

COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, JULY 28, 2020 10:00 AM

COMMISSIONER PRESENT: Chairman Flozell Daniels, Commissioner Fred Neal, Jr, Commissioner Mark Raymond, Commissioner Walter Tillery, Commissioner Mostofa Sarwar, Commissioner Laura Bryan, Commission Art Walton, and Commissioner Sharon Wegner

COMMISSIONER ABSENT: None.

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am.
2. **Roll Call:** A quorum was confirmed with 8 Commissioners present and 0 absent.
3. **Consideration: Approval of Minutes**
Minutes were presented for September, October, November and December of 2019 and approved subject to one correction to the September 24, 2019 minutes.
4. **Consideration: RTA Chairman's Report**
The Chair thanked everyone for their hard work and continued with the agenda.
5. **Consideration: Jefferson Parish Report**
Commissioner Wegner indicated that JeT announced new technology called NanoSeptic which is used to cover high touch areas on buses by providing a continuous self-cleaning surface that is replaced every 90 days. JeT also announced a new bus tracker, app and a new map that includes hurricane evacuation information for both Orleans and Jefferson Parishes. Jefferson Parish also received a \$4.3M grant from the FTA that will build an operations facility on David Drive and the Walker Town bus terminal will be renovated to include a 911 call tower.
6. **Consideration: RTA General Counsel's Report**
No report was given. General Counsel indicated there will be an Executive Session after the meeting.
7. **Consideration: RTA Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) Report**
The CEO began his report by announcing the new Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Ms. Gizelle Johnson-Banks to the Executive Team. The CEO gave an update on where we are as an industry and lobbying our federal partners for additional funding. Overall, the industry received \$25B for transit and the RTA received \$43M on the first round. The CEO played a video for Commissioners of a press

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conference he participated and stated that his colleagues are making an intense push to lobby for additional round 2 funding that will be critical to our ability to provide transit mobility in 2021.

The CEO also shared ridership information with the Commission by stating that fair revenue is down, and that the agency is operating at 80% capacity. On a typical Saturday our busiest lines are averaging about 10 passengers per revenue hour and the streetcar operation is averaging about 7.2 passengers per revenue hour.

One Commissioner stated that on TV they saw footage that showed overcrowded buses. The CEO was asked if any extra buses are available during peak times. The CEO answered that several months ago, the agency implemented a plan that depends on real-time information from the operator. If the operator detects that the passenger load is heavier than normal, they are instructed to radio the dispatcher and to activate buses that are in the field waiting to help with the overflow.

The CEO also announced that the RTA received the second highest grant award in the country to rehabilitate one of our ferry terminals in Lower Algiers and congratulated the team for their excellent work.

The CEO also reported that thanks to our savings and funding from the Cares Act, we were able to provide ground-breaking, hazard pay to our frontline workers up to \$2,000 in compensation paid over two installments. In comparison, other agencies have provided \$250 as a one-time payment as hazard pay to frontline workers.

Guest speaker, Mr. Oliver Morrison, informed Commissioners of a nonprofit that he has working with to help ex-offenders. The challenge for most ex-offenders is often they have no job opportunities and end up back in prison. Mr. Morrison spoke to the CEO about starting an apprenticeship program at the RTA focusing on mechanics or welding. Mr. Morrison stated that he has nine guys right now that are living at the church trying to start a new life. Commissioners thanked Mr. Morrison for his comments and agreed that the RTA has an opportunity for training and offered their individual resources in workforce programming to partner with Mr. Morrison's efforts.

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8. Ferry Operations Update

Mr. Jose Ruiz, Chief Maritime Officer started his slide presentation by stating that the Margaret Lab was kept for an extra couple of days until the Armiger is back from upgrades (clean up, paint) and repairs. The Armiger is back at Algiers Point and completed inspections with the Coast Guard. Based on comments received from the Ops Committee regular seats are being removed so we can identify them as ADA locations. The Canal Street service continues with a special schedule based on Covid.

Regarding the new ferries, we are working together with Metal Shark with all their repairs and modifications. A site visit planned for next week where we will see ongoing work. It is estimated that repairs will be completed by the end of August. RTA 1 will be headed to Metal Shark for repairs after RTA 2 receives its Certificate of Inspection (COI).

9. DBE Report:

Ms. Keziah Lee gave a report to the Commission. She stated that the RTA awarded \$7.1 million dollars in contracts of which \$1.2 million was awarded to DBE firms. The RTA has a total 30% DBE participation for the year but as of today the agency is at 17%. Ms. Lee stated that in the next few months the Commission will see a lot more DBE and small business participation. The agency has been working closely with procurement to identify projects where we can have a lot more DBE participation.

