FAST LANE TO THE FUTURE

MAKING THE CASE FOR EQUITABLE, HIGH-QUALITY TRANSIT IN THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS REGION





Ride New Orleans | October 2025

A special thank you to our sponsors

WHAT IS HIGH-QUALITY TRANSIT?

High-quality or "rapid" transit includes bus or rail services with frequent and reliable schedules, typically supported by dedicated infrastructure like bus lanes. It offers a convenient, dependable, and attractive alternative to personal vehicles, which encourages transit-oriented development, boosts economic growth, and reduces environmental impacts. *High-quality transit* is essential for achieving transit equity because it helps bridge social and economic gaps, giving all riders access to vital resources such as jobs, healthcare, education, and more.

WHAT IS BUS RAPID TRANSIT?

- Bus rapid transit (BRT) is one of many types of high-quality transit.
- BRT is a high-quality bus service that operates like a light rail system but without the need for tracks.
- BRT utilizes a network of dedicated lanes and buses, along with other features of high-quality transit, to combine the speed and reliability of rail with the flexibility and lower cost of buses.

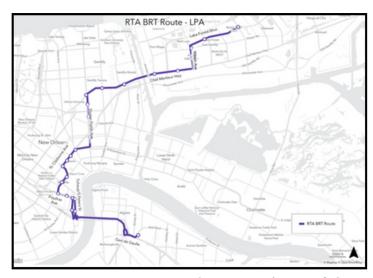
WHAT ISN'T BUS RAPID TRANSIT?

- Not just an express bus. Express buses offer transit from one destination to another with limited stops. However, they don't usually benefit from dedicated lanes or transit signal priority, and are often as susceptible to congestion as private vehicles.
- Not a light rail or train. BRT operates with buses, not tracks, providing increased speed and reliability without the high construction costs associated with rail.

DID YOU KNOW? Of the 50 largest U.S. metro areas, New Orleans is 1 of only 7 without some form of "rapid" transit? That's all changing soon.

NEXT STOP, NEW ORLEANS?

BRT is coming to New Orleans! Our local transit agency, the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), was recently awarded federal funding to pursue a roughly 15-mile BRT corridor connecting Algiers and New Orleans East, offering fast and frequent transit to the downtown job center. BRT offers a practical, low-cost, and high-quality transit option-ideal for smaller cities such as New Orleans. As cities worldwide have discovered. BRT is a valuable investment that benefits everyone, whether they ride transit, drive, roll, or walk.



Proposed BRT route for New Orleans

WHAT MAKES BUS RAPID TRANSIT FASTER & MORE RELIABLE?

SIGNAL PRIORITY: A traffic management strategy that allows signal controllers to adjust traffic lights along the routes of transit and emergency vehicles. By allowing for longer green lights or shortened red lights along the paths of transit and emergency vehicles, signal priority allows them to avoid delays and reach destinations faster, with minimal (or even positive) impacts on the travel times of personal vehicles.²

DEDICATED LANE: A traffic lane that is dedicated to transit and emergency vehicles, either at all times or during set schedules. These can include fully exclusive lanes, shared high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes, bus bypass shoulders, part-time exclusive lanes, intersection bypass lanes, and others. Dedicated lanes decrease travel times by ensuring transit and emergency vehicles arrive on time and avoid traffic congestion.

FREQUENT SERVICE & EXTENDED HOURS: To reduce wait times and total travel time, BRT vehicles operate more frequently and have longer hours, including early and late services, with increased service on weekends.

OFF-BOARD FAIR COLLECTION: To decrease boarding times, BRT lines often feature off-board fare collection methods, such as ticketing machines and digital fare systems, rather than on-board fare boxes. For riders, this means less time waiting to board and less time on transit.

UPGRADED SHELTERS/STOPS: BRT stations typically feature upgraded amenities to enhance rider comfort and dignity. These stations may include platform-level boarding, shaded or indoor waiting areas, lighting, restrooms, interactive schedules and maps, real-time information, and beautification projects.

DISTINCT BRANDING: BRT vehicles often feature their own unique branding, separate from a transit agency's standard fleet. This might include a distinctive name or logo used for special marketing of rapid fleet services, upgraded vehicles with enhanced technology and comfort features, and more.













HOW HAS BUS RAPID TRANSIT IMPROVED THE WAY OTHER CITIES MOVE, AND HOW CAN IT BENEFIT NEW ORLEANS?

