



Starter Project Criteria

The starter project criteria are intended to outline priorities in the development of a streetcar system and justify which potential alignment serves best as a starter project. These criteria have been developed over time through several discussions between Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members, with Downtown Alliance Stakeholders, and through the 3-day public workshop at the beginning of September. The criteria are split into two types: qualitative and quantitative. Financial criteria, both qualitative and quantitative, have been broken out as a third “type” due to the impact that cost and financial capability will have on the selection of a starter line.

The qualitative criteria include important characteristics in considering the general purpose of the streetcar and more specifically the starter project. As they have been developed throughout the process, so too have five potential starter lines. The qualitative criteria have been applied to the five potential starter lines by TAC members based on their observations and extensive knowledge of the area, the project, and many other factors. The quantitative criteria include important characteristics in relation to the proposed starter lines that can be quantified. Below is a brief explanation of the criteria that have been outlined in this process:

I. Qualitative Criteria

- A. **Social Equity** - These criteria are intended to make sure that the streetcar project addresses concerns and desires for *several interests* throughout the community.
 1. Meets the interests of a diversity of stakeholders
Stakeholders are identified as property owners, employers, and neighborhoods that have a stake in what might be affected by the implementation of a streetcar. This criterion ensures that the starter line does not benefit just a single group of stakeholders, but several.
 2. Connects neighborhoods, employment centers, and cultural assets
Inner-city neighborhoods have relatively dense populations living in them; many cultural assets and key destinations are located in the inner city; and there is a high concentration of employment centers located in and around downtown San Antonio. This criterion ensures that as many of these facets are connected as possible.
 3. Encourages mixed-income housing
Housing for individuals at different income levels located in relative proximity to one another can occur in new development scenarios as well as infill development. This criterion ensures that there are several opportunities for this type of development to occur.

- B. Neighborhood Revitalization & New Development** - These criteria are intended to make sure that there is high potential for *economic development* to occur along the starter line; both new development and revitalization.
1. Potential mixed-use development & increased density
Mixed-use development includes a mix of land-uses such as office, retail, and residential within the same development. Increased density refers to an increase relative to the surrounding area, which could range from minimal to extensive. This criterion ensures that there is potential for this type of development to occur.
 2. Development of under-utilized property
Under-utilized property is that which has high or complete vacancy. This criterion ensures that a starter line be placed in proximity to large amounts of under-utilized property for the purposes of being redeveloped into an active community asset.
 3. Enhance value of existing property
Enhancing the value of property refers to both the assessed property tax value, which contributes to local government revenues; as well as the inherent value of the property due to its proximity and access to cultural and community assets, retail, and services, by virtue of being located along a streetcar line.
 4. New opportunities in existing neighborhoods
There are several existing neighborhoods located along potential starter lines. This criterion specifically targets potential for revitalization in bringing new neighborhood employment opportunities and community assets along potential streetcar alignments.
- C. Implementation** - These criteria directly relate to the *physical implementation* of the starter line.
1. Minimal impact to capital & operating costs
Capital costs include the cost of construction, which can be influenced by physical constraints; the proximity of a starter line to a potential maintenance facility and the size of such a facility; and the number of vehicles required to operate the system. Operating costs are related to the number of personnel required to operate, and the maintenance requirement relative to the size and complexity of a starter line. This criterion favors the option that has the lowest capital and operating costs.
 2. Fewer physical constraints
Physical constraints represent characteristics in the starter line that have a higher cost to implement and maintain. Track switches, turns, bridges, property, retrofits, utility work, and so on, each result in higher capital costs, while specialized solutions to constraints may require constant specialized maintenance. This criterion favors potential starter lines with few constraints.

3. Opportunity for future connectivity and expansion
Though most potential streetcar alignments likely have good opportunity for future extension and connectivity to other high-capacity transit, some of the potential starter lines might be better suited for this than others.

D. Operation & Service - These criteria are more directly related to the *service* that would be provided, its usefulness, and the streetcar's relationship to the rest of the transit network.

