



THE STATE OF TRANSIT 2017

CREATING OUR TRANSIT
FUTURE

RIDE

WORLD-CLASS TRANSIT FOR NEW ORLEANS

About our Organization

Ride New Orleans is an independent nonprofit organization. Our vision is a world class, multi-modal transportation system that promotes a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable New Orleans region. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life in the New Orleans region by promoting safe, convenient, and affordable transportation options.

Visit rideneworleans.org for more information.

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When we founded Ride New Orleans in 2009, we were driven by a love for our city and the people who live here. While improving, transit was still not working the way our residents needed. This was hurting the people of the city and harming our collective future.

We set out to work with riders, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA), the city, the business community, neighborhoods, local non-profits, and individual residents throughout the city to do what we could to make it better.

As Ride New Orleans developed and evolved, we were able to hire our first staff member in 2012 and play an even more active role. We released our first State of Transit report in 2014. In that report, we highlighted the discrepancy between streetcar and bus recovery and how bus trips remained a fraction of what they were before the storm. But we also showed what was working in our transit system and suggested solutions to accelerate recovery and improvement.

Three years later, with an expanded staff of three, we are releasing our fourth annual State of Transit in New Orleans report. We can point to clear signs of progress – including many program and policy implementations that we recommended.

2015 and 2016 service enhancements made a big difference for many riders. A long-term RTA strategic mobility plan is being drafted and expected to be complete by the end of 2017. “Real” real-time data is on its way in early 2018. A new RTA board has taken on a more active role and brought on new staff to help manage the relationship with Transdev, the private company that currently plans, manages, and operates RTA service.

But there is still much to overcome. While the average New Orleanian with a car can reach 86 percent of the region’s jobs in 30 minutes-or-less, the average transit-dependent New Orleanian can only reach 11 percent of those jobs in 30 minutes-or-less. That needs to change. Access to frequent, reliable, affordable, and equitable transit should be a great equalizer, helping people across income levels build sustainable and thriving lives for themselves and their families.

Still, even with many remaining challenges to overcome, we at Ride New Orleans are optimistic.

We’ve got an important opportunity over the next year with the completion of the strategic mobility plan and the potential of a new mayor to solidify the progress of the Landrieu years and take us to the next level. We’re excited by the possibilities and will continue to partner with everyone in the city who wants to create a better transit future.

Thanks for your support and thanks for everything that you do,



Fred Neal, Jr.
President, Ride New Orleans Board of Directors

From the Board of Ride New Orleans

Executive Summary

CREATING OUR TRANSIT FUTURE

“The first step is to declare that we are no longer recovering, no longer rebuilding. Now we are creating.”

– Mayor Mitch Landrieu’s 2010 Inaugural Address

The last time our city had a mayoral race without an incumbent, our transit system was just beginning to claw its way back from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Coming back from that in any form at all was an impressive accomplishment. It is the result of incredible dedication on the part of RTA employees, board members, city officials, and community members. There are hundreds of inspiring stories and it will always stand as a highlight in the history of the agency.

We’ve made important progress over the last eight years to set the City up for success. After significant service enhancements in 2015 and 2016, structural and investment decisions have been made in the last year that could pay dividends for years to come.

- The all-volunteer RTA board hired a new Executive Director, bringing in needed in-house expertise to manage Transdev, the private company that is contracted to manage and operate the RTA system.
- Modern dispatch and vehicle locator equipment is being installed on all RTA vehicles. By 2018, riders will have reliable “real-time” data at their fingertips and the RTA operations department will have an enhanced ability to keep vehicles on schedule.
- The RTA is in the middle of the first long-term planning process in over a decade. The strategic mobility plan will be completed by the end of the year and will set clear priorities for the long-term and lay out a path for short-term improvements.

In another encouraging sign, this year we saw increased access to jobs for residents along two bus lines – the #15 Freret and #28 Martin Luther King. This increase came after RTA route planners made a simple tweak and reconnected the buses to the original terminus – Canal Street. This move cost basically nothing and shows us how reimagining our transit network through tweaks or a redesign could give us greatly improved transit for little or no additional cost.

But while these are encouraging developments, we need to be

honest about the challenges to overcome:

- In the last year, recovery of bus service has plateaued. Buses are what the majority of transit-dependent New Orleanians rely on – and improvements to this service continues to lag.
- We continue to lack effective regional transit connections, with many lines stopping at the parish line, adding time and cost to transit travel and putting potential jobs effectively out of reach for many of our residents.
- Our analysis shows that the major transit infrastructure project of the last seven years – the \$75 million Loyola/Rampart/St. Claude streetcar – did not provide any increase in access to jobs for residents in the corridor it serves.

The result of these deficiencies is that transit-dependent New Orleans residents can still only reach 11 percent of the jobs in the region in 30 minutes or less. But New Orleanians with a car can reach 86 percent of the region’s jobs in the same time period.

In a city with a high poverty rate, a high unemployment rate – especially in communities of color – and a high rate of residents without personal vehicles, this disparity is especially damaging. We must improve if we are serious about providing economic opportunity to our residents who need it the most, overcoming a legacy of racism and injustice, and providing local businesses with expanding access to a qualified workforce.

None of these problems are insurmountable. But they do require acknowledgement, the collective will to address them, and the comprehensive planning and community support needed to create a better transit future.

To do that we must be intentional about what we want. We must identify key transit corridors and appropriate levels of transit service, set ambitious reliability goals and ways to achieve them, create a path toward regional transit, prioritize better bus stop infrastructure and rider amenities, and make smart capital investment plans, especially around buses, to provide growing levels of service.

Most important though, we must set a goal of greatly increasing access to economic opportunity for our residents and determine the most logical and implementable strategy to improve our service and achieve that goal.

That’s why the strategic mobility planning process is so important. Looking back in eight years, the true transit story of 2017 may be whether or not we created the blue print to put our transit system on the right footing long-term.

Table 1: Average percent of jobs accessible, by mode

	30 Minute Commute	60 Minute Commute
via Transit	11%	33%
via Driving	86%	98%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.

Recent Progress

Like many public services, transit infrastructure in New Orleans was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. The road to recovery was never going to be easy so it's important to both recognize that and take stock of the progress that has been made.

SMALL TWEAKS, BIG RESULTS

In a year when the most talked about transit addition was the completion of a multimillion dollar project – the Rampart/St Claude streetcar extension – the most effective transit addition cost almost nothing.

As part of the schedule and routing changes associated with the opening of the Rampart-St Claude extension, the RTA also extended the #15 Freret and #28 Martin Luther King bus lines eight additional blocks to Canal Street.

This enabled the two lines to connect directly with the RTA's main transfer hub – where approximately 2/3 of the system's bus and streetcar lines intersect. Both lines previously reached Canal Street, but, in 2012, the RTA halted them at the UPT, obligating riders to transfer to the Loyola streetcar or walk if they wished to continue toward Canal Street.

This decision to reconnect the two bus lines to Canal Street led directly to significantly increased access to jobs for residents living in the Freret and MLK transit corridors.

Even with a slight decrease in frequency – since the RTA did not add another bus to the line – residents in the two corridors were able to reach 5,494 more jobs in 30 minutes or less via transit and walking – a 6.6 percent increase from the previous year.

Table 2: Job access changes in the #15 Freret and #28 MLK corridors, 2016-2017

	2016	2017
Jobs accessible in 30 minutes via transit and walking	83,722	89,216
Percent of regional jobs accessible in 30 minutes via transit and walking	20.3%	21.6%

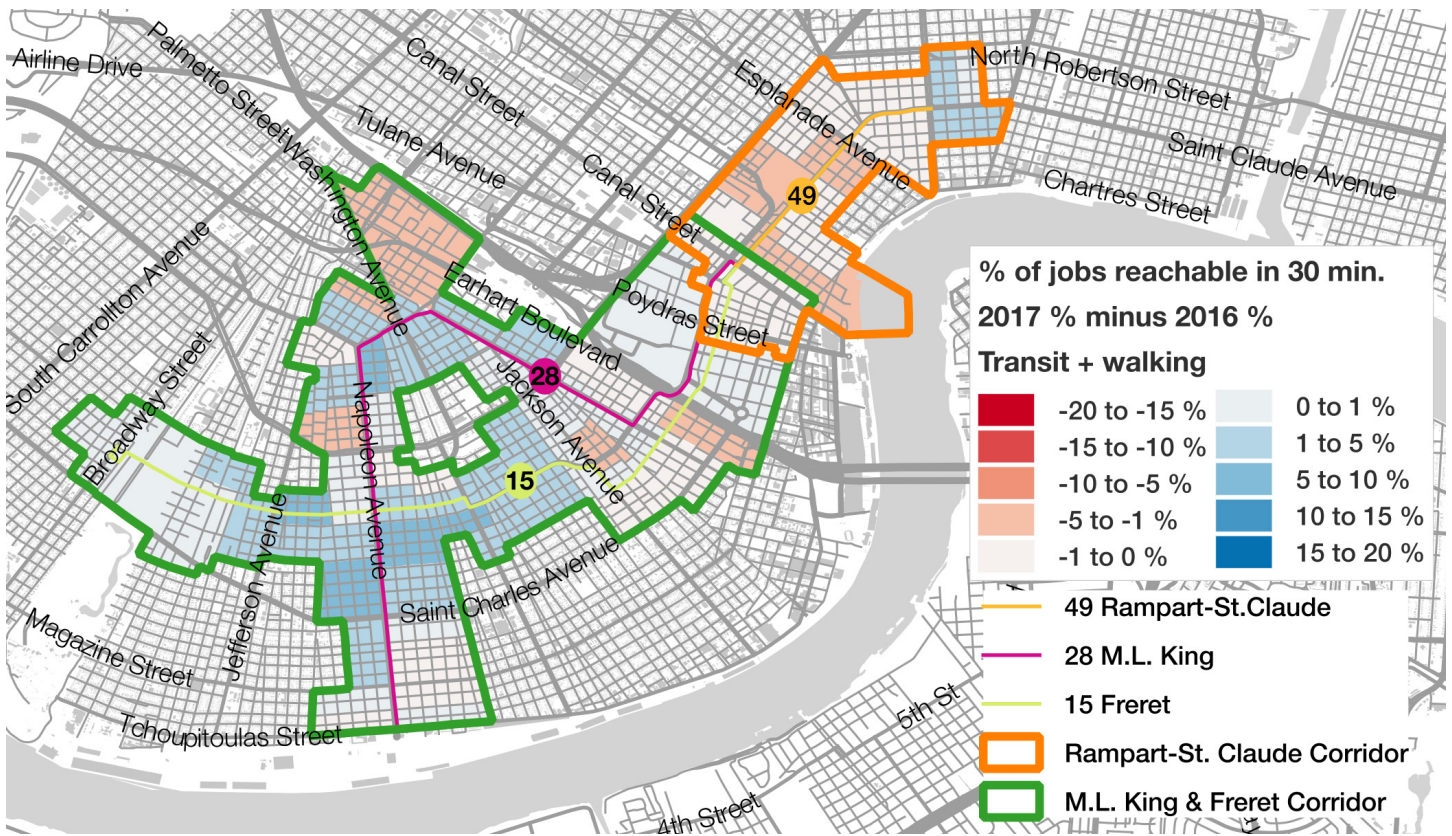
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.

This shows how tweaks to our transit network – both big and small – can bring impressive results. It should serve as a valuable lesson for our city and region as we look to improve transit in an uncertain funding climate.

INCREASED PUBLIC CONTROL

In a rare situation, RTA planning, management, and operations are completely contracted out to Transdev, the US subsidiary of the French

Figure 1: Change in percent of regional jobs accessible in 30 minutes via transit and walking



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.

multinational transit corporation Veolia. At the beginning of 2017, all transit employees - with the exception of one - were Transdev employees contracted out in service to the RTA.

This has led to concerns in the past that the all-volunteer RTA board - with no transit management experience and limited time availability - has an extremely difficult oversight role due to a lack of transit professionals who answer only to the board and the public. This could - at the very least - erode faith and trust in the RTA as an institution, making it more difficult to rally support for additional public investment. At its hypothetical worst, this situation means there could be no one standing in the way to prevent an unscrupulous operator from cutting corners to maximize profit.

Two decisions helped to improve that situation and perception in the last year:

- Board committees: Starting in January 2017, new RTA Board of Commissioners Chairwoman Sharonda Williams created two new subcommittees - the Finance Committee and Operations Committee. Meeting monthly, each committee offers RTA board members a chance to ask more pointed questions, and carry on more substantive dialogue about key issues than previously allowed. They are also a good chance for advocates and the public to request more consideration of certain issues and engage more directly with our public representatives.

