New Links

Final Recommended Network

FEBRUARY 2021

RPC REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION FOR THE PARISHES OF LOUISIANA

RTA

JET

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION OT

RIDE WORLD CLASS TRANSIT FOR NEW ORLEANS

About New Links

New Links is a collaborative project led by the planning staff of the Regional Planning Commission (RPC), which is a transportation policy organization made up of elected officials, transportation agencies, and citizen representatives from the eight parishes in the greater New Orleans region. The RPC is responsible for developing policies and plans for federally funded transportation projects in the region.

The New Links project focuses on the services operated by the two largest transit providers in the greater New Orleans region:[1]

- **The Regional Transit Authority (RTA)**, which operates 40+ bus, streetcar and ferry routes primarily in New Orleans and the City of Kenner, and:
- **Jefferson Transit (JET),** which operates 11 bus routes in Jefferson Parish.

In early 2018, the RTA board adopted their Strategic Mobility Plan (SMP), a 20-year comprehensive plan for enhancing the agency's transit service. As part of that plan, the agency committed to implementing a network redesign.

The RPC, which regularly works on planning projects with both the RTA and JET, was approached by the RTA in mid-2018 to lead the planning for a network redesign that could include both agencies as part of a comprehensive effort. At the time, the RPC was managing JET's strategic planning process, and received positive feedback from JET leadership about the prospect of a regional transit redesign that would involve both agencies. JET's Strategic Plan, released in 2019, committed the agency to implementing the recommendations of the network redesign along with the RTA. With the blessing of both agencies, the RPC initiated the New Links study in early 2019.

Planning Process

The purpose of the New Links project is to develop a set of short-term recommendations for improving transit service that can be implemented quickly using existing funding. The project involves two major components: a Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) of existing transit and a planning process for a network redesign of the region's transit system.

A Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) is a system-wide study of a transit network that includes a detailed, line-by-line assessment of every transit route in a system. To conduct the COA, the New Links project team gathered and analyzed data on existing lines operated by the RTA and JET to better understand how the existing regional transit system operates, who is currently riding transit, and the strengths, weaknesses and challenges of the system. In March 2019, a national surveying firm contracted with the RPC to gather data on system ridership and conduct a comprehensive demographic and Origin-Destination (OD) survey of regional bus, streetcar and ferry routes. This data was used to create a detailed profile of transit usage in the region including rider demographics, trip purposes, and origin-destination patterns.

The second task of the project consisted of developing a plan for a network redesign of RTA and JET services. A network redesign involves re-imagining transit service in a city or region to create a plan for service that reflects current travel needs and community priorities, and can be implemented using existing resources. The New Links project team developed a network redesign plan to incorporate the results of the COA along with community feedback and a detailed analysis of regional transit demand. A draft version of the plan was released for public comment in October 2019, and feedback on the draft plan is incorporated into the Final Recommended Plan presented in this report.

While a portion of New Links was completed by a consulting team, the majority of the planning and analysis work on this project was performed in-house by the planning and data science staff of the RPC and RTA, including the development of the Phase II Service Concepts.

1 The study area for New Links includes the census-defined urbanized of Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard Parishes. In addition to RTA and JET service, the project also incorporates recommendations for St. Bernard Urban Rapid Transit (SBURT), which operates a single fixed-route bus line serving St. Bernard Parish.

Community Engagement Process

Community engagement for the New Links project was extensive and robust. The project team extensively consulted riders and other transit stakeholders over multiple phases of outreach during the two-year planning process that led to the development of the Final Recommended Network.

The planning and execution of each phase of outreach was a major undertaking in which several important groups played a part. While surveys and information were distributed through a multitude of other channels, as described in the Final Network Report, public meetings and digital town halls were central to informing community members and collecting feedback during each phase.

During Phase I, the RPC co-hosted a series of neighborhood meetings with the City of New Orleans' Office of Neighborhood Engagement and Office of Transportation. During Phase II, RIDE New Orleans (RIDE) led a series of stakeholder meetings before the pandemic began, and transitioned to hosting digital town hall meetings when in-person outreach became impossible. Phase III once again relied on digital town hall meetings led by RIDE. The RTA also assisted with rider-focused engagement for Phase III, helping to survey transit riders and disseminate information on the Proposed Network.

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Introduction & Executive Summary

What is New Links?

New Links is a planning project to reimagine how public transit connects Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard parishes. The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) is working with the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and Jefferson Transit (JET) to develop recommendations for redesigning the region's transit network to create more reliable, equitable, and connected bus and streetcar service.

What is the purpose of this report?

This report presents the Final Recommended Network, the project team's recommendation for the best possible transit network that can be run using the combined resources of the RTA and JET prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Final Recommended Network is the culmination of two years of planning and community engagement work by the New Links project team.

In addition, this report presents:

- A summary of the three phases of public engagement which led to the Final Recommended Network and the key feedback from the public which informed the plan.
- A Resilience and Priority Plan addressing how the RTA and JET should prioritize service if the funding environment for transit changes after the pandemic.
- A summary of the steps required for the transit agencies to implement the plan.

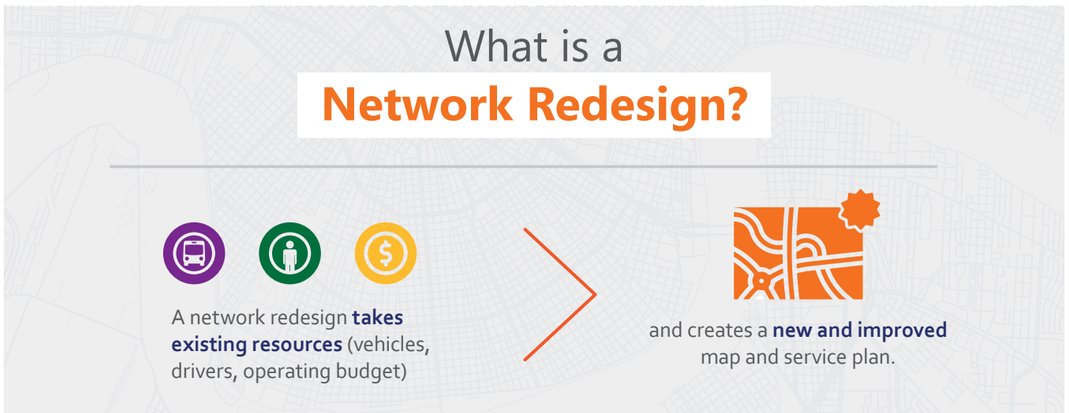
Who developed this plan?

The network was designed by the RPC, RTA and JET transportation planning staff. Although the transportation planners designed the network, it is meant to reflect the priorities of riders and stakeholders and was developed in close coordination with RTA and JET leadership.

What is a Network Redesign?

A network redesign is a transit planning process that begins by wiping the slate clean and starting from scratch. Working together, planners and the public can decide where, when, and how transit should serve a region. Many cities, including Houston, TX and Columbus, OH, have successfully grown ridership, improved frequency, and increased the reliability of transit service by reallocating existing resources.

Figure 1A: "What is a Network Redesign?"



Why redesign the network?

Transit in Greater New Orleans has not been rethought in a long time. Many of the features of the current system are based on a scaled-down version of the regional network run by RTA and JET before Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The network includes many bus lines that were designed for a different time in the city's history, and some of these "legacy" services are not well-suited to the current needs of the region. Since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, there has been significant growth in the region and major changes to the places where residents live and work, but the transit network has not fully kept up with those changes.

Figure 1B: "Why redesign the network?"

Figure 1C: Average trip time to work (in minutes) by travel mode for Orleans Parish residents, 2014–2018

SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, 2014-2018 ACS

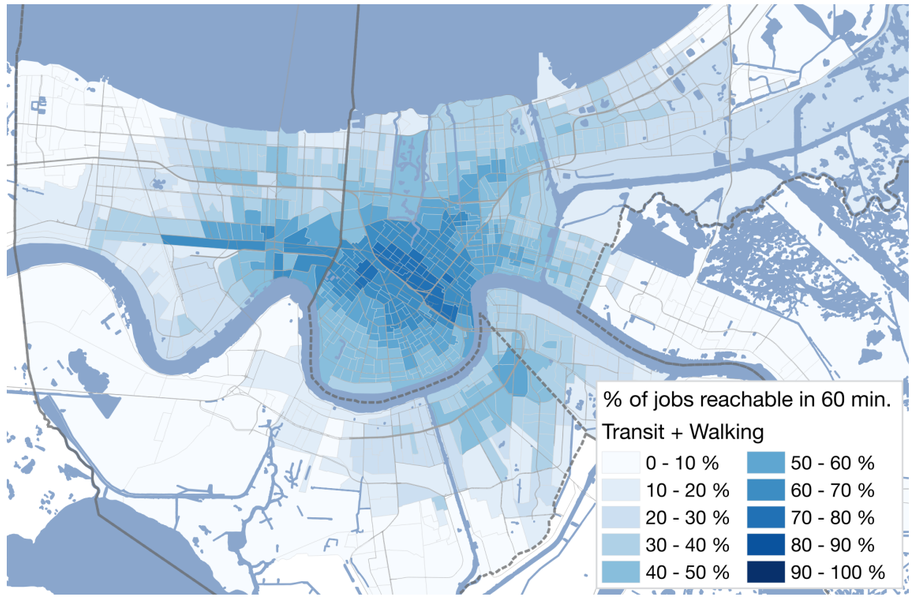
Poor reliability, limited stop amenities and roadway infrastructure for transit users, and other issues add to the challenge of using public transit. Limited coordination between transit services operating in Orleans and Jefferson parishes make cross-parish trips difficult for riders. Because most bus lines in the city are designed to get riders to and from Downtown New Orleans, it is difficult and time-consuming to access destinations in other parts of the region.

Taken together, these issues create significant barriers for residents of the region who must rely on transit to get to jobs and other destinations. A typical resident can only reach 43% of the region's jobs in 60 minutes or less via transit and walking, while a person driving a car can reach over 99% of the region's jobs.[2]

2 Source: Ride New Orleans, 2020 State of Transit Report.

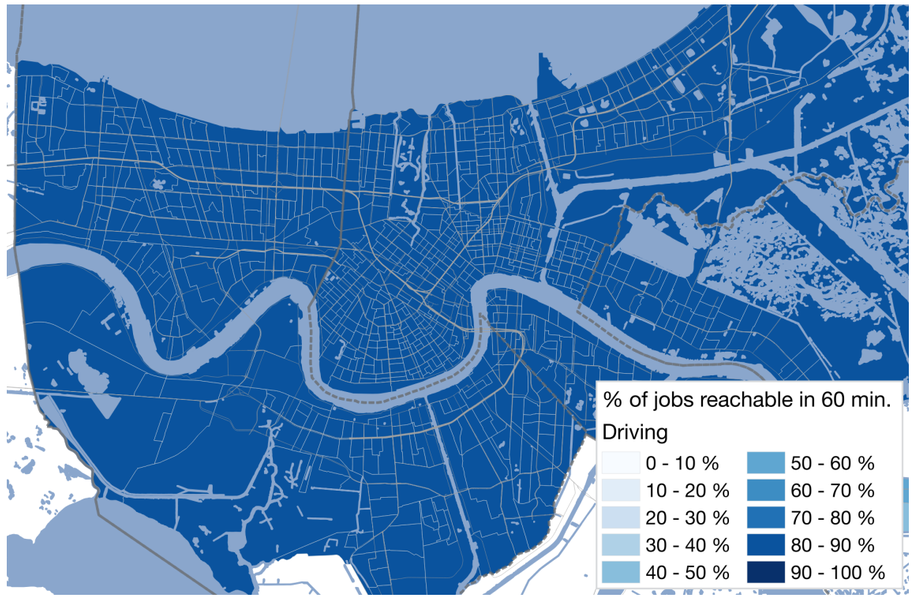
Riders have consistently indicated that they are ready for change and that they would be willing to make trade-offs to make transit service better and more reliable.

Map 1D: Percentage of jobs reachable within 60 minutes using public transit and walking



SOURCE: RIDE NEW ORLEANS, 2020

Map 1E: Percentage of jobs reachable within 60 minutes driving



SOURCE: RIDE NEW ORLEANS, 2020

New Links

Map 1F:

Recommended Network Map

What are the big takeaways?

Figure 1G: Percentage of residents in the region within half mile of transit – weekdays at noon

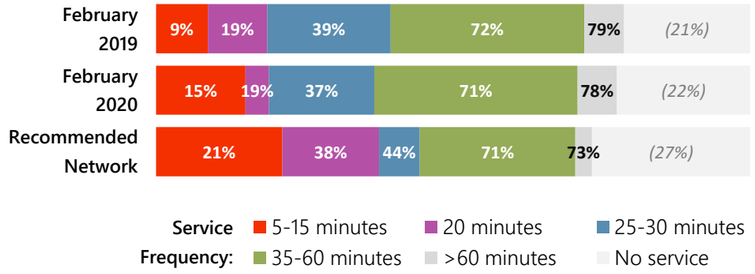
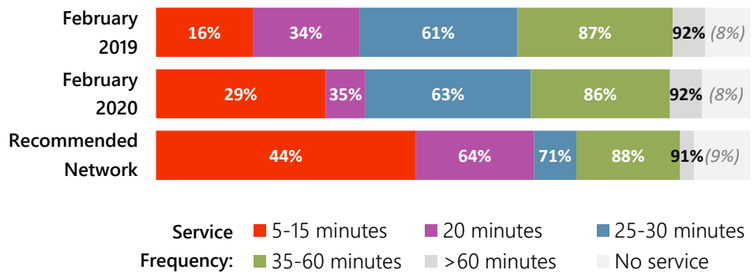


Figure 1H: Percentage of households without access to a car in the region within half mile of transit – weekdays at noon



Improved frequency

The new network would significantly improve the number of people living within a half mile of bus lines coming at least every 15 or 20 minutes.

More equitable service

The improved service would be strongest for residents who are most likely to need transit. People living in poverty and households without access to a car would see the greatest gains in access to frequent service.

More efficient service

The new network incorporates best practices to make service more efficient. This includes removing overlapping segments from many bus routes and structuring RTA and JET services so that they do not compete for riders.

Better job access across parish lines

The new network is structured to create better workforce connections for riders. The network significantly improves the number of residents who would have access to major job hubs in both Jefferson and Orleans parishes.

Transfer hubs

The new network would establish transfer hubs at several locations in Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard parishes. Some of these hubs would use existing transfer facilities (such as Wilty Terminal), while others would require new facilities (such as the proposed hub in New Orleans East).

Setting up regional transfer hubs makes it possible to run more frequent and more reliable service to New Orleans East, the West Bank, and Jefferson Parish by eliminating some of the overlap between different services and by shortening the running time for certain routes connecting to Downtown. These improvements also create better connections for riders traveling within a neighborhood. The trade-off for these improvements is that some riders must make an extra transfer to get Downtown.

Reduced coverage

In order to make these improvements, the plan eliminates or consolidates some existing bus lines with other routes, reducing coverage. A few areas of the region that currently have bus service would lose coverage as part of the redesign.

What was the process for developing the plan?

Figure 1I: Timeline of the New Links Process

New Links is the result of a two-year process, combining multiple phases of community feedback with a detailed review of the operating needs and regional market for public transit:

Rider feedback

The most important components of the planning process were the priorities identified by riders and other transit stakeholders during the RTA and JET strategic planning processes and during New Links outreach in 2019 and early 2020.

Agency strategies

This plan reflects strategies developed by the RTA and JET in their strategic planning processes as described in the 2018 RTA Strategic Mobility Plan and the 2019 JET Strategic Plan.

Ridership and operations data

In 2019, the project team conducted a detailed study called a Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) of existing transit services. The COA included detailed data on ridership, on-time performance, and fleet usage for the RTA and JET.

Data on transit needs

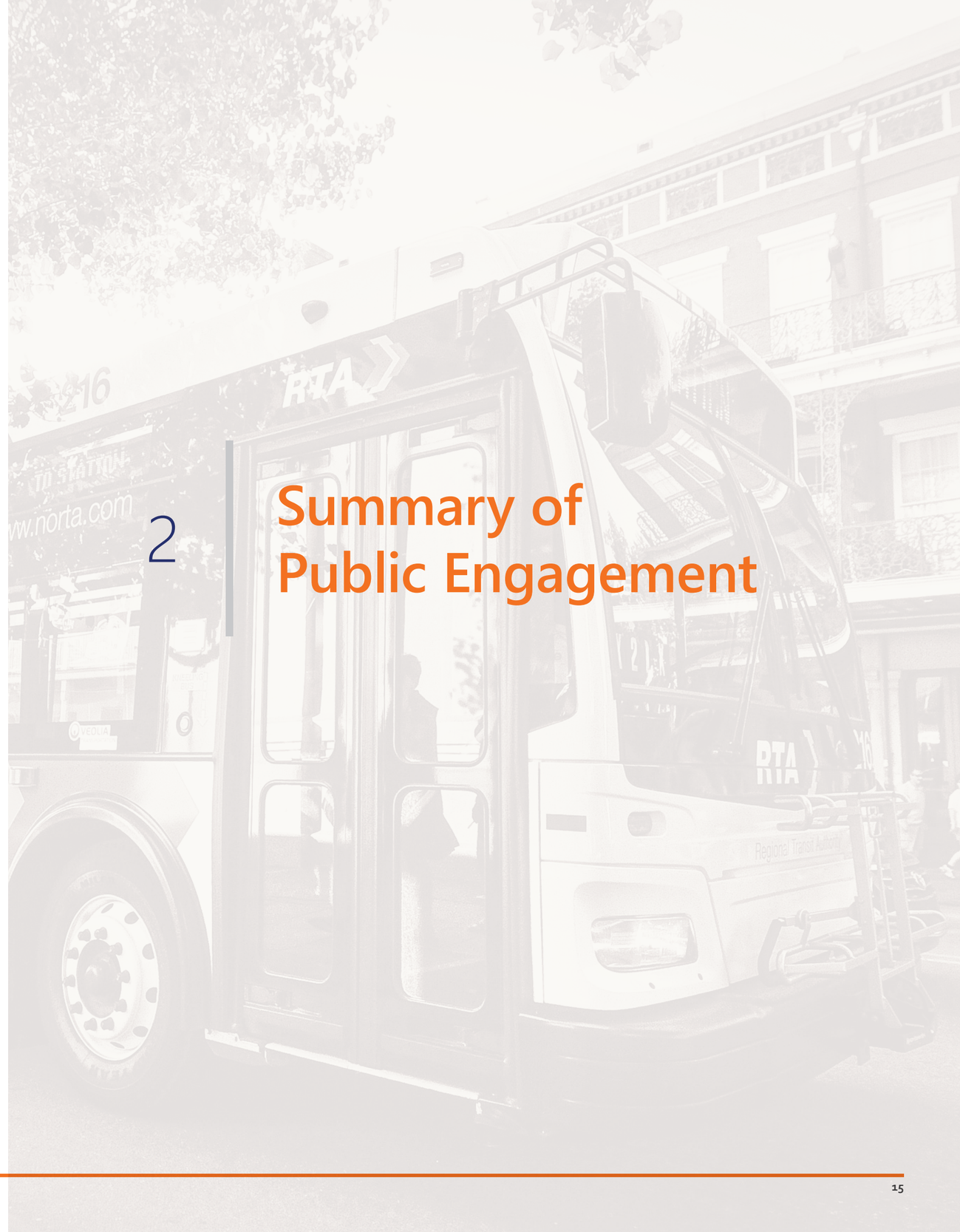
The planning team developed a transit propensity index to understand where people live, work, and attend school. The methodology for this index was based on the transit index developed by the RTA for its Strategic Mobility Plan. The New Links analysis builds upon that effort with newer and more detailed data including additional information on housing, school enrollment, and higher education.

