



VIA METROPOLITAN TRANSIT

ACCESSIBLE TRANSIT SERVICE GUIDE



VIA METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY

The “VIA” Metropolitan Transit Authority was formed in 1978 to continue the local transit system previously operated by the City of San Antonio. VIA buses, which travel along nearly 100 different routes, are fully accessible to individuals who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices. “Paratransit” vans are also available for persons who, because of a disability, cannot get to or from VIA bus stops or independently ride VIA buses. These services make it convenient for everyone to travel throughout the San Antonio area.

At VIA, our mission is to provide safe, dependable and cost-effective public transportation services to enhance the quality of life in the communities we serve.

VIA also supports the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which encourages independence, self-sufficiency and integration into the mainstream of daily life.

This *Accessible Transit Service Guide* describes the accessible elements of VIA service. We hope this information encourages members of the local disability community, and visitors, to confidently and successfully use VIA while traveling in the San Antonio area. Questions and comments can be addressed to:

VIA Accessible Service Department
P. O. Box 12489
San Antonio, TX 78212

You may also call (210) 362- 2140 or use the VIA Customer Service lines:

(210) 362-2020

TTY: (210) 362-2019

Toll Free: 1-866-362-2020

Another option is the Online Comment Form at the www.viainfo.net website.

We would like to hear from you... but most importantly, we would like to have you as another VIA customer!

VIA BUS SERVICE



The VIA Bus System

VIA owns and operates more than 400 buses. These large (40' or longer) vehicles have seats and standing room for at least 50 passengers. VIA buses travel along nearly 100 different "routes." Each route consists of a specific path and a timetable for bus arrival at key locations. Buses follow the same paths and timetables times every day, with minor differences at night and on weekends. Bus trips can begin as early as 4:30 AM and as late as 12:30 at night. The VIA bus system is often called "City Bus" or "Fixed Route" service.

Bus routes go all over town. People ride VIA buses to and from malls, grocery stores, medical appointments, job sites, colleges and universities, government offices, banks, the Alamodome, museums and many other places of interest. Because VIA buses stop every two or three blocks for passengers to get on or off, bus service is easy and convenient. Most customers can walk or roll to a VIA bus stop in five minutes or less.

There are more than 7,000 VIA bus stops through the metropolitan San Antonio area. Most are at street intersections and all are clearly marked. Many, but not all, bus stop locations have benches or shelters for customer comfort. It is not necessary to wave at an approaching bus; all bus operators (drivers) are trained to stop whenever they see a waiting passenger.

Each of the nearly 100 VIA bus routes has a specific number and name, such as # 86 *Ingram Rd.* Buses have external speakers to announce the route number and name whenever they stop. This is important, because two or more different routes sometimes use the same stop – especially in the downtown area and along major streets.

To find out more information about VIA bus routes and schedules, and for assistance in planning a bus trip, please call the VIA Information Center at (210) 362-2020. Maps, schedules and on-line trip planning assistance are also available at www.viainfo.net.

Welcome Aboard!

Back in the day, city buses had small steps and narrow doors for customers to get in or out. Most VIA buses now have a “low floor” design which eliminates the need for any steps. In places such as parking lots or some suburban streets that have no sidewalks, Buses also have built-in ramps, which create a gentle slope for the benefit of people who have difficulty bending their knees. Ramps are typically used in places such as parking lots and on streets where no sidewalk is available.

Bus ramps also create access for persons who travel in wheelchairs or electric scooters. The ramps are wide enough and strong enough to accommodate most mobility devices, and bus operators will assist persons who cannot self-propel a manual wheelchair up or down the ramp. The operator also will safely secure a customer’s wheelchair or scooter before the trip begins.

All passengers must enter through the front door and use a pass, tickets or cash to pay the required fare. The current fare structure is shown at the end of this booklet. Operators will, on request, assist customers who have difficulty showing a pass or depositing money in a farebox. Customers who must transfer to another bus route to complete their trip, can ask the operator for a transfer slip when paying with cash.

Ambulatory passengers may choose any open seat or space. Persons who are disabled may ask to sit close to the front of the bus, and the bus operator will ask other customers to move.

Yellow cords or plastic strips also located near the bus windows. When approaching your destination, pull the cord or press the strip to signal the bus operator to stop. Otherwise, the operator might pass your destination if no one is waiting at the bus stop location. Speakers and display screens inside each VIA bus will alert passengers to major street intersections or transfer points.

