



2817 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Board of Commissioners

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

10:00 AM

Virtual

The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority does hereby certify that it is unable to hold a commission meeting under regular quorum requirements due to Covid-19. On authority of the Governor under Section 2 of Proclamation Number 84 JBE 2020, the next Commission meeting will be held via telephone and/or video conference on Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 10:00 am. All efforts will be made to provide for observation and input by members of the public.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

3a. [Meeting Minutes for April 27, 2021]

21-076

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2021. The motion was approved unanimously.

approved

4. Reports

No Report

4a. RTA Chairman's Report

No Report.

4b. Operations & Administration Committee Chairman's Report

No Report.

4c. Finance Committee Chairman's Report

No Report.

4d. Jefferson Parish Report

Commissioner Wegner reported that Jefferson Parish has begun Hurricane Evacuation Exercises and was working on a new transit logo that will be placed on the new buses that will arrive in November.

Commissioner Wegner reported that Jefferson Parish has also implemented a new slogan "Your Smart Link" and launch a new website.

Commissioner Wegner reported that Jefferson Parish will be implementing "Mobile Eye" a vision based self-driving car and Advanced Driver Assistance System that provide warnings for collision prevention and Jefferson Parish has a new General Manager, Robert Gillibrew.

4e. RTA General Counsel's Report

Sundiata Haley stated he will discuss his report in Executive Session.

4f. RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA remain on track to return to full transit service on June 20, 2021. Additional operators were hired and the staff will also implement the 3 recommendations from New Links.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff was looking to give the riding public the necessary incentives to ride transit and tomorrow staff will go before the City Council Transportation Committee and report on the Fare Analysis.

Alex Wiggins reported that he was invited to speak at the APTA UTIP Rail Conference on how Transit Agencies can Attract Ridership Recovery.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff was working on the Long Term Acquisition for land in New Orleans East and last week the RTA submitted a letter of interest to acquire the land for little to no cost to develop a rapid transit area.

Alex Wiggins reported that on June 11, 2021. A memorial will be held to honor the RTA's employees that we loss to COVID-19.

In response to Commissioner Neal, Alex Wiggins stated that the Public Hearing would be held on June 5, 2021.

4g. DBE Report

Keziah Lee reported that \$2.9 Million in contracts were awarded of the DBE contracts \$449,808 was awarded to DBE/SBE Prime Contractors and RTA was currently at 15% of the 30% commitment.

Keziah Lee reported that there are six ongoing projects with DBE participation and the Prime Contractor on the Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project did submit a draft plan to

achieve their DBE Goal.

Keziah Lee reported that there are currently five SBE Projects and the A&E Services contract has increased to \$73,938.

Commissioner Wegner stated that she feels the RTA was on target with its DBE Goal.

5. Consent Agenda

approved

To Award:

5a. Vehicle Fluids and Lube [21-057](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to approve the Vehicle Fluids and Lube to McPherson Companies, Inc. Resolution No. 21-028 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 21-028

5b. Rampart Streetcar Line: Emergency Recovery Project Award Construction Project [21-062](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to adopt the Rampart Streetcar Line: Emergency Recovery Project Award Construction Project to the Lowest Bidder. Resolution 21-029 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 21-029

5c. Transit Security Services [21-064](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to adopt the Transit Securities Services with Bearcom/Motorola Solutions. Resolution No. 21-030 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 21-030

Grant Applications:

5d. Proposed Grant Application Submittal-FY 2021 Section 5307 Allocated Funds [21-058](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to adopt the Grant Application for 2021 Section 5307. Resolution No. 21-031 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 21-031

5e. Proposed Grant Application Submittal-FY 2021 Section 5339 Allocated Funds [21-059](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to adopt the Grant Application for 2021 Section 5339. Resolution No. 21-032 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 21-032

5f. Proposed Grant Application Submittal-FY 2021 Section 5337 Allocated Funds[21-060](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to adopt the Grant Application for 2021 Section 5337. Resolution No. 21-033 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 21-033

