



2817 Canal Street  
New Orleans, LA 70119

# New Orleans Regional Transit Authority Board of Commissioners

## Meeting Minutes

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Tuesday, June 28, 2022

10:00 AM

Virtual

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The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority does hereby certify that it is unable to hold a commission meeting under regular quorum requirements due to Covid-19. The next Commission meeting will be held via telephone and/or video conference on Tuesday, June 28, 2022 at 10:00 am in accordance with the provisions of La R.S. 42:17 1(A)(2) (a)-(c). All efforts will be made to provide for observation and input by members of the public.

### 1. Call to Order

### 2. Roll Call

**Commissioners Present:** Commissioner Raymond, Commissioner Bryan, Commissioner Coulon, Commissioner DeFrancesch, Commissioner Ewell, Commissioner Neal and Commissioner Walton

**Commissioner Absent:** Commissioner Daniels

### 3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes (May 24, 2022)

[Board of Commissioner Meeting Minutes]

[22-096](#)

Commissioner Ewell motioned and Commissioner Coulon seconded to approve the Board Meeting Minutes of May 24, 2022. The motion was approved unanimously.

### 4. RTA Chairman's Report

No Report.

#### A. Introduction of Commissioner Maria DeFrancesch

Commissioner Raymond welcomed Maria DeFrancesch to the RTA Board of Commissioners. Commissioner DeFrancesch was a devoted educator for more than 30 years. She has 30 years of experience as a leader being the longest serving

member of the Kenner City Council Representing District 4.

Commissioner DeFrancesch has earned a bachelor's degree from Gannon University with Degrees in Chemistry, Math and French and a Master's from Fordham University in Biochemistry.

Commissioner DeFrancesch is an opened minded Civil Activist who promotes good government.

Commissioner Raymond expressed his appreciation for Commissioner DeFrancesch to serve.

Commissioner DeFrancesch stated that the RTA was a vital service for the people in Kenner.

#### B. Assignment of Committees

Commissioner DeFrancesch was assigned to the Operations Committee and Commissioner Ewell was assigned to the Executive Committee.

### 5. Reports

#### A. Operations & Administration Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Neal reported that the Riders Advisory Committee Meeting during the month of June addressed New Links.

Commissioner Neal reported that he and Commissioner Bryan had a great meeting with the Planning Team.

#### B. Finance Committee Chairman's Report

Commissioner Raymond reported that he was looking forward to the Audit Report and he will be working with staff on the 2023 Budget.

#### C. Jefferson Parish Report

Commissioner Ewell reported on the following:

RIDERSHIP - Increased 37% since January 2022. On track to 117,000 riders for the month of June.

BUS PULL OUTS - no missed AM/PM pull-outs

BUS ON-TIME PERFORMANCE - 85%

PARATRANSIT ON-TIME PERFORMANCE - 96%

BUS & PARATRANSIT ACCIDENTS - significant reduction in preventable accidents in the months of May-June

JP-TRANSIT and RTA BUS SCHEDULE CHANGE - SEPTEMBER 25th

#### D. RTA General Counsel's Report

Sundiata Haley stated that he would address his report in Executive Session.

#### E. RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report

Alex Wiggins reported that fewer than 10 employees are impacted by COVID.

Alex Wiggins reported that the agency has had some staffing issues with the operators calling out during holidays. The Extra Board operators and the deployment of supervisors in the field help to operate the buses and minimized the number of missed trips.

Alex Wiggins reported that he and some members of staff attended the APTA Rail Conference in San Diego, and for the second time in two years the RTA received the APTA Safety Award for Rail Safety. Also, he was a panelist at the closing session.

Alex Wiggins reported that he and some of RTA Staff visited a couple of transit properties that focus on Low and No Emission Vehicles. Last year the RTA was awarded a \$5 Million study for Low and No Emission Vehicles and staff has begun to do its research.

Alex Wiggins reported that Sunlight Transit was actually leading the industry with a hydrogen operation where they fuel their buses on site and sell additional hydrogen on the open market.

