



2817 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Operations & Administration Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 11, 2021

9:00 AM

Zoom

MINUTES APPROVED AS AMENDED

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 am (35 minutes late) due to technical difficulties.

2. Roll Call

A quorum was confirmed. Commissioners Daniels and Raymond were in attendance.

3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

[Operation & Administration Committee Meeting Minutes from
January 14, 2021]

[21-011](#)

approved

4. Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Neal apologized for the technical issue that delayed the meeting start time and allowed additional time for audience members to join the virtual meeting using a new link that was provided via website posting and via email.

5. RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report

Mr. Wiggins began his update by stating that the RTA is working with the administration to secure funding for the downtown transit hub. Right now, the preferred location is Basin and Canal Streets. As this project advances, the team will continue to work towards finalizing this location and the design. Mr. Wiggins stated that he anticipates making this a shovel ready project this year.

Mr. Wiggins also mentioned that during the first quarter the agency will launch a staff training initiative. We're going to really begin to invest in our team of over 830 employees at the RTA. Mr. Wiggins explained that there's a need for increased technical training in a variety of

different areas involving technology. Specifically, technologies used to manage our on-time performance and general supervision management training. Mr. Wiggins stated that he had a productive discussion with the team about what is needed in the first quarter. We hope to narrow that down and publish an RFP for external trainers to come in and help out the team, as well as to develop department specific training plans. This is really going to help us to advance our goals of on- time performance and that we increase the technical skill set of our staff. You're going to hear a little bit more about this later, but I just talked about it in a very high level.

Mr. Wiggins stated that the agency is working very closely with the city and our partners on the federal level on two different initiatives. First, we're also doing everything we can to mitigate the risk to our ridership and to our employees. At the federal level, is an educational effort about the mask mandate. We are aggressively pushing this message locally. The second initiative is with our partners at the city and local hospitals to provide vaccination options. In the coming weeks we should have a defined plan that's specific to the rollout of the vaccine.

6. Chief Operations Officer's Report

a. Monthly Status Report

(Due to technical difficulties, this presentation was taken out of order and heard after the Service Standard Model Report agenda item)

Mr. Stringer started his presentation with the Monthly Status Report. For the month of December, ridership was 535,000 giving us a 12 month average of 574,000 with 31 operating days in the month. In addition to the service, we had 345 additional extra service trippers in place to support the ridership and social distancing for COVID-19. Nine of those were used to support ridership on the St Charles Streetcar, Broad, Carrollton, and the St. Claude lines. Mr. Stringer also reported that on-time performance was 74% on the streetcar line and 67% on buses for the month of December. The department's monthly goal is set for 90%. For paratransit services, performance was measured at 91% exceeding the established 85% goal.

Mr. Stringer stated that boardings per revenue hour for bus was at 11 and for streetcar at 10 which is consistent from last month. For preventable accidents, on the streetcar less than 600,000 miles or at 1.1, which is a decrease over the month of November so we're trending well. For the customer service, the total paratransit calls received was 14,000 slightly less than half were answered by the automated system 43% and for ride line 21,000 calls received. Where's my ride line and reservations for paratransit we're answering calls over 80% within 20 seconds.

b. RTA Citywide Vaccination Support

Mr. Stringer reported that the RTA will support the City of New Orleans as it relates to providing transportation to vaccination sites. The team is working closely with the city to develop a schedule and provide additional service in New Orleans East, Algiers and the Lower Ninth Ward. Mr. Stringer explained that this is an evolving plan, and the Committee will be updated as we get additional information. After the update Commissioner Neal stated,

whatever is needed from us to get citizens vaccinated let us know because this is really an important issue.

7. Service Standard Model Report

(Due to technical difficulties, this presentation was taken out of order and heard before the Chief Operations Officer's Report)

Mr. Shah gave an overview of the fixed route operational service standards framework that the team is putting together. The policy will set out to define how the agency will plan to add, reduce and/or change service as well as determine placement of transit stops and other amenities. After the presentation, Commissioner Neal thanked Mr. Shah for the detailed presentation. He went on to say that every transit agency should have service standards, but from his experience those that do, rarely follow their own standards resulting in arbitrary decisions made relating to service. Having a tool something like this, and the transit propensity index will encourage equity.

Commissioner Daniels then commented the Board's number one agenda item is on-time performance which is a core responsibility and duty which is a very complex task to actually accomplish. Commissioner Daniels went on to say that he would like to get an understanding of what kind of technology investment will be necessary to ensure that we can monitor the performance from an appropriate and cost effective way. Mr. Wiggins stated that we actually put together an on time performance Task Force that is looking at all of those variables that could affect our performance.

8. Ferry Operations Presentation & Update

Mr. Ruiz stated as far as the TRIPS completed for the month of December, the agency achieved essentially 100% of reliability, completing all the scheduled trips, both in Chalmette and Canal Street services. Monthly ridership when compared November to December we saw a decrease for a total of 42,000 passengers during December.

