

keenly aware of just how busy

it can get. Traffic,

congestion, lots of visitors,

and times very little street

parking. I dare say, all in all,

most of us locals probably tend

to avoid the downtown historic

district, although there are so

much that it offers for us to

do and enjoy right here in our

own backyard. But if you

consider, we do have the parking

garage in addition to street

parking and lots around the

city. And we have a St Johns

County resident discount for

parking. Well maybe it's not as

bad as you think. So I've

invited Xavier Pellicer, the

City's Mobility Manager to join

me this week and talk about a
few more initiatives being put

into place in St Augustine
while we constantly look for

those new mobility solutions.

X, welcome back. X: Great to be

here. MELISSA: Yeah. We got a lot going
on all the time with parking in

downtown and traffic and it
seems to be like the drum beat

that everybody is upset about.

X: Right. There's always the

complaint that there's not
enough parking and so that, and

it's always going to be that
way. MELISSA: Absolutely. X: There's just

more and more people coming in
St Johns County. You know,

we've we've really boomed here

in St Johns County. One of

the fastest growing counties in

the nation. MELISSA: Right. X: And so and and

we don't, we can't expand the

streets down here. We have the

old city streets. And so we do

have the parking garage

which is which is one of our

our main parking. There's always

the parking on the streets and

everything, too. But but but with

all the people, the parking on

the street is in such high

demand. MELISSA: And and we really, to our

defense, I know people get

frustrated. But to our defense,

we are looking and evaluating

and trying to figure out ways

to make it easier or better. And

that's one of the first things

you and I are going to talk

about, is this new express lane

that has just launched. It's a

pilot program, so we don't want

anybody get their hopes up too

much. But if it goes

well, we'll keep it. Tell us

about this express lane pilot.

X: Well, we'll we'll have to see

if we can get it to work well.

Which I, we're we're trying our

best this week to try and work

out all the bugs and

everything. The technology is

great. But it's always brings

its unique problems, also. But we

are, we we do want to try to

start, initiate this on Monday.

And and and and so it'll be

something where, right now, when
you come into the garage, you

pay as you enter. So, right
now, we have three entrance

lanes. And so two of the lanes
will continue to be just as

they've always been. But one of
the third lane, we want to call

it our express lane, where you
just drive right through. You

don't pay it there. You just
drive right through, you park.

Now, one thing you want to
remember is you want to

remember your license plate.

MELISSA: Cuz you're not getting in for

free. You still have to park.

You're just not paying at the

booth. X: And then after you park,
then you go find a a payment

kiosk and you can pay at the
payment kiosk. Or you can make
use of our mobile app.

So the mobile app is really the

way of the future because then
you you park, you you do your

mobile app, and then and then
and then you're set and then.

And and that's the case for
parking anywhere downtown. So

we're continuing a program that
we've already initiated several

years back. And so so now we're
just trying to introduce it to

the parking garage. MELISSA: So, I'm
going to replay what you just

said just to sum that up again,
so folks are listening. So, the

express lane, you're going to
drive in, you're going to park

your car. If you have the
mobile app, you can just get

into your mobile app and pay on
your mobile app. There

are going to be kiosks, which is
same thing that we see around

town. X: Exactly same kiosk. MELISSA: Now, when you
say. And when you

say to say remember your
parking, your license plate, I'm

going to give my best piece of
advice which is just take a

picture of your license plate.

X: Everybody has the the little

smartphone. Yes. You just take
a picture and then you've got

it. And when you get to the

kiosk, you just follow the
keypad, the directions.
And I don't have to go back to
my car. I don't have to put the
little ticket stub in my dashboard.

X: You will have to punch in your
license plate now. MELISSA: Okay. Have

to punch in my license plate
and then it knows I've parked

there. Now, the advantage of
the mobile app is that if I'm

in town, I can extend my time
by an hour, depending on how

much I've parked my time for,
right? I can extend it a little

bit. I don't have to go back to
the parking lot. X: That's true for wherever

you're parking along the
street. Now, in the parking

garage, that's pay as you

enter. So, once once you

pay, you're set. There's no

extending the time. You you've

paid for that. For the

rest of that day. So. MELISSA: Good

point. So, the parking garage,

it's it's a one-time fee. X: It's

a one-time fee. It it's. For

the day. It's pay per entry.

