



2021 Annual Report





About the RTA

The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is governed by the RTA Board of Commissioners, composed of eight publicly appointed representatives and determines agency policy, oversees the funding, operation, and expansion of public transportation in the city.

The RTA’s mission is to provide safe, dependable, efficient transit services to the residents of and visitors to the greater New Orleans region, through investment in infrastructure and service to expand access to opportunities, to build a more resilient community, and to protect the cultural, social, and economic well

being of our community through mobility. The RTA will become the region’s preferred mobility provider by building a transportation network focused on equitable service delivery, regional connectivity, and a forward-looking emphasis on the customer experience.

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Greetings from the Chairman



The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority is following through on its promise to develop a world-class transit system that carefully and intentionally prioritizes our riders today and in the future. This year we introduced a new fare structure which includes discounted rates for seniors and youth—increasing their access to critically important transit - as well as increasing funding for the bus shelter program to accommodate RTA riders.

The RTA is leading the industry in advancing transit equity. The early adoption of New Links, our equity-driven transit redesign; implementing equity goals at the highest level of the agency performance management process; and hiring a Chief of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion officer are a few examples of our commitment to equity. The RTA is actively practicing

its commitment to ensuring that all New Orleanians have access to the quality, equitable public transportation they deserve.

The Board’s commitment to equity extends to one of the RTA’s basic values: using our financial resources to contribute to our community’s economic development. This is proven by the fact that we awarded \$7.3 million in contracts to disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE’s), exceeding our 30% DBE utilization objective by more than 20% and making us one of the state’s top performers in this area. I’m especially pleased of the RTA’s pilot program to hire graduates of the Louisiana State Penitentiary’s Auto Mechanic Apprenticeship Program upon their release, which demonstrates our commitment to restorative justice.

The RTA was a national leader in the response to the worst pandemic in a century, emphasizing the health and well-being of our workers. We continue to fight for our workforce, as they repeatedly and without hesitation make sacrifices for the greater good, by providing opportunities for our essential workers to learn about the benefits of vaccines firsthand from trusted medical practitioners, by providing information to our staff on how to manage the mental health impacts of the prolonged crisis, and by becoming one of the first transit agencies in the country to require vaccinations for all employees.

The RTA understands our critical role in pushing for climate and environmental justice. First, by constructing a transit system that is both efficient and dependable, public transportation becomes more appealing to new riders while also lowering the demand for personal vehicles. Secondly, by converting our fleet to low/no vehicles, a process that the agency started this year and will continue to pursue aggressively.

We are excited about the opportunity to build upon the agency successes of 2021. The Board of Commissioners is appreciative of the RTA employees, our partners across City, State and Federal agencies, and most importantly our riders.

Sincerely,

Flozell Daniels, Jr.
Chairman of the Board of Commissioners

Board of Commissioners



Flozell Daniels, Jr.
*Chairman
Orleans Parish*



Mark Raymond, Jr.
*Vice Chairman
Orleans Parish*



Laura Bryan
*Commissioner
Orleans Parish*



Fred Neal, Jr.
*Commissioner
Orleans Parish*



Arthur Walton
*Commissioner
Orleans Parish*



Dr. Mostofa Sarwar
*Commissioner
Jefferson Parish*



Walter Tillery
*Commissioner
Jefferson Parish*



Sharon Wegner
*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 determines agency policy, oversees the funding, operation, and expansion of public transportation in the city. Five representatives are appointed by the Mayor of New Orleans, and three representatives are appointed by the President of Jefferson Parish.

Greetings from the CEO



The RTA continues to build the sound infrastructure of a world class transit system and I am proud of the agency’s many accomplishments this year. The RTA successfully maintained operations while overcoming new variants of COVID-19 and Hurricane Ida. I am personally grateful for our operations staff whose dedication to maintaining transit services for New Orleans has superseded any obstacles that have arisen.

This year the agency introduced new vehicles to the fleet and unveiled a new bus design, kicked off our Bus Rapid Transit study, broke ground on the St. Charles streetcar line re-paving project, and successfully pursued federal funding to boost regional transit through fare technology improvements. The agency also worked

to improve our fare structure by introducing youth and senior fares and reducing the cost of our monthly pass. Thus far the agency’s advancements have helped to improve the rider’s experience and provide quality service and amenities.

Our intense focus on delivering equitable transit services maintained as the agency began implementing a portion of the New Links network redesign. We also hired a new Chief of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and continued to forge community partnerships focused on better understanding the needs of our riders. The RTA remains steadfast in our commitment to equity and the belief that economic prosperity should be shared by all.