After the operational update, Mr. Ruiz moved into a discussion of marine assets. This information was requested by Commission Neal at last month's Operation's meeting. Mr. Ruiz explained that the RTA operate two routes one between Algiers Point to Canal Street and the other between Algiers to Chalmette. The separation between the ridership, was a little over 154,000 for the average for Canal Street service and close to 250,000 for the other route.

As far as the vessels, the agency has two new ferries assigned to the Algiers point Canal Street service. They have a maximum capacity of passengers of 149 and they require a minimum of four people to operate the ferry. In the case of the Armature, which is also assigned to this service, the maximum capacity is 346 passengers with a total crew of five. This vessel because of its nature requires not only a captain and beckons but also a licensed engineer.

Regarding car ferries, Mr. Ruiz stated the agency has two of them. The primary service vessel is the Thomas Jefferson that carries a maximum number of vehicles of 50 and with that combination of vehicles we require a total number of six people to man, the vessel. With 685

passengers and because of delivery that's a slightly larger vessel, which is the one that we have right now on standby status it carries 660 vehicles and can carry a 862 passengers but it requires eight people to man that vessel.

This is the vessel that on prior Operations Committee meeting, we had mentioned that has its strong internal structure examination due on April 30, 2021. We have to send the vessel to dry dock until we complete the process and return the vessel back into certification service. Mr. Ruiz concluded his asset overview by stating, that the ferry operation also has a warehouse at the maintenance facility to perform maintenance on barges and, within that warehouse, is the operation's office area.

After the presentation Commissioner Neal pointed out that it is amazing that sometimes we don't quite realize the scope, or the expansion of the service we provide. And, he believes that the ferries operation is a wonderful success story after a lot of hardening. Commissioner Neal went on to say that most riders who are workers and perform shift work just don't know all that goes into providing service, all they know it's there in the earliest part of the day.

9. Public Safety Report

Mr. Hickman began his update by stating that for January 2021 the RTA only had one felony crime, and that was a theft. We had one incident with a mask refusal by the time the police arrived, the person had left the scene. The agency had three disturbance of the peace. We also had five criminal damage incidents in those events two of our streetcars were vandalized. We also had two incidents where the windows were pushed out by a disgruntled rider. Mr. Hickman also reported that we had about 50% more in 2021 calls for service and issued 10 citations in 2021. After the update, Commissioner Tillery inquired about the window incident. Mr. Hickman responded that by the time they arrived on the scene, the perpetrators left.

Mr. Hickman also stated that we are on notice for the Mardi Gras weekend celebration. He explained that this carnival season will not involve the usual crowds but we are prepared to handle any unexpected gatherings especially on St Charles Avenue. We are expecting some issues on the St. Charles streetcar line with the float houses on display along the avenue. We anticipate that some people may attempt to take over the neutral ground. Commission Neal thanked Mr. Hickman for mentioning Mardi Gras weekend and appreciated he was on top of things, and we do have a plan in place in the event celebrations interfere with service.

10. Infrastructure and Planning Report

a. February Capital Projects Report

[21-007](#)

Ms. Lona Edwards started her update by stating that we have approximately \$33 million in contracts. She began the capital report with the bus shelters by stating that the program is complete with the exception of five shelters that are on hold due to the Hard Rock collapse and the Canal Ferry project. The Infrastructure Dept is developing a strategy for the 2021 shelter program and anticipate bringing that to the Board at our March meeting.

With the Canal Street Ferry project, demolition of the hammerhead staircase is complete. Woodward is demolishing the pedestrian bridge and the design for the temporary birthing has been completed. Our next step, is to start demolition

of the actual terminal building. Work on the temporary barge and the opening of the temporary birthing has been postponed to May of 2021 it was supposed to be delivered in March.

Installation of the air conditioner system in the IT server room is ongoing and the team is working on programming for the security arms. For the Riverfront Streetcar Track and Installation project, we're installing the track work that's expected to take about three to four weeks, and then they will be demobilize and then come back and do the additional painting that is required.

We have three projects that are either in the actively procuring in contracts and about to issue the NTP. The SIS flooring project, the NTP should be issued any day and we will begin coordinating pre-construction meetings that will involve safety and operations and maintenance to coordinate how the work will be performed to make sure it's a smooth transition.

The broken sewer line, we have received the bids this contract will be coming before you in the March meeting. For the roof, the exterior envelope prepare at the East New Orleans maintenance facility, we are advertising this project and plans to open bids and March and then hopefully received good bids, and we can start construction in April. We are working on finalizing our recommendations that include how to fund the Algiers ferry project. We're close and hopefully at the March meeting, we will have that final recommendation and go full path forward for the Algiers Ferry Terminal. The Napoleon facility rehabilitation, it has been under review with the FEMA and go set on the historical team, and so I have a call into MC counterparts at FEMA and GOHSEP to figure out why it is taking so long for their review and the double crossover it's still in engineering phase Infinity is still doing the design.

After the update, Commissioner Fred Neal thanked Ms. Edwards for the detailed report. Commissioner Wegner stated that she agreed with Ms. Edwards regarding the Napoleon facility. She passed by the building in it's just so sad because it's such a beautiful building that we've had so many issues with trying to get it repaired.

