

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressmen **Ciro D. Rodriguez**, **Henry Cuellar**, **Charles Gonzalez** and **Lamar Smith** announced \$5 million in Stimulus funding for VIA Metropolitan Transit to replace conventional diesel buses with 35-foot composite body electric transit buses.

The project includes quick-charging stations to recharge bus batteries. Grid-sourced electrical energy used to recharge the bus batteries will be augmented with solar energy collected with panels procured and installed under this project.

The VIA project was one of 43 winning proposals submitted by transit agencies from across the country as part of a nationwide competition for \$100 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA, or “Stimulus”) funds under the Transit Investments for Greenhouse Gas and Energy Reduction (TIGGER) program.

Keith T. Parker, President and CEO of VIA Metropolitan Transit, said the community will benefit from emissions-free transit service.

“With the TIGGER grant funding, we will be able to replace three of our diesel-powered buses with new buses that are powered solely by rechargeable batteries. Because these buses have zero emissions, they offer the cleanest operating technology from the source to the road of any buses we know of anywhere in the world.”

“This funding is key to our city’s transportation future,” said Congressman Gonzalez. “VIA is leading San Antonio into the next generation by incorporating grid source electrical energy, which uses less fuel and helps protect the environment. This funding is a smart investment in our future and creates new opportunities for San Antonio businesses and a cleaner more efficient transportation system for our citizens.”

“This is an exciting time for the nation as we grapple with how to protect our environment for future generations,” Congressman Rodriguez said. “Not only will this funding clean up our air by reducing damaging pollution and emissions, it will create jobs and lead to a sound financial investment.”

“This investment will accelerate our transit system into meeting the energy demands of the future, and this shows how cities as large as San Antonio can incorporate more energy efficient vehicles into their fleets,” Congressman Cuellar said. “This is a win for VIA and sets an example for the nation in how we can diversify fueling public transit in the future.”

Congressman Smith said “I am pleased to join with the San Antonio delegation to congratulate VIA for their efforts to obtain this competitive grant. This transition to cleaner public transportation will be a great benefit to the area both in terms of quality of life and our economy.”

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood made the announcement Monday, calling it “a sign of things to come.”

All the funded projects incorporate environmental technologies to reduce global warming, lessen America's dependence on oil and create green jobs. The VIA project was the only Texas project to receive funding.

Parker said the three composite body buses will circulate in the downtown area, and will be recharged at VIA's Robert Thompson Transit Station at the Alamodome. The electric propulsion means the vehicles will emit no greenhouse gases while in operation, but the true innovative nature of this project will be realized in the recharging cycles. When the batteries are charged, they will receive energy generated either by solar panels installed as part of this project or from West Texas wind farms as part of VIA's partnership with CPS Energy. As a result, the three new buses will provide public transportation for the downtown area that is sustainable and free of pollution.

Since the ARRA was signed into law in February, more than \$7.2 billion in grants have gone to transit improvements nationwide.

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