Despite the challenges, RTA ended 2021 with a \$14M surplus thanks to diligent fiscal oversight of staff and the \$43M in CARES ACT funding received from the federal government. The agency was able to utilize \$20M in CARES/ARP ACT revenue and expenditures to offset lower fare revenue for operation in 2021 and generated an additional \$25.1M from competitive federal grants. With the passing of the federal infrastructure bill, our teams will continue to advocate for transit funding to expand the services that meet the needs of our riders today, tomorrow, and 30 years from now.

Looking ahead, our riders remain our priority. We are excited for the next chapter as we continue to leverage our existing systems and strategies to provide a world-class transit system suited for the unique, bold, and diverse people of New Orleans.

Sincerely,

Alex Z. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

RTA Senior Leadership



Alex Z. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

Lona Edwards Hankins
Deputy CEO
Planning & Infrastructure

Mark Major
Deputy CEO
Finance & Administration

Katherine Bush Felton
Chief of Staff

Gerard Guter
Chief Operating
Officer

Detrich Hebert-Johnson
Chief Diversity, Equity,
and Inclusion Officer

Darwyn Anderson
Chief Human
Resources Officer

Gizelle Johnson-Banks
Chief Finance Officer

Robert Hickman
Chief Security Officer

Jose A. Ruiz-Garcia
Chief Marine Officer

Mike Smith
Chief Safety Officer



Black Masking Indians are a unique part of New Orleans culture whose traditions date back to the 1800s when Native Americans helped runaway slaves. Black Masking Indian culture is influenced by both ancestral enslaved Africans and the friendship forged with Native Americans.

Five Key Priorities

01

*World Class
Rider Experience*

02

Innovation

03

*Regional
Connections*

04

Equity

05

*Workforce
Development*



New Look, Improved Rider Experience

In May, the RTA debuted its 22 newly branded 35' New Flyer buses that had entered service in early May. The unveiling, held at the agency's Canal facility, featured the Warren Easton Charter High School band and included an inaugural processional down Canal Street.

The new vehicles were funded by a \$7,246,315 grant award from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) FY2019 Bus and Bus Facility competitive grant program as well as an FTA FY2020 Bus and Bus Facilities annual appropriation in the amount of \$1,115,771, plus an additional \$2,507,012 derived from revenue from the local one-cent sales tax.

In December 2021 the agency added 21 newly designed 35' New Flyer buses.

The buses were funded with a \$13M grant through the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) 2020 Bus and Bus Facilities grant program.

In December, RTA proudly announced Gary Rodney as Transit Operator of the Year and Duvalle Robichaux as the Maintenance Employee of the Year. Since bringing all operations and administrative business in-house, the agency has prioritized the importance of building a culture of recognition focused on the key values of customer service, innovation, equity, safety, and world-class riding experience.

The winners were selected based on criteria that included actively exhibiting RTA's core values, employment with the agency for a minimum of five years, and demonstrating a commitment to safety.



RTA's new vehicles are a beacon of mobility in the city. The RTA Board of Commissioners understands the importance of access through equitable, reliable transportation and why the addition of the new vehicles is just the beginning of great things to come for our riders."

Fred Neal, Jr.
RTA Commissioner



Gary Rodney
Streetcar Operator,
21 years with RTA

Mr. Rodney has an impeccable safety record with no preventable accidents/incidents within the past three years. His peers recognize Mr. Rodney as an important member of the team who is knowledgeable of the transit system. Mr. Rodney is a New Orleans native who has also been a NORD youth football coach for the past 28 years.

Duvalle Robichaux
Railway Maintenance team,
20 years with RTA

Mr. Robichaux is known for his can-do attitude. His innovation and commitment to safety have made Mr. Robichaux a valued member of the Railway team. Mr. Robichaux is also a life-long resident of New Orleans who enjoys sports and is a diehard Saints fan. He has a love for dogs and enjoys spending time with his three children.





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Our community has a great understanding and value for those who have come before us and paved the way for our future. The newest public art bus acknowledges, appreciates, and displays a profound respect for those pioneers who faced insurmountable odds, all in the name of justice and freedom for all. I am particularly pleased to honor Jerome “Big Duck” Smith in a manner relevant to youth, who has been introduced to his critical role in New Orleans and American history.

Flozell Daniels, Jr., RTA Board Chair.

