



2023  
*Annual Report*





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# Message from the Chairman



As I reflected on our accomplishments in 2023, I spent a couple hours at our downtown transit hub outside the Main Library to remind myself why our work at RTA matters. I watched the riders to see their experiences up close. I noted how many riders were using wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, crutches, and canes. They shared their stories, their hopes, their challenges, and their appreciation for all we do to serve them.

This reminds me of our commitment to be mindful of our most vulnerable riders as we build a world-class transit system for New Orleans. Through our endless challenges, we move forward, and remain proud of our achievements.

We had a productive year at the RTA. We appointed Lona Edwards Hankins as our CEO and welcomed Timolynn Sams as a new board member. We secured and parlayed millions of dollars in federal funding for capital projects, highlighted by the much-anticipated completion of the \$43.5 million Canal Street Ferry Terminal. We laid the foundation for a strong future by securing \$71.4 million in federal grants to help provide energy-efficient buses.

The Centennial Celebration of the Perley A. Thomas Streetcars was an amazing event that showcased our beautifully preserved history, while challenging us to ensure a future that considers the needs of all riders—especially those with mobility challenges first. As we look forward in 2024, the future looks bright: a new suite of buses to help modernize our aging fleet; the initial phase of our new Downtown Transit Center; renovation of our Algiers Ferry Terminal; and the implementation of the Bus Rapid Transit project, just to name a few highlights.

Finally, the upcoming Universal Accessibility Study will take a comprehensive review of the RTA's public-facing services to help the RTA gain a sharper understanding of best practices in providing accessible transit services, areas where the RTA needs to improve its accessibility features, and ways to apply these best practices to existing RTA services.

Our Board of Commissioners is more excited than ever to partner with RTA leadership and our dedicated employees to serve our riders and move them, and the city, forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Raymond, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mark Raymond, Jr.  
Chairman of the Board of Commissioners

# Board of Commissioners



**Mark Raymond, Jr.**  
*Chairman*  
*Orleans Parish*



**Arthur Walton**  
*Vice-Chairman*  
*Orleans Parish*



**Sunni LeBeouf**  
*Commissioner*  
*Orleans Parish*



**Fred Neal, Jr.**  
*Commissioner*  
*Orleans Parish*



**Timolynn Sams**  
*Commissioner*  
*Orleans Parish*



**Maria DeFrancesch**  
*Commissioner*  
*Jefferson Parish*



**Joseph J. Ewell, Jr.**  
*Commissioner*  
*Jefferson Parish*



**Timothy P. Coulon**  
*Commissioner*  
*Jefferson Parish*

The Regional Transit Authority is governed by the RTA Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners is composed of eight publicly appointed representatives and sets agency policy as well as overseeing funding and the expansion of public transportation in the region. Five representatives are appointed by the Mayor of New Orleans, and three representatives are appointed by the President of Jefferson Parish.

# Message from the CEO



I want to take a moment as we end 2023, my first year as RTA's Chief Executive Officer, to express my deepest gratitude for your continued support and use of our transit services. The year ahead brings an opportunity for reflection of our achievements, driven largely by our dedicated team of public servants. It's also an opportunity to look forward with excitement to the possibilities ahead in 2024 and beyond as we fulfill our mission to provide world-class transit service.

So much of our work was centered around securing critical funding that is leading to major improvements in our infrastructure in the form of new capital projects and new vehicles. We saw this with the reopening of the \$43.5 million Canal Street Ferry Terminal. The project was made possible with several public funding sources, including \$24.3 million from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), \$5.9 million

from the City of New Orleans, \$2 million from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, and \$6.5 million from the RTA. We also secured \$24.8 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation for the Downtown Transit Center. The next phase, community outreach and design, will begin in 2024.

Through our collaborative efforts with local and state partners, we were able to begin closing the funding gap to maintain service levels on the Canal Street-Algiers Point Ferry. \$10 million came from working with the New Orleans delegation led by Senators Gary Carter and Jimmy Harris during the 2023 legislative session, and the final \$3 million was committed by City of New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell. I'm also proud to note that thanks to our partnership with U.S. Rep. Troy Carter, RTA was awarded \$5.2 million in federal grants for the Algiers Ferry Terminal and maintenance facilities.

We secured \$71.4 million in federal grants to provide energy-efficient buses. The grants, administered by the FTA via the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, passed through Congress, shepherded by U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy and U.S. Rep. Troy Carter. Finally, RTA's Board of Commissioners approved the purchase of 29 new buses that will begin to arrive in fall 2024.

Amid all this hard work, we took the time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Perley A. Thomas streetcar. This momentous occasion of the historic streetcar and its continued service on the St. Charles line served as an opportunity to engage with the community at our Carrollton Streetcar Barn. It also shined a light on our remarkable shop workers, many of whom have been committed to preserving our streetcar service for decades.

The successes this year will pave the way for a thriving 2024. Our Winter 2024 Service Change, will prioritize our bus fleet maintenance, allowing our agency to improve service reliability as we prepare for the arrival of our new buses next fall. We're also looking forward to the construction of the much-needed Downtown Transit Center, the reopening of our Rampart-St. Claude streetcar line, the installation of nearly 20 new bus shelters across the city, and continued progress to implement a vital Bus Rapid Transit system that will provide rail-like bus service at much lower costs.

You, our riders, are just as integral to this work as the work itself. So thank you!

In closing, I want to encourage you to stay connected with RTA – whether by attending our meetings, following us on social media, visiting our website at [norta.com](http://norta.com), or planning your trips using our Le Pass app. Your voice will continue to inform our path toward providing the world-class transit service that this community deserves.

Respectfully



Lona Edward Hankins  
CEO, Regional Transit Authority





**OPERATOR  
OF THE YEAR**



**Dwane Tillis**

Operator, 7 years of service

**ADMINISTRATIVE  
EMPLOYEE  
OF THE YEAR**



**Floyd Hurts**

Service Manager, 14 years of service

**MECHANIC  
OF THE YEAR**



**Harold Parker**

Body Repairmen, 2 years of service

# Five Key Priorities

1

World Class  
Rider Experience

2

Innovation

3

Regional  
Connections

4

Equity

5

Workforce  
Development



4 out of 9 in  
Executive Leadership  
are Women



11 Rider Advisory  
Committee Meetings

\$4.4

Million Awarded  
to DBE Firms

54%

DBE Goal: Federal and  
Non-Federal Contracts

# RTA awarded \$5.2M for Algiers Ferry Terminal and maintenance facilities

In early 2023, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA) was awarded \$5,224,965 through the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Notice of Funding for the FY 2022 Competitive Funding Opportunity: Passenger Ferry Grant Program. The agency plans to use the funds for the revitalization and enhancement of both the Algiers Point Ferry Terminal and the Lower Algiers Maintenance Facility.

