

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to another edition of The Break Room, a

weekly conversation about how the City of St Augustine

works from those who do the work every day. Hosted by the

City of St Augustine's Communications Director Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a closer look at the different

City departments and provides updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now your host, Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Welcome to The Break Room. I'm Melissa Wissel, Communications

Director for the City of St Augustine. Thanks for tuning

in. Last weekend, we kicked off the 29th annual Nights of

Light season and with both

Hurricane Ian and Tropical

Storm Nicole blowing through

the city. We did have a little

bit of concern that it might

not happen, but we got the

lights repaired. The electrical

is going. Shuttles are back.

And so to talk about shuttles

that we're going to have

throughout the end of December,

I have invited X Pellicer, the

City's Mobility Manager back to

The Break Room to talk about

shuttles. X: Always great to be

here, Melissa. MELISSA: Thanks for coming

in X. Shuttles. We didn't have

them for COVID. We brought them

back year, we do them for 4th of

July. We have them in the

spring. It's a great program.

Let's talk about

it. X: We're easing back into it. Things kind of dipped off

there for a little while during
the past couple of years with

the COVID. And the year
before COVID, we were ramming

and jamming. Rocking and
rolling and just to give

you a feel for some numbers and
stuff like that. We started

back in 2016 with about 8, 000
passengers that we moved. And

then over the next couple of
years that we were up to about

11 - 12,000. And then in
2019 we were up to almost 20,

we were, say up to 19,000 folks. MELISSA:

Wow. X: And so we kind of made a

pretty good jump right then and
things were taken off. And then

bam, the bottom fell out with
COVID and so for that one or

two years we didn't do
anything. As far as

shuttles. We can't be putting a
whole bunch of people into a

small area and so. That does not work well with

with buses and shuttling,
because you are trying to fit a

bunch of people into a.. MELISSA: As many
people as you can. X: And

that's the whole thing is we're
trying to keep cars from

downtown St Augustine. And so
instead of two people driving

in a car and, you know, several

cars, we try and put 30 people

in a bus. And so it, that's
exact opposite of what COVID

was making us do, so. So this
past year, we started back up in

2021 and we had about 14,000,
so just you know, shooting from

the hip. We're about 75% last
year. So it'll be interesting

to see. We had this past
weekend, we kicked off, you know.

And so it, you know, we we'll
just have to see how the

numbers go through, through the
year. But it feels like we're

going to be more. It feels like
we're going to be back to

how we were back in 2019, so.

And we just have to see. MELISSA: We run

the shuttles. So, for Light
Up! Night, we did have that

Anastasia Island shuttle, but I
want to make sure folks know

that the Anastasia Island
Shuttle will not be running

anymore. That is just on
Light Up Night. So that,

was our, that's a has been. X: That
was just a one night thing. Now

from, for this up and
coming Thanksgiving weekend and

and for these next few
Saturdays, well for this

Thanksgiving, we're going to do
Friday and Saturday, and it'll

be from 1 PM to 11 PM.
And the, they got the three spots

that you can go to and it's
very easy to drive to these

three spots. We have, we, what we
call our Broudy's Lot, which is

at the intersection of US-1
and King Street. And then we

have the, our 301 San Marco Lot
is a grass lot on the very

North end of San Marco Avenue.
And then a little bit, about

another half a mile farther
North of that, we make use of

the St Johns County's Health
Department. And that's a very

beautiful paved parking lot.
That's that's really a nice lot

to go to also. So, yeah it'll
be it'll be Friday and Saturday

this weekend for Thanksgiving
weekend. And then after that

it'll be on Saturdays. Now, on

the Christmas parade, that's the

first Saturday in December, I
think what is that December 3rd,

I believe, and we will be
starting, the Christmas parade

starts at 9, we're going to
start shuttling at 8:00.

MELISSA: Okay, so early on the third for
the parade. And that that'll be

the only day that we'll be
starting the shuttles at eight

o'clock in the morning. Other
than that, we're always starting

at 1 PM. MELISSA: And that's on the
Saturdays in December, and we

want to make sure folks are
paying attention also. Christmas

and New Years this year fall on
Saturdays, or Christmas Eve,

excuse me. The holiday,
let's just say. X: Christmas and New

Year's Day is on Saturday, I'm
sorry, Sunday. And so New

Year's Eve is that Saturday and
then Christmas Eve is a

Saturday. And so normally
Saturdays is our very busiest

day for shuttling, and that's
our busiest times in downtown

St Augustine, and then
Saturday night in St

Augustine, with parking and
stuff. But the City of St

Augustine Beach, they normally
have and whatnot, and

festivities and so, there
does seem to be, they do

pull away some of the crowd
that's normally downtown. So

that's why we're not running it
on New Year's Eve and on

Christmas Eve. There is a little
bit of, over these past half a

dozen years, that we we've
noticed that there's a little

bit of a dip in the crowd that
comes downtown on those.

