



2817 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Operations & Administration Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 11, 2021

9:00 AM

RTA Board Room

1. Call To Order

2. Roll Call

3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

Staff requested deferred of Minutes until the April 8, 2021 Operations Meeting.

4. Committee Chairman's Report

No report was given.

5. RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA was hosting the Icon in Transportation next week, featuring women icons in the transit industry on March 17, 2021 and encouraging all members of the RTA as well as sister agencies to participate. The panelists are three fantastic leaders in transportation one was our very own Lona Hampton, Deputy CEO, of Infrastructure and Planning and the other two panelists are Carolyn Flowers, Managing Principal and Partner, InfraStrategies LLC., and Grace Crunican, Consultant, Crunican, LLC., Retired General Manager of Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART).

Alex Wiggins reported that the City was about to move to a modified phase three and that's indicative of a declining rates of infection, increased rates of vaccination and the economy beginning to recover with sales tax beginning to return to normal and the RTA was benefiting from three rounds of emergency federal funding and the RTA was actively planning to return to full transit service as early as the summer and the team was working to integrate the changes from New Links into our full operation.

Alex Wiggins reported that currently ridership is low and this would be a really good opportunity for the RTA to take a fresh look at ways to increase ridership and also increase revenue by temporarily adjusting our fares and allowing staff to explore options that actually do a couple of different things such as temporarily reduce the cost of a monthly transit pass

the current cost is \$55 a month and the monthly transit pass would cover all modes of transportation and introduce a low cost monthly pass for seniors, and introduce a low cost monthly pass for young people under the age of 18. All of these things would drive up ridership and ease the burden on riders that are returning to work and looking for employment. I would like staff to study the financial impact and then come back to the Board in April with the findings and staff may or may not have to conduct a Title VI Analysis.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff would like to begin a Comprehensive Fare Study to right size the transit fares across the entire network and make sure that we have an affordable fare that's not regressive for our local riders and at the same time capitalize on the uniqueness of the streetcars because ridership on the weekends on streetcars has skyrocketed.

Sharon Wegner stated that she was definitely for the discounted cost for seniors passes and not exactly sure what's the purposes for a low cost fare for young people and would like to have further discussion on this subject.

Alex Wiggins reported that if the RTA markets the sale of passes correctly this would actually grow ridership and revenue very aggressively.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, Alex Wiggins reported that staff does not have any specific price for the discounted passes but would like to meet with a team and look at the numbers and bring forth a recommendation to the board for approval.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, Alex Wiggins reported that staff was looking into a fair integration and trying to find a way to bring these fares together and try to make it as seamless as possible between the two agencies.

Commissioner Wegner stated that she agreed with having passes that cover all modes of transit.

Commissioner Bryan stated that she was excited about these proposed changes because it speaks to many things the RTA has been trying to highlight in the City and have been in discussions with the Office of Youth and Families, and one of the big things was transit. The youth should be able to attend after school programs and other weekend events on transit and the seniors were also a very important piece.

6. Chief Operations Officer's Report

6 a. Monthly Status Report

Thomas Stringer reported that for the month of January there were 520,000 riders and the routes with the highest ridership were 94 Broad and the St. Charles Streetcar carried 94,000 passengers and the Canal Streetcar carried 66,000 passengers.

Thomas Stringer stated that during the month of January, the On-Time Performance for bus was 67% and streetcar was 77% and certain events around the City impacts On-Time Performance.

Thomas Stringer reported that 22 new buses should be arriving during the months of April and May.

Thomas Stringer reported that the operators had the route picks at the end of February and some of the route adjustments should show-up during the month of February that was made based upon analysis for On-Time Performance. Staff had a great meeting with Clever Devices and discussed the expectations and challenges that the committee see with Clever and the committee was looking at different ways to improve the On-Time Performance.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, Thomas Stringer stated that staff was keeping track of different things that affects the On-Time Performance such as the riverfront streetcar being shut down for a week that affects On-Time Performance and On-Time Performance for Paratransit continues to do well at 92% during the month of January and the boardings per revenue hours for fixed route service remained constant with 10 on streetcars and 10 on buses.

Thomas Stringer reported that social distancing have been taking place on the Paratransit vehicles and no overcrowding The trips completed for Paratransit was 7,400 during the month of January and 8,900 during the month of December.

