



COVID-19 | FAQ

CURRENT AS OF MAY 22, 2020

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT VIA IS DOING ABOUT COVID-19?

- We're posting regular updates to our website at VIAinfo.net/covid-19.
- Posters and flyers are distributed throughout our transit centers and Park & Ride facilities.
- Signs are posted on buses.
- Information is posted on digital screens and kiosks throughout the system.
- You can also follow us on Facebook and Twitter for alerts.
- Sign up for email updates at VIAinfo.net.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN MY BUS INDICATES "AT SAFE CAPACITY" IN THE DESTINATION SIGN?

- To help passengers and our operators maintain a safe distance while on board, we have set a "safe capacity" limit of 16 passengers per trip on buses.
- This is less than half of seated capacity for buses and will allow people to skip a seat and keep some distance.
- We've put more buses on popular routes so that people don't have to wait long for the next bus to come.
- This is one of the ways VIA is helping to protect our passengers and operators.

HOW LONG WILL THE SAFE CAPACITY LIMIT BE IN PLACE?

- We will maintain a 16-passenger limit aboard buses until further notice to allow for safe distancing between passengers.



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WHAT DOES THE “STAY HOME, WORK SAFE” ORDER MEAN FOR VIA?

- The “Stay Home, Work Safe” order is to “shelter-in-place” for all persons living in San Antonio and Bexar County.
- On May 19, [the order was extended](#) through June 4, 2020. The most recent information can be found on the City’s website at [SanAntonio.gov](#).
- Under the order, everyone is required to stay home, except for essential or “covered” activities as outlined by state and local officials, such as:
 - Getting food or medical supplies for themselves or their families
 - To care for a person or pet in another residence
 - Visiting an essential or “reopened business,” per the state/local order.
 - Attending a religious service.
 - Other activities listed in the order
- Per the governor’s order, “reopened services” include the following as of May 18:
 - retail stores, dine-in restaurants, movie theaters, shopping malls, museums, golf courses, places of worship and libraries (at this time, San Antonio libraries remain closed).
 - Bars, gyms, bowling alleys, arcades, public swimming pools, massage establishments, tattoo and piercing studios and cosmetology and barber shops can reopen if proper social distancing is maintained.
- **The order lists VIA and public transit as an essential service.**
 - We will continue to run bus service for those who must still travel.
 - An ***Essential Service Schedule*** is in place as of April 26, and will remain in place until further notice. Click here for a [Complete List](#)
- VIAtrans, and VIA Link service will continue to operate as usual.
- The order requires everyone wear a cloth mask while in public and whenever proper social distancing is not possible (staying at least 6 feet apart).
 - VIA passengers will be required to use a cloth face covering over their nose and mouth to board and ride VIA vehicles, and access facilities, until further notice.



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- While supplies last, a face covering will be offered to customers who do not have one when they board the bus.
- VIA requirements will continue until further notice.

ARE VIA RIDERS REQUIRED TO WEAR MASKS?

- Yes. Non-exempt customers over the age of 10 are required to wear a face covering over their nose and mouth while aboard a VIA vehicle or at VIA facilities, where proper social distancing is not possible, **until further notice**.
- The order applies whenever 6 feet of personal space cannot be maintained between persons in public, such as inside a bus or a transit center.

WHAT IF I HAVE A CONDITION THAT PREVENTS ME FROM WEARING A MASK BUT DOESN'T QUALIFY ME FOR A REDUCED FARE CARD?

- The City/County order currently allows for some specific exemptions. One is applicable to VIA passengers. That is:
 - Face coverings do not need to be worn: *"When doing so poses a greater mental or physical health, safety, or security risk."*
- If a passenger is claiming exemption based on mental or physical health risks, they must present their VIA-issued **VIATrans ID** or VIA-issued **Reduced Fare ID** when boarding. They may also be asked to present their ID upon entering a VIA facility.

WHAT IF I HAVE A CONDITION THAT PREVENTS ME FROM WEARING A MASK BUT DOESN'T QUALIFY ME FOR A REDUCED FARE CARD?

- Please call our customer service line at (210) 362-2020 for more information.



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WHY AREN'T PASSENGERS BOARDING THROUGH THE BACK DOORS?

- Most VIA buses don't have automatic back doors. They must be pushed open by passengers when exiting. This is part of the reason we offered a fare-free period, so that customers boarding through the front door could limit contact with the driver and avoid crowding, while additional safety measures were put into place.

IS VIA STOPPING OR REDUCING SERVICE?

- VIA began operating on an "Essential Service" schedule Monday, April 27, which maintains or improves current schedules for routes that continue to see high ridership and adjusts others based on changing conditions. Several routes will move to "Sunday" schedules on April 27 with some exceptions, including additional frequency on routes that continue to be highly utilized
- Riders are reminded to only make essential trips during this time and observe VIA's requirements to practice social distancing and wear a face covering in public.

