

HOUSE SUMMARY OF SENATE AMENDMENTS

HB 544

2024 Regular Session

Boyd

TRANSPORTATION: Provides relative to the Regional Transit Authority

Synopsis of Senate Amendments

1. Makes technical changes.
2. Authorizes any city or parish with appointments and representation of the board of commissioners authority to audit the Regional Transit Authority or hire a third party to perform the audit.
3. Specifies that if any parish opts out of the Regional Transit Authority after August 1, 2024, the mayor of governing authority has the power to appoint two new members to the board.
4. Removes a provision that would have allowed the city council the ability to confirm and recall board members.
5. Removes a provision that would have denied the advisory board the power to vote on any matters to be decided on by the board of commissioners.
6. Authorizes the following powers and functions to be vested in the advisory board:
 - a. Full and unrestricted access to all written information, documents, data which are before the Regional Transit Authority board of commissioners and its committees. However, specifies that this does not include items that are covered by the executive session proceedings.
 - b. The power to request written briefings, presentation reports, and any other information as needed from the staff of the Regional Transit Authority in making informed decisions regarding the functions outlined in R.S. 48:1654(B).
 - c. The power to adopt formal recommendations regarding any such matter which must be presented on the record at commission meetings prior to a vote. However, the advisory board does not have the power to vote.
7. Changes the composition of the advisory board from nine persons to eleven.
 - a. The president of the University of New Orleans
 - b. Two members appointed by the president of the Louisiana American Federation Labor and Congress of Louisiana Industrial Organizations.
8. Clarifies that the board will be composed of a local member of the Amalgamated Transit union who works for the Regional Transit Authority appointed by the president and business agent.
9. Changes the appointing authority from the executive director to the executive officer for a member and changes the Downtown Development District to Ride New Orleans.
10. Specifies that all appointed members of the advisory board shall receive at least two hours of transit-specific training in the duties, responsibilities, and ethics and the substance of the positions held and two hours of training on labor and union relations best practices before taking office or no later than one year after office is assumed.
11. Allows a city or parish council to levy fines on the Regional Transit Authority.
12. Adds a member appointed by the New Orleans city council to the board of commissioners.

Digest of Bill as Finally Passed by Senate

Present law requires the board of commissioners of the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) be composed of three members from each participating parish appointed by the chief executive officer of that parish, subject to the approval of its governing authority.

Present law specifies that each member appointed by the chief executive officer of a parish must be domiciled within that parish.

Proposed law adds provisions for legislative delegation's failure to submit reference list and for parishes to opt out of the RTA.

Proposed law requires one member be appointed by New Orleans City Council. Requires that one member be appointed from House District 102 by the state representative representing the district beginning on Sept. 1, 2024, and specifies that the appointment rotates every four years between the members appointed from the house district. Adds a member appointed from Senate District 7 by the state senator representing the district.

Present law specifies that in the event the senators or representatives of that parish's legislative delegation fail to submit a list of names to the chief executive officer of that parish within 30 days of the date on which notice to submit such list of names is sent to the senators or representatives of that parish's legislative delegation, then the chief executive officer of that parish is to appoint such member as would have been authorized for the senators or representatives of that parish's legislative delegation.

Proposed law requires the mayor or governing authority to have the power to appoint two new members to the board if any participating parish opts out of the RTA after Aug. 1, 2024.

Proposed law adds additional qualifications to present law for the board of commissioners and members. Specifies that each member appointed to the authority by the parish legislator must possess minimum transit expertise standards, the required training, and have previous union experience. Further specifies that the transit minimum standards be established by Jan. 1, 2025, and will apply to all newly appointed commissioners.

Present law grants authority to make and execute all contracts and other instruments necessary or convenient, including the power to contract for managerial and operating services.

Proposed law makes authority in present law contingent on management and labor attempting to resolve all contracts bilaterally before involving a mediator.

Proposed law authorizes the authority to require quarterly reporting of the RTA, the power to establish penalties for when the RTA breaks city and state laws, the authority the power to probe waste, bid rigging, abuse of employees, and labor law violations.

Proposed law creates the RTA Advisory board and provides for its purpose, composition, and powers.

Proposed law specifies that the advisory board is created to assist and advise the RTA and make recommendations to make informed decisions regarding the functions outlined in present law.

Proposed law requires the advisory board to meet quarterly with the board of commissioners.

Proposed law requires the advisory board have two hours of transit specific training in the duties, responsibilities, ethics and the substance of the position held and two hours of training on labor and union best practices, either before taking office or no later than one year after the office is assumed.

Proposed law authorizes any city or parish with appointments and representation of the RTA board of commissioners authority to audit the RTA or hire a third party to perform the audit

Proposed law authorizes the following powers and functions to be vested in the advisory board:

(a) Full and unrestricted access to all written information, documents, data which are before the RTA board of commissioners and its committees. However, this Subparagraph does not include items that are covered by the executive session proceedings.

(b) The power to request written briefings, presentation reports, and any other information as needed from the staff of the RTA in making informed decisions regarding the functions outlined in R.S. 48:1654(B).

(c) The power to adopt formal recommendations regarding any such matter which shall be presented on the record at commission meetings prior to a vote. However, the advisory board does not have the power to vote.

Proposed law requires the advisory board be composed of eleven persons as follows:

- (1) An employee of the RTA appointed by the chief executive officer.
- (2) A local member of the Amalgamated Transit Union who works for the RTA appointed by the president and business agent.
- (3) A member from Ride New Orleans appointed by the executive officer.
- (4) The president of each of the following universities: Loyola University, Tulane University, Xavier University, Dillard University, Southern University at the University of New Orleans, the University of New Orleans, the University of Holy Cross, and two members appointed by the president of the La. American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization.
- (5) Two members appointed by the president of the La. American Federation of Labor and Congress of La. Industrial Organizations.

Proposed law allows a city or parish council to levy fines on the RTA.

Effective August 1, 2024

(Amends R.S. 48:1655(A)(1)(introductory paragraph) and (c), and (2) and 1658(8) and (23); Adds R.S. 48:1656(24)-(26) and 1656.1)