

VIA and Pure Keep San Antonio's Mass Transit Moving



VIA Metropolitan Transit plays a vital role in connecting the community of San Antonio, Texas by providing more than 36 million bus trips each year. For many people, VIA is their primary form of transportation and they depend on it for their daily mobility needs.

“Public transit helps people connect to jobs and economic opportunity,” says VIA CIO Steve Young. “VIA service helps put that opportunity within reach for more people, including essential workers, seniors, and people in the disability community.”

It's a responsibility VIA takes seriously. Through its Keep SA Moving plan, the mass transit agency aims to:

- Make bus service more frequent and reliable
- Create rapid transit corridors throughout San Antonio
- Use technology to make transit services smarter and more convenient for riders.

VIA has already made significant accomplishments through heavy investment in technology over the past few years.

Today, customers can buy bus passes through a mobile app. Digital signs at bus stops indicate when the next bus will arrive and people can track bus locations in near real-time. And a new AI-powered chatbot on VIA's website answers questions and reports bus locations in both English and Spanish, 24 hours a day.

What all these services have in common is data—accurate, up-to-date information people can depend on

as they commute to work, run errands, or head to a medical appointment.

Mobilizing Data, Mobilizing People

To keep buses and technology services running smoothly, VIA must mobilize data behind the scenes—and for that, the right storage is key. The agency runs its critical systems on Pure Storage®, trusting the platform to provide the performance and availability needed to support nearly 100,000 rides every day.

“VIA uses Pure Storage for data that includes schedules and GPS tracking to payroll to maintenance orders,” Young says. “Pure has cleared new avenues for innovation and growth.”

With Pure Storage FlashArray™, data moves faster than ever. For example, VIA tracks hundreds of buses and vans as they move throughout San Antonio, collecting millions of data points every day. Before Pure, it could only refresh the data every few minutes. Now, VIA has the speed and capacity to capture GPS data every six seconds, even as the volume of data grows. And it can send the data anywhere—to its new chatbot, via text messages, and to third-party apps such as Google Maps, Apple Maps, Transit, and Moovit.

This capability alone is a game changer for VIA customers. They can now see precisely where the next bus is and when it’s expected to arrive, and even use the tracking data while riding a bus to make sure they disembark at the right stop.

“We don’t want to just get people from point A to B,” Young says. “We want them to have a great experience in the process.”

Resilient Public Transportation during a Pandemic

As it turns out, VIA’s investment in customer experience was also an investment in resilience. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, ridership at most major U.S. transit agencies dropped, including San Antonio which experienced a drop of almost 50%. That also meant a drop in revenue. Still, VIA has kept its buses running for customers, many of whom are essential and frontline workers.

The agency adopted ongoing safety measures and waived fares temporarily to limit interaction and protect employees and customers. Employees who could work remotely were set up with a [virtual desktop infrastructure \(VDI\)](#) and cloud-based applications such as Microsoft Office 365, Microsoft Teams, and One Drive.

As it adjusted to rapidly changing conditions, VIA also implemented a storage upgrade and was able to take advantage of Pure’s Evergreen Storage™ subscription model, which combines a fully upgradable, non-disruptive architecture and investment-protected, on-demand upgrades.

“People rely on VIA 365 days a year. Storage must be reliable to avoid disruptions,” Young says. “With Pure Evergreen Storage, the upgrade was painless and didn’t require a huge amount of resources or time. We’re glad to have had Pure as a partner during this time.”

VIA also found ways to help the community as the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 became apparent. For example, it partnered with local school districts and the housing authority to provide vans as wifi hotspots for students who were suddenly adapting to online learning. It also partnered with the local food bank to deliver food to homebound residents and seniors needing assistance.

Simpler Storage and Faster Data Power VIA's Vision

Going forward, VIA sees the agility, simplicity, and performance of Pure Storage as a pushing-off point for its future technology initiatives. For Young and his team, it's also a time-saver.

"Pure helps us respond to changing conditions and avoid disruptions to service," Young says. "Allocating storage, swapping drives, and doing upgrades, which may have taken days in the past, are no longer necessary."

As VIA keeps moving toward its goals and objectives, Pure is helping the agency manage an increasing volume of data, mobilized at ever-faster speeds to better serve its customers.