Advancing Transit Equity

The RTA’s intense focus on building a world class rider experience is rooted in equity. In 2021, the agency made great strides to improve mobility while also making stronger connections with our community. The agency introduced the second public arts bus in celebration of Juneteenth, which honored living New Orleans Freedom Riders, Doratha “Dodie” Smith-Simmons and Jerome “Big Duck” Smith. The agency also entered into a partnership with JOB1 Career Solutions which will create on the job training for non-violent offenders upon their release. As the agency moves forward, better connectivity for our riders through the New Links Network Redesign which began a phased implementation in 2021.

Investing in Community

The RTA has placed an intense focus on creating sustainable relationships with small and disadvantaged businesses within our community. In order to achieve this goal, the agency has set aggressive DBE goals and holds of contractors and sub-contractors to rigorous standards to ensure that federal funding is equitably distributed within the agency’s capital projects. In 2021, the RTA exceeded our DBE goal by 123%. Within the year, the agency awarded \$7.3 million to DBE firms across a plethora of capital projects and smaller contracts supporting all aspects of the organization. The agency looks forward to continuing to grow the DBE program through extensive outreach and partnerships with local organizations in the region.

Workforce Development

RTA announced a new partnership with JOB1 Career Solutions to create On the Job Training (OTJT) training for non-violent offenders who successfully complete the requirements of the Louisiana State Penitentiary’s Auto Mechanic Apprenticeship Program upon release. This partnership is made available through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity ACT (WIOA), which is coordinated through the Louisiana Workforce Commission. The RTA will compensate participants at equivalent wages and benefits afforded regular employees and intends to transition successful participants to permanent employees once the six-month training program is completed. The agency hopes to expand this program to additional career pathways in 2022.

Transit System Redesign

The RTA is re-envisioning transit service as lead partner in the network redesign which aims to increase transit connectivity and equity. The New Links project, which began in 2019, is led by the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission (RPC) as a planning effort for a redesign of the greater New Orleans transit system which includes New Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard Parishes.

RTA and RPC planners placed an intentional focus on compiling rider and stakeholder feedback on the system, pain points, and suggestions for improvement from a series of surveys and public forums. From this data, the team compiled three transit redesign concepts which were presented to the community for feedback. The Final Recommended Network plan is designed to meet several key rider and stakeholder goals identified through the project’s outreach. The combined changes will result in a measurable improvement in transit equity, reliability, and overall rider experience.



123%

DBE Goal Exceeded



12 Rider Advisory Committee Meetings

\$7.3

Million Awarded to DBE Firms



36% Women in Executive Leadership

Fare Reduction

Making Transit More Affordable for Seniors and Youth

The agency announced a new permanent fare structure at the New Orleans City Council's December 2021 Meeting. The new fare structure aimed to simplify the fare offerings, incentivizing pass sales for riders who use multiple transit modes for their daily commutes, and offering financial relief to RTA passengers as the economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. The permanent fare structure effect on January 1, 2022.

RTA evaluated the impacts of the temporary fare pilot over the past several months concluding with the following results (1) wide adoption of the youth and senior passes, (2) operational efficiencies through fare structure simplification, (3) increased rider satisfaction, and (4) increased utilization of monthly passes. Despite the reduction in pricing on several products, RTA's passenger fare revenue per rider has remained stable.

The agency began a 6-month temporary fare pilot in July 2021, which introduced youth and senior fares and passes and reduced the costs of a 31- Day Jazzy Pass from \$55 to \$45. The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority's Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the temporary fare reductions to encourage ridership as the agency moved to reinstate full transit service and COVID-19 vaccinations rates increased throughout the region. The new permanent fare structure will include the addition of a 7-Day Jazzy Pass at \$15 and the reintroduction of the 3-Day Jazzy Pass at \$8. The new permanent fare structure will also maintain youth and senior fares. The new monthly and day pass offerings are accepted on all RTA buses, streetcars, and ferries giving riders a single purchase option to ride all transit modes. In addition, the agency has eliminated the upcharge for express routes and transfers.



RTA's introduction of senior fares helped to break mobility barriers for those within the senior community. It is wonderful to know that RTA is committed to serving the needs of all riders, no matter their age."

Howard Rogers, III
Executive Director, New Orleans Council on Aging



COVID-19 Response

The RTA continued to lead the nation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By placing an intentional emphasis on the well-being of employees the agency hosted a series of town halls addressing topics such as mental health and vaccinations. The first town hall was held in January 2021 and featured Medical Correspondent, Dr. Corey Hebert. Employees were able to ask a myriad of questions regarding vaccinations, COVID-19 safety measures, and additional ways to keep safe during these unprecedented times.

