



# COVID-19 | FAQ

**CURRENT AS OF MAY 26, 2021**

## **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](https://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.
- Our customer care team can help with specific questions about fares and service. Please call (210) 362-2020 for help.
- You can also follow us on Facebook and Twitter for alerts.
- Sign up for email updates at VIAinfo.net.

## **IS VIA LIMITING THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS ON BUSES AND VANS?**

- Beginning June 1, 2021, VIA will no longer limit the number of passengers on bus and van trips.
- Buses, VIAtrans vans, and VIA Link vans will be open to full capacity beginning Tuesday, June 1.
- Masks will still be required for all passengers and employees, per federal regulations.

## **ARE VIA RIDERS REQUIRED TO WEAR MASKS?**

- Yes. It is now a federal requirement that all non-exempt passengers ages 2 and older wear a face covering over their nose and mouth while on a VIA vehicle or at a VIA facility. The new federal mandate, which reinforces VIA's long-standing mask requirement, is effective as of February 2, 2021, and until further notice.

## **HOW DOES THE TEXAS GOVERNOR'S REPEAL OF A STATEWIDE MASK MANDATE (EFFECTIVE MARCH 10, 2021) AFFECT VIA'S MASK REQUIREMENT?**

- The Governor has lifted the statewide mask requirement, effective March 10. This does not change VIA's mask requirement for all non-exempt persons age 2+. Per Federal law, persons using public transit vehicles must continue to wear a mask over their nose and mouth at all times, including while boarding and riding a VIA vehicle and while visiting a VIA facility.



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## **DO FACE SHIELDS MEET THE FACE COVERING/MASK REQUIREMENT?**

No. A face shield cannot take the place of a face covering or mask. While face shields may provide an extra layer of protection when worn in addition to a mask, wearing a face shield alone does not meet the federal mask requirement for non-exempt passengers.

**The following are attributes of masks needed to fulfill the requirements of the Federal Order, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.**

- A properly worn mask completely covers the nose and mouth.
- Cloth masks should be made with two or more layers of a breathable fabric that is tightly woven (i.e., fabrics that do not let light pass through when held up to a light source).
- Mask should be secured to the head with ties, ear loops, or elastic bands that go behind the head. If gaiters are worn, they should have two layers of fabric or be folded to make two layers.
- Mask should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face.
- Mask should be a solid piece of material *without* slits, exhalation valves, or punctures.

**The following attributes are additionally acceptable as long as masks meet the requirements above.**

- Masks can be either manufactured or homemade.
- Masks can be reusable or disposable.
- Masks can have inner filter pockets.
- Clear masks or cloth masks with a clear plastic panel may be used to facilitate communication with people who are hearing impaired or others who need to see a speaker's mouth to understand speech.
- Medical masks and N-95 respirators fulfill the requirements of the Order.

**The following *do not* fulfill the requirements of the Order.**

- Masks worn in a way that does not cover both the mouth and nose.
- Face shields or goggles (face shields or goggles may be worn to supplement a mask that meets above required attributes).
- Scarves, ski masks, balaclavas, or bandannas
- Shirt or sweater collars (e.g., turtleneck collars) pulled up over the mouth and nose.
- Masks made from loosely woven fabric or that are knitted, i.e., fabrics that let light pass through.
- Masks made from materials that are hard to breathe through (such as vinyl, plastic or leather)
- Masks containing slits, exhalation valves, or punctures



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## WHAT IF I HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH OR PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUE THAT PREVENTS ME FROM WEARING A FACE COVERING/MASK?

- There may be specific situations or reasons why a person may be unable to wear facial coverings/face masks: for example, a physical or mental condition or disability. If you are a person who is unable to wear a facial coverings/face mask for these reasons, please contact the VIA Accessible Services Department at (210) 362-2140 to request an accommodation.

## WHY AREN'T PASSENGERS BOARDING THROUGH THE BACK DOOR?

- 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 is continuing to operate on an "Essential Service" schedule. The latest adjustments went into effect in May 2021, which maintain or improve current schedules for routes that continue to see high ridership and adjusts others based on changing conditions.
- A complete list of routes and stops are available at [VIAinfo.net/Service Changes](https://viainfo.net/ServiceChanges)
- Visit [VIAinfo.net/routes](https://viainfo.net/routes) for specific route schedules.

## 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 of San Antonio's website at [www.SanAntonio.gov](https://www.SanAntonio.gov) to take a self-screening test.
- You can call the City's COVID hotline at [210-207-5779](tel:210-207-5779), or email questions to [covid-19@sanantonio.gov](mailto:covid-19@sanantonio.gov).



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## 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 solution designed to kill germs that can cause illness.
- Operators and front-line employees have access to hand sanitizer, wipes, gloves and masks.
- VIA issues masks to all operators and front-line workers. These are mandatory for all employees while working or while at a VIA facility.
- Masks are offered to passengers who do not have one, while daily supplies last.
- VIA employees are required to follow additional recommended steps such as having their temperature checked when arriving for work every day, like washing their hands often, coughing and sneezing into their arm, wiping down surfaces and staying home if they feel sick.
- Protective barriers have been installed on all driver cabins for buses and vans.
- Federal law requires all non-exempt passengers ages 2+ to wear a facial covering over the nose and mouth while aboard a VIA vehicle or at a transit facility. The new federal mandate, which reinforces VIA's long-standing mask requirement, is effective as of February 2, 2021, and until further notice.
- VIA is performing temperature checks on all employees entering VIA facilities or reporting for duty at a VIA location.
- 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.

## 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.



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## **DOES VIA HAVE PROTECTIVE SHIELDS ON VEHICLES FOR OPERATORS?**

- Yes, we have installed protective barriers on all driver cabins to further shield them and others from the spread of germs.

## **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 at this time. 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?**

- Updates regarding employees who have tested positive are posted to the [VIA COVID-19 page](#).
- A list of routes, bus numbers and times operators drove during the period prior to their last day on duty is also available.
- All vehicles and work areas are cleaned and sanitized daily as needed as part of our enhanced safety protocols.
- 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?**

- VIA requires all non-exempt passengers to wear a face covering over their nose and mouth at all times, while riding a VIA vehicle or at a VIA facility.
- As of February 2, Federal law requires all non-exempt passengers and visitors at transit facilities to wear a face covering over their nose and mouth. This new federal mandate reinforces VIA's long-standing mask requirement. It applies to all persons ages 2 and older, and is effective until further notice.



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

## 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 their arm
- Avoid touching your face
- We have placed hand sanitizing stations at our offices and facilities for customers to use.
- 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](http://WWW.CDC.GOV).

## HOW OFTEN ARE BUSES / FACILITIES CLEANED?

- VIA vehicles and facilities are cleaned daily with CDC-approved 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.



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## WHAT DOES VIA USE TO CLEAN BUSES AND FACILITIES?

- VIA uses a CDC-approved disinfectant to help kill germs that cause illnesses like flu and coronavirus.

## 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.
- 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.**

## WHEN WILL VIA BEGIN HIRING AGAIN?

- VIA has resumed hiring for essential positions, including bus operators.
- Please visit [VIAinfo.net/employment](http://VIAinfo.net/employment) for a list of available positions and information about how to apply.