10. RTA Work Schedule Policy

Mr. Darwyn Anderson, Chief Human Resources Officer started his report by stating that the work policy came from surveyed employees and it provides guidance on how to make sure daily activities continue during a natural disaster or as an alternative to help employees create a more balanced work life. Mr. Anderson stated that the policy includes a Telecommuting Alternative Work Schedule, a Flexible Scheduling and Alternative Scheduling for a compressed workweek. The CEO commented that this is part of an entire package of policies and procedures, as we transition from the OEM agreement with Transdev to RTA having public employees. The Commission ultimately approves all our policies. And so, we'll be bringing a host of these for the Board's consideration.

Commissioners did not vote on the policy. It was expressed that it made more sense for the team to roll out the policies on a one on one basis so they can get the context that was heard by Mr. Anderson. In the meantime, the

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Commissioners agreed that the existing pandemic warrants remote the work format that we are in, and that the CEO will continue to manage those decisions from his perspective.

11. RTA 2020 Agency Safety Plan (ASP) Final Draft

Mr. Mike Smith, Chief Safety Officer for the RTA gave a power point presentation stating that the ASP represents approximately five months of work in close coordination with the staff at all levels and it represents a pivotal point in the development of what we call our Safety Management System (SMS). The SMS is designed to be a living and breathing system that will be implemented over a three to five-year period bringing our documentation up to par. The SMS will establish a new safety committee structure that represents all levels of the organization, in developing SOP's and processes to conduct safety assurance particularly in our critical areas of operations and maintenance, safety reporting, and establishing a comprehensive safety training program at all levels.

As a final note, Mr. Smith stated that this plan has gone through a review with the SSO and is tentatively approved as it stands. And so, Mr. Smith requested consideration to adopt it today. One of the Commissioners asked if the plan will be subject to annual review. Mr. Mike said yes, his office will be able to give an overview of RTA's compliance. He suggested tat the Operations & Administration Committee might be an appropriate venue for providing a regular report, relative to the targets.

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to authorize the **Agency Safety Plan (ASP)** document. Resolution No. 20-056 was adopted unanimously.

12. Financial Statements May 2020

Mr. Mark Major, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) stated that for the 2018 calendar year, over \$18M was budgeted in fare revenue. Our actual year to day revenue is adjusted at \$3.5M or we are \$4M underwater and we don't see this trend changing between now and the end of the year. The CFO showed slides that indicated a decrease in revenue during the months of April and May when the RTA offered free fares. With respect to sales tax revenues, the RTA budgeted \$7.6M and we collected shy of \$4.4M or \$3.2M under. For the month of May, the agency is 42% under our projected budget. Regarding operating expenses, \$45.6M is projected a day and it's primarily a result of lower service levels for March, April and May. And, diesel fuel was \$1.32 a gallon, well within the budget.

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13. Sales Tax Revenue Refunding Bonds – Series 2020

This issue appeared before the Commission on Nov 19th with a plan to do two things, refund the existing five debt issues at the RTA and look at a new money bond issue. We're on hold on a new money bond issue but the refunding plan is moving along according to schedule. As discussed at the last meeting, presentations to both Moody's and Standard & Poor's rating agencies were given. The RTA received an A3 rating by Moody's Investors Service. The Aa3 Moody's rating establishes that RTA bonds are investment grade quality as compared to non-investment grade or junk status.

14. Procurement Items

a) Replacement of Air Compressor at the Carrollton Facility

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to authorize staff to award the **Replacement of an Air Compressor at the Carrollton Facility to LewTech Product & Services** in the amount of **\$34,685.00**. Resolution No. 20-057 was adopted unanimously.

b) Brookville Equipment Upgrade ABB M35 Converters to ABBM55 Converter to Retrofit All Canal Street and Riverfront Streetcars

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to authorize staff to award the **Brookville Equipment Upgrade ABB M35 Converters to ABBM55 Converter to Retrofit All Canal Street and Riverfront Streetcars** in the amount of **\$716,187**. Resolution No. 20-058 was adopted unanimously.

c) Drug and Alcohol Testing Services

Commissioner Sarwar moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to authorize staff to award a **Drug and Alcohol Testing Services** for one-year to **Innovation Risk Management Solutions** as required by the US DOT for **\$175,000.00**. Resolution No. 20-059 was adopted unanimously.

d) Clever Devices GH7 MDT

Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to authorize staff to award a **Clever Devices GH7 MDT** for 23 new paratransit vans and buses at an estimated cost of **\$118,450.00**. Resolution No. 20-060 was adopted unanimously.

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- e) **Award of Excess Liability and Automobile Physical Damage Insurance**
Commissioner Daniels moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to authorize staff to **Award of Excess Liability and Automobile Physical Damage Insurance to Kennedy Financial Group of Louisiana Inc.** to replace \$25M of automobile and physical damage liability insurance that will soon expire. The new policy period will extend from 8/1/20 to 7/31/21. The price is \$1.9M with a deductible of \$6.5M. Resolution No. 20-061 was adopted unanimously.