As the Delta variant became the dominant COVID-19 strain, proving highly transmissible and spiking numbers across the country, the agency once again hosted a mental health forum with Dr. Corey Hebert and Jennifer Fletcher, a Licensed Medical Social Worker and the Executive Director of the Sickle Cell Disease. The forum discussed the importance of mental health as well as physical health.

In addition, the agency implemented a vaccination mandate for all employees and contractors. The decision came as the city experienced a surge in COVID-19 cases due to the deadly and highly transmissible Delta variant. The decision to require vaccinations for all employees was built on the existing COVID-19 safety protocols instituted at the onset of the pandemic. The RTA also reinstated mandatory daily temperature checks. Vaccination exceptions were made in rare circumstances for RTA employees with documented medical or religious reasons. The RTA continued to provide all staff with PPE, including masks, gloves, and sanitizer.





Hurricane Ida Response

Hurricane Ida made landfall as a destructive Category 4 Atlantic hurricane on August 26, 2021. Ida was the second-most damaging and intense hurricane to make landfall in the state of Louisiana behind Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The hurricane's damage was extensive, causing prolonged widespread power outages across the region as well as heavy debris and damage to major infrastructure citywide. The agency quickly sprang into action providing cooling buses in

neighborhoods throughout the city. RTA worked diligently to restore service as the city regained electricity and debris were cleared. Within 5 days of the Hurricane Ida making landfall, the agency was able to restore bus service along major corridors of the city helping residents get to essential destinations like food, healthcare facilities, and hurricane relief resource centers.

Throughout the city's recovery efforts. RTA assisted in evacuating 12 living

facilities, made 260 evacuation trips from various EvacuSpots around the city rescuing 908 people by transporting them to the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center to be transported to shelters around the state. Our Paratransit team made 100 residential visits to paratransit clients ensuring they had the necessities to maintain as the city continued recovery efforts.

5

Bus service restored
5 days after landfall

100

residential visits to
paratransit clients

12

senior living facilities
evacuated

908

people rescued

42

cooling buses

260

total evacuation trips

Transit Infrastructure Improvements



Canal Street Ferry Terminal

The RTA continues to make progress on the Canal Street Ferry Terminal redevelopment project. The two-year redevelopment project replaces the existing terminal with a smaller, modern, ADA compliant terminal and bridge. Once completed, the new terminal will create a seamless Riverfront connecting Audubon Aquarium to Spanish Plaza.

The total project budget is \$43,541,062 and is funded by contributions from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Regional Transit Authority (RTA), City of New Orleans, and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD). The project is expected to be completed December 2022.

