



*Regional Transit Authority*

## **BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) FEASIBILITY STUDY**

### **Re: Community Advisory Committee Meeting #1 Notes**

January 25 – 27, 2022  
via Zoom Call

#### **BRT FEASIBILITY STUDY TEAM**

##### **RTA**

- Alex Wiggins, CEO
- Lona Hankins, Deputy CEO for Planning & Infrastructure
- Dwight Norton, Sr. Director of Strategic and Long-Term Planning

##### **Project Consultant Team Representatives**

- Iam Tucker – ILSI – Prime Consultant
- Geneva Coleman & Karimah Stewart – Hawthorne Agency – Public Engagement
- Bobby Hosack – HNTB – Planning Consultant

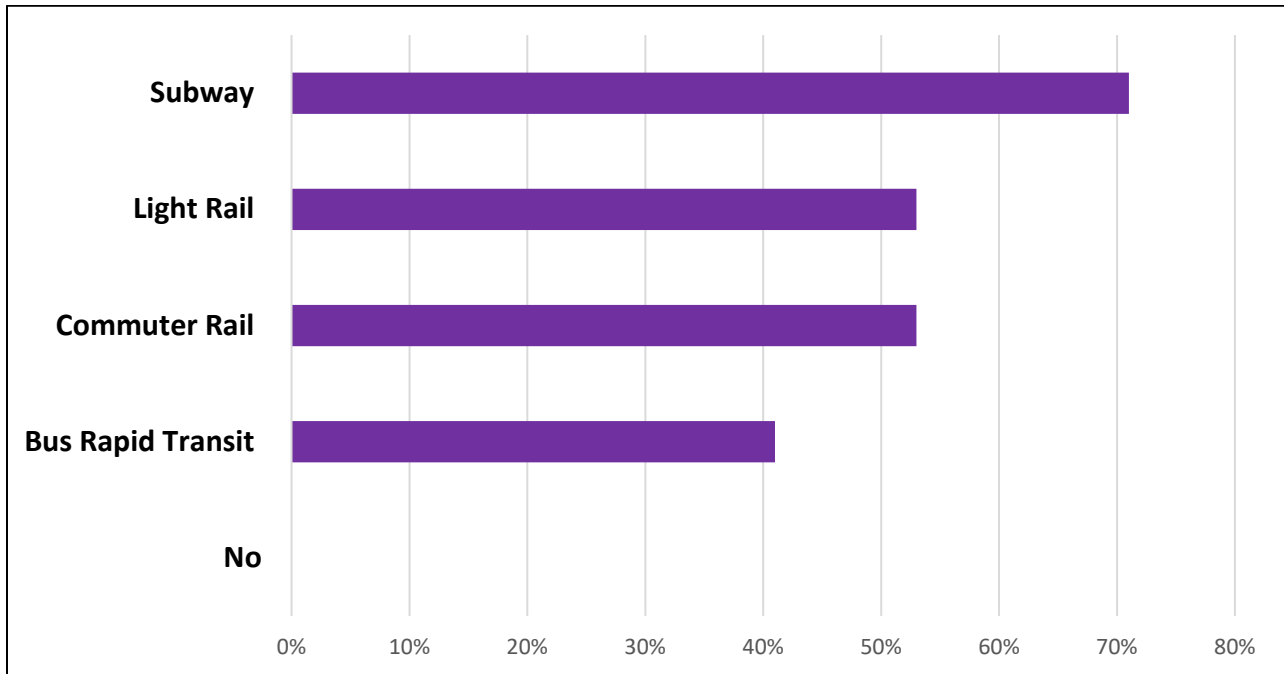
#### **INTRODUCTION**

The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA) hosted three different virtual kick off meetings for its Community Advisory Committee as a part of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Feasibility Study. The Community Advisory Committee gathering was broken into three separate meetings to accommodate the geographical representation of the committee members. The first meeting included representatives from Algiers (January 25), the second included representatives from Gentilly/7<sup>th</sup> Ward (January 26), and the third included representatives from New Orleans East (January 27). These three geographical groups were chosen based on the study area of the BRT Feasibility Study.

