



2817 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Board of Commissioners

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 24, 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, August 24, 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 July 27, 2021]

[21-131](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to approve the Board Minutes for July 27, 2021. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Reports

A. RTA Chairman's Report

Commissioner Daniels stated that the DBE Department held a DBE Workshop and he spoke to the participants and he stated that it was a pleasure to meet the different DBE Firms at the Workshop.

B. Operations & Administration Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Neal stated that at the August Operations and Committee Meeting staff started recognizing employees of the month. He stated that staff presented a Safety Report and a report on the Temporary Downtown Hub and both were great reports.

C. Finance Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Raymond stated that he was working with staff regarding the budget for next year and he was looking forward to the Move Presentation.

D. Executive Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Raymond stated that staff presented the New Employee Policies.

E. Jefferson Parish Report

No report.

F. RTA General Counsel's Report

Sundiata Haley stated that his report will be presented in Executive Session.

G. RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report

Alex Wiggins reported that a balloon release took place to celebrate and mourn the life of Operator Brian Jackson and our prayers are with his family.

Alex Wiggins reported that 92.5% of RTA employees are fully or partially vaccinated; 3.3% have requested a religious/medical accommodation and 4.2% were unvaccinated.

In response to Commissioner Daniels, Alex Wiggins reported that the service disruption due to the vaccine mandate was minimal. He stated that in the beginning of the mandate the RTA missed 38 trips and currently 4-5 missed trips are missed daily.

Alex Wiggins reported that on August 24-26 the Ferry Service was suspended and from August 27, 2021 - October 2021 Ferry Service was going to resume from Mardi Gras World terminal. A shuttle service will be available to take passengers from the Canal Street Terminal to Mardi Gras World and unfortunately no bikes, scooters or wheelchairs would be allowed due to the egress and all wheelchair riders should call Rideline to schedule a terminal-to-terminal ride.

Alex Wiggins reported that he was going to participate in the FTA's Nation Renewal Summit on August 27, 2021.

H. DBE Report

Adonis Expose reported that for the month of July \$13,514,475 of contracts were awarded, \$6,532,382 was awarded to DBE firms and of the DBE contracts \$6,611,285 was awarded to DBE/SBE Prime Contractors and the total DBE Participation was 49%.

Adonis Expose reported that regarding the Canal Street Ferry Terminal project currently consisted of marine work and once construction begins the DBE participation would pick-up.

Adonis Expose reported that the Transit Ferry Services has reached 72% of the 10% DBE Goal and two projects were added to the list the East New Orleans Maintenance Building and St. Charles Streetcar Line Downtown Loop Pavement Replacement.

Adonis Expose reported that the Vegetation Control on the Streetcar Lines was added

to the SBE Projects.

Adonis Expose reported that the upcoming DBE/SBE Projects to be awarded was the Napoleon Facility Renovation & Upgrade and OCS Pole Replacement. The current Solicitation for bid was to Replace the Construction Contractor for Emergency Purposes and the Facility Maintenance and Construction Support Services.

Adonis Expose reported that there were 108 people that participated in the DBE Workshop and on Thursday, August 26, 2021 at 5:30 the RTA was doing a live webinar with the New Orleans Regional Black Chamber.

5. Presentations/Updates

A. LA DOTD Update (Mr. Kevin Lawson)

Kevin Lawson reported that the Department of Transportation is the RTA's State Safety Oversight and has been working very closely with the RTA Safety Staff on the implementation of the RTA's Safety Plan and every month the RTA staff and Mr. Lawson discuss streetcar accidents.

Kevin Lawson reported that the Department of Transportation has successfully submitted the RTA's Annual Report to the FTA that stated that the RTA provides safe and reliable Fixed Guideway Transportation.

Kevin Lawson reported that the Department of Transportation completed the audit of the RTA Safety Program and will provide a draft copy of the report to the RTA before the report was finalized. The Commissioners wanted to receive a copy of the Draft Safety Report.

Kevin Lawson reported that Mike Smith was doing a terrific job.

B. Project MOVE Presentation

BJ Johnson reported that RTA's Flex was a pilot program driven by cutting edge technology that targets low income seniors and disabled resident in New Orleans East that will connect patrons to vital and essential services.

BJ Johnson reported that the RTA's Flex Program will enhance mobility and connectivity to essential destinations, increased On-Time Performance and service reliability, provide more equitable service to the community and was a technology based, demand response service.