Data on regional travel

The network plan incorporates data on where and when people travel. Some of this information comes from the Origin-Destination survey of RTA and JET riders conducted in 2019 which provides information on who is using the transit system and where, when, and why people travel. The New Links project team also used other sources of travel data on employment and educational trips to understand overall regional travel patterns and identify where transit connections need to be improved.

What are the next steps?

The RPC will deliver the New Links recommendations to RTA and JET leadership for their review and approval. The RTA and JET will review the recommendations using their own internal processes, and ultimately, the RTA board will vote on the plan. If approved, the New Links network could be implemented within the next 12 months, by early 2022.



2

Summary of Public Engagement

Introduction

This section summarizes the public engagement process for the Recommended Network Plan. The project team extensively consulted riders and other transit stakeholders over multiple phases of outreach during the two-year planning process that led to the development of the Final Recommended Network.

The engagement process builds on community outreach done by the RTA and JET during the development of their long-range strategic plans which initiated the New Links effort. The RTA's Strategic Mobility Plan (SMP) was released in 2018, while JET's Strategic Plan was released in 2019.

Both plans offer a wide-ranging, 20-year vision for transit improvements and agency growth. When creating their plans, both agencies performed extensive public outreach engaging a significant number of riders and non-riders to determine public priorities for transit improvements.

The New Links proposal builds directly on those long-term planning efforts by the RTA and JET, and the public priorities gathered during their outreach are a core part of New Links.

Figure 2A: RTA Strategic Mobility Plan (SMP) outreach findings

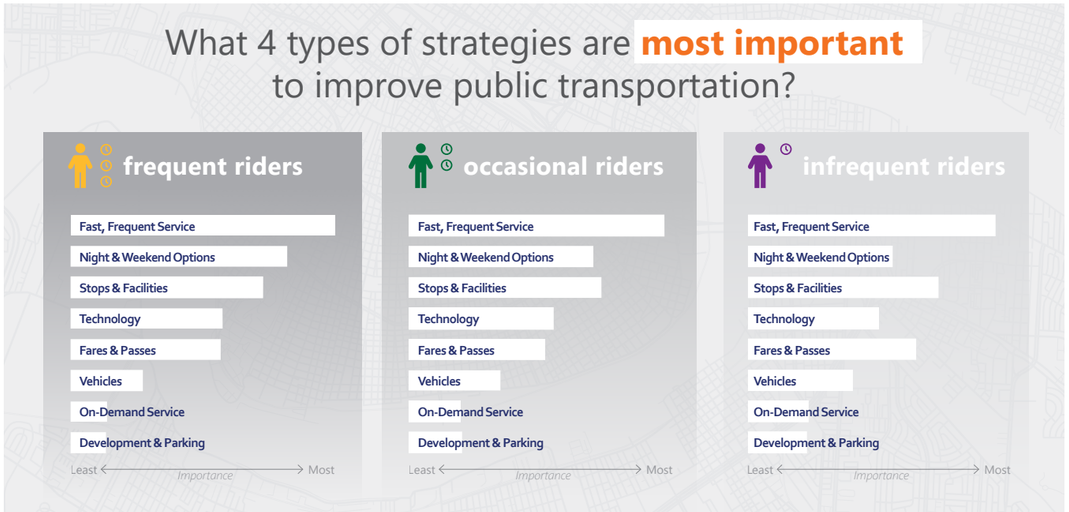
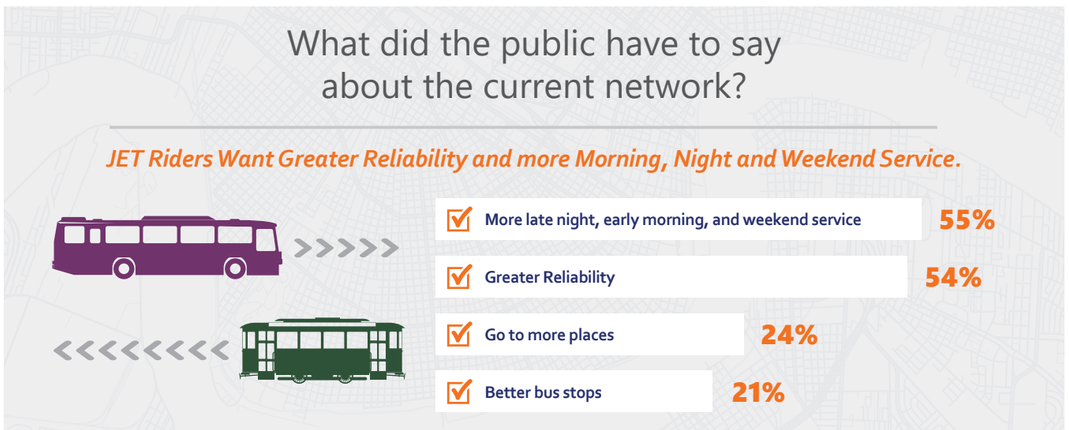


Figure 2B: JET Strategic Plan outreach findings



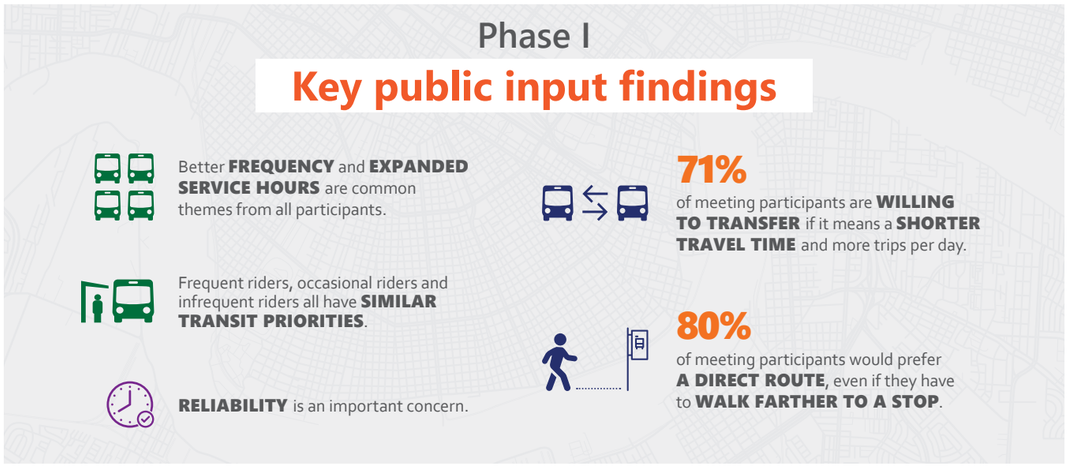
Phase I: Trade-offs (Summer–Fall 2019)

During the first phase of New Links public outreach, in the Summer and Fall of 2019, the project team surveyed members of the public about their key priorities for improving transit service.

The goal of Phase I outreach was to better understand which features of good transit were most important to the public and to introduce the concept of trade-offs. With the project designed to be cost-neutral, the New Links team asked the public to provide feedback on how to improve the current transit system using the existing budget for the regional transit agencies. They asked community members what trade-offs they would be willing to make to achieve better transit service within the network. Trade-offs included frequency, transfers, speed, access, stop proximity, and overall connectivity.

Figure 2C: Phase I engagement strategies and metrics

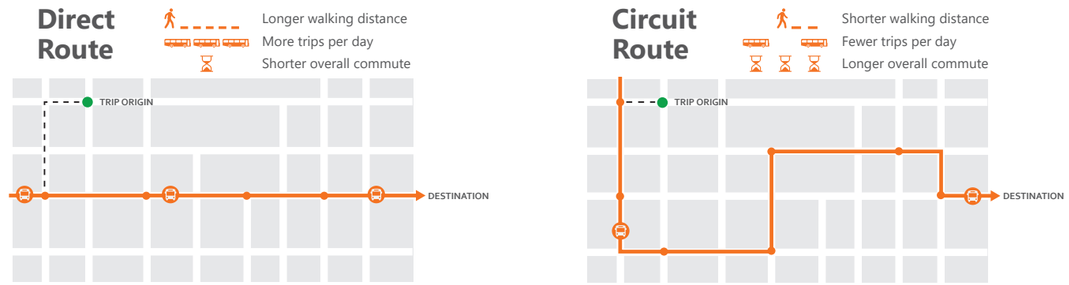
Figure 2D: Phase I findings



Trade-offs: one-seat rides vs. transfers

During Phase I public meetings, the public considered trade-offs showing two different versions of a trip using transit: the first version showed a trip with a single-seat ride but a longer overall wait time for a bus, and the second showed a trip with an additional transfer but less waiting time. Most riders and non-riders preferred the second scenario with the transfer.

Figure 2E: Trade-off – direct v. circuit route



Trade-offs: walking to transit

During Phases I and II, the project team asked members of the public several questions related to how far people are willing to walk to get to their bus or streetcar.

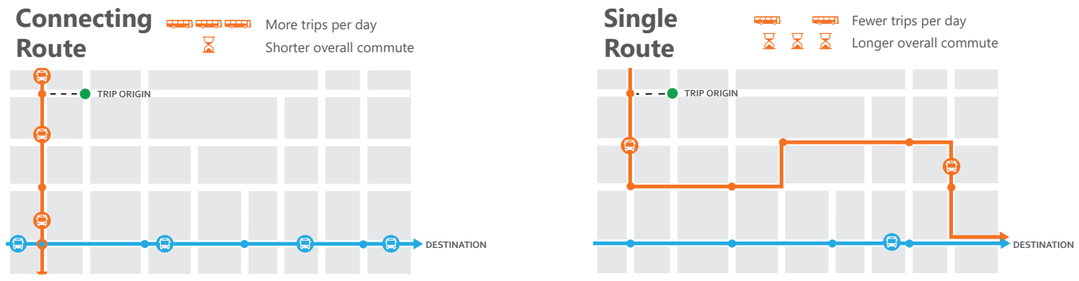
Understanding how people feel about walking is important for designing a transit network in several ways:

- **First,** it helps planners understand how far apart bus routes running parallel to each other should be spaced. A transit system can be designed so that routes are more frequent but spaced farther apart, or less frequent but closer together. It is generally more efficient to design bus systems with more widely spaced routes because there is less duplication (overlap) between bus routes.
- **Second,** it helps planners establish standards for direct service and deviations. Deviations are essentially detours where a bus leaves a corridor to provide direct service to a particular destination. Deviations make travel times longer for most riders and can contribute to poor service reliability.
- **Third,** understanding how the public feels about walking helps planners set standards for how far apart bus stops should be. When there are lots of stops near each other, riders will generally spread out among more stops on a line forcing the bus to slow down and stop at each one. More stops also make it easier for buses to get caught at red lights at intersections which adds to travel time. However, communities prioritize closer stops, even if it means less reliable service. Understanding how the community feels on this issue is crucial to the overall network design.

All three of the issues above are related to the same idea: it's possible to design bus service to travel to everyone's doorstep, but the bus service you get is slow, infrequent, unreliable, and not useful for most people.

During Phase I public meetings, people considered a trade-off showing two versions of a transit trip: one with a shorter walk but slower trip, and one with a longer walk but a faster trip. Most riders and non-riders preferred the faster trip with the longer walk.

Figure 2F: Trade-off – connecting v. single route



Phase II: Service Concepts (Spring 2020)

In Phase II of New Links, the project team used planning data and public feedback gathered during Phase I to develop three detailed Service Concepts showing different ways the public transit network could be redesigned using existing resources.

Phase II engagement launched in February 2020 and was originally scheduled to conclude in April 2020. During the first part of Phase II, input was collected through six public meetings, a web survey, and a series of pop-up and ride-along events to survey transit riders. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak that halted in-person outreach in mid-March, the project team made the decision to extend Phase II outreach in partnership with Ride New Orleans. During April and May 2020, RIDE hosted a series of digital town hall events with project team members which highlighted the key elements of the Service Concepts for different neighborhoods in Orleans and Jefferson parishes.

Figure 2G: Phase II engagement strategies and metrics

Service Concepts

During Phase II of New Links, the project team developed three distinct Service Concepts.

The concepts were built to illustrate in practical terms what it would look like to design a transit network based on the priorities identified by the public during strategic planning and New Links Phase I[3].

Each concept was built around a different core set of priorities and required different trade-offs:

- In Concept A (the **"Coverage and Consistency"** concept), the existing network was tweaked to make it easier-to-use, consistent, and reliable while preserving most existing coverage. Concept A was the most similar to the existing RTA and JET system. To make service more reliable, the project team assumed that bus timetables would be adjusted to allow buses to run more slowly in traffic. This would make service more reliable but at the cost of bus service being slower and less frequent resulting in longer trip times.
- In Concept B (the **"Ridership and Frequency"** concept), the New Links team considered larger changes to the existing network, redesigning it to increase ridership and create more frequent, all-day service by reallocating resources to the highest-performing routes. Concept B had fewer bus lines than the existing system but better quality service on those lines. In Concept B, a significant number of bus lines would be eliminated to improve the quality of service on core, high-ridership services. Concept B assumed that on high-frequency lines, bus stops might be spaced up to a quarter mile apart.
- In Concept C (the **"Access and Speed"** concept), the project team took a "blank slate" approach to redesigning service with the goal of improving the speed of regional trips between different areas of Orleans and Jefferson parishes. Concept C introduced commuter express services which would create faster connections between key job markets in Orleans and Jefferson. In Concept C, more riders would be required to transfer than in Concepts A and B to connect to the new express services.

3 Refer to the New Links Service Concepts Overview report for detailed maps and descriptions of the three Concepts.

Figure 2H: Concept A – Coverage + Consistency

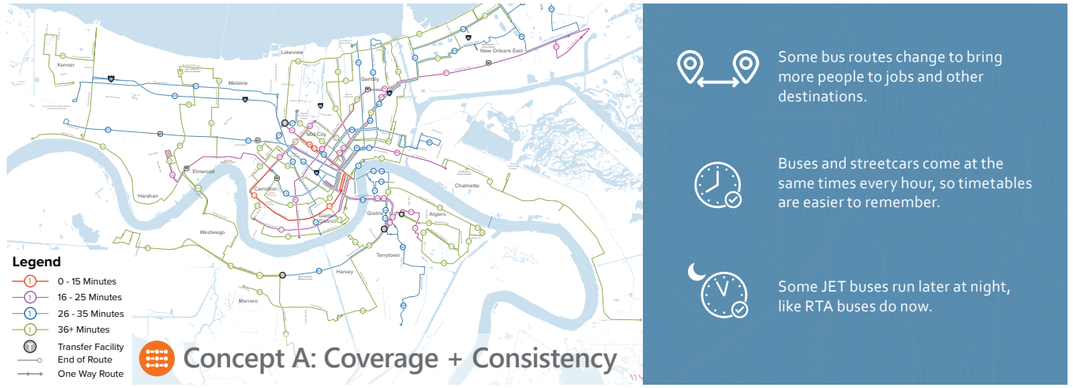


Figure 2I: Concept B – Ridership + Frequency

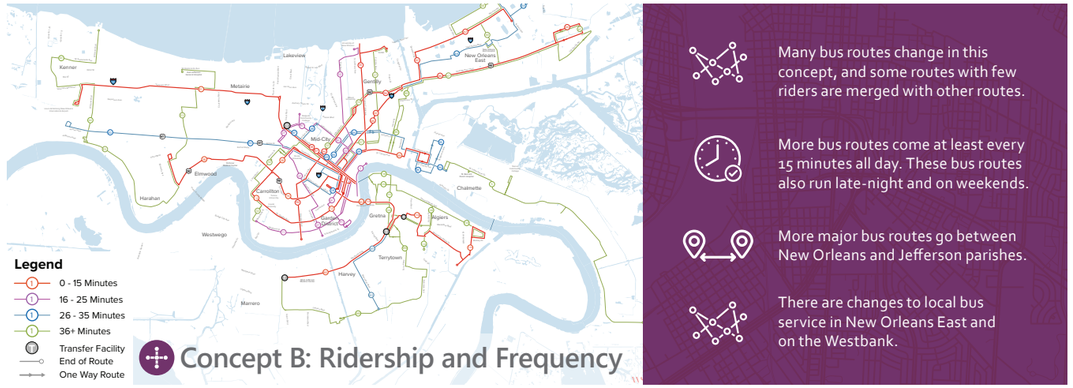
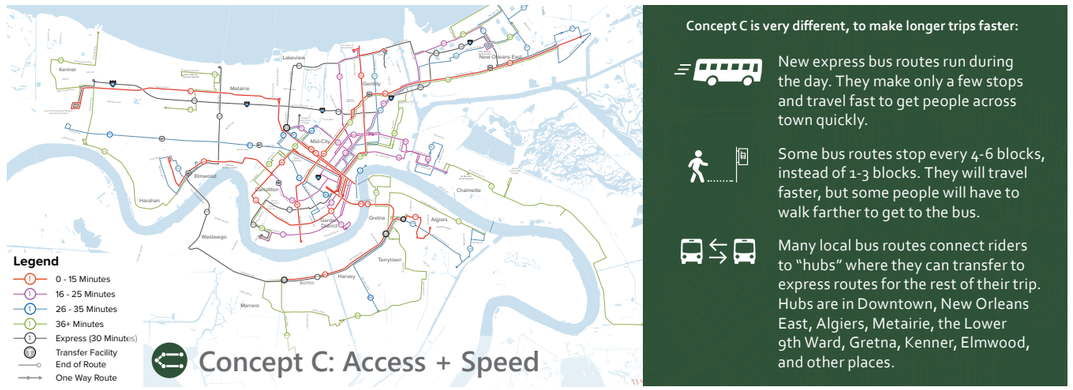


Figure 2J: Concept C – Access + Speed



Responses to Service Concepts

The project team collected public input on the concepts through a paper and web survey asking members of the public whether they agreed or disagreed with two statements about each concept: 1) an individual statement ("This service would make it easier for me to get around"), and 2) a big picture statement ("This service is an improvement on the existing network").