The allocated funds will assist RTA in expanding the operational square footage of the Algiers Point terminal, enabling the agency to enhance service for riders through the provision of administrative space for ferry operations staff and added rider amenities such as restrooms and waiting areas. This expansion will involve reducing the ceiling volume to incorporate a second floor. Meanwhile, the maintenance facility in Lower Algiers, supporting both ferry routes, is over 40 years old and faces the need for replacement of several critical systems that have reached the end of their useful life.

The Passenger Ferry Grant Program makes funding available competitively to assist in the financing of capital projects to support passenger ferry systems in urbanized areas, such as ferry vessels, terminals, and related infrastructure. For FY 2022, \$30 million for grants under the program was authorized under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law; an additional \$6.5 million was appropriated under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, of which \$3.25 million is for low or zero-emission ferries projects.

*“I am pleased to announce this funding, which will expand, improve, and modernize passenger ferry service to provide Louisianans access to jobs and opportunities. These programs are vital to improve and expand ferry service in our communities right here at home. Better connecting the East and West Bank will help open up the region’s job possibilities and grow our local economy.”*

- Troy Carter Sr., U.S. Rep. (D-LA)



# Lona Edwards Hankins named RTA CEO

In March 2023, the RTA Board of Commissioners approved the selection of Lona Edwards Hankins as its permanent Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Hankins assumed the role of interim CEO in December 2022, upon the retirement of her predecessor, Alex Z. Wiggins.

“The RTA Board of Commissioners is pleased to select Lona Edwards Hankins as the next permanent CEO,” said Mark Raymond, Jr., Board Chair, RTA. “Since joining the RTA in 2019, Lona has demonstrated time and time again her commitment to our community, her integrity and her ability to bring in over \$64 million in competitive federal funding to build a modern, rider-centered transit system.”



“I am humbled to be selected by the Board of Commissioners to steward the RTA in this next and important phase of the agency’s history,” said Lona Edwards Hankins. “Public transit is an important lifeline for our region’s families, workforce, and youth. It is the pathway to economic mobility for families and the foundation of job growth and economic development in our region. I am eager to partner with the community to build the efficient, reliable, and equitable transit system our riders so richly deserve.”

CEO Hankins became a part of the RTA in 2019, taking on the role of the agency’s Chief of Infrastructure and Long-Term Planning. In this capacity, Lona was responsible for overseeing the development and execution of capital assets, as well as the implementation of infrastructure improvement projects spanning all modes of RTA’s transit operations and administration. With a career spanning over 30 years in the industrial and public sector, Lona is renowned for leading the reconstruction of New Orleans schools in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Having previously served as the Director of Major Capital Projects for the Recovery School District (RSD), Lona successfully completed over \$2 billion in projects across 40 school campuses for the children of New Orleans.

# RTA orders new buses to address aging fleet

The RTA, working proactively to address a critical bus fleet issue, in 2023 ordered 29 new buses worth \$24.4 million set for arrival toward the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025.

The buses, a mix of diesel and hybrid, will help replace the RTA's bus fleet – 40% of which has reached the end of its FTA-determined useful life. Another 12% will be reaching the end of its useful life next year for a total of 52%.

RTA staff utilized a significant portion of one-time pandemic recovery funds from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act to fund 21 buses. Staff also worked with the State of Louisiana Office of Community Development to identify leftover disaster-CDBG funds which will pay for another 8 buses on the heels of the previous order.

The RTA secured approval from the Board of Commissioners to purchase the first 21 buses in August 2023. Of those buses, purchased for \$18.6 million, 15 are hybrid vehicles while the other six are diesel. They are expected to be put into service by

September 2024. The budget for this set of buses includes funding for some training for maintenance work of hybrid vehicles., which reinforces RTA's commitment to workforce development. The remaining eight buses, purchased for \$5.8 million, are diesel buses.

Also in 2023, the RTA received a \$71.4 million grant from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help provide energy-efficient buses. The grants, administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration, were secured through the legislation that Sen. Bill Cassidy and Rep. Troy Carter helped get passed through Congress.

The \$71.4 million award announced today will fund:

- 20 battery electric buses
- 2 en route chargers
- 6 depot chargers
- 1 microgrid (\$30 million)
- \$3.5 million to develop a training program to support the maintenance of electric buses and charging facilities.



# 'Pause, Breathe' initiative for Mental Health Awareness Month



To celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month, in May the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA) announced its first-ever onboard mindfulness message to remind transit operators and riders to “Pause, Breathe.” This message – written and recorded by New Orleans poet and healer Sunni Patterson – is part of the RTA’s public art partnership with Ashé Cultural Arts Center.

“Recognizing stress-related illness in society is on the rise as well as the toll that public service can take on employees. We hope this simple, yet powerful mindfulness message will provide the space and opportunity for our operators and riders to enjoy a moment of mindfulness,” said Lona Edwards Hankins, CEO, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. “Thank you to Sunni Patterson, the ‘Poet of the People’ and the team at Ashé Cultural Arts Center for their partnership on this important project.”

The onboard message by Sunni Patterson reads: “Let’s take a moment to pause, and breathe. Because we are here, present and on purpose, because we are not afterthoughts of things looking to be put off for another time. Because our health, wellness,

and overall wellbeing are worthy of full expression, functioning at optimal levels. It is here we proclaim, ‘I deserve it’. Where the collective ‘I’ comes together, unified, dignified, and aware. Empowered by one another’s existence, knowing we are all deserving of every good thing this life has to offer”.

The audio message on RTA buses and streetcars and complimentary visuals placed in bus shelters and in the vehicles are reminders to “Pause, breathe,” which evidence shows can reduce stress, anxiety, blood pressure and other stress related illnesses.

“Ashé Cultural Arts Center is excited to be a partner of the ‘Pause, Breathe’ Campaign and emphasizes its importance of Mental Health Awareness Month. In prioritizing the wellness of our communities through our creative programming such as I Deserve It!, a team of community health workers and artists addressing the 25 year life-expectancy disparity experienced by New Orleans’ Black neighborhoods, we encourage our community to join us in the intentionality of pausing, breathing, and reflecting for our overall well-being,” says Frederick “Wood” Delahoussaye, Chief Creative Officer, Ashé Cultural Arts Center.



*Our health, wellness,  
and well-being are  
all worthy of full  
expression, functioning  
at optimal levels. It  
is here we proclaim,  
‘I deserve it.’*

- Sunni Patterson, Life Coach / Poet / Healer



# RTA extends service in St. Bernard Parish

To start the summer, the RTA, in coordination with St. Bernard Urban Rapid Transit (SBURT), extended its 86-St. Maurice-Chalmette service in St. Bernard Parish on Judge Perez Drive to Nunez Community College.

