



2020 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 CEO



I am proud of the many accomplishments of the RTA this year, including transitioning operations and maintenance in-house, improving accessibility along the St. Charles Streetcar Line, entering two new ferries into revenue service, breaking ground on the new Canal Street Ferry Terminal and successfully pursuing federal funding to improve regional transit by studying Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The RTA team delivered all of this simultaneously managing with the unprecedented challenges associated with an overactive hurricane season and the COVID-19 global pandemic. The RTA maintained essential transit throughout the region and thanks to the RTA Board of Commissioners advocacy, we were able to maintain full employment of all staff during this time of crisis. I am personally grateful for our operations staff who

courageously put themselves in harm's way while fulfilling our obligation to maintain essential transit service for New Orleans. Our teams worked diligently to ensure that transportation remained a viable mobility option as riders carried out essential activities like getting to work, going to the grocery store, or getting to healthcare.

I am also proud of the intensive focus our team placed on delivering equitable transit service. As a lead partner in the development of the New Links Transit Redesign Plan, developing an internal Race and Social Justice Toolkit, and forging community partnerships to better understand and meet the needs of New Orleanians, the RTA has demonstrated its commitment to equity, community and the belief that economic prosperity should be shared by all.

Despite the crippling effects of the pandemic, the RTA ended 2020 with a \$18.5M surplus thanks to diligent fiscal oversight of the RTA staff and the \$43M in CARES ACT funding received from the federal government. Looking ahead, our riders remain our top priority. We strive to continually provide safe, equitable, and reliable transit services for the citizens of New Orleans. Our teams will continue to advocate for transit at all levels to provide the necessary funding to grow service that meets to needs of our riders today, tomorrow and 30 years from now.

We are excited for the next chapter in RTA's story and look forward to providing a world-class transit system suited for the unique, bold, and diverse people of New Orleans.

Sincerely,

Alex Z. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

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

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RTA Senior Leadership



Alex Z. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

Katherine Bush Felton
Chief of Staff

Lona Edwards Hankins
*Deputy CEO
Infrastructure*

Mark Major
*Deputy CEO
Operations & Administration*

Thomas Stringer
*Deputy CEO
Chief Operations Officer*

Darwyn Anderson
Chief Human Resources Officer

Gizelle Banks
Chief Finance Officer

Robert Hickman
Chief Security Officer

Jose Ruiz
Chief Marine Officer

Michael J. Smith
Chief Safety Officer



Mardi Gras Indians are an unique part of New Orleans culture whose traditions date back to the 1800s when Native Americans helped runaway slaves. Mardi Gras 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*



The New RTA

Transitioned Operations In-House

In December 2020, the New Orleans, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority announced the completion of the agency's transition to bring all operations and maintenance functions in-house. Since 2009 RTA operated with a delegated management model. Though COVID-19 impacted transit operations, RTA forged ahead with its plan to restructure the agency and in December 2020, completed the final steps to bring all operations and maintenance staff in-house. This accomplishment came 2 years after the RTA Board commissioned an independent management analysis which recommended hiring a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that would be directly accountable to the Board and the public. This change would help the agency shift from a post-Katrina emergency management model to community governance model. Alex Z. Wiggins was hired as the agency's first publicly appointed CEO since 2009.

Moving away from the delegated management model, would empower local leadership to make operational changes to improve the transit experience for New Orleans riders.

Today all bus, streetcar, and paratransit operators, as well as, maintenance personnel are directly employed by the RTA. The transition not only signified a shift in management structure, but also served as a reset to the core values and culture of the agency. The new RTA places an intense focus on public service, improving service reliability, advancing transit equity, contributing to the local economy by investing in workforce development and job creation, and partnering with New Links to build a regional transit system that better meets the needs of our riders. With this historic change, the RTA is poised to make good on its commitment to create a world class transit system that is both equitable and reliable.



RTA's consolidation of its operations is another important step in the agency's turnaround with new leadership and improved collaboration with the City...We look forward to continued progress in 2021.

LaToya Cantrell
Mayor of New Orleans

“Transit equity is the driving force behind the decision to bring RTA operations in house. We understand the importance of transit and the role it plays in the viability of families.”