6. Financial Statements

Gizelle Banks reported that the Ridership - The actual March ridership of 632K underperformed the budget by 10% or 179k passengers but exceeded February's total by an impressive 38.7%. March 2020 results signaled the beginning of the downward trend in ridership due to the pandemic as the graph illustrates.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Operating Cost Per Unlinked Passenger Trip 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre COVID) - For the first time this year, the cost per passenger trip is less than pre-COVID levels. This can be attributed to the increase in ridership and the decrease in expenses when compared to the prior two months.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Ferry - Operating Cost Per Unlinked Passenger Trip 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - The ferry operations have also experienced significantly higher operating costs per passenger trip since the onset of the pandemic. While this metric is not at pre-COVID levels, March marked the most notable decrease in cost so far this year.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Farebox Recovery Rates 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - With dramatically fewer passenger boardings because of the pandemic, fare revenue continues to offset a significantly lower percentage of operating expenses. In March, however, the farebox recovery rate rebounded from the slump in February, doubling the results to over 10%.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Ferry-Farebox Recovery Rates 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - The ferry ridership has dropped drastically because of the pandemic, causing fare revenue to offset a significantly lower percentage of operating expenses. There was, however, some improvement in this area for the month of March, with over a 5% increase from February's results.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Operating Revenues (Budget, Actual & Prior Year) - The adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Operating Revenues is reflected in the March 2020-to-current year comparisons. Passenger Fares continue to fall short of projections. CNO sales tax collections through March have been received, exceeding expectations for the first quarter by \$1.7m or 11.9%.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Operating Revenues (Actual) - Of the \$6.5m in Operating Revenues, 76% or \$4.9m is derived from General Use Sales Taxes.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Operating Expenses - The Labor and Fringe Benefits, the largest expenditure of \$6.5M comprised 72% of this month's actual expenses. Staff continues its post-transition payroll analysis and true-up. 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.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Net Revenue Before and After Government Assistance) - The Net Revenue (Before Government Assistance) is (\$300k) for the month of March, much more favorable than the previous month. After applying the month's \$1.2m in Government Operating Assistance, Net Revenue ended with a \$900k positive variance.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Capital Expenditures and Debt Services as a result of the bond refinancing in September 2020, Debt Service was dramatically reduced by \$658k from prior year actuals for the month and by \$1.9m year-to-date.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Operating Reserve - The positive variance that resulted from Net Revenue (After Government Assistance) added \$330k to Restricted Operating/Capital Reserve after accounting for the payment of \$576k in Debt Service.

Gizelle Banks reported that the Maritime Operations - Passenger fare revenue for ferry operations increased by over 300% for the month of March when compared to the same period in 2020. This is a result of having full ferry operations this year as well as signaling a bit of recovery, since the pandemic began. In contrast, March 2021 operating expenses outpaced those from the prior year by 29% primarily due to the newly negotiated contract with Labmar.

Gizelle Banks reported that the RTA was still trending under budget.

Commissioner Daniels would like to get more information on the Ferry Budget.

7. Procurement Items

Authorization To Award:

7a. Fixed Route Bus Purchase [21-073](#)

Commissioner Sarwar moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adopt the purchase of Fixed Route Buses with a contract with New Flyer of America, Inc. Bus Sales per Virginia State Contract. Resolution No. 21-034 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-034

7b. Para Transit Vehicle Purchase [21-078](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to adopt the purchase of Paratransit Vehicles with Creative Bus Sales per Oklahoma State Contract. Resolution 21-035 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-035

8. RTA Ridership Incentives [21-074](#)

Chase Haislip reported that the RTA wanted to provide clarity for the riders, pulling together a youth and senior pass to get ridership from that specific age groups and these incentives would offer relief to the riding public. This study was done with the RTA peer properties to see what they were offering to their riders.

Chase Haislip reported that currently passengers pay an up charge for transfers and express buses and the RTA was eliminating those charges. The Jazzy Pass can be used for all modes of transportation and staff was looking to suspend the three and five-day pass because these passes were not selling. The Jazzy Pass was going to be reduced to \$45.00. The monthly youth and senior passes would be \$18.00 and \$14.00 respectively.

Chase Haislip reported that the RTA was going before the City Council Transportation Committee and the Public Hearing was scheduled for June 3, 2021.

Chase Haislip reported that by doing this pilot RTA would be able to collect a lot of great data and feedback for the permanent fair restructuring.

Commissioner Wegner stated that this was a great starting point and makes sense in a lot of ways and this should be less work for the operators.

Yolanda Rodriguez stated that this item was going to be on the Board Meeting Agenda at the June 22, 2021.

continued

Enactment No: 21-053

9. Service Restoration/Phased New Links Implementation [21-075](#)

Dwight Norton reported that the Summer Pick was going to take place on June 20, 2021 and the RTA would return to full schedules and improve On-Time Service by adjusting some time points.

Dwight Norton reported that the New Links recommendations for the St. Charles Streetcar, St. Claude and Jackson/Esplanade was going to be implemented and the St. Charles Streetcar will be adjusted to accommodate the downtown construction and this project will be completed by 2022 Mardi Gras.

