

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 everyday. 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: Hello and thanks for tuning in. You're listening to The

Break room. I'm Melissa Wissel, Communications Director for the

City of St. Augustine. There's been a lot of conversation

among the City Commission and
downtown residents concerned

about the future construction
and redesign of the Sebastian

River Bridge. That's the small
bridge at the end of King

Street where it meets up with
US -1. The main fire station

is located near there on Malaga
Street and everybody's got

questions about what the new
traffic pattern is going to

look like. It's a ways off, but
before it becomes a reality,

I've invited the City's Public
Works Director Ruben Franklin

to The Break Room to continue
the conversation. REUBEN: Well, thank

you for having me. It's a hot

topic. It's a bit of, as I

said, it's a ways away, but it's
never too early to start

talking about some of these
things. So, commission brought

it up at a recent meeting. Give
us the the low down. Those

who don't know what we're
talking about. REUBEN: Yeah and we'll

give into more detail over what
I'll call the King Street

Transfer Agreement, which the
City entered into at the state.

There's multiple components of
it and the bridge replacement

is one of the parts of that
transfer agreement So, the

bridge is going to get
replaced. It's at the end of

its useful life, which is a good thing, because at the end of the

day, we're going to have a brand-new bridge, strong

infrastructure, that's great.

But getting there is always

going to be an issue because that means it impacts people's

daily lives. MELISSA: This is the bridge just so we're all on the same

part of the street. So, it's up near US -1. You come over that

bridge to get into downtown. It puts you in there near Flagler

College, the winery, the police station, Carmelo's. It's that

little entry. The bridge, and it floods. REUBEN: Yes. If you turn right

on the King Street heading towards the plaza, the bridge

that you cross is the bridge

we're discussing. Got it. Um

it's scheduled to for

construction summer 2024.

But you know, a lot

of stuff has to take place

between then, between now and

then, which is finishing the

design. The

engineered plans, putting it out

the bid, and getting a

contractor on board. And all

that's done by the State and

our Commission asked the State to

come give a presentation, to

give the highlights of the

project which is a bridge

bridge replacement. But then

also discuss the detour that's

going to be necessary in order

to construct the project

and accomplish the project.

And so that detour is the

bridge will be closed down,

there will be no vehicular

traffic over the the bridge.

There's not enough room.

It's a narrow part of the

river. We've got building

structures on both sides.

They can't build a temporary

crossing or bridge. If people

remember the Bridge of Lions,

you know, we had a temporary

bridge. There's not

enough room here to do that.

So, they're going to close the

bridge down, and Malaga Street

is going to become the ingress
egress. If you're using King

Street, Malaga Street is now
going to be how you enter and

exit downtown, just like you
would King Street. The

difference is we're going to
put a temporary traffic signal,

so it will be signalized.

You'll have a red green light at

Malaga and US -1. It's going to
allow all the turning movements

that you currently have, so you
know, if you're heading

Northbound on US -1 instead of
turning right on King Street,

you'll go up to Malaga and turn
right. If you're heading

westbound out of town on King
Street, you'll turn right on

Malaga Street. And if you want

to go south on US -1, you'll

get to the light and and make a

left and and head south on US- 1. So it's not ideal, but it's

what's necessary in order to

replace the bridge. MELISSA: So they'll,

I'm envisioning lots of traffic

queues. You know waiting. So I

would say something for our

residents to think about, and

folks that kind of, we've talked

about this in the past. Folks

who use King and downtown as

sort of a cut through. Just

start making your travel

patterns around. Go around to 312 if you're trying to get to

the island, per se. REUBEN: Yeah I mean,

so what always happens is when

you first have a detour people,

it takes an adjustment period.