The 86-St. Maurice-Chalmette, which serves the Lower Ninth Ward along St. Claude Avenue and St. Bernard Hospital along West Judge Perez Drive, previously terminated at Dr. Meraux Boulevard. The route now continues along West Judge Perez Drive, to Paris Road, and to the Nunez Community College campus, the new route terminus.

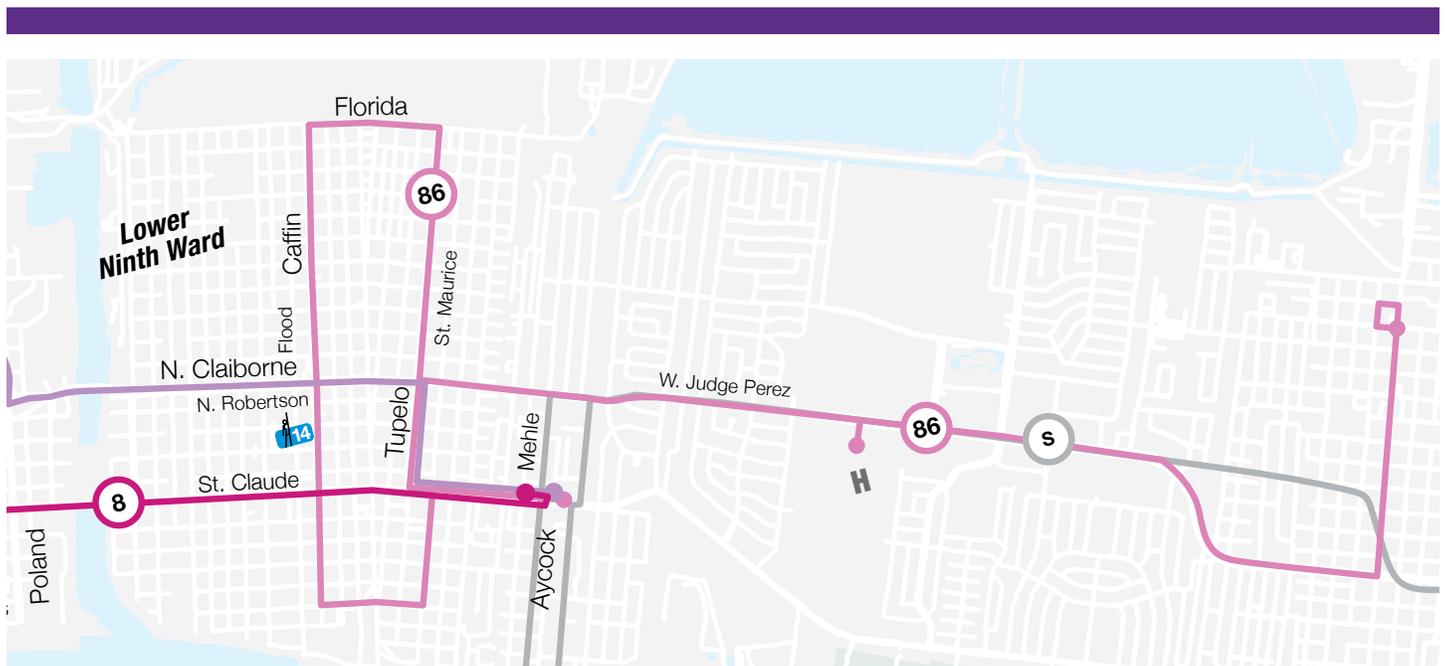
RTA will service all existing SBURT stops along the extended route, which operates from Monday through Sunday from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. SBURT will operate its bus service Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on their existing route which overlaps with portions of the extended RTA service.

“We are grateful to St. Bernard Parish President Guy Mcinnis for his commitment to connecting St. Bernard and Orleans Parish residents to the places

they work, live, and learn,” said Lona Edwards Hankins, CEO, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. “As transit agencies across the nation try to leverage limited financial resources, it is important for local government agencies to work together to connect housing, educational, and employment centers across our region.”

“A major goal of the community college is to remove barriers to higher education. RTA’s addition of a stop on the Nunez campus addresses the very real barrier of transportation and access. The many services and programs available at Nunez will be accessible to more of our local citizens,” said Dr. Tina Tinney, Chancellor, Nunez Community College. “Proximity is one piece of the puzzle, but proximity without transportation is a missed opportunity. We’re excited to partner with the RTA and St. Bernard Parish to expand our reach through public transportation.”

The extension was part of RTA’s Summer 2023 Service Change, which took effect Sunday, June 4, 2023, and reflected minor adjustments to the schedules on most lines.



# RTA receives \$24.8M for Downtown Transit Center



In June, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) granted the RTA a total of \$24,826,905 for the final design and construction of the Downtown Transit Center and connecting transit corridor. This funding, made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, aims to enhance the transportation infrastructure.

The upcoming bus terminal is designed to foster safer connections between transit modes and enhance rider conveniences, including shelter from extreme weather and restroom facilities. Additionally, the Downtown Transit Center is poised to become the central downtown hub for the proposed Bus Rapid Transit project, promising substantial reductions in transit times for New Orleans East and West Bank riders. Notably, the new transit center will be situated at the same location as the former Southern Railway Terminal.

“Federal partnerships are vital to the RTA’s commitment to creating world-class ridership that will connect our passengers from throughout Greater New Orleans,” said Lona Edwards Hankins, CEO, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. “This grant is a crucial step toward the creation of our Downtown Transit Center, which will serve as the heart of our service. I want to thank the Biden Administration and Congressman Troy Carter for their leadership and for recognizing the value of transit – not just as a service to riders but also as a driver of economic development to move our region forward.”