Flozell Daniels, Jr., Chair
RTA Board of Commissioners

“We will continue to build a world class transit system while focusing on our goals of improving on time performance, building a culture of safety, and providing the best customer service for our riders.”

Alex Z. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

Fast Facts

- Transitioned 736 Transdev employees to RTA
- Improved employee health benefit packages for 2021
- Transitioned upwards of 30 operational contracts from Transdev to the RTA
- Created new agency org charts and implemented an extensive Qualification Review Process to re-align employment needs
- Trained over 478 Operations team employees under the revised Conflict De-Escalation and Customer Service Program
- Created new policies, an Employee Handbook and Code of Conduct
- Created a Drug and Alcohol Program for the RTA

Advancing Transit Equity

The RTA aims to set a new national standard in how transit agencies approach transit equity. By setting aggressive Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) utilization goals, forwarding employment equity through re-entry and development programs, instituting its Race and Social Justice Toolkit, creating better transit options in the West Bank and New Orleans East and as the lead partner in the New Links network redesign, the RTA is aggressively working to create an equitable transit system. As the RTA looks to implement many of these improvements, the RTA is committed to working with our federal transit partner to ensure new federal policies support local equity goals.

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.

The planning team, comprised of 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. This new network plan would increase the number of people living within a half mile of buses with 15- or 20-minute headways. It will improve service for residents who live in poverty and for households without cars. The system will be better coordinated across parish lines to reduce redundancy and make transfers between systems easier. The new plan would establish transfer hubs in the West Bank, East New Orleans, St. Bernard, and Jefferson Parishes which will allow more frequent service by shortening run times on major routes to the downtown corridors. Combined, these changes will result in a measurable improvement in transit equity, reliability, and overall rider experience.

Public Arts Partnership

New Orleans is a city built on diversity, resulting in a rich and unique culture. It is a city whose livelihood flourishes and often rebounds on the voracity and resiliency of the people, their cultural intelligence and their adoration for the arts and the artists themselves. In beat with that cultural rhythm, the RTA has focused on being a better community partner by joining forces with New Orleans' artist Brandan "BMike" Odum and Ashe Cultural Arts Center to create its first public art bus. BMike, nationally celebrated for

his poetic and passionate pieces surrounding political activism depicting brightly colored political figures, contemporary creatives, and everyday people, graciously agreed to allow the RTA to use his art in a traveling art exhibit which launched in November 2020 and has brought an uplifting message celebrating African American youth to the community. The RTA is proud to be a part of this community and is honored to do its part to ensure that New Orleans culture endures and prosperity is shared by all.



106%

DBE Goal Met



12 Rider Advisory Committee Meetings

\$11.6

Million Awarded to DBE Firms



33% Women in Executive Leadership



Transportation is about more than just getting from one place to another, but it's about how you get there. Ashé Cultural Arts Center is excited to partner with the Regional Transit Authority and Studio BE to create a public transit experience that delivers service with dignity, celebrates community identity, and honors the contributions of our most relied upon, yet least rewarded residents.

Asali DeVan Ecclesiastes, Chief Equity Officer
Ashé Cultural Arts Center

Accessibility

St. Charles Avenue Streetcar

In December 2020, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority introduced ADA compliant streetcars into revenue service along the St. Charles streetcar route. The three new streetcars are equipped with wheelchair lifts at the front and rear of each car to better accommodate riders with limited mobility and those who use wheelchairs and walkers. To help riders identify the ADA compliant streetcars, the new cars are marked with the universal accessibility icon on the front and side indicating ADA accessibility. The project also included modification of 12 St. Charles Streetcar Line stops, six inbound and six outbound. These stations were rebuilt to feature platforms wide enough for streetcar operators to safely deploy streetcars Limited Mobility (ADA) Ramps, installation of yellow tactile warning strips, installation of protective bollards, and re-grading stations to provide level ADA compliant surfaces.

