



2817 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Board of Commissioners

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

10:00 AM

RTA Board Room

The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA) hereby declares that, in accordance with Louisiana Revised Statute §§ 42:17.1 (A)(2)(a)-(c), a meeting will be held in person on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. Please be aware that wearing masks in the boardroom is encouraged.

Written comments on any matter included on the agenda will be accepted in the following ways: 1) Submission of a Speaker Card on meeting day; 2) Electronically by email sent to: rtaoard@rtaforward.org prior to the meeting; or 3) By U.S. Mail send to 2817 Canal Street, Attention: Office of Board Affairs, New Orleans, LA 70119.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Commissioner Raymond, Commissioner Coulon, Commissioner DeFrancesch, Commissioner Ewell, Commissioner Neal and Commissioner Walton

Commissioner Absent: Commissioner LeBeouf

3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

4. Reports

[Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes - September 27, 2022]

[22-157](#)

Commissioner Ewell moved and Commissioner DeFrancesch seconded to approve the Board Meetings of September 27, 2022. The motion was approved unanimously.

A. RTA Chairman's Report

Commissioner Raymond stated that he was looking forward to the New Links Update.

Commissioner Raymond stated that the Board Retreat was going to be in December .

In response to Commissioner Coulon, Yolanda Rodriguez stated that she will set-up meetings with the Commissioners regarding 2023 Budget.

Commissioner Raymond asked that Alex Wiggins give to the Board a summary of all contracts executed under \$100,000 at the Finance Committee Meeting.

Alex Wiggins reported that \$100,000 policy was based on FTA guidance that allowed staff to move on items quickly to keep business flowing.

Commissioner Coulon stated that he would like to revisit the policy of giving the Chief Executive Officer the authority of signing procurement items under \$100,000.

In response to Commissioner Coulon, Alex Wiggins reported that usually CEO has \$500,000 of signing authority.

In response to Commissioner DeFrancesch, Alex Wiggins reported that he would have to research the number of contracts over \$100,000.

Alex Wiggins reported that all the contracts that go before the Board for approval requires 3 bids.

In response to Alex Wiggins, Commissioner Raymond stated that the Board wanted a summary of contracts under \$100,000.

B. Operations & Administration Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Neal stated that the October RAC Meeting was very well attended by riders and staff received excellent feedback from riders regarding the New Links Projects.

Commissioner Neal stated that staff must keep communicating and connecting with the public.

C. Finance Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Walton stated that staff was preparing for the 2023 Budget.

D. Jefferson Parish Report

Jefferson Parish Transit

		<u>Ridership</u>	<u>Revenue</u>
<u>September 1-20</u>			
E3 - Jefferson	13,512	\$22,432	
W2 - Westbank Expressway		9,267	\$11,687
W3 - Lapalco	8,511	\$10,254	

October 1-20

E3 - Jefferson	14,244	\$23,568	
W2 - Westbank Expressway		9,515	\$12,297
W3 - Lapalco	7,214	\$8,808	

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 there has been an up-tick of COVID cases with employees. The RTA has held numerous Health Fairs for Staff to receive the necessary vaccines.

Alex Wiggins reported on the following:

System Re-Design Continuous Improvement

Extending 66 Haynes Bus
St. Bernard Parish coordination
New Bus Hubs nearing completion

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA should have a regional fare integration with other parishes.

Alex Wiggins reported that new bus shelters are being designed for East New Orleans and Downtown.

APTA Conference

Site visits to King County Metro/Sound Facilities including:

Vashon Passenger Ferry
Green Charging Facility
King Street Station

Mike Smith participated in panel on (FTA) safety-related rulemakings, including PTASP as well as the Bi-partisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) safety requirements

1881 Institute Apprenticeship

Mechanical Engineering Apprenticeship Program which will be led by RTA's Rail Maintenance Department.

First of its kind for the New Orleans region and RTA.

Has been identified as a career pathway for current IBEW employees and local residents.

Approximately three-year program

Gretna Fest Ferry Service

3,279 riders used the Pilot Ferry Service

In response to Commissioner Ewell, Alex Wiggins stated that the conversations continues with Gretna to regarding Ferry Service.

Commissioner Raymond stated that to continue ferry service in Gretna would have great Financial Constraints on the agency.

G. Chief of Staff Legislative Update

Katherine Felon reported on the following:

Meetings with St. Bernard Parish President on system re-design.