Alex Wiggins reported that staff was going to study Low and Emission Vehicles, Hydrogen and Electric Battery, put a plan together, present the plan to the Board.

Commissioner DeFrancesch stated that she was looking into hydrogen vehicles and was glad that the RTA was in the forefront looking into hydrogen vehicles.

Alex Wiggins reported that TSA Cybersecurity Training and I-Step Exercises were held at the RTA Facility.

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA was participating in the Summer Youth Employment Program and currently has four interns.

#### F. Chief of Staff Legislative Update

Katherine Felton reported on the Legislative Update:

\$4 Million UPT Upgrade Project included in the House Appropriations Committee year 2023 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies funding bill (Announced June 22).

RTA is supporting the UNO grant application for the Bus Exportable Power Systems grant program from FTA to study best practices on using electric buses as a power source after hurricanes/disasters.

Staff will present the BRT update to Transportation Committee on July 14, 2022.

Staff attended the Governor's Westbank Luncheon on May 13, 2022.

#### G. Operations Update

Gerard Guter reported that total Ridership for the month of April 2022 was 873K. On-Time Performance for bus was 77% and streetcar was 78%.

Gerard Guter reported that On-Time Performance for Paratransit during the month of April was 81% and the new Paratransit vehicles are now on the street.

Gerard Guter reported that Route 45-Lakeview had the highest On-Time Performance with 92% and the route with the lowest On-Time Performance was Route 88 Lower Nine-Chalmette 67%.

Gerard Guter reported that 22 of the 34 service routes were affected by Temporary Detours which was 64.7% of the routes and 6 of the 34 service routes were affected by Long Term Detours which was 17.6% of the routes.

Gerard Guter reported that for the month of April RTA delivered 96% of Bus Service and 98% of Streetcar Service.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Gerard Guter reported that the agency has received 19 out of the 21 new Paratransit Buses.

In response to Commissioner Raymond, Gerard Guter reported that the agency was going to receive a new Ford vehicle which was different from the other Paratransit Vehicles that the RTA currently use.

In response to Commissioner Bryan, Alex Wiggins reported that one of the strategies that will be used to measure customer satisfaction was the improve Mobile Apps this was going to be new to the riding public and staff will also introduce a baseline ridership survey also, and these things will be implemented after New Links.

In response to Commissioner Ewell, Gerard Guter reported that the Long Term Detours were due to all the major infrastructure projects happening throughout the City and your Short Term Detours were due to pop up parades, second lines and temporary road construction projects.

Commissioner Neal stated that the RTA need to create a link for Customer Experience.

#### H. RTA Chief Financial Officer's Report

Gizelle Banks reported that Ridership - As COVID wanes, ridership gradually recovers while service levels remain steady. However, the number of public transit trips taken by riders in April 2022, (889K) shows a slight increase of, (62K) from the previous month

of March 2022. Actual ridership when compared to the budget shows a positive variance of over 22% for the month of April.

Gizelle Banks reported that Farebox Recovery Rates - 2022 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - Fare revenue continues to offset a slightly lower percentage of operating expenses as ridership struggles to rebound. April's farebox recovery decreased slightly from 12.60% in the prior month to 10.93%; a total decline of 1.7%.

Gizelle Banks reported that FERRY- Farebox Recovery Rates - 2022 vs. 2019 (Pre-COVID) - The increase in farebox recovery to 13.91% in April from 8.42% in March is a result of increase in passenger revenue and a slight decrease \$408K in operating expenses from the prior month.

Gizelle Banks reported that Operating Revenues (Budget, Actual & Prior Year) - Overall, Operating Revenues display positive results for the month when compared to the prior year due to strong Sales Tax Revenues. Passenger Fares for April, fared favorably by \$153K or 21.3% when compared to the budget.

Gizelle Banks reported that Net Revenue (Before and After Government Assistance) - Net Revenue (Before Government Assistance) is \$3.7M for the month of April. After applying the month's \$1.9M in Government Operating Assistance, Net Revenue ended with a \$4.6M or 442% positive variance for the month of April (when compared to the budget \$971K).