“Investing in Louisiana’s transportation infrastructure makes our state a more attractive home for companies

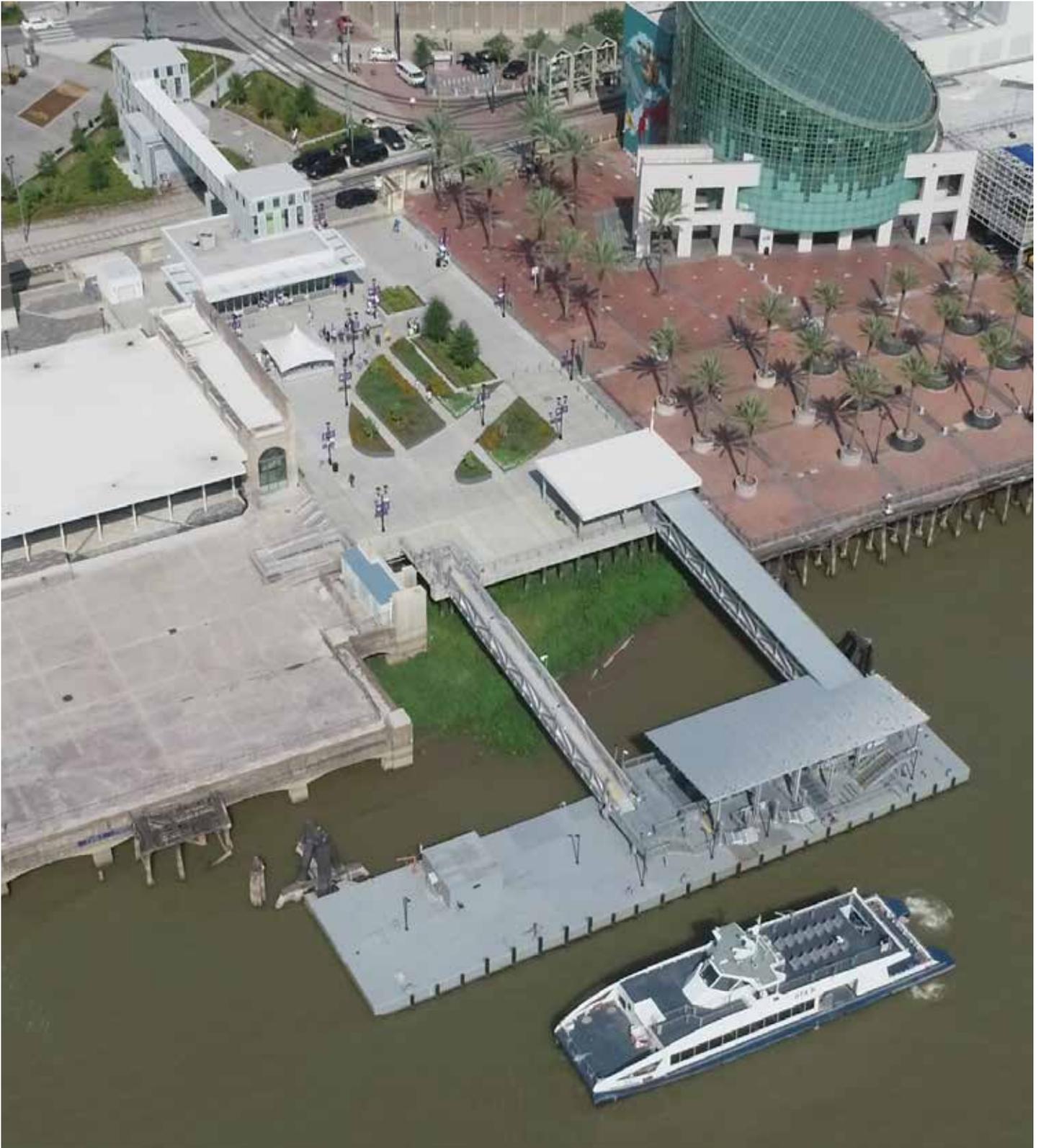
and families considering moving here,” said Dr. Bill Cassidy, U.S. Senator (R-LA). “This funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is a great step towards greater economic growth.”

“I firmly believe that investing in our city’s infrastructure is important to fostering economic growth and enhancing the quality of life for all Louisianans,” said Troy Carter Sr., U.S. Rep. (LA-2). “Our transportation network serves as the lifeblood of our communities, connecting people to jobs, businesses to customers, and families to essential services. This funding for the Regional Transit Authority will ensure smoother commutes, reduce congestion, and promote sustainable transportation options for a prosperous future.”

“These two major awards from the Department of Transportation will make public transit for our residents more accessible and environmentally sustainable,” said LaToya Cantrell, Mayor, City of New Orleans. “Constructing the Downtown Transit Center has been a shared priority for both my administration and the Regional Transit Authority for years. The project will act as an economic catalyst for our downtown area and include right-of-way improvements to make the surrounding area safer for people walking, bicycling, riding transit, and driving. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the RTA and we are appreciative of our partners in the Federal delegation and Biden Administration who have made these projects a reality for New Orleans.”



# RTA celebrates completion of \$43M Canal Street Ferry Terminal project



In August 2023, the RTA celebrated the opening of the new \$43.5 million Canal Street Ferry Terminal which better connects the city's Eastbank and Westbank communities with its modern passenger ferry service between Canal Street and Algiers Point. RTA CEO Lona Edwards Hankins was joined by Federal Transit Administrator Nuria Fernandez, U.S. Representative Troy Carter Sr. (LA-2) and other federal, state and local officials for the grand opening ceremony at the new terminal.

With the completion of this redevelopment project, the new terminal replaces the now demolished terminal with a smaller, modern, ADA-compliant terminal and pedestrian bridge. The new terminal creates a seamless Riverfront connecting Audubon Aquarium to Spanish Plaza. The project opens the Riverfront and re-envision the connectivity between all transit modes to provide safe, reliable connections for riders. Since suspending car ferry service on Canal-Algiers ferry line, the agency focused the design of the terminal towards passenger needs while accommodating the new RTA passenger ferry vessels, RTA1 and RTA2.

The project was made possible with several public funding sources including, \$24.3 million in funding from the Federal Transit Administration, as well as \$5.9 million from the City of New Orleans, \$2 million from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, and \$6.5 million from the RTA.

"We thank our federal, local and state partners for their support and commitment as we work to address our aging transit infrastructure. Not only does this project deliver much needed accessibility and rider enhancements, but it will also have a lasting impact on our regional economy," said Lona Edwards Hankins, CEO, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. "The new terminal's \$43.5 million project cost is estimated to have garnered \$174 million in economic return to our regional economy, including small and disadvantaged businesses."

"The new Canal Street Terminal will expand how people travel by providing safer, more accessible routes to the ferry," said Nuria Fernandez, Administrator, Federal Transit Administration, who

attended the event to highlight the \$25 million in federal investment from the U.S. Department of Transportation. "RTA riders are traveling to work, pursuing an education, and connecting with people. We are proud to support RTA's efforts to modernize to meet the needs of today's riders."

"Today, the dream to modernize the Canal Street Ferry Terminal becomes a reality. Making updates to Louisiana's ferry service is vital to fostering economic growth, promoting tourism, and improving overall connectivity for our state. I am deeply invested in our community's growth and infrastructure development and recognize the significance of this revitalized terminal for both New Orleans residents and visitors alike. Growing up on the West Bank, the Algiers Ferry was a gateway to the rest of New Orleans. It allowed everyone to experience all the fun our city has to offer. Louisianans deserve reliable transportation that they can count on," said Troy A. Carter, Sr., U.S. Rep (LA-02).

