

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: Thanks for tuning in to The Break Room. I'm Melissa Wissel,

Communications Director for the City of St Augustine. If you

live or work near the city's

downtown Historic Core, you

are keenly aware of traffic,
congestion, and finding a way

to get around and finding
places to park. But we do have

the Parking Garage and now we
have a new Star Circulator Bus.

I've invited X Pellicer to join
me this week to talk about

these initiatives. X, you were
here exactly a year ago this

week. X: Yeah. MELISSA: And we were
talking, I do want to ask you

real quick. Last year, we were
talking about the express lane

at the Parking Garage. It was a
pilot. We were going to try it

out Did we like it? X: most
people liked it. There

there's some kinks that we
gotta work out but we we're

going to try to get that back
full time. But there are

some hard things that we do
need to get figured out and

we're in the process of trying
to get that figured out. It's

just taking a lot of time to
work that out. But for the most

part, for the, by far most part,
people loved it. MELISSA: Good. And it

served its purpose. X: It's
purpose. We do want to get it

back in there, but there are
some issues and and we'll

get there eventually. MELISSA: It may be
next year. We may be back here

again next year. X: Well hopefully
it won't be that long. MELISSA: Let's hope. X: But so.

But we're we're we're working
in that direction. MELISSA: Okay. But

the big news right now, this
time this year. And I will say

we were talking last year about
the hopes of a circulator. The

hopes of this downtown bus and
here we are. It's a reality.

It's happening. People are
writing it. Give it, give us the

the low down. Tell us about it.

X: Finally got there. We were

trying to get this thing
started about a half a year

ago. But there were some
issues with right away permits

and stuff like that with the
DOT. But we eventually got that

worked out. And so finally we

started it and and things

seemed to be working very well.

A lot of ridership on it.

So the buses are not just
riding around empty. MELISSA: Excellent.

But it it's a it's a very
frequent service. So that's one

big complaint that I've heard
over the past many years is

that say, for instance, the Sunshine
Bus is a very good public

service that the St Johns
County provides, but the one big

complaint that they hear from
that a lot of times is that the

buses only come like once an
hour, or it might even be an

hour and a half, or maybe almost
two hours. And so this service,

what's really good about this
service, is it's every 15

minutes. And it and we do it
from 10 o'clock in the morning

till 10 o'clock in the evening
and it's everyday. And now there

will be some days like the
Fourth of July and Light Up

Night and sometimes we have
parades downtown and so the

streets are closed, so we'll
have to temporarily suspend it

for for that short period of
time. But but basically

for the most part, this is
everyday from 10 AM to 10 PM.

And and every 15 minutes a bus
is coming. And they're nice,

beautiful, new buses, air
conditioned. It starts at

the downtown Parking Garage,

which is adjacent to our

Visitor Information Center. So

that's a huge source of the

folks that are wanting to ride

it. And so, they can pick up on

it as they come walking out of

the Parking Garage and hop on

the bus. There's, we call it the

clock circle, but it's a red

brick huge cul-de-sac that's

right between the Visitor

Information Center and the

Parking Garage. And so that's

our main hub. MELISSA: Which is cool,

because I don't think most

people find that we use that

very much. I mean, I know we do

use it, but it's great that

we're going to actually start

to see that traffic coming
through there. X: It's being, it's

very heavily utilized now.

So we we've got a

least two buses operating out
of it and every every 15

minutes we have two buses going
in and out of it. So, it's,

this is kind of our initial
step, if you will with this

public transportation. And
it is funded by the DOT. I

want to say thank you very much
to the DOT because they are the,

by far, bulk of the funding of
this operations. And so

it and it covers the
downtown historical core area.

And so our plans are to branch
out from this, but you have

to walk before you run. And so
right now, it initiates at

the Visitor Information Center.

It comes out on the Orange

Street. It drives along the
Fort and the Bayfront and so

our our first stop is right in
front of the River and Fort

business, which is also where
the crosswalk is to get over to

the Fort and so that's our stop
number one. Our stop number two

is on Cathedral Place, and it's
about halfway between St

George Street and Cordova, and
then it comes back to the hub.