BRT can enhance the quality of life for everyone, including those who have access to personal vehicles or don't yet use transit. From Cleveland to Birmingham, BRT has demonstrated its ability to reduce travel times, increase ridership, and generate billions in economic growth, all while providing cities with a cleaner, faster, and more equitable transportation system.



ECONOMIC GROWTH

Frequent routes and longer service hours help workers in hospitality, service industry, healthcare, and shift-based jobs get to work reliably. Economic growth spurred by BRT often creates more jobs, affordable housing, and other opportunities along the route.

Cleveland, OH - HealthLine

The HealthLine BRT connects downtown with major hospitals and universities.

Impact: \$9.5 billion in economic development along the corridor, including 8,800+ new residential units and 13,000+ new jobs.³



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES, INCREASED RIDERSHIP, & EQUITABLE ACCESS

Signal priority and dedicated lanes allow buses to bypass congestion. Riders save time, making transit a more competitive alternative to driving. Predictable service fosters trust and boosts transit usage. Youth, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those without access to a car benefit from increased access to jobs, education, healthcare, and social opportunities.

Birmingham, AL – Birmingham Xpress Alabama's first BRT system runs a 10-mile corridor with 32 stations.

Impact: Improved east-west mobility through downtown with fast, reliable connections for residents led to a 71% increase in ridership from 2023-2024.



SAFER STREETS FOR ALL

With modern technologies and facilities, customers perceive BRT systems to be **safer and more secure than other local bus services**. BRT infrastructure can also promote safer driving behaviors, improving safety for all road users, including personal vehicles and pedestrians.

Albuquerque, NM - Albuquerque Rapid Transit According to the agency, "all ART stations include designated pedestrian crossing signals so customers can safely cross the street and walk to and from the station."

Impact: Albuquerque's Central Avenue corridor saw a 65% reduction in serious injuries and fatalities after installation of the ART system.⁶

DID YOU KNOW?

Bus Rapid Transit is the fastestgrowing transit mode in the United States!⁷



CLEANER AIR & CLIMATE RESILIENCE

More people using transit means fewer cars, lower emissions, and less traffic. It supports local climate goals outlined in the city's Climate Action Plan by *reducing transportation-related carbon emissions* and helps lessen urban heat by *creating shaded, walkable station areas.*

DID YOU KNOW? The BRT project aligns with several ongoing city and agency initiatives, including RTA's Strategic Mobility Plan, the City of New Orleans' Transit Action Plan, and the City's Climate Action Plan.

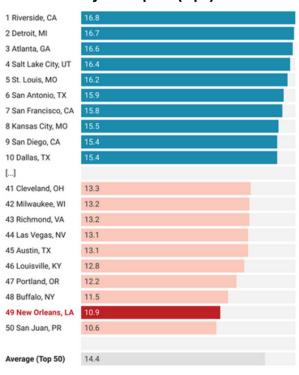
THE PLAN FOR NEW ORLEANS

The proposed BRT route will span about 15 miles, connecting New Orleans East and Algiers (West Bank) with frequent and reliable service to downtown New Orleans. Many neighborhoods could experience 10-minute transit rides into the city center, along with **shorter and more reliable commute times than those currently available by private vehicle.** Upgraded transit stations and beautification along the corridor will enhance nearby communities, while the corridor can facilitate the development of new 'downtown adjacent' walkable neighborhoods.

WE NEED INCREASED SPEEDS

Of the transit agencies in the top 50 largest U.S. urban areas, New Orleans currently ranks 49th in system speed, just ahead of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Urban Area System Speed (mph)



Source: 2022 National Transit Database (NTD) annual vehicle revenue miles and hours for U.S. urban areas, via FTIS Urban Integrated National Transit Database (iNTD).

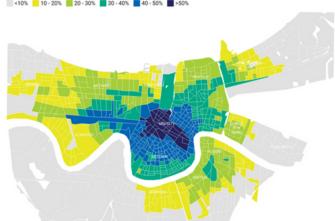
TIMELINE

The design and implementation of a highquality BRT line takes time and coordination between local, state, and federal entities.