"RTA is a vital part of New Orleans' infrastructure, with tens of thousands of our residents relying on its services to get around efficiently and effectively," said LaToya Cantrell, Mayor, City of New Orleans. "A top priority of my administration has remained focused on ensuring transportation access is easily and readily available for all neighborhoods, regardless of the mode, especially for communities that have historically had limited transportation options. We are excited that the completion of this two-year redevelopment project at the Canal Street Ferry Terminal will now allow us to better connect residents and visitors across the Mississippi River. This opening of this new terminal is instrumental in ensuring a world-class transit system for all riders."

"The new ferry terminal and pedestrian bridge is an historic achievement that provides better and safer accessibility to riders with limited mobility. I can tell you this project is a win for me personally as well as the rest of our fellow passengers," said Mark Raymond, Jr., Board Chair, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. "It's this type of inclusive design that will bring the RTA one step closer to its goal of delivering a fully accessible transit system."

“The new Canal Street Ferry Terminal represents not only transit connectivity that is safe, modern, and accessible, but it is also a symbol of progress that our community can view with pride,” said Royce Duplessis, State Sen. (D-5).

“The Canal Street Ferry Terminal provides a vital connection between the communities on either side of the Mississippi River, which in turn improves service for our region’s passengers – including our most vulnerable. Ferry service is near and dear to my work, and as state senator I was proud to help secure \$10.5 million in capital and operating funds in the latest Legislative session to avoid a fiscal cliff for our ferry service,” said Gary Carter Jr., State Sen. (D-7). “The opening of this terminal is another important step toward modernizing our transit system, and I look forward to being a strong partner with RTA in our next efforts together in this work.”

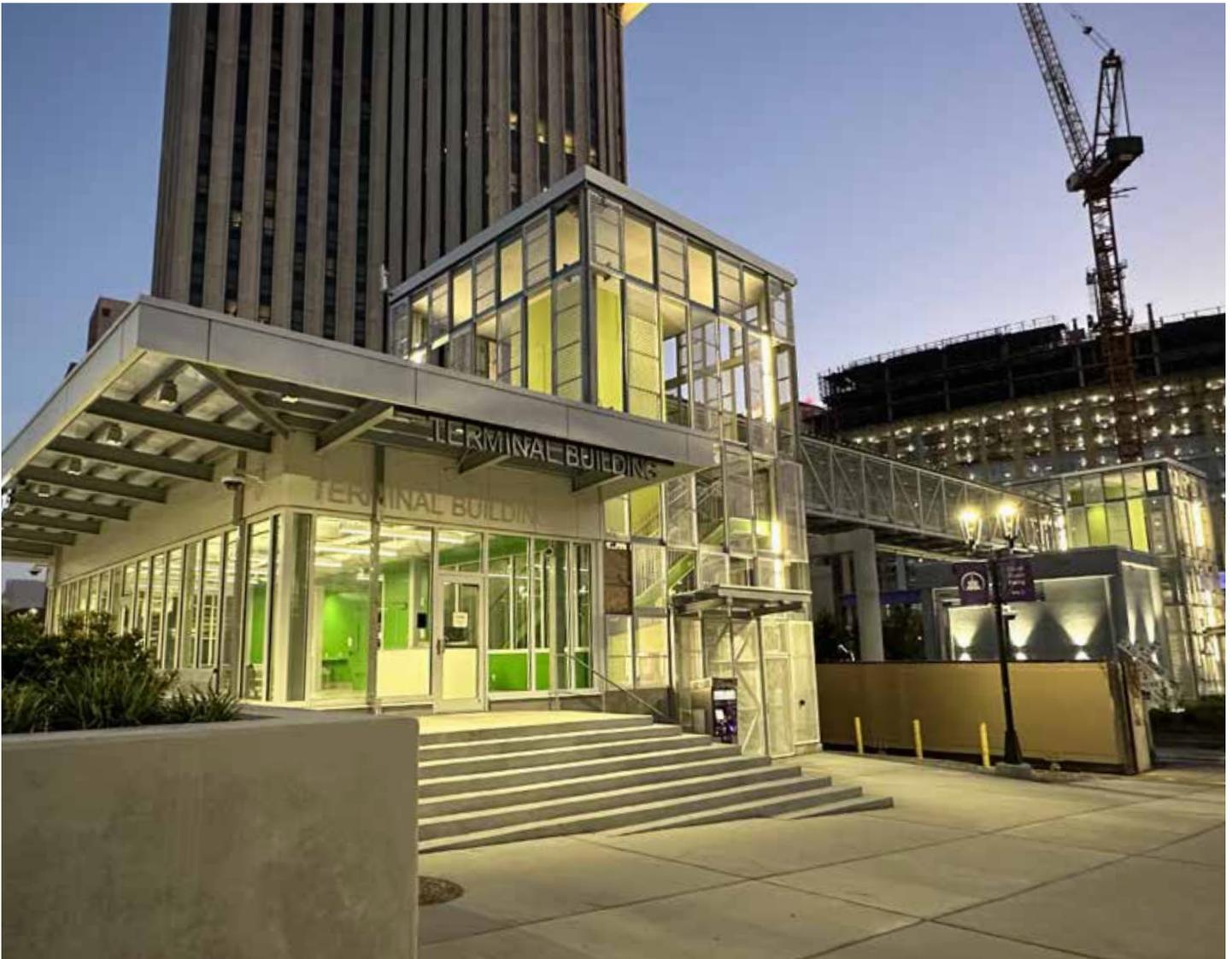
“Through unwavering dedication and collaboration, the transformation of the Canal Street Ferry Terminal stands as a remarkable testament to progress. As we approach the grand opening, this endeavor symbolizes the power of unity in reshaping transit connectivity. The modern, ADA-compliant terminal and bridge not only redefine convenience for passengers but also rejuvenate the Riverfront’s spirit. Our vision has become a reality, thanks to the concerted efforts of all stakeholders. Let us embrace this achievement as a stepping-stone towards a more accessible and interconnected future,” said Alonzo Knox, State Rep. (D-93).

“The opening of the new Canal Street Ferry Terminal marks not just a connection between two points, but a bridge between communities, cultures, and possibilities. It symbolizes the vitality of our city, the resilience of its people, and the enduring spirit of exploration. In this simple act of crossing, we transcend boundaries, embrace diversity, and celebrate the shared heritage that unites us all,” said Delisha Boyd, State Rep. (D-102).