People gave similar answers to both the individual and big picture statements on each Service Concept. Overall, the public gave positive responses to each of the three Service Concepts. Relatively few people said that they "strongly agreed" that Concept A would be a major improvement, while a larger number of respondents answered that they "disagreed," "strongly disagreed," or "didn't know" if Concept A would be an improvement in comparison to Concepts B and C. People supported Concepts B and C more strongly than Concept A, with the majority of the increase in support coming from a higher share of people who "strongly agreed" those concepts would be an improvement on the existing network.

The project team also analyzed survey responses based on how frequently a person took transit and whether or not they had access to a car. In general, riders, non-riders, car users, and non-car users had similar patterns of support for all three concepts. One notable difference in support between car users and non-car users was in support for Concept A. About 60% of people without access to a car agreed the concept would improve the system, while only 39% of people with access to cars agreed it would be an improvement.

Figure 2K: Phase II survey findings

Phase III: Proposed Network

During the summer of 2020, the project team used the public input from the first two phases of New Links engagement to develop the Proposed Network Plan. Unlike the Service Concepts, the Proposed Network Plan is a detailed plan for transit service that includes precise frequencies, schedules, and routing for each transit line, as well as the calculated cost to the agencies operating the network.

For Phase III outreach, the Proposed Network Plan was presented to the public through multiple channels. Detailed materials were available on the New Links website including an interactive map of the network which members of the public could use to examine and comment on the proposal, as well as the Report on the Proposed Network. The team also presented the plan through a series of digital town halls and other virtual meetings. A map of the Proposed Network was placed on posters installed in ad slots at high-volume bus shelters, and a paper brochure with a full-size map of the proposed routes and summary of major changes was available on-board buses, at several major transit stops, and by mail upon request. The RTA customer care team was also available to answer questions about the Proposed Network for riders calling into the Rideline customer service hotline.

After being presented with the Proposed Network, riders and community members were asked to take the Phase III survey which invited both general and detailed feedback on the Proposed Network and asked about transit use during COVID-19. A paper copy of the survey was included in the Proposed Network Plan brochure and could be mailed back or returned to drop boxes at major transit stops. The same survey was also available online or could be taken over the phone by calling Rideline.

Detailed feedback in the form of written comments was also collected through the survey. Many riders expressed support or concern over changes to individual routes. The project team also invited RTA bus and streetcar operators to attend two virtual meetings where the Proposed Network was presented. The operators gave extensive feedback on proposed changes, pointed out potential issues that they foresaw based on their experience operating vehicles, and made suggestions for solving specific problems.

The team received a total of 613 surveys for Phase III including 311 web surveys, 178 Rideline surveys, and 124 paper surveys. Of the 613 surveys, 418 were completed by frequent riders (rode transit multiple times per week before COVID), 132 by occasional riders (rode weekly or monthly), and 63 by infrequent riders (rarely or never rode transit).

Figure 2L: Phase III engagement strategies and metrics

Responses to Proposed Network

The majority of those surveyed think that the Proposed Network would make public transit service better. The positive response was greatest among frequent transit riders and residents of color, though all groups gave majority positive feedback. Infrequent riders were more likely to answer that they were neutral or did not know whether the Proposed Network was an improvement.

Figure 2M: Phase III survey results by frequency riding transit

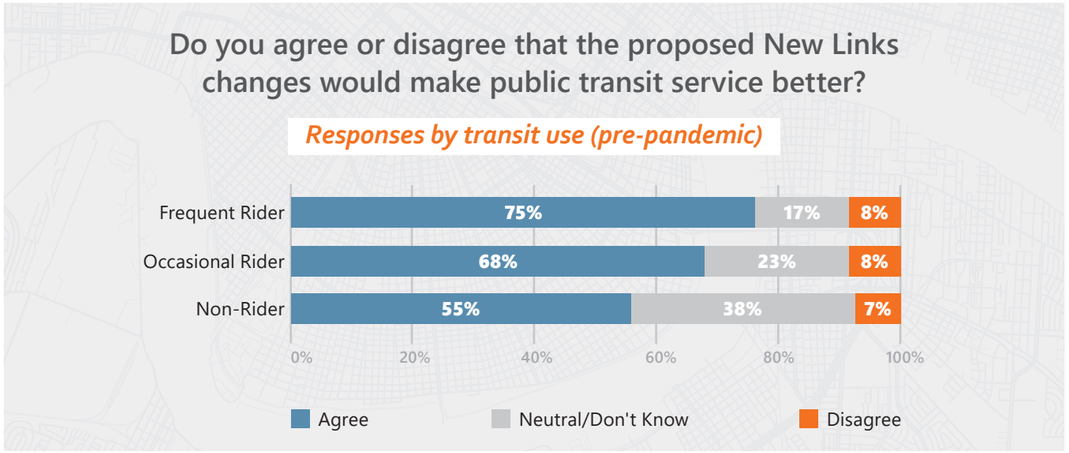
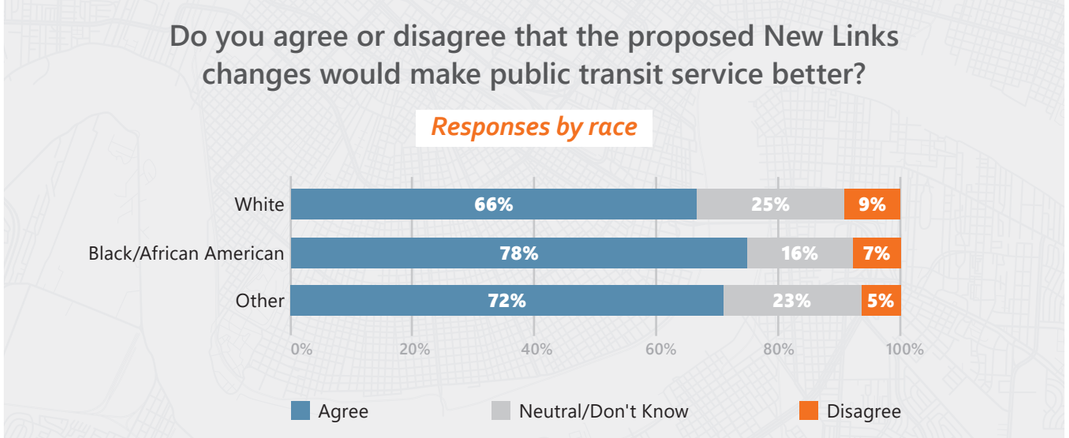


Figure 2N: Phase III survey results by race



The survey also asked riders if COVID-19 had affected how often they used transit. The plan got similar levels of support from people who ride less often and people who are still riding transit the same amount (or more). However, support was higher among respondents who intend to ride transit more often post-COVID.

Figure 2O: Phase III survey results by COVID ridership

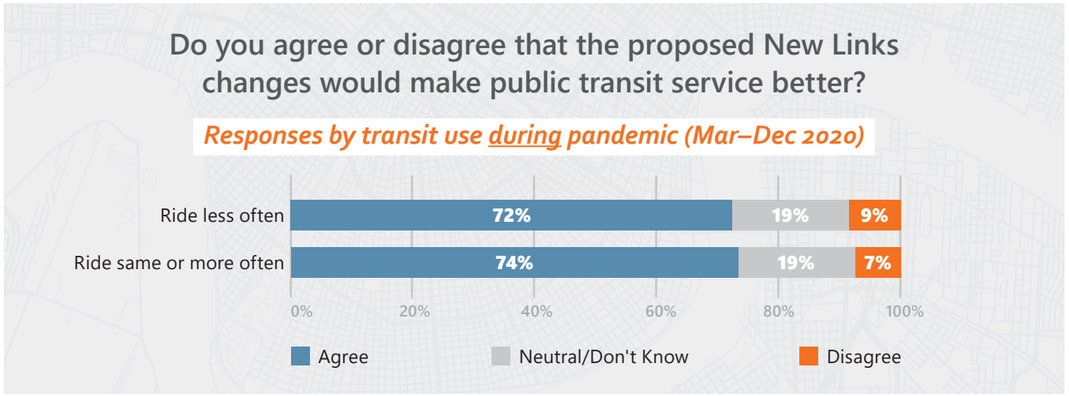
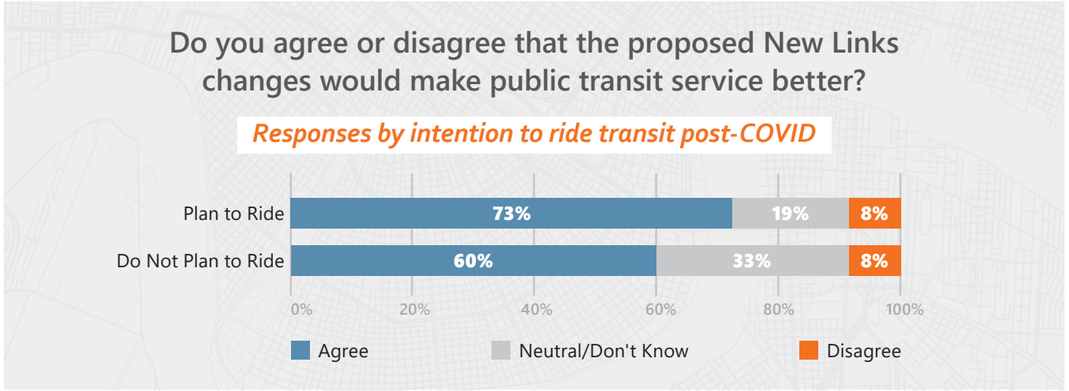
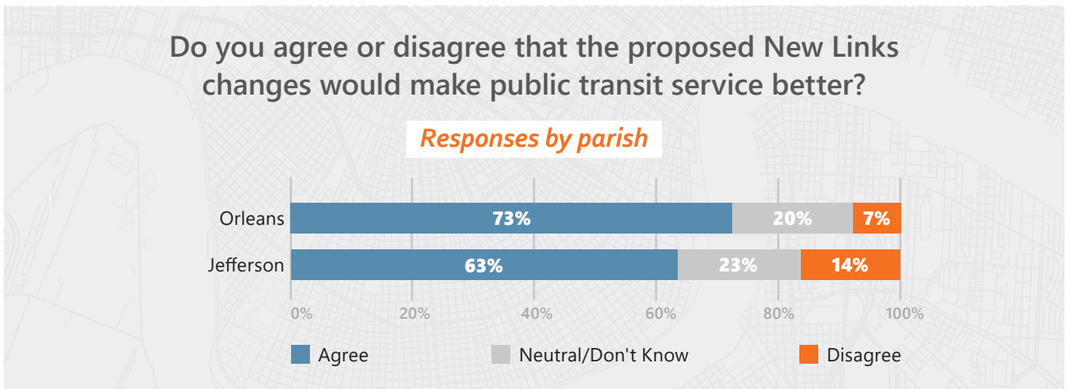


Figure 2P: Phase III survey results by plans to ride transit after COVID



Overall, respondents in both Orleans and Jefferson parishes support the proposed changes with Orleans Parish residents responding slightly more positively to the plan than Jefferson Parish residents.

Figure 2Q: Phase III survey results by parish



3

Recommended Network Plan

This section presents the Recommended Network Plan including maps and other information comparing the existing and Recommended Network. This chapter includes a summary of regional changes along with detailed descriptions of service changes in New Orleans East and on the West Bank. Additional maps of service changes for individual neighborhoods are available in Appendix B to this report.

Rider and stakeholder priorities reflected in the Final Recommended Network

The network plan is designed to meet several key rider and stakeholder goals identified through project outreach:

- **More frequent service:** the network would significantly increase the number of residents in the region with access to service coming at least every 15 or 20 minutes.
- **Improved trip speeds:** the network would improve trip speeds by reducing wait times for service (through improved frequency) and by implementing consistent stop spacing on high-frequency routes (1/4 mile between stops).
- **More equitable service:** the Recommended Network would significantly increase the number of low-income residents, residents of color and residents without access to a car who are within walking distance of bus service coming every 15 or 20 minutes.
- **Better workforce connections:** the Recommended Network would substantially improve access to three major job hubs in the region: the New Orleans Central Business District (CBD), Elmwood, and the Veterans Boulevard corridor between Causeway Boulevard and Clearview Parkway in Metairie.
- **Enhanced reliability:** the network plan incorporates measures designed to enhance the reliability of service by standardizing stop spacing and shortening certain routes to reduce round-trip travel time, decreasing the potential for service to be delayed.

Planning best practices reflected in the Final Recommended Network

The Recommended Network is designed to reflect best practices in transit planning as well as the RTA's service standards which the RTA Planning and Scheduling team is developing concurrently with the New Links plan:

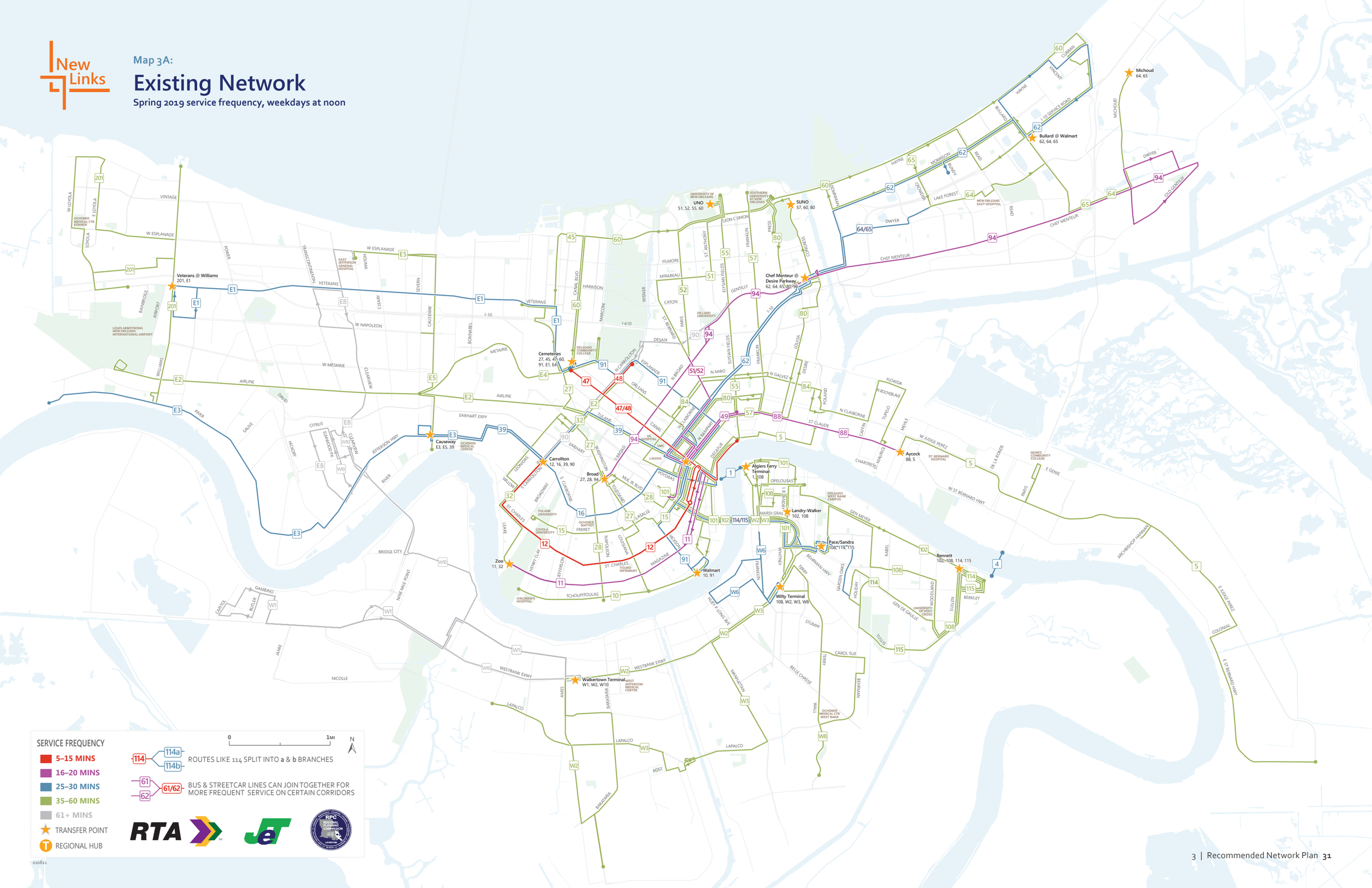
- **Simplified service:** the Recommended Network simplifies the regional network by consolidating certain overlapping and duplicating services into a smaller number of routes providing higher quality service.
- **Consistent route spacing:** where possible, the Recommended Network arranges parallel routes to be spaced a half mile apart. Where two lines operate on the same corridor, whenever possible, the network arranges routes to offer complementary (instead of competing) service.
- **Standard frequencies:** whenever possible, the Recommended Network Plan uses consistent, "clockface" headways (10, 15, 20, 30, or 60 minutes) so that buses arrive at the same time each hour. This simplifies timetables and makes them easier to remember for riders because most buses will arrive at a stop at the same time each hour. Standard frequencies also make it easier to schedule timed transfers between different lines.

New Links

Map 3A:

Existing Network

Spring 2019 service frequency, weekdays at noon



Existing Network overview

The existing transit system as of March 2019 is shown on pages 30–31. The current transit network has numerous duplicate lines. Carrollton Avenue, between St. Charles Avenue and Esplanade Avenue, is served by an array of overlapping bus lines covering different parts of the route. The three New Orleans East express lines (the 62 Morrison, 64 Lake Forest, and 65 Read-Crowder) overlap each other in different areas of New Orleans East, competing with each other for riders on those corridors.