1. Integrates inner-city with regional transit system
Though an individual starter line might be directly limited in its extent to a small part of the inner city, its location and orientation can allow for it to be better connected to other routes and transportation infrastructure throughout the region, compared to others. This criterion favors the potential starter line that has the most opportunity for multi-modal interaction.
2. Establishes new service for new & existing customers
By virtue of being the first Modern Streetcar route in San Antonio, the starter line would itself, be a new service. New service though, also refers to where the route goes, what it connects, and how frequent it operates. Not only should the starter line offer a new service, but also enhance existing service, provide a new link for existing customers, and be attractive to new customers.
3. Has potential for high ridership
Each of the potential starter lines have some degree of existing service along their alignment with existing ridership. This criterion considers that existing ridership as well as new ridership that could be generated by virtue of the starter line being located in proximity to new development, existing employment centers, and local destinations.

II. Quantitative Criteria

With the exception of pedestrian and bicycle networks, each quantifiable criterion is tallied within 750' (1/8 mile) of each potential starter line. This distance is generally within where the most substantial level of development will occur relative to a streetcar line. The pedestrian network is identified within 1/4 mile of each line, while the bicycle network within 2.5 miles of each line. These are generally understood as distances that someone is willing to walk or ride, to make use of a streetcar.

A. Accessibility to Population, Employment, and Community Assets

This criterion has several aspects that can be quantified such as projected (2015) population and employment densities; the number of major employment centers and employees there; number of higher-education institutions and their enrollments; linear feet of River and Creeks; and the number of local destinations, which include arts and entertainment venues, civic and educational facilities, healthcare centers, historical assets, major retail centers, major transportation facilities, parks, and public spaces.

B. Zoning, Land-Use, Development Potential, and Funding Ability & Method

This criterion quantifies current mixed-use zoning; future land use as prescribed in adopted neighborhood plans; development potential and announced development;

assessed property values; and how much of a potential starter line is within a tax increment reinvestment zone (TIRZ). Current mixed-use zoning includes properties zoned as downtown (D), mixed-use districts (MXD), infill development zone (IDZ), form-based zoning district (FBDZ), and arts & entertainment district (AE). Future land uses include mixed-use, transit-oriented development, vacant, high density residential, and institutional.

C. **Physical Constraints, and Traffic Impacts**

This criterion quantifies projected (2015) roadway congestion, the number of traffic lanes on a roadway, the number of bridges a line would have to cross, the number of low-clearance underpasses, and the number of freight rail crossings that would require new grade-separation.

D. **Existing Ridership & Potential Feeder Network**

This criterion takes in to account the existing ridership from boardings along the segments in question, the potential bus routes that would feed into the streetcar line, and the pedestrian and bicycle networks that feed into each potential starter line.

III. Financial Criteria

This set of criteria includes those that were developed by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Workshop in early September. The VIA Board has also asked a Financial Advisor to determine the agency's methods and capacity to fund future projects and services. Qualitative and Quantitative Criteria in this section have been addressed similarly to the way they were above. Costs and Funding will have a significant impact on how a starter line is selected.

A. **Qualitative** - These criteria relate the potential starter lines to how the *capital expenses* might be funded. They were developed by the TAC and the Workshop process.

1. **Opportunity for local funding to have high impact on cost**

Local funding options might include improvement districts in which property owners agree to tax themselves to pay for a portion of the capital expense, leveraging tax increment, or issuing bonds. Each potential starter line has a different capacity to take advantage of these funds insofar as how much can be leveraged relative to the cost of implementation.

2. **Ability for project to qualify for Federal funding**

The Federal New Starts program provides opportunities for Federal Transit Administration grants to pay for substantial portions of capital costs. To qualify for these grants, a project must significantly improve mobility, increase the operational cost-effectiveness of transit, and be adjacent to transit-supportive land-uses among other factors. Each potential starter line has a different capacity to meet these requirements.

3. **Maximizes the potential for public/private partnerships**

Public-private partnerships are contractual agreements formed between a public agency and a private sector entity that allow for greater private sector participation in the delivery and financing projects. Each potential starter line has a different capacity to make this type of arrangement attractive to both public and private sectors.

B. Quantitative - These criteria call out costs and quantifiable financial ability for VIA to fund a starter line including the use of other funding instruments.

1. Capital & Operating Costs

This criterion accounts for the capital and operating costs associated with each potential starter line.

2. Financial Capacity of VIA

This criterion simply outlines VIA's financial capacity to fund a starter line, leaving the ability to fund other current and future capital projects. This may be a constant regardless of which potential starter line is addressed.

3. Other Possible Financing Options

This criterion outlines the capacity of other financing options to have an impact on each of the possible starter alignments. Some of these options may be constant, while others will vary according to the alignment. All of them are making assumptions that each given alternative financing option is available to the fullest extent possible.