“The Canal Street Ferry Terminal seamlessly connects the Audubon Aquarium to Spanish Plaza. Completed in two and a half years, this terminal is designed with all passengers in mind, especially

*“Not only does this project deliver much needed accessibility and rider enhancements, but it will also have a lasting impact on our regional economy”*

- Lona Edwards Hankins, CEO,  
New Orleans Regional Transit Authority



those with special needs. With a \$43.5 million investment from partners like the FTA, RTA, and City of New Orleans, our Riverfront is now safer and more vibrant,” said Freddie King III, City Councilmember (District C).

“Leading the design and overseeing the construction management of the Canal Street Ferry Terminal has brought immense pride to the entire team at Infinity Engineering Consultants. From beginning to end, this project was truly a team endeavor, as it required specialized expertise in waterfront structural engineering, architectural finesse, landscaping artistry, and dedicated coordination with a multitude of entities,” said Raoul Chauvin, III, P.E.; Principal Partner, Infinity Engineering Consultants, LLC. “The Canal Street Ferry stands as an essential

centerpiece of the riverfront revitalization. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the RTA Executive Staff for their dedication in entrusting Infinity Engineering and other esteemed locally owned enterprises to deliver the professional services for this important infrastructure initiative.”

“We are proud to be part of the team that delivered such a pivotal component of infrastructure for this region. We want to commend all of the different parties that worked together from inception to ensure the project’s success. The RTA is a long-term, trusted client and partner and we wish them continued success in improving its services to the communities and the passengers of the region,” said Michael L. Pugh, PE; President and CEO, Royal Engineers & Consultants.

# RTA announces agreement with IBEW



In September, the RTA announced ratification of a four-year agreement with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 1700-4. The new agreement between RTA and IBEW currently applies to the 167 represented bus, streetcar and paratransit mechanics, custodians, groundskeepers, rail technician machinists, building engineers, fleet technology technicians, and carpenters – including the master craftsmen who build and maintain our fleet of historic streetcars and catenary system. The four-year agreement is effective through June 30, 2027.

“I am proud to sign this four-year contract with the membership of IBEW. This agreement demonstrates our continued commitment to our workforce,” said Lona Edwards Hankins, CEO, Regional Transit

Authority. “As the agency works to improve the reliability of our fleet and improve the quality of our facilities portfolio, largely stemming from deferred maintenance, and the impacts of Hurricane Katrina, the membership of IBEW remains a critical partner in delivering the high-quality transit service that New Orleans deserves.”

According to the terms of the agreement, the RTA IBEW-represented employees will now receive:

- Wage rate increases of 4% (starting July 2023), 3% (starting July 2024), 2.5% (starting July 2025), and 2.5% (starting July 2026)
- Addition of two holidays: Memorial Day (effective calendar year 2024) and Juneteenth (effective calendar year 2023)

- 457 Retirement Plan employer match for every dollar deferred up to 6% of eligible compensation for new hires as of 12/20/20
- Training and recertification bonuses for all eligible skilled positions at \$1,000 per year – per employee for each type of bonus effective in 2024 and 2025, respectively
- Increases in sick-leave entitlement for employees hired after July 1, 2015, from 5.34 hours per month to 8 hours per month
- Emergency pay for employees assigned to work during major weather events or other declared emergencies by the Authority at a rate of two times the employee’s regular rate

“I am excited the RTA reached this critical agreement with IBEW leadership,” said Mark Raymond Jr., Board Chair, New Orleans Regional

Transit Authority. “This agreement not only helps us meet today’s maintenance and service delivery needs, but it also allows us room to grow new skills and adopt green technologies of the future, creating pathways of employment for generations to come.”

“The IBEW family would like to thank Lona Edwards Hankins, Chief Executive Officer, and her staff along with the federal mediator Stephanie Collier, along with my negotiating crew of Darian Epps, Harold Parker, and Kimberlin Young. Thanks also to Brian Lala. Without these folks we wouldn’t have the great outcome of this contract,” said Darius Hollins, President, IBEW Local 1700-4.

CEO Hankins, Board Chair Raymond and IBEW President Hollins were also joined by Board Commissioner Sunni LeBeouf and other members of the negotiation team.

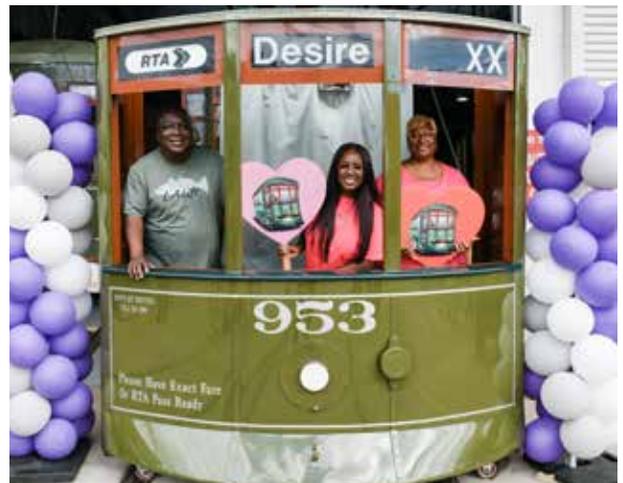


# RTA celebrates a century of the Perley A. Thomas streetcar with block party

In late October 2023, the RTA hosted a block party in the Carrollton community to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the introduction of the Perley A. Thomas streetcar. These iconic streetcars made their debut on the historic St. Charles streetcar line between 1923 and 1924. The festivities were held at the Carrollton Streetcar Barn, drawing in neighbors, streetcar enthusiasts, and public officials for a family-friendly affair filled with music, refreshments, activities, and guided tours of the equally historic facility. Lona Edwards Hankins, the CEO of RTA, played host to facility tours, showcasing the skilled craftsmen responsible for constructing and maintaining the streetcar system.

“It was an honor to join our community to celebrate the legacy of the Perley A. Thomas streetcar, St. Charles Streetcar Line and the RTA workforce that has maintained the system for generations,” said Lona Edwards Hankins, CEO, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. “We hope that by celebrating our skilled craftsman and their work to maintain our iconic streetcars, we are planting seeds in our young people who may one day want to pursue careers in transit, engineering and skilled trades.”

Debuting in 1835, the St. Charles Streetcar line is the oldest continuously operating streetcar line in the world and is registered as a National Historic Landmark by the National Historic Register in Washington, D.C. The first streetcars were pulled by steam locomotives and were later replaced by horse-drawn carriages. In 1893 the streetcar line was electrified. The iconic, green Perley A. Thomas cars were introduced in the New Orleans Streetcar System between 1923 and 1924. These streetcars are revered for their artistry and meticulous construction. Of the 173 Perley A. Thomas streetcars originally ordered, 38 remain with 10-13 in service on the St. Charles streetcar line daily. The entire streetcar fleet



is completely maintained by skilled RTA electricians, welders, carpenters, machinists, and painters, often using antique tools and machines dating back to the 1900s. Originally purchased for \$15,000 each, the Perley A. Thomas replicas would cost nearly \$4 million per car to build today.