RTA Strategic Mobility Plan as of July 2017

Draft mission

Deliver mobility services that connect the people, places, and culture of the region in a safe, convenient manner and contribute to a sustainable and healthy future.

Draft vision

Become the preferred mobility provider in the region.

Draft goals

- **Earn Trust.** Be a trusted public agency by communicating honestly and effectively and by providing meaningful opportunities to shape decision-making
- **Be Reliable.** Be reliable with adequate financial resources to provide timely and predictable service.
- **Connect to Opportunities.** Provide the connections between people, jobs, schools, and other destinations.
- **Prioritize the Rider Experience.** Provide mobility services that are easy to use, safe, and comfortable.
- **Be Equitable.** Provide mobility services in a just and fair manner. Be accessible to all.

The Operations Committee focuses on day-to-day operations and has been a starting point for productive discussion on issues like enhanced late-night service. The Finance Committee focuses on the RTA's budget and expenses. It has led to more open and detailed conversation on the often-opaque world of transit finance and has become a place for the public and board members to better understand investment decisions and alternatives.

- **RTA Executive Director:** Potentially much more important for the long-term future of the RTA is the April 2017 hiring of Greg Cook as Executive Director (and the RTA's second full-time employee), a process also spearheaded by Chairwoman Williams. The hiring of Cook, a seasoned transit professional, means that the RTA board has a high-level manager whose answers only to them, and, by extension, the public. This greatly increase the board's ability to continue the momentum of recent years.

STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN STARTED

Despite a significantly changed post-Katrina environment, the RTA had not engaged in a comprehensive long-term strategic planning process since the storm. But in late 2016, the RTA began just such a planning process – called the strategic mobility plan. This plan will be the guiding document for how to improve transit over the next 20 years. The RTA expects to finish it by the end of 2017.

Planning processes like these have been used by many other regions to jumpstart transit:

- Houston redesigned their entire bus network to increase rider access to frequent service for a minimal cost increase
- Nashville developed a clear list of community-supported capital investment priorities centered around increased frequency and connectivity
- Seattle adopted a plan that inspired enough community support that voters passed multiple funding increases over a decade to pay for greatly increased service.

The RTA strategic mobility planning process is divided into five phases. The first three phases aim to develop an overall vision and goals, as well as collect and analyze data on current and future population, travel patterns, and ridership trends. The final two phases aim to establish a set of strategies, action items, and benchmarks to guide efforts moving forward and draft the final plan.

It's too early to declare the process a success. As this report went to press, the process was only half over – the RTA has only released draft goals, a mission statement, and a vision for the agency.

Much of what has been publicly reported back is positive. The RTA has identified better regional connections, shorter travel times, more frequent and reliable service as central rider needs. This is consistent with what riders tell Ride New Orleans.

The draft goals are encouraging (see sidebar) – with a focus on better connectivity, better reliability, improved transparency, a better rider experience, and equity. These are goals that could form the basis of a strong strategic plan.

RTA handout to explain the strategic mobility planning process

What is the Strategic Mobility Plan?

Greater New Orleans is changing. The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is developing a Strategic Mobility Plan that will establish the vision, goals and roadmap for public transportation in the city and region for the next 20 years. The process will include feedback from the general public, passengers, and many stakeholder groups. The plan will be complete by the end of 2017 and is part of the RTA's larger commitment to equity and access for all, as well as excellent service and performance.

LISTENING AND LEARNING
Community conversations about needs, objectives and measures of success (Jan – Mar 2017)

EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES
Assessment of strengths, weaknesses, and changing mobility demands; sharing information on emerging innovations and options (Mar – Apr 2017)

VISIONING
Update of RTA's Mission, Vision, and Goals; identify strategies to achieve these goals and ways to measure progress (Apr – Jul 2017)

EVALUATING OPTIONS
Evaluation of packages of alternative mobility strategies; assessment of trade-off and opportunities. (Aug – Sept 2017)

DEVELOPING THE PLAN
Draft of proposed plan for a sustainable, equitable and vibrant New Orleans region (Sept – Dec 2017)

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e: StrategicPlan@noria.com
p: 504-228-2626 (call or text)

#RTAstrategicPlan

RTA

The ultimate test will come when proposed action items and benchmarks are released to the public. That will likely happen in September, a month after the release of this report. Ultimately, success will rise or fall on strong benchmarks that provide clear metrics for success and accountability and specific action items that provide a step-by-step action plan to improve regional transit. In the final section of this report, we offer some suggestions for what those elements could look like.

“REAL” REAL TIME

One frustration for riders in recent years has been the aging and faulty equipment that tracks and relays transit vehicle locations – the key ingredient for “real-time” data.

Even for riders without smart phones or interest in transit tracking apps, this can be a problem as it keeps the RTA from more effectively tracking buses and identifying problems with the schedule – based on driver error, traffic conditions, crowded stops, or other issues – and quickly correcting them.

This deficiency can also be an impediment for increased ridership. The New York City bus system saw a two percent increase in ridership between 2011 and 2013 after reliable arrival time data was introduced and made available to the public.¹ In the RTA system in 2016, that would have meant an additional 369,000 riders, or almost \$500,000 in additional revenue.

Fortunately, help is on the way. The RTA has contracted this year with a nationally recognized firm to implement a complete overhaul of the transit vehicle tracking system. The firm will be installing “CAD/AVL” systems that will generate the real-time data that many current and future riders want to see as well as greatly increase the RTA's ability to ensure buses stay on schedule.

As this report goes to print, initial steps of testing and installation are in process. A full system-wide rollout is expected in the first quarter of 2018.

Challenges to Overcome

METHODOLOGY NOTES

Job Access Analysis: The methodology used for this study strongly reflects the cumulative opportunity metric that is utilized in the “Access Across America” report produced by the University of Minnesota’s Accessibility Observatory. Data is obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program 2014. The calculations are based on the travel times observed between every US Census Block Group (CBG) in Jefferson Parish, Orleans Parish, and St. Bernard parishes. To calculate the trip origin and destination for a particular CBG, the population- and job-weighted centroid was used. Travel time is calculated using OpenTripPlanner based on graphs composed of data from OpenStreetMap and published transit timetables. Driving times assume that the vehicles do not encounter any congestion and travel at the speed limit. The transit travel times operate on an assumption of perfect schedule adherence. The observed travel times further make the assumption that portions of a trip that are not on-board a transit vehicle take place by walking at a speed of 3 miles per hour along designated pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks, trails, etc. To reflect the influence of transit service frequency on accessibility, travel times are calculated repeatedly for each origin-destination pair every ten minutes between 7:00 and 8:59 AM as the departure time. Accessibility is averaged across the three parishes Orleans Parish, with the number of jobs accessible from each CBG weighted by the percentage of workers residing in that CBG. The result is a single metric that represents the accessibility value experienced by an average worker in each of the three parishes. The following formula describes how the weighted average is calculated:

Weighted Average = $(w1/a)j1 + (w2/a)j2 \dots wn/ajn$
 w = workers residing in CBG
 a = all workers residing in Orleans Parish
 j = jobs accessible from CBG
 n = Each CBG in Orleans Paris

While the table has been set for improvements, we saw little short-term progress on two key metrics— convenient access to jobs via transit and recovery of pre-Katrina transit service.

This is a problem for our region. It makes us less competitive economically, as robust transit options are increasingly on the must-have list for attracting major employers. Existing employers also suffer – a recent survey Ride New Orleans performed of employees at Harrah’s Hotel and Casino showed that almost 1/3 of transit-riding Harrah’s employees had been late three times or more in the last month due to transit unreliability.

More importantly, our neighbors who are most in need suffer. Transit is an essential ingredient to providing individuals access to opportunity. 19 percent of New Orleans residents don’t have access to a reliable vehicle – twice the national average. Meanwhile, the average cost of owning and maintaining a car is \$8,558 annually – over \$700 a month.

Reliable transit – with an RTA monthly pass costing only \$55 currently – can even the score for lower-income families. But first we have to improve in some very specific areas.

ACCESS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The most important thing transit can do is to get people where they need to go conveniently and in a reasonable amount of time. Unfortunately, our transit system is not providing the needed access.

While the average New Orleans commute time is 23 minutes, most individuals reliant on transit face a much longer trip to economic opportunity. The average New Orleanian can only reach 11 percent of our region’s jobs in 30 minutes or less via a combination of transit and walking. This number barely improved from 2016, with only a slight increase of 1,016 jobs accessible in that time period. If the same individual has access to a car, the situation is vastly improved, with the individual able to reach, on average, 85.7 percent of the region’s jobs in a 30-minute drive.

Transit commuters fare even worse in Jefferson and St. Bernard parishes, being able to reach 4.2 percent and 0.6 percent of the region’s jobs respectively in 30 minutes or less.

Table 3: Average percent of jobs accessible, by mode

	30 Minute Commute	60 Minute Commute
via Transit	11%	33%
via Driving	86%	98%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.

Figure 2: Percentage of jobs in region accessible within 30-minute transit commute, by census block group

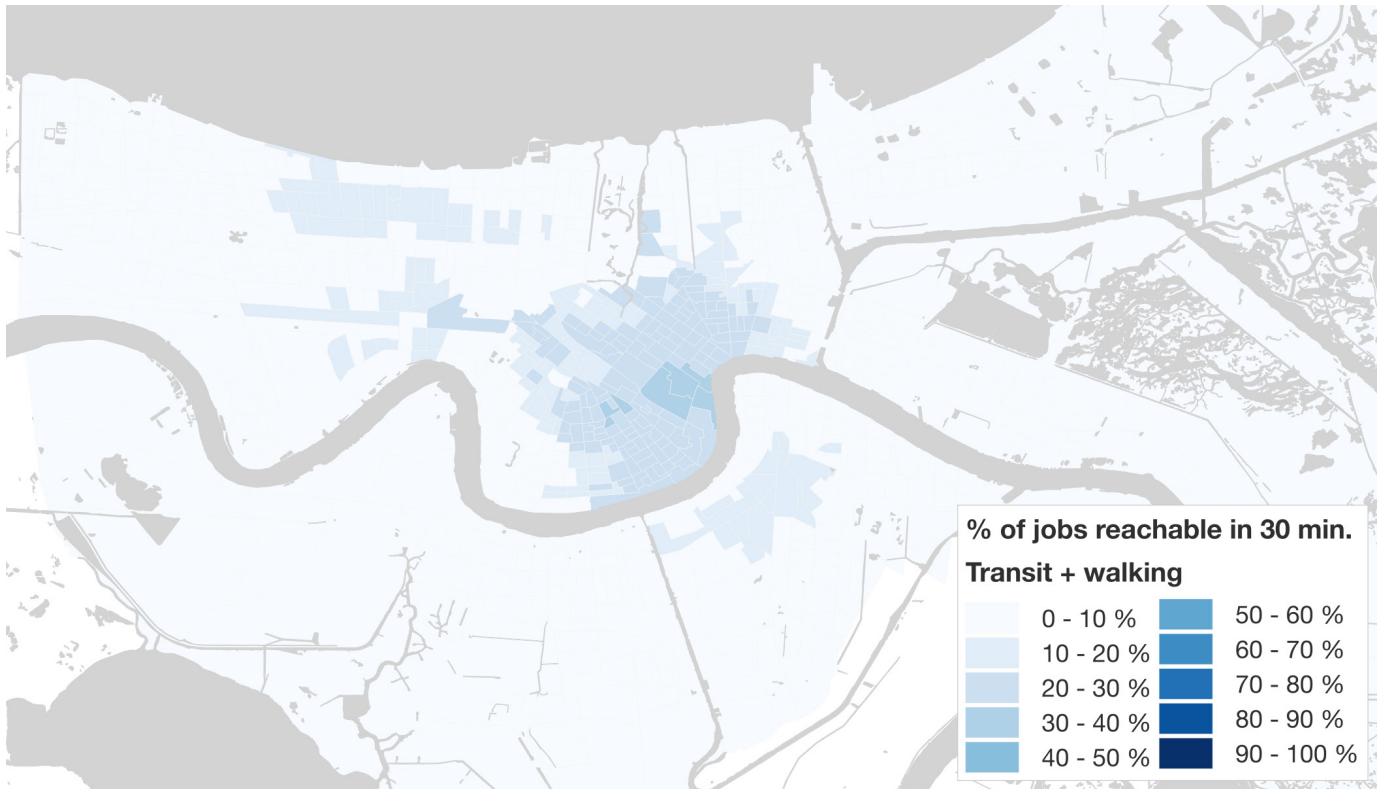


Figure 3: Percentage of jobs in region accessible within 30-minute driving commute, by census block group