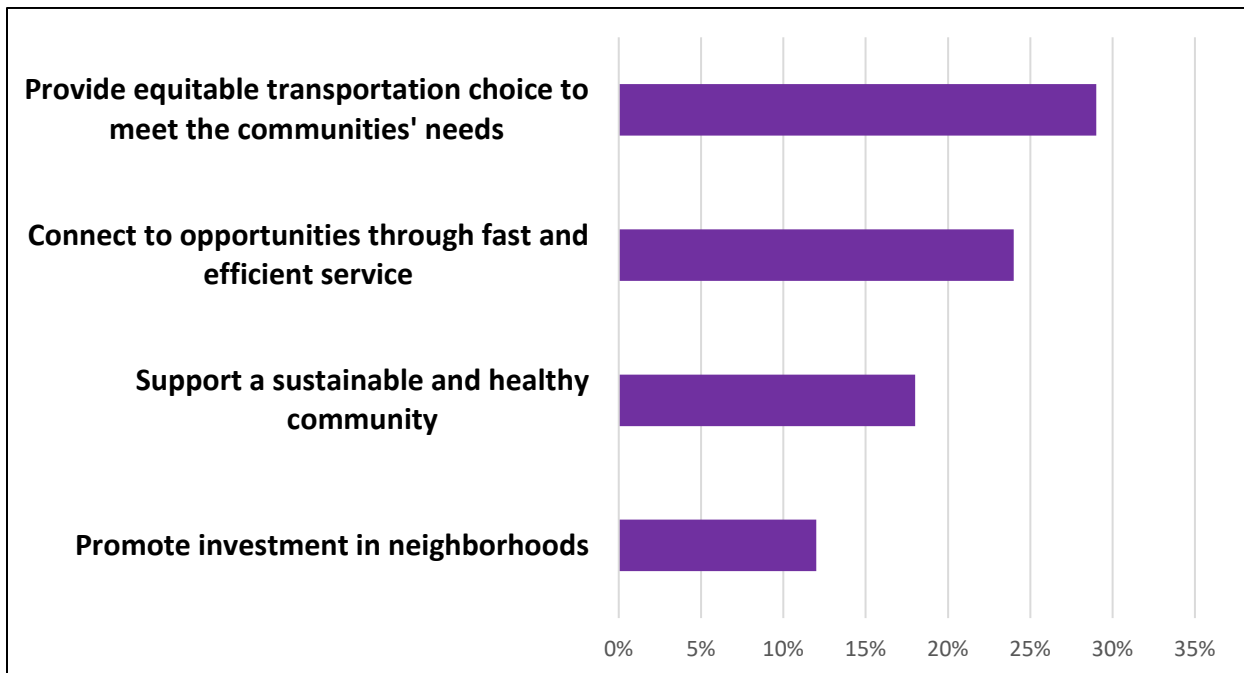
#### **MEETING SUMMARY**

The Community Advisory Committee meeting included a presentation that touched on the purpose and background of the BRT study as well as a brief roadmap for the future of BRT in New Orleans. During the presentation, committee members were asked to give their input on several different poll questions. The results of the polls are below:

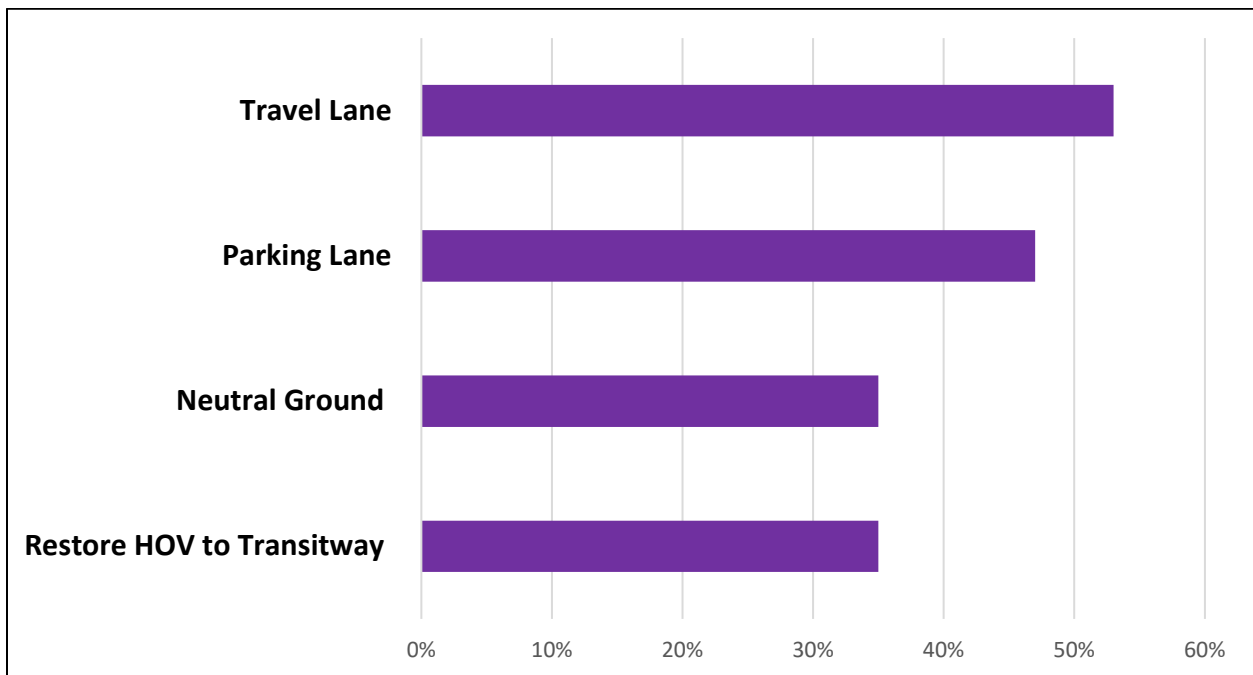
**Poll Question #1: Have you ever experienced a high-capacity transit system? (Check all that apply)**