BJ Johnson reported that the RTA's Customers have to be residents of New Orleans East, Technology Users, currently utilizing Lift Services and physically/economically disadvantaged.

BJ Johnson reported that the transit zones would be Little Woods East, Little Woods West and West of Read.

BJ Johnson reported that this program will provide a flexible alternative to current paratransit services and the RTA would like to provide transit options to communities where service has a gap and connect customers to RTA transit network such as mode to mode and first mile last mile solutions.

BJ Johnson reported that the RTA Customers can anticipate on time pickups, Safety and Security and Staying Connected to the service.

BJ Johnson reported that the RTA Flex would utilize technology to connect with customers, focus on data accuracy to increase performance and customize transportation needs.

BJ Johnson reported that with the pilot project the RTA will survey its customers to determine if the technology was user friendly, the service is sustainable and meeting the needs of the community.

BJ Johnson reported that the Flex Fleet will consist of three Ford transit vehicles and the goal is to increase the Flex Fleet to 12 with mobility aid lifts.

BJ Johnson reported that the RTA Flex App would make communication with customers faster, reliable, and easier to use and RouteMatch by Uber was the selected software for the pilot program The RouteMatch would Optimize Performance Delivery, Trip Management and Verification, Reduce Cash Management Costs, Achieve High-Impact Dispatching, Modernize Your Operations and Leverage Robust Reporting. The On-Time Performance for this pilot should be greater than or equal to 90%.

BJ Johnson reported that the Timeline for Implementation should be in November 2021.

Alex Wiggins reported that if this pilot is successful the RTA has the ability to create a mobility on demand program across the service area.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, BJ Johnson reported that the ramp was on the side of the bus and all the seats fold-up.

In response to Commissioner Wegner, BJ Johnson reported that initially there will be three vehicles and the fleet will increase to a total of 12 vehicles.

In response to Commissioner Wegner and Commissioner Raymond, BJ Johnson reported that the clients would have to go through the same eligibility process and be certified to use the paratransit service.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, BJ Johnson reported that it currently takes 3 weeks or less to be certified to ride paratransit.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, BJ Johnson reported that it can take up to a month but that's on Karen-Wilson-Sider's Department.

Alex Wiggins reported that he would look into the internal process on how long eligibility takes to process clients request.

Commissioner Daniels stated that maybe that there was something that could be done to shorten the eligibility process.

Commissioner Daniels stated that he wanted to thank the RTA Team for getting this program up and running and staff needs to keep an account of the cost to run this pilot program.

Commissioner Wegner stated that this was an extremely valuable program and that the RTA need to do outreach to make the public aware of this program.

Commissioner Raymond stated that he sits on the Governor's Advisory for Disability Affairs Board and he is the Transportation Chair and this pilot program could be implemented in every parish in Louisiana.

In response to Commissioner Walton, BJ Johnson reported that clients that do not have the necessary technology can call the Paratransit reservationist and book a trip.

In response to Commissioner Neal, BJ Johnson reported that the app that was going to be used was a standalone app.

In response to Commissioner Bryan, BJ Johnson reported that in the month of February 2022 the RTA would be three months into the pilot program and would come back to the board to present statistics and actual stats from the November 2021 start date.

In response to Commissioner Bryan, BJ Johnson reported that initially the clients could go anywhere in the New Orleans East and connect to any mode of RTA's Transportation.

Alex Wiggins reported that this grant was area specific and staff wanted to launch this pilot program in January but COVID pushed this project back.

Commissioner Neal stated that the RTA should consider building a Transit Hub in New Orleans East.

In response to Commissioner Walton, BJ Johnson reported that the duration of the pilot program is 6 months to a year.

Commissioner Raymond stated that an additional program may be needed to show how effective it is used when people are going to other places in the City besides New Orleans East.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, Alex Wiggins reported that this pilot program was limited to medical facilities and a defined geographical area and the data showed

that there was a need for medical transportation in New Orleans East.

Commissioner Daniels stated once you leave New Orleans East you will not maintain the necessary On-Time Performance.

6. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was carried unanimously.
adopted

RTA Work Policies

[21-117](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to adopt the RTA Work Policies. Resolution No. 21-064 was adopted unanimously.
Enactment No: 21-064

7. Financial Statements

Gizelle Banks reported that June's Ridership of 685k outperformed the budget for the first time this year by 6.5% or 42k passengers. This result, however, represents a 7.4% drop when compared to May's ridership. The decrease in riders from May to June is a consistent occurrence historically. Year-to-date comparisons to June actuals show improved but continued negative results across the spectrum - when compared to the budget (7.2%), 2020 actuals (3.4%) and 2019 pre-COVID actuals (56.6%).