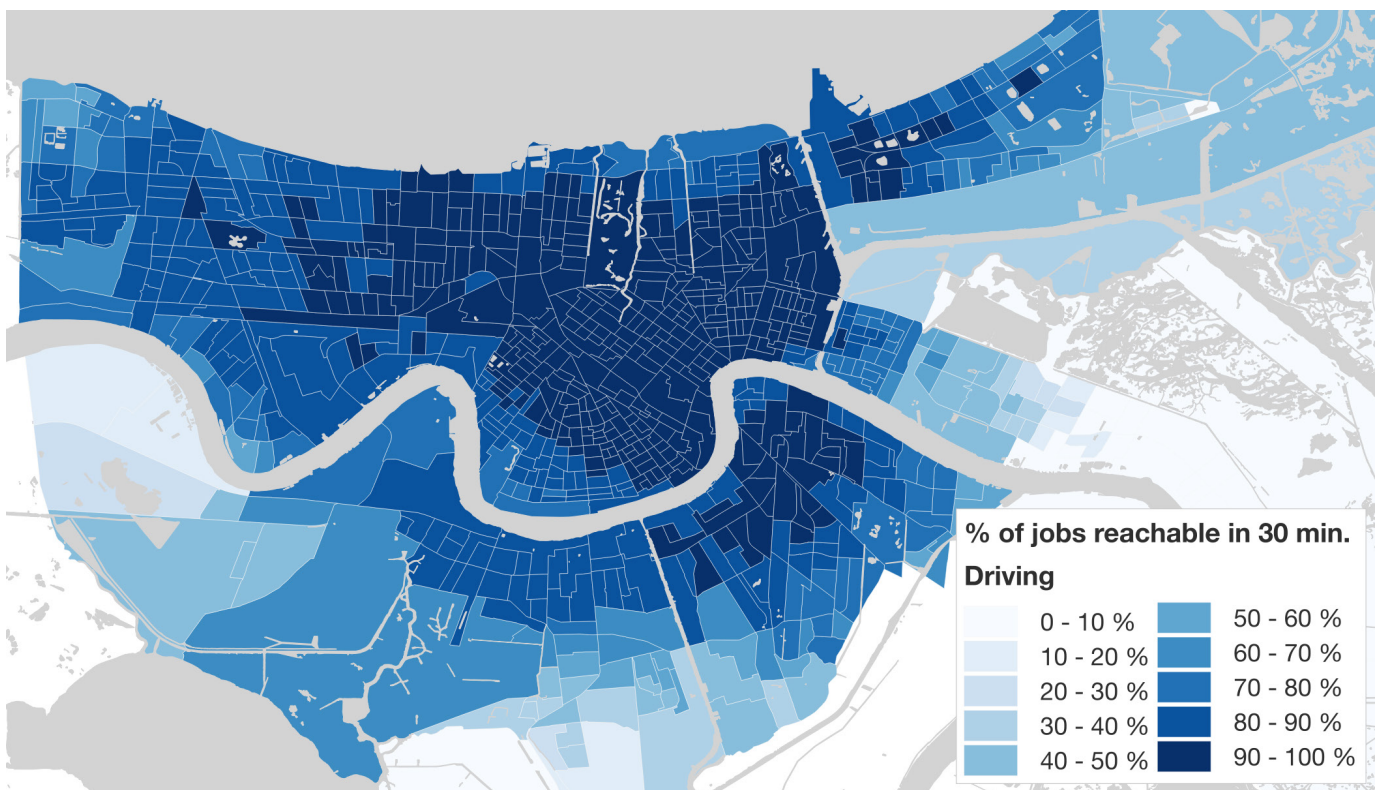


Figure 4: Percentage of jobs in region accessible within 60-minute transit commute, by census block group

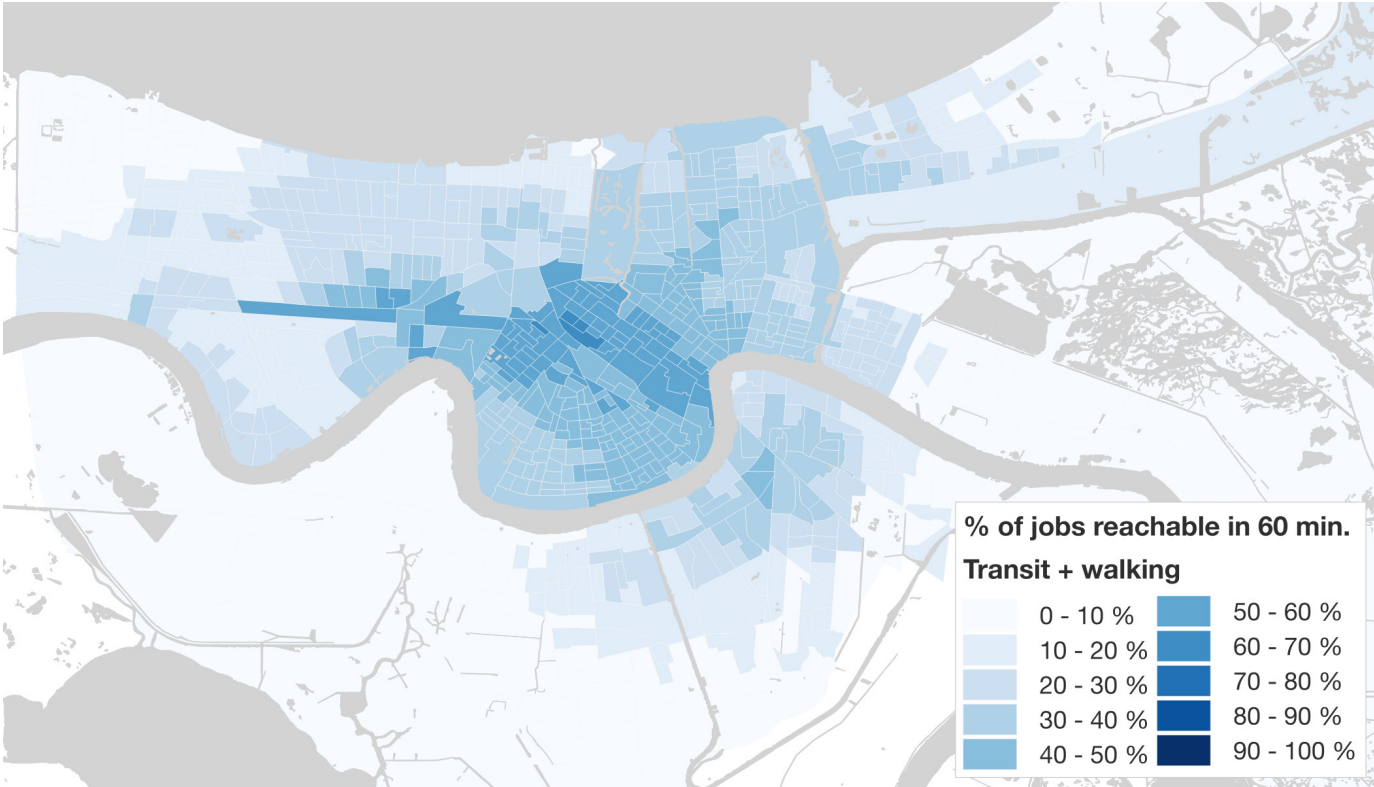
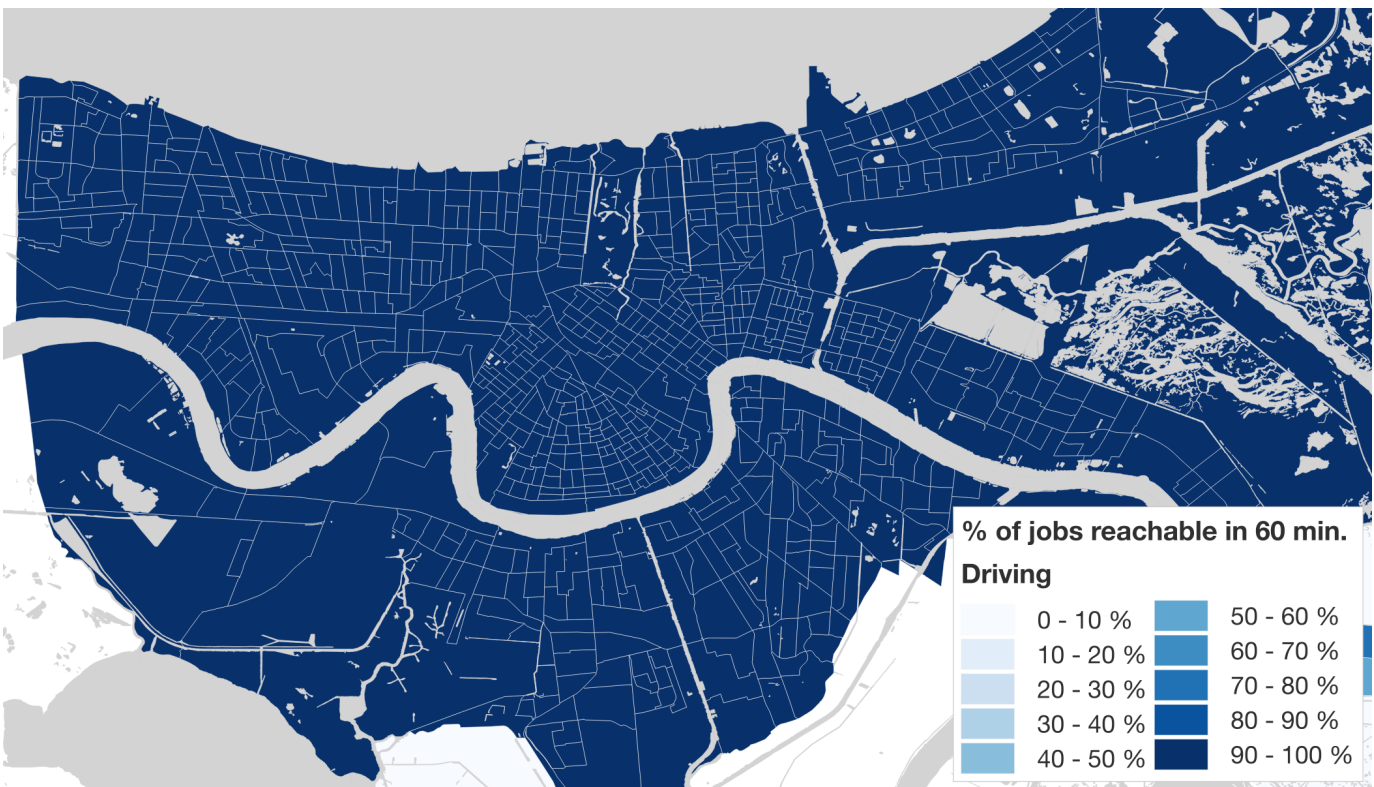
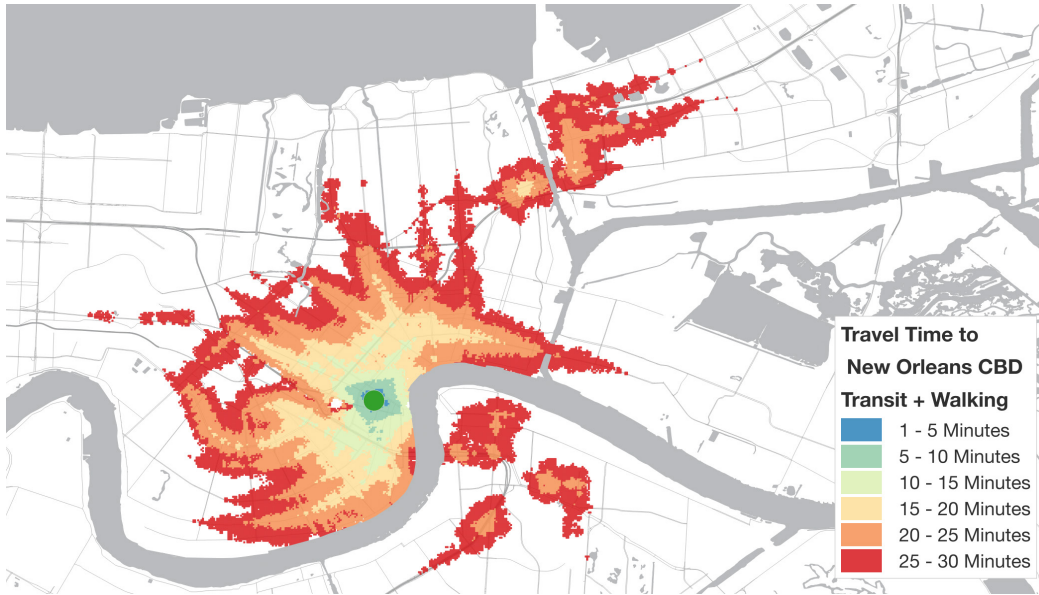


Figure 5: Percentage of jobs in region accessible within 60-minute driving commute, by census block group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.

