



2817 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Board of Commissioners

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 28, 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, September 28, 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

approved

3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

[Board Meeting Minutes from August 24, 2021]

[21-142](#)

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to approve the Board Minutes of August 24, 2021. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Reports

A. RTA Chairman's Report

Commissioner Daniels congratulated Alex Wiggins and his staff for doing a great job during Hurricane Ida and the Board was very grateful for the hard work and the way the staff served the community and by making sure that the riding public had equitable in the service that they deserved.

B. Operations & Administration Committee Chairman's Report

Fred Neal reported that he would like to thank staff for returning service quickly after the storm and for working with the elderly in the community and using the buses as cooling stations for the citizens of New Orleans.

C. Finance Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Raymond stated that staff did an excellent job during Hurricane Ida by executing the RTA emergency plan and he hoped that the Vacation Cash Out for the employees help those that needed help.

D. Jefferson Parish Report

No Report.

[CEO's Report-PowerPoint Presentation Post Hurricane
Ida]

[21-148](#)

E. RTA General Counsel's Report

Sundiata Haley stated that there was an Executive Session

F. RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report

Alex Wiggins reported that he would like to echo the Commissioners sentiments that staff did an excellent job with Hurricane Ida and many of the employees homes were damaged and they came and showed up for the City of New Orleans and staff was able to lead this organization through a tremendous trauma.

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA staff worked hand in hand with the National Guard stationed at the Convention Center to assist them with the evacuation of the most vulnerable in the City and a total of 269 evacuation trips were made.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff came through and the organization performed well and absolutely there are some adjustments and tweaks that need to be made in the future but the team performed very well.

Alex Wiggins reported that Commissioner Bryan and he came up with the idea of the cooling buses over a late- night email and a total of 42 cooling buses were deployed to neighborhoods throughout the City of New Orleans.

Alex Wiggins reported that the Paratransit Team worked with the Department of Health and went to 12 different locations throughout the city to rescue the elderly from buildings that were abandoned. A total of 908 people were rescued.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff would have briefings at 6:00 am to go over the days deployment and ensure that the RTA had the right number of personnel in the field, the right level of accountability and management in the field and right after the storm the maintenance team began clearing the RTA's right-of-way so that service can begin. The RTA began service five days after the storm.

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA was very fortunate not to lose any of its employees, many employees homes were destroyed and/or damaged.

Alex Wiggins reported that the Paratransit Team went door to door to clients on the Paratransit roster to see if anyone needed assistance.

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA2 Vessel sustained significant damage, the Thomas

Jefferson Vessel sustained minimal damage, the Maintenance barge was partially submerged, the Gretna Ferry Terminal had roof damage, there was damage to the overhead garage doors, minimal water damage to walls, roof vents, fencing damage, water was in the garage pits due to pump failure, radio tower damage and the bus fleet sustained minor damage.

Alex Wiggins reported that the number given to FEMA for damages was estimated at \$3 Million but this number could change.

Alex Wiggins reported that **What Worked** was the Pre-training on FEMA documentation, Payroll was successfully processed without interruption, generator maintained power at key facilities, cell phone service was maintained, Clever devices remained operational and worked continued seamlessly under the Unified Command with the City of New Orleans.

Alex Wiggins reported that the **Challenges** were widespread, long-term power outages but Canal Facility maintained generator power, food scarcity but 3 meals were provided to essential staff daily, fuel shortage was maintained supply through the EOC, Lodging limitations staff secured 100 rooms for essential employees and loss of some communication services from Cox (including rideline).

Alex Wiggins reported that the **Opportunities to Improve** was Emergency Staffing Accountability, Ferry Mooring, Incident Command System (ICS) staff training, redundancy in lodging options, redundancy in agency communications and hardening of facilities.

Commissioner Daniels stated that he appreciated the transparency on What Went Well, What Didn't Go Well and What the Agency could do better.

Commissioner Bryan thanked staff for doing a great job serving the communities, helping with the evacuations, and setting up the cooling stations.

Commissioner Sarwar also thanked staff for doing a wonderful job during Hurricane Ida.

Alex Wiggins reported that last week was the kickoff for the Bus Rapid Transit Project and staff will make a presentation at the October Operations Committee Meeting. The RTA was awarded a grant to study connecting the New Orleans East Corridor with the Downtown CBD.

Alex Wiggins reported that the Bus Rapid Transit was Transit Priority Lanes, Traffic Signal Prioritization, Quality Images and Unique Identify, Unique Vehicles, Fewer Stops Along a Route an Improved Boarding Facilities.

Alex Wiggins reported that the New Links Implementation Meetings were scheduled for Wednesday, September 29, at 5:30 pm and on Thursday, September 30, 12:00 pm.

