



DONNA CAMPBELL, M.D.
TEXAS STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 25

For Immediate Release:
Monday, November 4, 2013

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SENATOR CAMPBELL WRITES LETTER TO AG'S OFFICE ASKING FOR SCRUTINY OF VIA STREETCAR BONDS

Austin-- State Senator Donna Campbell is asking the Attorney General's office to scrutinize bonds recently submitted by VIA to build streetcar terminals. The bonds would fund the Westside Multimodal Transit Center and the Robert Thompson Transit Center using sales tax voters approved when they created the Advanced Transportation District. VIA previously assured voters that no ATD money would be used for light rail projects.

"San Antonio voters have made it clear that they expect these funds to go to the purpose intended and that's improving our roads and easing traffic congestion," Senator Campbell said. "I am disappointed that VIA has chosen to ignore the contract it made with the voters and insists on going forward with a dubious project at huge costs to taxpayers."

The full text of the letter is included below:

November 1, 2013

Dear General Abbott,

On October 17, I presented a letter to the VIA Board of Trustees asking them to recognize the will of San Antonio voters and reject the use of bonds allocating money for streetcars. The Board approved ATD-backed bonds to fund the Westside Multimodal Transit Center and the Robert Thompson Transit Center.

As noted in a letter from my predecessor in 2012, voters never approved ATD funds to be used for such projects. This goes back to the 2004 election when a VIA election brochure expressly stated that ATD funds would not be used to fund light rail. Further, the Board adopted a resolution forswearing the use of ATD tax proceeds for a light rail project and voters rejected light rail outright at the polls in 2000.

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VIA is now attempting to use ATD sales tax revenue to back the public issuance of revenue bonds to fund its streetcar project terminals. Based on the 2004 election results, this represents a violation of the "contract with the voters" as defined by article I, section 16 of the Texas Constitution. Deceptively, VIA does not acknowledge the ATD-backed bonds will fund the streetcar project, but two major items it lists are integral parts of the streetcar project. Renderings of these transit stations clearly show details associated with streetcars.

It has also come to light that VIA cannot produce a comparative cost analysis for the operation of a more comprehensive bus system as an alternative to the downtown streetcar system despite taking federal funds for that purpose. This is a disturbing violation of the people's trust.

I am asking your office to take a closer look at these issues when reviewing these bonds. The sales tax money should be used for its intended purpose - to improve San Antonio's roads. Streetcar terminal stations do not meet that definition.

Please don't hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Senator Donna Campbell, M.D.
Texas Senate District 25

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Senator Donna Campbell is a practicing emergency room physician representing Senate District 25, which includes all or parts of Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe, Hays, Kendall, and Travis Counties. She currently sits on the Transportation Committee.