Gizelle Banks reported that Operating Expenses - Operating Expenses for the month of April is 7.9M. Labor and Fringe Benefits, the largest expenditure at \$5.3M, comprised 66.4% of this month's actual expenses. In total, Operating Expenses for the month shows a negative variance of \$1M or 11.9% when compared to the budget.

Gizelle Banks reported that Operating Reserve - The strong positive variance that resulted from Net Revenue (After Government Assistance) added \$4M to Restricted Operating/Capital Reserve after the offset of \$567K in Debt Service.

In response to Commissioner Coulon, Gizelle Banks reported that the \$2M in revenue assistance are funds from the FTA for Preventative Maintenance and the RTA draws this money down every month.

In response to Commissioner Coulon, Gizelle Banks reported that the CARES Act/American Recovery Act money drawdown is periodically.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Gizelle Banks reported that when they make drawdowns from the CARES Act/American Recovery Act the agency has to show proof of the money that was spent.

Alex Wiggins reported that the RTA has a substantial amount of federal assistance to help the agency on the operating side. The year 2025 was going to be very critical for the RTA to be very creative to identify additional review and staff must be very concerned with the cost of fuel.

In response to Commissioner Coulon, Alex Wiggins reported that during the month of August/September staff will bring to the Board the actual projections.

Becky Hammond reported that her team was in the process of wrapping up the audit and finalizing a Draft of the Financial Statements. The process this year was met with a number of challenges, largely due to the transition of the RTA to an internal run organization.

Becky Hammond reported that the report will be filed with the Legislative Auditor on Thursday.

Becky Hammond reported that there were some findings this year with the Life Benefits Census Data it was discovered that there were a number of additional participants that had not been provided in the initial censuses data provided this year and in the prior years, which resulted in about \$500,000 of additional liability that was not previously accounted for and this had to do with some employees not being on the list for the life benefits and this was a significant deficiency and a one time finding and staff should make sure that someone is assigned to this task to make sure that this census data is updated and accurate and to question the Third Party Administrator on the data giving to the auditor.

Becky Hammond reported that the other item was a Management Letter Comment that there was some incomplete data with the reports that was provided on the Auto and General Liability Data for claims that occurred but not reported and was not given to an actuary. The reports were incomplete and missing structured settlement payments and reserves activity.

#### I. DBE Report

Adonis Expose' reported that the RTA awarded a total of \$8,417,785 in contracts and \$6,719,611 was awarded to DBE Prime Contractors. The DBE participation was 80%.

#### **Current DBE Projects:**

CMAR - Canal Street Ferry Terminal (Construction) - 7%  
Disaster Recovery Grants Management and Administration - 35%  
Riverfront Track Work & Overhead Catenary - 10%  
Transit Ferry Services - 11%  
East New Orleans Maintenance Building - 19%  
St. Charles Streetcar Line Downtown Loop Pavement Replacement - 67%  
OCS Pole Replacement - 0%  
Business Intelligence & Data Management Reporting System - 0%  
On Call Technical Support - 0%  
Napoleon Facility Renovation & Upgrade - 0%  
Transit Security Services - 0%

#### **Current SBE Projects:**

DBE Consulting Services - 46%

Construction Cost Audits - 49%  
Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study - 16%  
On Call A&E Services for Design of Interim Downtown Transit Hub - 18%  
Vegetation Control on Streetcar Lines - 0%  
Facility Maintenance & Construction Support Services - 0%  
Classification and Compensation Study - 0%  
Leadership & Change Management Training - 0%  
Temporary Janitorial Services 0%

**Upcoming - DBE/SBE Projects:**

Contractors for Rampart Streetcar Line: Emergency Repair Project - 13.83%  
Transit Stop On-Call & Support Services - 28.33%

Adonis Expose' reported that there were going to be a DBE/SBE Outreach Event on June 29, 2022, with the Port of NOLA Procurement Fair.

Adonis Expose' reported that on Thursday, June 30, 2022, the DBE/SBE will have a Public Meeting on the Proposed Overall DBE goal for Fiscal Years 2023-2025.

