MINUTES OF THE
JACKSONVILLE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
BOARD WORK SESSION
THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2026

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority Board of Directors held a Work Session on Thursday, May 28, 2026.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Aundra Wallace, Patricia Sams, Max Glober, Elaine Brown, Alan Hopkins, Madelen Salter, and Daniel Vallencourt.

JTA STAFF PRESENT: Nathaniel Ford, Cleveland Ferguson, Greer Gillis, Jeffery Smith, Jessica Shepler, Heather Obora and Katie Smith.

OTHERS PRESENT: Richard Milian

I. WELCOME: Chair Wallace called the Work Session to order at 12:03 p.m. and welcomed the Board, staff and public.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT: There were no requests to speak.

III. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Ford thanked the Board for their time to give staff a good frame in terms of the actual deliverable that will be presented at the Board meeting related to the Fiscal Year 2027 budgets.

Mr. Milian stated that he is aware the Board has received a lot of information and provided them with an overview of the process to have the budgets ready for consideration at the meeting following the work session. He stated that technically there are two action items that will come before the Board at the meeting, and those are the Fiscal Year 2027 operating and capital budgets. Those are due to the City of Jacksonville next week. Staff will present you with their recommendation, as well as scenarios for the Board to consider and discuss during the work session. He added that based on feedback and direction from the Board staff will present the budgets at the Board Meeting for final Board approval. The Board will need to determine how the Authority gets to recommended Fiscal Year 2027; will that involve service cuts or modification, fare increases, and administrative reductions. Although the budget needs to be submitted on June 1, staff will still need to meet Title VI requirements and share those with the Board at the August Board Retreat. The retreat will allow additional discussions to determine what adjustments, if any need to be made, based on community feedback and updated tax revenue projections.

Mr. Ford added that the sales tax projections are from $80 million to $86 million. Staff used the mid-range projection of $83 million to prepare their recommendation for Board

Consideration.

Chair Wallace asked Mr. Milian to provide details on Title VI to ensure the Board Members are aware and understand that requirement. Mr. Milian stated that anytime there is a service reduction in public transportation, an agency must meet the federal legislation that requires review to ensure there is no disproportionate impact on a certain group of people. Therefore, the budgets that are submitted to City Council are not final, they can be amended based on Title VI review and findings.

Chair Wallace added that he wants it to be clear that the budgets submitted to City Council on June 1 are not final. The budgets will not and cannot be final until the Title VI review is completed.

a. Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget: Mr. Ford stated that the presentation that you have in front of you represents months of consideration and careful work by the JTA Board financial team operation staff in the planning team. The number of hours that have been invested in his analysis from scenario, modeling, ridership impact assessments equity reviews, as well as the revenue forecasting reflects how serious every one of the JTA takes. It's obligation to the people we serve. He continued recognizing that JTA's customers and the citizens of the Northeast Florida region depend on the JTA as many of them have no other alternative. Every decision that is made about service levels has direct human impact and consequence whether it's for someone to go to work, medical appointments or to school and that is the lens with which staff built these different scenarios for this presentation and the Board's consideration. The financial challenge the Authority is facing is real.

There is a \$17.5 million projected funding gap for Fiscal Year 2027, which is driven in significant part by declining sales tax revenue, a trend that has been moving downward for the past three years, as well as the rising operating costs.

Mr. Ford acknowledged the information that was in front of each of the board members but not only includes the presentation but also shows sales tax revenues inflation, labor cost, and in service areas. In addition to the scenarios, the board was provided a budget recap of the Fiscal Year 2027 operating budget which shows the waterfall of the Authorities expenditures, and that the largest portion of the expense budget is related to salaries, wages, and the personnel that are needed to run the operations, followed then by services. He pointed out that some of the services included in budget line are for contracted services.

Mr. Ford also provided a view of the strategies to close the budget gap, which includes expenditure opportunities related to service delivery changes and expenditure reductions, as well as revenue opportunities that include: forecasting the sales tax revenue at mid- or high range, as well consider a fare modification. He provided details on the budget gap that will be expected depending on which Sales Tax Revenue is used for the operating budget. A snapshot of current service hours and frequency for Fixed Route, ReadiRide, Ferry, Skyway and NAVI.

He then shared details of staff's three scenarios which include service modifications, reduction of service hours and frequency and the cost savings that will be realized with the proposed changes included in each scenario. The recommendations related to service are included in all scenarios. He added that based on Board feedback, staff also created a modified Scenario 2. Mr. Ford stated that staff recognized the financial constraints, but staff took a hard look at scenario 3, as it was more protective of service levels on the streets for the community.