The following changes for VIA's fixed-route bus service went into effect Monday, April 27, 2020, and will continue until further notice. Summary:

- No changes to VIAtrans or VIA Link Service.
- Most VIA routes (52 of 92) will be on "Sunday" schedule. Exceptions include:
 - 14 routes that have maintained high ridership and provide many essential trips.
 - 11 routes that will operate on a Sunday Service schedule during the bulk of the day but with expanded morning hours.
 - 5 routes that will maintain service, but at a less frequent schedule.
 - 5 routes that are experiencing extremely low ridership and have alternative transit service available from other routes (this is in addition to the 5 routes suspended since April 6).

Visit [VIAinfo.net/routes](https://viainfo.net/routes) for specific route schedules.



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IF I FEEL SICK, CAN I TAKE VIA TO GO TO THE DOCTOR OR HOSPITAL?

- **No.** If you feel sick, do not use public transit—per CDC recommendations.
- Call your doctor or health care provider for instructions.
- Visit the City’s website at www.SanAntonio.gov to take a self-screening test.
- You can call the City’s COVID hotline at 210-207-5779 or email questions to covid-19@sanantonio.gov.

IF I PURCHASED A PASS BEFORE THE FARES WERE SUSPENDED, CAN I GET A REFUND?

- Please call our customer care line at (210) 362-2020 for questions about passes or refunds.

WHAT IS VIA DOING TO HELP PROTECT ITS EMPLOYEES?

- VIA has stepped up its cleaning procedures for buses, vans and facilities. This includes daily cleaning—at the end of the run and throughout the day—with EPA-approved, hospital-grade solution.
- We have removed or restricted access to the seats nearest to the driver’s seat on our vehicles. This helps reduce interaction and promote social distancing for passengers and operators.
- Operators have access to hand sanitizer, wipes and gloves and masks to help protect them and our customers.
- We have suspended fares **through May 31**, and restricted access to the areas in front of the bus to reduce interaction and crowding close to the operator.
- VIA issues masks to all operators and front-line workers. These are mandatory for all employees while working or while at a VIA facility.
- Protective plastic shields have been installed on all driver cabins for buses and vans. These droplet-resistant, clear-plastic curtains are temporary. Permanent shields will be installed in the future.



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- VIA is performing temperature checks on all employees entering VIA facilities or reporting for duty at a VIA location to ensure they are safe and healthy while interacting with the public.
- VIA requires all passengers to wear a facial covering over the nose and mouth whenever social distancing is not possible, such as aboard a bus or at a transit facility, until further notice.
- VIA employees are required to follow additional recommended steps like washing their hands often, coughing and sneezing into their arm, wiping down surfaces and staying home if they feel sick.
- Up-to-date information on how to stay healthy and safe is available to operators and employees online, in office areas, aboard buses, and at transit centers and Park & Ride facilities.
- Employees who can perform their duties remotely have been asked to do so to promote social distancing in the workplace.

DO VIA OPERATORS HAVE MASKS? ARE THEY REQUIRED TO WEAR THEM?

- VIA issues masks to operators as part of their personal protective equipment that also includes gloves and sanitizing products. This is in line with CDC recommendations and guidelines for the public, including public service workers.
- All VIA employees who interact with the public are provided masks and gloves and required to wear them while working or at a VIA facility.
- We will continue to monitor recommendations from the CDC and other health officials and take any additional steps required.

DOES VIA HAVE PROTECTIVE SHIELDS ON VEHICLES FOR OPERATORS?

- Yes, we have installed temporary plastic barriers on all driver cabins to further protect them and others from the spread of germs.
- The shields are droplet-resistant, clear-plastic curtains.



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IS VIA CHECKING TEMPERATURES FOR EMPLOYEES?

- Yes, VIA is performing temperature checks for all employees entering VIA facilities or reporting for work at a VIA location.

IS VIA CHECKING TEMPERATURES FOR PASSENGERS?

- Not currently. But passengers are reminded that if they feel sick, they are not supposed to take public transit. They should call their doctor or the City's COVID hotline for information.

HAVE ANY VIA EMPLOYEES TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

- As of Wednesday, May 20— **Eight VIA employees** have tested positive for COVID-19, including six operators and two administrative employees.
- The buses and areas used by the employees prior to testing positive have been sanitized daily as well as during enhanced cleaning.
- A list of routes, bus numbers and times operators drove during the period prior to their last day on duty is available online at VIAinfo.net/covid-19.
- All employees are instructed to report COVID-related symptoms to their supervisor and their physician. Employees are told to stay home if they feel ill to limit exposure to others.
- Operators are eligible for COVID-19 screening at the City's pre-approved testing facility. They are asked to work with their supervisor to be referred for testing.

WHAT IS VIA DOING TO HELP PROTECT ITS CUSTOMERS?

- To date, no local cases have been linked to the use of public transit services.
- VIA continues to expand its cleaning procedures for buses, vans and facilities that include daily cleaning with EPA-approved, hospital-grade solution designed to kill germs that cause illness.



