

**COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 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 10:15 am.

2. **Roll Call:** A quorum was confirmed.

3. **Consideration: Approval of Minutes**

Minutes were presented and adopted for January 28, 2020 and July 28, 2020.

4. **Consideration: RTA Chairman's Report**

The Resolution was introduced by Chairman Daniels. Ms. Rodriguez explained that the document originated from the Finance Dept and would give the Director of the Office of Board Affairs authority to sign certain documents. Mr. Major added that between the Chair and the Board Secretary, the Board Office is required to execute several documents in the upcoming bond refinancing. He checked with the bond council and want to make certain that the secretary was duly authorized. So, this resolution serves that purpose. Commissioner Bryan moved and Commissioner Wegner seconded to consider the Board Resolution for the Director of Office of Board Affairs & Board Secretary. **Resolution No. 20-063 was adopted unanimously.**

5. **Report from the Finance Committee Chair**

Commissioner Raymond thank staff for their efforts during the pandemic and in preparation for two potential hurricanes that was going to affect our community. He explained that the Finance Committee was working with staff on drafting budget for 2021 which will include two scenarios outlining our revenue projections.

6. **Financial Statements**

The CFO presented the June 2020 Financial Statement showing operating revenues compared to the year to date. Budgeted is \$8.9 million with a variance of \$1.6 million which is due to ridership decline of 57%. Revenue is at \$37.7

COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2020 10:00 AM

million which is a decrease of about \$17 million. Operating expenses for the month of June is around \$9 million.

7. Jefferson Parish Report

Commissioner Wegner read a statement from Jefferson Parish's Director of Transportation. The letter stated that Jefferson Parish is looking forward to working alongside the RTA as the Department of Public Works prepares to receive the Regional Planning Commission's final New Link's report. Jefferson Parish has been placing bus stop signage for the one Veterans and the two Airline Highway route this week. Jefferson Parish will be servicing Canal Street from Greenwood Cemetery and will be stopping at each major stop along the way down Canal Street both inbound and outbound. Jefferson Parish will no longer let their riders off at Carrollton. It will now be a non-stop strip all the way to Loyal.

8. Consideration: RTA General Counsel's Report

Mr. Haley reported that the Board of Pension and two new members. Ms. Dina Lavigne and Mr. Mark Major. One vacancy was long-standing, and the other vacancy was recently created with a resignation. Mr. Haley also stated that an Executive Session is also scheduled today and appears on the agenda.

9. Consideration: RTA Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) Report

The CEO began his report by stating we have been very fortunate regarding the impacts of the weather on New Orleans. As you may recall, we began preparations for tropical storm Marco and now Hurricane Laura. With Marco no longer a threat, transit services were restored throughout the City and we are monitoring Hurricane Laura as it enters the Gulf. Precautionary measures include four hours to pull all service off the street and anywhere from 12 to 24 hours sometimes 48 hours depending on weather conditions to fully restore service.

With regards to normal streetcar service, we are operating at a reduced schedule about 80%. Mr. Wiggins stated that it's time for us to make some additional adjustments on streetcar service. Right now, the Saturday schedule is carrying less than 10% of our ridership. While the schedule now has an 8-minute wait between streetcars, the RTA should look at increasing that to a 15-minute wait or longer. Mr. Wiggins stated that we need to take a hard look at what service level should be, but still maintain adequate social distancing.

Regarding the Hazard Pay Schedule, Mr. Wiggins also stated that to make sure that all those frontline employees are compensated for incredible dedication that

COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2020 10:00 AM

they displayed during the peak of the pandemic. And so, just as a reminder, the maximum amount available is \$1,000 for the first segment and then \$1,000 from July through December paid proportionately.

Mr. Wiggins concluded his report by introducing Mr. Paul Tolliver to Board Members. He stated that Mr. Tolliver is here to assist with the transition from Transdev to RTA. Mr. Tolliver stated that he was honored to be part of the team and looked forward to working with Board Members.

After the report, Commissioner Daniels stated that the public should be aware that with streetcar ridership at 10%, this is an indication of future challenges that we will have with regards to revenue. Commissioner Raymond inquired about the average number of passengers on the streetcar being at 40 per hour. Mr. Wiggins believed it to be closer to 5 to 7 passengers per hour. There are several different factors to it, like the collapse of the Hard Rock. That event really affected the mobility of transiting down Canal Street, the Quarter and N. Rampart. As staff start to look at ridership data, Commissioner Daniels asked that Mr. Wiggins prepare and share a dashboard illustration as a regular agenda item.

10. DBE Report

Ms. Keziah Lee gave a report to the Commission. She stated that this year the RTA awarded \$11.4 million dollars of which \$4.3 million went to DBE firms. Of the DB and SP contracts are prime contractors. The RTA has a total 30% DBE commitment for the year but as of today the agency is at 38%. Ongoing projects include the Canal Street Ferry contract, the Financial Management Services contract with a contract value of \$3.1 million, and an Architectural & Engineering project with a value of \$53,884. After the report, Commissioner Daniels asked if small businesses were facing any other challenges. Ms. Lee stated working with our small businesses and getting the information out to them of what opportunities are available is our main priority and she is not aware of any challenges.