Figure 6: Areas within 30-minute or less transit travel time to CBD



CBD jobs

This large disparity stands out even more when you look at specific situations. The New Orleans Central Business District is the largest jobs hub in the region and also the central transfer point for the RTA system. If there's any place we need – and should expect – efficient and equitable transit access, it is there.

Yet even with those advantages, workforce access is poor. Only 13.9 percent of the current workforce in Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard parishes can access the CBD in 30 minutes or less via transit. 91.8 percent of that workforce can do so with a car.

Infrastructure decisions

More troubling is that the biggest transit infrastructure investment project we have seen since the storm – the Rampart/Loyola streetcar which opened in the fall of 2016 – did not increase access to jobs. Ride New Orleans analysis shows that residents along the Rampart/St. Claude portion of the corridor lost 30 minute-or-less access to over 1,000 jobs after the new streetcar came online and associated bus line adjustments were implemented.

There may be a number of reasons for this accessibility decline. The #57 Franklin and bus line was re-routed to go on Claiborne. While the #88 St. Claude and #91 Jackson-Esplanade bus lines continue on Rampart to Canal, several stops were eliminated, possibly increasing walking/transit access time. At 20 minute headways, the Rampart/Loyola streetcar also does not come with the same regularity as the Cemeteries or St. Charles lines.

But whatever the reasons, one thing is clear – \$75 million of public investment over six years led to – at least in the short-term – no increased access to economic opportunity for residents along the corridor. In contrast, residents in the corridors served by the #15 Freret and #28 Martin Luther King buses gained access to 5,494 jobs in 30 minutes or less via transit and walking – at effectively no additional cost.

Table 4: Number of jobs accessible, by service corridor

	Pre-Service Changes	Post-Service Changes	Change
#15 Freret and #28 M.L. King Buses			
30 minute commute	83,722	89,216	6.6%
#49 Rampart-St. Claude Streetcar			
30 minute commute	107,524	105,742	-1.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.

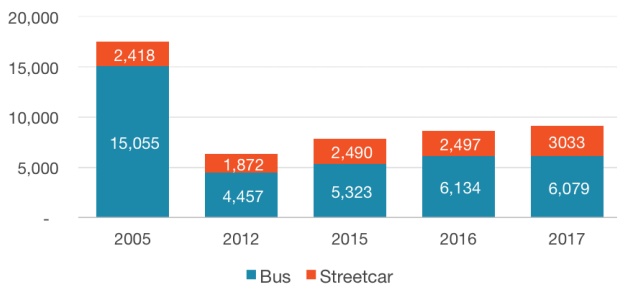
Map Source: Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.

METHODOLOGY NOTES

Trips and Total Trip Volume: A “trip” is a single round trip made by a single vehicle, like a bus or streetcar, from the time it leaves its first station until it returns to that station at the end of its route. Ride New Orleans’ analysts relied on the RTA’s maps and schedules from 2005 and 2017 to count total weekly trips on each route. We added all the routes together to get the “weekly trip volume” or total number of weekly trips available in a normal week during 2005 and 2017. Our trip volume analysis does not include paratransit trips; it focuses on the scheduled service available to the majority of transit riders.

Route Frequency: To determine the frequency of the region’s 2005 and 2017 transit service, we calculated the headway – or number of minutes wait between transit trips – on each bus and streetcar route during weekday morning peak hours (from 6:30AM to 10:00AM) and weekday evening peak hours (from 3:30PM to 7:00PM), based on official RTA, JeT, and SBURT schedules. The total number of trips departing during these hours was divided by 420 minutes to calculate minutes per trip within the seven hours of peak periods. The results organized into the following categories: Headways of 15 minutes or less; 15.1 to 30 minutes; 30.1 to 50 minutes; and greater than 50 minutes

Figure 7: Total weekly trips, by mode



Source: Ride New Orleans analysis of Regional Transit Authority schedules

Table 5: Number of routes by frequency, 2005 & 2017

	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Less than 15 minutes	19	24%	5	10%
15.1 to 30 minutes	43	54%	13	25%
30.1 to 50 minutes	12	15%	25	48%
Greater than 50 minutes	6	7%	9	17%

Source: Ride New Orleans analysis of RTA, JeT, and SBURT schedules in 2005 and 2017

STALLED TRANSIT RECOVERY?

By several measures, we still remain well below the service levels that riders could count on before the storm.

Weekly trip count

Overall, we saw slight progress. System-wide, the RTA has brought back 52.1 percent of the total number of weekly bus and streetcar trips that riders could count on in 2004. That’s a 2.7 percent increase since last year’s report.

The increase came from weekly streetcar trips, with the total number of weekly bus trips actually slightly declining from 2016.

From a workforce access standpoint, the plateauing of bus trip recovery is problematic. The streetcar trip increase has both positive and negative implications.

64 percent of the increased streetcar trips came on the Cemeteries line, which serves a critical role as a connector between Jefferson Transit’s highest ridership line – the E1 Veterans – and the CBD. The Cemeteries also connects high ridership RTA routes like the #94 Broad (which runs from Gentilly and New Orleans East to Broadmoor) with CBD jobs. Some increased Cemeteries trips are very helpful for improving access to jobs.

But the remainder of the increase comes primarily from the Riverfront Line, with a small amount added to the Loyola/Rampart line after the Rampart/St. Claude extension opened. According to a Regional Planning Commission (RPC) report in 2012, 83 percent of the Riverfront Line’s riders were from out-of town.⁴

Tourism is, of course, an important industry for New Orleans and there may be economic benefits to the city’s residents in providing increased service to the Riverfront line. But it does not help local residents reach more jobs, as the majority of New Orleans’ transit riding workforce rides buses.

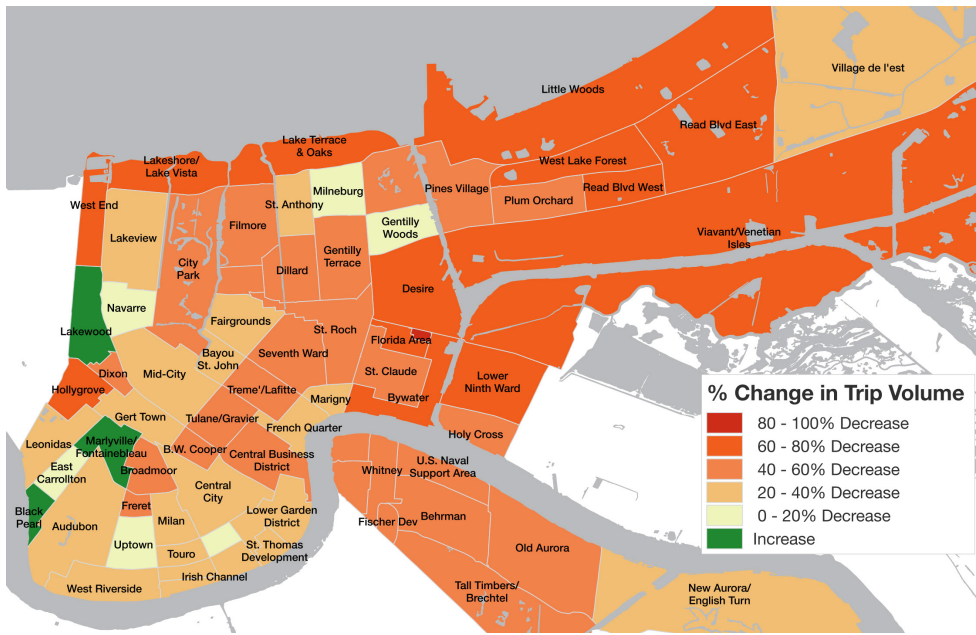
Frequency

Frequent service, with transit vehicles arriving every 15 minutes or less, is viewed by many industry analysts as an important component of quality transit.

Pre-Katrina, our region had 19 high frequency routes, with most of them within the RTA. 12 years after the storm, we only have 5 high frequency lines, all within the RTA system.

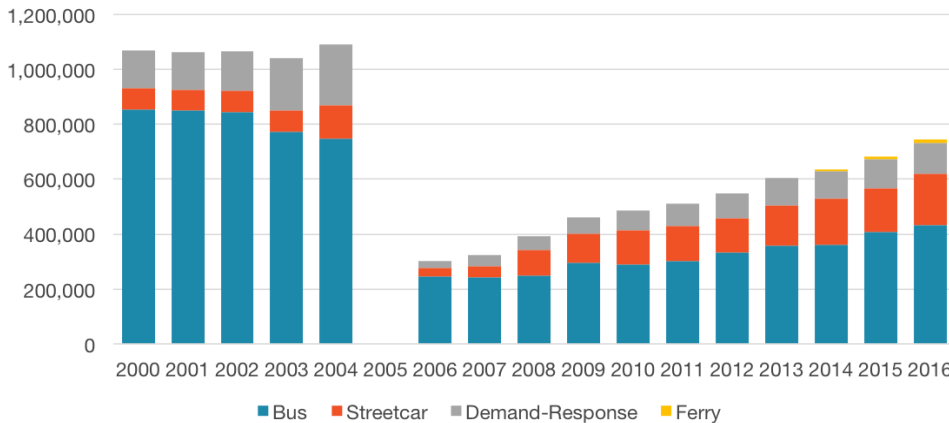
The number of high frequency lines did increase by two in the last year, with service increases on the Cemeteries and Riverfront streetcar lines. As noted above, the Cemeteries line increase likely helped to increase connectivity for local riders. The Riverfront line, however, predominantly serves visitors.

Figure 9: Change in trip volumes, by neighborhood, 2004-2017



Source: Ride New Orleans analysis of Regional Transit Authority Schedule

Figure 8: RTA VRH by mode, 2000-2017



Source: NTD 2000-2016 and Regional Transit Authority 2016 NTD Filings

Many neighborhoods still have reduced transit options

We also analyzed the total number of weekly bus and streetcar trips available to each New Orleans neighborhood, both now and before the storm. While the overall number of weekly trips in 2017 is just over half of what it was in 2005, service recovery varies substantially between neighborhoods. Several have recovered fewer than 40% of their pre-Katrina levels of service. These are predominantly located outside the city core, in New Orleans East, Lakeview, and Gentilly. Many New Orleans neighborhoods, including New Orleans East and the West Bank, continue to lack high frequency service during peak hours.

See pages 20 – 24 for a more detailed look at what transit service looks like in some targeted neighborhoods.

Vehicle revenue hours

In 2016, Ride New Orleans called on the RTA to set a goal to achieve 1 million vehicle revenue hours (VRH) by the end of 2020. VRH are the hours that vehicles travel while they are accepting passengers on their scheduled routes.

Reaching 1 million VRH by 2020 would bring us slightly above the equivalent service per capita of 2005, after adjusting for the reduced (but still growing) population.

VRH saw a steady increase after the storm, with the encouraging trend continuing in recent years. In 2014, we saw a 5.3 percent increase, with a larger increase in 2015 – 7.7 percent – to coincide with the service enhancements of that year.

According to just released figures, we saw an even larger increase in 2016, 8.7 percent. If we continue at that rate, we can reach 1 million VRH by the end of 2020.

But thus far, there has not been any increase in service in 2017 similar to what we saw in 2015 and 2016. As noted, we actually saw a slight decline in weekly bus trips over the last year, though that may not correspond to a matching decline in VRH. The year is not over yet, but if we do not see another service enhancement in 2017 it will make it more difficult to reach 1 million VRH by the end of 2020.



LACK OF REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

The RTA's enabling legislation called for Jefferson, St. Bernard, and St. Tammany parishes to join Orleans Parish in the RTA. Political concerns, mistrust between municipalities, and, in some cases, racism, all played a role in ensuring that only the city of Kenner would join.

