

FY 2022 Low or No Emission Grant Program and the Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Competitive Program

Applicant and Proposal Profile

Is this a resubmission due to an invalid/error message from FTA? Yes No

Is this application for: Low-No (FTA-2022-001-TPM-LWNO)
(If applying to both programs, please check both boxes) Buses and Bus Facilities (FTA-2022-002-TPM-BUSC)

Note: If applying to both programs, applicants should enter information for both programs on this form but **Must** submit the application package including the Supplemental Form and attachments, to **Each** respective Opportunity ID on Grants.Gov for each program. That is, complete 1 form, but submit it to both programs in Grants.gov.

Section I. Applicant Information

Organization Legal Name:

FTA Recipient ID Number:

Organization Chief Executive Officer:
(Name and Direct Phone Number)

Applicant Eligibility: Direct or Designated Recipient
 State
 Local Governmental Authority
 A Federally-Recognized Indian Tribe

Project Location: Small Urbanized Area (50,000-199,999 people)
 Large Urbanized Area (200,000+ people)
 Rural (less than 50,000 people)

Description of services provided and areas served:

The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is the public transportation provider for the City of New Orleans and the City of Kenner. As the largest public transportation provider in the New Orleans – Metairie, Louisiana Metropolitan Statistical Area., the RTA operates 34 bus routes, five streetcar routes, two ferry routes and ADA paratransit service. Bus and streetcar service includes six routes with peak-service frequencies of 15 minutes or better, as well as 12 routes that operate 24 hours/day. RTA's service area is relatively dense, covering more than 450,000 people and 200,000 jobs over a land area of about 185 square miles. This service area includes major employment centers and tourist destinations such as New Orleans' French Quarter and Central Business District; major educational institutions such as Delgado Community College, Xavier University, Tulane University, and the University of New Orleans; major healthcare systems such as University Medical Center, the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System, Tulane Medical Center; and numerous commercial districts and shopping centers.

Section II. Project Information

About the Project

Project Title:
 (Descriptive title of this project)

Project Executive Summary:

The RTA is requesting \$11.4 million in federal funding for critical bus fleet replacement to run its fixed route service. This grant proposal will provide funding to procure 23 low-floor diesel buses. These new buses will enable the RTA to retire 23 buses in its existing fleet that will meet their useful life in 2024, providing an essential stopgap in bus replacement so that the RTA can retain full level of service while the agency works towards a low and zero-emissions bus fleet

Project Statement of Work (one sentence summarizing request):

The agency intends to procure twenty-three (23) diesel busses to fill the immediate need to replace busses in the existing fixed route fleet that will meet their useful life in 2024, for a total project cost of \$14.3 million, a federal share of \$11.4 million and a local share of \$2.9 million.

- Propulsion Type: Battery electric
 CNG
 Diesel
 Diesel-electric hybrid
 Gasoline
 Hydrogen fuel cell
 Other

If Other, specify:

- Project Type: Bus Replacement

Number of buses to be replaced:

- Bus Rehabilitation

Number of buses to be rehabilitated:

- Bus Expansion

Number of buses for service expansion:

- Bus Facility Replacement

- Bus Facility Rehabilitation

- Bus Facility Expansion

- Bus Equipment

- Other

If Other, specify:

Climate Change

For Buses and Bus Facilities Projects, please describe the significant community benefits relating to the environment. See NOFO Section E.2 for additional guidance:

Both the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana have adopted Climate Action Plans that directly reference transit service as key to lowering emissions from transportation in the city and in the state as an alternative to private vehicle use. The RTA is working towards these climate action plans through the implementation of a network redesign to improve efficiency. The RTA requires a full and reliable fleet to meet the goals of increasing ridership through improved access.

Environmental Justice Populations

Is there an environmental justice population(s) located within the service area? Yes No

Describe the environmental justice population(s) and the anticipated benefits resulting from the project for those population(s) (see NOFO Section E.2):

EJ population that will immediately benefit is existing local bus riders which are 68% black, 40% from households earning <\$25,000 a year, and 51% without access to a vehicle. Benefits will extend to riders through the city and parish (aka county) which is a designated area of persistent poverty. EJ populations will benefit from improved access to jobs, education, major destinations and other basic services.

Racial Equity/Barriers to Opportunity

Does the project address racial equity or barriers to opportunity (see NOFO Section E.2)? Yes No

If yes, please describe:

RTA has adopted an aggressive Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goal of 30% overall participation in FTA assisted contracts for FY2020-2022 to counter decades of racial exclusion. That goal is further subdivided for 20% race conscious and 10% race neutral participations. RTA then provides ongoing and active outreach to DBE business to encourage participation and make them aware of upcoming projects. This project will seek to maximize DBE participation.

