



2817 Canal Street  
New Orleans, LA 70119

## New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Board of Commissioners

### Meeting Minutes

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Tuesday, February 22, 2022

10:00 AM

Virtual

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The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority's Board of Commissioners hereby certifies that it will convene a meeting on Tuesday, February 22, 2022 electronically via Zoom in accordance with the provisions of La. R.S. 42:17.1(A)(2)(a)-(c).

#### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am.

#### 2. Roll Call

Commissioner Walton joined the meeting at 10:08 am, immediately before the Chief Executive Officer's Report.

#### 3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

[Board Meeting Minutes - January 25, 2022]

[22-030](#)

approved

#### 4. Reports

##### A. RTA Chairman's Report

Chairman Daniels thanked presenters and their respective teams for their efforts and contributions to material for review at the February 22, 2022 Board of Commissioners Meeting.

##### B. Operations & Administration Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Neal reported that on-time performance, work that is underway, and the new Mardi Gras schedule were reviewed during the February 10, 2022 Operations and Administration Committee Meeting.

Mr. Neal reported that repairs to signage were discussed during the RAC Meeting on February 2, 2022.

In answer to Chair Daniels' question regarding on-time performance and reporting progress, Mr. Neal replied that strategic report reformatting will roll out within the next months to allow riders and the public to better understand the agency's performance.

Chair Neal underscored RTA's commitment to safety and the number one commitment for 2022 to improve on-time performance for the riding public.

C. Finance Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Raymond reported that the committee gave the directive for RTA to engage with Jefferson Parish to determine how to better serve paratransit riders, and the directive to conduct an accessibility/feasibility study of every mode of transportation and every stop in order to determine opportunities for improvement throughout the city.

D. Jefferson Parish Report

Commissioner Wegner reported that Jefferson Parish Transit developed a schedule for Mardi Gras service that is available on their website for Jefferson Parish, and produced fliers that are available at various locations.

E. RTA General Counsel's Report

None.

It was announced that an Executive Session would take place on February 22, 2022.

Chair Daniels noted that Commissioner Walton joined the meeting at this point.

F. RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report

Alex Wiggins reported that the impact of the Omicron variant on staff had decreased significantly as of December 2021, and that the operational impact on customers is now minimal.

Mr. Wiggins reported that the New Orleans RTA was one of eleven transit agencies to be selected by the FTA to receive approximately \$5.7M to support ferry operations to invest in replacing Algiers landing bars and creating more flexible space for dry-docking.

Mr. Wiggins reported that ferry ridership has increased substantially this Mardi Gras season.

Mr. Wiggins invited participants to join the February 25, 2022 Black History Transit Equity Forum.

Mr. Wiggins mentioned that a resolution to begin negotiations regarding new locations for transit hubs, per recommendations from New Links, would be discussed in detail as a matter of New Business during the February 22, 2022 meeting.

**5. Chief Financial Officer's Report**

[December 2021 Financials]

[22-025](#)

Gizelle Banks reported that Ridership is still down 54.4% when compared to pre-COVID 2019 actuals, and was attributed to the impact of Hurricane Ida, Delta and Omicron COVID variants. Despite ridership being down, Ms. Banks reported that pass sales have increased by approximately 40% due to the implementation of the temporary fare structure in the second half of 2021.

Regarding Operating Cost per Unlinked Passenger Trip: 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID), Ms. Banks attributed increased operating costs for September 2021 to the impact of Hurricane Ida.

Regarding Ferry Operating Cost per Unlinked Passenger Trip: 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID), Ms. Banks reported significantly lower operating costs due to the existing ferry operator contract.

Regarding Ferry Farebox Recovery Rates: 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID), Ms. Banks pointed out that an increase in ridership for Mardi Gras can be expected for February 2021, and that the Pre-COVID recovery rate of zero for December 2019 was due to ferries being out of service for repairs.

Regarding Operating Revenues (Actual), Ms. Banks reported that Passenger Fares increased from previous months.

Regarding Operating Expenses, Ms. Banks reported that Labor and Fringe Benefits were the largest expenditure and continue to be monitored while service continues to be provided. Ms. Banks pointed out that the increase in service to full/peak capacity resulted in increased operating costs and reported that in total, Operating Expenses for the month compared favorably with the budget with a 25.3% or \$2.7M positive variance.

Ms. Banks reviewed the December 2021 Summary of Sources and attributed most of the variance between Total Revenue budgeted Year-to-Date and Year-to-Date Actual to government assistance and timing of the capital project funds. She confirmed that revenue will increase after the remaining COVID funds are drawn down. Ms. Banks reported \$9.5M in Operating Reserve for the year, an almost \$1.4M positive variance for December's Operating Reserve, and that despite the impacts of Hurricane Ida and COVID-19, the agency will end the year with approximately \$17M positive Operating Reserve due primarily to the 4th quarter's government assistance that remains from which to draw down.

