

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Public Works Receives \$1.6 Million In Federal Funding To Revamp La Reine Transit Facility

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Department of Public Works (D.P.W.) applied for a competitive grant from the Federal Transit Administration in May, of which transit departments throughout the U.S. mainland were also eligible to apply.

In September, D.P.W.'s Office of Transportation was informed that the department was awarded \$1.6 million in funding to replace the dated La Reine Transit Facility here, a press release D.P.W. issued on Wednesday has revealed.

For D.P.W. Commissioner Gustav James, the funding is yet another step in improving the territory's infrastructure and, in this case, St. Croix's economy.

"The La Reine Bus Facility replacement project is an investment in our infrastructure. It will have a positive impact on St. Croix's economy and our transit system," Mr. James said.

Replacement of the La Reine facility is part of a larger initiative to improve VITRAN, the territory's public transportation system, according to the release. Notable improvements include: 1) Revising the bus schedule for time efficiency; 2) Procuring new buses equipped with the latest technology, including Wi-Fi; and 3) Launching a more user-friendly website featuring an interactive territorial map, schedules, bus routes and bus stop/shelter locations, D.P.W. says.

Public Works has also partnered with the Department of Tourism and the Lieutenant Governor's Cadastral Office to create the territory's most comprehensive mapping to date, the release says.

Meetings concerning the construction of the La Reine Transit Facility are scheduled to begin in the coming weeks. The facility will serve as a transfer station and a mid-point hub of information relevant to the public transit system. It will reduce the wait-time/ride-time of patrons as well as congestion, especially at peak times, while providing enclosed shelter to residents and visitors during inclement weather, noted D.P.W.

Notably, the facility, in concert with several ongoing road, port and procurement projects territory-wide, will link surface, air and future ferry transportation providing a seamless transit system linking the islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John, the press release says.

"The Department of Public Works, Office of Transportation is making steady advances. We intend to produce a reliable, time-efficient and modern public transportation system that will better serve the public, connecting them to educational, career, medical, social and other travel needs," Mr. James said. "Our transit system has outgrown the dated La Reine facility. In the coming year, it will be replaced by a modern facility suited to the needs of our system and riders."

Mr. James anticipates that the project will increase ridership, thus revitalizing the surrounding area and attracting small business opportunities.

Feature Image: Current La Reine Transit Facility. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)