US DOT, Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy visited NOUPT and Canal Ferry Terminal

City Council/State Legislative briefings on BRT

Thrive Grant letters of support from Reps. Carter and Garafolo

H. Operations Update

Gerard Guter reported that total Ridership for the month of August 2022 was 727K.

Gerard Guter reported that On -Time Performance for bus was 79% for 2022 compared to 2021 at 63% and On Time Performance for Streetcar was 80% for 2022 compared to 2021 at 60%.

Gerard Guter reported that On-Time Performance for Paratransit was 80%.

Gerard Guter reported that Route 45-Lakeview had the highest On-Time Performance with 93% and the route with the lowest On-Time Performance was Route 64 Lake Forest Express 65%.

Gerard Guter reported that 27 of the 34 service routes were affected by Temporary Detours which was 79% of the routes, 3 of the 4 streetcars service routes were affected by Temporary Detours which was 75% and 6 of the 38 bus and streetcar service routes were affected by Long Term Detours which was 15.8% of the routes.

Gerard Guter reported that for the month of August RTA delivered 97% of Bus Service and 97% of Streetcar Service.

Gerard Guter reported that the RTA Flex Program - Total Completed Trips during the month of August was 270 and during the month of September was 815.

In response to Commissioner Coulon, Alex Wiggins reported that the study with the RPC is to make sure that the RTA can move the ADA Customers through the region with ease.

In response to Commissioner Coulon, Alex Wiggins reported that staff was currently going over the process of approving ADA riders. The demand and cost for Paratransit was very high.

In response to Commissioner Ewell, Gerard Guter reported that the issue was with the

tablets that are on the Paratransit Vehicles that the operators use, and he and the Director of Paratransit was going to meet with the consultant to discuss the current issues and all operators has been trained on the software.

In response to Commissioner Ewell, Gerard Guter reported that the Flex Program was the Pilot On-Demand Program that was being operated in New Orleans East that will run 6-9 months. Currently there are over 2,000 riders using the program which takes some pressure off of Paratransit.

In response to Commissioner DeFrancesch, Gerard Guter reported that the RTA has the necessary vehicles to continue the program until December and if the program is expanded, staff will come before the Board for approval for more vehicles.

Commissioner Neal would like a detailed report on Operations at the Operations Committee in February.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, Gerard Guter reported that most of the riders are making phone reservations because the Elderly and Disability Community has issues with downloading apps and staff was looking into other apps to try and streamline the process.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, Gerard Guter reported that staff has done Community Outreach to the Elderly Centers located in New Orleans East to help with the use of the app.

Alex Wiggins reported that some riders will never use the apps and will only use the phone.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, Gerard Guter reported that the Operators like the turn-by-turn software.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, Gerard Guter reported that the Paratransit Operators prefer Route Match, and the Fixed Operators prefer Clever.

In response to Commissioner Neal, Alex Wiggins reported that the Pilot Program software being used was Route Match.

Alex Wiggins reported that On-Time Performance has nothing to do with technology but more with human errors.

Commissioner Ewell stated that he went to a meeting at RPC where a study is being done on Paratransit for Jefferson Parish and at the meeting it was mentioned that Human Error plays a major role On-Time Performance.

Status of New Links Implementation

Successes:

Overall ridership is trending upwards

On-time performance for bus and rail remaining solid. Expected to improve as operators continue to adjust to new routes.
Construction at hubs complete.

Challenges

Operator reliability: Operator call-offs continue to be an issue, impacting service reliability. To mitigate impacts, we are able to augment with ops supervisors to minimize service disruptions.

Passenger transfer connections.

Developing plans to address access issues for Behrman Walmart, UNO, SUNO, and Delgado.

Lack of signage at hubs.

Vehicle readiness.

In response to Commissioner DeFrancesch, Gerard Guter reported that the Haynes bus operators on a 30 minute frequency from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and with the current changes being made the bus currently may run 6-8 minutes late. The Hayne bus now go to SUNO because the service was warranted.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Gerard Guter reported that there was going to be a meeting with the Union to work on the Operator's Attendance Policy.

Commissioner Neal would like to get from riders at the RAC Meeting information on transfers and where more buses are needed on the line.

Commissioner Raymond asked that at the Operations Committee Meeting a report is given on Paratransit.

