

**MINUTES OF THE  
JACKSONVILLE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY  
BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2023 AND THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2023**

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority Board of Directors Strategic Planning Retreat was held on Wednesday, September 13, 2023 and Thursday, September 14, 2023 at One Ocean Resort located in Atlantic Beach, Florida 32233.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Debbie Buckland, Arezou Jolly, Ray Driver, Aundra Wallace and Stephanie Burch.

**JTA STAFF PRESENT:** Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr., Cleveland Ferguson, Charles D. Frazier, Greer Gillis, Ivan Rodriguez and Katie Smith.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Richard Milian, General Counsel, JTA staff: Mary Smith, Jessica Shepler, and Ivan Rodriguez.

**WELCOME:** The Retreat was called to order by Chair Buckland at 8:01 a.m. She extended a welcome and a thank you to the Board for taking time to attend the retreat.

Chair Buckland provided the September Safety Message, If you See Something Wrong, Do Something Right.

**REBUILDING CULTURE IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD**

**A. Frontline Workforce and Recruitment at the JTA:** Ms. Smith provided the Board with an overview of JTA's recruitment, attrition and retirement and how it compares locally, in Florida and across the country. She shared the activities the Human Resource (HR) department has been involved in for job fairs, marketing and multi-media, and the incentives being provided such on sign on bonuses and relocation reimbursement.

As for retention, a memorandum of understanding was reached with the ATU (bus operators union) to increase the starting pay. There will also be more employee engagement and appreciation activities.

Ms. Smith introduced the panel that would share more insight on recruitment and retention trends: William Moseley, Bruce Ferguson, and Anna LeBesch. The panelists were all local staffing professionals.

The Board and staff had an in-depth discussion around impact on operations without the full staff of operators, as well as the impact of training and then losing new operators. The Board acknowledged the shortage was not just at the JTA, the school district is having a lot of recruitment and retention issues as well.

**B. Administrative Workforce and Recruitment:** Ms. Smith introduced panelists that attended virtually to discuss recruitment trends and where the JTA fits in. Gregg Moser, Michael Carpenedo, and Daphne LeBlanc are all recruiting professionals for the entire transportation industry. The focus was on administrative employees, i.e. planners, technology, procurement, etc. The panel wrapped up by expressing the agreed point that JTA is on the right track to continue successful recruitment.

**C. Driving Success at the Myrtle Avenue Operations Campus:** Mr. Ferguson shared that the JTA wants to reimagine the Myrtle Avenue Operations Campus (MAOC) as a place of pride, respect, and appreciation. To do this, the campus will have signage that provides storytelling and themed super graphics to refresh and create inspirational experiences for the men and women who are in the background making it possible for the thousands of customers that use the JTA system every day. MAOC is the heartbeat of the JTA and by far the largest employee center, which plays a critical role in the ability to serve customers and deliver safe, accessible and equitable transportation services.

To do this, MAOC was rebranded using the input from the employees that work day-in and day-out at MAOC by holding vision sessions and focus groups. Mr. Ferguson provided the Board with graphics and details on all of the improvements to revitalize MAOC.

Mr. Ferguson also provided details on how the placemaking also focused on employee well-being to educate, energize and excite the daily experience at MAOC.

The Board expressed their appreciation of the updates and revitalization at MAOC.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no requests to speak at the retreat.

**REBUILDING RIDERSHIP IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD: SURFACE TRANSPORTATION SERVICE DELIVERY:** Mr. Frazier began by introducing his operations team.

**A. Riders, ridership & Service Delivery in Fiscal Year 2023 – who are the riders, what are the statistics and what has been their experience:** Mr. Frazier began by sharing the improvements and success for Operations in Fiscal Year 2023. He then provided a look into who

is the rider, the ridership, and the service quality for Fixed Route, Connexion and Connexion Plus, ReadIRide and the Ferry. The presentation concluded with a comparison of ridership to show that ridership is trending up and getting closer to pre-pandemic numbers.

**B. MOVE2027 Mobility Ecosystem and Service Delivery in Fiscal Year 2024:** Mr. Frazier presented the Board with an overview and timeline for service enhancements for Fixed Route and the Ferry in Fiscal Year 2024.