Creating Good-Paying Jobs

Applicants for facility projects, please describe how the project will support creating good paying jobs (see NOFO Section E.2):

N/A

Zero-Emission Fleet Transition Plan - Workforce Involvement

For zero-emission projects, please explain how workforce representatives were included in the development of the workforce plan of the Zero-Emission Transition Plan and which of the three elements described in the NOFO Section E.2 were used to maintain job quality and avoid displacement of the existing workforce:

N/A (see Appendix A for RTA's Zero Emission Fleet Transition Plan)

Justice40

Does the project support the Justice40 Initiative? Yes No

Describe how the project supports the Justice40 Initiative and the benefits provided (see NOFO Section E.2):

This project addresses a critical need for the RTA's bus fleet, which requires the addition of 23 busses to be able to retire busses that will soon be past their useful life and continue to deliver today's level of service. The benefit to the Justice40 population is the continuation of RTA service at levels provided today in the new configuration of the routes proposed in the system redesign, known as New Links. The New Links redesign is centered around equity and proposes to make routing choices that most benefit vulnerable and transit dependent populations. The proposed procurement from this application will enable a smoother continued delivery of the New Links plan by preventing any reduction in fleet capacity. This benefit is directly related to the expressed goals of the target populations that RTA has captured through surveys used during previous planning efforts (2018 Strategic Mobility Plan and 2021 New Links Plan).

Describe the methodology used to determine the project meets the Justice40 Initiative (see NOFO Section E.2):

The methodology is based primarily on work of the recent COA (part of New Links) which included a rider survey in 2019. That survey included basic socio-economic information, transit use (including visitor vs resident status), origin-destination and transfer rate information to supplement data from the Alternatives Analysis. The high visitor rates to New Orleans require the filtering out of visitors to ensure benefits capture accurately reflect the intended communities.

Since the proposed funding will affect bus riders, RTA chose the most conservative approach of looking at number for bus rider surveys only, although many riders transfer regularly to streetcar and are expected to do so even more with the completion of this project.

The selected demographic variables are riders with annual household income below \$25,000, riders with zero household vehicle ownership, and black riders. These variables represent the most vulnerable and historically disadvantaged communities in the region.

Justice40 Population Impacted

Justice40 Disadvantaged Community Served as Identified in the NOFO Section E.2	Actual or Estimated Annual Ridership Count
Households earning less than \$25,000 annual	4,933,334
Households with no access to a vehicle	6,398,432
Black or African American	8,037,573

What is the percentage of Disadvantaged Communities within the project area? %

Was this estimate generated using the Justice40 online mapping tool? Yes No

Project Budget

Description	QTY	Federal Amount Requested	Local Match Amount	Other Federal Funds	Other	Total Cost
Low-floor 40' diesel bus	23	496,000	124,000	0	0	14,260,000
Total:		11,408,000	2,852,000	0	0	14,260,000

Does the project budget include funding for workforce development activities or training at the National Transit Institute (NTI)? Yes No

For zero emission projects, is 5% of the project budget for workforce development training as outlined in the applicant's Zero-Emission Transition Plan? Yes No

If no, please explain why the full 5% is not needed:

N/A

Matching Funds Information

Matching Funds Amount:

Source of Matching Funds:

RTA receives more than \$80 million annually through proceeds from a local one-cent sales tax dedicated to public transit. Funds are spent on a combination on operating and capital needs each year. The RTA will use proceeds from the sales tax to fund the \$2.9 million local match. The RTA has demonstrated the ability to match and manage previous FTA grant funds and cover any cost overages.

Supporting Documentation of Local Match:

The RTA Board Resolution 22-027 committing funds for local match in the amount of \$2 million is included in Appendix B ("NORTA_BBF_Appendix-B-Funding") along with a detailed budget breakdown. Since this resolution passed the required fleet mix was adjusted to meet the transition plan (see Appendix A) and updated fleet needs. RTA staff will bring to the Board an amendment to ratify the additional funds needed to meet the replacement goals. These funds will be reflected in future budgets starting in 2022.

Project Scalability

Is project scope scalable? Yes No

If Yes, specify minimum Federal Funds necessary:

Provide explanation of scalability with specific references to the budget line items above:

This grant is for the number of buses needed to support the smoothing out of RTAs massive fleet replacement needs. A minimum of 10 new buses is needed to meet spare coverage of 2024 but that would also delay the retirement of 13 buses that will exceed 12 years of service life.

Project Timeline (Please be as specific as possible)

Timeline Item Description

Timeline Item Date

Grant funds available

12/05/2022

Submit vehicle purchase order

01/13/2023

Fleet delivery complete

08/30/2024

Congressional Districts (Project Location)

Congressional District

LA-002

LA-001

Partnership Provision

Note: the partnership provision is only applicable to low or no emission projects that are applying to the Low-No Program or both the Low-No and Bus Program. Projects applying only to the Bus program are not eligible to use the partnership provision. See NOFO Section C(1).

Is this application a partnership between an eligible applicant and one or more partners?