MELISSA: They're all home opening
Christmas presents or getting

ready to have dinner or going
to church, but right not

necessarily riding the
shuttle. X: And one thing I'd

forgot to mention when I was
mentioning the pickup spots

where people can drive to... We're,
we're shuttling them from those

parking lots to our Visitor

Information Center. And

so that's, that's that's where
normally, a great place to park

is our Visitor Information
Center Parking Garage.

But what happens is we get so
many people coming into

downtown St Augustine that
all the parking fills up,

including our downtown parking
garage at the Visitor

Information Center. And so then
the biggest complaint we've

always been receiving is
there's no place to park. So

this provides a place to
park and it's free. But, by the

the St Johns County's
Tourist Development Council, they they provide
some funding to the City. And so

it's a combination effort with

the St Johns County and the

City of St

Augustine, to where we're able

to provide this service for

free. MELISSA: And we've got a, let me

just real quick. If you're 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. He is our

Mobility Manager. We're talking

about shuttles for the Nights

of Lights season, it only runs

in the month of December,

although Nights of Lights does

run through the end of January.

We're talking about the funding

and the drop off spot at the
VIC Visitor Information Center.

The parking garage you were
mentioning fills up, so the

first thing is, if it if you
think it might be full, just

park outside. Don't come
downtown, don't try to get in

there, just park at one of those.

But you have this really cool

counter, digital counter display
on West Castillo. X: Yes we do.

And good and bad on that.

The the good is it it works

great, but the bad is we,
there's a part that's missing,

and it's, we've had that problem
for the past two weeks.

And we're trying very hard to
get this thing working.

Before this Thanksgiving
weekend. And it's, so it,

that's a kind of an irritant to
me right now. MELISSA: But keep an eye on

it. And you can also, Denise
came by my office the other day

and we actually turned it on on
the website. So, if you go to

CityStAug.com and you go
find the parking page for the

downtown parking garage, the
counter is on the website.

As well and you can
get that on your phone before

you even get into town. X: That's
right. MELISSA: To know that we're at

capacity. X: And so that's, you
know, and that's a good source

of information before you even
leave your house. You

can glance it up, look at it,
and say, oh well, the parking

garage is full. Best place to go
park is the is the, I call it

satellite parking. And then the satellite

parking too is it makes it so
easy. Before you drive through

the downtown congestion and
people get irritable with that.

I do get it where people
like to drive down and see the

lights, but it's, there's a lot
more stop than there is go,

because there's, everybody's
doing that. And so if if you get

irritable with congested
traffic, this is a way to avoid

it. You can go park in the outside satellite parking lots.

The bus driver will drive you down. It's very. MELISSA: And tell me

about the buses. They're nice buses. X: Oh yeah they're very

nice. Very clean, new, and so it's, and they're spacious.

Now, they are, you know, you

got your regular bus, where

you're fitting folks in there.

But they are spacious.

MELISSA: They're not school buses. X: No.

MELISSA: They're they're charter buses.

X: They're much more comfortable.

MELISSA: They're nice charter buses. X: And

they're very comfortable buses. MELISSA: And if you

do, I will ask if you're

listening and you do go take

the shuttles, any of them.

We should have our QR code

posted. X: In a convenient spot. MELISSA: In a
convenient spot. Snap that

QR code if you would scan it.

Tell us how we're doing on the

shuttle, and tell us how you
heard about the shuttle, because

we're curious to know if people
are just happening by a sign

and they pull in. Do they hear
it on The Break Room? Did you

see it online somewhere? Did
you see it in an advertisement?

X: Well, it helps us to improve
everything in the future, too.