He then provided details on Service Delivery for the consolidation of reservation, dispatch and customer service for Connexion, Connexion Plus, ReadIRide, Express Select and Clay County Services in Fiscal Year 2024. Mr. Frazier explained how the comingling of services and trips will allow for shared vehicles across all services, increasing customer service by meeting the customer's needs. This microtransit service options will be incorporated in the MyJTA App, which will streamline on service available for Jacksonville and surrounding communities. He concluded by providing an overview of the MyJTA App and the timeline to incorporate each service to allow customers to plan, pay and ride with one App.

## **HOW DO WE KEEP OUR EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY SAFE? PEDESTRIAN INTERACTION, SURFACE TRANSPORTATION SAFETY AND SECURITY**

**A. JTA Safety and Security Trends:** Mr. Geraci provided the Board with an overview of the Safety Management System (SMS) – a comprehensive, collaborative approach to managing safety. It brings management and labor together to better control risk, detect and correct safety problems earlier, share and analyze safety data more effectively and measure safety performance more precisely. He highlighted the members of his staff and their roles and responsibilities within the Safety and Security Department. Mr. Geraci also shared the safety initiatives and ongoing safety efforts to promote safety and drive the JTA safety culture.

**He also provided the Board with information related to operator and passenger assault prevention and what JTA is doing in conjunction with Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.** Using data science a heat map was created to show the crime areas, JSO riding services to increase visibility to deter crime and strengthening the Customer Code of Conduct and the trespass warning and exclusion policy to ensure operators and passengers are safe.

Mr. Geraci shared industry comparisons for incidents and collisions, as well as the traffic injury and fatality crisis.

**B. Vision Zero:** Mr. Geraci shared the JTA's plan for Vision Zero – Target "Zero Fatalities

and Serious Injuries” and that the City is working on a plan as well. However, the JTA is not waiting, the Authority feels the responsibility for the entire transportation ecosystem, whether your biking, walking, riding public transportation or in an automobile. As transportation leader we are charged with ensuring safe, equitable mobility for all. That means being proactive and working to develop JTA’s own Vision Zero Action Plan that will align with the federal, state and city plans.

Mr. Ford then introduced Jennifer Homendy, Chair of the National Transportation Safety Board who joined the retreat virtually to share her message around Vision Zero and how public transportation is key in achieving the goal.

**LUNCH/ROUNDTABLE:** Before the Board pause for lunch, Mr. Milian provided the Board with information on the environmental remediation request for Montana Avenue that is on the Board meeting agenda for action by the Board. After discussion, the Board agrees that JTA providing money to offset some of Corner Lot’s cost for remediation is the right thing to do.

Mr. Ferguson also provided the Board with information on the ratification of marketing and communication contracts that will come to the Board under Old Business at the meeting. Also, that under New Business will be a request to authorize the CEO to enter into a grant agreement with FDOT for a State Block Grant.

**FY 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW:** Mr. Ferguson provided the Board with an in-depth look at the status of the Fiscal Year 2023 Goals and Objectives and where the year will end. He provided the final performance metrics that showed the continued path of success. As the MOVE 2027 is the base for the Goals and Objectives, he shared the next steps for Fiscal Year 2024 related to TeamWorks, TransitWorks, MobilityWorks, CustomerWorks, RegionalWorks, and CommunityWorks.

The Board and Staff discussed the Goals and Objectives for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024. The Board was in agreement with plan for Fiscal Year 2024. Mr. Ferguson shared he would present the goals and objectives to the Board at the meeting for their approval, pursuant to the Board’s employment agreement with the CEO.

## **INFLUENCING POLICY CHANGES IN NEFL AND ITS EFFECTS**

A. **Federal:** Lisa Barkovic from Holland and Knight provided information related to the state of the Federal government activities, budget, and possibility of a government shutdown.

a. **Grants Strategy City/JTA/Other Independent Authorities:** Mr. Rodriguez provided the Board with an overview for the Funding Strategy. He shared details about the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act, a \$1.2 trillion spend. He then provided details on where the funds would go and how the discretionary grants would be divided.

In addition, there will be additional bills and opportunities such as the Inflation Reduction Act and the Community Project Funding. Mr. Rodriguez concluded with a look at the discretionary grant opportunities the JTA has for several of its capital projects and Authority-Wide initiatives.

The Board recessed for the day at 4:05 p.m.

Chair Buckland called the retreat back to order at 8:04 a.m. on September 14, 2023.

**CEO REMARKS:** Mr. Ford provided an overview of what would be covered on day two of the retreat, beginning with Ultimate Urban Circulator (U<sup>2</sup>C) Program. He then shared some background and history about the program and where the JTA currently is.