Additional Information:

Operators are not required to provide assistance with grocery bags or packages. Packages, groceries or other large objects may not take up additional seats; block the

aisles; or cause injury to others. Customers are absolutely not permitted to carry guns or any other weapons on any bus or van. VIA does not allow eating, drinking or smoking, or loud, disruptive or threatening behavior. Occasionally, uniformed and plain-clothed police officers ride VIA buses to ensure the safety of all customers. These officers can arrest and detain customers who are drunk, disorderly or violating the law.

Guide dogs, signal dogs or any other animal trained to assist with or perform activities of daily living are classified as working or service animals. These animals can ride any VIA vehicles when providing or being trained to provide assistance to persons who are disabled. Small pets not classified as working or service animals can be transported on VIA's vehicles. The animal must be held on a customer's lap and must be in a cage, pet carrier or on a leash.

NOTE: If a bus operator believes a service animal is not within its owner's control, or that the animal may pose a direct threat to any passengers, the Operator has the right to refuse or terminate service to that animal and passenger.

Personal items left on a bus (or van) at the end of each day are taken to VIA's Lost and Found Center. VIA employees will contact customers if items are marked with an address or phone number, and lost property can be reclaimed with proper identification.

Need More Help?

VIA offers a Travel Training program that helps people learn how to use the VIA bus system. A qualified instructor will meet with an individual customer and/or family member(s) to determine what information or experience is needed. The instructor will then design an appropriate plan, which could involve something as basic as learning how to read bus schedules and plan a trip. The plan may include other people who travel together on a bus to see how the fare is paid and how to anticipate a destination stop. In other cases, an instructor make work one-on-one with a candidate and repeatedly take the same bus trip until the customer is able to independently follow a path to and from a bus stop. Travel Training is provided at no cost.

VIA understands that due to individual circumstances, many customers will not be able to use fixed route bus service for all their travel needs. It is hoped, however, that the customer who participates in travel training can use VIA buses for at least some trips. Persons interested in VIA's travel-training program are invited to call the Accessible Services Office at (210) 362-2140.

VIAtrans Paratransit Service



VIA is a public transportation provider. To the extent practical, VIA meets the local travel needs of local residents and visitors who:

- Do not own or have access to a car, motorcycle or other passenger vehicle;
- Are too young to drive;
- Prefer, for various reasons, to not use a private vehicle; or
- Have limited mobility as a result of an injury or medical condition.

The primary method of meeting these travel needs is VIA fixed-route bus service, as described in the previous section. VIA delivers nearly 50 million person-trips each year, and more than 97% of those trips are made by VIA bus riders. The remaining trips are provided on the VIAtrans system.

VIAtrans Overview

VIAtrans is reserved for persons who, because of a disability, are prevented from independently using VIA fixed-route buses. This basically means they do not have the capacity (in terms of strength, endurance, balance, awareness, judgment and similar factors) to get to or from a VIA bus stop and/or ride a VIA bus without assistance from another individual. A person's disability may be related to age, injury, serious illness or a condition present at birth. It may involve physical, visual, intellectual ("mental") or behavioral deficits. Whatever the reason for their mobility limitations, such individuals are equally entitled to the travel benefits available to people who can ride VIA buses.

Three elements of VIA bus service are most likely to present a barrier to persons with disabilities:

- Getting to and from a bus stop;
- Recognizing where or when to get off a bus; and
- Knowing how to transfer from one bus route to another.

To address these issues, VIAtrans uses a fleet of small (up to 25' long) vans which can transport up to eight passengers. These vans will go to a customer's house or apartment and take him or her to their specified location – workplace, mall, bank, church, wherever. This type of service, called “paratransit”, eliminates the requirement for customers to walk or to pilot a wheelchair more than a very short distance. Because van operators (drivers) know each destination, their passengers need not have the capacity to follow a path or recognize landmarks. VIAtrans customers also complete their trips on the same vehicle, so there is no need to transfer.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), requires VIA and all other fixed-route bus systems to provide paratransit service as a safety net. As such, VIAtrans must be similar or identical to bus service in terms of such factors as service area; days and hours of operation; capacity; and fares. The major differences between fixed-route bus service and paratransit van service, in addition to vehicle size and address-to-address vs. bus stop-to-bus stop routing, are:

- VIAtrans trips must be scheduled at least one day in advance; and
- VIAtrans customers must be pre-approved for service.

These distinctions are explained below.

VIAtrans Eligibility

The ADA requires that paratransit service be available to persons with a physical, intellectual or visual impairment of such severity as to prevent independent travel on city buses. A specific disability, diagnosis, or condition alone does not confer VIAtrans eligibility. Applicants are not approved on the basis of age, income, residence or the (un)availability of a car, and doctors cannot write a prescription for VIAtrans service.

