



2817 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Board of Commissioners

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 22, 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, June 22, 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**

[May 25, 2021 Meeting Minutes]

[21-097](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to approve the minutes from the May 25, 2021 Board Meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.
approved

4. **Reports**

- 4a. RTA Chair Report

Commissioner Daniels stated that Juneteeth was now a Federal and State Holiday and the RTA played a role in the Juneteeth Celebration by unavailing an RTA bus with Freedom Rider Jerome "Big Duck" Smith on one side and Doratha "Dodie" Smith-Simmons on the other side.

Commissioner Daniels thanked the team that worked on this project.

- 4b. Operations & Administration Committee Chair Report

Commissioner Neal reported that the Riders Advisory meeting scheduled for the month of July was cancelled.

4c. Finance Committee Chair Report

Commissioner Raymond stated that the RTA has received great compliments from the public regarding the Freedom Riders Bus.

4d. Jefferson Parish Report

No Report.

4e. RTA General Counsel's Report

Sundiata Haley reported that there will be an Executive Session.

4f. RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report

Alex Wiggins reported that on Sunday, June 20, 2021 the RTA returned back to full service and staff had to use mandatory overtime to make sure that all routes were covered during peak hours to serve the riding public.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff was in the process of hiring additional operators which has not been an easy task.

Alex Wiggins reported that the riding public came back before the RTA was ready to put full service back on the street.

Alex Wiggins reported that ABC News did a great report on the Juneteenth - Freedom Riders bus featuring artist Brandan "BMIKE" Odums. He painted the two Freedom Riders Jerome Smith and Doratha "Dodie" Smith-Simmons on the RTA bus.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff honored Mr. Harrison and Mr. Palmer the two supervisors that loss their lives to COVID-19 they will be forever remembered by the RTA.

4f.1 Response To Safety Concerns

Robert Hickman reported that RTA carried 15 million plus riders in 2019 and dropped down to 6 million in 2020 and the comparison peer agency used in this report was Houston, Austin, Cleveland, Los Angeles and Atlanta.

Robert Hickman reported that Houston carried 78 million passengers in 2019 and 49 million in 2020; Austin had 8 million passengers in 2019 and 3 million in 2020; Cleveland carried 32 million passengers in 2019 and 16 million in 2020; Los Angeles carried 370 million passengers in 2019 and 213 million in 2020; Atlanta carried 117 million passengers in 2019 and 290 million in 2020.

Robert Hickman reported that the RTA was comparing total crimes that was recorded by the FBI in their Uniform Crime Report and this report covers murders, homicides assaults, robberies and burglaries.

Robert Hickman reported that in 2019 the RTA had a total of 6 major crimes and in 2020 12 major crimes. Houston had 526 in 2019 and 412 in 2020; Austin had 177 in 2019 and 166 in 2020; Cleveland had 123 in 2019 and 136 in 2020; Los Angeles had 1,427 in 2019 and 1,306 in 2020 and Atlanta had 421 in 2019 and 282 in 2020.

Robert Hickman reported that Total Crimes per 100K Passengers in 2019 the RTA had 0.04 and in 2020 0.17; Houston had 0.67 in 2019 and 0.84 in 2020 and Austin had 2.21 in 2019 and 4.26 in 2020; Cleveland had 0.38 in 2019 and 0.80; Los Angeles had 0.39 in 2019 and 0.61 and Atlanta had 0.36 in 2019 and 0.31 in 2020.

Alex Wiggins reported that he feels that the RTA numbers were not 100% accurate and that the number of crimes were being underreported and more crimes were happening than being reported.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Alex Wiggins reported that all the systems have rail and the crimes could be higher than what was reported.

In response to Commissioner Bryan, Alex Wiggins reported that his concern was that customers were not reporting crimes.

Robert Hickman reported that the RTA system does not have major crimes happening everyday such as murders, shootings and stabbings.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA was using the FBI Uniform Crime Reports and everything in the report was clearly defined.

Robert Hickman reported that 8 Bus Barriers were being installed per week and the goal was to complete installation by December 1, 2021.

