



## City's \$9 million sidewalk will slow buses, clog traffic

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At a cost of \$9 million, San Antonio urban planners are ripping out a bus lane on one of the busiest transit routes in downtown. In its place, the city will widen a sidewalk where few people walk.

Seven bus lines funnel through the half-mile stretch of Commerce Street, connecting the city center with the VIA Centro bus plaza, Interstates 35/10 and points west.

Using a dedicated transit lane, the buses transport hundreds of passengers every hour during peak periods.

Though pedestrian traffic is sparse on Commerce between St. Mary's and Santa Rosa streets, the city will scrap the VIA bus lane in favor of a wider sidewalk there.

"Widened sidewalks complement the transit service by providing additional sidewalk space for shelters and amenities," the city plan says, without providing specifics.

The \$9 million price tag far exceeds the standard cost of installing a sidewalk. According to the city's Transportation & Capital Improvements Department, a mile of sidewalk runs roughly \$450,000, including design and construction.

VIA spokeswoman Lorraine Pulido said the purchase price of a standard bus is "approximately \$290,000 to \$490,000."

"Wider sidewalks do not make pedestrians," said Randal O'Toole, a transportation expert with the market-oriented Cato Institute. "The most heavily used sidewalks in America are in the part of Manhattan known as Chinatown, and the sidewalks there are no wider than anywhere else."

San Antonio clogged another downtown artery when it removed a bus lane along Navarro Street.

"The city hopes that young professionals capable of creating a vibrant local economy will be driven to live downtown," according to the [Rivard Report](#).

But the more likely outcomes are worsening downtown traffic congestion and greater frustration with public transit.