In response to Commissioner Bryan, Thomas Stringer stated that some route changes took place during the month of February and with the operators assistance other changes would take place as time progresses.

Commissioner Neal stated that he was really excited that we have 22 new buses coming into the bus fleet.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, Thomas Stringer stated that the RTA was still running a Saturday schedule on weekdays and there were more motorist on the roads.

6 b. New Links Network Redesign Plan - Final [21-015](#)
Recommendations (REVISED BOARD REPORT)

No Action was taken on this item.

Enactment No: 21-011

6 c. Fixed Route Service Standards Policy [21-024](#)

Vivek Shah reported that this report was the framework for evaluating the existing system. This report takes into consideration the parameters, guidelines and metrics for planning, design and designing service and creating service changes, guidance for how to place transit stops and amenities, and decide priority framework for adding reducing and changing services for the agency .

Vivek Shah reported that the full draft policy has been on the RTA website since February 26, 2021 and was available for public comment.

The RTA has been receiving public comments because this report was meant to be transparent, the RTA wants to make sure that the Community had a chance to weigh in on the plan. The comments were positive and the public was glad the policy was being considered for public comments and the public has until March 12, 2021 to comment.

Commissioner Neal stated that the reports shows the capacity, the technical expertise and the knowledge of our staff and highlights and integrates a lot of the work that was done that supports the planning of the Strategic Mobility Plan and the New Links Projects.

Laura Bryan stated that the report was a great report with transparency.

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Bryan seconded to approve the Fixed Route Service Standards Policy. The motion was approved unanimously.

Enactment No: 21-017

7. Ferry Operations Report

Jose Ruiz reported that during the month of January 95% of the trips were completed for both services and the weather conditions was not favorable for some trips .

In response to Laura Bryan, Jose Ruiz stated that the New Links Project recommended that it was beneficial to offer an integrated fare for the ferries.

8. Public Safety Report

Robert Hickman reported that an inebriated passenger went to sleep on the bus and a passenger boarded the bus and realized that this guy was sleeping and he went into the passengers pocket and took about \$300 from him and this incident was still being investigated. Also, young passengers were kicking out the doors and breaking the windows on the buses.

Robert Hickman reported that for the month of February the Transit Police handled 54 calls.

In response to Commissioner Bryan, Robert Hickman reported that there were a lot of disturbances on the buses between passengers and a lot of those disturbances was domestic in nature and by the time Transit Police arrived the passengers had already left the scene .

Sharon Wegner stated what concerns her is that the operators were stuck on the buses and these situations could escalate and the operators would become a part of the disturbances .

Robert Hickman: stated that the operators are told to get off the bus and stay in a safe area . This type of disturbance was taking place more on buses than streetcars .

In response to Commissioner Neal, Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA would like to work

with some social programs, and partner with the City of New Orleans to ensure that the RTA was doing an effective job with the homeless outreach.

Alex Wiggins reported that in the industry, per 100,000 boardings the RTA was relatively low compared to our peers when it comes to assaults on operators, we want to get that number to zero and so staff was taking the necessary steps to protect the operators including the installation of barriers.

9. Agency Safety Plan Revision

Mike Smith stated that the Board approved the Safety Agency Plan in July and given the transition that occurred in December and a mid cycle Safety Plan Revision needs to be done.

In response to Commissioner Neal, Mike Smith stated that this is an revision to the plan.

This will go before the March Board Meeting.

9a. Agency Safety Plan Revision Incorporating Recent Organizational Changes

[21-025](#)

Mike Smith reported that the Board approved the current Agency Safety Plan back on July 28, 2020 Board Meeting and due to the RTA takeover in December, 2020 the Safety Management Oversight determined that a mid-cycle revision to this document was necessary, and pending the Board's review this report would make it to the full board and staff took the opportunity to make modifications to the safety performance targets to keep in line with actual data and revamped employees safety reporting program that's in line with FTA.