Commissioner Walton asked if money remained available to draw down for the fourth quarter to which Ms. Banks replied that actual operating expenses will be submitted for reimbursement per Cares Act expense submission protocol. CEO Wiggins added that the \$59M awarded by the FTA as part of the American Recovery Program remains available to potentially invest in capital projects and that he would keep the Board of Commissioners apprised.

Chair Neal touched upon the public debate regarding why resources are being held in reserve and pointed out that the availability of those funds allows RTA to

fare periods of unstable ridership that may result from COVID or other emergencies, such as natural disasters.

Chair Neal asked if inflation was apparent in operations. Mr. Wiggins replied that an increase in costs due to inflation could indeed be seen reflected in operating costs, as evidenced by the higher cost of fuel and steel for capital projects. Ms. Banks added that a number of capital projects have required vendors to rebid due to escalating costs of materials, and that capital project start dates have required postponement as a result.

Regarding the public's concern that resources remain in reserve, Commissioner Neal clarified that said funds enable the agency to continue to provide equitable service and maintain its fleet. Ms. Banks added that said resources are matched by the federal government to invest in capital projects.  
presented

## **6. DBE Report**

Adonis Expose' presented the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise report.

Regarding DBE Contracts awarded through January 2022, he reported that \$20,177,770 in contracts were awarded, and \$7,321,457 was awarded to DBE firms. Total DBE participation (commitment) remains 37%.

Mr. Expose' reviewed current DBE projects. He reported that the CMAR - Canal Street Ferry Terminal is making progress for which he is awaiting a report for January. Regarding the Riverfront Trackwork and Overhead Catenary, Mr. Expose reported a change from 67% to 76% of the goal achieved. Regarding the Transit Ferry Services project, Mr. Expose' reported that 100% of the goal had been achieved and he expects an increase. Regarding the St. Charles Streetcar Line Downtown Loop Pavement Replacement, he reported the DBE goal of 38.61% had been exceeded and 55% achieved. Regarding the OCS Pole Replacement project, Business Intelligence and Data Management Reporting System project, and On Call Technical Safety Support project, Mr. Expose expects to see progress in the next month or two upon receipt of the respective invoices and payouts.

Regarding Current SBE projects, Mr. Expose' reported that Construction Cost Audits project and Temporary Staffing-Surveyors projects are ongoing, and that the only new project is the On Call A&E Services for Design of Interim Downtown Transit Hub.

Mr. Expose' concluded by reviewing the seven potential upcoming DBE and SBE projects that include current solicitations.

presented

## **7. 2022 Mardi Gras Service Changes**

Christopher Clark presented the 2022 Mardi Gras Service adjustments that were presented to the RAC and Operations and Administration Committee on behalf of Gerard Guter.

Mr. Clark pointed out potential service disruptions to be expected and unique detours due to parades on February 26th and March 1st. He relayed that it was communicated to riders to expect service delays in areas where parades will run, pointed out the consistent detour patterns for Uptown parades to enable easier trip planning, and underscored the extended Algiers/Canal ferry hours. Mr. Clark went into detail regarding the St. Charles and Canal streetcar service adjustments, noted changes to ferry service, and pointed out resources via which to access up-to-date information.

presented

**8. Consent Agenda**

adopted

Napoleon Avenue Facility Renovation and Rebuild-403 Napoleon Avenue [22-010](#)

adopted

Non-Revenue Support Vehicles [22-013](#)

adopted

Contract for Background Services [22-015](#)

adopted

Rampart Streetcar Emergency Recovery Project: Amend AECOM's Engineering Contract [22-016](#)

adopted

Katrina-Rita CDBG Grant Program [22-017](#)

adopted

Facility Maintenance & Construction Support Services [22-018](#)

adopted

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

approved

**Consideration of Resolution: Authorization for Staff to enter Negotiations for Transit Facilities Development**

Commissioner Neal and Commissioner Wegner requested additional information regarding the resolution. Mr. Wiggins relayed that he would provide the additional information to the Commissioners.

adopted

**10. Audience Questions and Comments**

No audience members signed up to speak, but one comment was entered into the chat regarding the possibility of using surplus of cash reserves to add more busses to service routes. The comment was addressed by Mr. Wiggins.

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

**Executive Session**

go into Executive Session

Morial Convention Center v. the Regional Transit Authority

**Executive Session**

come out of Executive Session

**12. Adjournment**

adjourned

[February 22, 2022 PowerPoint]

**22-035**