



**CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF MAYOR RON NIRENBERG
INTERDEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE**

TO: Members of City Council
FROM: Ron Nirenberg, Mayor
COPIES TO: Erik Walsh, City Manager; Tina Flores, Interim City Clerk; Andy Segovia, City Attorney; Kevin Barthold, City Auditor
SUBJECT: VIA Metropolitan Transit
DATE: June 17, 2020

The pandemic is forcing every resident, family, business, and government agency to reevaluate and realign their priorities to ensure a safe and healthy recovery. Ahead of the novel coronavirus' arrival, our community was preparing for an extensive expansion of our transit network. Your support for the ConnectSA process and the accompanying VIA Reimagined plan was critical as we looked forward to high frequency bus service and the installation of San Antonio's first advanced rapid transit (ART) line.

In the wake of economic difficulties brought on by COVID-19, VIA Metropolitan Transit has delayed the implementation of their original VIA Reimagined plan for the foreseeable future. VIA officials have also stated that the delay of the Reimagined plan would not be immediately accelerated by future investments, including the potential allocation of the 1/8th cent sales tax set to expire next summer.

Despite the delay of an expanded transit network, VIA officials are considering asking the voters to approve the allocation of the 1/8th cent sales tax – roughly estimated to be \$40 million in annual revenues – to restore pre-COVID-19 service levels.

Because we have not seen a detailed five-year financial forecast laid out in a way to which we are accustomed, it is concerning that VIA Metropolitan Transit is still projecting a \$218.5 million deficit in their unrestricted cash reserve balance. I am asking VIA to present the steps they are taking to manage operations within their budget, accounting for their recent CARES Act allocation.

As such, I cannot support a November 2020 election to allocate the 1/8th cent sales tax to VIA Metropolitan Transit and would greatly appreciate your support for a full review of VIA's financial situation.

Public transportation remains a critical variable in the equation of our region's success, but we must revisit the order of operations in these calculations as we move beyond this pandemic. We must also ensure that we maintain public transportation services for all San Antonio residents who depend on VIA.

I look forward to the ensuing discussions and working with each of you to realize our mutual goals to benefit the City of San Antonio and its residents.



Ron Nirenberg
Mayor