11. Ferry Operations Update

Mr. Jose Ruiz, Chief Maritime Officer stated that because of Zulu weather condition, the ferries were shut down and all crew is on stand-by. Once given the okay to resume service, it will take a couple of hours to reshuffle vessels and be able to line them up. As far as the status for individual vessels, the Armiger has been operating since August 12th without any situation. Margaret Lab is on standby, repairs on the Levy are complete and work is progressing for RTA 2. Work will begin on RTA 1 once Metal Shark is done with RTA 1. After the report, Mr. Wiggins stated that what is most impressive about Mr. Ruiz's report is that

**COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2020 10:00 AM**

the Armiger has been in service since August 12th. We have not had a stretch in the last year for consecutive service. Commissioner Daniels agreed and applauded the incredible work staff has done to move this forward. Commissioner Daniels also inquired about the naming of RTA's vessels. Often he mentioned that he is asked who are these men we've named these boats after. What are their histories and biographies, I never have an answer. So, if there's someone on staff who can get this information it will certainly be helpful. Mr. Wiggins responded by saying his staff will do the research on that and provide a comprehensive overview to the Board.

12. New Links Presentation

Mr. Sam Buckley with the Regional Planning Commission, an agency that works very closely with other regional transit providers on transportation planning issues gave an overview of the New Links Project. Mr. Buckley stated that the project was about to hit a pretty substantial milestone which is the completion of the drafts network plan for redesigning the regional transit network. At the beginning of October, the RPC will formally release the plan to the public for feedback and in December they will present the findings.

13. Consideration: Consent Agenda

The following items appeared on the consent agenda. Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Sarwar seconded to adopt the Consent Agenda Items. **Resolution No. 20-074 was adopted unanimously.**

- A. Presentation of the New Drug & Alcohol Testing Policy
Resolution No. 20-064 was adopted unanimously.
- B. RTA 2019 Financial Audit Acceptance
Resolution No. 20-065 was adopted unanimously.
- C. RTA 2018 Single Audit
Resolution No. 20-066 was adopted unanimously.
- D. New Procurement Policy
Resolution No. 20-067 was adopted unanimously
- E. To Award:
 - 1. New Contract for Disaster Recovery Grant Management and Administration
Resolution No. 20-068 was adopted unanimously.

**COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2020 10:00 AM**

14. Procurement Status Report

No presentation was given. The information was included in the meeting packet for review.

15. New Business

There was a motion to amend the Consent Agenda. The amendment would add the Transit Security Services, Cemeteries Transit Center Project, Print Services, and the Website Redesign, to the Consent Agenda. All these contracts were reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee. They were inadvertently omitted from the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Raymond moved
Commissioner Neal seconded to add the above reference items to new business the motion was unanimously approved.

1. Transit Security Services (RFP 2020-009)
Resolution No. 20-069 was adopted unanimously
2. Cemeteries Transit Center Project
Resolution No. 20-070 was adopted unanimously.
3. Print Services (RFP 2020-002)
Resolution No. 20-071 was adopted unanimously.
4. Website Enhancement Services
Resolution No. 20-072 was adopted unanimously.

16. Public Comments

A motion was made by Commissioner Sarwar, seconded by Commissioner Raymond to hear public comments before going into Executive Session. The motion was adopted by unanimous vote. The following spoke during the public comments portion of the meeting:

SPEAKER #1: Autumn White

Ms. White presented the Board with the following questions:

Question #1: When will the public know about changes in the bus schedule specifically from Saturday service back to full-time service?

RTA Response: The CEO explained that the return to normal service is closely tied to us getting through the adverse effects of Covid. Right now, ridership is significantly down, not just locally but across the country and we really need to manage our operating

**COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2020 10:00 AM**

costs to the best of our ability. And so, we're going to be operating at reduced service level until we see a strong recovery. Once the economy recovers, ridership will return.

Question #2: Does the RTA have an email or text service for schedule changes? The mobile app doesn't work for everyone and some of our riders have found Twitter to be ineffective.

RTA Response: The CEO stated that bus schedules are posted on social media, the mobile app and RTA's website. We will talk to the team to see if we can further enhance the communication with ridership.

Question #3: Why are the streetcars the last to be restored during emergency service?

RTA Response: The CEO stated that when we have severe weather or we're anticipating severe weather, the City lifts restrictions on parking on the neutral ground allow folks to park their cars which impeded the safe operation of the streetcars. When the storm is no longer a threat, the City will instruct residents to remove their cars so we can safely operate.

SPEAKER #2: Elizabeth Soychack

Ms. Soychack stated a concern that reducing streetcar service from eight to nine-minute intervals to 15-minute interval could result in a downward spiral of less people riding because service will be less frequent. And are the people riding the streetcar essential workers, not reducing the service could save these riders an extra 20-30 minutes in their day commuting.

RTA Response: The CEO explained that streetcar data shows that ridership is down. When looking at the cars throughout the day, they are practically empty. In most cases, we have two or three passengers per trip so we must really be as responsible as possible with taxpayer dollars without imposing negative impacts.

Ms. Soycheck also asked if anything was being done about the over-crowding on certain bus lines and that drivers have been asking for increased service?

COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2020 10:00 AM

RTA Response: The CEO explained that depending on the day of the month, a line can go from carrying 10 to 15 passengers per vehicle to 30. When we start to see large crowds, drivers are instructed to notify dispatch. We have vehicles on standby to be deployed immediately to the field to ease crowding. In addition to that strategy, we also manage overcrowding and social distancing by blocking seats with stickers indicating the seat is unavailable.

SPEAKER #3: Valerie Jefferson also expressed concerns about crowded bus lines and PPE supplies for operators.

SPEAKER #4: David Graber asked wo will receive the \$2,000 hazard pay.

RTA Response: The CEO stated that the dedication of our frontline workers and those receive supplement funds will include operators, mechanics, field staff. These individuals were the most at risk and we want to be very intentional about acknowledging their service.

17. Executive Session

A motion was made by Commissioner Tillery, seconded by Commissioner Wegner to go into Executive Session.

18. Adjournment

Commissioner Tillery moved and Commissioner Raymond seconded to adjourn the Board Meeting of August 25, 2020. The motion was approved unanimously.