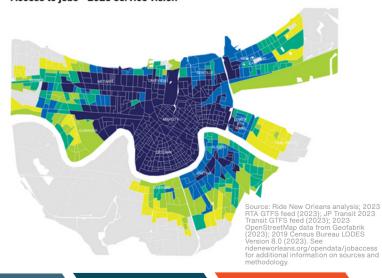
RIDE'S NETWORK GROWTH VISION

RIDE envisions a comprehensive growth network scenario that provides improved access to jobs for New Orleanians. The proposed BRT route is an essential component of the vision.

Access to jobs - 2024 existing network Share of private jobs in Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard Parishes reachable within 60 minutes by transit (weekdays 11am-1pm) 10-20% 20-30% 30-40% 40-50% 50%



Access to jobs - 2028 service vision



PHASE ONE PHASE TWO PHASE THREE PHASE FOUR

2 Japan

PHASE FIVE

Feasibility Study, Data collection, Evaluation, & Identification of Proposed Route.



Environmental & Preliminary Design

Final Design

Construction

Service Begins!

WHO IS INVOLVED & HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Collaboration between agencies is key to a successful BRT system



	BRT NEEDS	AGENCIES	ACTIONS
	Traffic Signals & Right-of Way Along Local Roads; Sidewalks; Lighting	City of New Orleans Department of Public Works (DPW)	Build Community Support; Secure Dedicated Local Funding; Facilitate Effective Coordination Between City Offices and RTA
	Signal Control & Lane Designations Along State Roads (e.g. Chef Menteur, Gentilly Blvd.)	Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD)	Strengthen Interagency Coordination; Build Legislative Relationships; Foster "Buy In" at the State Level
	Routing, Scheduling, Shelters/Stations, Fare Collection Systems, Service Planning	New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA)	Identify Sustainable Funding Sources and Develop Staffing Capacity
	Funding, Guidance, and Approvals	US Department of Transportation (USDOT) and other Federal Agencies	Advocate for Transit Funding as a Federal and USDOT Priority
DILDING PERM CONTROL OF THE PERM CONTROL OF THE PERM OF THE PERM CONTROL OF THE PERM OF	Permitting	Local, State, & Federal Agencies	Align Permitting Requirements Across Agencies



WHAT ABOUT THE RIDER VOICE?

RIDE will continue our robust outreach efforts and policy recommendations to ensure riders and community members are involved in every step of the BRT planning process. Improving the transit experience for riders must remain the top priority as this project progresses, and riders' needs must guide the conversation.

HOW TO SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY & EQUITABLE TRANSIT FOR EVERYBODY IN NEW ORLEANS



Transit is not as it should be. At the beginning of the 21st century, New Orleans had one of the most robust public transit systems in the United States for a city of its size. Unfortunately, over the past 20 years, transit service levels have dropped more than 40% due to a range of factors, including Hurricane Katrina and the COVID-19 Pandemic. These service cuts have led to a less equitable system and reduced mobility for many residents.9

New Orleans, like many other cities nationwide, is facing a transit funding crisis. The agency lacks the necessary resources to expand or sustain its services. Dedicated funds would enable the agency to grow its operations, purchase much-needed vehicles, and increase staffing capacity to grow the system.

Remind leaders that transit is a lifeline for the most vulnerable communities in New Orleans. It provides critical access to resources such as food, medical care, work, and education.

Transit is a public service and should be treated with the same importance as other utilities. We must ensure transit is reliable, affordable, and equitable.

Sources:

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FAST LANE TO THE FUTURE:

Making the Case for Equitable, High-Quality Transit in the Greater New Orleans Region





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DID YOU KNOW? There is currently NO transit line item in the City of New Orleans Budget! This means no dedicated funds are allocated in the city budget for transit operations.



ATTEND TRANSIT & BUDGET MEETINGS

Attend RTA Board Meetings, and City Council Budget and Transportation meetings. Make public comment in support of transit funding, and hold leaders accountable to transit riders.



CONTACT YOUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

Emphasize that high-quality transit and dedicated transit funding are top priorities for New Orleans. A strong transit system benefits everyone in our community.



GET INVOLVED WITH RIDE NEW ORLEANS!

Help RIDE advocate for equitable transit! Join our Policy Committee or attend our monthly Coalition for Quality Transit meetings to be part of our grassroots, volunteer-led campaigns. The rider's voice shapes every aspect of our advocacy.

Want to stay connected without attending more meetings? Follow us on social media and consider donating to support our efforts.



GET ON BOARD!

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