A lack of coordination between the RTA and JET networks accounts for some of the duplication. Both agencies run separate bus lines on Tulane Avenue between S. Carrollton Avenue and Downtown (the 39 Tulane and E2 Airline), and the 39 Tulane also overlaps with the E3 Kenner Local route on Jefferson Highway between Causeway Boulevard and S. Carrollton Avenue. JET recently extended a branch of the E1 Veterans bus to service Downtown via Canal Street, paralleling the Canal Streetcar.

Duplicating routes consume a significant share of the resources the RTA and JET have available to run service. In many cases, service is designed this way to minimize transfers. The agencies operate a total of eight bus routes connecting the West Bank to Downtown (the 101, 102, 106, 114, 115, W2, W3, and W8). If service from the West Bank was better coordinated, the agencies could operate more efficient service over the Mississippi River with a smaller number of lines by having riders transfer at a central hub on the West Bank.

The large number of overlapping routes also makes the network harder to understand and confusing for potential riders. Both the RTA and JET currently operate separate lines connecting Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport to the New Orleans CBD. Neither agency acknowledges the service operated by the other transit provider on its website or in its maps.

There are three key factors in the current transit network that make it very difficult to use transit to travel between destinations outside of Downtown:

1. **Radial network.** The current bus network is highly radial, meaning that most lines are designed to create connections to and from Downtown New Orleans. There are very few lines creating good transit connections between neighborhoods outside of Downtown with the important exception of the 94 Broad, which has the highest ridership of any bus line in the regional network.

2. **Low frequency.** Most trips between non-Downtown destinations involve transferring at some point. Because the majority of bus lines have a frequency of every 30 minutes or more during the day, most of those trips involve a long wait for the next bus. Those transfer waits dramatically increase trip times for most non-Downtown travel.

3. **Lack of a Downtown pulse.** Many cities with radial bus networks, i.e. where many lines connect in one place (usually Downtown), use something called pulse scheduling. In systems that use pulse scheduling, many buses from different routes are scheduled to arrive at the same place at the same time to make transfers easier for riders. Many agencies schedule pulses to coincide with layover time to give riders a few minutes to transfer between any buses that are part of the pulse. The RTA and JET currently do not use pulse scheduling, primarily because there is not a dedicated space Downtown to bring many buses together long enough to make a pulse work.

As a result of those issues, the current transit network makes it (relatively) easy for a rider to travel Downtown but very difficult for most riders to access opportunities in other parts of Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard parishes.

Most routes in the existing system have stops placed every 1–2 blocks. This means that buses must frequently slow down and stop multiple times over a short distance to pick up or drop off riders which contributes to slow speeds and poor service reliability on many lines.

Existing Network – service frequency and span

Figure 3B shows how frequently bus, streetcar and ferry service runs at different times of day in the existing transit network. The chart is color-coded in the same way as the maps in the previous section.

Some bus and streetcar lines in the current system operate like one route with two branches: an example would be the Canal Streetcar which has a branch connecting to the Cemeteries Transit Center (the 47 Cemeteries branch) and a branch connecting to City Park (the 48 Canal City Park branch). For those services, the table shows both the frequency where the routes combine together and the frequency of the individual branches.

Figure 3B: Existing Network frequency and span

		Weekday Peak	Weekday Base	Saturday	Sunday	Overnight
12	St. Charles Streetcar	10	10	10	10	35
	Canal Streetcar	10	10	10	10	15
47	Cemeteries	20	20	20	20	30
48	City Park	20	20	20	20	35
49	Rampart Streetcar	20	20	20	20	— —
1	Algiers Ferry	30	30	30	30	— —
4	Chalmette Ferry	30	30	30	30	— —
5	Marigny-Bywater	50	40	50	50	— —
10	Tchoupitoulas	40	40	40	40	— —
11	Magazine	20	20	25	25	— —
15	Freret	30	60	60	60	— —
16	S. Claiborne	35	30	60	60	60
27	Louisiana	30	40	40	40	— —
28	M.L.King	40	40	40	40	— —
32	Leonidas-Treme	50	50	50	50	— —
39	Tulane	15	30	30	30	60
45	Lakeview	40	40	40	40	— —
	St. Bernard (Main)	20	20	20	25	60
51	St. Bernard-St. Anthony	40	40	40	40	— —
52	St. Bernard-Paris	40	40	40	80	60
55	Elysian Fields	35	35	35	50	60
57	Franklin	30	35	40	40	— —
60	Hayne	60	60	60	60	— —
62	Morrison Express	30	30	40	40	— —
63	New Orleans East Owl	— —	— —	— —	— —	60
64	Lake Forest Express	30	60	60	60	— —
65	Read-Crowder Express	35	60	50	50	— —
80	Desire-Louisa	55	60	60	60	— —
84	Galvez	45	50	50	40	60
88	St. Claude	15	20	30	30	60
90	Carrollton	35	70	60	60	— —
91	Jackson-Esplanade	30	30	60	60	— —
94	Broad	15	20	20	20	60
100	Algiers Loop Owl	— —	— —	— —	— —	90
101	Algiers Point	70	60	60	60	— —
102	General Meyer	45	40	45	40	— —
106	Aurora	60	— —	— —	— —	— —
108	Algiers Local	55	50	120	— —	— —
	Gen. de Gaulle	25	25	20	25	60
114	Gen. de Gaulle-Sullen	55	45	50	45	60
115	Gen. de Gaulle-Tullis	50	50	40	50	— —
201	Kenner Loop	50	45	40	70	— —
202	Airport Express	65	— —	— —	240	— —
E1	Veterans	25	30	30	40	— —
E2	Airport	30	35	40	95	— —
E3	Kenner	25	30	40	70	— —
E4	Metairie Road	40	40	— —	— —	— —
E5	Causeway	35	60	55	— —	— —
E8	Clearview	65	70	— —	— —	— —
W1	Avondale	65	70	70	— —	— —
W2	Westbank Express	30	60	80	— —	— —
W3	Lapalco	45	45	60	— —	— —
W6	Gretna Local	30	30	— —	— —	— —
W8	Terrytown	40	60	— —	— —	— —
W10	Huey P. Long	70	80	60	— —	— —
WSL	Westbank Sunday Loop	— —	— —	— —	60	— —

New Links

Map 3C:

Recommended Network

Recommended service frequency, weekdays at noon

Veterans @ Williams
201, E1

Elmwood
39, E7, W10

Cemeteries
27, 47A, 91, E1

Xavier
17, 27, 39, 96, E2

Carrollton
12, 16, 39

Tchoupitoulas
11, 96

Desire Parkway
55, 61, 62, 80, 94, 96

Elysian Fields @ St. Claude
49, 55, 80, 88

Bullard @ Walmart
62, 66, 68, 73

Lake Forest Plaza
61, 62, 66, 68, 73, 94

Arabi
84, 86, 88, S

Algiers Ferry Terminal
1, 103

Algiers Park & Ride
105, 114

Wilty Terminal
103, 105, 114, W2, W3, W8

Walkertown Terminal
W1, W2, W4, W10

LOUIS ARMSTRONG NEW ORLEANS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

OCHSNER MEDICAL CTR KENNER

EAST JEFFERSON GENERAL HOSPITAL

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AT NEW ORLEANS

DELGADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

TULANE UNIVERSITY

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

OCHSNER BAPTIST FRERET

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

TOURO INFIRMARY

OCHSNER MEDICAL CENTER

VA HOSPITAL

LSUHSC

NEW ORLEANS EAST HOSPITAL

DELGADO WEST BANK CAMPUS

WEST JEFFERSON MEDICAL CENTER

OCHSNER MEDICAL CTR WEST BANK

ST. BERNARD HOSPITAL

MUNEZ COMMUNITY COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF HOLY CROSS

DELLARD UNIVERSITY

SERVICE FREQUENCY

- 5–15 MINS
- 16–20 MINS
- 25–30 MINS
- 35–60 MINS
- 61+ MINS
- TRANSFER POINT
- REGIONAL HUB

0 1MI N

114 — 114a, 114b — ROUTES LIKE 114 SPLIT INTO a & b BRANCHES

61, 62 — 61/62 — BUS & STREETCAR LINES CAN JOIN TOGETHER FOR MORE FREQUENT SERVICE ON CERTAIN CORRIDORS

RTA

JET

RPC REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

020821

Summary of recommended changes – regional network

The Recommended Network assigns significantly more resources to bus lines coming at least every 15 or 20 minutes than the current regional transit network. Major changes in the Recommended Network include:

- Four RTA bus lines (routes 39, 88, 94, and 114) along with the 47 Canal Streetcar and 12 St. Charles Streetcar, run at least every 15 minutes throughout the day on weekdays. Another nine bus lines (RTA routes 11, 27, 50, 55, 61, 62, 84,and 91, and the JET E1 bus line) run at least every 20 minutes throughout the day.
- Average stop spacing is increased on many routes to improve travel speeds and reliability. Stops are typically 3 to 4 blocks apart on most bus lines with 20-minute frequency or better.
- Service from New Orleans East to Downtown is consolidated into two bus lines, Routes 61 and 62, which run every 20 minutes throughout the day.
- Routes 106, 114 and 115 are consolidated into a single, high-frequency bus line (Route 114) with two branches (114A and 114B) serving different areas of lower Algiers.
- Routes 16/17 (in Central City), 61/62 (in New Orleans East), and W2/W3 (in Gretna) operate as two branches of one route, combining for higher frequency on the corridors they share.
- Route 96 is a new route replacing most of the former Routes 32 and 90. The 96 line runs as a rapid service (stopping only at major intersections) along the portion of N. Broad Street, Gentilly Boulevard, and Chef Menteur Boulevard it shares with the 94 Broad line.
- The 94 Broad line now runs down Napoleon Avenue, ending at Tchoupitoulas Street.
- The 39 Tulane bus is extended from its current terminus at Causeway Boulevard to serve Elmwood.
- The E1 bus line runs as a rapid service along Canal Street parallel to the Canal Streetcar, stopping only at major intersections. The line would complement the streetcar by providing fast service between the Cemeteries hub and Downtown.
- The Recommended Network imagines six regional hubs outside of Downtown: in New Orleans East, Arabi, the West Bank (at Wilty Terminal), Elmwood, Cemeteries, and Gentilly Woods. These hubs would serve as layover points for many routes, where some riders would transfer from local lines to routes serving to Downtown. Service in New Orleans East and Algiers is significantly restructured around these transfer hubs.
- Downtown streetcar service is rearranged to provide better circulation and connect the main bus hub near Canal Street and Basin Street to destinations closer to the Mississippi River, including the Algiers Ferry Terminal.
- Certain lines with either very low ridership or duplication with other routes are eliminated or restructured.

Recommended Network – service frequency and span

Figure 3B shows how frequently different lines would run in the Recommended Network Plan. Because ridership data shows that there is consistent demand for travel on many routes throughout the day, most bus and streetcar lines would run at the same frequency throughout the day (from about 6 AM to 9 PM) throughout the entire network.

All of the RTA routes in the Recommended Network Plan that currently run overnight would continue to run 24 hours a day. Several other bus lines that do not currently have late night service, including the 11 Magazine and 91 Jackson, Esplanade would also run overnight. Because there are fewer resources available for the Jefferson system, most JET routes would run similar spans of service to the existing transit system.

Figure 3D: Recommended Network frequency and span

			Weekday Peak	Weekday Base	Saturday	Sunday	Overnight
1		Algiers Point Ferry	30	30	30	30	— —
3		Loyola-Riverfront Streetcar	20	20	30	30	60
12		St. Charles Streetcar	12	15	15	15	30
47		Canal Streetcar	10	10	15	15	20
47	A	Canal - Cemeteries	20	20	30	30	— —
47	B	Canal - City Park	20	20	30	30	— —
47	O	Canal - Owl Shuttle	— —	— —	— —	— —	20
49		Rampart	30	30	30	30	— —
11		Magazine	20	20	30	30	60
15		Freret	40	40	40	40	— —
16/17		Martin Luther King Jr	15	15	30	30	60
16		MLK - Claiborne	30	30	60	60	60
17		MLK - Hollygrove	30	30	60	60	— —
27		Louisiana	20	20	30	30	60
39		Tulane	15	15	15	15	30
52		St Bernard	20	20	20	20	60
52	A	St. Bernard-Senate	40	40	40	40	— —
52	B	St. Bernard-Paris	40	40	40	40	60
55		Elysian Fields	20	20	30	30	40
57		Franklin	40	40	40	40	— —
61/62		New Orleans East Express	10	10	15	15	30
61		Lake Forest	20	20	30	30	60
62		Morrison	20	20	30	30	— —
62	O	Morrison Owl	— —	— —	— —	— —	60
66		Hayne Loop	60	60	60	60	— —
68		Little Woods	30	30	60	60	— —
73		Michoud Loop	40	40	90	90	— —
80		Desire-Louisa	60	60	60	60	— —
84		Galvez	20	20	30	30	60
86		Barracks-Chalmette	60	60	60	60	— —
88		St Claude	15	15	15	15	30
91		Jackson-Esplanade	20	20	30	30	40
94		Broad	15	15	15	15	30
96		Carrollton-Gentilly	30	30	60	60	— —
103		Algiers-Gretna	30	30	30	30	— —
103	O	Algiers Owl	— —	— —	— —	— —	40
105		Algiers Local	60	60	60	60	— —
114		Garden Oaks	15	15	20	20	40
114	A	Garden Oaks-Kabel	30	30	40	40	— —
114	B	Garden Oaks-Tullis	30	30	40	40	40
201		Kenner-Williams	40	40	80	80	— —
E1		Veterans-Canal	20	20	40	40	— —
E2		Airline	30	40	90	90	— —
E6		Metairie Local	60	60	— —	— —	— —
E7		Elmwood Local	30	60	120	120	— —
W1		Avondale/Churchill	90	90	90	90	— —
W10		Huey P Long-Walkertown	90	90	90	90	— —
W2/W3		Westbank Exwy (Combined)	15	20	60	60	— —
W2		Westbank Expressway	30	40	120	120	— —
W3		Lapalco	30	40	120	120	— —
W4		Marrero	60	60	— —	— —	— —
W8		Terrytown	30	60	60	60	— —
S		Arabi-St Bernard	60	60	— —	— —	— —

Summary of recommended changes – New Orleans East

The overall goals of redesigned service in New Orleans East are:

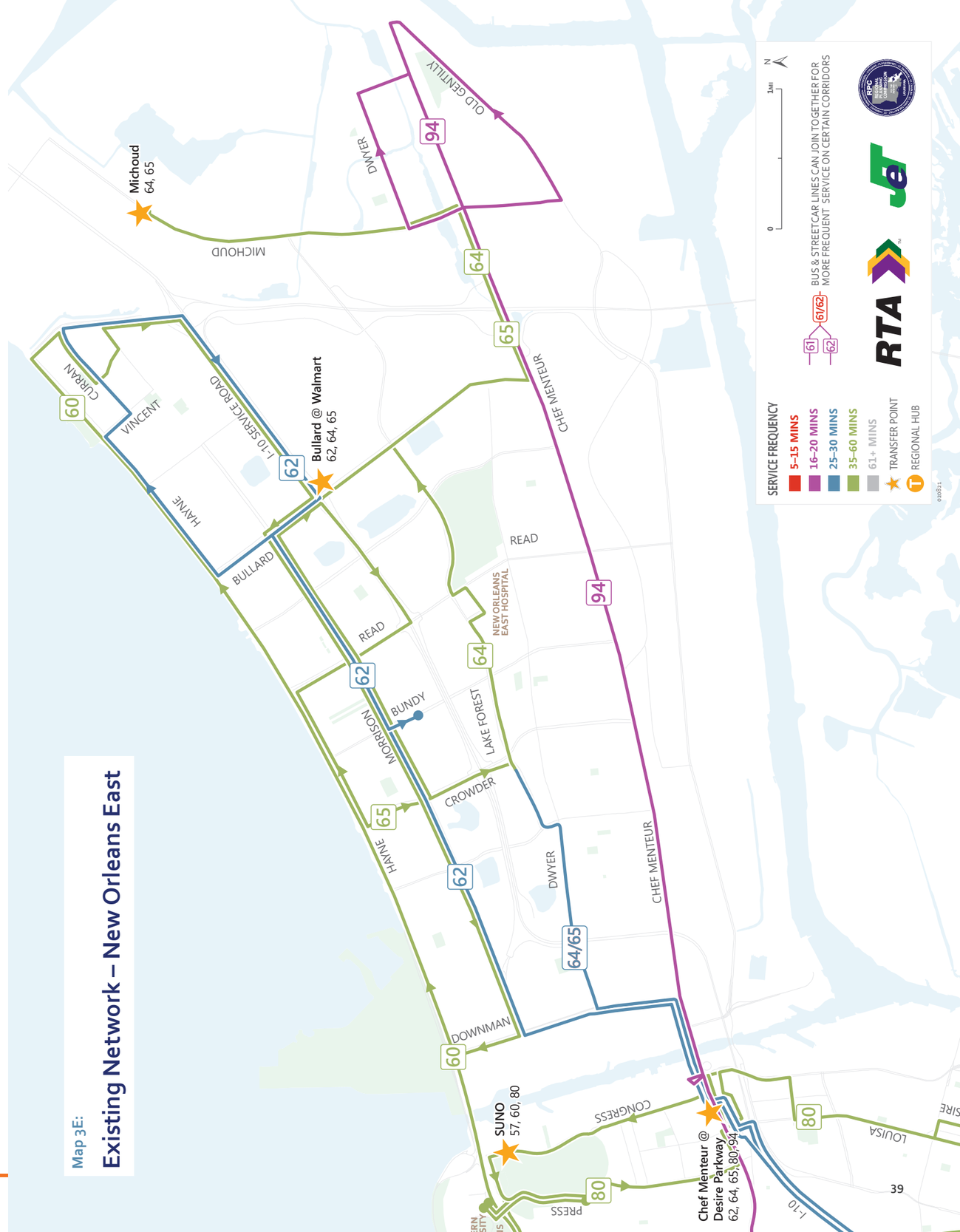
- Improve the reliability of service, especially bus lines connecting Downtown
- Improve connections between New Orleans East and non-Downtown destinations
- Improve circulation within New Orleans East
- Make service more efficient

Existing Network – New Orleans East

The current bus network has three express services (the 62, 64 and 65 lines) connecting New Orleans East to Downtown. These three routes all overlap and duplicate each other in different areas of New Orleans East.