Instead, paratransit eligibility is determined by whether the applicant's functional mobility is so restricted that he or she is prevented from performing the tasks necessary for independent travel on VIA buses -- even though it may be difficult, inconvenient, or challenging to do so. This standard is based on federal regulations, which require that eligibility be “strictly limited” to persons who meet specific guidelines.

Individuals with disabilities (or their relatives or caregivers) who desire to use VIAtrans service must complete an application. This form can be downloaded at www.viainfo.net or mailed by calling (210) 362-2140. Some information must be provided by a doctor or other medical professional who is familiar with the applicant's current condition, abilities and limitations. Eligibility decisions are made within 21 days, although this time-period will be extended if an application is incomplete or an in-person assessment is needed. A majority of VIAtrans applicants are approved for full or limited VIAtrans service, and an appeals process is available if an applicant disagrees with VIA's decision.

VIAtrans Service

VIAtrans is an advance reservation and shared-ride system. Trips must be requested at least one day (and up to seven days) before the desired travel date. After picking up a VIAtrans customer, a van often makes one or more intermediate stops to pick up or drop off other passengers before reaching the customer's destination. Like VIA buses, VIAtrans vans will transport passengers who travel with service animals.

Most VIAtrans are scheduled by phone, and the VIAtrans call center is open every day. An option to schedule certain trips using a personal computer or other internet-connected device will be available in July 2017. Customers can request a specific pick-up or drop-off time, but actual van arrivals can be scheduled within a one-hour window. If desired, customers can also reserve space for a personal care attendant and at least one companion.

VIAtrans strives to maintain a 90% on-time rate for all trips, regardless of purpose. The ADA does not allow "priority" status for medical or work-related trips. While trips are scheduled and routed so as to minimize each customer's time on a van, some trips may require an hour or more. The ADA standard is that VIAtrans travel times should be comparable to the same trip when taken on the VIA bus system.

Customers are expected to be ready to travel at their scheduled pick-up time and to board within five minutes of van arrival. In some situations, the van operator may assist a customer to and from the vehicle. Most VIAtrans vans have built-in ramps or lift devices for use by customers who travel in wheelchair or scooters. Customers who repeatedly fail to appear for scheduled trips are subject to a service suspension unless the "no-show" incidents occurred for reasons beyond the customer's control. Van operators are instructed in safe driving practices and passenger assistance techniques, but are not trained to control a passenger's behavior or to provide medical assistance. All vans have radio and GPS equipment, and operators will request immediate help in emergencies.

Want More Information?

There are many other procedures, options and requirements in the VIAtrans system. For details, please consult the *VIAtrans Service Customer Guide* which can be viewed or downloaded at www.viainfo.net. To request a copy by mail, please call (210) 362-2140. Also available at the VIA website is a 12-minute video which shows the important features of VIAtrans service. VIA suggests you read the *Guide* and watch the video before deciding if VIAtrans can meet some or all of your travel needs.

Following are the current (May, 2017) fares for regular bus, express bus and VIAtrans van service. Fares must be paid in cash (U.S. funds) or with passes or tickets purchased in advance at VIA facilities, by mail or at most local HEB grocery stores. Vehicle operators cannot make change and cannot sell tickets or passes.

	Regular Bus and Streetcar Routes	Express Bus Service	VIATrans Van Service
Adults (12 & older)	\$1.10	\$2.50	\$2.00
Children (5-11)	\$.65	\$1.30	\$1.00
Persons of Limited Mobility with VIA Reduced Fare card	\$.65 Free Sat & Sun	\$1.30 Free Sat & Sun	N/A
Senior Citizens (62 & older) with VIA Reduced Fare card	\$.65 (*.25 Off Peak) Free Sat & Sun	\$1.30 (*.25 Off Peak) Free Sat & Sun	N/A
Medicare Recipients with VIA Reduced Fare ID card	\$.65	\$1.30	N/A
Students (12 & older) with VIA Student ID card	\$.65	\$1.30	N/A
Children under 5 years of age, riding with paying customer	Free	Free	Free
VIATrans customers	Free	Free	N/A
Authorized attendant and/or companion, riding with VIATrans customer	Free	Free	Attendant Free; Companion \$2.00
First transfer to Full-fare customers	.15	.15	N/A
First transfer to Half-fare customers	.07	.07	N/A

***Off peak hours are from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM on weekdays and All day on Saturdays and Sundays.**

This publication is available in large print, Braille, or Spanish. Please call the Accessible Services Office at 362-2140 to request the appropriate format. This publication can also be read or downloaded at VIA's official website: www.viainfo.net

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