

[Narrator] You've tuned in to another edition of The Breakroom, a

weekly conversation about how the city of Saint Augustine

works from those who do the work everyday. Hosted by the

City of Saint Augustine's communications director Melissa

Wissel. The Breakroom 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 Breakroom. I'm Melissa Wissel,

communications director in studio. We have X Pellicer here.

He is our mobility manager. X, I can't believe it's been a month

since you've been here last and
we are already wrapping up

December [X] yeah I'm I'm always
around ask ask me to come in

here [Melissa & X] anytime [Melissa] well so parking
shuttles nights of lights it

seems literally like just the
other day we were doing light

up night and we've been running
the shuttles through the month

of December on Saturdays we've
got one more to go and the week

between Christmas and New Years
give us the update what how did

it go how did how are People
taking the shuttle. [X] Yeah.

[Melissa] That's my question. [X] We're we're
we're getting back to where we

were back in 2019 before COVID.

[Melissa] Good. [X] So we're not quite there

yet but we're we're pretty
close. Um so across the board

for all these Saturdays that
we've been running in

Thanksgiving and stuff we're
you know we're bouncing around

you know 1, 500 to 2, 500
people riding the shuttle which

is really pretty good. [Melissa] That's a
good number. [X] And but we were

almost across the board over
two thousand Every time for

back in year 20 19. [Melissa] Right. [X] So
way back in 20 this started

back in 2016 actually. And then
2017 2018 we were every year we

were picking up. [Melissa] Right. [X] And
then between 2018 to 2019 we

just about shut up 50 to 100%.

[Melissa] Wow. [X] With ridership which is

huge. [Melissa] Huge. [X] And then and then

twenty 20 COVID hit. We shut

down. We didn't do any

shuttling. And then twenty

twentyone we started again and

people really weren't

coming out yet. [Melissa] Yeah. [X] It and so. [Melissa] That sitting

in a closed space on a bus, people are still a little. [X] And and

it it really exactly and so and

then in year twenty twenty-two,

we were about the same as what

we were back in twenty 18.

[Melissa] Okay. [X] And so so far here in

twenty twenty-three, we're not

like I said, back at the jump

between 2018 to 2019 was just

huge. [Melissa] Yeah. [X] And so, we're not

quite there yet but for all

practical purposes, we're about

the same. [Melissa] So, with out talking
specifically about spring

shuttles I will say we do the
we do affect pretty much the

same program we have North City
up at the health department

[X] yeah so we've got 301 San Marco
Avenue which is up on the north

end of San Marco just before
San Marco and US one merge

together and then about a half
a mile farther north from that

is the Saint Johns County
Health Department and so the

Saint Johns County helps us
with with providing their

parking lot and so we we've got
those two parking lots up on

the North in the town and then
our most popular lot is turning

out to be the Broudy's lot
which is at US one in King

Street and this past weekend we
we filled up. [Melissa] Yeah. That's great. [X] If you can

believe that. So we were right
on the verge of turning people

away but but actually people
were coming back at that time

so we were able to get them in
but that's a huge lot. It holds

about 400 cars. [Melissa] And what I'm
going to put you on the spot.

You you just said I sometimes
do that. Our parking garage

filling up? Have we seen that
this season? [X] Yeah. Well, our

parking our parking garage is
the best place to go park.

[Melissa] Sure. [X] But because we've got so many people coming in to our

Nights of Lights has become so worldwide popular that the

parking garage does fill up and so and it fills up just about

every Friday and every Saturday and that those are kind of our

two biggest days and nights and and it'll fill up sometime

around five o'clock in the evening and then we have to

close it for about an hour and then we'll reopen it and then

it'll close again. [Melissa] Right. [X] Uh for about another hour So, so

that's that's the problem but but that is the best place to

go park. [Melissa] Well, if you saw one

of the things but let me let me

get that out. The when you're
coming into go park at the

parking garage. There are
signs, digital signs that

actually tell you how many.

[X] Yup. [Melissa] Spots are remaining. So,

that's a little bit of a heads
up if folks don't know that and

then I do want to let folks
know it's something that is

online. We haven't really
promoted it because we wanted

to iron out the kinks but we do
have what's called a parking

spot finder. [X] Right. [Melissa] And it is
an interactive parking spot

map. Uh there's a legend on it.
If you go to City Saint Auck.

com forward slash parking spot
finder. [X] Mm hmm. [Melissa] It's really

creative. Parking spot finder
and it'll show you doesn't get

you right down into the
specific spots but it will show

you availability, show you
where there's parking. So

that's another tool. [X] And and so it's
another tool but during nights

of lights especially when you
get into the evening. [Melissa] Forget

it. [X] Yeah forget it. All the
parking downtown is full [Melissa] Right.