The legacy of this situation is harmful to our workforce and it will be hard to provide improved access to opportunity without progress on this front.

We have a regional economy, but a transit system that, for the most part, stops at the parish lines. In 2014, according to the American Community Survey, 25 percent of the Orleans Parish workforce and 27 percent of the Jefferson Parish workforce were already working in the other parish. For those workers, taking transit means extra costs and significantly longer commutes, effectively putting some jobs out of reach for many.

Consider these examples below of potential peak time trips that would take relatively little time in a car, but become lengthy journeys by transit. All trips were calculated using Open Street Maps' weekday morning peak time frame of 7:00 a.m. to 8:59 a.m., assuming optimal traffic conditions:



1. New Orleans East (Chef Menteur Highway at Downman Road) to **Ochsner Medical Center** on Jefferson Highway:

- 16 minutes by car
- 71 minutes and two transfers by transit (RTA's #94 Broad, RTA's #90 Carrollton, and JeT's E3 Jefferson Highway)

1. Fat City (Edenborn Avenue at 18th Street, Metairie) to **New Orleans CBD** (Poydras at Loyola):

- 12 minutes by car
- 67 minutes and one transfer (JeT's E-1 Veteran's Highway and RTA's #49 Canal-Cemeteries streetcar line)



1. Central City (Washington Avenue at La Salle Street to **Westside South Shopping Center** (Westbank Expressway @ Stumpf Boulevard, Gretna):

- 9 minutes by car
- 55 minutes by transit and one transfer (the RTA's #91 Jackson-Esplanade and JeT's W3 Lapalco) with a 1/2 mile walk to start and finish the trip

This situation is made worse by the separate fare systems of transit systems in the region. Riders are paying two full prices for transit trips that, in most other regions in the country, would be taken in one transit system. In cases where a rider has to make an extra transfer within each system they could be paying as much as \$7 a day or more. Before the storm, there was a \$5 regional day pass for travel between the RTA and JeT systems.

Fortunately, there are also some hopeful signs to report:

- Both the New Orleans and Jefferson councils have called to bring back the regional day pass to make it easier to travel between the two parishes and the RTA is currently studying the issue
- The RTA board has expressed interest in extending a line across the parish lines to directly connect the CBD with the growing Ochsner campus on Jefferson Highway
- Initial findings of the RTA's strategic mobility study show a strong unmet demand for regional transit and many stakeholders acknowledge the need for increased cooperation. But observers worry that little practical progress might be made since Jefferson Transit is not a full partner in the planning process, but just one of many stakeholders.

Ultimately, our region needs to see real regional routes. These can either be part of an expanded RTA or via an agreement between independent transit agencies to better share resources. But riders must have seamless, convenient, and affordable access across parish lines or much of the problems that we have already identified will never be adequately resolved.

HIGH COST OF SERVICE

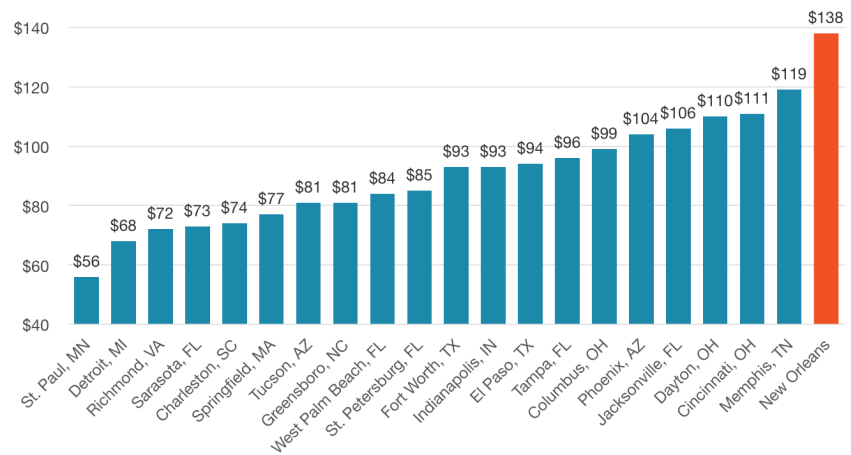
Since Hurricane Katrina, RTA service has had significantly higher operating costs than many of our peer transit agencies. This can be a barrier to providing increased service – both in terms of pure cost and in rallying public support and trust for additional funding.

While the operating expense per VRH has decreased significantly since 2006, the most recent publicly available data shows a cost of \$138 per VRH (after factoring out the cost of ferry service, which is a feature our peer agencies do not offer). This is the highest 2015 rate among the 20 transit agencies identified as the closest peers of the RTA by the Urban Integrated National Transit Database.

Streetcar operations – especially historic streetcars like the St Charles line – can add to the operating costs, so it's important to also compare the operating costs of bus operations. The RTA - at \$134 per bus operating hour – is again high compared to our closest peers, with only Detroit higher. Jefferson Transit bus service cost \$114.49 per operating hour in 2015, according to the National Transit Database.

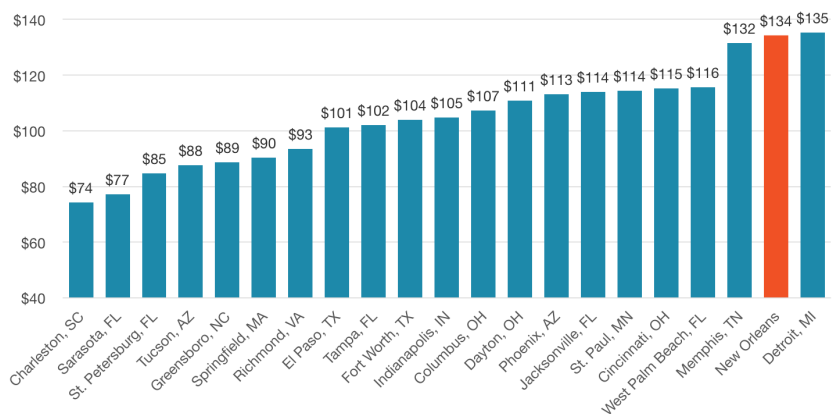
Transdev staff, in the service to the RTA, often point to higher legacy costs as a primary reason for higher operating costs and say that adding new service is cheaper per hour. According to budgeted 2017 service levels provided by the RTA to Ride New Orleans, the budgeted cost per revenue hour in 2017 without legacy costs factored in is \$137.37, still well above the reported peer agency costs of 2015.

Figure 10: Total operating expenses per VRH, 2015 - peer agencies



Source: Urban Integrated National Transit Database and National Transit Database (NTD) 2015

Figure 11: Bus operating expenses per VRH, 2015 - peer agencies



Source: Urban Integrated National Transit Database and NTD 2015

Table 6: Farebox recovery ratios, 2015

	RTA	US Average
Bus	20.6%	25.7%
Demand Response	3.1%	7.7%
Streetcar	25.8%	31.8%
TOTAL	19.0%	36.0%

Source: NTD 2015 and NTD 2015 National Transit Summary & Trends

Lower income fare discounts

No fare increase should take place unless there is a way to protect lower-income residents from increased costs. Fortunately, there are a growing number of examples nationwide of how to do this.

Seattle and San Francisco have both created low-income fare programs using 200% of the federal poverty line as the standard threshold to qualify for 50% reduced adult fares. A 2016 report from the Portland group *Bus Riders Unite!* says that, despite initial implementation concerns in Seattle and San Francisco, early program results have been positive, including:

- Increased ridership from lower-income riders
- An increased number of rides per rider
- Shifting of many lower-income riders to electronic fare cards

The RTA already has a limited system in place. Seniors, individuals with disabilities, and Medicare cardholders are eligible for reduced fares at \$0.40 a ride with free transfers, though many riders report that the system is hard to understand and utilize.

For further background, the *Bus Riders Unite!* report can be found at <http://www.opalpdx.org/2016/08/bus-riders-unite-release-life-report/>

CAN FARES BE TOO LOW?

While fares never fully pay for the transit agency service, they do typically make up an important part of operating revenues – the funds that pay for day-to-day transit operations. Nationwide, rider fares make up, on average, 36 percent of a transit agency’s operating revenues. That number is much lower for the RTA – the 2017 budget estimates just 19 percent of operating revenues will be made up from farebox recovery.

A quick comparison of fares of peer agencies shows one reason why – we have lower fares than most other similar agencies. New Orleans RTA fares have not been raised since 1999 – unlike most of our peer agencies.

Table 7: Cost of single adult fares - peer agencies

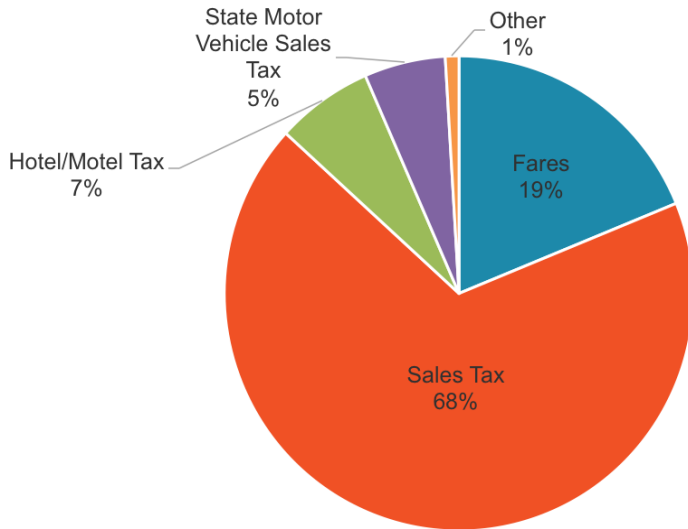
Location	Single Fares
New Orleans	\$1.25
Springfield, MA	\$1.25
Sarasota, FL	\$1.25
Richmond, VA	\$1.50
Jacksonville, FL	\$1.50
Greensboro, NC	\$1.50
Detroit, MI	\$1.50
El Paso, TX	\$1.50
Memphis, TN	\$1.75
Cincinnati, OH	\$1.75
Dayton, OH	\$1.75
Indianapolis, IN	\$1.75
St. Paul, MN	\$1.75
Fort Worth, TX	\$1.75
Tucson, AZ	\$1.75
West Palm Beach, FL	\$2.00
Tampa, FL	\$2.00
Charleston, SC	\$2.00
Columbus, OH	\$2.00
Phoenix, AZ	\$2.00
St. Petersburg, FL	\$2.25

Source: Fare prices from websites of respective transit agencies, July 2017

While preserving (or even improving) transit affordability is an important goal, it is also important to understand that the current financial model for transit in the United States generally factors in fare revenues as an important part of operating revenues. If fares had kept pace with inflation since 1999, the RTA base fare would be \$1.84, giving the agency significantly more operating revenue, potentially leading to enhanced service.

Ride New Orleans would oppose any fare increase proposal not tied to greatly improved connectivity and without a comprehensive plan to keep fares low for lower-income households. But with the strategic mobility plan due to be completed at the end of the year and a growing number of examples from other regions on preserving low-cost transit for lower-income families (see sidebar), it may be a good time to start this conversation.

Figure 12: 2017 approved budget operating revenues



Source: RTA CY2017 Approved Budget Statement of Revenue and Expenses



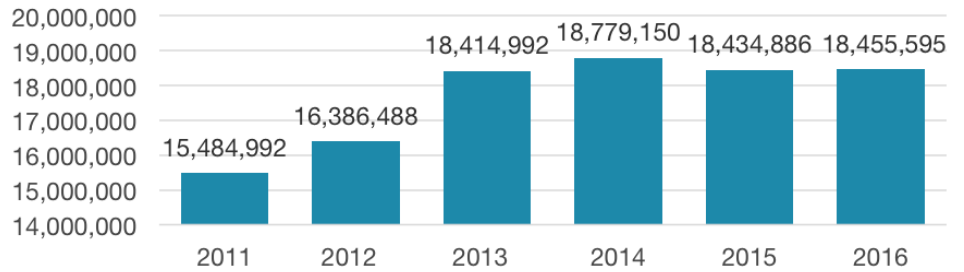
RIDERSHIP PLATEAU

While increasing very slightly from 2015, RTA ridership effectively continued to plateau, continuing a trend started in 2014 after several years of rapid growth.