Dwight Norton reported that these changes translate to \$5.2 Million in operating expenses.

Commissioner Sarwar moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adopt the Service Restoration/Phased New Links Implementation. Resolution No. 20-036 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-036

10. Renewal of Various RTA Insurance Coverages 2021-2022 [21-061](#)

Mark Major reported that a number of insurance policies are scheduled to expire at the end of this month and the RTA was working with the Broker of Record Kennedy Group. The insurance policies that are set to expire are the catenary system, public officials, crime and flood. The cost for a one year renewal increased by 7% for the year which equated to \$1,290,548.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Mark Major stated that with the 7% increase the coverage stays the same.

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to adopt the Renewal of Various RTA Insurance Coverages 2021-2022. Resolution 21-061 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-037

**11. RTA & DOTD Ferry Cooperative Endeavor Agreement: [21-077](#)
Amendment No. 8**

Jose Ruiz reported that staff wanted to replace GoMobile and send the Levy to dry-dock for regular maintenance. The RTA was able to locate two sources of funding that was assigned to the DOTD from the FTA one for Automated Ferry Fare Collection and one for the repower, dry-dock, improvement and maintenance of the Levy. The DOTD would put up the 20% for each grant and the RTA would not have to come up with any funding and the RTA would use the RTA Procurement Process.

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to

adopt Amendment No. 8 for the Ferry Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the RTA and DOTD. Resolution No. 21-028 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-037

12. New Business (UNANIMOUS VOTE REQUIRED TO CONSIDER)

Commissioner Sarwar moved and Commissioner Walton seconded to add The Memoriam Resolution to the agenda for Mr. Harris and Mr. Palmer. The motion passed unanimously.

approved

Consideration of Memoriam Resolutions

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to adopt the Memoriam Resolution for Mr. Harris and Mr. Palmer. Resolution No. 21-039 and 21-040 was adopted unanimously.

approved

13. 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.

Autumn White stated that the RTA riders would like the RTA to continue stops at Canal and Elk and Tulane and Loyola these stops are important to riders that need to transfer to the streetcars.

Alex Wiggins stated that the City just opened up the Canal Street Lanes and staff was working to restore the Streetcar Line during the months of July/August and an internal analysis would be conducted to see if the bus hub can be moved to Canal and Elk.

Jessica Jackson requested some presentation material and Yolanda Rodriguez responded to her request.

Valerie Jefferson thanked Alex Wiggins for the way negotiations were going with management.

Valerie Jefferson reported that the operators reported that they are receiving threats on the buses and the supervisors were supposed to follow the buses late at night and they were not doing so but they follow the streetcars.

Valerie Jefferson stated that the RTA was not following the Union Agreement and was being very disrespectful toward the members.

Commissioner Daniels stated that when the RTA took over it knew that they would be some

challenges and staff has been working on fixing those issues as quickly as possible which included significant upgrades to the system that was never functioning.

Alex Wiggins stated that he did receive Valerie Jefferson's email and he will follow through on her issues.

Alex Wiggins stated that staff was added to the supervisor team and the RTA was also working with the NOPD to deal with the issues that the operators were having and barriers are being installed on all the buses to protect the operators.

Commissioner Daniels asked Alex Wiggins to work with the operators with their safety issues because he does not want the image that the RTA does not care about its employees and their security issues.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, Alex Wiggins stated that some of the incidences do take place on the buses and the RTA has hired an Intervention Specialist to help deal with the homeless and mental passengers.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, Alex Wiggins stated that these incidents were taken place on a number of different routes.

In response to Commissioner Daniels, Alex Wiggins stated that staff started installing the barriers this month and all of the new 21 buses came with barriers and this was just one tool being used to keep the operators safe.

In response to Commissioner Daniels, Alex Wiggins stated that the new Intervention Specialist would bring a report to the Board at the next Board Meeting dealing with the resources to help the homeless and mental passengers.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, Commissioner Daniels stated that the supervisors are in the field but not on the buses.

Alex Posorske stated that the riders would like to get off at Canal and Elk Place and what is the timeline before this happen for the passengers.

Alex Wiggins stated that he does not have a timeline for this stop to open for the riding public but at the next Board Meeting he would share the progress that has been made with this stop.

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

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to approve to go into Executive Session on Riverwalk v. Regional Transit Authority et al and Union Negotiations. The motion was carried unanimously.

approved

14a. Riverwalk v. Regional Transit Authority et al.

14b. Union Negotiations

15. Adjournment

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to adjourn the Board Meeting of May 25, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.