

Guidelines for a Transit Riders Advisory Committee

Purpose of the Riders Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Riders' Advisory Committee is to actively seek input from a broad range of transit users on service, infrastructure and operational issues that affect bus, streetcar and para-transit services. The Riders' Advisory Committee is responsive to transit users and will make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners based on public input and with the absence of parochial bias to ensure that the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) of New Orleans provides safe, reliable and efficient service to all citizens of New Orleans and the Region.

The Riders Advisory Committee will:

- Provide a forum for the users of public transit to have their voices heard.
- Promote meaningful participation in planning and decision-making.
- Provide a mechanism for informing the larger base of transit users on changes and improvements in services.
- Seek input of and provide feedback from transit users on customer service and public confidence.
- Provide a forum for the agency to meet and exceed FTA requirements for citizen participation and involvement in planning activities.
- Support improvements in service.
- Help the agency to build public confidence.

Minimally, the Committee will review and provide input and feedback on the annual budget, capital planning, major service changes and performance standards. The Committee may also be called upon to participate in the Citizens Participation components of Social Equity Analyses and Environmental Justice reviews.

Membership

The Riders Advisory Committee will be comprised of not more than 21 members to include both transit dependent riders and transit choice riders. Members should represent a cross section of bus, streetcar and para-transit users, as well as broad representation of the geographic and demographic composition of the city.

The criteria for membership on the Riders Advisory Committee includes: transit use, community involvement, availability to participate, and ability to work as a team toward a united goal. This criteria will be listed on the application for Committee membership.

In the first year 11 members will be selected as the initial Riders Advisory Committee and the remaining 10 will be selected in year two in order to stagger the terms of the committee members. Of the 21 seats on the Committee one will be reserved for a representative of the agency's Special Transit Services (STS) Committee.

Committee members must be a permanent resident of either Orleans or Jefferson Parish.

Riders Advisory Committee Members are volunteers. Riders apply for a seat on the Committee, are selected by a panel consisting of representatives from a minimum of three independent third organization and appointed by the RTA Board of Commissioners. The panelists will be selected from the following organizations: Neighborhood Partnership Network; Total Community Acton, Inc., Job One, Louisiana Language Access Coalition, Associated Catholic Charities, and Delgado Community College. Notably, while members are selected by an independent third-party or organization, Committee members are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Commissioners.

Committee members will serve a two-year term and may have the option for an additional two-year term depending on the number of pending applications. After the initial two-year term Committee members that are interested in a second term will be required to reapply. Every effort will be made to ensure access and inclusion to a broad-base of riders and as such new applications will be prioritized over reapplication of previously seated Committee members.

Code of Conduct

The Riders Advisory Committee will have a code of conduct requiring that members conduct themselves according to a set of ethical standards. All Committee members will be required to sign a code of conduct statement.

Governance

The Riders' Advisory Committee will operate by authority of the RTA Board of Commissioners, such authority to be granted (or subsequently revoked) by majority vote of the Board.

The Riders Advisory Committee will be chaired by the Chair of the Board of Commissioners of the RTA or his/her designee.

The Riders Advisory Committee will have no authority or power to act on behalf of the RTA.

No individual member shall have authority or power to speak or act on behalf of the Riders Advisory Committee without approval of the both Committee and the Board.

As the Committee will be advisory only, there is no organizational hierarchy or officers.

The role of the Committee is to ensure that citizens in general and riders in particular have an opportunity to provide input and feedback on transit service delivery. As such, all voices of the Committee count equally. There is no voting on positions or support of proposed services changes, infrastructure development or planning projects; recommendations are approved by consensus of the members. In the event that the Committee cannot achieve consensus, all positions will be recorded without bias to ensure that the Board of Commissioners has access to the needs, concerns and questions of the agency's core constituency.

Training and Capacity Building

A portion of each meeting of the Riders Advisory Committee will be reserved for training and capacity-building activities. RTA staff will develop a schedule of topics for transit related training such as service standards, budgeting and federal regulations. Additionally, RTA staff will work with the committee to identify presenters and/or material on other topics of interest to the Committee.

Each meeting of the committee will include a meeting evaluation to identify opportunities for improvement. As well, an annual evaluation will be conducted to determine the Committee's efficacy.

Legal Guidelines

The Committee exists as a policy mechanism of the Board of Commissioners of the RTA. The Committee cannot exist as a legal entity outside of RTA policy, cannot enter into any agreements and as an entity is prohibited from taking any legal action against the agency, the Board and/or individual Board members. This covenant does not restrict the action of individual members and is applicable only to the Committee as an entity.

The voice of the Riders' Advisory Committee is intended to: 1) inform decision-making by the Board of Commissioners; and 2) educate the general and riding public. While individual members of the Committee are free to express any opinion about the agency, the Board of Commissioners or the individual members of the Board of Commissioners, the Committee as an entity cannot represent the RTA or release any public statements on behalf of the RTA, and can only release public statements on behalf of the Committee with the approval of the Board of Commissioners.

The Riders Advisory Committee will not be a forum for employee grievance and there will be no discussion of personnel issues in Committee meetings. Employees may participate at Committee meetings, however employees with specific grievances must follow the agency's formal grievance processes.

Committee members and citizens may use the forum to report perceptions of customer service, but specific complaints involving named or identifiable agency personnel must follow the agency's formal complaint process.

The Riders Advisory Committee will not be a forum for discussions of the union bargaining agreements.

The Riders' Advisory Committee will have no role or influence in the selection of contractors or the hiring of staff. The Riders Advisory Committee will not have access to personnel or contract information except as afforded by public records law and only by written request of an individual member. The Chair of the Board of Commissioners, through his/her designee determines what public information, if any, can be made available to the Committee as an entity.

The Committee will not "secret shop" the services of the RTA except in partnership with the agency through the operations department.

Operations

The Riders Advisory Committee will be staffed by a representative of the agency. All requests for information will be made to the Committee's designated staff person.

All Committee meetings will be open to the public and advertised. Minutes of Committee meetings will be recorded and accessible to the public.

The Committee will meet quarterly, however special meetings may be called by the Chair of the Board of Commissioners (or his/her designee) to get input and feedback as warranted for service changes or compliance with environmental justice requirements for infrastructure projects.

Reports of the Committee will be presented to the Board of Commissioners as a part of the Chair's report at the regularly scheduled Board meetings.