And so every 15 minutes we're
hitting these three spots. MELISSA: I

was downtown having lunch and

looking, I was facing the street

and through the windows, and the

the day that it launched the

bus drove by three times. I was

like oh my gosh, there's the

bus. And it's a pretty

bus, too. The wrap out looks great. X: Brand spanking

new and we call it our star. And

star is kind of an acronym for Augustine Rider. A

little catchy phrase that we

kind of, it was a team effort,

if you will, of trying to come up

with, we wanted something that

would kind of strike a cord

with folks out there. And this

isn't just for the tourists. So

so this is really, we we're

trying to get this tailored for

the residents and the business
owners and the workers that

work downtown, the waiters, the
waitresses, the bus boys, the bus

girls, the everybody downtown.

And so, just just to throw an

idea out there for the folks, is
they always say they can't find

parking and stuff like that now.

So the locals can go buy, for

\$34. You can buy a monthly pass
in the parking garage. You can

go in and out of the parking
garage just as much as you want

and then you can hop on the
free shuttle. That's another

thing. I didn't get that out
there. Is this shut, it's not a

shuttle. We like to call it our
star circulator. And so the Star

Circulator is free. And
so they can hop on that and
it'll drive you around to these
two stops that I mentioned and

it'll get you fairly close to
where they're, where they're
working, the businesses. And so
it it gives the employees a

place to go park. Because
that that's a big demand that
we hear about. So, basically for
a dollar a day. The

employees can park in the
parking garage. Go go to work

and then come back. So
that's that's something that we
hope we're trying to get the
word out. MELISSA: And don't forget

residents can get the Park Now

Card. So residents can do the park now card,

which is, if you don't come
downtown where you would need

it, you know that daily discount,
like you just said a dollar a

day. I can get in for \$3
with the Park Now card as a

St Johns County resident.

And even if I come down

once or twice a month, still
cheaper. X: Oh yes.

Absolutely. MELISSA: And get on the Star
Circulator. X: That that's another

avenue. So you know, a lot
of times the the locals, say

we'll make it good
for us, and hard for the

tourists. Right. You know and
so well, so the tourists are

only here for a few days. So,
they'll park in the parking

garage for \$15. The
locals can buy, you kind of have

two alternatives, like we
explained that the park now

card, which is, works out to
about a dollar a day, or the

park now card which is \$3 for
every occurrence that you

should. So, there there's
some big incentives there for

the locals. MELISSA: And the you're
mentioning the DOT funding.

We've got that, this initial
piece of it as a five year

contract, but we're looking, you
started to mention, the

expansion of this. Talk about
that, because when we posted

this on social, we explained,

Jessica Clark did an interview

to clarify some things, as well,

with us. And we want folks to

know we want to expand. The

idea is this is a mobility

solution long term. Talk a

little bit about some of those

other places, the Broudy and

the beach maybe. People

people feel like it's only all

about the downtown and it's not

ultimately. X: Well, this is our

first step. And then we hope to

branch out from this. And you

had mentioned Broudy's, so so

there's a lot of work in the

direction of trying to develop

the area we call it the

Broudy's lot, but it's at the
intersection of US-1 at King
Street. And the Broudy's business

is at that location and he owns
all that property. And so there,

he's worked out an agreement
with the City of St

Augustine, and so there's
going to be a lot of
development coming there and
and a parking garage.

Probably about maybe 800 cars.
Something in that ballpark.

There's a lot of things that
still need to get worked out in
that, but it does appear
to have out of traction and it

does appear to be coming. MELISSA: And
there and it's a vision, so...

X: And so it's
a year two or three down the

line. But it's it it appears to
be coming. MELISSA: It'll be here before

we know it though. X: And so we
hope to get another Star

Shuttle branching out along the
West King Street direction.