Robert Hickman reported that on all vehicles there are Emergency Phones, Duress Alarms and Cameras.

Robert Hickman reported that the Mitigating Security Concerns at Bus Stops were Lighting, Vegetation and Loitering and buses were equipped with Emergency Alarms, Bus Barriers, Random Boardings by Officers, Security Cameras Aboard Buses and Posted Security Bulletins.

Robert Hickman reported that when there is an issue on the vehicles the operators contacts the dispatcher, the dispatcher notifies the transit police the transit police notifies the appropriate police district of the incident (non-availability of transit police) and all buses are equipped with emergency alarms to alert dispatchers.

Robert Hickman reported that the operators have Security Education Training Awareness (SETA) (Conducted by TSA), First Observer Plus (Mass Transit Security Training) and Conflict Resolution Training.

Robert Hickman reported that the RTA was submitting an MOU to the City of New Orleans for additional Transit Police, currently the RTA has 2 Security Coordinators,

Contract Security that patrols the Duncan Plaza location and a Crisis Intervention Coordinator on staff.

Commissioner Wegner and Commissioner Raymond stated that this was a great presentation and Commissioner Tillery liked the Security Training Program.

Commissioner Neal stated that the report showed how transit was very important to the public.

Commissioner Daniels thanked Alex Wiggins and Robert Hickman for their work on this report and for making sure that the RTA was deploying staff and resources accordingly.

Commissioner Walton would like staff to confirm the accuracy of the data being presented.

In response to a concerned citizen regarding security at the ferry, Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA need to maintain situation awareness where passengers are gathering so if anything would occur the RTA has the ability to respond immediately.

4g. DBE Report

Keziah Lee reported that the contract award amount has went up since the April report. Contracts have gone up from \$2.9 million to \$4.9 million of that amount \$1.8 million was awarded to the DBE's and SBE's firms as prime contractors.

Keziah Lee reported that the participation so fare this year was 37% and our commitment was 30% so the RTA was above its goal.

Keziah Lee reported that the Insurance Coverage Project was \$1.2 M and was 100% DBE.

Keziah Lee reported that Construction Cost Audits project was 100% Small Business at a contract value of \$78,902.

Keziah Lee reported that the outreach and partnership staff was planning an event for the end of July and the goals of these events were to have a coordinated effort with the community organizers.

5. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to adopt the Consent Agenda. Resolution No. 21-050 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

5a. Connecting Communities-NORTA Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
Planning Project

[21-038](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to award a contract to Integrated Logistical Support, Inc. (ILS) to Study BRT Routes for the Connecting Communities-NORTA Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Planning Project. Resolution No. 21-041 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-041

5b. Egle' Janitorial On-Site COVID Cleaning [21-063](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to amend the contract with Egle' Janitorial for On-Site COVID Cleaning. Resolution No. 21-042 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-042

5c. NEOGOV Change Order [21-079](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to amend the contract with NEOGOVE. Resolution No. 21-043 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-043

5d. General Bus Parts [21-081](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to award a contract to Kenworth of Louisiana and Mohawk MFG & Supply Co. for General Bus Parts. Resolution No. 21-044 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-044

5e. On-Call Architectural/Engineering Services - Small Business Enterprise [21-083](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to adopt contracts with 10 firms for On-Call Architectural/Engineering Services - Small Business Enterprise. Resolution No. 21-045 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-045

5f. ENO Maintenance Building - Exterior Envelope Repair [21-084](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to approve a contract with C.D.W. Services, LLC for ENO Maintenance Building - Exterior Envelope Repair. Resolution 21-046 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-046

5g. Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project Amendment Request to Woodward-APC's Contract [21-086](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to amend the contract with Woodward-APC's Contract - Jackson Avenue Barge for the Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project. Resolution No. 21-047 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-047

- 5h.** Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project Amendment Requesting Woodward-APC's Contract [21-087](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to amend the contract with Woodward-APC's Contract - Permanent Barge Work for the Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project. Resolution No. 21-048 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-048

- 5i.** Cintas Uniforms [21-088](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to award a contract with Cintas Uniforms for RTA employees. Resolution 21-049 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-049

6. Financial Report

April Financial Statement

Gizelle Banks reported on the April Financials.

