



VIA stands up for streetcar plan

Opponents issue 25-page report criticizing plan

By: Stephanie Serma – November 28th, 2012

As VIA gets ready to announce some more details over their proposed modern streetcar project, some are voicing their concerns.

On Wednesday, the Cato Institute, along with other opponents of street cars, released a 25-page report, called "The Streetcar Fantasy," questioning the costs and the benefits.

"Streetcars are very expensive," said Randal O'Toole, Cato Institute fellow. "They're expensive to build. They're expensive to operate and they're expensive to maintain."

However, VIA officials responded to critics later Wednesday afternoon, saying it's VIA's job to plan for tomorrow and with gas prices going up, now more than ever, something has to be done.

"Only saying 'no' is not the right solution for the citizens of San Antonio," said Henry Munoz III, chairman of the VIA Board of Trustees. "At some point, you have to listen to what people, our own people, have to say, and then you have to take a step forward and that's what VIA as been concentrating on over the course of the last four years and that's what we're going to do."

Judge Nelson Wolff said in addition to planning for the future, streetcars are actually less expensive than buses, averaging a \$1.50 per passenger, as opposed to \$2.82 per passenger.

He also said electrical power to run them is less than gasoline.

"It is environmentally better for us because over two-thirds of the power created by our utility is done with clean fuels from gas," he said.

On Tuesday night, VIA hosted a public briefing to update the community on the streetcar project and to get feedback about the way they want to see the service run in the city.