In response to Commissioner Neal, Mike Smith reported that FTA requires that any revision to the plan has to be signed by the Chief Executive Officer and approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Enactment No: 21-013

10. Infrastructure & Planning Report

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the New 10-ton A/C was installed in the IT Computer Room and was tested and awaiting the warranty.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the NORTA Shelter Program Phase 1: Completed 24 Shelters; Phase 2: Installation Completed-11 On Hold 6 from the Hard Rock Location and Canal Ferry Project and substantial completion date the first quarter of 2021 and staff was developing a strategy for the 2021 Shelter Program.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the Canal Street Ferry Terminal Project was moving quickly to Demolishing the terminal building to begin the repair work on the temporary barge. The Board authorized a Change Order for approximately \$600,000 and staff was able to get the work done for approximately \$500,000.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the Security Arms at the Canal Street Facility - The installation of 4 Security Arms at Bienville Street Bus Entrance was completed and the construction for this project started in January, 2021 and the scheduled completion was scheduled for February 2021. The control box was going to open independently and the master switch was going to lock all gates.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the Riverfront Streetcar Line was moving along and that 35 of the 108 poles were painted and the contractor was removing and installing the rails as scheduled.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the Recoating of the Flooring at the SIS Building has started and this project will be completed on schedule.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the projects in the Procurement Phase are the Repair of the Broken Sewer Lines at the Randolph Facility and the ENO - Exterior Envelope Repair to the Maintenance Building. The Repair of the Broken Sewers Line at the Randolph Facility was going before the Finance Committee today and was approved by the Board and the Procurement Department will issue the Notice to Proceed for that project. The ENO Exterior Envelope Repair to the Maintenance Building was delayed and the paperwork was going through the final process for the project and the project will be advertised by the end of the month with a bid opening in May and construction is scheduled to start in June.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the Algiers Ferry Terminal Rehabilitation and Modernization Project - A study was conducted to make a decision on whether or not to repair the barge or replace the barge and the plan was to use the existing grant as it was originally intended to renovate the building. The building will become an administrative office for staff and that existing grant had an ADA Compliance portion for installing a cover walkway for the pedestrian and staff was proposing to amend the scope that wouldn't include removing the pedestrian bridge and stairs towers.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the Napoleon Facility Rehabilitation Project - this project got caught between two federal agencies FEMA and FTA and the two grants. The RTA was using both and both grants and that required a review from both agencies and the FTA was hoping to get an answer to the RTA by the end of this month. Advertise in April and bring the project before the Board for approval and start construction in June.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the St. Charles Streetcar Line -Downtown Loop Pavement Replacement Project was in phase two of the project. Staff was working with DPW with the design and the work will take about five to six months to actually complete. The project would consist of removing the asphalt and replacing it with concrete. This project was going to require close coordination between the RTA and the City of New Orleans.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the St. Charles Streetcar Line - Carrollton Double Crossover and the Engineering Firm was expected to provide the RTA with some drawings for this project because the RTA wanted to add some additional safety features.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the Recovery from the Hard Rock Hotel Collapse - Staff

managed to separate the Canal Streetcar Line from the Rampart Streetcar Line and the Engineering Phase has begun on the Canal Streetcar Line and staff anticipates to have a package in April. Included in the package was the Engineering Estimates of what the construction would cost and on the Rampart Streetcar Line a poll was a long lead item, was ordered it would take 20 weeks to come in.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the Installation of New Non-Advertising Bus Shelters - Staff managed to put \$500,000 of self-generated funds into this project and this would allow the RTA to purchase and install approximately sixteen 13 foot Non- Advertising Shelters in various locations and staff will identify the possible locations of the shelters that would not impact New Links and locations would meet the New Service Criteria.

10 a. March Capital Project Report

Lona Edwards Hankins reported on Capital Projects Grant Opportunities - There was some money left over from Katrina/Rita Hurricane Disaster related to CBDG dollars. The French Quarter Management District reached out to the RTA because they were awarded a grant and they planned on purchasing small buses and operate circulator buses for the hospitality industry. This was not something that was recommended by New Links and staff has to make sure this route was financially sustainable and the RTA would have to partner with the French Quarter District or the Downtown Development District.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that a lot of the school districts are starting to close out grants and instead of giving the money back to the State they would give the money to the RTA and for every \$5 Million that was given to the RTA buses would be purchased and the State liked this particular idea because the RTA can tie the money back to Katrina and Rita Hurricane and the RTA was not made whole from FEMA and the insurance companies during the Hurricanes and the State was going to look into this agreement and give the RTA more information to see if this could be done.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the State had approximately \$3 Million of Bus and Bus Facility Grant Money. The RTA would like to use this money to replace non revenue vehicles.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the other two larger grants that the RTA would apply for next year was the INFRA and Build Grant for the Downtown Transfer Center.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that the Lo-No Emissions Grant had \$180 Million and the grant was due on April 12, 2021. The Federal share from this Grant was 85% for buses and 90% for equipment and the Bus and Bus Facilities would be used for the Downtown Regional Transfer Center and Comfort Stations for the Operators.