Gizelle Banks reported that Ridership - April's ridership of 672K underperformed the budget by 14.8% or 117k passengers. When compared to prior months, April's results modestly exceeded March's total by 6.3% or 40k riders, but outpaced February's ridership by 97k riders, almost 2.5 times the prior month variance. Year-to-date comparisons to April actuals show negative results across the spectrum - when compared to the budget (11.5%), 2020 actuals (29.2%) and 2019 pre-COVID actuals (59.4%).

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Cost per Unlinked Passenger Trips 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID).

There was a modest increase in the cost per passenger trip for the month of April when compared to March. However, like the prior month, April's cost showed a reduction from January's and February's results.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Ferry - Operating Cost per Unlinked Passenger Trip 2021

vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID).

Ferry operations have also experienced significantly higher operating costs per passenger trip since the onset of the pandemic. While March marked the most notable decrease in cost per passenger trip so far this year, it is encouraging to note that April yielded only a slight increase from the prior month.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Farebox Recovery Rates 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - Fare revenue continues to offset a significantly lower percentage of operating expenses. However, despite the amount of inclement weather throughout the month, April's farebox recovery rate dipped less than 1% from March's year-high performance and tracked higher than January and February's farebox recovery rates.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Ferry- Farebox Recovery Rates 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - Likewise, ferry ridership has dropped drastically because of the pandemic, causing fare revenue to offset a significantly lower percentage of operating expenses. On a positive note, though, April's farebox recovery rate for ferry operations fell short of March's year-high results by less than 1% and markedly exceeded the results for January and February.

Gizelle Banks reported that - *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 continued to struggle, falling short of projections by 14.4% for the month. 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 - Operating Revenues (Actual) - Of the \$9.4m in Operating Revenues, 82% or \$7.7m is derived from General Use Sales Taxes.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Expenses - Labor and Fringe Benefits, the largest expenditure at \$4.9M, comprised 67% 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 6.7% or 532k positive variance.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Net Revenue (Before and After Government Assistance) - Net Revenue (Before Government Assistance) is \$1.7m for the month of April. This strong position is largely attributable to the \$2.0m in Net Operating Revenue for the month. After applying the month's \$1.2m in Government Operating Assistance, Net Revenue increased to \$2.9m.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Capital Expenditures and Debt Service - As result of the bond refinancing in September 2020, Debt Service was dramatically reduced by \$397k from prior year actuals for the month and by \$2.3m year-to-date.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Reserve - The positive variance that resulted

from Net Revenue (After Government Assistance) added \$2.1m to Restricted Operating/Capital Reserve after accounting for the payment of \$783k in Debt Service.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Maritime Operations - Passenger fare revenue for ferry operations increased by \$7k over the prior month. This represents the second straight month of positive results, further indication of possible recovery. Recall that fare collections were suspended in April 2020 system-wide. April 2021 operating expenses reflected positive results as well, down by \$219k from the prior year.

Gizelle Banks reported that the RTA's expenses were approximately \$17m in comparison to the revenue of \$19m there was a \$2.1m Operating Surplus for the month and for the year \$595,000.

Commissioner Daniels reported that this finance report was a reflection of the entire team keeping the RTA on track.

7. Audit Consideration

7a. CY 2020 Single Audit Acceptance 21-089

Becky Hammond reported that there were No Findings on the Single Audit.

7b. CY 2020 Financial Audit Acceptance 21-090

Becky Hammond reported that the audit would be filed on-time before the June 30, 2021 deadline.

Becky Hammond reported that there were no Unmodified Opinion ("clean") on the financial statements. Independent Auditors report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and other Matters Based on an Audit of Financial Statements Performed in Accordance with Government Auditing Standards - No deficiencies in Internal Control or Compliance Finding Noted.