This matches with a nationwide trend, where most systems saw a decline in ridership between 2015 and 2016. It is interesting to note that two of the only systems to see a rise in ridership – Seattle and Houston – both implemented significantly enhanced bus service in the last few years. Seattle also expanded its light rail system.⁵

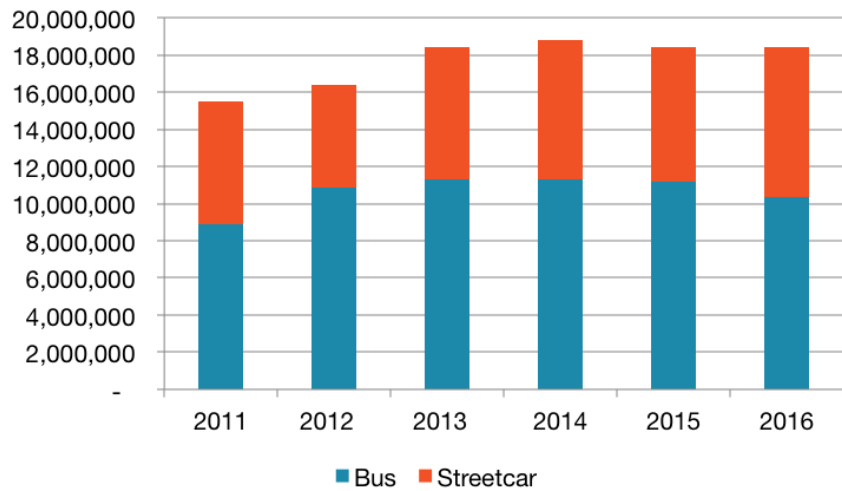
Looking more closely at the RTA's ridership figures, there was an increase in streetcar ridership in 2016 and a decrease in bus ridership.

Figure 13: Total annual RTA boardings



Source: Regional Transit Authority

Figure 14: Total RTA boardings by mode



Source: Regional Transit Authority



Rider Spotlights



TONI MARSHALL
WEST BANK/
ALGIERS RIDER



BRIANCA CAYETTE
NEW ORLEANS
EAST RIDER

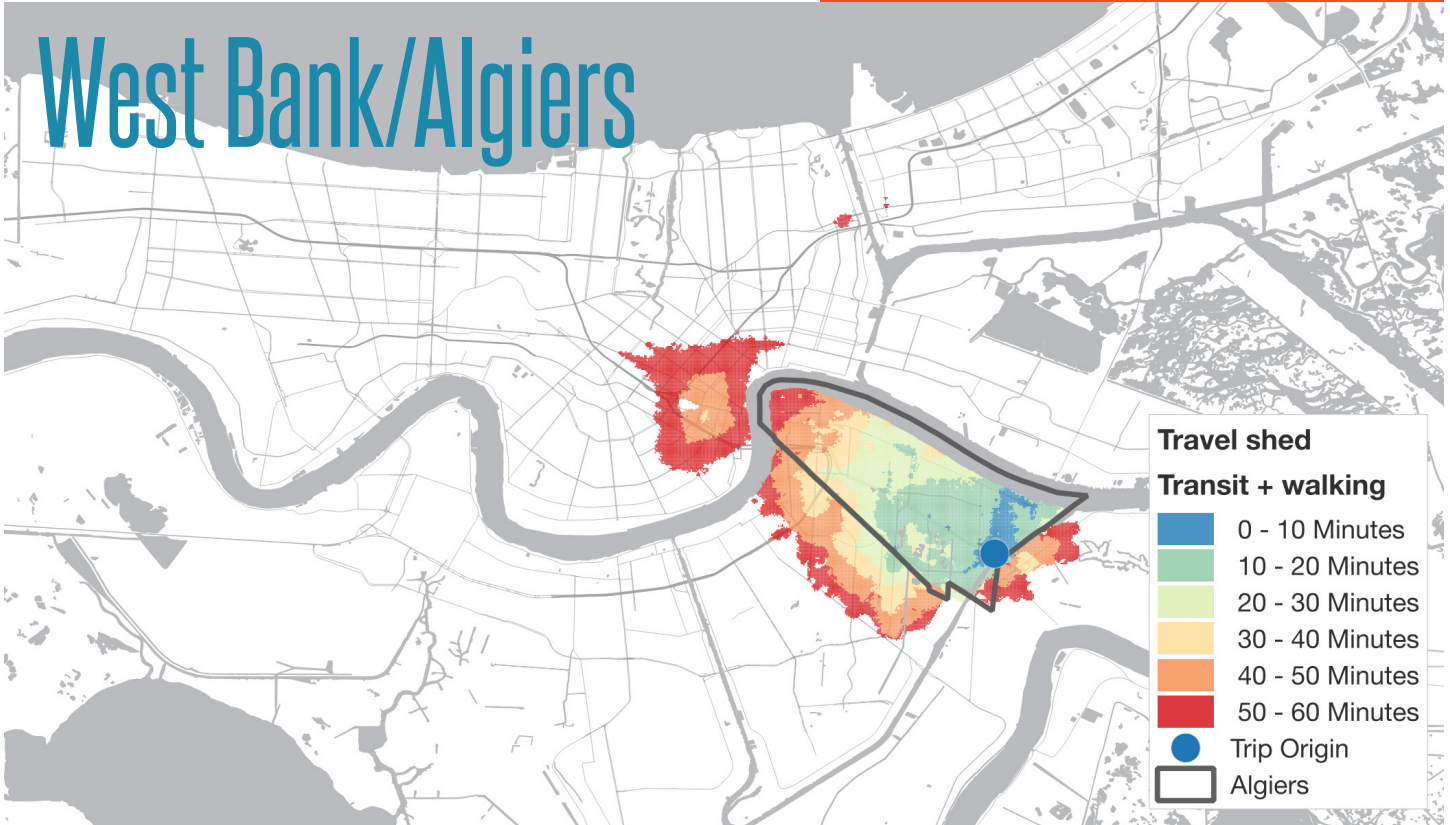


SHELIA CULMER
N. CLAIBORNE
CORRIDOR RIDER



DEWAIN BALDWIN
S. CLAIBORNE
CORRIDOR RIDER

West Bank/Algiers



TONI'S COMMUTE

Origin: Near General DeGaulle at Tullis Drive
Destination: Ochsner Medical Center on Jefferson Highway
Walk, wait, ride time: 1 hour 45 minutes to 2 hours and 15 minutes
Shift: 6:45 p.m. to 6:45 a.m.
Lines: #114/#115 General De Gaulle-Tullis/Sullen, #39 Tulane, E3 Kenner Local

TONI'S VISION

"If we had an RTA bus to Ochsner it would save a lot of people a lot of time and money. That would be a big change because I would have less transfers and less commuting time. The best part is I would get an extra hour of sleep everyday!"

"However, improving transit is not just about me. It's about the patients, their family members, and the other employees going to and from Ochsner. It would help provide people better access to jobs, to the hospital, and back home at a reasonable time. It would be good for the community, period."

Table 8: Algiers percent of jobs accessible by mode

		30 Minute Commute	60 Minute Commute
Algiers	via Transit	3%	19%
	via Driving	81%	100%

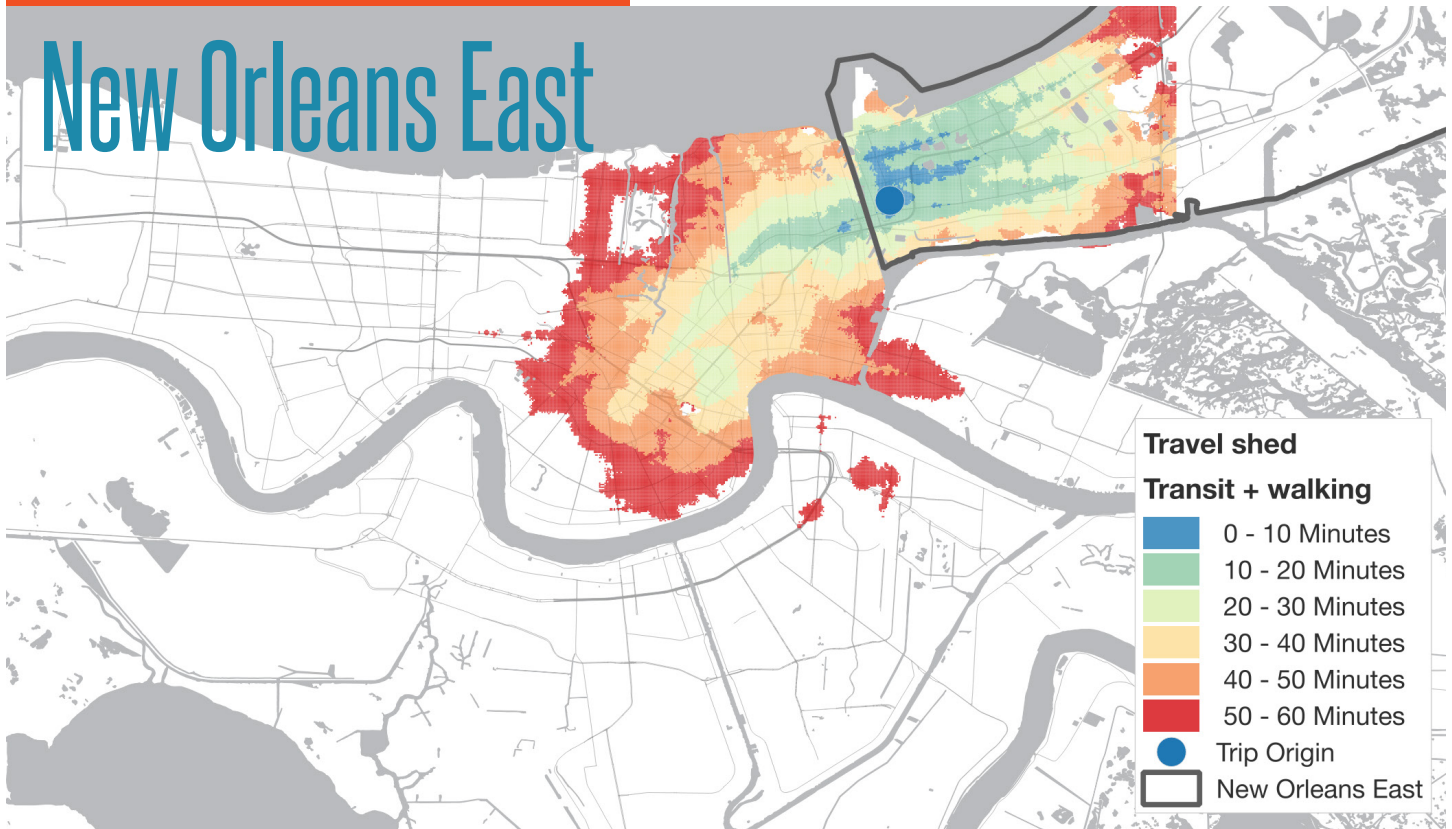
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.



TONI MARSHALL WEST BANK/ALGIERS RIDER PROFILE

"If I had a magic wand and I could do one thing to improve our transit system then I would extend the #39 Tulane bus all the way to Ochsner. It would be RTA and JeT working together to serve the community to help people get back and forth to work. Having better regional coordination would help a bunch."

New Orleans East



BRIANCA CAYETTE NEW ORLEANS EAST RIDER PROFILE

“I’m riding from New Orleans East everyday and the fastest my trip ever takes is one to one and a half hours. What I would like to see improved is more frequent trips on the bus lines...quality transit is having more frequent options.”

BRIANCA'S COMMUTE

Origin: Near Chef Mentour Highway at Downman Road

Destination: Touro Hospital, Foucher Street at Prytania Street

Walk, wait, ride time: 1 to 1 ½ hours

Shift: 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Lines: #62 Morrison Express, #64 Lake Forest Express, #65 Read-Crowder Express, #94 Broad, and #12 St. Charles Streetcar.

BRIANCA'S VISION

“What I would like to see improved is more frequent trips on the bus lines. We also need safer stop locations especially at main transfer points and bus drivers with better attitudes.”