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Cost Per Unlinked Passenger Trip 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - There was a spike in the cost per passenger trip for the month of June, up by \$2.49 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 has remained relatively consistent since March, with June bringing a sizable \$1.23 decrease in the cost per trip. This is encouraging since slight increases have been mounting since April.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Farebox Recovery Rates 2021 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - Fare revenue continues to offset a significantly lower percentage of operating expenses. The fluctuation in rates persists with June's farebox recovery decreasing this month by 2.2% from May's rate. 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. In June, the farebox recovery rate for ferry operations rose by 3.5%, making it this year's highest performing month.

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.) Although only slightly, Passenger Fares exceeded the budget for the first time this year by .67%. When compared to

May's fare collections, June's actuals fell by 3.5%. CNO sales tax collections through May have been received, exceeding expectations by \$5.1m or 20.8%.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Revenues (Actual) - Of the \$8.6m in Operating Revenues, 75% or \$6.5m is derived from General Use Sales Taxes.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Expenses - Labor and Fringe Benefits, the largest expenditure at \$4.7M, comprised 61% 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 2.6% or \$203k positive variance.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Net Revenue (Before and After Government Assistance) - Net Revenue (Before Government Assistance) is \$482k for the month of June. This positive position is largely attributable to the \$1.0m in Net Operating Revenue for the month. After applying the month's \$6.5m in Government Operating Assistance, which included \$5.2m in CRSRSAA Act funding, Net Revenue increased to almost \$7.0m.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Gizelle Banks reported that the drawdown was the round two of the CARES Act Funds.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Capital Expenditures and Debt Service - As result of the bond refinancing in September 2020, Debt Service was dramatically reduced by \$390k from prior year actuals for the month and by \$3.1m year-to-date.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Operating Reserve - The positive variance that resulted from Net Revenue (After Government Assistance) added \$6.2m to Restricted Operating/Capital Reserve after the offset of \$777k in Debt Service.

Gizelle Banks reported that - Maritime Operations - Passenger fare revenue for ferry operations increased by \$10k over the prior month. This represents the fourth straight month of positive results, a further indication of possible recovery. Recall that fare collections were suspended in April 2020 system-wide. June 2021 operating expenses, however, produced mixed results - over budget by \$228k and down by \$390k from the prior year.

Gizelle Banks reported that for the month of June total revenue \$10.5 Million actual \$15.1 Million and year to date actual was \$6.7 Million.

Gizelle Banks reported that the actual expenses for the month was \$8.9 Million and 10 Million was budgeted and expenses year to date was \$62.6 Million and expended \$60.8 Million and this was still under budget.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Gizelle Banks reported that this was the RTA's first drawdown on the CARES Act 2nd Round of funding.

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA has \$59M from the CARES Act to take the RTA into 2024.

8. Authorization: Grant Submission

FY21 Areas of Persistent Poverty Program

[21-130](#)

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Bryan seconded to adopt the FY21 Areas of Resident Poverty Program Grant. Resolution No. 21-065 was adopted unanimously.
adopted

Enactment No: 21-065

9. New Business (UNANIMOUS VOTE REQUIRED TO CONSIDER)

None.

10. Audience Questions

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.

In response to Autumn White, Alex Wiggins reported that staff needed to take a look at the Canal Blvd. Terminal location to see if those benches were being used and staff needed to make sure that all locations are being equally served.

The Stephan Namisnak "Colonel" stated that since 2016 at every RTA presentation on the Canal Street Terminal Project there was never a mention of interruption of ferry service and he was disappointed to learn this on yesterday. He was also very disappointed to know that the new location would not be able to service bikes and ADA passengers and he should be able to use the ferry without having to access the Paratransit Service. He feels that this delay in ferry service was going to setback the ferry because it was currently building-up ridership.

Valerie Jefferson thanked staff for the balloon release on yesterday for Operator Jackson and the operators was not aware of the Move Project.

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

approved

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

Commissioner Wegner moved Commissioner Tillery seconded to go into Executive Session.

Gallagher v. RTA, et al Civil District Court No. 2020-10065, Div. "B".

12. Adjournment

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to adjourn the Board Meeting of August 24, 2021. The motion was carried unanimously.

adjourned