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- We have removed or restricted access to the seats that are closest to the driver's seat aboard our vehicles. This leaves some space between passengers and the driver, which is recommended to keep a safer environment.
- **We've extended our fare-relief period through MAY 31**, so that customers don't have to touch the fare box or crowd the front door when boarding, and to help maintain social distancing. **We'll begin collecting fares again on Monday, JUNE 1.**
- We'll continue to set a safe capacity limit of 16 passengers per trip until further notice, to allow for social distancing on board. Extra buses have been placed on popular routes to make sure all passengers are picked up.
- Passengers and customers at VIA facilities are required to wear a face covering over their nose and mouth, until further notice. A face covering is required whenever 6 feet of physical distance between people is not possible – such as while waiting at bus stops, when aboard a VIA bus or van, or while at a VIA facility.

WHY IS VIA OFFERING FREE FARES?

- The fare relief period for VIA bus, VIAtrans and VIA Link services is meant to reduce the need for customers to touch the farebox and/or interact with the driver when boarding. Faster boarding also minimizes crowding at the door.
- Also, to maintain essential service for those who still must travel for work at essential businesses or services, to get food or supplies, or care for someone else.
- Only necessary trips should be happening at this time.

WILL "REGULAR SERVICE" SCHEDULES RETURN WHEN FARE COLLECTION RETURNS?

- Fare collection resumes June 1.
- We will continue to operate our Essential Service Schedule until further notice.



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- This schedule adjustment is temporary and designed to continue operating bus service for people who must travel for work or other essential activities.
- Any future schedule or route changes will be announced on our website, social media channels, and through our customer service centers.

WHEN WILL THE VIVA ROUTES RETURN TO SERVICE?

- VIVA routes 11, 40 and 301 are temporarily suspended.
- This change is part of our Essential Service Schedule that keeps service going for people who must make essential trips.
- The schedule focuses service on routes and areas with the highest demand for ridership.
- While most museums, parks and restaurants remain closed or are open with limited capacity, we will pause service on VIVA.
- We hope to return soon!

WHAT CAN CUSTOMERS DO TO HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS?

- Stay home.
- Wear a face covering when in public.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Use hand sanitizer between washing
- Cough and sneeze into your arm.
- Avoid touching your face.

- **ONLY TAKE ESSENTIAL TRIPS during this time.** If you do not absolutely have to travel, stay home and avoid public spaces.

- Keep a safe distance from others when in public. At least 6 feet between you and the person next to you is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), health and government officials.

- Use hand sanitizer in between hand washing. We have placed hand sanitizing stations at our offices and facilities for customers to use.



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- We have also updated the information available on our website, aboard our buses, and at our transit centers and Park & Ride facilities to ensure customers can stay informed.
- You can find this and other helpful information at WWW.CDC.GOV.

HOW OFTEN ARE BUSES/FACILITIES CLEANED?

- VIA vehicles and facilities are cleaned daily with EPA-approved, hospital-grade solution.
- We have stepped up our cleaning and disinfecting routine to include additional cleaning during the day, as well as overnight.
- This includes detailing of high-traffic areas aboard the vehicle like handles, rails, straps and seats.

WHAT DOES VIA USE TO CLEAN BUSES AND FACILITIES?

- VIA uses an EPA-approved, hospital-grade disinfectant to help kill germs that cause illnesses like flu and coronavirus.

WITH SO MANY BUSINESSES CLOSED TO VISITORS, WHERE ARE OPERATORS SUPPOSED TO TAKE COMFORT BREAKS (RESTROOM BREAKS)?

- We have set up portable restrooms in areas where other facilities aren't readily available for operators on their routes. Restrooms are secured with a combination lock and operators have been provided the code.
- Only 10 of our 92 routes do not pass by a VIA facility or transit station, where operators could safely use the restroom. When not at these locations, operators typically use gas station or other business restroom, as allowed by the business owner.



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WHEN WILL VIA BEGIN HIRING AGAIN?

- We have temporarily suspended hiring for non-essential positions.
- We don't have a date for when we will begin hiring again for all positions. We will announce it on our website and social media channels when we do.

WILL VIA CONTINUE MAKING SA FOOD BANK DELIVERIES?

- We will continue to partner with the Food Bank to make deliveries to homebound residents and support their food distribution events as long as resources are available.
- As COVID-19 conditions change, we may no longer be able to dedicate vehicles or staff to these programs.
- We're proud of our work to fight hunger alongside the Food Bank and will stay active for as long as possible.

HOW DO COVID-19 CHANGES AFFECT CUSTOMERS WHO USE WHEELCHAIRS?

- VIA has put safety measures in place to ensure customers and staff are protected when riding with VIA or at a VIA facility.
- Maximum passenger limits are in place for bus and VIAtrans riders to allow for social distancing.
- Face covering requirements are in place for all non-exempt riders on bus and VIAtrans trips. Persons who have a mental or physical health issue that prevents them from wearing a face covering over their nose and mouth can show their VIAtrans ID or Reduced Fare ID to ride without one.
- Operators will still assist riders in wheelchairs or other mobility assisted device, including kneeling the bus when boarding and helping with securing the chair while on board.
- **For questions about VIAtrans service during COVID-19, please call 210-362-5050.**