I. RTA Chief Financial Officer's Report

Gizelle Banks reported on Ridership - As COVID wanes, ridership gradually recovers while service levels remain steady. However, the number of public transit trips taken by riders in August 2022, 744K, shows a slight decrease of 48K from the previous month of July 2022. Compared to the prior years, ridership was 544K in August 2021 and 362K in August 2020; this shows ridership continues to make a slow but steady recovery.

Gizelle Banks reported on Farebox Recovery Rates - 2022 vs 2019 (Pre-COVID) - Fare revenue continues to offset a slightly higher percentage of operating expenses as ridership continues to rebound. August's farebox recovery rate increased slightly from 7.27% in the prior month to 8.28%; a total increase of 1%. The farebox recovery rate for August 2019 (Pre-COVID) was 23.81%.

Gizelle Banks reported on Ferry - Farebox Recovery Rates 2022 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - The increase in farebox recovery to 9.78% in August from 8.24% in July is a result of decrease in passenger revenue and a decrease in operating expenses from the prior month.

Gizelle Banks reported on Operating Revenues (Budget, Actual & Prior Year) - Overall, Operating Revenues display stable results \$7.4M for the month of August when compared to the prior year \$7.9M due to strong Sales Tax Revenues. Passenger Fares for August, fared unfavorably by \$-68K or -8% when compared to the budget.

Gizelle Banks reported on Net Revenue (Before and After Government Assistance) - Net Revenue (Before Government Assistance) is -\$2.1M for the month of August. After applying the month's \$2.9M in Government Operating Assistance, Net Revenue ended with a \$575K or 78% negative variance for the month of August (when compared to the budget of \$1.6M).

Gizelle Banks reported on Operating Expenses - Operating Expenses for the month of August are roughly \$9.3M. Labor and Fringe Benefits, the largest expenditure at \$6.5M, comprised 69% of this month's actual expenses. In total, Operating Expenses for the month of August show a slight decrease of 9% from \$10.5M in July.

Gizelle Banks reported on Operating Reserve - The strong positive variance that resulted from Net Revenue (After Government Assistance of approximately \$2.9M) added \$954K to Restricted Operating/Capital Reserve after the offset of \$567K in Debt Service.

In response to Commissioner Coulon, Gizelle Banks reported that \$6M remain in the American Recovery Plan Fund and the RTA still has \$59.6M in Recovery Funds that still has not been allocated and RTA has until 2029 to spend these funds.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Alex Wiggins reported that the Board has given staff the authority to hire 891 employees and staff is currently at 891 and staff will not exceed that number.

Gizelle Banks reported that the impact of the Union Contract was seen in July and August Financial and going forward the expense are spread out through the budget.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Gizelle Banks reported that Year-To-Date there is \$76.1M for Transit Operations including Labor and Fringes and currently at \$67M in terms of budget actual.

In response to Commissioner Neal, Gizelle Banks reported that all Capital Projects will be included in the Budget.

[August 2022 Financials]

[22-156](#)

5. Consent Agenda

An Amendment to Correct Original Resolution for RTA Website Services

[22-136](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt the Amendment to Correct the Original Resolution for the RTA Website Services.

Resolution No. 22-080 was adopted unanimously,
Enactment No: 22-080

Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) between the Port of
New Orleans (PONO) and Regional Transit Authority [22-145](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt the
Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) between the Port of New Orleans
(PONO) and Regional Transit Authority. Resolution No. 22-081 was adopted
unanimously,

Enactment No: 22-081

Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project: Amendment Request to
Infinity Contract [22-147](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt the
Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project: Amendment Request to Infinity.
Resolution No. 22-082 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 22-082

Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project: Amendment Request to
Woodward-APC's Contract [22-148](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt the
Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project: Amendment Request to Woodward-APC's
Contract. Resolution 22-082 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 22-083

Transit Security Services - SEAL Security Services [22-149](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt the
Transit Security Services - SEAL Security Services. Resolution 22-084 was
adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 22-084

Portable Radios [22-150](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt
Portable Radios. Resolution No. 22-085 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 22-085

FY 2023-2024 State Capital Outlay Request: Vehicle Ferry
Replacement Study [22-151](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt the
FY2024-2024 State Capital Outlay Request: Vehicle Ferry Replacement Study.
Resolution No. 22-086 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 22-086

FY 2023-2024 State Capital Outlay Request: Ferry Maintenance
Barge Replacement [22-152](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt the
FY 2023-2024 State Capital Outlay Request: Ferry Maintenance Barge
Replacement. Resolution 22-087 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 22-087

5339 Bus and Bus Facilities: Large Urban Areas

[22-153](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt the 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities: Large Urban Areas. Resolution No. 22-088 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 22-088

6. New Business (UNANIMOUS VOTE REQUIRED TO CONSIDER)

Commissioner DeFrancesch moved and Commissioner Ewell seconded to added Executive Session to the agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

7. Audience Questions and Comments

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 to have your comments read aloud at the meeting.