The project was jointly funded by RTA and the City of New Orleans with \$160,000 for engineering and construction administrative services and \$400,000 for engineering costs. The new ADA St. Charles Streetcars are three retrofitted Riverfront streetcars. The cars were painted inside and out to match the historic Perley Thomas cars. The line is a National Historic Landmark featuring the famed green “Perley Thomas” streetcars. Each streetcar is entirely fabricated in

house by our skilled team of artisans at the Willow Streetcar Barn.

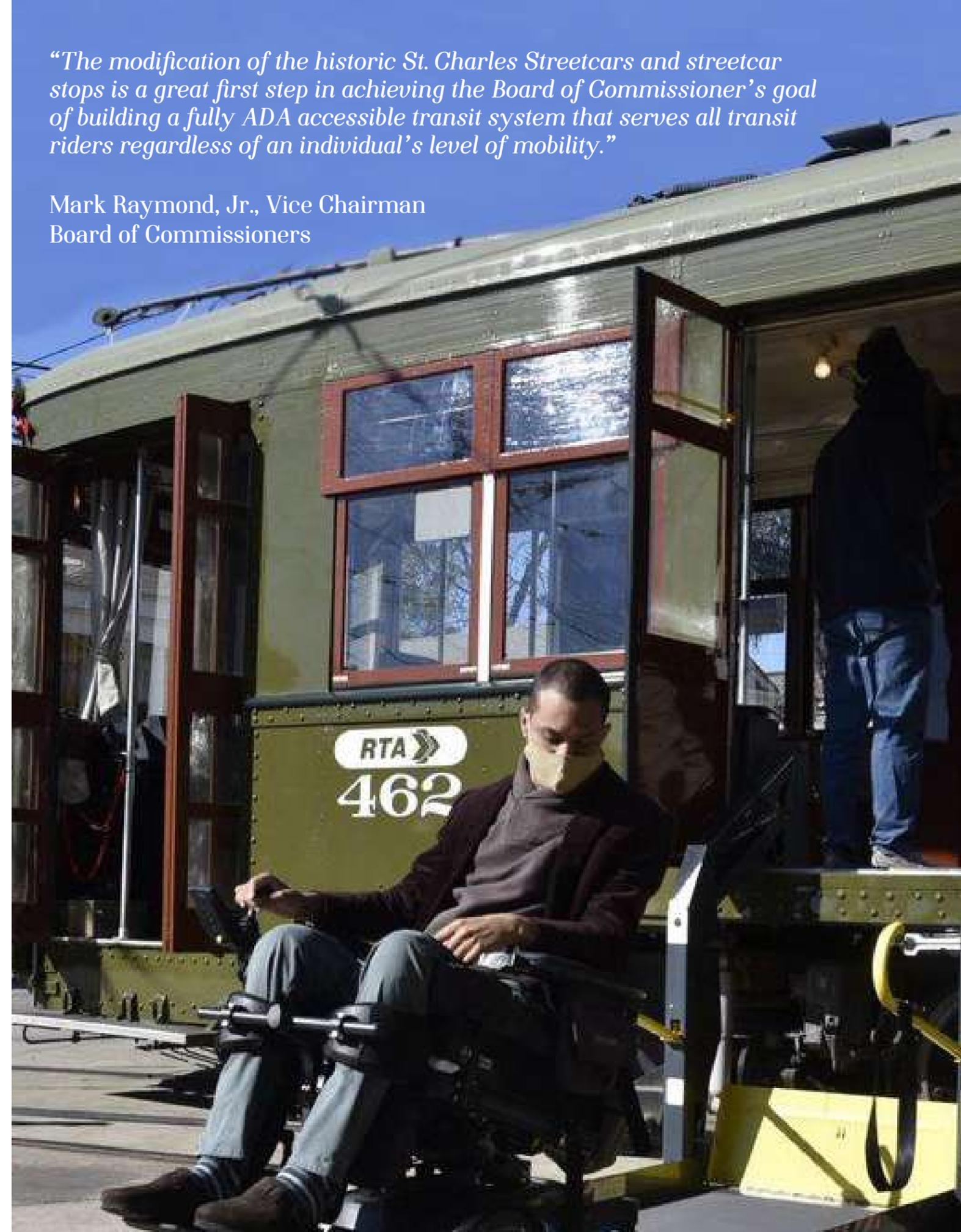
MOVE Mobility Pilot

In June 2020, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority received funding through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Mobility for All Pilot Program to be used for the MOVE East NOLA pilot program. MOVE (Mobility On-Demand Vehicle Express) will provide enhanced mobility and connectivity for New Orleans East residents with low incomes, seniors, and persons with disabilities to assist with making vital transportation connections to healthcare options that are often inaccessible due to distance. The pilot will utilize a fleet of three lift equipped vehicles to transport patients to and from medical appointments. Riders can preschedule pick-ups and request “on-demand” return trips using a personal app designed specifically for this project.

RTA plans to leverage the pilot program, which is geared towards the paratransit community and riders with mobility issues, to be the precursor for accessible transit solutions for all riders in the New Orleans East area and beyond.

“The modification of the historic St. Charles Streetcars and streetcar stops is a great first step in achieving the Board of Commissioner’s goal of building a fully ADA accessible transit system that serves all transit riders regardless of an individual’s level of mobility.”

Mark Raymond, Jr., Vice Chairman
Board of Commissioners



New Ferries Enter Service

The RTA introduced two new ferry vessels, RTA 1 and RTA 2, into its maritime fleet. This new style ferry vessel first entered service in October 2020. Both vessels service the Algiers Point – Canal Street route and are used interchangeably to allow for seamless service during routine maintenance, trainings, or deep cleanings. The Col. Frank X. Armiger, which previously serviced the route, will be available to provide service on an as needed basis. Both vessels are a 105-foot, 150-passenger, BMT-designed, aluminum high-speed catamaran passenger ferries.

“*The RTA 1 and RTA 2 are game changers for RTA ferry service. We are proud to provide reliable ferry service for our region.*”

Jose Ruiz
Chief Marine Officer