Mr. Ford provided the Board with an overview of current fares and staff's fare modification proposal, highlighting that fares have not been raised since 2019 even though inflation since that time has been at 31 percent. Should a fare modification be approved, new fares will go into effect January 1, 2027. He shared that JTA will still have one of the lowest fares compared to other agencies in the Southeast, even with a fare increase. He then described the service area for JTA is much larger than peers - 3 times the area compared to MARTA, 4.3 percent larger than Tampa and 6 times larger than Miami – attributing to higher operating costs. Density also has an impact on operating costs with a higher cost per passenger.

He then provided an overview of service modification savings, fare modification projected revenues and the delta for scenario 3. The modified scenario 2 was shared with the Board, which is staff's recommendation. The modified scenario does include a $1.7 million delta that will be addressed with further administrative reductions. The identified administrative reductions include professional services, benefits strategy, travel, real estate, and organizational realignment.

Mr. Ford then shared next steps after Board approval of the budget with service modification and potential fare increases and associated timeline. The steps include Title VI Review, Title VI Public Engagement, Board discussion at the annual Board retreat, anticipated service modification implementation, and fare modification. He emphasized that the Board's vote is direction, not a final product. The direction will be fine tuned after the Title VI review requirements are met. He concluded with a summary of the two staff preferred recommendations.

Chair Wallace thanked Mr. Ford and the staff for the work that has been done to prepare the recommendations and opened the floor for his fellow Board members.

Director Vallencourt inquired about the difference in the budget totals of $140.6 million and $1.37 million. Mr. Ford explained the difference is based on whether the tax revenue projection used is conservative, mid-range or high range.

Chair Wallace shared that he prefers to not increase fares at this time, but for the Board to also consider what service will be cut and impact to those that depend on JTA to get from point A to point B. Also, to consider the areas that will be impacted by elimination of service and the effects on those neighborhoods, as well as the Title VI review.

Director Salter shared her thoughts on service modification in scenario 2 related to the Ferry and Skyway in different quarters. Could modifications be considered based on usage, not the full year. Also possibly increasing the cost for the 31-day pass. Another consideration for staff is understanding the travel distance for those using the ReadiRide services that may be eliminated.

Chair Wallace inquired about ridership on the ReadiRide service that may be eliminated. Mr. Ford shared ridership between the five zones vary from an average of four weekly trips to seven weekly trips. He also provided some history on the ReadiRide zones and that the service was created to take the place of a 40-foot bus serving the area, with only a handful of passengers. Mr. Smith responded to Director Salter's inquiry related to the timeframe that average weekly trips on ReadiRide, that is a snapshot of eight months.

Director Hopkins stated that his concern is the elasticity of demand for the service and for the people who really need it. The modified scenario creates a concern that frequency changes significantly, it could be a detriment to people who really need the service. The customers need to be at work at a certain time; thereby eliminating their ability to even use JTA service. He also inquired about the savings that could be realized by bringing professional services in-house or eliminating them completely. Mr. Ford shared what all is included in the professional service bucket. Mr. Smith gave the example that once JTA launches Spare for Connexion and Connexion Plus, there could potentially be savings of $1 million - $1.5 million. Also, ridership on the Ferry and modify service times and is curious what ridership looks like at certain times of the day. He asked that staff consider those that use the ferry for work when determining the service hours. Mr. Smith provided details on the review to determine usage at certain times of the day and on certain days.

Director Vallencourt stated that the Authority has not raised rates in a very long time, even with inflation at 30 – 31 percent. Has the potential ridership loss with an increased fare been considered in the new fare. Mr. Ford confirmed it does. Mr. Ford then shared details of the fare capping policy that was put in place a couple of years ago and explained how that saves customers money with regular use of the system. Ms. Obora provided an example of the cost per trip for customers with the implementation of fare capping.

Director Vallencourt stated that the JTA cannot face another budget shortage again like was seen in Fiscal Year 2026. He urged the Board to come to a conclusion that protects the Authority from another budget shortfall. He feels that the budget should be very conservative at $137.6 million and doesn't feel it is prudent to assume anything else considering the economy is slowing down.

Director Hopkins stated that he appreciated Director Vallencourt's comments. However, the concern is that a budget has to be created and submitted months before it is implemented. The numbers that need to be used to create the budget do not have anything to do with the Board and staff, and they are for a budget that begins in six months. He stated the numbers in six months will look nothing like they do today.

Director Glober stated that he agrees with Director Vallencourt's comments. He understands that there are some implications for changing fares, but the Board and staff are trying to shore up with peer agencies from figures that have been in place for 13 years. The Board will need to address fare increases at some point and if something is not done now, it could potentially be a larger increase in the future.