G. DBE Report

Adonis Expose reported that contract awards for the month of August was \$13,514,475 of that \$6,532,383 was awarded to DBE Firms and of the DBE Contracts \$6,611 was awarded to DBE/SBE Prime Contractors and the Total DBE Participation was 49%.

Adonis Expose reported that regarding the Transit Ferry Services Project the DBE Goal was now at 91% of the 10% goal achieved. The new DBE projects are East New Orleans Maintenance Building, St. Charles Streetcar Line Downtown Loop Pavement Replacement and the OCS Pole Replacement.

Adonis Expose reported that the Upcoming DBE/SBE Projects: Waiting to be Awarded - Napoleon Facility Renovation & Upgrade - 30.8%, Recently Closed Solicitations - Pre-placed Construction Contractor for Emergency Purposes - 24% and Facility Maintenance & Construction Support Services - 100% SBE.

Adonis Expose reported that the DBE/SBE Outreach Event was rescheduled due to Hurricane Ida and the new date is October 21 at 5:30 pm.

Commissioner Daniels would like a year-end report from DBE that would give more information on the DBE/SBE Firms, from a race and ethnicity perspective and even from a geographical perspective.

[July Financials PowerPoint Presentation]

[21-149](#)

5. Financial Statements

[July 2021 Financials]

[21-145](#)

Gizelle Banks reported that Ridership - July's ridership of 663k outperformed the budget for the second consecutive month this year by 2.8% or 18k passengers. This result, however, represents a 3.2% decline when compared to June's ridership. Year-to-date comparisons to July actuals show improved but mixed results across the spectrum - when compared to the budget (-5.8%), 2020 actuals (+3.1%) and 2019 pre-COVID actuals (-55.3%).

Gizelle Banks reported that *Operating Cost per Unlinked Passenger Trip 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID)* - Like the month of June, there was a spike in the cost per passenger trip for the month of July, up by \$3.26 from the prior month.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Ferry - Operating Cost per Unlinked Passenger Trip 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) Ferry cost per passenger trip surged by \$2.79 in July, making it the largest increase for this metric so far this year.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Farebox Recovery Rates 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - Fare revenue continues to offset a significantly lower percentage of operating expenses. July's farebox recovery took another dip; this time by 2.4%. This decline ranks as the largest so far this year.

Gizelle Banks reported that - 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. After reaching a year-high mark in June, the farebox recovery rate for ferry operations slid by 5.2%, the year's largest decline in a single month.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Revenues (Budget, Actual & Prior Year) - Overall, Operating Revenues display favorable results for the month when compared to the budget and prior year. (Note that fare collections were suspended in April 2020.) After a slightly positive performance in June, Passenger Fares took a 6.7% downward turn in July when compared to projections. When compared to June's fare collections, July's actuals fell by 6.8%. CNO sales tax collections through June have been received, exceeding expectations by \$6.6m or 22.3%.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Revenues (Actual) - Of the \$8.3m in Operating Revenues, 80% or \$6.7m is derived from General Use Sales Taxes.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Expenses - Labor and Fringe Benefits, the largest expenditure at \$7.0M, comprised 72.8% 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 20.6% or \$2.5m positive variance.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Net Revenue (Before and After Government Assistance) - Net Revenue (Before Government Assistance) is -\$1.5m for the month of July. This negative position is largely attributable to the -\$1.2m in Net Operating Revenue for the month. After applying the month's \$2.4m in Government Operating Assistance, which included \$1.2m in COVID-related funding, Net Revenue increased to almost \$923k.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Capital Expenditures and Debt Service - As result of the bond refinancing in September 2020, Debt Service was dramatically reduced by \$391k from prior year actuals for the month and by \$3.5m year-to-date.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Reserve - The positive variance that resulted from Net Revenue (After Government Assistance) added \$149k to Restricted Operating/Capital Reserve after the offset of \$774k in Debt Service.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Maritime Operations - Passenger fare revenue for ferry operations decreased by \$30k over the prior month. This snaps four straight months of positive results. July 2021 operating expenses produced similar unfavorable results - over budget by \$228k and up by \$91k from prior

year actuals. Recall that fare collections were suspended in April 2020 system-wide.

Gizelle Banks reported that for the month of July the RTA was under budget in terms of revenue and the RTA just started round two of the government assistance.

Gizelle Banks reported that year to date the RTA has \$78.6 Million in Total Revenue.

Gizelle Banks reported that the RTA was under budget with expenses. The expenses for the month were budgeted at \$14 Million and came in about \$10.6 Million for a positive variance of 3.5.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA2 sustained significant amount of damage and the Thomas Jefferson sustained relatively minor damage and the RTA2 looks like it was struck by another vessel which caused it to come loose and for future storms the RTA will take the vessels out of the water.

Gizelle Banks reported that those damages from the ferries will be covered by insurance.

Gizelle Banks reported that there was an increase in fares revenue with the July Implementation of the Youth and Senior Passes.

