



2817 Canal Street  
New Orleans, LA 70119

## New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Board of Commissioners

### Meeting Minutes

---

Tuesday, July 27, 2021

10:00 AM

Virtual

---

The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority's Board of Commissioners hereby certifies that it will convene a meeting on Tuesday, July 27, 2021 electronically via Zoom in accordance with the provisions of La. R.S. 42:17.1(A)(2)(a)-(c).

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

**Present:** Chairman Flozell Daniels, Commissioner Fred Neal, Commissioner Mark Raymond, Commissioner Walt Tillery, Commissioner Laura Bryan, Commissioner Art Walton, and Commissioner Sharon Wegner

**Absent:** Commissioner Mostofa Sarwar

**3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes**

[Board Meeting Minutes - June 22, 2021]

[21-115](#)

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to approve the minutes of the June 22, 2021 Board Meeting. The motion was carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Tillery, seconded by Commissioner Neal and adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Chairman Daniels, Commissioner Neal, Commissioner Raymond, Commissioner Tillery, Commissioner Bryan, and Commissioner Wegner

**Absent:** Commissioner Sarwar, and Commissioner Walton

**4. Reports**

A. RTA Chairman's Report

No Report.

B. Operations & Administration Committee Chairman's Report

No Report.

C. Finance Committee

No Report.

D. Jefferson Parish Report

No Report.

E. RTA General Counsel's Report

Sundiata Haley stated that there was going to be an Executive Session.

F. RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA was focusing on returning ridership and recovery from the impact of COVID and he has been asked to participate in an FTA Panel on August 6, 2021 this will be a national discussion with several other peer properties to help riders return to the transit system.

Alex Wiggins reported that the Delta Variant from COVID has impacted the country that the RTA decided to make the COVID Vaccination a Mandate for all employees and staff has to bring in proof of vaccination and no one will be allowed to work without being vaccinated.

Alex Wiggins reported that this was the RTA's second out break of COVID and instituted the mask mandate and daily temperature checks and onsite testing will be brought back to the agency.

Commissioner Daniels thanked Alex Wiggins and his staff for doing a great job staying ahead of the curve of COVID-19.

Commissioner Daniels, Neal and Bryan stated that they appreciate all the hard work Alex Wiggins and his staff has done regarding COVID-19.

G. DBE Report

Adonis Expose reported that \$8,879,731 contracts was awarded and \$2,920,305 was awarded to DBE firms and of the DBE contracts \$2,999,207 was awarded to DBE/SBE Prime Contractors and the total DBE participation was 33%.

Adonis Expose reported that the current DBE Projects that changed percentage was Security Services went from 3% to 8% and Disaster Recovery Grants Management and Administration went from 10% to 90%.

Adonis Expose reported that the two new DBE Projects was the East New Orleans Maintenance Building and Transit Ferry Services.

Adonis Expose reported that the upcoming DBE/SBE Project were Napoleon Facility Renovation & Upgrade with a goal of 30.8%, St. Charles Streetcar Line: Downtown Loop Pavement Replacement with a goal of 38.61%, OCS Pole Replacement with a goal of 15% and Vegetation Control on Streetcar Lines with a goal of 100% SBE.

Adonis Expose reported that the RTA's Outreach & Partnerships Event was going to be held on Thursday, August 12, 2021 at 5:30pm at the McDonogh #35 Senior High School Auditorium.

Adonis Expose reported that he was working with the Urban League of Louisiana and Delgado Community College to provide technical assistance and various contractor trainings for DBE's.

Adonis Expose reported that he was participating in a Webinar with the New Orleans Regional Black Chamber of Commerce members on Thursday, August 26, 2021 at 5:30pm.

Commissioner Daniels would like to have a report on DBE plans for 2022 and would like the Board to have a training on how the DBE percentages are calculated.