All New Orleans East bus lines are very long. The five daytime routes are the five longest bus lines in the entire transit system, in terms of both travel time and mileage (with the exception of the 202 Airport Express.) All three express routes have deviations which increase travel times and create reliability issues for most riders.

Map 3E:
Existing Network – New Orleans East



Recommended Network – New Orleans East

The Recommended Network restructures service in New Orleans East around a new transit hub at Lake Forest Plaza. Every line serving New Orleans East (except the extended 55 Elysian Fields bus) connects to this hub.

The three daytime express lines (Routes 62, 64 and 65) are consolidated into two lines (Routes 61 and 62), which run every 20 minutes throughout the day. Those two routes combine to provide service every 10 minutes from the intersection of Downman Road and Dwyer Road all the way to Downtown. Both routes are streamlined to make fewer turns and deviations with the goal of making both routes more reliable than the current express services from New Orleans East.

Three new local lines (Routes 66, 68, and 73) provide service in New Orleans East to areas formerly served by other routes, including Hayne Boulevard, Little Woods, the I-10 Service Road, Crowder Boulevard, and Michoud. These circulators will take riders to destinations in New Orleans East or to transfer to the more frequent express buses to go Downtown or beyond. Direct connections to UNO/SUNO will be taken off the Hayne route and put on the revamped 55 Elysian Fields which will now connect to routes 61, 62 and 94 at the Chef Menteur and Desire transfer hub.

Although the 94 Broad bus no longer connects to Village de L'est, the new 61 Lake Forest line serves the area and runs more frequently and more directly to Downtown than the 65 Read Crowder bus it replaces.

Because all New Orleans East routes now connect to a central hub, the redesigned network will make it much easier to travel to destinations within New Orleans East. Splitting New Orleans East routes into local service and service connecting to other neighborhoods (Routes 61, 62 and 94) also makes it easier to improve service reliability by reducing the possibility of delays on a route affecting all riders on the line.

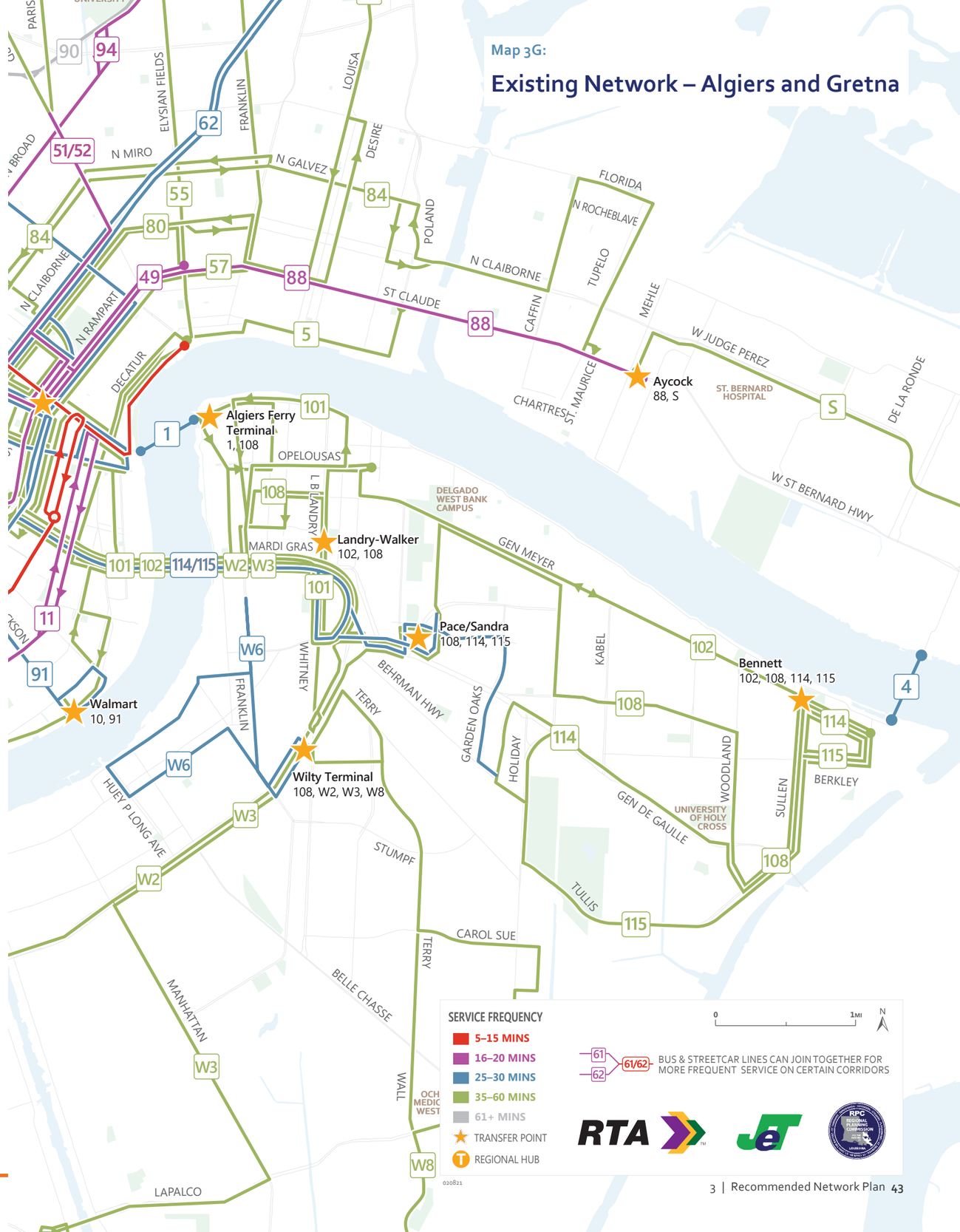
Summary of recommended changes – Algiers and Gretna

The overall goals of redesigned service on the West Bank are:

- To improve the frequency of service in areas of the West Bank where it is needed most, such as the Garden Oaks area;
- To better incorporate the Algiers Ferry into the network as an integral transit connection to Downtown over the Mississippi River;
- To improve the reliability of connections to the East Bank;
- To improve cross-parish connections between Algiers and Gretna on the West Bank;
- To make service more cost effective by streamlining duplicate services.

Existing Network – Algiers and Gretna

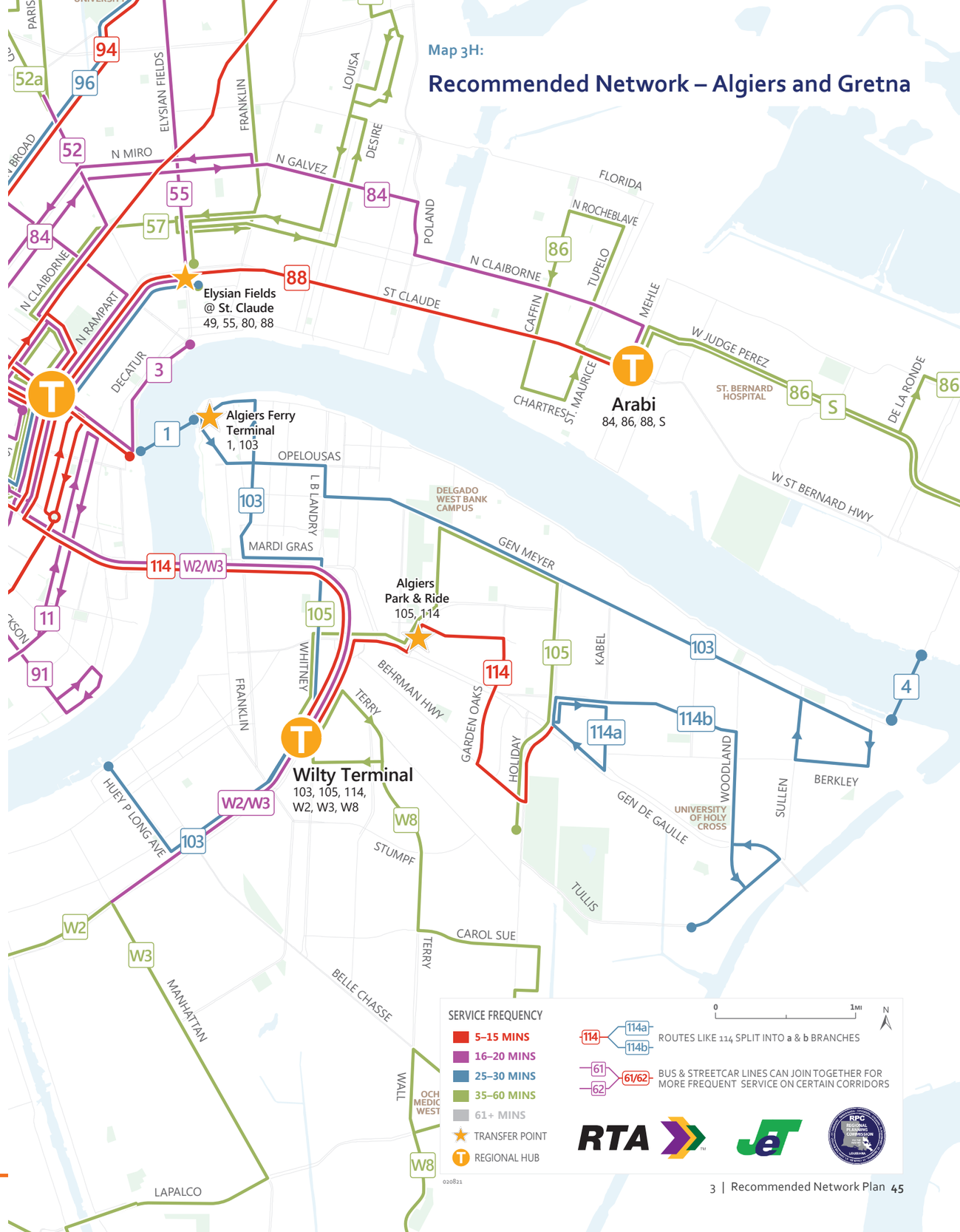
In the existing network, Algiers and Gretna are served by eight bus lines which connect the West Bank to Downtown via the Crescent City Connection. Currently, none of these bus lines run more frequently than once every 40 minutes. Many of these services overlap or create duplicate connections. The 101 Algiers Point line and 102 General Meyer line both serve Algiers Point and connect to the Crescent City Connection via L.B. Landry Avenue. The 101 Algiers Point bus also competes with the Algiers Ferry as an option for transit users connecting to Downtown. In lower Algiers, the 106 Aurora, a peak-only route, overlaps with portions of the 114 and 115 General de Gaulle lines.



Recommended Network – Algiers and Gretna

The Recommended Network consolidates three bus lines (Routes 106, 114, 115) into a single service, Route 114, which would run at least every 15 minutes throughout the day to the New Orleans CBD. Route 114 would split into two branches at General de Gaulle Drive and Holiday: the 114A branch would make a short turn at Kabel Drive, while the 114B branch would serve Tall Timbers via MacArthur Boulevard and Woodland Drive

Lines 101 and 102 are consolidated into a new service, Route 103, which serves, General Meyer Avenue, Algiers Point, Wilty Terminal via Franklin St, and downtown Gretna via the Westbank Expressway and Huey P Long Avenue. This bus line would run every half hour throughout the day with a timed connection to the Algiers Ferry, allowing riders to transfer to Downtown via the ferry in Algiers Point or the high-frequency 114 bus line at Wilty Terminal.



Summary of recommended changes – Downtown

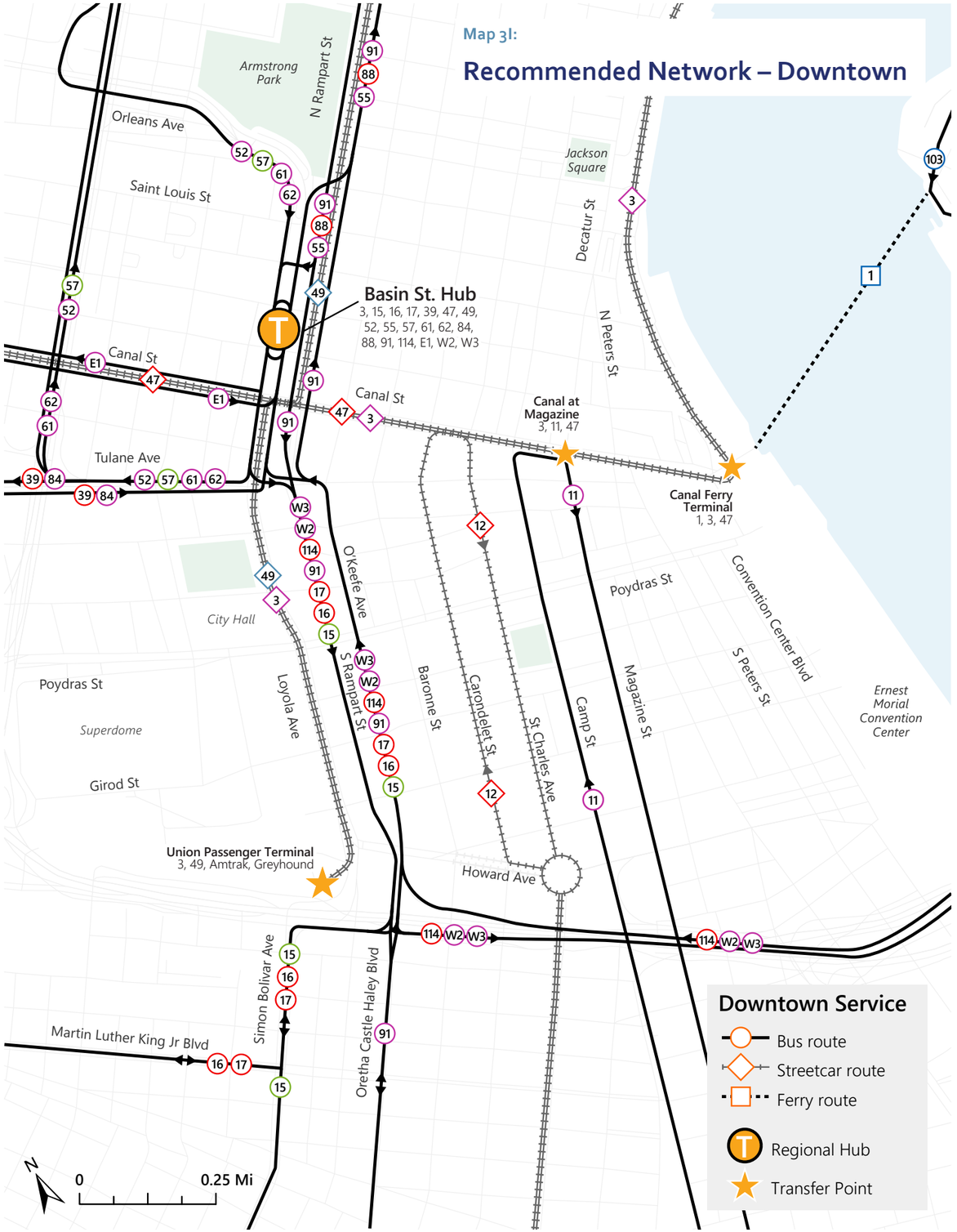
The Recommended Network reorganizes service Downtown to run on O'Keefe Avenue and S. Rampart Street through the CBD connecting to Elk Place (and the existing bus lanes on Basin St) via Common Street. This routing would facilitate a connection to a potential transit hub at Basin Street, the highest scoring site in the RTA's Downtown Transit Center Study.

Downtown congestion is a major source of delay for many bus routes. Concentrating transit service on fewer corridors in the Central Business District makes it possible to create cost-effective improvements to transit infrastructure on those corridors, making transit operations run more smoothly.

The Recommended Network would move bus service on the 55 Elysian Fields bus off of Decatur Street, (a major source of bus delay on that route) to N. Rampart Street, connecting to the main bus hub on Basin Street or Loyola Avenue. This allows riders on the 55 to better connect with other parts of the region. Because of this change, along with the elimination of Route 5, there is no longer bus service running on Decatur Street. To account for this change, the Recommended Plan proposes to replace the 2 Riverfront Streetcar with a new streetcar line (Route 3), which would run every 20 minutes connecting destinations along Decatur Street to the main transit hub at Basin Street, and would run down Loyola Avenue to the Union Passenger Terminal.

Map 3I:

Recommended Network – Downtown



For more information:

Detailed maps of the existing and Recommended Network by neighborhood are available in Appendix B. A detailed summary of service recommendations for Downtown transit is available in Appendix C.

4 Measuring Impacts

This section analyzes the impacts of the Recommended Network described in Chapter 3. Impacts of service changes are primarily measured in two ways:

- **Walking access to transit:** how many existing transit riders, residents, and jobs gain or lose walking access to transit lines operating at different frequencies.
- **Isochrone (travel time) maps:** how many people are able to access key destinations in the region within 60 minutes throughout the day, including major employment, education and healthcare centers.

Notes on measuring impacts

The New Links team completed its service analysis of existing regional transit in March 2019, and the access maps presented later in this chapter compare the Recommended Network to the March 2019 system.

The walking access to transit section in this chapter compares the Recommended Network to both the March 2019 system and the February 2020 system. The additional metrics for February 2020 are included to reflect the fact that there have been several important changes to regional transit service from March 2019–February 2020. Those changes include:

- **June 2019:** JET reconfigured the routing of its West Bank bus services through Downtown.
- **September 2019:** The RTA expanded service hours, increasing frequency on several bus lines.
- **October 2019:** JET replaced the E4 Metairie Road line with a pilot on-demand service and increased service hours on the E1 Veterans line. The RTA made a number of emergency changes to service Downtown in response to the collapse of the Hard Rock Hotel site.
- **November 2019:** The RTA reconfigured its 202 Airport Express route to serve the new North Terminal of the airport. JET reconfigured the E1 Veterans route to serve the new terminal and split the E1 line into two branches, one serving the Cemeteries transit hub and one connecting to the Central Business District via rapid service on Canal Street.
- **January 2020:** The RTA finalized a plan for longer-term service detours Downtown in response to the collapse of the Hard Rock site, including the redirection of bus and streetcar service to a temporary transfer hub at Duncan Plaza.