Much of the \$19M in funding for RTA 1 and RTA 2 comes from a \$15.2M award from the Federal Transit Administration’s 2015 Passenger Ferry Grant program for the construction of the two vessels and the Canal Street Ferry Terminal re-development project. The State of Louisiana provided the required local funding match in the amount of \$3.8M. Additionally, the RTA annually receives roughly \$5.1M in operating funds from the State to support ferry operations and maintenance.





Emergency Response

On the heels of the Hard Rock Hotel building collapse at the close of 2019, New Orleans faced a number of new challenges early into 2020. A record breaking hurricane season, along with the prolonged impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic shined light on the New Orleans team's resilience while setting precedent for future emergency response.

The 2020 hurricane season resulted in the activation of the RTA's Incident Command System (ICS) seven times in response to the extreme weather. After Hurricane Zeta made landfall, RTA crews worked diligently to begin restoration of transit service within 24 hours. And while New Orleans was narrowly spared from the wrath of Hurricane Laura, the RTA supported countless evacuees by providing shuttle service

between hotels and support centers. However, most significant and prolonged was the agency's emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the new protocols which resulted. Unlike anything we had experienced in modern history, COVID-19 universally stopped us in our tracks and nearly shuttered every transit agency world-wide. The pandemic emergency response was priority for the greater portion of 2020 even as RTA continued to manage the Hard Rock collapse and an active hurricane season.

With the safety of our riders and frontline staff at the forefront, the New Orleans RTA swiftly became innovators, employing many new strategies and establishing a cross departmental COVID safety team that met daily to ensure response remained adequate and

agile. Through this team many tactics were deployed across the agency to minimize community spread of COVID-19. Notably, New Orleans RTA was one of the pioneer agencies to retrofit and install Plexiglas barriers on its vehicle fleet. Similarly, RTA was one of the first agencies impacted by COVID and acquired and distributed PPE to frontline staff early, offered Hazard Pay and COVID leave to employees, and instituted enhanced daily bus cleaning and disinfecting protocols for the fleet in addition to a number of other measures.

Through the CARES Act, RTA received \$43 million in federal aid and later received an additional \$26 million to support COVID safety initiatives and continued transit operations.