So there's a lot of
things that we gotta get worked

out on that. But that's our
plan is to branch out this

initial core and then branch
out of a branch that goes out

West King Street, also a branch
goes out towards Anastasia

Boulevard across the Bridge
of Lions. There's some

challenges when the bridge
closes and stuff like that

which we we know. And but that's
our intent is to branch this

out. And then also get a branch
going up north either San Marco

Avenue or US-1. So this is
a first step. It it will be

branching out. It might take a
few years, but we're headed in

that direction. MELISSA: That's a great vision.

Well, if you're just now tuning

in, you're listening to The
Break Room. I've got X Pellicer here

with us this week. We're
talking about the new Star

Circulator. We're going to
look forward to seeing an

update on the express lane at
the Parking Garage, one of

These days. Also, real quick

before we wrap up, new Parking

Spot Finder. It's web, the web

address is CityStAug.com/ParkingSpotFinder and it does just that.

Give us a quick, what's the

parking spot finder for? X: So,

well, that's a very new program,

and so it's, we're working out

some kinks in it also. But it's,

it gives the general public

a way where they can pull this

up and it gives availability of

parking downtown. Is it

likely? Is it highly unlikely,

or is it scarce? You know, is

it very unlikely? And when they

say very unlikely, it's

basically there's there's no

parking downtown. But we

have it identified for each

block, for each street, for
each, and so it's very broken

out into.. MELISSA: It's exactly where the
parking is. X: Yeah. Well, it's

not each exact spot. But
it is each street's lot. MELISSA: Area

of parking. X: And so and it says
for this one run of say ten

parking spots, you know, it'll
give you the ideas to yes,

there's parking
available there, or no

there's 50/50,
and then there's, and then

there's the very unlikely thing
where basically no. MELISSA: This is if

folks drive by the Parking
Garage and some some spots

nearby, it's got the counter, but
that's just for the Parking

Garage. This actually is a map.

So, if you go to CityStAug.com/ParkingSpotFinder is going to pull up a

web page and it's got a map of
the downtown with green and red

and color coding of the
likelihood of a place to park.

X: And you can zoom in to the area
that you're desiring to park,

and you can find out very
precisely whether there's
parking or not available.

MELISSA: Excellent. X: And it's real

time. MELISSA: And downtown too, we've
got the ParkStAug app

where I pay online, pay on my
phone, or I can put the money in

the meter and use the phone.

So, you guys are really getting

it together there with

technology and mobility and

mobile apps and... We're really

trying to answer the call of..

what about the parking?! X: Well,

I'll put in... MELISSA: You're doing a lot

of hard work, X, doing a great

job. X: Well, I'll put in a plug

for Reuben Franklin. He

is really pushing hard to bring

in this modern technology to

the downtown area. You know,

one little clicky phrase that gets thrown out there a

lot of times is we're the

Nation's Oldest City.

And we're trying to get it to

say we're the Nation's Oldest

City with the most modern

technology. MELISSA: Excellent.

I like that. X: So for so for

mobility and for parking and

those type of things. And
for the locals out there, you

know, we're we're trying to get
the satellite parking, we call

it, where the the folks can park
out on the perimeter of town

and then we'll either shuttle
them in or or using our Star

circulators, you know, bring them
in through public

transportation. So, that's how
we're trying to expand the

parking and make it year for
the locals and for the tours.

MELISSA: And better yet that it can be
free. X: And with the DOT

is really helping us out, and
and so with the help of the DOT

we are able to make it for
free. MELISSA: Great. Well I think we've

run out of our time. It's
a lot of good updates. X: Well, you

know, it's always cool to be in
here with you, Melissa. You know,

what'd you say, it was a year
since I was in here last? Well

you don't have to wait a whole
year. MELISSA: I won't. You've got a lot

going on, so we'll make sure to
have you back, and we appreciate

all your hard work. X: Thank you
Melissa. MELISSA: If you missed part of

this podcast and want to go
back and listen from the

beginning. You can now find us
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find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @CityStAug. Thanks 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.