Bus Rapid Transit Study

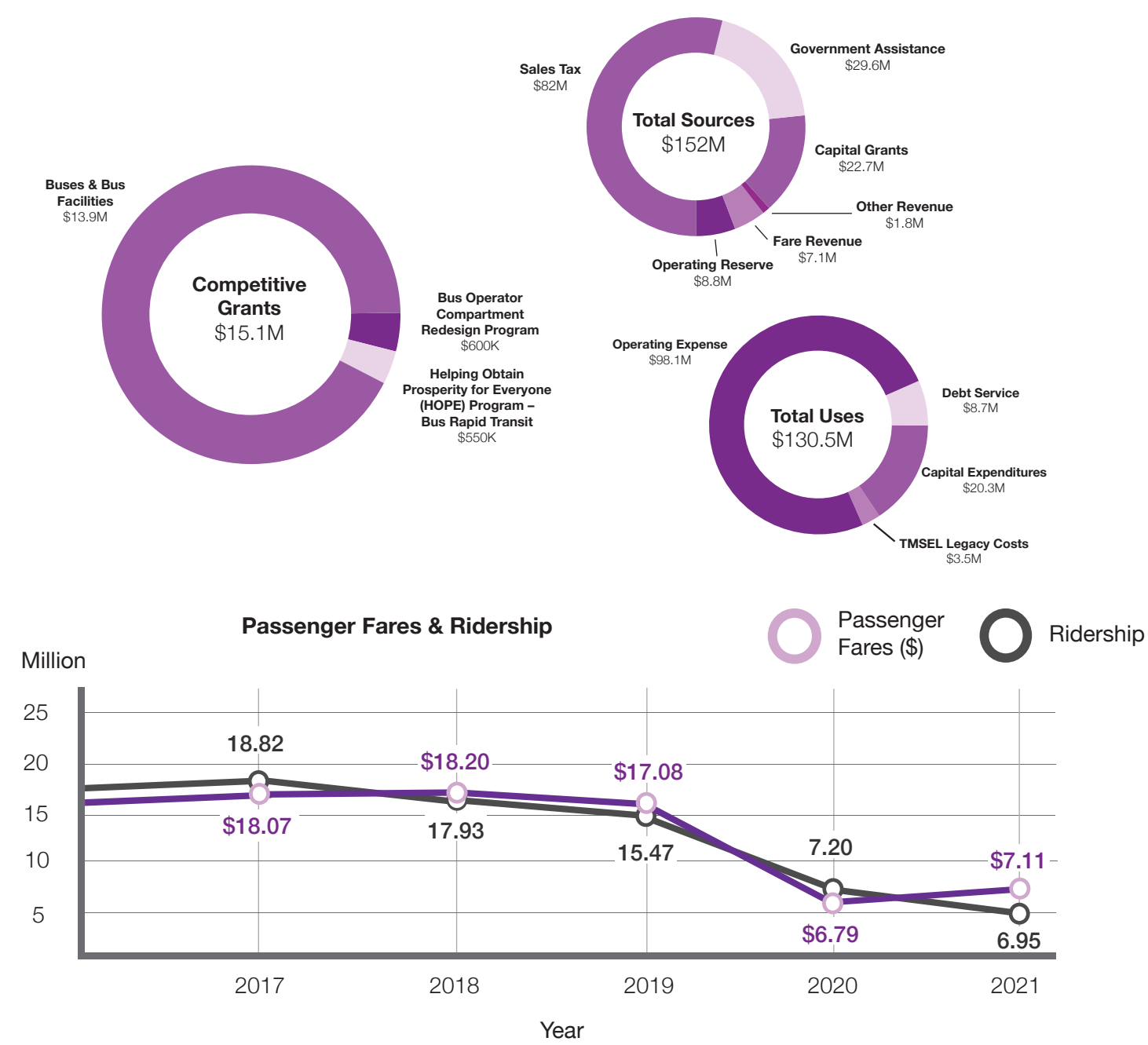
The RTA kicked off a 10-month long feasibility study for a proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor. The study is initially for a dedicated transit corridor between East New Orleans and downtown with a possible extension to Algiers. The project will help the RTA to improve transit equity by significantly reducing commute times within the region. The project will deliver design standards for BRT on any corridor in the region and a corridor-specific plan with preliminary design, conceptual operations, construction costs, and funding strategies for the proposed corridor. BRT is a high-quality bus-based transit mode that will deliver fast and efficient service that will include dedicated lanes, busways, and traffic signal priority. The RTA seeks to utilize BRT,

a national best practice, to improve transit times for residents on critical corridors throughout the region with an emphasis on the West Bank and East New Orleans, areas which analysis shows longer commute times to downtown. The study is funded by the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) grant program which supports projects that will improve transit services or facilities in areas of persistent poverty through planning, engineering, or development of technical, or financing plans for projects. The RTA was awarded \$550,000 in 2020 as one of 25 projects in 17 states that received a share of approximately \$8.5 million in funding.



Financial Summary

As COVID-19 continued to impact New Orleans, major events that fueled the economy were cancelled and many local businesses closed. The loss of sales tax dollars left a hole in transit funding and primed RTA for a budget deficit. RTA’s 2021 operating revenue of \$90M fell within 1% of our budget. 2021 passenger fares of \$7.2M were 25% below projections but were 5% greater than 2020. Total operating expenses of \$98M were below the projected \$110M. RTA’s Federal advocacy efforts provided \$20M in CARES/ARP ACT revenue and expenditures to offset fare revenue and generated \$25.1M from competitive federal grants. At the close of fiscal year 2021, RTA is operating in a \$12M surplus with \$14M in reserves.