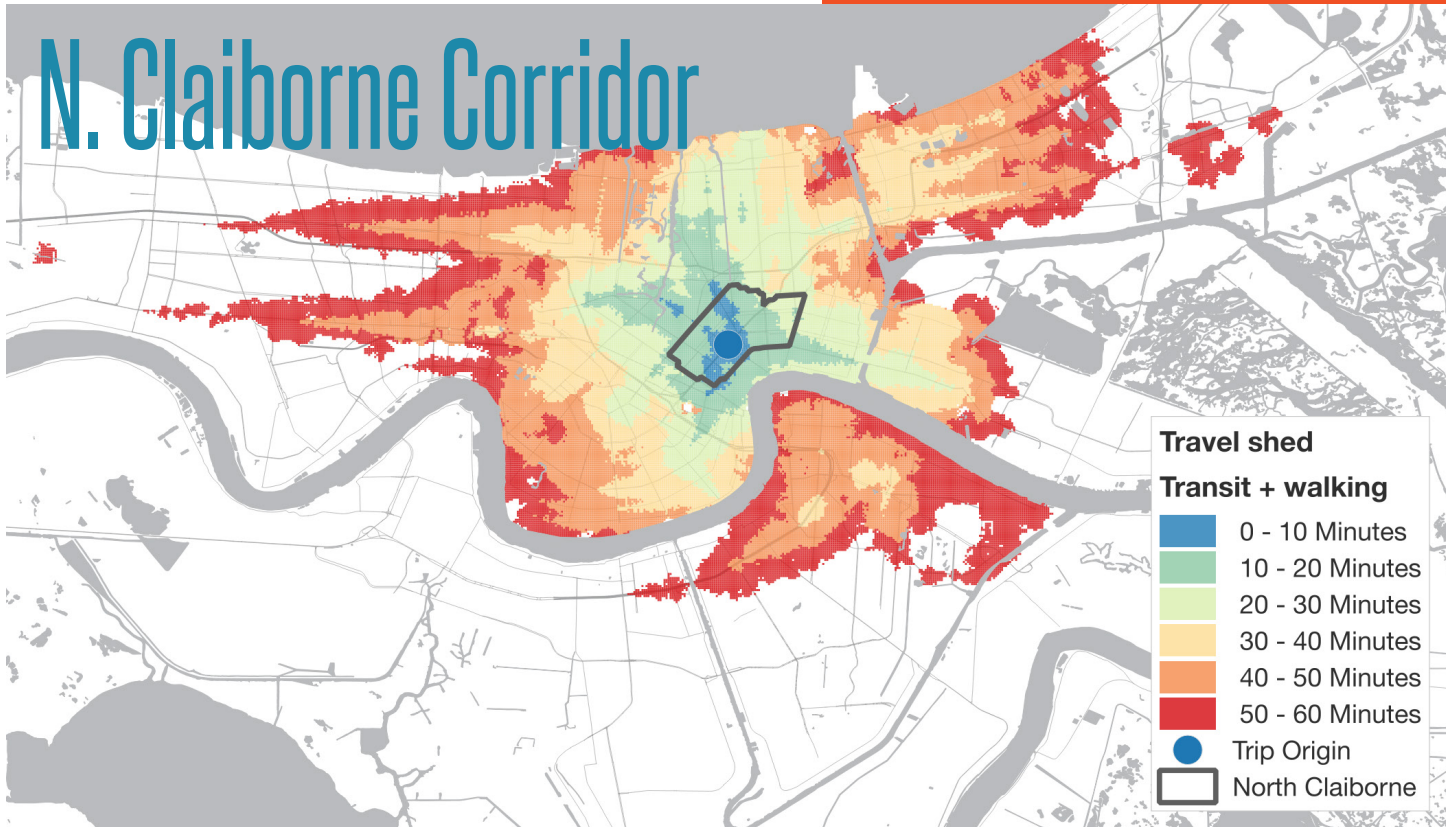
“We need more frequent trips. Because I use public transportation daily— If I’m going to visit my mom, visit my sister, or visit any of my friends or to come downtown just to shop I take public transportation. And my view of the quality transit is to have more frequent options. I want more options.”

Table 9: New Orleans East percent of jobs accessible by mode

		30 Minute Commute	60 Minute Commute
New Orleans East	via Transit	2%	14%
	via Driving	72%	98%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.

N. Claiborne Corridor



SHELIA'S COMMUTE

Origin: Near N. Claiborne Avenue at Esplanade
Destination: Harrah's Casino, near foot of Canal Street
Walk, wait, ride time: 30 to 45 minutes
Shift: 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Lines: #57 Franklin, #88 St. Claude-Jackson Barracks, #91 Jackson-Esplanade, and #49 Rampart-St. Claude Streetcar

SHELIA'S VISION

"When you're transferring that's the problem. That next stop, if something happens in between that bus ride, you're stuck. And you could be late to work. The RTA should coordinate the schedules to make it easier for people to transfer."

"The buses also don't run as frequently in the evening. It's every half hour and the streetcar is every 20 minutes. So, when I leave work the rush is to get on that streetcar and get to Rampart Street before the bus runs by. There's a big difference between the 7:30 p.m. versus the 8 p.m. bus because then it's dark."

Table 10: N. Claiborne percent of jobs accessible by mode

		30 Minute Commute	60 Minute Commute
N. Claiborne	via Transit	23%	45%
	via Driving	95%	100%

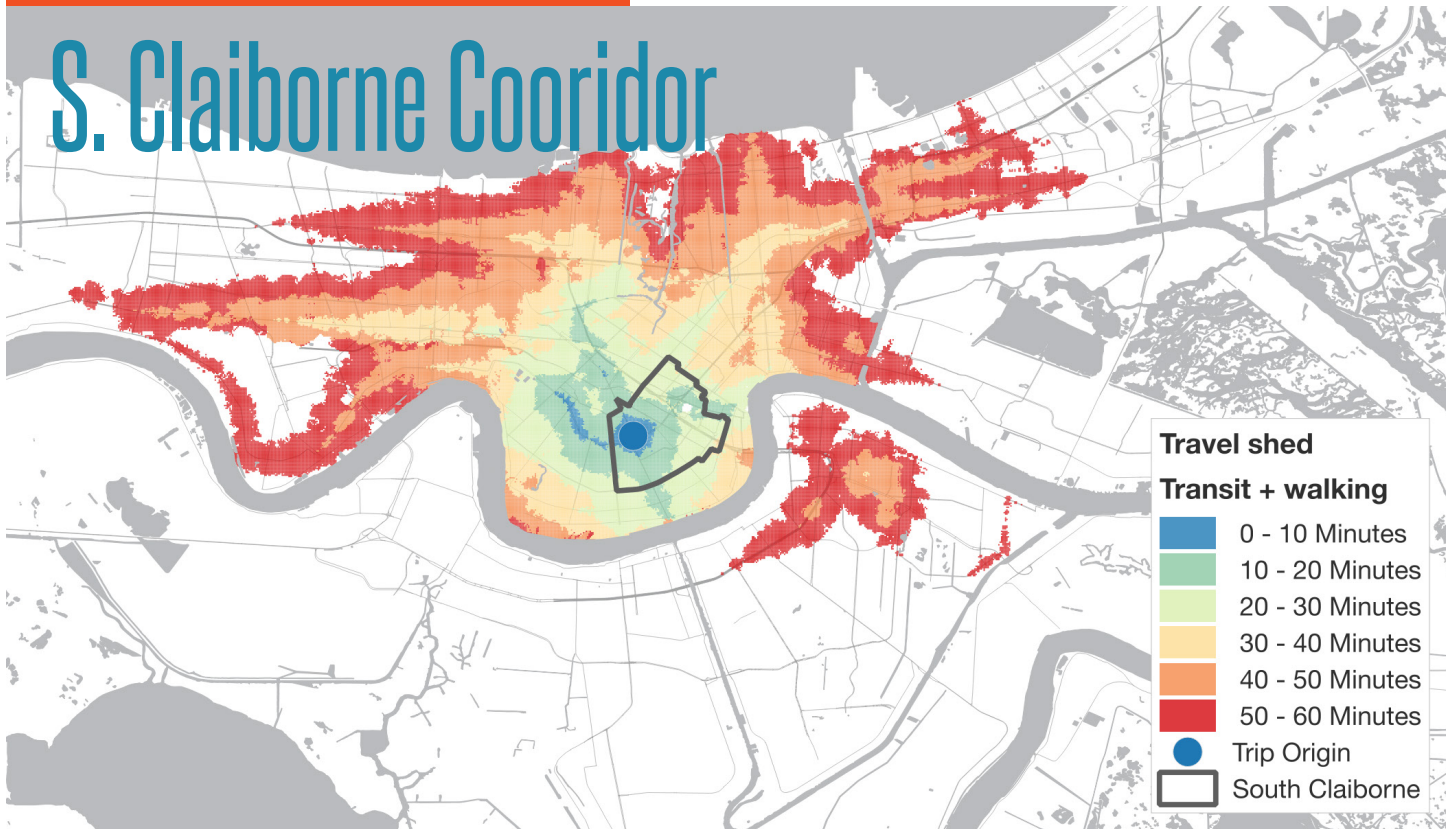
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.



SHELIA CULMER N. CLAIBORNE CORRIDOR RIDER PROFILE

"If I could make any change to our transit system it would be to shorten wait times. Too many bus lines have a 30-minute wait. A half hour is a long time. It could be the difference between getting to work on time and being late. For those routes taking longer than 20 minutes on any day—I think it's too long."

S. Claiborne Corridor



DEWAIN BALDWIN S. CLAIBORNE CORRIDOR RIDER PROFILE

“The biggest issue for me is that we need more shelters. The city doesn’t have enough shelters. Waiting in the hot sun is a big problem...and of course more comfortable seating. If people were more comfortable waiting at the bus stop then they’d be happier.”

DEWAIN’S COMMUTE

Origin: Near S. Claiborne Avenue at Toledano Street
Destination: Mid-City restaurant, North Carrollton Avenue at Bienville Street
Walk, wait, ride time: 30 to 45 minutes
Shift: 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Lines: #16 Claiborne, #27 Louisiana, and #47 Canal Streetcar

DEWAIN’S VISION

“I like the different transit options in my neighborhood but the #16 Claiborne bus stops running at 10 p.m. and I think 24/7 service would be a huge improvement. This would be excellent for workers because most people who live in the neighborhood work downtown.”

“Overall the city needs more shelters and I would love to see a transit hub downtown. It would have comfortable seating, air conditioning, places to shop or just sit down and relax, and electronic signage to know when the next bus is coming. It would be a safe, community space where people can connect.”

Table 11: S. Claiborne percent of jobs accessible by mode

		30 Minute Commute	60 Minute Commute
S. Claiborne	via Transit	26%	47%
	via Driving	95%	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017. LODES Data. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program. <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/>; Ride New Orleans analysis.

Moving Forward

As New Orleans prepares to elect a new Mayor and City Council, and the region is well into our second post-storm decade, we have made great, though incomplete, strides toward transit recovery.

In this transformative year, we are well-positioned to address some of the deficiencies listed in the previous section. But to do so, we need to make progress on three key items:

- Implement a strong and specific long-term strategic mobility plan
- Improve regional connectivity
- Engage in a regional funding conversation

APPROVE A STRONG STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN

Starting the strategic mobility planning process was an important step forward. But a successful start does not guarantee a successful outcome. Ride New Orleans defines a successful outcome as an ambitious, but achievable and specific plan that provides a clear road map for moving forward.

As this report goes to press, the planning process is roughly half-finished. The RTA has released a draft vision and set of goals for public comment, but it does not yet contain specific strategies or implementable action items to achieve the goals it has proposed nor does it yet establish measurable benchmarks.

The draft goals (see sidebar) are on the right track, but it will be hard to gauge the process' success until we see the RTA's proposals for the next phase – anticipated to be released this September. The planning process itself is scheduled to conclude by the end of 2017.

Within the five goals, Ride New Orleans hopes to see the following action items or strategies ratified and implemented:

Goal: Connect to opportunities

Ride New Orleans recommends:

- Create designated high frequency corridors with associated levels of service and the next steps for implementing those levels of service
- Conduct evaluation of whether the existing transit network is adequate or whether a network redesign process is needed and, if so, clear next steps for a network redesign process
- Make decisions about appropriate mode (e.g., bus, streetcar, circulator) for appropriate corridors in during the plan's lifetime. Decisions should be based on maximizing the mobility potential of residents within the specific corridors
- Establish concrete steps toward regional transit integration and more regional routes with a seamless rider experience
- Create a short-term action plan for transit improvements over the next five years, with a clear priority list for the next two years.
- Per the City's Climate Action for a Resilient New Orleans plan,

build a transit system that can help achieve the goal of 50 percent of trips being made without a car by 2030.