Rahsaan M. Parker stated that he wanted a follow-up on the Hayne Line. He stated that he would not change the Lakeview Route. Ferncrest Manor Living Center was near Paris Road and that was a very dark area and the RTA still has not address the bus service in that area. The Hayne Route should be reinstated to its original route.

Alan Drake stated that the RTA need to offer a bonus to employees that get the New Boaster and Flue Shot. He stated that Louisiana was slated to be an high infection area.

Jim Goodwin stated that the Algiers Point Community was pleased with the new bus routes, but the buses was still speeding on Patterson Street. The Algiers community was also pleased with the Gretna Festival Service and if the Algiers Community can be of any help with restoring that service please let us know.

Jim Goodwin stated that he would like an update on the Canal Terminal and the Algiers Point Terminal.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, Jim Goodwin stated that there is a 20 mph sign on that street and cars are also speeding.

Jacqueline Kennedy stated that on Wednesday, September 25, 2022 she was on the Louisiana Bus and the new routes are terrible. She stated that she was riding on the Louisiana Bus and she had to exit the bus on LaSalle and Louisiana where an elderly lady had to walk 7 blocks to her home due to the new bus route. Ms. Kennedy stated that she had to help the elderly lady with her basket of groceries off the bus.

Jacqueline Kennedy stated that the Louisiana bus never showed up on Washington St. and she waited an hour for the bus, she was never informed of the new route and due to the new route people now have a longer walk from the bus stop almost 7-8 blocks.

Jacqueline Kennedy stated that the Claiborne Bus that passes by the Gus Homes has a

different route which is a major inconvenience to the residents.

Jacqueline Kennedy stated that there is no more Tchoupitoulas bus, and she has to walk to the Magazine bus to get to Canal Street. The new routes are very bad and does not support the neighborhoods.

Jacqueline Kennedy stated that the bus operator would not wait for a passenger and she put her foot in the door so the operator could not pull off and the passenger was able to get on the bus.

Brenda Holmes stated that she worked with the RTA as an Ambassador during the New Links process and she was listening to the riders. She stated that once the Desire Bus get to the end of the route at Elysian Fields and St. Claude those routes are always getting caught by the train, that takes 20-25 minutes to pass.

Brenda Holmes stated that these changes to the routes has left so many people walking further to a bus stop She stated that the Freret and the Franklin lines need to go back to its original routes.

Brenda Holmes thanked Gerard Guter and his staff for all his help listing to her concerns regarding these changes.

Commissioner Walton thanked Brenda Holmes for her service to the community and the RTA.

In response to Kenny Collins, Alex Wiggins reported that there is issues with the app that is why the real bus time does not come through on the phones.

Commissioner Neal recommend that Kenny Collins attended the RAC Meeting.

Ronald Major stated that he is a disabled rider on the fixed route and regular passengers are sitting in the ADA seats on the buses and the operators don't ask the passengers to move out of the ADA assigned seats. He also stated that the lines need to go back to its original routes and just put more buses on the lines.

Commissioner Raymond apologized on behalf of the RTA for the inconvenience that Mr. Major experienced on the buses.

Courtney Jackson stated that the Hayne route need to change to have better service for the riding public. She would like to know what infrastructure Grants was the RTA applying for.

Dusty Roberson stated that he hope RTA would shift to Riders Experience. He also would like to know when will the permanent bus signs be implemented and when will the new shelters installed.

A Ride member would like to know when the app would be updated to show real time information. The messages that was coming from the app was not clear and reliable and the information was not accurate information.

In response to Commissioner Neal, Alex Wiggins stated that staff would look into continuing to have a Transit Ambassadors in the budget.

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

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Ewell seconded to go into Executive Session regarding

The RTA and the Convention Center

The motion was approved unanimously.

9. Adjournment

Commissioner Neal moved and Commissioner Walton seconded to adjourn the Board of Commissioners Meeting, Tuesday, October 25, 2022. The motion was approved unanimously.