No matter how much messaging
we're going to do. There's

going to be somebody the day of
that wasn't aware, and so it's

going to take time to get used
to it. And we're also being

very, want to be very cognizant
and respectful of the impacts

to the neighborhood that's
adjacent to the detour which

would be Flagler Model Land.
So, we're going to keep an eye

on traffic and see if there's
people cutting through. There's

some things that we
could work with the

neighborhood to do to prevent
cut-through traffic. MELISSA: That was

going to be my next.... Does that impact the

neighborhood? How much we
can do until we see it actually

start happening? REUBEN: Right. But we
can restrict turning movements,

you know, right turnout only to
prevent people that are coming

in the town from making lefts
and turning up the streets.

But we're not going to do that
per se from the beginning.

We're going to
implement it and then observe.

We're talking about a 12 to 14
month period that this detour

would be in place. MELISSA: So it's
it's not short term. It's short

term in the lifetime of our
City. So it will be some growing pains.

REUBEN: Yes, there's always growing
pains, but that's just one part

of the King Street Agreement.

There's actually what people

are probably seeing happen on
the base of the Bridge is

another part of that King
Street Agreement and that's a

drainage project that's about
to start construction on March

27th. And so if you're driving
across the Bridge, you might

see a lot of activity going on. MELISSA:
Bridge of Lions. Bridge of

Lions, other end of King
Street. Now, we're downtown by

the plaza. REUBEN: So, you'll see a lot
of activity going on, and

that's the contractor starting
to prep the site. It's in

Gibbs Park which is on the
south side of the Bridge on

the mainland side and by the
Ripley's Mini Golf and the City

Marina. And so they're getting
ready to install a five-foot

diameter drainage pipe from
basically it's going to

daylight out into the river by
the Marina, and they're going to

install it across Gibbs Park,
across the Avenida Menendez

intersection, and get down King
Street to about Charlotte

Street is the limits. MELISSA: So I'm
going to ask that, so is this

something that dig underground
like with a, let's call it a

drill? Or do they, literally will

they literally be cutting a gap? REUBEN: No

they're literally
cutting a gap in the road. Yeah,

they're going to use it, most
likely a trench box. And they're

going to dig a big hole, lay the
pipe, cover it back up, and keep

moving. So it's, you're going to
see it start at the river, and

it's going to slowly be moving
its way towards Avenida

Menendez intersection, King
intersection. And then so that's

going to be about three to
months where they're in the

Gibbs Park area working, but
then they're going to have to

come out into the roadway. And
then that's when we're going to

have detours for this project
that are going to happen in

about three to four months. MELISSA: So
let's talk, let's talk months,

naming the months Because we we
do our interviews and sometimes

we're able to rebroadcast our
conversation today. So, we're

talking, we're right now the end
of March. So if this is

going to get started, let's call
it the end of March. You've got

three months you said of this
staging. Yes. So April, May,

Juneish. REUBEN: So we're March 2023. I would

expect by July 2023 that
they're going to be starting to

move out into the roadway.
It's a complicated

project. Five foot diameter

pipe and there's a lot of

traffic that moves through the

intersection. So when they get

to that point, they're going to

have to start diverting

traffic. They're supposed to

have the intersection open on

Friday through Sunday, but your

Monday through Thursday there's

detouring that's going to occur,

which is basically if you're

heading down to cross the

Bridge, you're going to turn

left onto Cordova Street and

head north to Orange Street and

to the Bayfront. And that's

going to be about a two month

process of when you, if you're

traveling in that corridor. And

I know that's a lot to take in,

but we're going to work with

communications and DOT to make

sure that all of our residents

and businesses are well aware

of the detour and how long it's

going to be in place. MELISSA: So when

we start to really see that,

peeking or seeping into traffic,

we're talking summer. So for

those of you who go to CPS,

those of you that are using

that traveling, keep that

in mind. This would be another

example of if you can go around

to 312 to get where you need to

go. Start thinking about that.