It helps us be more cost
effective in the future with

advertising and stuff like
that. So, we we want to hear

from you. MELISSA: Yeah, absolutely. And
so we're talking shuttles. First three

Saturdays in December. We're
also running it, we said not on

Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve.
But we are running it the week

between Christmas and New Years. X:
Yes. And that that'll be that

Monday through Friday between
Christmas and New Years, same

time 1 PM to 11 PM, and that's
very busy time here in Downtown

St Augustine. It almost seems
like that Monday Tuesday

Wednesday Thursday Friday are
almost like a Saturday,

everyday between Christmas and
New Year, so it's a very busy

time for us. MELISSA: but the lots on
that one. Let's be clear, because

because it's a work week, you
can't park at the Health

Department. 'Cuz people
are working. X: Right. Folks are

working there at the St
Johns County Health Department,

and so they ask us to stay. So,
the only lot that we're

running during that Monday
through Friday will be what we

call our Broudy's Lot, which is
at US-1 and West King Street.

But it's still, it's
very easy, it's approachable

from all directions, so. And
it's also more cost effective

for our City to run. We're able to get the

buses to make a turnaround time

in half the time, so we can

utilize half the number of

buses. So, it's more cost

effective for the City. But, and

that's proving, we just

started utilizing the Broudy's

lot just this past year or two.

And so it's proving to be one

of our our best lots. MELISSA: And

that's that location that

everybody, love it or hate it.

We're going to get that over

time, that will become

potentially that transportation

center, or whatever, it's gonna become that... X: It's got

few years coming, there's a lot of

planning and a lot of work that

has to, so we're talking a few

years out there. But there is a

lot of, there's already been
some approvals towards it, and

even to take it a step farther,
they're talking about a

commuter shuttle, commuter rail
shuttle, like a train track. And so that Broudy's
lot, is it's close to that

intersection. It's close to the
railroad tracks. And so they're

talking about commuter rail
from Jacksonville to St

Augustine on a regular basis.

So.. MELISSA: That's several years down

the line. X: You know, say
five years down the line. There,

there's a lot of work that has
to be done. But it does appear

to be headed in that direction.

MELISSA: And the fact that we're using

it now gets people accustomed
to having that service provided

at that intersection. X: Right.

And it's going to be a mobility

hub, if you will. It'll be
multiple mobility options.

So it'll be a place to come
park that you can get your

taxis, or I call them your
bicycle rickshaws, if you will.

Or just your whole multitude of,
and shuttle buses from

there. And it's
walkable. That's one

thing about the Broudy's Lot
that's very nice is it's

almost exactly one
mile from the Broudy's Lot to the

Bayfront, to the Bridge

of Lions. MELISSA: Which is a nice walk. X: And

so and then another
nice factor is over the next

few years is the we're going to
reconstruct King St.

And so there's there's kind of
a push kind of a unique little

cliche, if you will, is you
want to make, we want to make

that one mile of King Street
the most beautiful mile in the

state of Florida. MELISSA: Excellent.

X: And so that's kind of a little

cliché. But so
we'll be. But there's a whole

lot of work to be done. There
is. And we do have to

compromise that with, still need
to access to the businesses and

stuff. Whenever you have
construction there's, it's

tough. There there's no easy
way around it. And I think next

year we're going to start
construction on the bridge over

the San Sebastian River. So,
it's coming in pieces. There's

also a a short segment that
we're doing some drainage

improvements on the very East
end of King Street. And that's

going to kick in up next year
also. So, that'll be, so we're

trying to do this in segments
and it's tough. Construction's

tough, as I'm sure the
businesses are aware. And

they've had to live through it and we hear their

complaints. And so, but

but it is a

compromise. And so, it's

a unified effort. Everybody has

to give a little bit. MELISSA: Yep. Lots

of lots of fun things coming.

X: But but the shuttling our

shuttling program has really

taken off. The COVID the past

couple years kind of made us

take a step back. But we do

appear to be very quickly

getting back to where we left

off. In 2019, we were, we

made a huge stride forward with

the number of passengers. And

and so we we appear to be, you

know I'm still trying to gather

the numbers from this past

weekend. MELISSA: Sure. X: But it appears to

be that we're we're getting
back to normal. We're on track.

MELISSA: Well, hop on that shuttle for
Thanksgiving weekend. Three

Saturdays in December. Also
that last week in December. And

X, when we have some more
updating on mobility, we'll have you

back. X: Always great to be here.

MELISSA: Thanks for coming in. 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 for us
on Spotify, Apple Podcast, and

more. You can find a complete
listing of our podcasting

platforms at CityStAugRadio.com. Remember that in

order to stay connected, you

need to be connected to the

city. Follow us on any of our

social media platforms. You'll

find us on Facebook, Twitter,

and Instagram @CityStAug. Thank again for tuning in.

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.