## 6. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Bryan moved and Commissioner Walton seconded to adopt the Consent Agenda. Resolution No. 22-043 was adopted unanimously.

RTA Work Policies New and Amended [22-085](#)

Yolanda Rodriguez stated that the Compensation Policy will be taken out of the RTA Work Policies New and Amended and will be brought back before the Board at another time.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Yolanda Rodriguez stated that there was some initial language that was added to the policy regarding the emergency pay for essential personnel that staff need to make modifications.

In response to Commissioner Bryan, Yolanda Rodriguez stated that the Compensation Policy will be brought before the board at another time.

In response to Commissioner Walton, Alex Wiggins reported that this policy will be brought back before the Finance Committee.

Commissioner Bryan moved and Commissioner Walton seconded to adopt the RTA Work Policies New and Amended without the Compensation Policy. Resolution No. 22-040 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 22-044

RTA Line of Credit (Rescind and Replace Resolution Number 19-092) [22-088](#)

Commissioner Bryan moved and Commissioner Walton seconded to adopt the

RTA Line of Credit (Rescind and Replace. Resolution No. 22-045 was adopted unanimously.

Enactment No: 22-045

## 7. Consideration of ATU Local 1560 Contract

RTA Labor Agreement with ATU Local 1560

**22-099**

Alex Wiggins reported that these negotiations was Interest Based Bargaining and with this type of negotiations both parties wins, and the Union will be compensated fairly.

Mark Major reported that the RTA and the ATU-1560 reached an agreement . This Union includes the bus operators, streetcar operators, paratransit operators, information operators, depot clerks, communication dispatches for both paratransit and fixed route, transit tellers and operation schedule makers which total to 542 budgeted positions.

Mark Major reported that a total of 10.25% was approved for over a four-year contract period covering July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2025.

Mark Major reported that the breakdown was as follows: 3% for July 1, 2021, 2.75 effective June 1, 2022, 2.55 effective July 1, 2023, and then the final 2% would be effective July 1, 2024. The operators also negotiated two additional Holidays Memorial Day, and the newly recognized Juneteenth Holiday and RTA agreed to increase the company contribution to their 457 Plan from 3% to 6%. The cap to the Health Plans was a 20% cap to the annual premium costs.

Mark Major thanked Kory Dupree and all his union members and all the members of the Administrative Team that helped with the contract negotiations.

In response to Commissioner Ewell, Mark Major reported that he would submit all the bullet points that he discussed to the Board.

In response to Commissioner Coulon, Mark Major reported that the RTA follows the actions from the Mayor of New Orleans and the Governor of Louisiana for declared emergencies.

Commissioner Raymond stated this Board was a people-oriented board and was centered around the riders experience and takes care of its employees and this contract was an embodiment of all those decisions and would like to thanked the Union and staff.

Commissioner Neal thanked everyone for working on this contract.

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Ewell seconded to adopt the RTA Labor Agreement with ATU Local 1560. Resolution No. 22-046 was adopted unanimously.



Enactment No: 22-046

**8. New Business (UNANIMOUS VOTE REQUIRED TO CONSIDER)**

None.

**9. Audience Questions and Comments**

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](mailto:rtaboard@rtaforward.org) to have your comments read aloud at the meeting.

Yolanda Rodriguez read into the record a letter of complaint from Valerie Jefferson. The letter made reference to her Pension Payment and why RTA has not contributed to the TMSEL Pension Plan. The letter also suggested that Sundiata Haley should not be on the Pension Board because he is the attorney for RTA Board and that is a conflict.

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

Commissioner Coulon moved and Commissioner Ewell seconded to go into Executive Session on:

Jasmine Berry v. RTA, et al  
Civil District Court No. 2016-10803, Div. "E"

Commissioner Neal moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to come out of Executive Session. The motion was approved unanimously.

Jasmine Berry v. RTA, et al  
Civil District Court No. 2016-10803, Div. "E"

**11. Adjournment**

Commissioner Walton moved and Commissioner Neal seconded to adjourn the Board Meeting of June 28, 2022. The meeting was adjourned unanimously.