Amounts in Thousands	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual
OPERATING REVENUES					
TAX REVENUES					
Sales Tax - General Use	\$ 66,370	\$ 71,048	\$ 73,322	\$ 57,914	\$ 70,691
Sales Tax - State Motor Vehicle	\$ 5,436	\$ 5,397	\$ 5,321	\$ 5,384	\$ 6,056
Sales Tax - Hotel Motel	\$ 6,405	\$ 6,987	\$ 7,073	\$ 2,968	\$ 5,268
Total Sales Tax Revenues	\$ 78,210	\$ 83,432	\$ 85,716	\$ 66,266	\$ 82,015
TRANSIT REVENUES					
Fares	\$ 18,070	\$ 18,202	\$ 17,078	\$ 6,799	\$ 7,110
Other Revenues	\$ 2,359	\$ 2,761	\$ 2,428	\$ 2,175	\$ 1,767
Total Fare & Other Revenue	\$ 20,430	\$ 20,962	\$ 19,506	\$ 8,974	\$ 8,877
GOVERNMENT OPERATING GRANTS					
Preventive Maintenance	\$ 11,769	\$ 13,884	\$ 13,583	\$ 13,158	\$ 13,364
Other Fed. Sources (JARC/New Freedom)	\$ 1,971	\$ 10	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ -
State Parish Transportation Fund	\$ 10	\$ 1,879	\$ 1,932	\$ 1,928	\$ 1,954
CARES Act (COVID19) Funding	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 43,852	\$ 14,017
Total Government Operating Grants	\$ 13,750	\$ 15,773	\$ 15,515	\$ 59,838	\$ 29,335
Total Operating Revenues	\$ 112,390	\$ 120,167	\$ 120,737	\$ 133,660	\$ 120,226
OPERATING EXPENSES					
TRANSIT EXPENSES					
Labor & Fringe Benefits	\$ 318	\$ 338	\$ 2,739	\$ 8,066	\$ 71,134
Post-Retirement Benefits	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ -
Contract Services	\$ 79,676	\$ 85,825	\$ 81,315	\$ 83,220	\$ 9,807
Insurance & Self-insured costs	\$ 12,258	\$ 4,856	\$ 1,168	\$ 7,566	\$ 7,656
Materials, Fuel, & Supplies	\$ 3,578	\$ 4,554	\$ 4,330	\$ 2,851	\$ 7,319
Utilities	\$ 1,489	\$ 1,424	\$ 1,419	\$ 1,355	\$ 1,393
Taxes, Other Than Payroll	\$ 433	\$ 448	\$ 457	\$ 389	\$ 336
Miscellaneous	\$ 253	\$ 140	\$ 180	\$ 147	\$ 271
Leases	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 16	\$ 127	\$ 214
Total Transit Operating Expenses	\$ 98,004	\$ 97,587	\$ 91,626	\$ 103,720	\$ 98,130
TMSEL Legacy Costs	\$ 3,547	\$ 4,909	\$ 22,794	\$ 2,056	\$ 3,492
Maritime Operations - Revenue	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ (14,173)	\$ (21,079)
Maritime Operations - Expenses	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 14,173	\$ 21,079
Income from Operations	\$ 10,838	\$ 17,672	\$ 6,317	\$ 27,884	\$ 18,605
NON-OPERATING REVENUE (EXPENSES)					
Investment Income	\$ 476	\$ 693	\$ 930	\$ 114	\$ 45
Debt Service, Net	\$ (13,417)	\$ (14,745)	\$ (14,584)	\$ (9,503)	\$ (8,659)
Total Non-Operating Revenues (Expenses)	\$ (12,941)	\$ (14,052)	\$ (13,653)	\$ (9,390)	\$ (8,614)
Net Loss Before Capital Contributions	\$ (2,103)	\$ 3,620	\$ (7,336)	\$ 18,494	\$ 9,991
CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS					
Total Federal Sources	\$ 11,521	\$ 3,372	\$ 4,099	\$ 8,325	\$ 16,127
RTA Capital Bond Funds	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Other Local Sources/Restricted Capital Res.	\$ 5,775	\$ 5,537	\$ 1,064	\$ 2,188	\$ 3,651
FEMA Project Worksheets	\$ 2,235	\$ 2,758	\$ 1,864	\$ 260	\$ 226
FEMA Project Worksheets Expenditures	\$ (1,622)	\$ (2,744)	\$ (1,872)	\$ (260)	\$ (226)
Capital Expenditures	\$ (17,296)	\$ (8,909)	\$ (5,163)	\$ (10,513)	\$ (20,261)
Total Capital Contributions	\$ 612	\$ 13	\$ (8)	\$ 0	\$ (483)
Change in Operating Contributions	\$ (1,490)	\$ 3,633	\$ (7,344)	\$ 18,494	\$ 9,508
Recovery Ratio	\$ 18.4%	\$ 18.7%	\$ 18.6%	\$ 6.6%	\$ 0.072
	\$ 1,490,482	\$ (3,633,238)	\$ 7,344,372	\$ (4,559,235)	\$ 9,508,887



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