11. Update on Granicus Project

A Powerpoint presentation was given informing Commissioners that Phase 1 of the Granicus project is active and that Phase 2 which will involve video streaming is expected to launch in March. Ms. Yolanda Rodriguez informed the Committee that last week, the Boards Office launched a new digital tool to assist with the processing of requests that require action either from the committee, one of our committees or the board. This primarily includes any new policies, new contracts, as well as amended contracts valuing over \$100,000 in value. For the public, the new system will allow easier access to board documents and live streams as well as recorded video footage of board meetings. After the presentation, Commissioner Neal stated this is great and thanked Ms. Rodriguez for all the work put into this, I know it's a work in progress and I'm excited.

12. RPC Update on New Links Plan

Mr. Sam Buckley with the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) updated Committee Members on information obtained from the public feedback phase and outlined final recommendations from the plan. Mr. Buckley explained that this plan was last presented to the operations committee back in October. Mr. Buckley also explained that stakeholder engagement included riders, bus operators, municipalities, advocacy groups business and education stakeholders. With the goal of increasing service frequency on a lot of core lines, improving regional connections between Orleans and Jefferson Parish. We wanted to see if riders, in particular, were receptive to the changes that were being proposed and see if we were getting consistent feedback from different groups. We also wanted to finalize the recommendations and catch any issues with the plan or potential sticking points before finalizing the recommendations.

According to Mr. Buckley, at the end of Phase 3, 600 positive responses were collected which is similar to the engagement results of other projects similar to New Links in other cities. One thing the team was particularly happy to see was that the majority of our responses were from people who are active transit riders and people who frequently used transit prior to COVID-19. About half the surveys, we got back were from people who rely on transit, and did not have access to a car. We asked how people felt about the proposed transit changes and whether it would make public transit better, we received positive responses across the board to the changes from both frequent transit riders and non transit riders.

Some of the negative response received were about specific changes that were being proposed that people did not like, as opposed to kind of structural problems with the plan. This was helpful to the Planning Team because we could look at specific adjustments to the plan as we finalized the recommendations.

With regards to implementation, Mr. Buckley explained that RTA's Operations Team is working on a plan that will be presented at the March Operations Committee meeting. At that point, that will conclude the project, and it will be handed off to the RTA and JeT for next steps. The RPC will fall back into supporting role for implementation by providing staff support and check-ins between regional stakeholders. Our agency has also set aside funding for some follow up work that can be done including a regional paratransit study. Commissioner Neal thanked the RPC for their work and stated that the detail is so amazing.

13. New Business

Under new business, Mr. Mike Smith, Chief Safety Officer briefly updated the Committee to the agency's COVID response. As you all know, the TSA issued their security directive to public transportation agencies on February 1, 2021, and in compliance with that federal directive, the wearing of masks became a requirement for employees and customers. Also going into effect May 1, 2020 mask wearing became a federal requirement and we aggressively pushed out this message to the public and our workforce.

The other item presented to the Committee was the new internal protocols being prepared by staff. Mr. Smith stated it was necessary to have a new formalized plan in place that collects all

the practices we have in place all in one package. Presently, all departments have mandatory reporting of workforce absences that are caused by COVID, whether that be due to a positive test result from other employees or within their household. As a precautionary measure, when an employee self quarantines in line with CDC guidelines. After the update, Commissioner Neal thanked Mr. Smith for sharing the information and look forward to future updates.

14. Audience Questions & Comments

The public comment portion of the meeting began with a question from Jim Goodwin that was typed in the Zoom chat box. Mr.

Jose Ruiz stated that the lead paint job to be performed when it goes to drop, and the answer is yes. That's already included in the traffic, the scope of work.

Mr. Alex Posorske commented that he was sorry that the RTA had to deal with the absolute dregs of our society by those who hacked the RTA Zoom Meeting, now, I just want to let you all know that we appreciate you as public servants and putting yourself out there he congratulated Sam Buckley, Jason Sappington and the entire RPC New Links team for putting together what looks like an amazing plan. Mr. Posorske said that the plan will serve as model for a lot of transportation plans going forward. I'm not a member of the APA, but I'm sure someone else here is who could probably nominate them for something. Mr. Posorske also expressed many thanks to the RTA staff for directly participating in this project as well, we are excited to see the next steps we do hope to see an approval soon.

The next speaker was Ms. Valerie Jefferson. She had a quick overview of what the Union has been communicating to the RTA. Ms. Jefferson stated that now that the transition is complete they have seen much progress, but have also witnessed some issues such as compensation. She mentioned that their Compensation Committee went out and completed an evaluation on different lines. Regarding on-time performance, Ms. Jefferson mentioned that the Planning Department, was unable to change the running time and she believes there is weekend overloading issue on the St. Charles Ave Streetcar and she also mentioned a safety issue with a rider. Even though the rider was banned from riding RTA and given a citation, most operators are afraid of this individual because he still tries to board the buses. Operators would like to see more protection.

15. Adjournment

adjourned