**Present:** Chairman Flozell Daniels, Commissioner Fred Neal, Commissioner Mark Raymond, Commissioner Walt Tillery, Commissioner Mostofa Sarwar, Commissioner Laura Bryan, Commissioner Art Walton, and Commissioner Sharon Wegner

**Absent:**

## 5. Project MOVE Presentation

Deferred

## 6. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to adopt the Consent Agenda Items. The Motion was adopted unanimously.

Overhead Catenary System (OCS) Hardware Fabrication and Replacement Award Fabrication Contract [21-099](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to award the Overhead Catenary System (OCS) Hardware Fabrication and Replacement Award Fabrication Contract. Resolution 21-055 was adopted unanimously. This Resolution was adopted.

Enactment No: 21-055

Rampart Streetcar Line Emergency Recovery Project Award Construction Project [21-100](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to award the Rampart Streetcar Line Emergency Recovery Project. Resolution No. 21-056 was adopted unanimously.

This Resolution was adopted.

Enactment No: 21-056

St. Charles Streetcar Line Downtown Loop Pavement Replacement

[21-101](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar moved to award the St. Charles Streetcar Line Downtown Loop Pavement Replacement. Resolution No. 21-052 was adopted unanimously.

This Resolution was adopted.

## 7. Chief Financial Officer's Report

[May Financials]

[21-110](#)

Gizelle Banks reported that May's ridership of 740K underperformed the budget by 4.1% or 32k passengers. This is, however, a notable improvement from April's performance, exceeding the prior month by 10.1% or 68K riders. In addition, May marks the third consecutive month of increased ridership. Despite this positive trend, year-to-date comparisons to May actuals show improved but continued negative results across the spectrum - when compared to the budget (9.8%), 2020 actuals (12.7%) and 2019 pre-COVID actuals (57.7%).

Gizelle Banks reported that the *Operating Cost per Unlinked Passenger Trip 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID)* There was a significant decrease in the cost per passenger trip for the month of May. The \$8.67 cost per passenger trip represents the lowest cost rate so far this year.

*Gizelle Banks reported that the Ferry - Operating Cost per Unlinked Passenger Trip - 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID)* - Ferry cost per passenger trip has remained relatively constant since March. This is encouraging since March marked the most notable decrease in this cost metric so far this year.

Gizelle Banks reported that the *Farebox Recovery Rates 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID)* - Fare revenue continues to offset a significantly lower percentage of operating expenses. However, May's farebox recovery rate increased by 2.1% from April's and now ranks as the year's highest performing month.

Gizelle Banks reported that the *Ferry - Farebox Recovery Rates 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID)* - Ferry ridership has dropped drastically because of the pandemic, causing fare revenue to offset a significantly lower percentage of operating expenses. For May, the farebox recovery rate for ferry operations took another dip for the second consecutive month; this time by 1.6%.

Gizelle Banks reported that the *Operating Revenues (Budget, Actual & Prior Year)* - Overall, Operating Revenues display positive results for the month when compared to the budget and prior year. (Note that fare collections were suspended in April 2020.) Passenger Fares continue to struggle, falling short of

projections by 7.68% for the month. This result represents a 47% improvement, though, from April's outcome. CNO sales tax collections through April have been received, exceeding expectations by \$3.5m or 18.2%.

Gizelle Banks reported that the *Operating Revenues (Actual)* - Of the \$7.5m in Operating Revenues, 76% or \$5.7m is derived from General Use Sales Taxes.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Operating Expenses - Labor and Fringe Benefits, the largest expenditure at \$4.5M, comprised 71% of this month's actual expenses. Staff's post-transition payroll analysis and true-up continue. The contrast in 2020 and current year results for Labor and Fringe Benefits and Services is directly related to the transition from the O & M contractual arrangement with Transdev to 100% in-house operations. In total, Operating Expenses for the month compared favorably with the budget with a 18.3% or \$1.4m positive variance.