So, every time you enter,

you pay. It's now if you leave

and come back, you have to

repay. MELISSA: Pay again. X: But but

ultimately, sometime in the

future, you know, if the,

especially if this, a pilot

program works out well, the the

intent is sometime in the

future, we're going to convert

the parking garage from being
pay by entry to pay by hour.

MELISSA: Okay and that that'll have, that
would again be license plate

readers or the kiosk or the app.

But it would basically

eliminate the people at the
gate. X: Exactly. It would it be

much more efficient. MELISSA: Automated,
right? X: And and and nothing that

it does is it helps just free
flow the traffic right on into

the parking garage. So then you
don't have the backup of

traffic. So. Right. So it's all
to make things a lot more

efficient and and make things
work well and and that's

mobility. It's trying to get it

to move a little bit. MELISSA: Moving

people efficiently. And I will
make a note here too reminding

folks. If you use the mobile
app or you've you are a St

Johns County resident and through the
mobile app, you can prove that.

You register your license,
either your driver's license or

your registration. It's online. But you only pay \$3.

X: Right. Well, there is a
discount for living in St

Johns County and now you you
still have to go to the Park

St Aug and you have to apply
and you have to get the mobile

app and you have to, you know,
you have to apply for the.

For the local discount. And you will have to

provide, your say that the two
easy things is you provide your

driver's license number and
then you also provide your

vehicle registration, and then,
and then you're set. That's

that's the easiest way. And so,
that's that's the way of the

future. And and it's an
industry thing. There seems to

be industry wide, nationwide,
where a lot of these other

parking garages all throughout
the nation. They're all

converting from a person being
at the gate to to being doing

this. MELISSA: I I did it in Charleston
for Father's Day weekend. Went

downtown with my dad to to

lunch and went to park. And you

just took a picture of the
little QR code and paid your

fee and off you went. If you
are just now tuning in, you are

listening to The Break Room.

I'm Melissa Wissel,

Communications Director for the
City of St Augustine. And I

have X Pellicer here with me
today. He is our Mobility

Manager and we are talking
about parking downtown. We just

wrapped up a little
conversation about the parking

garage. Don't forget to check
out ParkStAug. com. That's

where you can register to get
your local St Johns County

discount. X, I want to switch gears here, no pun intended.

Before we run out of time,
we've also got something coming,
the downtown circulator.
Talk about, tell me about that.

X: And so that kind of plays off
of the parking garage. The
parking garage really is the
easiest place to go to to park.

And that one of the biggest
complaints that we have is is
that you park at the parking
garage and you're so far away

from the downtown. MELISSA: Have to walk all the way
down St George Street. X: And so it

it's about a half a mile away.
And so I totally get it, with
say ladies are in their high
heels or something like that.

And so we want to offer a that
we're calling it the downtown

circulator. And then and
on the circulator, it's an

air-conditioned bus. And and
this is something that we've

recently, we we put out the bids
and everything. And so we have a

contractor on board.

We're in the process of

finalizing contracts with the
DOT. The DOT, it's a grant

program to the DOT. They've
initiated half a million

dollars. And then
there'll be another half a

million dollars coming sometime
this November. So so the the

plan is about a million dollars a

year. And and hopefully it'll

grow. Now this initial phase, if
you will, is this a circle. And

and let's say downtown where
you park at the parking garage,

you can you can hop on, we'll
call it the circulator shuttle

bus for free. Because of the of
the moneys that are paid by the

grant where we're able to offer
this as a free use. And then

it'll it'll circle around the
downtown area. We'll have three

different stops, one of the
stops will be at the parking

garage, at the Visitor
Information Center. It's I call

it the Clock Circle, but there's
the nice beautiful red brick

circle there. And that'll be our main hub. And then that's also

our our generator. That's where we have 1,200 parking spots

there at the garage. People come, park, get on an

air-conditioned bus. It'll drive you around, say along the

Bayfront is one of our stops is is near the fort. There's

a crosswalk there and so we're going to convert a couple of

parking spots to a bus stop. And that'll be the first up. And

then the second stop will be on Cathedral Street. And and

then after that then it'll come right back. So it'll have three

different stops. What it does is it allows people to park at

the parking garage and then

very easily get on air

conditioned bus and it'll get

you a lot closer to where

you're trying to get downtown.

MELISSA: And again, going back to this

whole mobility solutions. It's

all about getting people into

town to park once and then make

it easy for them to get around

downtown once you're here.

We've got Gotcha bikes. X: Yep.