Yes No

If yes, please list the partner(s) and describe their qualifications:

Section III . Evaluation Criteria

*** Address each of the evaluation criteria as described in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.***

Demonstration of Need

The RTA's fleet is a crucial point in time. In 2005, the levee failure following Hurricane Katrina wiped out the entirety of the RTA's fleet of 372 buses. The agency had to rapidly purchase vehicles to restart service, resulting in 78% of the bus fleet (104) being purchased in a 3-year period from 2008 to 2010. Even with carefully planned bus replacement schedules the RTA still must replace large numbers of buses at a time as they reach their useful life while trying to smooth out future replacement schedule to avoid this issue in another twelve years.

Today, the RTA operates with 43% of the buses purchased in 2008 and 2010 following Hurricane Katrina. Before Katrina, the RTA had a rolling stock of 372 buses compared to the 134 buses in service today. By the end of 2021, 53% or 71 of the 134 buses in the fleet were purchased in with FEMA funds 2008 and 2010 and have surpassed their useful life in years or miles, further compounding the need to acquire replacement vehicles and critical maintenance equipment. The aging fleet makes it difficult for the RTA to provide reliable service, and the older buses are increasingly below standard for comfort for riders. As the RTA seeks to improve service for its riders and for the region, it requires a dependable fleet.

Demonstration of Benefits

Note: If applying to both programs, be sure to select "yes" and provide a response to both questions below.

Is this an application to the Low-No Program? Yes No

Please describe the benefits of the proposed project per the statutory requirements of the Low-No Program (see NOFO Section E(1)(b)(i)):

Is this an application to the Buses and Bus Facilities Program? Yes No

Please describe the benefits of the proposed project per the statutory requirements of the Buses and Bus Facilities Program (see NOFO Section E(1)(b)(ii)):

The FY22 Bus and Bus Facilities funding request will enable the RTA to retire 40 of the post-Katrina busses that will meet their useful life in 2024, allowing the agency to continue to deliver high-quality service to its residents while it forms a long-term and comprehensive transition strategy for its fleet, see Appendix A (NORTA_BFF_Appendix-A-TransitionPlan). Acquiring these new vehicles will support the RTA as it improves its service according to the goals of the Strategic Mobility Plan (SMP) and implements the network redesign. The RTA is seeking to serve the region's residents with world-class transit and become the preferred mobility provider. With the route redesign on hand, many more residents will have better access to jobs and major destinations with more frequent and direct service. RTA is also working to support transit-oriented development standards in the city, which would also result in more residents with good quality transit options. As the RTA moves towards these goals, the requested funding will ensure that the agency can deliver on these promises without being limited by an aging fleet.

Planning and Local/Regional Prioritization

Additional planning efforts conducted by the city that are supported by this project are the Resilient New Orleans plan, the Climate Action Plan for a Resilient New Orleans and the recently completed companion Resilience New Orleans Finance Plan as a guide to

fund implementation of critical infrastructure and programs to meet the City's resilience and climate action goals. Transit plays a critical role in these plans by improving service to support mode shift away from cars, reducing flood risk through stormwater management at facilities and increase energy independence and resilience. These actions are also supported by the City of New Orleans Master Plan ("Plan for a 21st Century")

Support from the MPO and the City of New Orleans Mayor and City Council for this project as evidence of its local and regional priority are provided in Appendix C ("NORTA_BBF_Appendix-B-Support").

Local Financial Commitment

RTA will fund the \$2.9 million local match with a one-cent sales tax dedicated to public transit. These revenues are sourced from general use, hotel/motel, and state motor vehicle sales taxes and provide consistent annual revenue for RTA. Sales tax revenues dedicated to public transit generate more than \$80 million annually to fund operating costs and capital needs. RTA has demonstrated the capacity to match and manage FTA grant funds and cover any cost overages. The RTA Board has authorized a resolution committing to the \$2 million local match. The additional funds needed to meet local match are within current budget and an additional funds will be approved in a supplemental amendment to the Board. Furthermore, in accordance with the objectives of the Bus and Bus Facilities grant program, the Board has afforded Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) full opportunity to compete for project contracts.

The RTA Board Resolution is included in Appendix B ("NORTA_BBF_Appendix-B-Funding").

Project Implementation Strategy

Can this project be obligated within 12 months? Yes No

Administrative and operational personnel will work closely to deliver this project on time. The project can be completed within 12-18 months. After notice of FTA award, RTA staff will move quickly to place this procurement on the agenda for our monthly Board meeting. Our team's experience procuring new buses with integrated ticket scanners and Clever Devices CAD/AVL systems means that the timeline for delivering detailed specifications will be short -- minimizing procurement delays. We expect all buses to be delivered within 12-18 months of contract award, depending on manufacturer capacity and load.

Technical, Legal, and Financial Capacity

The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Infrastructure and Finance Departments are committed to delivering this project and following all FTA grant requirements and protocols. With more than 30 years of experience in developing and implementing FTA and other federal grant program funding, the RTA is a trusted partner and steward of funds. The RTA has the proven capacity to work with federal, state, regional, and local agencies to use limited funding in a cost-effective manner with a focus on project delivery. Additionally, the RTA has undergone both annual audits and triennial reviews over the past ten years without issue or requiring further audit or review. RTA has retained legal representation on all matters regarding the execution of grant funds and has no pending litigation at this time.