[X] And so you're really better off
you know going to the parking

garage but but even you know I
said that that's our best place

really for free is the Brodie's
lot. [Melissa] Right on Saturday. [X] I I

like to point people to the
Brodies lot as far as our three

I call it satellite. [Melissa] Right. [X] Uh
parking because we're kind of

out on the outskirts and and
then we we shuttle around. So

it's free parking. It's free
shuttle and and it drops you

off right at the downtown
parking garage. [Melissa] And it's a it's

a great training exercise for
when we get that new parking

garage. [X] And it's it's it's
coming. So it's coming. So

that's now I'm I'm not exactly
sure the dates on that show.

There's a lot of [Melissa] it's a while
yet. [X] But but it's it it's

already turned out to be a very

popular parking spot for our

shuttle. [Melissa] Right. [X] I want to
remind folks too that the

shuttle while it has been
Saturdays in December. We will

be running it the week starting
on the 26th the day after

Christmas through Saturday. [X] And the
times are like from 1 PM to 11

PM and so we'll be running the
Saturday before Christmas

weekend or they're on Christmas
weekend and then Christmas is

on a Monday and so that Tuesday
through Saturday following

Christmas from 1PM to 11 PM it
will only be running from the

Broudy's lot so people we might
put a little sign out there or

something saying that if if you
do happen to drive into the 301

you need to drive over to the
Broudy's but but yeah we want to try

to get the word out that that
we're not using the the two

lots on the north end of town
so that and then and then it'll

end on that Saturday before New
Year's right and so New Year's

is on a Monday typically the
the day before New Year's which

this year it happens to be
Sunday the the day before New

Year's tends to be not quite as
busy so the parking garage ends

up right on the verge of
closing sometimes it does

sometimes it doesn't so so
that's that's we don't run the

shuttle the night before New

Year's and and also people just

don't like to work on New

Year's Eve to be quite right

upfront with you and Christmas

Eve those are two very

unpopular times when people

want to work they they want to

be home [Melissa] yeah [X] and I don't blame

them [Melissa] if you're just now tuning

in you're listening to the

break room this week we're

talking with the city's

mobility manager X Pellicer

we're talking about of course

the shuttles for Nights of

Lights coming to a close here

at the end of the month we do

have a QR code and a survey. I

know that we've put it in news

and notes. If you've taken the shuttle, look for that on our

website. We really want to know how people are finding out

about us. [X] Right and so it it's there. It's a little QR code.

It's it's visible in different spots when you when you pull up

to the lot and when you're loading on the bus and so just

when it's at your convenience.

We we really do appreciate that

information because it it really helps us to plan for the

future and it helps to see any little out there maybe we're

not seeing and you can bring it to our attention. [Melissa] Absolutely.

[X] So we're we're we're getting
there. [Melissa] We also had we started

the star circulator and we cut
back some of the hours but

that's doing very well even for
the daytime hours. Right now

it's running ten to five. It's
going to come back to its full

time 10 AM to 10 PM on January
2nd. Give us an update on how

we're doing with the star
circulator. [X] The star

circulator's doing really good.
Um it started out like a bang.

It really did. We started on
July 11th. That was our very

first day. And so just to give
you some raw numbers for the

month. So we we've got the
month of July, August,

September, October, and
November. And so for July we
had 5600 and some odd. Which
was huge. Uh the first week we

had over two thousand people
right at the second week over

two thousand. But then as we
got into August August 10th I

believe was when the day when
everybody started going back to

schools at least in Saint Johns
County and so there's a

noticeable drop off and it's
not just for the the star

circulator but it's also at our
parking garage and it's it's

all around downtown area even
all the the [Melissa] the quiet time [X] trolleys

and the trains and stuff. [Melissa] The

slow season. [X] Well, they say

slow but. [Melissa] It's all relative.