“The RTA Board of Commissioners is proud to share the history and legacy of the historic St. Charles streetcar line with our community, transit enthusiasts and the thousands of visitors who come to New Orleans to experience the iconic streetcar system”, said Mark Raymond, Jr., Board Chairman, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. “As we seek to maintain the historic aspects of this line, we are also working diligently to solve for the fact that the Perley A. Thomas cars were not originally equipped with lifts for riders who rely on wheelchairs or those with mobility challenges. We are balancing the unique history of our legacy

system but also looking to the future, a future that more proactively prioritizes the needs of all riders, particularly those with mobility challenges.”

Like many industries that rely on skilled labor, the RTA is working to attract the next generation of its workforce to preserve the rich, nearly 200-year legacy of the New Orleans streetcar system. Most of the principal craftsmen who maintain the legacy streetcar system are at or beyond retirement eligibility, creating a potential skilled labor crisis. Simultaneously, the RTA is re-training and developing a workforce to expand the use of low- and no-emission vehicles beyond our current streetcar system to our fixed-route bus service, ferry vessels and eventually modern rail. The RTA has partnered with Delgado Community College and nonprofit partners like the 1881 Institute to identify and train a workforce that can carry the baton to the next phase of the RTA’s history.



# RTA to maintain current ferry service operations in 2024



In December 2023, the RTA received a letter of commitment from the City of New Orleans detailing its dedication to locating a funding solution for the \$3 million necessary to sustain the existing service levels in 2024. This letter of commitment will empower the RTA to persist in providing ferry services on Sundays through Thursdays from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., along with extended hours on Fridays and Saturdays, running from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.

“Securing this funding is not just about dollars; it’s about enhancing the very fabric of connectivity within our communities,” said Lona Edwards Hankins, CEO, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. “We are deeply grateful to State Sen. Gary Carter and the New Orleans Delegation, U.S. Rep. Troy Carter and to

Mayor Cantrell for their support, which underscores an unwavering commitment to serving the needs of those who rely on us for seamless, reliable ferry service.”

The RTA served 395,124 passengers on the Canal Street–Algiers Point Ferry service in 2022, accounting for 1,083 average daily riders. Through Oct. 31, 2023, the RTA served 419,687 or 1,381 average daily riders. Since the removal of the tolls on the Crescent City Connection in 2013, ferry service has been grossly underfunded. Prior to the RTA transitioning to a public agency, the ferry operated at a loss and deferred critical maintenance to operate. Since 2020, the RTA was able to use COVID-19 recovery funding to bridge the gap, but those funds are no longer available after 2023.

The general purpose of the financial agreements between RTA and the City are as follows:

- The City will identify a funding source for the \$3 million required to maintain service levels within a reasonable time.
- The RTA and the City will enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) to facilitate the transfer of funds between the two public entities as required by law.
- The RTA and its contracted ferry operator will plan to continue the current service levels throughout 2024.
- The RTA and the City will continue their coordinated efforts to identify long-term operating funding sources to maintain ferry service beyond 2024.

“As a city, we recognize the pivotal role transportation plays in the lives of our residents,”

said LaToya Cantrell, Mayor, City of New Orleans. “This funding commitment into our transit agency marks a significant stride toward maintaining connectivity and overall quality of life for our community members.”

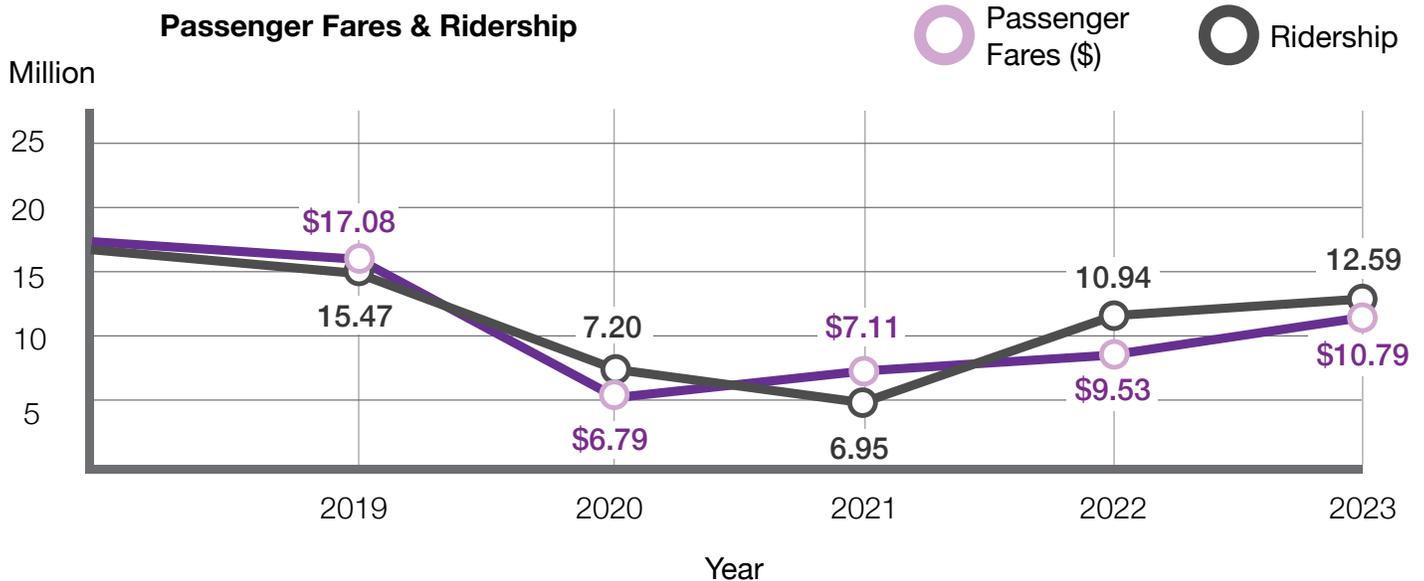
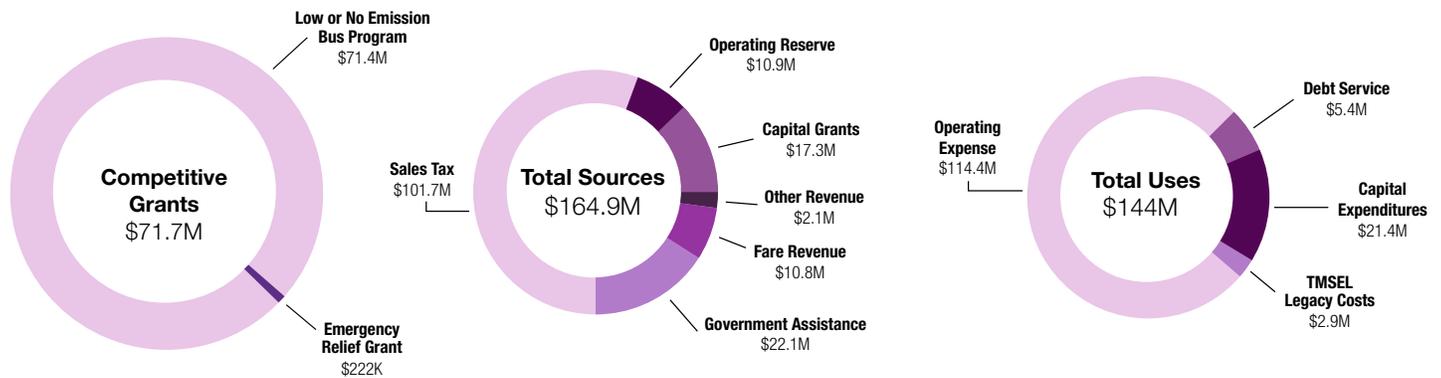
RTA began 2023 with a projected \$19.8 million shortfall for 2024. As a cost-saving measure, the agency removed the second Chalmette ferry vessel from service to avoid \$6 million in repair costs scheduled for next year. The agency also received \$10 million from the state legislature in House Bill 1 to partially cover the cost of Canal Street–Algiers Point Ferry and Lower Algiers-Chalmette ferry service. The \$3 million from the City of New Orleans will fill the remaining gap.

