



LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR  
DARYL G. PURPERA, CPA, CFE

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## ST. BERNARD PARISH GOVERNMENT TRANSIT DEPARTMENT

More than \$98,000 in St. Bernard Parish bus fares were collected but never deposited into the parish bank account between January 2011 and March 2014, according to an investigative audit released Monday by Legislative Auditor Daryl Purpera.

The report also pointed out that the daily route sheets for the St. Bernard Urban Rapid Transit buses have not been reconciled to fare deposits for years.

“Three employees of the transit department had access to the bus fares but all three denied taking any of the missing funds,” according to the audit. The report has been forwarded to the U.S. Attorney’s office in New Orleans and the 34<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney’s office.

As passengers board the buses they deposit money into fare boxes, which are locked. Individual fare boxes are housed in a locked cabinet on the buses. The system requires two different sets of keys to access the cash: one for the fare boxes and one for the cabinets in which they are placed.

Larry Calabresi, a backup bus driver, would take the fare boxes from the buses once a week, or when they overflowed, and bring them to a counting room in the parish transportation department office. Tina Pitre, the office manager, had a key to the counting room where the cash was stored but did not have keys to the fare boxes or the cabinets.

The report said Calabresi had keys to the fare boxes and cabinets, but not to the counting room. Transportation Director Lonnie Campbell Jr. had keys to both the boxes and the counting room. “All three employees denied taking any of the missing funds and would not consent to a polygraph examination,” the state auditor’s report said.

Members of Purpera’s staff reconciled the daily route sheets to the deposits for the period between January 2011 and March 2014 and found that collected bus fares exceeded bank deposits by \$48,585.

The report said auditors also found 767 daily route sheets that were missing in the same period of time. “Based on the ridership from an average daily route sheet, an estimated \$43,557 in additional bus fares were collected but not deposited,” it said.



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During the audit, Campbell found an additional stack of route sheets “hidden in the count room” that totaled \$5,963 in bus fares collected but not deposited, bringing the total of missing bus fares to \$98,105.

In an attempt to explain the differences between the route sheet and the deposits, both Pitre and Calabresi said the sheets “might have been filled out incorrectly or some of the riders may not have paid the entire fare,” according to the report. Campbell said in his response to the audit that the data is not reliable. However, the report pointed out that with the new system now in place “the amount of deposits has increased. . . but the driver’s daily route sheets have remained consistent.”

Calabresi, who retired from St. Bernard Parish government in May shortly after being interviewed by auditors, first said he had a key to the cabinets, but not to the fare boxes, then changed his story and said that he had a key to the fare boxes and lost it.

According to the audit, Pitre said Calabresi told her that “he changed his statements every time he talked to the auditors so he could keep them guessing.” She also told auditors that he was “not taking the missing money and the investigation seriously.”

As of March of 2014, Campbell began removing the fare boxes from the cabinets and delivering them unopened to a bank which has the keys, opens the boxes, counts the money and makes the fare deposits to the parish government account.

**For more information, contact:**

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**On Twitter:** More than \$98,000 in St. Bernard bus fares were collected but never deposited between January 2011 and March 2014.