Commissioner Neal thanked Lona Edwards Hankins for such a detailed report regarding the RTA's Capital Programs and at the April Rack Meeting he would like to have a Ferry update especially about the Algiers Project.

In response to Commissioner Bryan, Lona Edwards Hankins stated that a contract was not issued and the 42 Non-Revenue Shelters would not affect the New Links Stops.

Laura Bryan asked to be kept informed about the CBD Terminal.

10 b. Downtown Regional Transit Center

21-021

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that staff would like the Board to select a specific site for the Downtown Regional Transit Center. The 2 Tier Evaluation Criteria was based on a weighted process, the facility design, the riders experience, community experience, location, implementation and RTA Service Impacts.

Lona Edwards Hankins stated that there were four primary sites Basin Street, Rampart Street, Basin-Rampart Hybrid and Duncan Plaza and the two sites that scored the highest was Basin Street with 362 points and Duncan Plaza had 342 points. Community Engagement was done at the Duncan Plaza Site polling riders to understand the riders concerns and the study was presented at the RAC Meeting and staff put a survey on the websites for two weeks and the consensus was the Basin Street Site and New Links endorsed the Basin Street location and the only drawback for this location was the delivery trucks for the Saenger Theater during performance/productions.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that staff would complete the Final Alternative Analysis Report and complete the grant application process. The potential timeline was NEPA Process 6 months, Design 12 Months, CMAR Procurement 3 Months and Construction Duration 24 Months. The potential funding sources would be the Bus and Bus Facilities - Competitive Transit Grant, Infra Grant - Competitive and Build Grant - Competitive DOTD Transit, State, Municipalities and RTA Self-Generated Funds. The current estimate for the Downtown Transfer Center was \$20.5 Million.

Commissioner Neal stated that he supports the report 100%.

Commissioner Wegner stated the report was very well presented.

Commissioner Bryan stated that she was very excited to move forward with this project.

Enactment No: 21-012

11. New Business

None.

12. Audience Questions & Comments

Pat Bryant was no longer at the meeting.

Alex Posorske stated that Ride New Orleans had a concern with the implementation of the New Links Project and wanted to thank the RTA on the Bus Shelters and was very glad to hear about the Fare Study that RTA will conduct and there was a Pay As You Go Pass that the RTA should look into and the RTA needs to eliminate the transfers.

Valerie Jefferson was no longer at the meeting.

In response to Jim Goodwin, Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA can provide him a detail analysis within the coming months regarding the different disturbances that take place on the buses and the lines that were more problematic. The operators on the bus notifies dispatch and dispatch notifies the Transit Police or in some cases 911 directly. The RTA was also looking into different tools to make the operators feel safe such as a barrier between the passengers and the operators and also having distress alarms on all buses.

In response to Jim Goodwin, Jose Ruiz stated that the RTA does not have the schedule for the dry dock of the Levy and the expiration date of the current certificates was April 30, 2021.

Lona Edwards Hankins reported that she put the answer of Jim Goodwin's question in the chat.

in response to Liz Soyachak, Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA has a number of different strategies underway to address the issues with the comfort stations for the operators and once the RTA identify funding for construction of a series of comfort stations there is also a Task Force working with different businesses so operators can use their restrooms as comfort stations and the RTA agrees that confront stations are a priority. The RTA was working with the City of New Orleans along with Ochsner to make sure all operators will be able to receive vaccinations.

John Jefferson had a question regarding the RTA's policy handbook.

13. Adjournment

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to adjourn the Operations Administration Committee Meeting of March 11, 2021. Motion was carried unanimously.
adjourned