RTA remains committed to delivering excellence in transit services and to working with local and state partners to secure long-term funding to maintain this service at current levels.



# Financial Summary

In 2023, the RTA experienced a moderate increase in passenger fare revenue as compared to 2022. We continue to experience the benefits of increased pass sales that began with our new fare structure adopted in 2022, coupled with an increase in mobile app users. The RTA continued its regular operations of the routes that were redesigned in September of 2022, with recommendations made from the New Links study. The RTA operated between 80-90% of what was budgeted for 2023. This resulted in total transit operating expenses of \$116.7M inclusive of maritime operations, which is an increase from 2022. The City continued to do well with events and tourism in 2023, however the boom that we experienced in the latter part of 2022 leveled off, as general use and hotel/motel sales tax showed a slight decrease of nearly 2%. Overall, our numbers still showed that the City generated healthy returns, as we ended the year with \$101.7M in sales tax revenues and \$137.7M in total operating revenues. Leaving a total operating income of approximately \$20M, before TMSEL legacy costs. The RTA saw the completion of the new Canal Street Ferry Terminal and began a number of other capital projects in 2023. The agency issued no new debt in 2023, as our credit rating remained positive, allowing capacity for larger capital projects in future years. While we experienced challenges with our fleet in 2023, we were able to initiate the procurement of 29 new buses through government grant funding to assist with replacing our aging fleet. The addition of the new buses in 2024 will allow the RTA to continue serving the customers throughout our region.



\*Note: in 2022 RTA's Automated Passenger Counters were certified for use on buses to collect more accurate ridership data. As a result, 2022 ridership numbers were adjusted in this year's report to reflect the updated data source.

## OPERATING REVENUES

### TAX REVENUES

Sales Tax - General Use	\$ 86,898,270	\$ 86,616,965
Sales Tax - State Motor Vehicle	\$ 7,666,352	\$ 6,163,954
Sales Tax - Hotel Motel	\$ 8,921,386	\$ 8,957,285
<b>Total Sales Tax Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 103,486,008</b>	<b>\$ 101,738,204</b>

### TRANSIT REVENUES

Fares	\$ 9,531,457	\$ 10,785,395
Other Revenues	\$ 3,008,560	\$ 2,070,208
<b>Total Fare &amp; Other Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 12,540,017</b>	<b>\$ 12,855,603</b>

### GOVERNMENT OPERATING GRANTS

Preventive Maintenance	\$ 13,355,835	\$ 15,463,249
State Parish Transportation Fund	\$ 1,849,955	\$ 2,046,586
CARES Act (COVID19) Funding	\$ 11,552,219	\$ 4,555,485
<b>Total Government Operating Grants</b>	<b>\$ 26,758,009</b>	<b>\$ 22,065,320</b>
<b>Total Operating Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 142,784,034</b>	<b>\$ 136,659,127</b>

## OPERATING EXPENSES

### TRANSIT EXPENSES

Labor & Fringe Benefits	\$ 69,262,565	\$ 81,217,598
Contract Services	\$ 10,122,025	\$ 10,656,235
Insurance & Self-insured costs	\$ 8,260,226	\$ 9,020,802
Materials, Fuel, & Supplies	\$ 11,155,573	\$ 10,917,313
Utilities	\$ 1,738,826	\$ 1,608,446
Taxes, Other Than Payroll	\$ 390,219	\$ 397,501
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,290,404	\$ 375,839
Leases	\$ 161,987	\$ 207,340
<b>Total Transit Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 102,381,825</b>	<b>\$ 114,401,074</b>
TMSEL Legacy Costs	\$ 3,055,608	\$ 2,858,629
Maritime Operations - Revenue	\$ (6,159,330)	\$ (9,277,388)
Maritime Operations - Expenses	\$ 10,456,291	\$ 11,527,263
Income from Operations	\$ 33,049,640	\$ 17,149,549

### NON-OPERATING REVENUE (EXPENSES)

Investment Income	\$ 287,233	\$ 1,549,760
Debt Service, Net	\$ (6,771,174)	\$ (5,371,887)
<b>Total Non-Operating Revenues (Expenses)</b>	<b>\$ (6,483,941)</b>	<b>\$ (3,822,127)</b>
<b>Net Loss Before Capital Contributions</b>	<b>\$ 26,565,699</b>	<b>\$ 13,327,422</b>

### CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Total Federal Sources	\$ 15,282,721	\$ 13,262,366
Other Local Sources/Restricted Capital Res.	\$ 3,728,852	\$ 5,725,488
Capital Expenditures	\$ (25,668,032)	\$ (21,383,321)
<b>Total Capital Contributions</b>	<b>\$ (6,656,459)</b>	<b>\$ (2,395,467)</b>
<b>Change in Operating Contributions</b>	<b>\$ 19,909,240</b>	<b>\$ 10,931,955</b>



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