Gizelle Banks reported that the *Net Revenue (Before and After Government Assistance)*- Net Revenue (Before Government Assistance) is \$842k for the month of May. This strong position is largely attributable to the \$1.1m in Net Operating Revenue for the month. After applying the month's \$1.2m in Government Operating Assistance, Net Revenue increased to \$2.1m.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Capital Expenditures and Debt Service - As result of the bond refinancing in September 2020, Debt Service was dramatically reduced by \$458k from prior year actuals for the month and by \$2.7m year-to-date.

Gizelle Banks reported that the *Operating Reserve* - the positive variance that resulted from Net Revenue (After Government Assistance) added \$907k to Restricted Operating/Capital Reserve after the offset of \$1.2m in Loss in Valuation of Assets and Debt Service.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Maritime Operations - Passenger fare revenue for ferry operations increased by \$105k over the prior month. This represents the third straight month of positive results, a further indication of possible recovery. Recall that fare collections were suspended in April 2020 system-wide. May 2021 operating expenses, however, reflected negative results - over budget by \$321k and up by \$591k from the prior year.

Gizelle Banks reported that for the month of May the overall Operating Revenues \$10.4 Million was budgeted and actually finished the month at \$8.4 Million.

Commissioner Neal would like to know the true RTA baseline for 2022.

Alex Wiggins reported that the baseline would change because the RTA was operating under COVID and that was going to change.

## CY2021 Revised Budget

[21-108](#)

Gizelle Banks reported that once the RTA increase service there was some increase operational expenses that has to be accounted for .

Gizelle Banks reported that Operating Revenue increased by \$7.7 Million the approved budget was \$82.3 Million and staff was proposing a \$90.1 Million Operating Revenue Budget and this was due to an increase in General Use Sales Tax.

Gizelle Banks reported that Operating Expenses increase by \$9.2 Million the approved budget was \$101 Million and staff was proposing \$110 Million Operating Expenses Budget and this was due to an increase to returning to full peak service and RTA previously operating at 80%.

Gizelle Banks reported that Government Operating Assistance was awarded in Round 2 of the CARES Act Funding \$26.2 Million.

Gizelle Banks reported that Operating Revenues Sources: Other - \$1,574,550; Passenger Fares - \$9,528,536; Sales Tax - \$79,002,730.

Gizelle Banks reported that Operating Expenses Services - \$11,274,722; Materials & Supplies - \$10,497,230; Utilities \$1,491,098; Casualty & Liability \$7,774,400; Taxes \$439,880; Miscellaneous and Leases & Rentals \$756,213; Labor \$56,757,277 and Fringe Benefits \$21,906,086.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Board approved 835 positions and Authorized a total of 890 positions.

Gizelle Banks reported that Government Assistance consisted of - Actual Funding for Preventive Maintenance was \$600,000 less than projected; CARES Act proceeds exceeded expectations by a total of \$39.5 Million and CY2022 - Awarded - Awarded \$59 Million under ARP (Expires 2024).

Gizelle Banks reported that Non-Operating Revenue and Expenses - The receipt of all 22 new buses in March and April and the anticipated arrival of an additional 21 new buses by December were the primary reasons for the increase in the Capital Budget.

Alex Wiggins reported that the ARP allows the RTA to use this money for Capital Projects instead of Operating Costs and staff was looking to use that money for different Capital Projects.

Gizelle Banks reported that the - Passenger Fares - were below budget through May and passenger fare projections are not being reduced; expecting ridership to increase to achieve our original passenger fare budget due to the temporary fare reductions effective July1, 2021, State and Other Subsidy increased due to the increases in the new ferry management contract.

Gizelle Banks reported that the increases were due to - Cost of Ferry Operator's Operations & Maintenance Contract Expenses, Levy Drydock costs; Ferry Fare Technology and Higher Fuel Costs (paid by the RTA).

In response to Commissioner Daniels, Alex Wiggins stated that a report will be given to the Board regarding staffing positions.

In response to Commissioner Daniels, Alex Wiggins stated that the ferry farebox recovery should be 40-50%.