These changes reflect a mix of permanent (planned) changes and emergency detours prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Access to transit

People and jobs

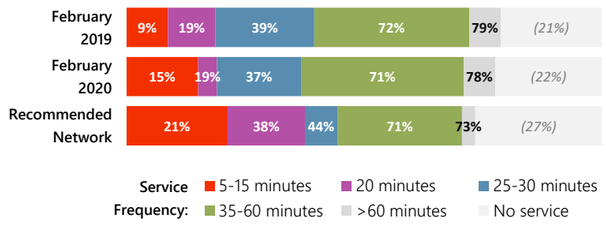
Figures 4A and 4B compare the percentage of people and households in the project study area[4] located within a half-mile walk of a bus stop in the Recommended Network Plan to the existing transit network in both March 2019 and February 2020. The charts compare access to service at different frequency levels (15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 60 minutes and greater than 60 minutes.) Figure 4C shows the same information for jobs within the study area.

From March 2019 to February 2020, there was a notable increase in the share of residents with access to service coming at least every 15 minutes, which was primarily due to increased service on the 94 Broad bus line in September 2019.

When compared to both the March 2019 and February 2020 transit network, the Recommended Network would slightly decrease the percentage of people and jobs within half-mile walk of any transit line. This is expected because an explicit policy goal of the redesign was to improve service frequency, and the public expressed a preference for improved frequency over coverage.

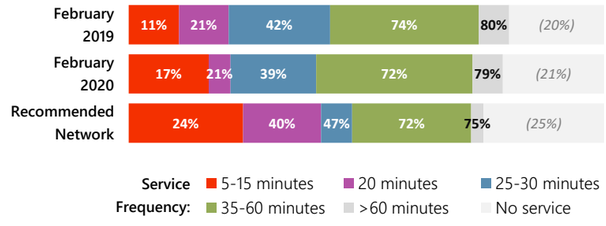
However, the Recommended Network would substantially increase the number of people and jobs with access to higher frequency service, coming at least every 15 minutes or 20 minutes.

Figure 4A: Percentage of residents in the region within half mile of transit – weekdays at noon



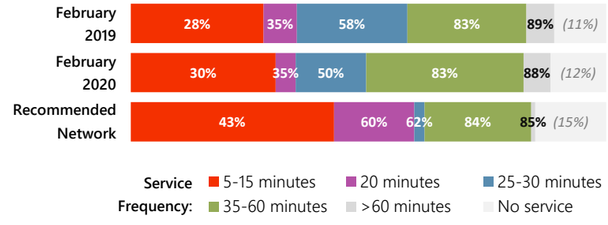
SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, ACS 2014–2018

Figure 4B: Percentage of households in the region within half mile of transit – weekdays at noon



SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, ACS 2014–2018

Figure 4C: Percentage of jobs in the region within half mile of transit – weekdays at noon



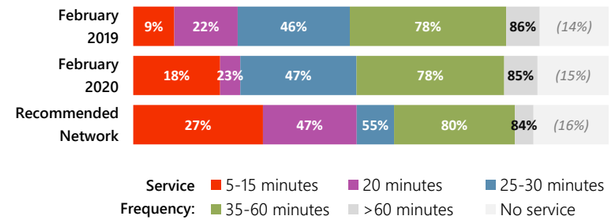
SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, LEHD 2017; NORPC 2020, LDOE 2020

4 The project study area includes the Census-defined urbanized portions or Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard parishes.

Access for specific groups

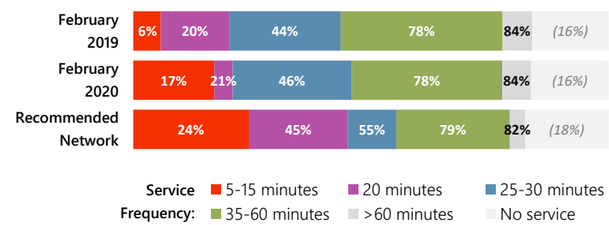
Figures 4D through 4G show how access to transit service would change for different groups. Taken as a whole, the network would create greater benefits for residents in poverty, residents of color and households without access to a car when compared to the total population of the region. In particular, only a very small percentage of households without cars would lose access to a bus line within half a mile, while more than two thirds of households without a car would be within a half-mile walk of a bus line coming every 20 minutes.

Figure 4D: Percentage of residents in poverty in the region within half mile of transit – weekdays at noon



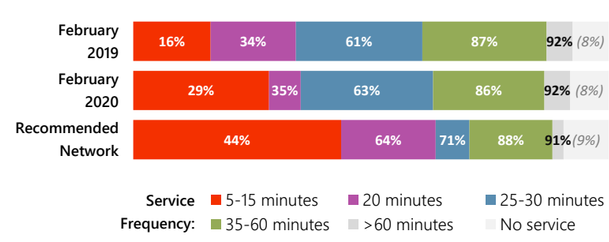
SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, ACS 2014–2018

Figure 4E: Percentage of residents of color in the region within half mile of transit – weekdays at noon



SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, ACS 2014–2018

Figure 4F: Percentage of households without access to a car in the region within half mile of transit – weekdays at noon



SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, ACS 2014–2018

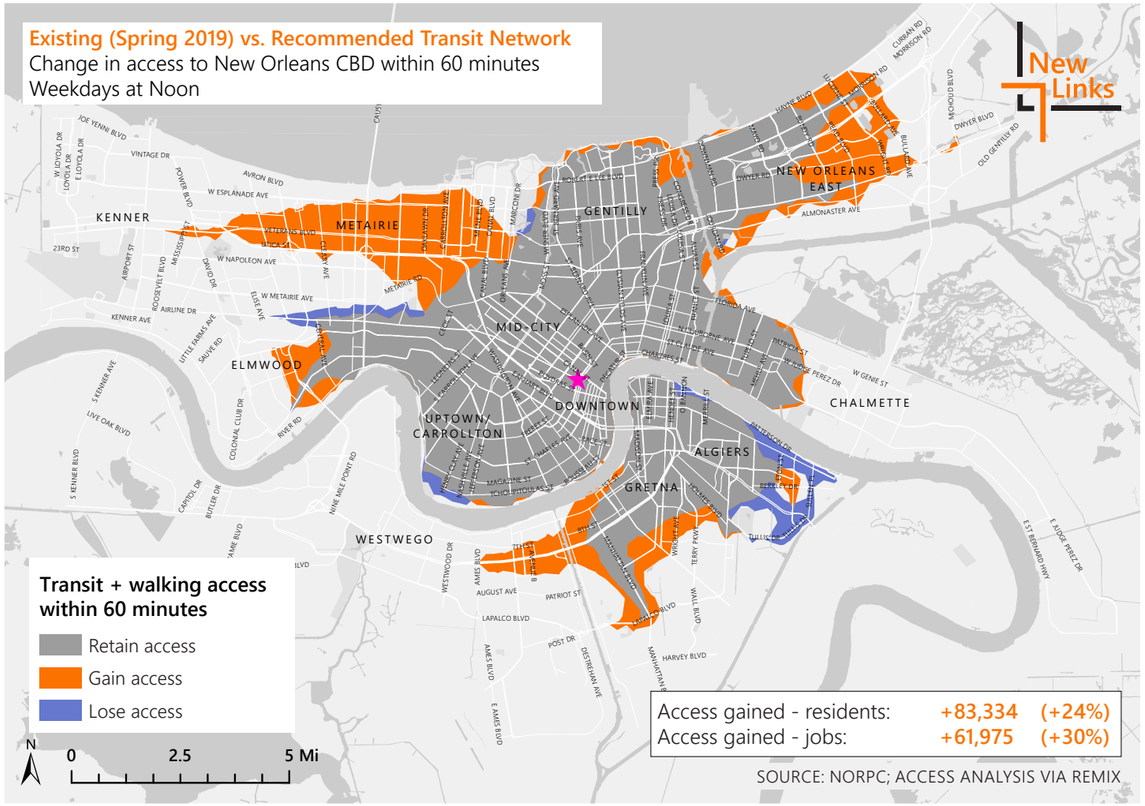
Isochrone maps

Isochrone maps (also known as travel time maps) are a useful way to show the practical effects of service changes in terms of their effects on travel time. These maps show how far a person is typically able to travel using a combination of transit and walking in a given period of time. RIDE often includes isochrone maps in their "State of Transit" reports to illustrate disparate levels of access to jobs and destinations from different areas of the city. This chapter uses a similar methodology to compare the existing transit network (as of Spring 2019) to the Recommended Network. The isochrone maps in this chapter show how many parts of the region would typically have access within 60 minutes to these four locations on weekdays:

- **Downtown New Orleans** (at Elk Place and Tulane Avenue)
- **Lakeside Shopping Center** (at Causeway Boulevard and Veterans Boulevard)
- **Elmwood** (at Citrus Boulevard and Elmwood Park Boulevard)
- **Delgado Community College** (at City Park Avenue and Marconi Drive)

Access via transit + walking: Downtown, weekdays at noon

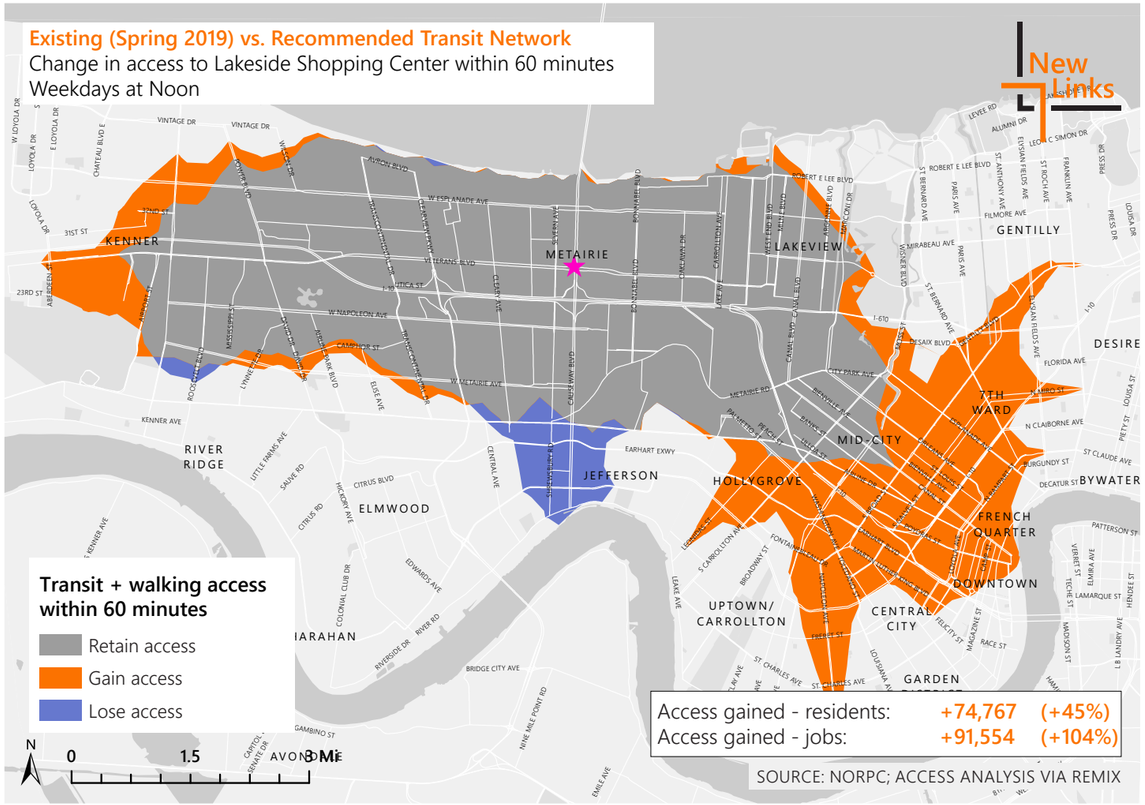
Map 4G: Access within 60 minutes to the New Orleans CBD – weekdays at noon



Under the Recommended Network Plan, a significantly larger share of residents from Jefferson Parish (along the Veterans Boulevard and Westbank Expressway corridors, and from New Orleans East) would be able to travel to the New Orleans CBD within 60 minutes when compared to the existing transit system in Spring 2019. These changes reflect the two East Bank regional routes (the 39 Tulane bus and E1 Veterans bus) connecting the New Orleans CBD to Elmwood and the Veterans Boulevard corridor, and increased service frequency on routes serving the West Bank and New Orleans East.

Access via transit + walking: Lakeside, weekdays at noon

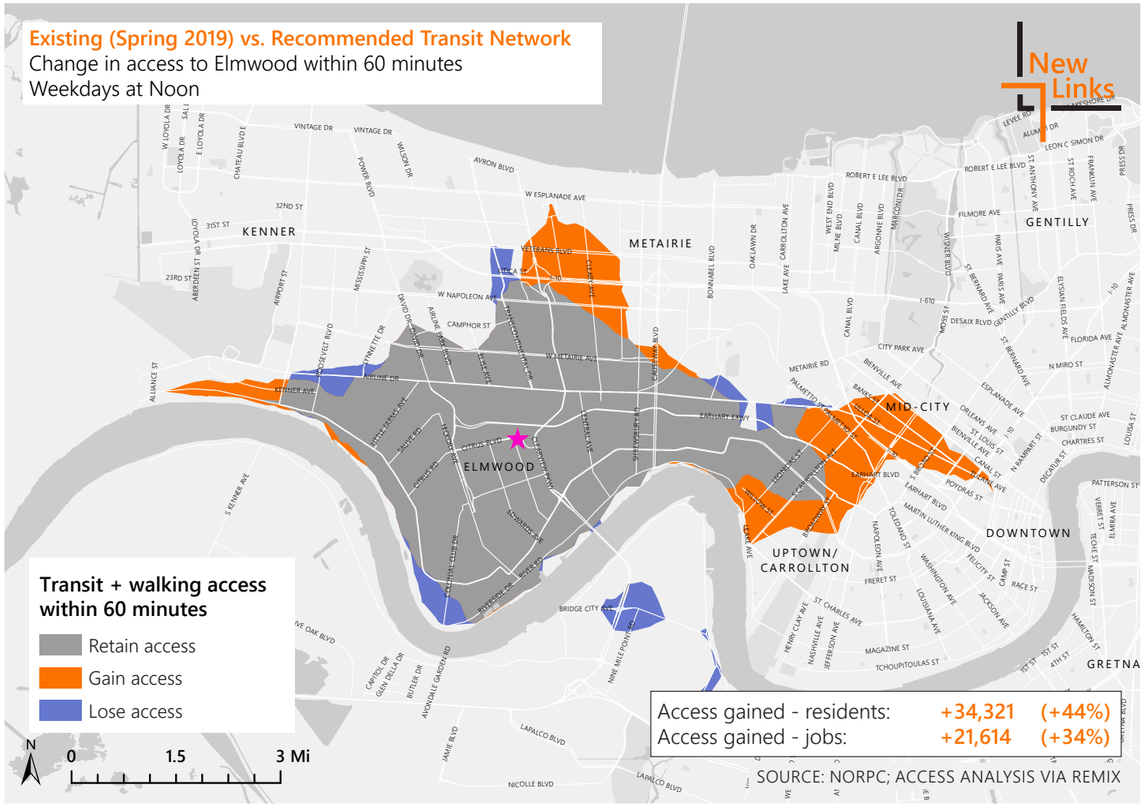
Map 4H: Access within 60 minutes to Lakeside Shopping Center – weekdays at noon



The Recommended Network Plan would create stronger connections from Orleans Parish to employment and commercial destinations on the Veterans Boulevard and Causeway Boulevard corridors, centered at Lakeside Shopping center. While these improvements are substantial, there would no longer be a direct connection to Jefferson Highway via Causeway Boulevard, so trips from destinations along Causeway Boulevard south of Airline Drive would take longer than they do now.

Access via transit + walking: Elmwood, weekdays at noon

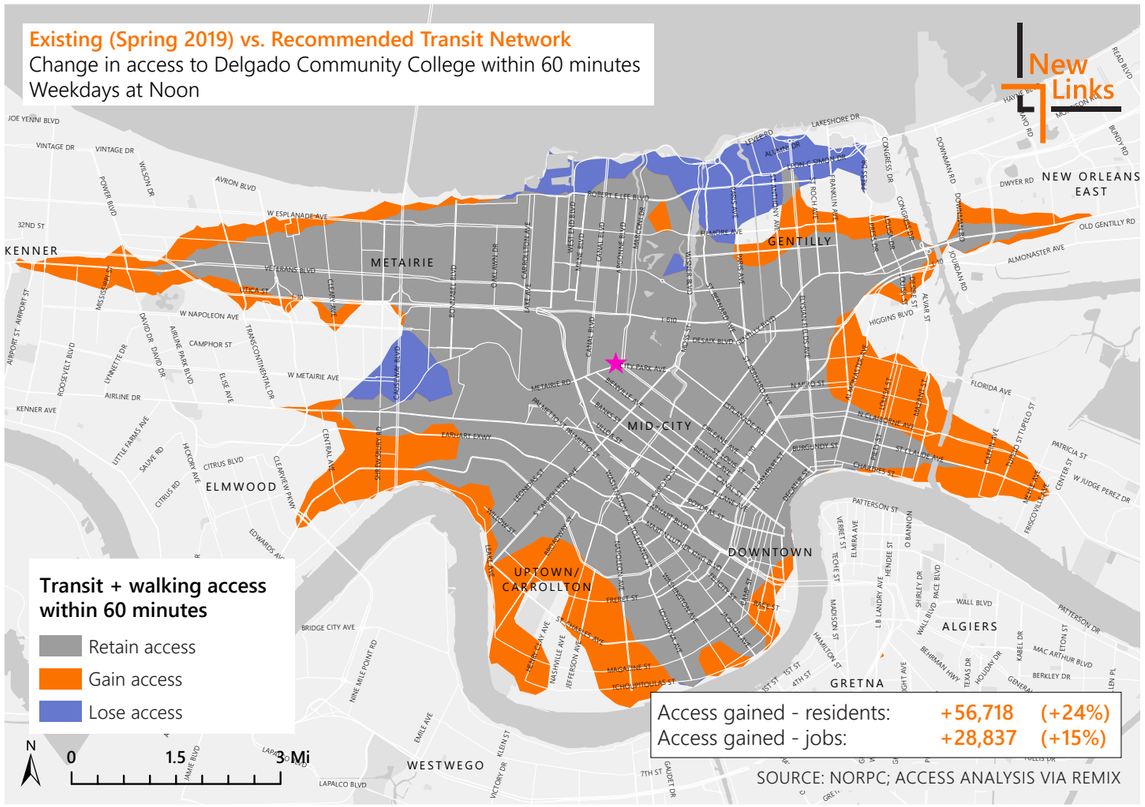
Map 4I: Access within 60 minutes to Elmwood – weekdays at noon



The Recommended Network Plan would substantially increase access within 60 minutes to retail and employment destinations in Elmwood along Clearview Parkway from Metairie, south Kenner, and Orleans Parish. These changes reflect increased frequency on the 39 Tulane bus, as well as the rerouting of several bus lines to connect to a new bus hub in north Elmwood.

