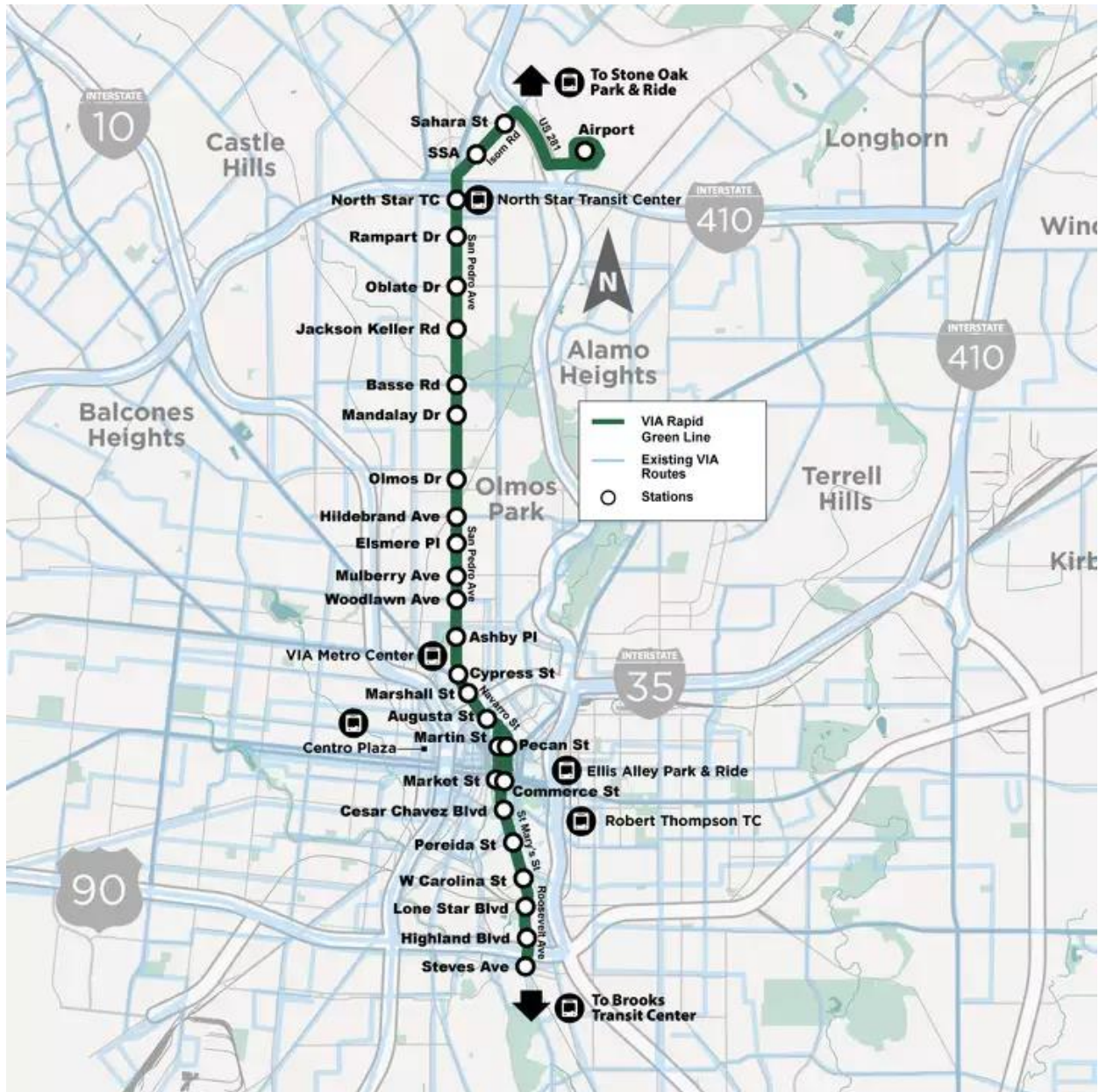
“The way a fixed-route bus works, it’s got these stops along the way, and if there’s one person at a stop or 20 people a stop, that bus will make the stop whether it’s people getting on or getting off. With people getting on, if you’ve got five or six people getting on right now, that bus stops in the right lane. So, traffic may start to build up behind it,” VIA Communications Director Josh Baugh told MySA. “What [advanced rapid transit] does it resolves those issues. People are paying their fares before the vehicle gets there. So, there’s isn’t that clog. When it’s center running, it’s taken out of traffic.”

Essentially, the rapid transit lines will be, ideally, steadily moving buses which will reduce travel times significantly for those traversing much of San Antonio’s downtown. In fact, to speed things along, officials said the buses will have tech that triggers traffic lights to prioritize the buses’ movement.

How will these rapid transit lines help improve traffic flow? A combination of a reduced stops, prepayment at bus terminals along the route for faster onboarding, and designated rapid transit bus lanes. This series of improvements could reduce, for example, the travel time by bus from North Star Mall to the Steves Avenue, by Mission Concepcion, could be cut in half. It now takes nearly 2 hours.

Further, these buses will run at a much higher frequency. Two existing routes on San Pedro are scheduled for 20-minute frequencies. The rapid transit buses are expected to be on a 10- to 15-minute loop, reducing wait times significantly through some of the most heavily-traveled areas of San Antonio.

The Green Line, VIA’s first rapid transit line, is expected to run along San Pedro from the San Antonio International Airport all the way down to Steves Avenue with continuing local bus service connections to Brooks Transit Center and Stone Oak Park & Ride. The Silver Line will connect the Eastside and Westside. It’ll likely run along Commerce Street and Buena Vista from around Our Lady of the Lake University, crossing I-10 and I-35, and shift to Houston Street and ending its destination at the Frost Bank Center. Continuing service westward from OLLU will go to the Kel-Lac Transit Center, and eastward service from the Frost Bank Center would continue to the future Eastside Transit Center.



Map showing the Green Line advanced rapid transit bus route.

“Two key corridors that were exceedingly identified in those master plans and long range planning efforts were the north-south corridor along San Pedro and the east-west corridor that basically would connect the Westside and Eastside through downtown,” Baugh said.

The Green Line is entering its final design phase and is expected to be operational by 2027. The Silver Line is still in its early days, and a design plan hasn’t been developed yet. However, things are moving quickly thanks to some serious support from federal funds. Baugh explained that VIA had never had access to federal dollars before, but the rapid transit line opened the public transport agency up to some \$400 million in federal dollars – a first time feat for VIA.

That financial backing is significant considering the cost of these ambitious projects. \$267.8 million in federal dollars will help fund The Green Line, which will cost roughly \$446.3 million in

total. That means 60% of the project is funded with federal support. For The Silver Line, the federal government is shelling out \$134.7 million toward the overall \$289.2 million project – that’s a whopping 46% contribution.

Editor's note: This story was updated to include clarifying information from VIA Metropolitan Transit.

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