Commissioner Neal stated that if there was any extra revenue it should be used to invest in riders amenities.

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to approve the CY2021 Revised Budget. Resolution 21-058 was adopted unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wegner, seconded by Commissioner Tillery and adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Chairman Daniels, Commissioner Neal, Commissioner Raymond, Commissioner Tillery, Commissioner Sarwar, Commissioner Bryan, Commissioner Walton, and Commissioner Wegner

**Absent:**

Enactment No: 21-058

CY2020 Financial Audit Acceptance

[21-113](#)

Commissioner Daniels stated that this was extraordinary for an agency this size to have an audit with no findings.

Commissioner Sarwar moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to approve the CY2020 Financial Audit. Resolution 21-059 was adopted unanimously.

Commissioner Sarwar moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to approve the CY2020 Single Audit. Resolution 21-060 was adopted unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sarwar, seconded by Commissioner Raymond and adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Chairman Daniels, Commissioner Neal, Commissioner Raymond, Commissioner Tillery, Commissioner Sarwar, Commissioner Bryan, Commissioner Walton, and Commissioner Wegner

**Absent:**

## Enactment No: 21-059 &amp; 060

**8. Procurement Items****A. Authorizations:**

## Canal Street Ferry Project Schedule Recovery

[21-106](#)

Lona Hankins reported that staff was recommending to suspend ferry service for approximately 38 days if an alternative docking location is not found. This is because certain body of work can't be performed until a new temporary birthing place was in place and this project was delayed due to a larger gangway and permitting issues.

Lona Hankins reported that the RTA can start installing pilings in December because the river rises during the month of March.

Lona Hankins reported that she was asking the Board to give Alex Wiggins the Executive Officer to enter into three agreements; A Change Order with Woodward Not to Exceed the Amount of \$230,000 for demolition A Change Order to Labmar Not to Exceed \$125,000 incase an alternative location was found along the river so that services would not be suspended and A Not to Exceed \$100,000 with a vendor at the port for a sub-lease arrangement.

Commissioner Daniels stated that unfortunately you can't continue to be in service if you can't find an alternative location.

Lona Hankins reported that with an alternative location it will affect the ADA and bike riders.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff was aggressively looking for alternative options.

In response to Commissioner Bryan, Lona Hankins reported that all riders would receive advance notice of the ferry changes and the suspension dates are scheduled for August 24, 2021 to September 30, 2021.

In response to Commissioner Neal, Lona Hankins reported that staff was looking at all the work that could be expedited and did a cost estimate for installing the pilings, the forming of the concrete and the hollow core panels.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Lona Hankins reported that the cut-off date to make a decision would be two-weeks before August 24, 2021.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff would like the Ferry to be back in service for all the upcoming festivals.



Commissioner Walton would not like the Board to stay updated on the process of the ferry location.

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to approve the Canal Street Ferry Project Schedule. Resolution No. 21-061 was approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Raymond, seconded by Commissioner Tillery and adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Chairman Daniels, Commissioner Neal, Commissioner Raymond, Commissioner Tillery, Commissioner Sarwar, Commissioner Bryan, Commissioner Walton, and Commissioner Wegner

**Absent:**

Enactment No: 21-061

Renewal of Excess Liability and Automobile Physical  
Damage Insurance

[21-107](#)

In response to Commissioner Walton, Mark Major stated that the premium year was from August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022.

In response to Commissioner Neal, Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA had unprotected intersection and the major transit systems has protected intersections.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, Mark Major reported that the insurance companies look at the RTA's trend from 2012 to the present to determine the premium. The expiring premium was \$3,128,000 and the new premium is \$3,612,000.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Mark Major reported that the increase of the new premium was a total of half a million dollars.