7 named storms



2,952 shuttle trips

for Hurricane Laura evacuees



1,120 gallons of disinfectant

used to sanitize vehicles



154,500 masks

distributed to transit operators and riders



Canal Street Ferry Terminal Groundbreaking

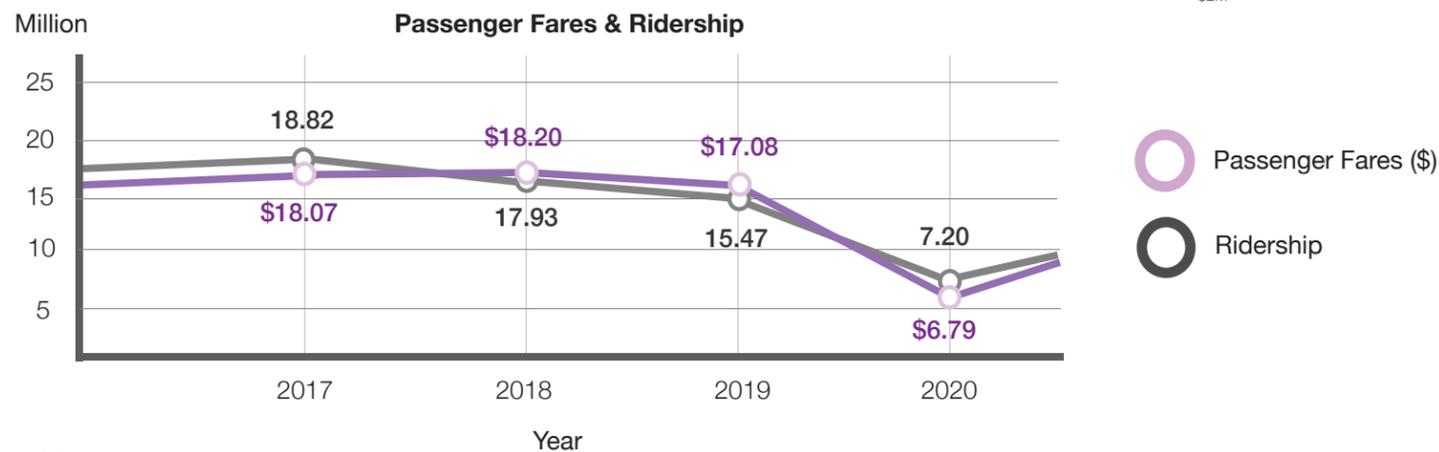
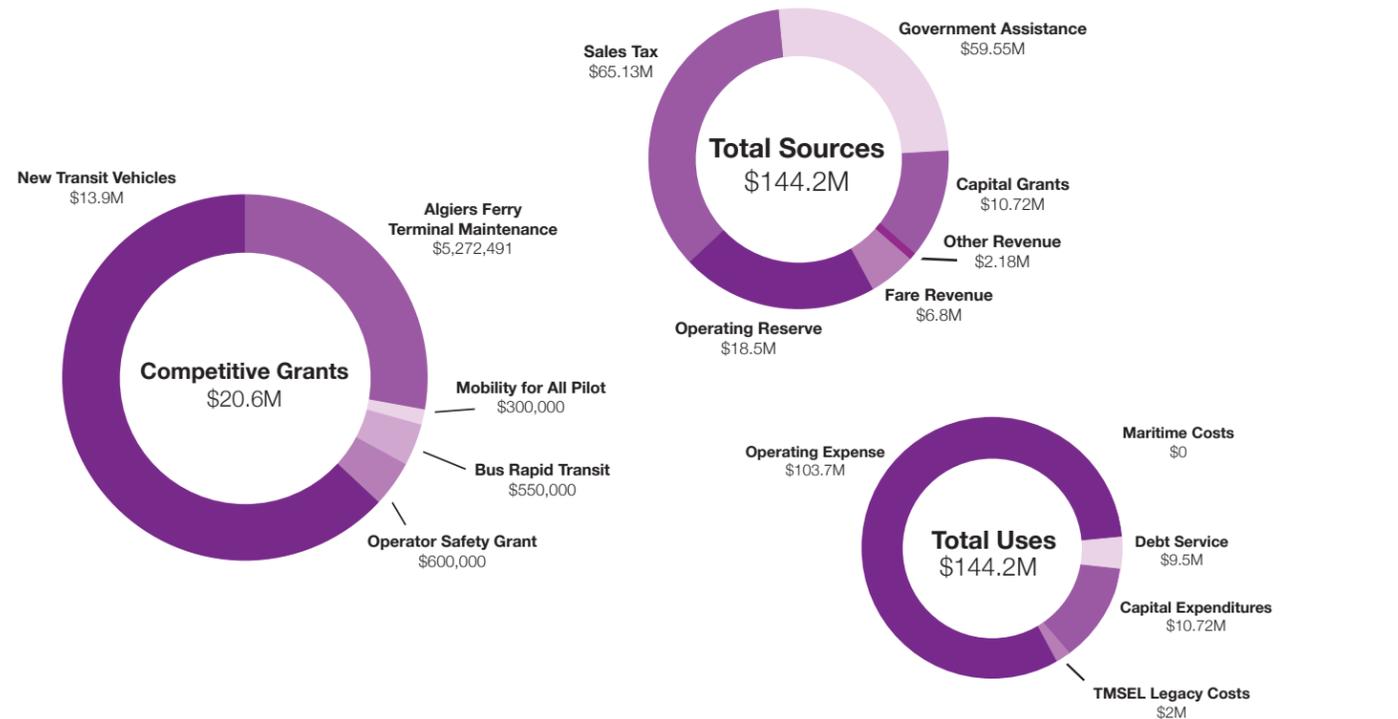
The RTA broke ground on the Canal Street Ferry Terminal in November 2020 which kicked off a two-year redevelopment project that will replace the existing terminal with a smaller, modern, ADA compliant terminal and bridge. Once completed, the new terminal will create a seamless Riverfront connecting Audubon Aquarium to Spanish Plaza. Construction is anticipated to be completed by Summer 2022.