Access via transit + walking: Delgado City Park campus, weekdays at noon

Map 4J: Access within 60 minutes to Delgado Community College – weekdays at noon



Under the Recommended Network, a much larger share of Delgado students traveling from destinations Uptown, Elmwood, and the 9th Ward (including Delgado's Sidney Collier Campus) would be able to get to campus within 60 minutes. However, certain parts of Lakeview and Gentilly would lose access within 60 minutes.

5 Resilience and Priority Plan

Resilience and Priority Plan

This report was finalized in January 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic, which began almost a year ago, has affected almost every aspect of how we conduct our lives. It has dramatically changed the planning process for this project and injected significant uncertainty into the near-term future of public transit.

When New Links began in 2019, the project team had a basic set of assumptions regarding the budget, operations, and goals of the transit agencies serving the New Orleans region. While we recognized that funding and budgets change slightly from year-to-year, the planning process was based on the premise that the funding available to run the new network was roughly the same as the funding being used to run the current network. However, disruptions to existing revenue sources and continuing uncertainty about the future of the pandemic make it nearly impossible to predict what transit use, funding, and operations in New Orleans will look like next year or five years down the road.

Some notable impacts and uncertainties caused by the pandemic include:

- **Economy decline and rise in unemployment –** The effects of the pandemic on the local economy have been far-reaching and unemployment has skyrocketed. The service and hospitality industries, driving forces in New Orleans, have been particularly hard-hit.
- **Reduced ridership –** Weekday ridership since March 2020 is roughly half of what it was in 2020 for both agencies. There are fewer service industry employees traveling to work, more Downtown professionals working from home, and fewer tourists riding the streetcars. Additionally, routine transit riders are likely trying to take fewer trips or avoid transit to maintain social distancing.
- **Lost fare revenue –** In addition to revenue lost due to fewer passengers, the RTA and JET suspended fare collection for approximately six weeks in 2020 in order to minimize contact between riders and operators, further impacting fare revenue.
- **Reduction in non-operating revenue –** Sales tax and hotel tax, other significant sources of funding for the RTA, were also down in 2020. The drop off in tourism, rise in unemployment and corresponding lost wages, and the shuttering of local businesses, have all contributed.
- **New operational needs –** Bus crowding, which before was seen as a manageable inconvenience for passengers, is now recognized as a serious health risk. This increases fleet requirements and creates more work for dispatchers as they track passenger crowding and dispense extra-board vehicles as needed. It is uncertain how long social distancing measures will need to be maintained.

None of this is good news, and the pandemic has introduced unforeseen challenges to the outreach and planning processes. However, given the timing of these final stages of the project, New Links is now uniquely situated to offer more than just a system redesign: It can also lay out the priorities and theoretical background for building a more adaptable and resilient system.

We are optimistic that ridership will eventually rebound to pre-COVID levels, and we are confident federal relief funds will allow the agencies to continue operating at the current levels for the near future, but it's important to have a clear framework for prioritizing service under different budget circumstances. This section presents a Resilience and Priority Plan for implementing the network plan under different budget scenarios, including scenarios where there is less financial capacity available for transit.

This is NOT a proposal for reducing or cutting service. In fact, this priority plan also includes recommendations for adding service if agency revenues increase. However, we must acknowledge major disruptions and catastrophes can occur that force the agencies to operate with less.

When Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, the RTA lost the majority of its bus fleet to the flooding. While the agency did its best to bring back important routes in the years following, there was no system-wide plan in existence to help guide the recovery, no previously established priorities, and many of the incremental improvements over the years were piecemeal and ad-hoc for both the RTA and JET. The Resilience and Priority Plan will provide the roadmap and priorities that were previously missing and help agency officials make quick decisions that have already been informed by public input and sound planning.

Service allocation priorities

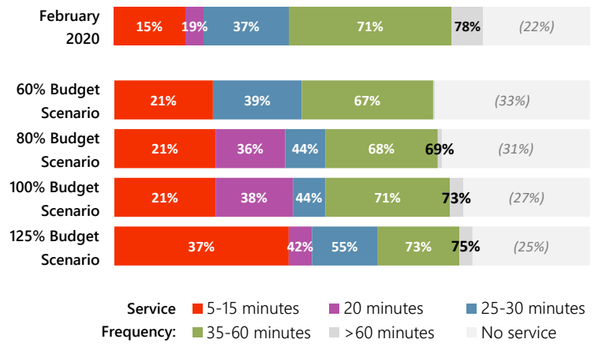
The Resilience and Priority Plan is a data-driven, community-informed plan that shows how to make the needed reductions while doing the least possible harm and preserving service to communities that need it the most. In this chapter, we present proposals for what the system should look like given different budget levels, including 60%, 80%, and 125% of the 2020 funding allocation for the RTA and JET.

The priorities driving the proposed service tiers are similar to those that drove the creation of the 100% network:

- **Core capacity –** maintain adequate frequency on high-ridership, crosstown and regional lines. This is essential for keeping the system functional, retaining ridership, and preventing overcrowding on the highest ridership routes. Prioritizing frequency on core routes reflects the priorities we heard from riders during all phases of outreach, as well as best practices in transit planning.
- **Service equity –** maintain service in neighborhoods with the highest need for transit. This priority reflects a core goal and responsibility of the agency.
- **Coverage –** preserve access to transit within a half-mile. Most residents currently have a bus stop within a quarter-mile of their home. While a reduction in budget means that some routes will be eliminated, the Resilience Plan attempts to maintain half-mile access for as many people as possible while also maintaining frequency.

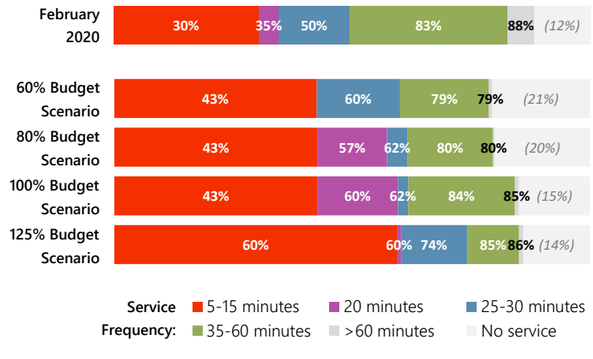
The reduced service networks that reflect these priorities are significantly more effective than a network that simply reduces frequency on every line. They maintain access to relatively frequent transit for the residents who rely most on transit and continue to connect riders to major job centers and opportunities in the region.

Figure 5A: Percentage of residents in the region within half mile of transit (60% system) – weekdays at noon



SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, ACS 2014–2018

Figure 5B: Percentage of jobs in the region within half mile of transit (60% system) – weekdays at noon



SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, LEHD 2017; NORPC 2020, LDOE 2020

60% funding scenario

Figure 5C: 60% funding scenario service plan

			Weekday Peak	Weekday Base	Weekend	Overnight
1		Algiers Point Ferry	30	30	30	
3		Loyola-Riverfront Streetcar				
12		St. Charles Streetcar	15	15	30	60
47		Canal Streetcar	15	15	30	40
47	A	Canal - Cemeteries	30	30	30	
47	B	Canal - City Park	30	30		
47	O	Canal - Owl Shuttle				40
49		Rampart				
11	X	Magazine (to Audubon)	30	30	60	
15	X	Freret (Short)	40	40	40	
16/17		Martin Luther King Jr	30	30	60	
16		MLK - Claiborne	30	30	60	
17		MLK - Hollygrove				
27		Louisiana	30	30	60	
39		Tulane	15	15	30	60
45		Lakeview				
52		St Bernard	40	40	90	
52	A	St. Bernard-Senate				
52	B	St. Bernard-Paris	40	40	90	
55	X	Elysian Fields (Short)	30	30	60	
57	X	Franklin (Short)	60	60	60	
61/62		New Orleans East Express	15	15	30	30
61		Lake Forest	30	30	60	60
62		Morrison	30	30	60	
62	O	Morrison Owl				60
66		Hayne Loop				
68		Little Woods	60	60		
73		Michoud Loop	90	90		
80		Desire-Louisa	60	60		
84		Galvez	40	40	90	
86		Barracks-Chalmette				
88		St Claude	15	15	30	60
91		Jackson-Esplanade	30	30	60	
94		Broad	15	15	30	60
96	X	Carrollton (Short)	60	60	60	
103		Algiers-Gretna	60	60	60	
103	O	Algiers Owl				120
105		Algiers Local				
114		Garden Oaks	15	15	30	60
114	A	Garden Oaks-Kabel	30	30	60	
114	B	Garden Oaks-Tullis	30	30	60	60
201		Kenner-Williams	40	40	80	
E1	X	Veterans-City Park	30	30	60	
E2		Airline	60	60		
E6		Metairie Local				
E7		Elmwood Local	60	60		
W1		Avondale/Churchill				
W10		Huey P Long-Walkertown				
W2/W3		Westbank Exwy (Combined)	20	30	60	
W2		Westbank Expressway	40	60	120	
W3		Lapalco	40	60	120	
W4		Marrero	60	60		
W8		Terrytown	60	60		
S		Arabi-St Bernard	60	60		

80% funding scenario

Figure 5D: 80% funding scenario service plan

			Weekday Peak	Weekday Base	Weekend	Overnight
1		Algiers Point Ferry	30	30	30	
3		Loyola-Riverfront Streetcar				
12		St. Charles Streetcar	15	15	30	60
47		Canal Streetcar	10	10	15	40
47	A	Canal - Cemeteries	20	20	30	
47	B	Canal - City Park	20	20	30	
47	O	Canal - Owl Shuttle				40
49		Rampart				
11		Magazine	20	20	30	60
15		Freret	40	40	40	
16/17		Martin Luther King Jr	15	15	30	60
16		MLK - Claiborne	30	30	60	60
17		MLK - Hollygrove	30	30	60	
27		Louisiana	20	20	30	
39		Tulane	15	15	30	60
45		Lakeview				
52		St Bernard	20	20	40	
52	A	St. Bernard-Senate	40	40		
52	B	St. Bernard-Paris	40	40	40	
55		Elysian Fields	20	20	30	90
57		Franklin	40	40	40	
61/62		New Orleans East Express	10	10	15	30
61		Lake Forest	20	20	30	60
62		Morrison	20	20	30	
62	O	Morrison Owl				60
66		Hayne Loop	60	60	60	
68		Little Woods	30	30	60	
73		Michoud Loop	40	40	40	
80		Desire-Louisa	60	60	60	
84		Galvez	30	30	60	
86		Barracks-Chalmette				
88		St Claude	15	15	30	60
91		Jackson-Esplanade	20	20	30	90
94		Broad	15	15	30	60
96	X	Carrollton (Short)	30	30	60	
103		Algiers-Gretna	30	30	60	
103	O	Algiers Owl				60
105		Algiers Local				
114		Garden Oaks	15	15	30	60
114	A	Garden Oaks-Kabel	30	30	60	
114	B	Garden Oaks-Tullis	30	30	60	60
201		Kenner-Williams	40	40	80	
E1	X	Veterans-City Park	20	20	60	
E2		Airline	30	60	90	
E6		Metairie Local	60			
E7		Elmwood Local	40	60	120	
W1		Avondale/Churchill				
W10		Huey P Long-Walkertown	90	90		
W2/W3		Westbank Exwy (Combined)	15	30	60	
W2		Westbank Expressway	30	60	120	
W3		Lapalco	30	60	120	
W4		Marrero	60	60		
W8		Terrytown	30	60		
S		Arabi-St Bernard	60	60		

100% funding scenario

Figure 5E: funding scenario service plan

		Weekday Peak	Weekday Base	Weekend	Overnight
1	Algiers Point Ferry	30	30	30	
3	Loyola-Riverfront Streetcar	20	20	30	60
12	St. Charles Streetcar	12	15	15	30
47	Canal Streetcar	10	10	15	20
47 A	Canal - Cemeteries	20	20	30	— —
47 B	Canal - City Park	20	20	30	— —
47 O	Canal - Owl Shuttle	— —	— —	— —	20
49	Rampart	30	30	30	— —
11	Magazine	20	20	30	60
15	Freret	40	40	40	— —
16/17	Martin Luther King Jr	15	15	30	60
16	MLK - Claiborne	30	30	60	60
17	MLK - Hollygrove	30	30	60	— —
27	Louisiana	20	20	30	60
39	Tulane	15	15	15	30
45	Lakeview	— —	— —	— —	— —
52	St Bernard	20	20	20	60
52 A	St. Bernard-Senate	40	40	40	— —
52 B	St. Bernard-Paris	40	40	40	60
55	Elysian Fields	20	20	30	40
57	Franklin	40	40	40	— —
61/62	New Orleans East Express	10	10	15	30
61	Lake Forest	20	20	30	60
62	Morrison	20	20	30	— —
62 O	Morrison Owl	— —	— —	— —	60
66	Hayne Loop	60	60	60	— —
68	Little Woods	30	30	60	— —
73	Michoud Loop	40	40	90	— —
80	Desire-Louisa	60	60	60	— —
84	Galvez	20	20	30	60
86	Barracks-Chalmette	60	60	60	— —
88	St Claude	15	15	15	30
91	Jackson-Esplanade	20	20	30	40
94	Broad	15	15	15	30
96	Carrollton-Gentilly	30	30	60	— —
103	Algiers-Gretna	30	30	30	— —
103 O	Algiers Owl	— —	— —	— —	40
105	Algiers Local	60	60	60	— —
114	Garden Oaks	15	15	20	40
114 A	Garden Oaks-Kabel	30	30	40	— —
114 B	Garden Oaks-Tullis	30	30	40	40
201	Kenner-Williams	40	40	80	— —
E1	Veterans-Canal	20	20	40	— —
E2	Airline	30	40	90	— —
E6	Metairie Local	60	60	— —	— —
E7	Elmwood Local	30	60	120	— —
W1	Avondale/Churchill	90	90	90	— —
W10	Huey P Long-Walkertown	90	90	90	— —
W2/W3	Westbank Exwy (Combined)	15	20	60	— —
W2	Westbank Expressway	30	40	120	— —
W3	Lapalco	30	40	120	— —
W4	Marrero	60	60	— —	— —
W8	Terrytown	30	60	60	— —
S	Arabi-St Bernard	60	60	— —	— —

125% funding scenario

Figure 5F: 125% funding scenario service plan

		Weekday Peak	Weekday Base	Weekend	Overnight
1	Algiers Point Ferry	30	30	30	30
3	Loyola-Riverfront Streetcar	15	15	30	60
12	St. Charles Streetcar	10	10	15	30
47	Canal Streetcar	10	10	10	20
47 A	Canal - Cemeteries	20	20	20	— —
47 B	Canal - City Park	20	20	20	— —
47 O	Canal - Owl Shuttle	— —	— —	— —	20
49	Rampart	30	30	30	— —
11	Magazine	15	15	30	30
15	Freret	30	30	30	— —
16/17	Martin Luther King Jr	10	10	15	60
16	MLK - Claiborne	20	20	30	60
17	MLK - Hollygrove	20	20	30	— —
27	Louisiana	15	15	30	60
39	Tulane	10	10	15	30
45	Lakeview	60	60	60	— —
52	St Bernard	15	15	20	60
52 A	St. Bernard-St. Anthony	30	30	40	— —
52 B	St. Bernard-Paris	30	30	40	60
55	Elysian Fields	15	15	30	60
57	Franklin	30	30	30	— —
61/62	New Orleans East Express	7.5	7.5	15	15
61	Lake Forest	15	15	30	30
62	Morrison	15	15	30	— —
62 O	Morrison Owl	— —	— —	— —	30
66	Hayne Loop	30	30	30	— —
68	Little Woods	20	20	30	— —
73	Michoud Loop	30	30	30	— —
80	Desire-Louisa	30	30	30	— —
84	Galvez	20	20	30	60
86	Barracks-Chalmette	30	30	30	— —
88	St Claude	10	10	15	30
91	Jackson-Esplanade	15	15	30	30
94	Broad	10	10	15	30
96	Carrollton-Gentilly	30	30	30	— —
103	Algiers-Gretna	30	30	30	— —
103 O	Algiers Owl	— —	— —	— —	30
105	Algiers Local	30	30	30	— —
114	Garden Oaks	10	10	15	30
114 A	Garden Oaks-Kabel	20	20	30	— —
114 B	Garden Oaks-Tullis	20	20	30	30
201	Kenner-Williams	40	40	80	— —
E1	Veterans-Canal	15	15	30	120
E2	Airline	30	60	90	— —
E6	Metairie Local	30	30	60	— —
E7	Elmwood Local	40	60	120	— —
W1	Avondale/Churchill	90	90	90	— —
W10	Huey P Long-Walkertown	90	90	90	— —
W2/W3	Westbank Exwy (Combined)	15	15	30	— —
W2	Westbank Expressway	30	30	60	— —
W3	Lapalco	30	30	60	— —
W4	Marrero	30	60	60	— —
W8	Terrytown	30	60	60	— —
SA	Arabi-St Bernard	60	60	— —	— —
SB	Chalmette-N.O. East	90	90	— —	— —