- f) **Contract Amendment for Royal Engineers and Consultants, LLC for the Canal Street Ferry Terminal**
Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar second to authorize to amend the contract with **Royal Engineers and Consultants, LLC for the Canal Street Ferry Terminal** in the amount of **\$134,114.66**. Resolution No. 20-062 was adopted unanimously.

15. New Business

No new business was discussed.

16. Audience Questions & Comments

The following people offered public comment/questions:

- a) **Valerie Jefferson** indicated that her and CEO disagree on certain issues and hope to resolve their differences. A meeting is scheduled tomorrow with the RTA and the Union Attorneys. She stated that the Union did not receive the open letter and did not hear about the hazard pay until Thursday. Ms. Jefferson stated that the Union is working with Mike Smith on the safety plan and Vivek regarding crowding and on-time performance issues.

Commissioner Raymond responded by stating that he was very disappointed about comments she publicly made about the CEO being safe from Covid. He stated that those comments were inaccurate, and unappreciated.

The Chair further stated that it is okay for us to disagree, but there have been more than two points where we believe things have been said that was not true. And you are not interested in in having your reputation impugned, you are not interested in us saying things that are not true about you. And I think similarly we're interested in the context of this relationship with the Union which has been fantastic for almost 10 years. In the middle of a pandemic and an economic crisis we cannot find ourselves at odds with each other in

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ways that are not productive including how we choose to tell the truth. The point that Commissioner Raymond made was that the comments didn't feel fair or truthful. And, we get to share that just as you get to share your comments and your perspective.

- b) **Jim Goodwin** stated that the Armiger looks good and he was hoping to get an update as to when RTA 2 will swap out RTA 1. Since the staff site visit was announced, he hopes to get an update at the August Ops Meeting. Mr. Goodwin also asked the following:

- When will the Armiger be put in service, since the repairs are complete, and the Margaret Lab is on extended contract?

RTA Response: The current plan is to put the Armiger into service in early August, to verify its reliability, while maintaining the Margaret Lab in standby status.

- Has a decision been made whether to replace or repair the Algiers landing barge? The decision has changed from repair to replace to TBD.

RTA Response: Non-Destructive Testing is needed. The testing is scheduled in the next 2-3 weeks. Depending on the testing information, we would like to decide by August 31, 2020.

- Will the Levy get a new paint job like the Armiger did? Is there a projection on how long the generator repairs will take and when the Levy will return to service?

RTA Response: The Levy will receive a new paint job. We are still evaluating the cause of the generator failure. Once the issue is diagnosed, recommendations for repair will be submitted to the USCG. We hope to have the information to the USCG this week.

- Will the public be provided with more details on the scope of the \$5M improvements to the Cut-Off landing and maintenance facility?

RTA Response: Yes, we are in the initial phase of satisfying the series of steps needed to submit to the FTA. Once the FTA

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approves our required documentation, we will have additional information to communicate to the public.

- c) **Sebrina Hillard** stated she is a resident of New Orleans East and a business owner. She wanted to make sure that the Commission was aware of the Better Bus Stops Campaign which began several weeks ago. The campaign is asking that the RTA Budget for 2021 include funding for 25 new bus stop shelters. She stated that RTA has over 2200 spots but less than 300 shelters. She applauded the RTA for past efforts, but she wants to push the RTA to continue to make this a priority by making this a line item in the 2021 budget. She requested guidance on how she can follow up to make sure that this is being considered.

RTA RESPONSE: During the meeting, the CEO stated that RTA will be working on a 2021 grant request where the ask will include several hundred shelters. He stated that Ms. Hillard's points are right on the mark and we need to provide better shelter for our riders. Ms. Lona Hankins, Chief of Infrastructure & Long-Term Planning Officer, stated that the RTA requested roughly \$600,000 in grant funding to start a robust shelter program. The Chair stated that he and the CEO had previous conversations about ways to create shelters that are cost effective and still meet all the FTA and local permitting requirements.

- d) **Andreanecia Morris**, the Executive Director of Housing Nola stated that transit and housing are linked, and affordable housing only works when there's accessible transit. And so, we are grateful to have been our partners over the last few years. First with the Strategic Mobility Plan and most recently with the New Links process which started last year. We think that it's very important to make sure that transit relates to housing opportunities that are slowly coming out of the ground. She thanked RTA for getting the New Link Process going and we encouraged that will take those considerations in mind.

17. Executive Session

The Commission went into Executive Session at 12:19 pm to discuss Transdev Services, Inc. The session ended at 1:00 pm.

18. Adjournment

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Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adjourn the Board Meeting of July 28, 2020. The motion was approved unanimously.