Becky Hammond reported that the Independent Auditors' Report on Compliance for the Major Program and on Internal Controls Over Compliance Required by the Uniform Guidance - No deficiencies in Internal Control or compliance finds noted.

Becky Hammond reported that the RTA had \$68.4 Million of federal funds for the total of the year and a test was done on \$67.2 Million.

Becky Hammond reported that the Net Position compared to prior year had an increase in unrestricted and a decrease in your total liabilities and it is always great to see the Net Position rise and the Debt fall. The RTA had a \$8.6 Million reduction in the bond related debt and the RTA was seeing the savings the RTA had a \$31.9 Million reduction in net pension liability and a \$8.1 Million pension compared to a large liability last year of \$32 Million.

Becky Hammond reported that the RTA Capital Assets at a glance for 2020 was \$13 Million of capital expenditures offset by \$22.5 Million of depreciation.

Becky Hammond reported that the RTA dodged a bullet with the COVID assistance that was received from the CARES Act.

Becky Hammond reported that it was great to work with the RTA Team and the partnership with Bruno and Bruno.

8. Procurement Items

Authorizations:

8a. RAISE Grant New Links Capital Infrastructure Project [21-095](#)

In response to Commissioner Walton, Yolanda Rodriguez stated that there was a \$6 M local match required.

Commissioner Sarwar moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to approve the RAISE Grant New Links Capital Infrastructure Project. Resolution No. 21-051 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-051

8b. FY21 RAISE Grant - Planning [21-096](#)

In response to Commissioner Walton, Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA was capturing the data that was reported but not sure that all passengers were recording every incident.

Alex Wiggins reported that this particular grant was looking at the entire corridor and the RTA was working with the City to actually make things safer and reduce the accidents and collisions along the corridor.

Commissioner Daniels stated that he does not understand why the riding public does not report incidents that occur on the vehicles.

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to approve the FY21 RAISE Grant-Planning - Grant. Resolution No. 21-052 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-052

9a. RTA Ridership Incentives [21-074](#)

Yolanda Rodriguez reported that the following names sent emails for

support of the lower fares Lucy Blumberg, Haley Beavery, Jadia Washington, Sydney Anderson, Florentina Staigers Cruz, Megan Stroh and Maggie Herman

Commissioner Daniels stated that he has also received positive feedback from the public.

Commissioner Neal moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to approve the Temporary Fare Structure. Resolution No. 21-053 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-053

10. New Business (UNANIMOUS VOTE REQUIRED TO CONSIDER)

None

11. 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.

Valerie Jefferson stated that the RTA conducted the summer pick and it was not done correctly and the RTA does not have enough staff to work the pick. The streetcars operators are being transferred to the bus and they are not being trained correctly and they don't know the bus routes and if she does not talk to Executive Staff regarding these issue she was going to call a press conference on the operators behalf.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff was following the union contract which allows staff to make changes and the implementation of the New Links recommendations requires transferring operators from the streetcar to the bus and the streetcar operators have to be qualified to drive the buses.

Alex Wiggins reported that he will sit down with the team to go over any union concerns and he was working with the constraints of the Union Agreement.

Commissioner Daniels stated that Executive Staff needs to make sure that they were working within the confines of the FTA regulations and all safety standards.

Alex Wiggins reported that all streetcar operators are also qualified bus operators and streetcar operators are required to be recertified on the bus every month to drive the bus a to make sure that there are skilled.

Commissioner Daniels stated that everyone needs to come together to work through the current situation.

In response to Sabrina Bush Hillary, Alex Wiggins stated that on June 20, 2021 the RTA return to full service and RTA was currently hiring operations and this is a 45 day process to implement the new operators.

Commissioner Neal asked for staff to give an update on the hiring of operators at the August Operation Meeting.

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

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to go into Executive Session. The motion was approved unanimously.

approved

Ernest N. Morial Exhibition Hall Authority v. Regional Transit Authority Civil District Court No.: 2021-04470, Div. "J" Section-15.

13. Adjournment

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adjourn the June 22, 2021 Board Meeting. The motion was adopted unanimously.