**U2C – THE BAY STREET INNOVATION CORRIDOR:** Mr. Ferguson began the presentation by providing information on how the project came to fruition. He shared the vision from 1976 when the decision was made to build the Jacksonville Downtown People Mover (The Skyway). The vision by City Leadership and members of the City Council at the time was that the Skyway would improve the parking, attract personal trips to downtown at all hours, alleviate traffic congestion, enhance pedestrian safety, among several other positive factors.

He then shared details of the Skyway operations and the mechanical issues due to obsolete parts to maintain all of the original components. With these issues, the JTA Board Chair created a Skyway Advisory Group, made up by 3 JTA Board Members and 15 community/business leaders. Mr. Ferguson also shared the process and the Groups decision to Keep, Modernize and Expand the Skyway. Wherein, the U<sup>2</sup>C Program was created.

Mrs. Gillis stated that the U2C Program is made up of three phases: I. Bay Street Innovation Corridor (BSIC); II. Downtown Service Expansion, Skyway Conversion; and, III Neighborhood Extensions.

A. **Phase I – 60 percent Design:** Mrs. Gillis shared details on Phase I, BSIC, by providing the timeline and details from the beginning of Phase I in January 2022 and reaching 60 percent design in March 2023. She also shared the schedule for the BSIC implementation.

B. **Phase II – Construction:** Mrs. Gillis provided a snapshot of the construction for BSIC.

a. **CPI for Construction:** She shared information on the construction industry related to backlog, labor shortages and rising costs.

i. **BSIC Stations:** Mrs. Gillis shared updates on the design for stations/shelters along BSIC how the corridor will look and operate.

b. **Autonomous Innovation Center at LaVilla:** Mrs. Gillis also shared a look at what would serve as the operations and maintenance (O&M) facility for the U2C Program but would provide and serve many other purposes. Therefore, O&M is not accurate and is appropriately called the Autonomous Innovation Center (AIC) at LaVilla. She provided visuals of the aesthetically pleasing facility located at Jefferson Station, which will include public spaces and gathering spots outside of the building, in addition to:

i. **Command and Control Center:** Support the overall autonomous system with an analytics dashboard, a bluetooth dashboard to provide critical travel time information, flood sensor dashboard to predict and prevent flash flooding and future dangerous events, as well as LiDAR detection to create multiple layers of redundancy to protect vulnerable road users, bicyclist and blind spot detection, as well as Bestmile fleet management dashboard to oversee critical operating points throughout the connected system.

ii. **Training Facility:** The conference room and terrace spaces will also serve as a training facility.

iii. **Shared Charging:** The AIC will have covered parking that can charge 12 vehicles and a maintenance bay that can charge an additional 3 vehicles.

iv. **Cybersecurity:** The BSIC Project will have an independent cybersecurity system from that of the JTA's existing system. The system has been fully assessed by Grayline and Best Practices from the JTA.

v. **Podium Design for Future TOD:** The design will include architectural elements to allow for future TOD around the AIC.

Mrs. Gillis completed the presentation by sharing the request by staff that the Board

approve the additional funding appropriation for BSIC Phase II. The increased \$15.5 million will be used to complete the contractual requirement and scope of work as well as adding the AIC to the project. She provided the Board with a breakdown of the \$15.5 million to show: \$9.4 to AIC, \$2.4 to BSIC Cybersecurity System, \$2.7 to design enhancements, and \$1 million TPO in-kind contribution.

The Board acknowledged the purpose for the additional funding is not just an increase to the project cost, but for additions to the project that are in the best interest of the project and the community with the AIC having public use space. The inquired about where the additional funds are coming from and Mrs. Gillis responded from the local funds.

The staff and Board discussed the next steps related to dedicated lanes, vehicle selection and getting to 90 percent design on BSIC, and that additional costs may arise due to staff's incorporation of DDRB, DIA and the City feedback into the design.

The Board also discussed at length the roadblocks the project is facing and how the Board can assist staff with bringing the BSIC project and the entire U<sup>2</sup>C program to fruition. Also, the Board requested information in the form of an FAQ related to the program and include a comparative for dedicated lanes, funding, and Skyway's useful life as determined by the Federal Transit Administration for projects and inventory acquired with federal dollars.

**MOBILITYWORKS** – due to time, this topic was deferred to a future work session.

There being no further business, the Retreat adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

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Debbie Buckland, Chair

SEAL

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Abel Harding, Secretary