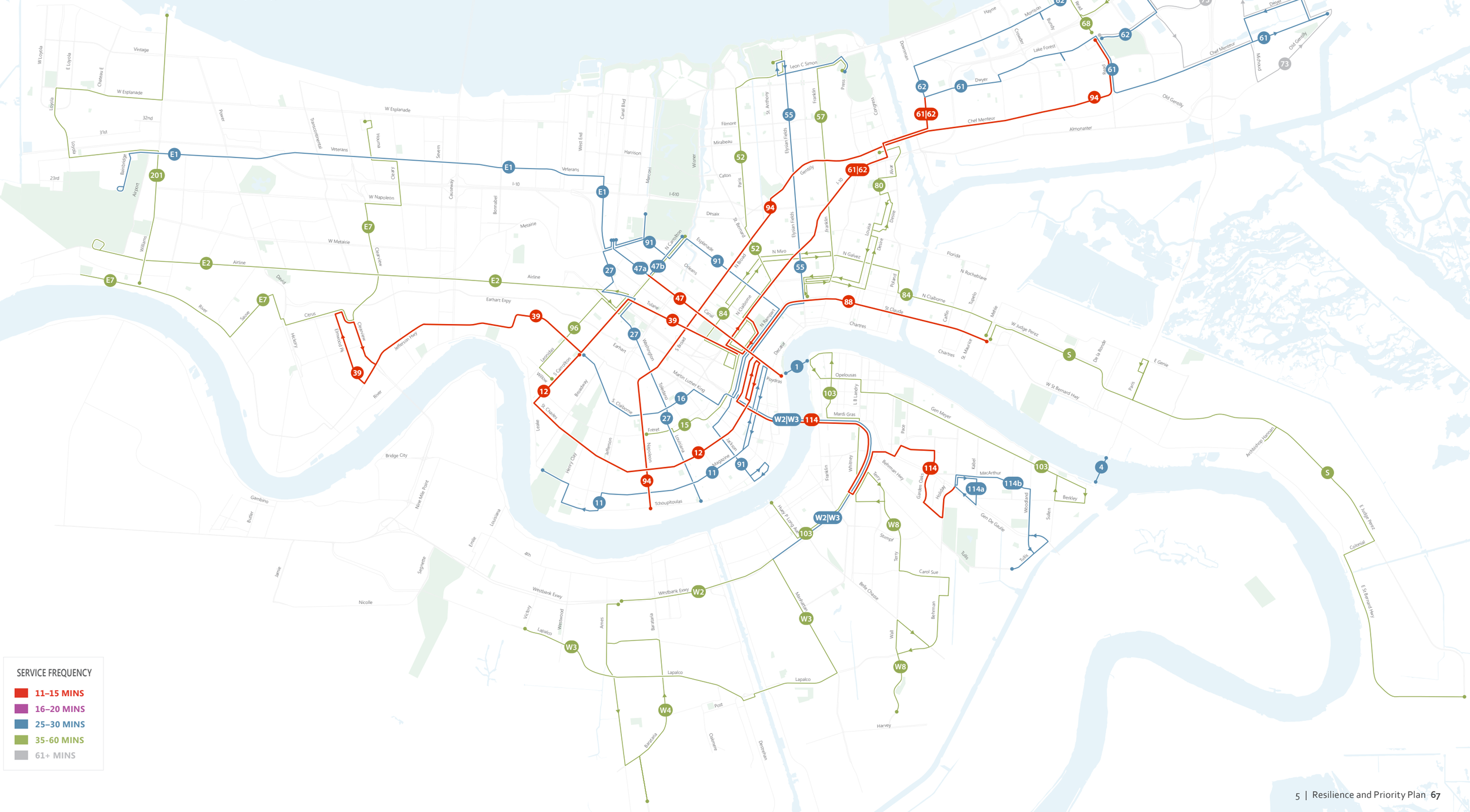
New Links

Map 5G:

Resilience and Priority Plan

Service scenario – 60% CY 2020 funding

Recommended service frequency, weekdays at noon



20210131

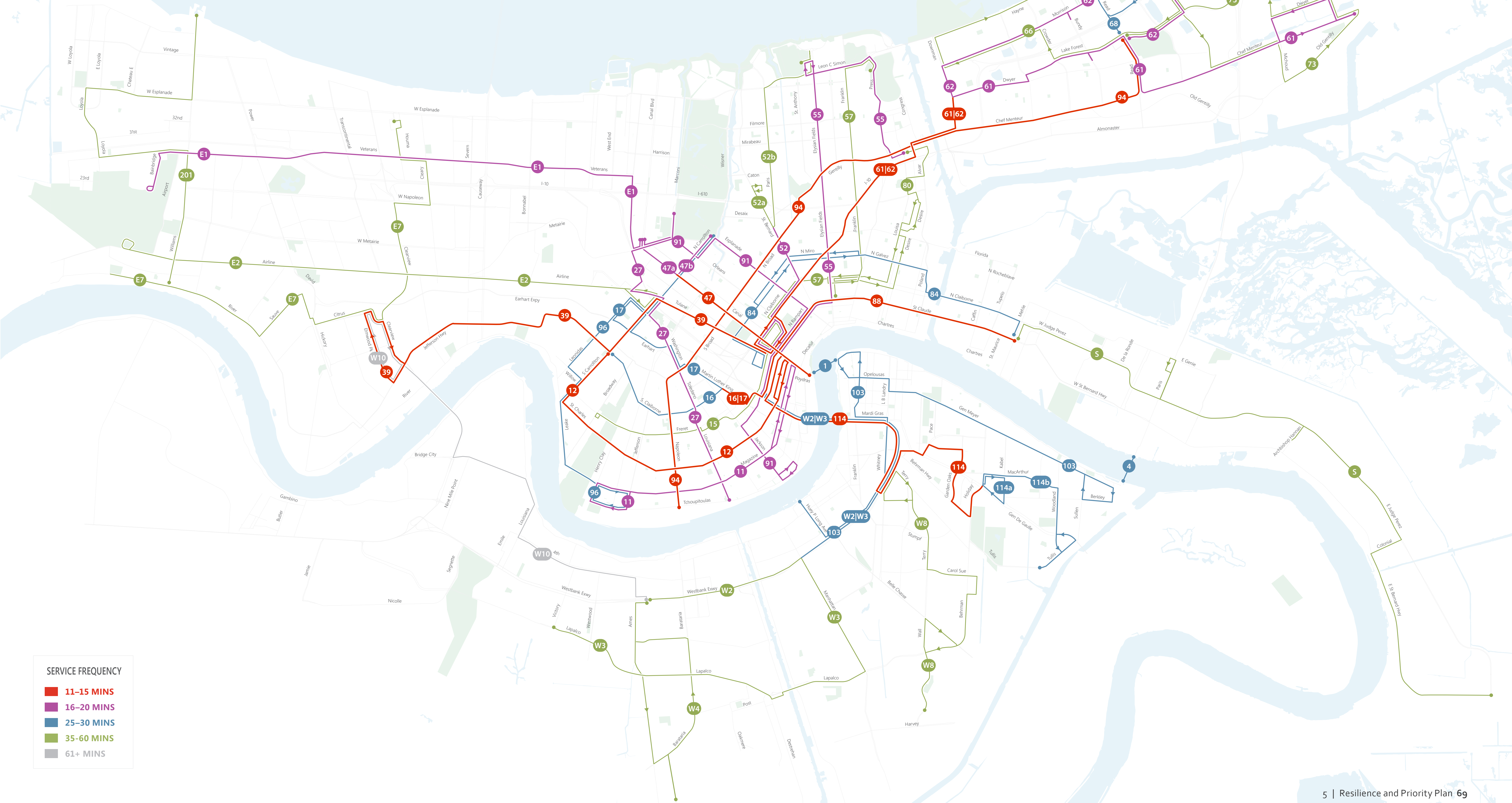
New Links

Map 5H:

Resilience and Priority Plan

Service scenario – 80% CY 2020 funding

Recommended service frequency, weekdays at noon



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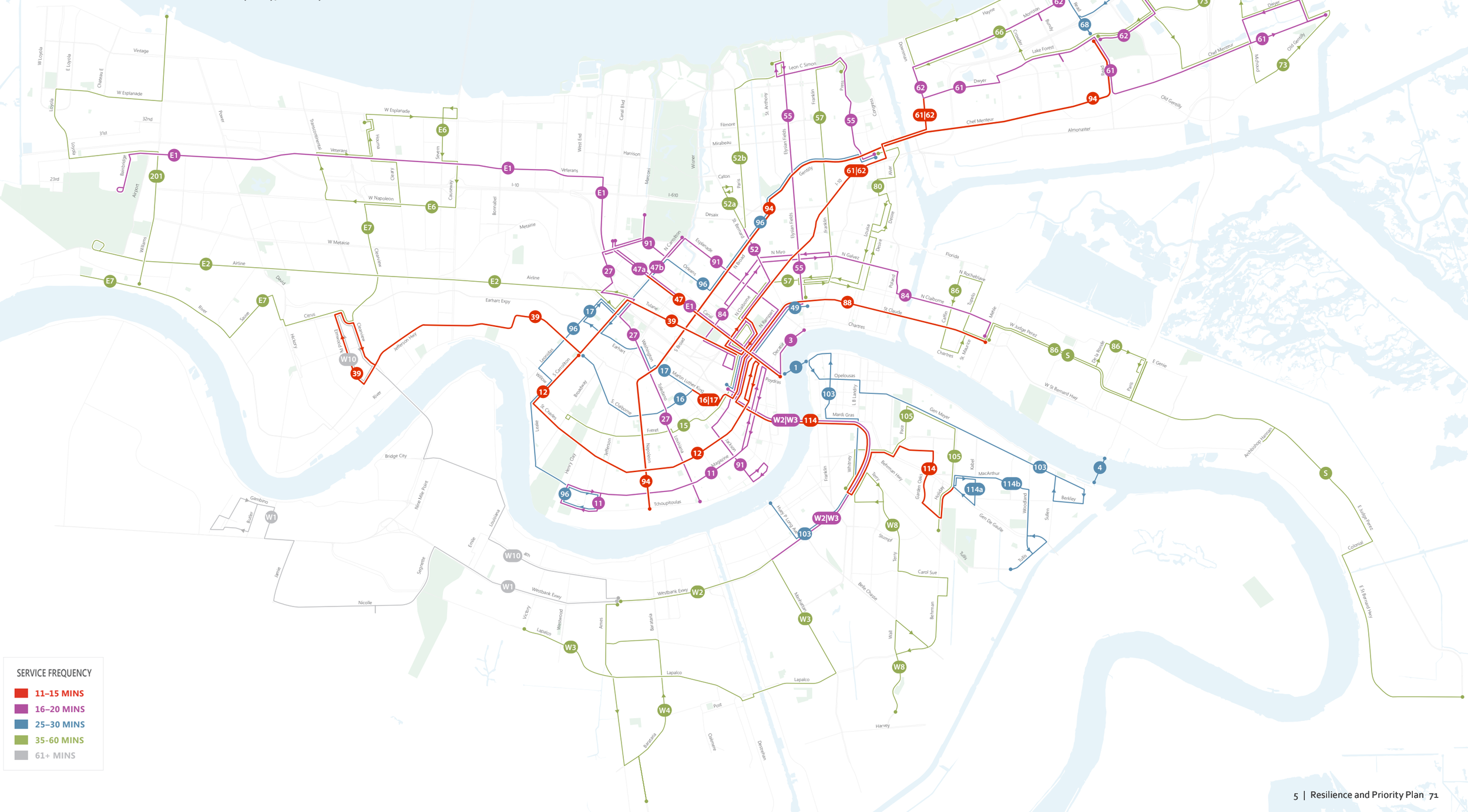
New Links

Map 5I:

Resilience and Priority Plan

Service scenario – 100% CY 2020 funding

Recommended service frequency, weekdays at noon



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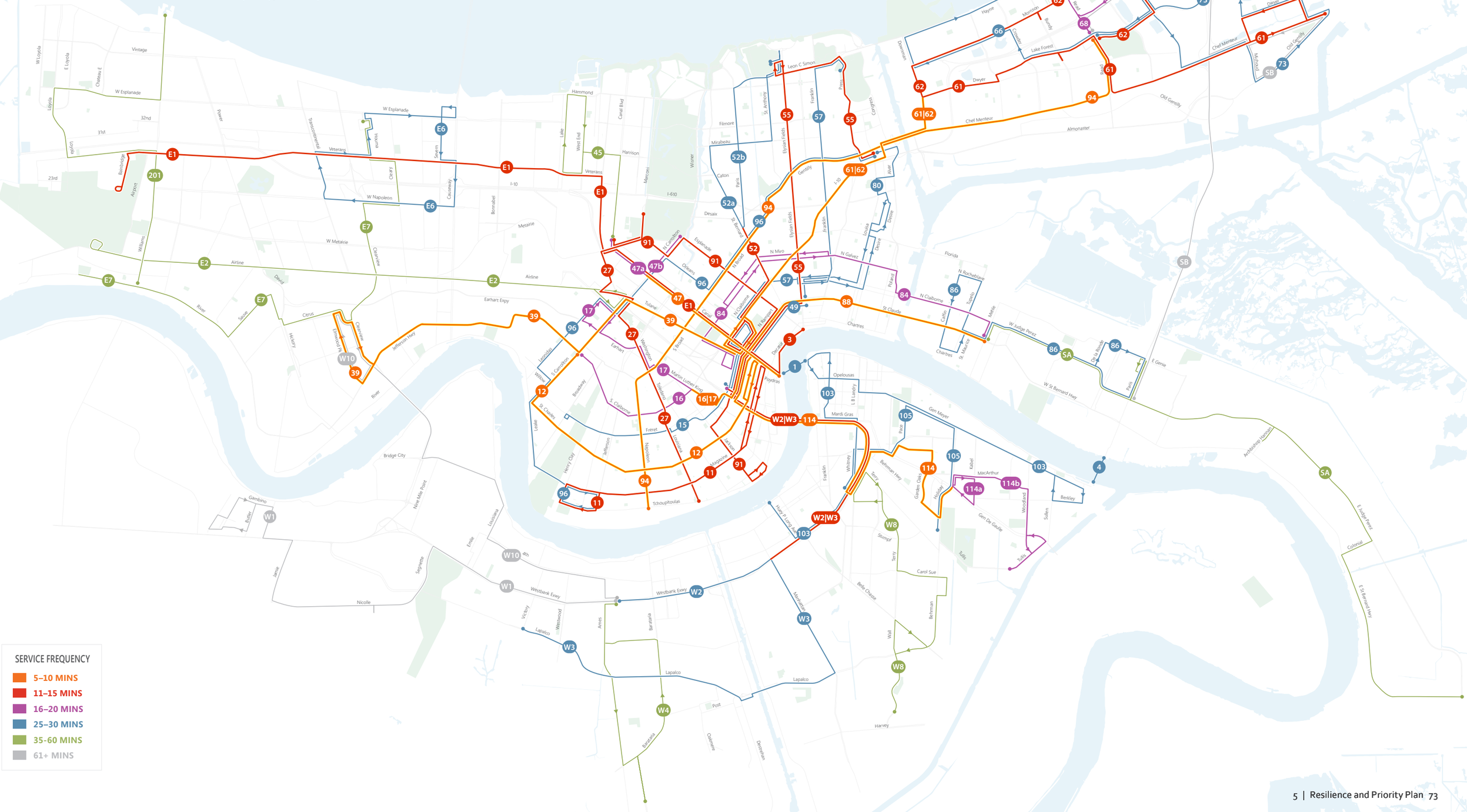
New Links

Map 5I:

Resilience and Priority Plan

Service scenario – 125% CY 2020 funding

Recommended service frequency, weekdays at noon



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6 What Happens Next?

Short-term

Once this plan is complete, it will be over to the agencies for consideration. The RTA and JET will review using their own internal processes, and ultimately, the RTA board will vote on the plan. If approved, the New Links network could be implemented within the next 12 months, by early 2022.

The Final Network Plan, the Resilience and Priority Plan, and all of the other previously completed materials provide a detailed framework for implementation of the plan. The rest of the work is in the execution and implementation and will fall primarily to JET and the RTA. After the agencies accept the plan, the next steps for implementation would include:

- Developing new schedules, system maps, and other public materials
- Relocating some stops and shelters to serve new route alignments
- Final Title VI Service Equity Analysis and associated public outreach
- Media and public outreach campaign to inform people of the new routes, new network, and new schedules
- Training of operators on new route alignments

Since most of the New Links plan was completed in-house rather than by consultants, a significant portion of the COA budget remains. We anticipate some of this remaining funding will be used to defray the costs of implementation. The RPC is also planning to work with the RTA and JET to conduct a detailed study of paratransit in the near future. Some of the remaining budget is set aside for that purpose.

There are also several other policy considerations outside the scope of the New Links project, but which will affect the smoothness of the implementation and the ultimate success of the regional transit network. The following issues should be examined by the RTA and JET as soon as possible:

- **Cost of transfers –** The redesigned network gives riders better access to more destinations. However, more trips will require a transfer, and we believe riders should not be financially penalized for having to transfer between lines. The RTA and JET should revisit the way that transfers are treated to mitigate the negative effects of this feature of the new network.
- **Regional Fare integration –** The new system features improved regional connections, but some of these will require transferring between JET and RTA systems. The RTA and JET should expand their regional fare program and revenue sharing agreement to allow for easier transfers between the systems.
- **Coordinated infrastructure plan –** While some transfer hubs utilize existing facilities for operators to use during their breaks, some new facilities should also be constructed for optimal driver and rider convenience. Additionally, the plan anticipates the Downtown hub will eventually be moved from Duncan Plaza to the site of a new Downtown Transfer Center. Some bus stops and shelters will also need to be relocated to serve new route alignments.

Long-term

This plan presents a proposal for an immediate redesign of the transit network in the New Orleans region using existing resources. However, it can and should also inform the long-term planning of the transit agencies and their public partners, and affect transportation and land use planning in the region.

Over the long term, we hope that the agencies will be able to continue building out the network using the priorities from this plan, the SMP, and JET's Strategic Plan. The agencies should seek additional sources of operational funding so they can run more service and so transit is less vulnerable to economic downturns such as one brought about by the pandemic. As the 125% plan suggests, additional funding for operations would be put to good use. Even if funding levels remain the same, the agencies should continue to adapt the network to changing land use and commuting patterns over the long term, using the Service Standards that the RTA has developed alongside the New Links plan.

One-time capital funding opportunities should also be explored for improvements to rapid corridors, such as implementing Bus Rapid Transit as well as more focused priority treatments. The agencies should also work with local partners, such as the Department of Public Works (DPW), to implement priority treatments at key chokepoints in the system. DPW will also be an essential partner for improving pedestrian infrastructure and safety around stops, a major concern brought up repeatedly by riders and other community members during public outreach.

The high-frequency corridors defined in this study and the SMP are central to the transportation network and are also potential economic drivers. The RTA and the City of New Orleans are in the process of developing a Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) plan, which seeks to encourage compact and mixed-use development, affordable housing, and pedestrian-scale design around quality transit services. We hope that network plan is just the first step in this iterative land use and transportation planning process, and in the long run, leads to greater transit ridership, lower household transportation costs, and the creation of vibrant, equitable, and resilient communities throughout the region.