

New Transit Center Powered by the Sun

As part of its ongoing efforts to reduce pollution in the San Antonio area, VIA Metropolitan Transit has installed a system that uses solar energy to provide power to the Senator Frank L. Madla Transit Center.

VIA sought to develop the power system because the agency constantly seeks ways to reduce emissions and energy consumption, and the construction of the Madla Transit Center provided an opportunity to showcase solar technology. The angled roof of the customer service building provides a southern exposure that is ideal for the insolation of solar panels.

The power system was a custom installation. It provides enough power to light up the facility, though VIA still relies on power from CPS Energy at night and to run the air conditioning. On low-use days, however, the Madla Transit Center actually provides enough power to put back into the CPS grid.

The system, which has been online since July 2008, earned VIA a rebate check from CPS in the amount of \$27,000. But the primary benefit of the renewable energy system has been the reduction of emissions.

"The use of solar power has never been about the money saved," said John Milam, president and CEO of VIA. "Though CPS gave us a rebate check, we're more concerned with reducing emissions. Since we turned on the system in July, we have saved the planet over 11,425 pounds of carbon emissions, and we will continue to do our part to reduce pollution in the Alamo City."

As VIA develops more facilities, each project will be evaluated for suitability for similar systems. If possible, renewable energy resources will be integrated in all new facility construction initiated by VIA.



Buster Anniversary

Has it been five years already?

Yes, it has! It was in November 2003 that Buster the Bus made his big comeback!

Many San Antonians remember the VIA Buppets from the 1980s, and Buster was the first of the bus-shaped puppets to help the new transit agency reach out to the community. After appearing in advertisements and television commercials for a decade, the Buppets retired in 1991.



Then, in 2003, Buster was brought out of retirement to assume his new role as a life-sized champion of public transportation. Five years later, Buster is still going strong. He makes about 10-15 appearances each month, and he has hobnobbed and rubbed shoulders with such famous personalities as County Judge Nelson Wolff, former San Antonio mayor Ed Garza, Rey Feo, H-E-Buddy, and the Spurs Coyote.

Buster will continue to visit schools, community events, special functions, and other neighborly gatherings, and he will keep spreading the message that riding the bus is fun and safe.

Starlight Service To Be Discontinued

As of January 1, 2009, the Starlight service provided by VIA Metropolitan Transit will no longer be available.

Starlight service was implemented in April 2006 to meet a demand for late-night public transportation. At the time, VIA's bus service ended at midnight and began running again at 5:00 a.m., which left many transit users without service late at night.

In May 2007 VIA expanded the hours of its bus service to allow buses to start running at 4:00 a.m. Buses also continue later in the night, sometimes until 1:00 a.m. These extra hours of service now accommodate many of the demands for late-night bus service, and VIA has seen Starlight ridership fall from a high of 357 trips in one night to an average of 88 trips a night.

Given the loss in ridership, the expanded bus hours, and the hefty cost of providing the service, the VIA Board of Trustees voted to eliminate the service altogether. If you have any questions about this decision, please call 362-2370.

Facility Tours

As part of its community outreach efforts, VIA gives children the opportunity to learn how a transit system operates behind the scenes.

Children will find out that there's more to VIA than just buses on the streets by taking a facility tour of the maintenance garage. These tours teach children what it takes to keep the VIA buses on the road every day, and the groups can even take a ride on a bus and possibly go through the bus wash while in a vehicle.

If any groups are interested in facility tours, here are some things to remember:

- The tour will be about one hour long.
- Children will take a walk through the maintenance garage with a guide.
- The minimum age requirement for participants in the tour is 5 years.
- There is a maximum of 20 students per group.
- Youth groups of all kinds are welcome.
- Special give-a-ways will be presented to each child.
- Groups are responsible for arranging transportation of the children to VIA's facility.
- At least two weeks notice is requested for facility tours.
- Background on job information is available.

For more information on VIA's facility tours, or to arrange a tour for your group, please call VIA's Public Affairs department at 362-2370.

How To Reach Us:



P.O. Box 12489
800 W. Myrtle
San Antonio TX 78212

Main Administrative Office	362-2000	
Customer Service and Information	362-2020	362-2019 (TDD)
VIAtrans Scheduling and Information	362-5050	362-5060 (TDD)

VIA Metropolitan Transit was created according to Ch. 451 of the Texas Transportation Code to provide public transportation services for the citizens of Bexar County. VIA has prepared this Rider Reader to keep you informed of VIA services. We welcome any comments or questions regarding this publication or VIA - - your transit company.

Rider Reader

Winter 2009



New Fares Coming with New Year

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To enhance the community's environment and quality of life by providing regional and customer-oriented public transportation that is dependable, cost effective, and enticing to more riders.

NEW FARES COMING WITH NEW YEAR

Riders on VIA Metropolitan Transit buses will see some new fares beginning January 1, 2009 with the base fare costing a dime more and the monthly pass going up by five dollars.