Our bike program is is by the

Gotcha, and and then Gotcha then

was bought out by the Bolt

Company. But that's working very

well too. Our bike share

program. I'll touch on it just

very quickly, is is it it

started off with around 100

bikes. But then because of over
the past year or two with the

issues of supply chain and all
that kind of stuff, it dwindled

down quite a bit. But now it's
come back. But we still have a

little bit of the pandemic,
where where they're having a

hard time getting some manpower.

Because I did get a little

irritated with the Gotcha folks
in that they're supposed to, on a

daily basis. They're
supposed to be corralling these

bikes and neatening things up
and. For the past few

weeks, they haven't been doing
a very good job. MELISSA: So, bear with

us. X: So, well, I'll give em a
little kick in the butt and

they'll they'll get it together.

But they have promised me that

they have hired some, they have
gotten a couple more people on

board. And so they should start
doing a very much better job.

MELISSA: And these are the turquoise
bikes that you see. And there's

there's racks of them all over
the place. X: We have about 13

different stations all
throughout different areas

downtown. And it and it even
branches out to Anastasia

Island over on Arrendondo Avenue.

There's a there's a location

and then it even stretches out
to The Amp, the amphitheater. And

so that's that's a, that's a
growing program also. And it

seems to be working very well.

And but just like everything,

it has little growing pains
here and there. But but we're up

to about 100 - 110 bikes and it seems
to be wanting to expand. And so

that's that's a good thing.

Another thing that I'd like to

talk about is is our
circulator, you know, even

though this is the our initial
phase, that the plan is for that

to expand also. There's an
article in the newspaper a few

days back about the Broudy's
lot in the vicinity of US - 1

at King Street. MELISSA: That

transportation hub. X: That's that

is ideally going to become a
transportation hub. And that,

say another parking garage.

We have the River to Sea Loop

bike trail program that could
come in there. There's

there's a, there's several
different possibilities that

that... but there's a lot to be
worked out on that. And

that's something that's
going to play out over several

months and maybe even a couple
of years. But but things are

coming quicker. You know,
everything everybody thinks

that this is going to be way
off in the future. But the these

mobility issues are coming a
lot faster than people realize.

For instance, at that Broudy's Lot
is is they're hoping to tie

that into tying that to
Jacksonville with a...

With a railroad, they call it a.. MELISSA:
A transit rail or yeah. X: A rail

a a commuter rail. And
so that's that's another, that's

a huge possibility for that
site. MELISSA: Well and we're constantly,

I think what you're what you're
bringing around in all of this

conversation, is that we've
constantly gotta be thinking

about what's coming. What's
what's possible. And we can't

just make a decision for right
now. But when we make the

decision for now, we also have

to consider, how does it then,

how is it something that can be

adapted and and expanded upon,

like you're saying. How

can we reach out to the beach?

How do we reach out to those

satellite parking areas that we

keep talking about that, maybe

10 years, 15 years, but we've

gotta start setting those. X: And

it's coming and we've got,

there's more and more hotels

being constructed. St

John's County's boomed from 80,000 say 30 years ago to now

we're approaching 300,000

of people in the county.

And and and so we're not going

to be able to create really

more parking in the downtown

core of the city, because we

just don't want to have a bunch

of parking garages downtown.

MELISSA: Right. X: And so it just doesn't
fit well with the historical

flavor of the community. And so

that, you had touched on it

trying to have satellite
parking hubs, where we can have

maybe some parking garages on
the periphery of town and then

shuttle them in, through various
different mobility branches,

such as this circulator that

we're talking about. MELISSA: And that's

all we have time for X. Where

does the time go? X: Well we just

have fun talking. MELISSA: There's lots

to talk about. I will have you

back because we'll talk about
it again. But I'm going to

have to wrap up our interview
for today. Thanks for

coming by. X: Always glad to be
here. MELISSA: If you missed part of

this broadcast and want to go
back and listen from the

beginning. You can now find us
on your favorite podcast. Look

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until next time. ANNOUNCER: You've been

listening to The Break Room. A
weekly program addressing

projects and programs offered
by the City of St Augustine.

Join us each week as the City's
Communications Director, Melissa

Wissel, has in depth
conversations with the people
who make our town work to meet
the needs of our community. The

Break Room is produced by
Communication Specialist for

the City of St. Augustine, Cindy
Walker. See you at this time

next week for another edition
of The Break Room.