[X] But but it it is relative but

so I'll just fly through some

numbers real quick. So, the

very first month and that was

July 11th. So, that wasn't even

a full month and and we were

over 5, 500 the second month of

August we were 3, 500 September

was our slowest month and that

was about 1800 then we started

picking back up so then October

2600 and then November we're

about 2700 but keep in mind for

November for light up night

[Melissa] right [X] we started our our hours

were much less [Melissa] right right [X] we

cut at 10 AM and and then we

normally it's from 10 AM to
10PM, but for the nights of

lights the the downtown area just becomes so congested [X] Yeah. We we
like to pride ourselves in

saying that the star circulator
will make a loop every 15

minutes and and and normally we
can do that with no problem but

in the nights of lights. [Melissa] Not a
chance. [X] People people are

gawking at the Nights of
Lights. [Melissa] Right. [X] And they want to

just stop in the middle of the
road. Right. And and that does

tend to irritate our locals.
Yup. They're trying to get from

point A to point B and and then
you got the tourist and the

visitors and then and you say
tourist and visitors but even a

lot of folks who live in
They're coming downtown and

they're gawking at the lights
and they and they want to stop

in a row. They don't they they
they enjoy how slow and how

congested it is because it
gives them a chance to just

enjoy the lights. [Melissa] Take it all
in. [X] But so so those were some

raw numbers. [Melissa] Yes. [X] Um so
obviously our our summertime is

huge and it'll be interesting
to see what happens. We're

we're continuing our time frame
for for the star circulator

from and star by the way is
STAR is an acronym for Saint

Augustine STAR Saint Saint

Augustine Rider [Melissa] Rider yes [X] so so

it's so we normally from 10
to 10 we'll be from 10 to 5PM

until January 1st New Year's
Day and then on January 2nd,

we're going to go back to 10 to
10 so it'll be interesting to

see the the traffic tends to
die off a lot after New Year's

Day and that's actually
something I like to give people
a little tidbit of information
some people love the crowds and

but most people tend to not
like the crowds well if you can

wait until after New Year's
weekend come in and whether

it's the weekdays or or the
week week nights or or weekends

right it's it's it's really
dropped off a lot it's a lot

easier to drive around it's
easier to get into the

restaurants [Melissa] parking [X] and
parking's much easier the

parking garage doesn't really
fill up anymore and so

everything just becomes a lot
easier[Melissa] right [X] and so it's it's a

lot more enjoyable to a lot of
folks who tend to get irritated

with with with congestion and and what not
but some people love that.

[Melissa] Well, the I would agree with
you. I I like to remind people

about that too and you're
right. If you don't, if you

don't have to come down during
the holiday, if you can wait

until after the first of the
year, you make a good point.

It's quieter. It's not as
congested. The lights are still

just as beautiful. [X] Yeah. [Melissa] And
the parking, I will, I wasn't

going to bring it up but I'm
going to remind folks to

register their license plates.

[X] Yup. [Melissa] At Park Saint Aug. com, if

you're Saint Johns County
you'll still get that discount.

The license plate readers are
installed at the parking

garage. [X] Mm hmm. Well, I I tell
you on on that on that thought,

you know, some of the older
generation like myself. Um I

just turned 65 not too long

ago but you know, there there

they tend to shy away from
computers, from smartphones,

and stuff like that and apps
and so so the older generation

says, well, we have to get an
app. Well, no. You don't have

to get an app. You can come in
and you can register your

license plate and you don't
have to use an app and then and

then your license plate is
done. You don't have to have a card

in your pocket. So, when you
pull up to the to the downtown

parking kiosk, you you punch in
your license plate number and

boom, you're automatically
given that discount if you're

if you're a Saint Johns County
resident. [Melissa] And you made a very

good point at the right when
you started to say that you can

come in. So, even though I told
folks you can go to a website

to register your license plate,
X is right. You can come to 50

Bridge Street, walk in, talk to
a human being, hand them your

paperwork, write your check
what you need to do and. And

get your and get your resident
discount. [X] And and and I tell

you it's the older generation
they they like to talk to a

person. They they really do.

[Melissa] Yeah. [X] Uh it's you you got the

the twenty, 30, and 40 year
olds. They're very comfortable

with the apps. [Melissa] Right. [X] And and
getting on the smartphones and

computers in general and and
all modern technology. They

love it. [Melissa] Right. [X] And but but us
older folks I say us because

I'm one of them and that's one
comment I hear all the time is

they say I want to talk to a
person. [Melissa] Right and we can do

that. [X] And so come on down to 50
Bridge Street during our normal

working hours which are 730 to
430. [Melissa] Yep. [X] And you can come in

and you can actually talk to
somebody and we'll be glad to

help you. [Melissa] Great. Well that's a
wrap. We're we're out of time.

So thanks for all the work that

you do to help us with getting

people in and around the city

and we'll look forward to the

spring shuttles when when that

happens next and we'll have

back then [X] merry Christmas and

happy New Years [Melissa] thanks X you

too yes if you missed part of

this broadcast and want to go

back and listen from the

beginning you can get a

complete listing of our

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thanks for tuning in

until next time [Narrator] you've been

listening to the 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.