The fare increases have been scheduled for a few years now, and VIA held some public hearings in September to gather feedback from the public regarding the changes. Taking the concerns of citizens into account, the VIA board approved some adjusted fares, and then they were reviewed by the Local Governmental Approval Committee. This committee, which is made up of local elected officials and meets for the sole purpose of reviewing changes to VIA's fare structure, also approved the new fares.

The primary change riders will see come January 1 is the increase in the base fare from \$1.00 to \$1.10 with a corresponding increase in the reduced fare from 50 cents to 55 cents. Also, the first transfers are no longer free. All transfers will now cost 15 cents with a reduced-fare transfer costing seven cents.

The fare to ride express routes is also going up. Currently \$2.00, the new express fare will be \$2.50. VIAtrans rides will also cost a little more as they increase from \$1.50 to \$1.75.

Under the new fare structure, VIA's monthly Big Pass (popular with many riders) is going up in price as well. Riders will pay \$30 for a month of rides instead of \$25, and the corresponding reduced fare will be \$15. The student Semester Pass will go up from \$25 to \$35, and a new price for the Day Pass is being set at \$4.

If you have any questions regarding these new fares or how you can purchase passes, call VIA's Customer Service line at 362-2020.

Regular bus and streetcar service	\$1.10
Regular bus and streetcar half fare	\$0.55
Express bus service	\$2.50
Express half fare	\$1.25
VIAtrans service	\$1.75
Special event service	\$5.00
Special event half fare	\$2.50
Monthly Big Pass	\$30.00
Monthly Big Pass half fare	\$15.00
Semester Pass	\$35.00
Day Pass	\$4.00

TARIFAS NUEVAS VIENEN CON EL AÑO NUEVO

Los pasajeros de VIA Metropolitan Transit verán algunas tarifas nuevas comenzando el 1º de enero del 2009. La tarifa básica costará diez centavos más y el pase mensual costará cinco dólares más.

El aumento en las tarifas estaba programado desde hace unos años, y hubo audiencias públicas en septiembre para recibir información de la comunidad sobre estos cambios. Con el interés de la comunidad en mente, el Consejo de Directivos de VIA aprobó algunas tarifas ajustadas, y estas fueron revisadas por el Local Governmental Approval Committee o el Comité Local de Aprobación Gubernamental. Este comité, el cual está formado de funcionarios electos y se junta solamente para revisar los cambios a las tarifas de VIA, aprobó estas nuevas tarifas.

El cambio principal que verán los pasajeros el 1º de enero es el aumento en la tarifa básica de \$1.00 a \$1.10 con un aumento correspondiente a la tarifa reducida de 50 centavos a 55 centavos. La primera transferencia ya no será gratuita. De ahora en adelante todas las transferencias costarán 15 centavos con la transferencia de costo reducido costando siete centavos.

La tarifa para las rutas exprés también aumentará. Actualmente es de \$2.00, y la nueva tarifa exprés será de \$2.50. Los viajes en VIAtrans también aumentarán un poco de \$1.50 a \$1.75.

Bajo la estructura nueva de tarifas, el Big Pass mensual de VIA (el cual es muy popular entre los pasajeros) aumentará también. Los pasajeros pagarán \$30 por mes en lugar de \$25, y la tarifa reducida correspondiente será de \$15. El pase de semestre para los estudiantes aumentará de \$25 a \$35, y el nuevo precio del pase de día será de \$4.

Si tiene preguntas sobre estas tarifas nuevas o para enterarse cómo comprar sus pases, llame a la línea de servicio al cliente de VIA al 362-2020.

Autobús regular y trolebús	\$1.10
Autobús regular y trolebús medio precio	\$0.55
Servicio Exprés	\$2.50
Servicio Exprés medio precio	\$1.25
Servicio VIAtrans	\$1.75
Servicio de Evento Especial	\$5.00
Servicio de Evento Especial medio precio	\$2.50
Pase mensual Big Pass	\$30.00
Pase mensual Big Pass medio precio	\$15.00
Pase de Semestre	\$35.00
Pase de Día	\$4.00

Holiday Reminder:

Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 24, 2008
Buses on "Saturday" schedule

Christmas Day

Thursday, December 25, 2008
Buses on "Sunday" schedule

New Year's Eve

Wednesday, December 31, 2008
Buses on "Saturday" schedule

New Year's Day

Thursday, January 1, 2009
Buses on "Sunday" schedule

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Monday, January 19, 2009
Buses on "Saturday" schedule

Question and Answer

Q: What is a "holiday schedule"?

A: On certain holidays, VIA runs its buses on a "Saturday" or a "Sunday" schedule. For example, on Thanksgiving Day VIA normally runs a Sunday schedule. This means that, even though Thanksgiving falls on a Thursday, the buses will operate as if it were a Sunday. Check the pocket schedules for a list of holidays observed by VIA.

Q: Can I ask to get off where there's not a bus stop?

A: Yes, you can request that an operator let you off between marked bus stops. This is known as a "courtesy stop". However, due to safety concerns, the operator may ask if the next bus stop or nearest safe location would suffice.