Alex Wiggins reported that the remaining of the year staff will be very aggressive in marketing the Youth and Senior Passes Sale pass sales went up 40%.

In response to Commissioner Daniels, Gizelle Banks reported that the RTA can start planning for the FY2022 and with the uncertainty around COVID now the agency must deal with Hurricane Sales Tax Recovery.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, Gizelle Banks stated that the RTA was not holding its own regarding the ferry operations.

Commissioner Wegner would like the RTA to be in a position where the Ferry Operations can continue to expand.

Commissioner Daniels would like to see a scenario if the ferry could be self-sustaining.

6. Procurement Items

A. Authorizations:

k Disruption Manager Module of Clever Device System

[21-132](#)

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to adopt the Disruption Manager Module of Clever Device System. Resolution 21-068 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-068

Business Intelligence and Data Management Reporting System

[21-133](#)

In response to Commissioner Walton, Alex Wiggins reported that this software would give Executive Staff a dashboard of RTA's financials, budget and Capital Improvements information in real time. This would help with making correct business decisions and the RTA's current financial systems are very antiquated.

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to adopt the Business Intelligence and Data Management Reporting System. Resolution No. 21-069 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-069

FY 2021 Passenger Ferry Grant Program

[21-134](#)

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adopt the FY 2021 Passenger Ferry Grant Program. Resolution No. 21-070 was adopted unanimously.

approved

Enactment No: 21-070

Fare Collection Infrastructure Upgrade

[21-135](#)

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adopt Fare Collection Infrastructure Upgrade. Resolution No. 21-071 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-071

Canal Streetcar Module Purchase

[21-137](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adopt the Canal Streetcar Module Purchase. Resolution No. 21-072 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-072

On-Site COVID-19 Testing

[21-138](#)

Deferred.

Alex Wiggins reported that the bids had to be redone due to a technology issue and will bring it back to the Board to ratify.

Commissioner Walton stated that he has an issue with low bids that is very important and would like to stay on top of this bid.
tabled

Re-Allocate Funds to Support Operation Lifesaver Rail
Transit Safety Education Grant Program

[21-139](#)

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adopt the Reallocation Funds to Support Operation Lifesaver Rail Transit Safety Education Grant Program. Resolution 21-072 was adopted unanimously.
adopted

Enactment No: 21-073

Interim Downtown Transit Hub

[21-140](#)

Lona Hankins reported that the Downtown Transit Hub will be in a general location of the buses that travel to the Westbank and New Orleans East.

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adopt the Interim Downtown Transit Hub. Resolution No. 21-074 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-074

B. Amendments:

Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project: Amendment Request
to Woodward-APC's Contract

[21-136](#)

Lona Hankins reported that the price for steel is increasing.

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to adopt the Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project: Amendment Request to Woodward-APC's Contract. Resolution No. 21-075 was adopted unanimously.

adopted

Enactment No: 21-074

C. Ratifications

[Vacation Cash-Out Resolution (Hurricane Ida)]

[21-141](#)

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adopt the Vacation Cash-Out Resolution for Hurricane Ida. Resolution No. 21-067 was adopted unanimously.
adopted

Enactment No: 21-067

7. New Business (UNANIMOUS VOTE REQUIRED TO CONSIDER)

None.

8. Audience Questions and Comments

Comments made in the Chat Box:

Will the new fare structure for the Senior and Youth Passes remain after 2021?

Alex Wiggins reported that this new fare structure for the Senior and Youth Passes will stay the current price and the RTA was looking to come up with a college pass.

Will the agency take a better look at the Maintenance of the Buses?

Alex Wiggins reported that Maintenance was an issue and staff will continue to monitor those issues.

Will the buses that stop at Duncan Plaza can they also stop at Galvez and Claiborne?

Alex Wiggins asked if he could get the persons email so he can respond to his question.

When will the Canal Streetcar Line open?

Lona Hankins reported that this project was going to begin this week with an anticipated completion date of November.

What is the status of the Downtown Transit Center?

Lona Hankins reported that the Grant Application for the Bus and Bus Facility was due in November and the RTA will apply for the Grant.

Commissioner Daniels asked staff to bring to the Board a timeline with milestones for this project.

Valerie Jefferson stated that the employees' stepped-up to the plate during Hurricane Ida and that she was terminated for calling Alex Wiggins out of his name and she did not do that and for her grievance the RTA read a statement and the RTA was refusing to recognize her as the President of the ATU and she would like the RTA to recognize her as the President of ATU and reinstate her job.

On advice from General Counsel not to speak on this issue Commissioner Daniels stated that on behalf of this agency this agency has never gone back on any agreements with staff and has honored all agreements past and present.

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

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to approved going into Executive Session on the matter of

Amalgamated Transit Union

The motion was passed unanimously.
adopted

Amalgamated Transit Union

10. Adjournment

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to adjourn the Board Meeting of September 28, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.