Director Sams concurred with Directors Glober and Vallencourt in that JTA's peer agencies statewide, as well as country-wide that have exceeded the current rate. She added that at the Board retreat in 2025, the Board received information that a fare increase really needs to be considered – and then staff came back with a fare reduction, that was reasonable. Ridership improved according to the numbers; however, the Board is still here working to come to a solution. She stated that a $.25 increase is acceptable considering the fare index policy that was put in place in 2019. Mr. Ford provided details of the Fare Index Policy and stated that if the modifications would have went into effect according to the policy, current fares would be at $2.30. Mr. Milian then provided information on how the policy was created and the reasoning behind the policy, as it does not require discussions with the Board, stakeholders and such. The increase goes into effect automatically in small increments. He added that once the budget is determined, is the Board willing to keep the policy in place and move forward with automatic increases.

Director Sams stated her concerns are related to service times. Even though ridership is low at certain hours, the customers that using the services early – even the small amount – are using it to get to there destination and work. How does the Authority replace that from public perspective. However, when she looks at rates, it affects everybody that uses the system and that is what the Board's work is about – everyone in every zip code, every neighborhood. She wants to ensure the impacts are fair and equitable to all customers. Director Sams shared an analogy on how personally families meet their household budgets and the cuts that need to be made. However, she would like to see the numbers related to senior fares, college passes and my ride to train. She concluded by stating that she would prefer to see a fare increase/modification before going to a 90-minutes service delivery model.

Ms. Obora stated the common practice related to fares for seniors at peer agencies is half price of the regular fare. Also, the age to be considered as a senior varies between 60 and 65. Mr. Ferguson shared that there is a City Ordinance that governs the ability to charge fares or not. Based on the ordinance, it is not just up to the Board's judgement on those that are 65 and older ride complimentary. Ms. Obora shared that in Fiscal Year 2026 there have been 187,000 trips for the College students and over 25,000 for the My Ride to Train. Also, seniors represent 14 percent of ridership.

Director Vallencourt stated that he wants to remind everyone that JTA has one of the lowest fares but has the biggest footprint. Assets are going much further for less. He feels that what the Authority is doing on a value basis for the end user is an extreme stand out amongst the rest of the industry.

Mrs. Shepler confirmed that sponsorships for Fiscal Year 2026 have been suspended and will continue in the same direction in Fiscal Year 2027.

The Board and staff discussed the timeline for changes to fares.

Mr. Smith confirmed that a 15-minutes frequency equates to $1.8 million annually and explained the number of routes that run at 30-minute frequency. There was also discussion on routes and their frequency for the entire system.

Director Brown stated the JTA has been conservative along the way but today there are circumstances that need to be addressed, some out of the Authority's control, others are driven by necessity. She has studied the scenarios at length and scenario 2 is what jumps out to her as it is conservative and good for the community. She asked for clarification on the fare changes for weekend truck and RV trips on the ferry. Mr. Smith shared that fare structure is based on two things: 1. the weekend is the busiest time and at times there is more demand than capacity. 2. the bigger vehicles on board reduce the number of other vehicles that the ferry can carry. It is all about supply and demand on the weekends. Mr. Ford stated that it is paying a premium because of oversized vehicles. She stated that the work that has been done is remarkable and the tightening of the belt is beyond what can be said. It is certainly remarkable.

Chair Wallace asked Mr. Milian to conduct a straw poll on the preference to go with a sales tax projection of $80 million on the conservative side or $83 million on the mid-range.

There were discussions related to the decisions of the Board related to approval of the budget submission. Any service changes or fare modifications will need to go though the Title VI review process between now and the August Board Retreat.

Chair Wallace stated this budget is for planning purposes. Planning wrong will lead to different conversations in the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2027.

Mr. Milian stated the sales tax revenue is a projection, it has always been a projection. Some years there is a surplus and some years there is a deficit, which is the reason staff need to know which projection the Board wants to move forward with. After the straw poll, it was determined that staff will proceed with the $80 million projection for a budget of $137.6.

Discussions then began to determine the Board's direction related to which scenario staff should move forward with. Based on the discussion, the Board directed staff to move forward a modified scenario 2. Include that scenarios service modification but add in the fare modification. Chair Wallace directed staff to create a slide or spreadsheet that lays out the Board preference on the scenario and fare modification for Board's consideration at the Board meeting following the work session.

b. Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Budget: Mr. Ford stated that the Board will also consider the Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Budget at the Board meeting. There have been no changes to that budget from what has been presented to the Board several times over the last several weeks.

The capital budget revenues and expenditures are balanced.

IV. ROUNDTABLE

V. ADJOURN: There being no further business, the work session adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

Aundra C. Wallace

Aundra Wallace, Chair

SEAL

Max Glober, Secretary