The Canal Street ferry terminal project has a total budget of \$43.5M 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 FTA's 2015 Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant program provided \$12M for the ferry terminal redevelopment accompanied by an additional \$12M in other Federal Transit Administration funding sources. The State of Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development provided the local funding match in the amount of \$2M. Additional funding of approximately of \$12M is provided through matches from the City of New Orleans and Regional Transit Authority in addition to a \$5M land match.

The project will focus on opening the Riverfront and re-envisioning the connectivity between all transit modes to provide safe, reliable connections for riders.

Financial Summary

As COVID-19 made local impact, many of the normalcies New Orleanians cherish and had come to take for granted were brought to a complete halt. Major events that fueled New Orleans' economy such as Mardi Gras, Jazz Fest, Essence Fest, and Voodoo Fest had been cancelled due to the pandemic, many locally owned restaurants, shops and business were forced to close their doors. The loss of the sales tax dollars that help fund RTA's transit operations left a gaping hole in transit funding and primed RTA for an eventual budget deficit. However, with the federal aid provided through the CARES Act, there was a path forward offering hope for the RTA. But the agency was not out of danger, careful management of our resources amid this global crisis and the additional federal aid extended through the CARES Act was key. Despite a year of challenges, at the close of fiscal year 2020, the RTA is operating in a \$18.9 million surplus and \$30 million in reserves.



Amounts in Millions

2017 Actual 2018 Actual 2019 Actual 2020 Actual (Unaudited) 2021 Budget

OPERATING REVENUES

TAX REVENUES

Sales Tax - General Use	\$	66,370	\$	71,048	\$	73,322	\$	57,076	\$	61,881
Sales Tax - State Motor Vehicle	\$	5,436	\$	5,397	\$	5,321	\$	5,036	\$	6,056
Sales Tax - Hotel Motel	\$	6,405	\$	6,987	\$	7,073	\$	3,023	\$	3,330
Total Sales Tax Revenues	\$	78,210	\$	83,432	\$	85,716	\$	65,135	\$	71,268

TRANSIT REVENUES

Fares	\$	18,070	\$	18,202	\$	17,078	\$	6,799	\$	9,529
Other Revenues	\$	2,359	\$	2,761	\$	2,428	\$	2,175	\$	1,575
Total Fare & Other Revenue	\$	20,430	\$	20,962	\$	19,506	\$	8,974	\$	11,103