**Poll Question #2: Of our goals, what is the most important to you? (Pick one)**



**Poll Question #3: What tradeoffs do you currently support for fast and reliable transit?**



**GENERAL COMMENTS**

- Restaurant and hotel employees that work downtown probably have very valuable input to lend to the study because the parking rates are so unreasonable.
- Would appreciate a Powerpoint that committee members could use to present to different organizations around their community and gather feedback that they could then pass on to the RTA.
- Reach out and use Blue Bikes as a resource. The data they have from their ridership may be useful information.
- Consider collaborating with the New Orleans Complete Streets Coalition for education efforts around BRT.
- Need to help folks move beyond the stigma that transit is for the poor. We need to make sure that people understand that it is a convenient service.
- New Orleans East is one of the few areas of the state that has a national wildlife refuge at Bayou Sauvage – that should be considered in the study.
- BRT can be a real game-changer for bringing tourists into New Orleans East.
- BRT is a convenience, but also an opportunity for economic growth in New Orleans East

## **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

### **New Orleans East**

- Q: How many miles is the corridor?
  - A: Approximately 10 – 12-mile study area.
- Q: How would construction take for the BRT corridor, and how would construction impact surrounding businesses?
  - A: RTA has estimated for approximately 1.5 years of construction, but that will also depend on the extent of the design. Construction will be divided into segments, not done all at once. It will depend on what the final design looks like. For example, BRT facilities on the curbside might cause more disruption than facilities located in the center. There are many different strategies to minimize disruption when we get to that point. RTA will work with local businesses and residents to minimize and mitigate disruption to the greatest extent possible
- Q: Would there be job opportunities for local residents during the construction phase?
  - A: RTA and its board has aggressive targets as it relates to small business and DBE opportunities. The RTA also communicates with regional educational providers so they know what construction schedules look like and they can share the employment opportunities with local craftsmen.
- Q: Lake Forest and Reade is a far distance from the apartment complexes and dense housing areas. Will that be a part of the design considerations as we move forward?
  - A: Lake Forest and Reade is a point that we want to hit, a point that we want to pass through because the rest of the bus network passes through that point as well. The actual end point is not finalized. The New Links initiative is creating neighborhood circulators that tie into key points that are easy to get to, and from those key points you can more easily travel to other areas in the region.
- Q: There is a lot of roadwork that would have to be done to accommodate BRT, is that cost built into RTA's budget? Or is that something that the City will have to contribute to?
  - A: RTA would build this into its own budget. The City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana are both key partners as the entities that own and manage the roadways and they are very involved in this process. RTA will be paying for the project. Depending on the scale, we will explore cost-share opportunities, but it will be something that RTA puts together.
- Q: When creating the transit hubs with BRT and New Links, is the RTA considering the traffic and density that these efforts will bring to the neighborhoods?

*Re: Consolidate Downtown Stops on Canal Streetcar*

- A: Yes, the RTA wants to be sensitive to this. However, we want to present transit as an efficient alternative that takes up less space and removes the need for as many automobiles.
- Q: You mentioned tradeoffs, are the lands of businesses and homeowners a possible tradeoff?
  - A: No, that is not something we are anticipating.
- Q: Is there connectivity with Jefferson and St. Bernard Parishes in this new system?
  - A: The current study area corridor does not directly to Jefferson or St. Bernard Parishes. We will continue to work with our partners to plan for our next corridor which will be the downtown – Veterans Blvd – airport corridor. New Links will also help improve those connections.
- Q: Why are we so confident that we can install new bus shelters at bus stops with BRT when we seem to have trouble installing shelters at existing stops?
  - A: Most sites that are able to have a shelter easily installed have already done so. Much of the remaining stop locations require additional work to ensure there is sufficient space and are ADA compliant which requires minor construction. RTA has committed \$500,000 annually toward this effort is moving forward with installing as many shelters as possible depending on the site work required. Locations are being prioritized based on ridership and other factors based on RTA's Fixed Route Service Standards.