But then when we get into

summer, that will be that major

traffic rerouting, like you

said. So start paying close
attention. We'll get that

signage out there. And we're
hoping to have it done by? We

don't want to commit? REUBEN: Nights of
Lights. MELISSA: Nights of Lights. Well,

we're going to keep our fingers
crossed. Let's not forget

archaeology has to come in
because we're digging in, so you

never know what they're
going to find. So bear with

us. REUBEN: Patience. And at the end of
the day, flooding is a major

issue for the City, and this is
just one of many projects

that's focused on alleviating
flooding in the downtown area.

So keep that in the back of
your mind when you're

frustrated with the detour.

MELISSA: Right. So and also then would

be that queuing along the
Bayfront. If you end up getting

diverted around to Avenida
Menendez, the only way across

the Bridge of Lions to the
island is going to be that

left-hand turn. Is that
correct? Probably? REUBEN: Yes.

MELISSA: So, really pay close attention.

Ruben, you did mention the

workshops. I don't know as of
this, our recording date, we have

a date, but keep an ear out for
when those, that open houses is.

Because we will have signage,
posters, drawings, diagrams,

all of that good stuff. If
you're just now tuning in,

you're listening to The Break
Room. We've been talking for

quite a while. I've got
Ruben Franklin with me. He is

our Public Works Director.

We're talking about King

Street. Before we wrap up,
we've got a few minutes. Let's

talk about the overall vision
of King Street. So, you've got

this new bridge at one end.

You've got a new drainage at

the other end. What happens in
the middle? REUBEN: Well, great

question. So, in the
beginning of the programs, the

City has agreed to the transfer

of ownership to, from the State to

the City. So, at the end of the day, the King Street's going to

become a city-owned road. And there was a bunch of

different parts to it. So, what you're seeing right now is

I'm going to call part one, the drainage improvements at the

base of the Bridge of Lions.

So, the drainage improvements

are not the intersection improvements. That's going

first. That's DOT. DOT is going to construct that. Then,

second is going to be the bridge replacement. That's also

DOT, okay? In the same time, they're doing that, the City

starting the design of King
Street Cathedral, the little
section of Cordova Street, and
the remainder of King Street

between Cordova and Malaga
Street. So, we're going to

design that and construct that
to our own standards. We're

going to be starting a public
engagement component to that.

We have the design engineer and
the landscape architect, the

design team's complete. So,
you're going to be seeing in

the next couple months some
dates for workshops. There's

a lot of things we want to
cover. A couple of things,

Cathedral is going to remain
open to traffic. In the

past, there's been a lot of
discussion of closing it down

to pedestrian traffic only.

This project, we're going to

keep Cathedral open, but we are
going to be engaging the public

on, you know, we're going to
propose different traffic

pattern ideas, a shuttle lane,
and at the end of the day,

parking and at the end of the
day, we're going to get public

feedback on what that design
looks like before we go and

actually construct it. So,
we've got time. The road

doesn't have to be fully
constructed until 2033. So, 10 years from
now. MELISSA: So, I don't know if that's

a good thing or a bad thing.

REUBEN: Yeah. So the beginning of what

you're going to see with the

City is a lot of public

engagement. We're going to show

you different alternatives and

concepts and try to get the

community behind the redesign.

MELISSA: And we'll have an email address

set up at some point so. REUBEN: Yeah,

we'll have a website of

projects. And I plan to go to

the neighborhoods and talk to

the neighborhoods. You know,

as we're developing the

concepts and get feedback.

So, it's an exciting project.

It's a, it's going to be a lot

of work, but what you're seeing

happen right now is part of the

agreement, but it's not, we're
not reconstructing all of King

Street right now. It's
these two isolated projects.

MELISSA: And the most important critical
arteries of our town. Well

Ruben, thank you. I think it's
been a great conversation.

You've explained a lot. We're
going to make sure that folks

are listening. This is
available on the website. If

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the beginning. We want to keep

you informed about what's

happening in and around the

City and most importantly that

you hear it here from the

people doing the work and

making it happen every day.

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Until next time. Thanks for

tuning in. ANNOUNCER: You've been

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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.