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to award the Renewal of Excess Liability and Automobile Physical Damage Insurance. Resolution No. 21-062 was adopted unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wegner, seconded by Commissioner Raymond and adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Chairman Daniels, Commissioner Neal, Commissioner Raymond, Commissioner Tillery, Commissioner Sarwar, Commissioner Bryan, Commissioner Walton, and Commissioner Wegner

**Absent:**

Enactment No: 21-062

**9. New Business (UNANIMOUS VOTE REQUIRED TO CONSIDER)**

None

**10. Audience Questions**

PLEASE NOTE: Persons wishing to submit public comments must either enter their full name in the chat sections of the Zoom meeting to provide comments during the meeting or email your comments to [rtaboard@rtaforward.org](mailto:rtaboard@rtaforward.org) to have your comments read aloud at the meeting.

Autumn White stated that since the Hard Rock collapse Ms. Rain can't get off at her stop and make her connection for the streetcar and riders are aware that the RTA was working on a temporary hub.

Alex Wiggins stated that staff was putting together a presentation for the August Committee Meetings that would explore the location and its infrastructure needs. The conditions are not suitable to transfer the hub to Canal and Elks.

Andree Fant stated that the New Links Report introduce two bus routes to Henry Clay Ave. and one would be the Magazine Line which would bring buses to a residential street that's not made for buses. She stated that 78 residents along with the Audubon Riverside Neighborhood Association signed a petition objecting to these new bus routes and this petition along with alternative solutions were sent to the RTA on May 5, 2021 and she has not received a response.

Commissioner Daniels asked that Alex Wiggins make sure that someone from staff address the petitioners needs.

In response to Commissioner Daniels Andree Fant stated that she did not go to Children's Hospital to get any feedback.

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA wanted to make sure that Children's Hospital had amicable service and no recommendation has been made as of yet and staff welcomes feedback from the public before a recommendation would be presented to the Board.

In response to Andree Fant, Alex Wiggins stated that there will be an opportunity to negotiate am solution for all parties.

Yolanda Rodriguez read each email into the record that the RTA received from Karen Flournoy, Alissa Schmidtke, Mark Hightower Melisa Ray and Thomas Rey regarding buses on Henry Clay Ave.

Courtney Jackson would like to know more about the schedule of the bus shelters.

Alex Wiggins reported that the bus shelter plan will be presented at the August Committee Meetings and the RTA was working on funding for bus shelters and bus shelters was RTA's

top priority.

Courtney Jackson stated that the extension of the Magazine Route would be a great thing for the passengers needing to get to Children's Hospital.

Chairman Daniels stated that he would like staff to move quickly on the installation of bus shelters.

Trey stated that he wanted to commend the RTA for running an efficient bus system. He stated that the Henry Clay Avenue currently have enough traffic and to put a bus would make the situation worse and he would like the Neighborhood Association to be a part of the amicable decision between the RTA and the Neighborhood Association.

Valerie Jefferson stated that she appreciate how the RTA was handling COVID-19.

#### **11. Executive Session (2/3RDS VOTE TO Consider)**

Personnel Matter: ATU Update

Commissioner Neal moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to approve to go into Executive Session on Personnel Matter: ATU Updates. The motion was adopted unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Neal, seconded by Commissioner Tillery and adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Chairman Daniels, Commissioner Neal, Commissioner Raymond, Commissioner Tillery, Commissioner Sarwar, Commissioner Bryan, Commissioner Walton, and Commissioner Wegner

**Absent:**

#### **12. Adjournment**

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Tillery moved to adjourn the Board Meeting of July 27, 2021. The motion was approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Raymond, seconded by Commissioner Tillery and adjourned. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Chairman Daniels, Commissioner Neal, Commissioner Raymond, Commissioner Tillery, Commissioner Sarwar, Commissioner Bryan, Commissioner Walton, and Commissioner Wegner

**Absent:**

Rollcall

**Present:** Chairman Flozell Daniels, Commissioner Fred Neal, Commissioner Mark Raymond, Commissioner Walt Tillery, Commissioner Laura Bryan, and Commissioner Sharon Wegner

**Absent:** Commissioner Mostofa Sarwar, and Commissioner Art Walton