- Establish an evaluation matrix for how to prioritize increased transit service on lines in the short-term and long-term
- Establish a focus on transit-oriented development (TOD) corridors that match with the City of New Orleans' designated TOD focus areas in the Master Plan and determine appropriate levels of service and connectivity for those corridors

Benchmark: 80 percent of the RTA's service area population can reach most of the region's jobs within 30 minutes by transit during peak periods within 10 years

Goal: Be reliable

Ride New Orleans recommends:

- Create a clear plan and timeline for purchase of replacement and new transit vehicles necessary to ensure reliability of existing service and to increase service levels in the short- and long-term. Per the City's Climate Action for a Resilient New Orleans plan, explore opportunities to increase the fuel efficiency of public transit in New Orleans, particularly opportunities with renewable fuels and battery electric buses.
- Publish reliable real-time information with open data for outside developers to access
- Create strategy for decreasing travel time of streetcar network through signal priority, off board fare collection, stop elimination, and elimination of vehicular access to the neutral ground in key areas
- Select appropriate locations for additional dedicated bus lanes, transit signal priority, or new bus rapid transit (BRT) lines and determine which other state, regional, and local agencies need to be involved

Benchmark: Ambitious but achievable on-time performance metrics (see side-bar for metrics from other systems)

Goal: Ensure available, accessible, and affordable mobility

Ride New Orleans recommends:

- Implement reduced fare for lower-income households
- Streamline procedure for disabled and senior discount fare approvals
- Improve affordability of demand-response between parishes and to the airport
- Improve flexibility and convenience of demand-response
- Ensure that riders in New Orleans East and Algiers have reliable and convenient connections to jobs centers throughout the region

Table 12: On-time performance

Transit Agency	On-time definition	Goal	Actual
Denver (RTD)	Between one minute early and five minutes late	88%	85.9% (2015)
Minneapolis (Metro Transit)	Between one minute early and five minutes late	87.6%	85.9% - 87.6% (2014)
Seattle (King County Metro)	Between one minute early and five minutes late	80%	74.9% - 77.6% (2016)
DC region (WMATA)	Between two minutes early and seven minutes late	79%	77.7% (2017 Q1)
Columbus (COTA)	On-time to five minutes late	77.5%	79.08% (2015 Q4)

Source: Performance measures from websites of respective transit agencies, July 2017

Benchmark: At least 50 percent of lower-income households can reach all jobs within the RTA service area in 30 minutes or less via transit in the next five years and that 100 percent can do so in the next 10 years

Goal: Earn Trust

Ride New Orleans recommends:

- Help riders clearly understand the processes by which they can affect change regarding transit agency policy
- Clearly display easy-to-understand financial statements on website
- Develop an expanded list of partners through which to publicize important RTA meetings and decision points where the public has an opportunity to get involved
- Include the public in the creation of an easily-accessible capital improvements plan and create a process for regular, public updates and continued input
- Publish and display key performance indicators with goals and actuals on a quarterly basis

Benchmark: Steadily increasing attendance at RTA public meetings and events and an increasing annual amount of officially-filed rider feedback

Goal: Prioritize the rider experience

Ride New Orleans recommends:

- Ensure all transfer points and stops with more than 50 boardings a day have shelters and all stops with 15 or more boardings a day have benches within the next five years
- Create a rider-supported matrix to prioritize amenities at remaining stops based on boarding volume, wait time, and proximity to seniors and individuals with limited personal mobility
- Ensure all bus stops are clearly marked, well-lit, and safe for pedestrians to access within the next two years
- Rapid communication between the agency and the public when there are detours, cancellations, or delays that affect service whether those are one-time, periodic, or ongoing
- Introduce real-time displays at busy stops
- Create one-stop shopping office for rider complaints and services

Benchmark: Success meeting goal around transit stop amenities and a steady increase of reported rider satisfaction

MAKE TANGIBLE PROGRESS ON REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

We have a regional economy but a transportation system that stops at the parish lines. To provide efficient and growing service and to provide equitable access to economic opportunity to lower-income residents, this divide ultimately must be overcome.

In the long term, the strategic mobility plan must create a path to make this happen. But in the meantime, there are several tangible short-term steps that we can take to improve things for riders:

- **Allow transit lines to cross the parish lines where it make sense:** There is already precedent for transit lines to cross parish lines in order to provide access to the most logical jobs center: Jefferson Transit's E-2, W-2, W-3, and W-8 take Jefferson Parish residents to the New Orleans Central Business District. Regionally, we need to look for other examples where small tweaks to bus lines would create easier access to jobs centers for residents on the other side of the parish line.
- For example, the RTA should immediately expand a line 1.5 miles into Jefferson Parish along Jefferson Highway in order to connect with the expanding Ochsner Medical Center, where the job total is expected to significantly increase in the next few years.
- **Bring back the regional day pass:** Pre-Katrina, a regional day pass permitted riders to travel between systems for a one-time fee of \$5 a day. That system disappeared after the storm and riders now pay multiple fares for a simple round trip commute.
- Both the New Orleans City Council and Jefferson Parish Council support resolutions in favor of bringing back the day pass, and Jefferson Transit has been very receptive to the idea. The RTA has been slower to respond, publicly worrying about potential revenue loss and hiring consultants to study the issue in the spring of 2017. That study is expected to conclude at the end of 2017 with a recommendation on next steps.

Ride New Orleans survey research indicates that most interparish riders currently pay between \$5.50 and \$6.50 a day, with a small percentage paying more. The base RTA fare is \$1.25 and the base JeT fare is \$1.50, with transfers costing \$0.25 and \$0.50, respectively. A \$5 pass would help out lower-income transit riders immensely. A \$5.50 to \$6.50 priced pass would help out some riders financially, be a huge convenience factor for all riders, and would likely be revenue-neutral for the transit agencies.

Moving forward on this issue in the next six months would be a big win for transit riders.

- **Implement scheduled, public regional transit coordination meetings:** RTA and JeT representatives do not have a regularly scheduled monthly or quarterly time to come together and discuss inter-parish issues facing riders. Having a set meeting schedule – and opening that meeting up to the public – will create an ongoing dialogue and opportunity to build trust and cooperation between the agencies. The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) would likely be the appropriate venue for these meetings.

How are others improving regional transit?

Other regions are also recognizing that improved connectivity means improved regional coordination. Here are two examples of how peer regions are approaching the issue.

Nashville

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and Regional Transit Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA), the main service providers in the Greater Nashville area, want to provide the public appearance and functionality of a single, seamless system. Specific actions include:

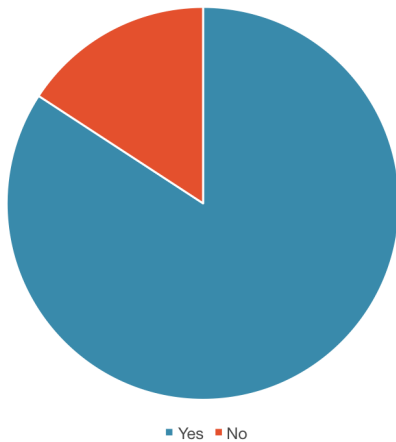
- New branding under a single name
- Consolidated passenger information with a single website, scheduling apps, real-time information, and wayfinding at major stops
- A simpler, unified fare system
- Development of a branded "Frequent Service Network" jointly operated by both transit authorities.

Kansas City

Five different agencies are implementing the RideKC Regional Transit Plan, aiming to double jobs accessible by transit in the next ten years. They want a more convenient fare collection system that doesn't penalize riders for crossing agency boundaries. Proposed ideas include:

- Honoring fares between various transit providers
- Installing modern fare collection equipment, including smart fare media, on all systems
- Shared revenue, based on agency usage
- Regional fare payment options other than cash.

Figure 15: “If you could receive better regional transit service, would you be willing to spend \$0.25 more for each ride on RTA?”



Source: Ride New Orleans cross-parish connections survey, 2017

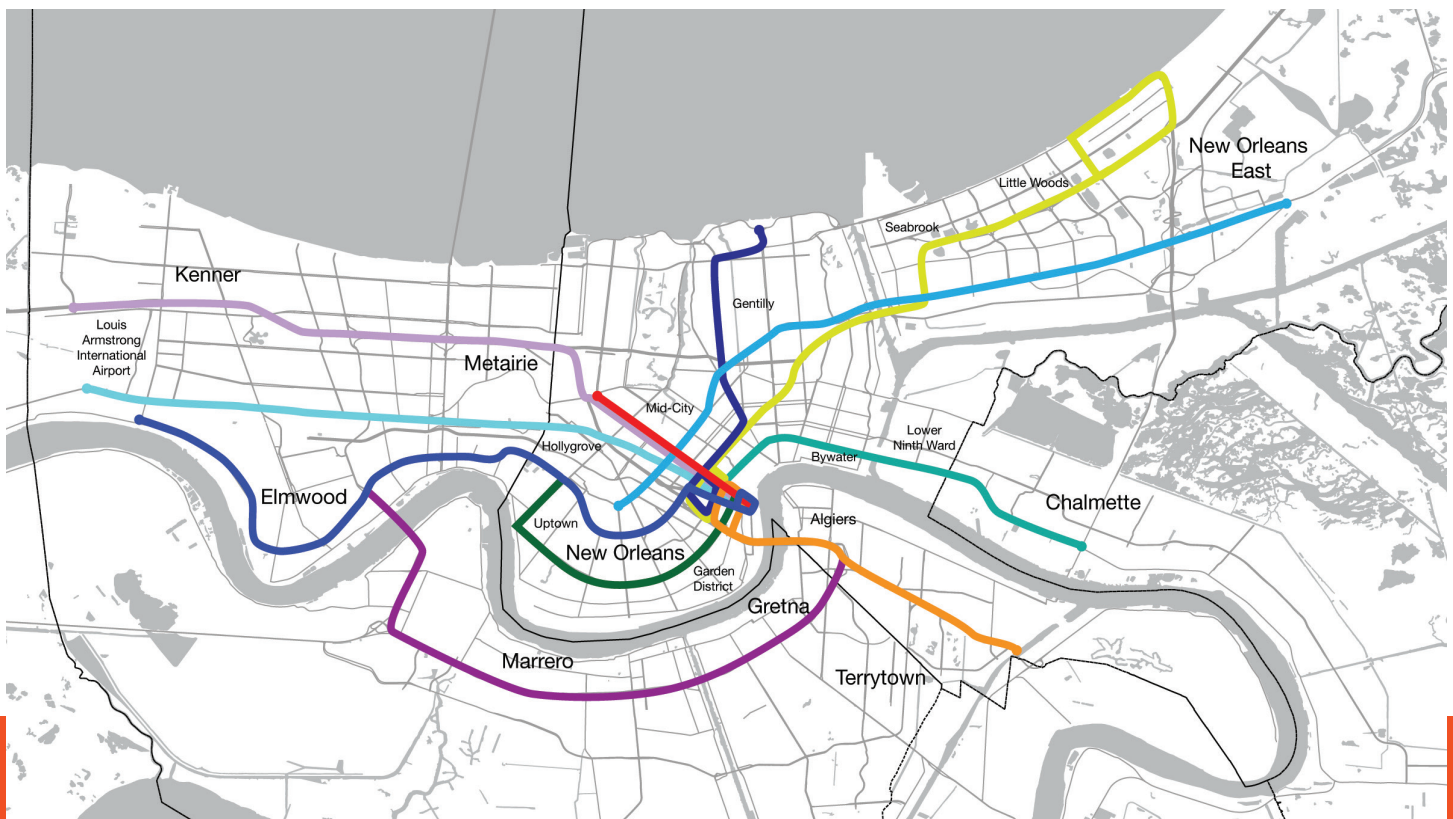
HAVE A REGIONAL FUNDING CONVERSATION

Ultimately, there may not be sufficient revenue currently to support transit operations at the level future riders and the region need to see. Increased capital funding may also be necessary to set up the equipment and infrastructure to achieve ambitious goals.

An open and widespread conversation should be started about what these costs might look like and to identify potential revenue sources from local jurisdictions, the state, and the federal government. The completion of the strategic mobility plan will give some basis to this conversation, but it should not stop at that point.

Last year, Ride New Orleans recommended that the RTA Board empower a Transit Funding Committee. Baton Rouge instituted a similar group in 2011 and the result of that group’s work led to the passage of a property millage to fund transit operations in April 2013. While the RTA Board’s Finance Committee has been a positive step forward, we still recommend the creation of a Transit Funding Committee to look toward future funding needs. This will be especially important to maintain momentum at the conclusion of the strategic mobility plan.

Figure 16: Potential high capacity, high frequency regional transit lines



Source: Ride New Orleans

ENDNOTES

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