GOVERNMENT OPERATING GRANTS

Preventive Maintenance	\$	11,769	\$	13,884	\$	13,583	\$	13,772	\$	13,522
Other Fed. Sources (JARC/New Freedom)	\$	1,971	\$	10	\$	0	\$	0	\$	0
State Parish Transportation Fund	\$	10	\$	1,879	\$	1,932	\$	1,928	\$	1,954
CARES Act (COVID19) Funding	\$	0	\$	0	\$	0	\$	43,852	\$	13,214
Total Government Operating Grants	\$	13,750	\$	15,773	\$	15,515	\$	59,552	\$	28,689
Total Operating Revenues	\$	112,390	\$	120,167	\$	120,737	\$	133,661	\$	111,060

OPERATING EXPENSES

TRANSIT EXPENSES

Labor & Fringe Benefits	\$	318	\$	338	\$	2,739	\$	8,066	\$	71,991
Post-Retirement Benefits	\$	0	\$	0	\$	0	\$	0	\$	0
Contract Services	\$	79,676	\$	85,825	\$	81,315	\$	83,220	\$	10,282
Insurance & Self-insured costs	\$	12,258	\$	4,856	\$	1,168	\$	7,566	\$	7,974
Materials, Fuel, & Supplies	\$	3,578	\$	4,554	\$	4,330	\$	2,851	\$	8,670
Utilities	\$	1,489	\$	1,424	\$	1,419	\$	1,355	\$	1,484
Taxes, Other Than Payroll	\$	433	\$	448	\$	457	\$	389	\$	431
Miscellaneous	\$	253	\$	140	\$	180	\$	147	\$	672
Leases	\$	0	\$	0	\$	16	\$	127	\$	180
Total Transit Operating Expenses	\$	98,004	\$	97,587	\$	91,626	\$	103,720	\$	101,685
TMSEL Legacy Costs	\$	3,547	\$	4,909	\$	22,794	\$	2,056	\$	2,129
Maritime Operations - Revenue							\$	(14,173)		
Maritime Operations - Expenses	\$	0	\$	0	\$	0	\$	14,173	\$	0
Income from Operations	\$	10,838	\$	17,672	\$	6,317	\$	27,884	\$	7,246

NON-OPERATING REVENUE (EXPENSES)

Investment Income	\$	476	\$	693	\$	930	\$	114	\$	0
Debt Service, Net	\$	(13,417)	\$	(14,745)	\$	(14,584)	\$	(9,503)	\$	(8,061)
Total Non-Operating Revenues (Expenses)	\$	(12,941)	\$	(14,052)	\$	(13,653)	\$	(9,390)	\$	(8,061)
Net Loss Before Capital Contributions	\$	(2,103)	\$	3,620	\$	(7,336)	\$	18,494	\$	(815)

CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Total Federal Sources	\$	11,521	\$	3,372	\$	4,099	\$	8,325	\$	12,478
RTA Capital Bond Funds	\$	0	\$	0	\$	0	\$	0	\$	0
Other Local Sources/Restricted Capital Res.	\$	5,775	\$	5,537	\$	1,064	\$	2,188	\$	3,995
FEMA Project Worksheets Expenditures	\$	2,235	\$	2,758	\$	1,864	\$	(260)	\$	1,058
Capital Expenditures	\$	(17,296)	\$	(8,909)	\$	(5,163)	\$	(10,513)	\$	(16,472)
FEMA Project Worksheets Expenditures	\$	(1,622)	\$	(2,744)	\$	(1,872)	\$	260	\$	(1,073)
Total Capital Contributions	\$	612	\$	13	\$	(8)	\$	0	\$	(15)
Change in Operating Contributions	\$	(1,490)	\$	3,633	\$	(7,344)	\$	18,494	\$	(830)
Recovery Ratio		18.4%		18.7%		18.6%		6.6%		9.4%
	\$	1,490,482	\$	(3,633,238)	\$	7,344,372	\$	(4,559,235)	\$	830,338



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