

**MINUTES OF THE
JACKSONVILLE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
BOARD WORK SESSION
THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2026**

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority Board of Directors held a Work Session on Thursday, January 22, 2026.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Aundra Wallace, Patricia Sams, Max Glober and Donald Horner.

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 12:37 p.m. and welcomed the Board, staff and public.

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

III. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

a. **Fare Modification Pilot Update:** Mrs. Shepler stated that she wanted to provide the Board with an update on the Fare Modification Pilot since the last Board meeting in December. She shared that eight public meetings were held to solicit feedback from the community and stakeholders. The main concerns that were heard from the public meetings as well as other meetings held in the City of Jacksonville (City) came mainly from paratransit customers, specifically related to Connexion Plus service ending and moving riders to the regular Connexion service.

After the public meetings another set of meetings were held that focused solely on Connexion and Connexion Plus Services and Mrs. Shepler shared the presentation that was given at these additional meetings with the Board. The presentation provided a summary of Connexion and Connexion Plus services and how they differ. Details on ridership for Connexion and Connexion Plus and the percentage of each service's usage was shared with the Board.

Mrs. Shepler highlighted the enhancements that have been made to Connexion service to bolster the customer experience, including now being able to provide same day reservations. A breakdown of the cost per trip for Connexion Plus service was shared to show that the average cost to the JTA per trip is \$39.

She then shared the data that staff reviewed to respond to the public's concerns. This data

included number of trips and trip distances. After this data review, staff proposed a fare for Connexion Plus be set at a \$10 base charge for the first 8 miles and \$3.50 per mile thereafter, with a maximum of 46 trips per month per customer. A breakdown of the current base cost and the proposed base cost was provided to show an increase of .85 cents per mile as the base cost for Connexion Plus riders.

Chair Wallace inquired about Connexion being federally mandated and if Connexion Plus is federally mandated. Mrs. Shepler responded that Connexion Plus is not federally mandated, it is a premium on-demand service that is similar to an Uber or Lyft.

Director Sams asked about the increase in ridership since 2019 and if the pandemic caused some of the escalation. Mrs. Shepler said yes, the pandemic did impact ridership, but staff will get the year over year ridership numbers.

Chair Wallace requested details on the paratransit service vehicles and drivers. Mr. Ford stated that Connexion Service uses JTA vehicles that are maintained in house. The drivers are provided under a contract to operate Connexion. Connexion Plus is operated through a contract as well but the drivers' personal vehicles are used to provide the service.

Mrs. Shepler shared that Council members raised some questions and inquired about other options. Council asked for JTA staff to take some time to look at additional options, additional funding to offset cost and other possible solutions. JTA agreed to do additional research. Mr. Ford added that staff is trying to find the right solution. Staff asked the Board to consider this proposal related to Connexion Plus at the Board meeting. The other services in the Fare Modification Pilot will move forward as approved in December; however, staff asks that the Board approve pushing the beginning of the pilot for Connexion Plus until March 1, 2026 to allow additional time to evaluate this service. The solution that is determined will come back to the Board at the February 26, 2026 Board meeting.

Chair Wallace asked if March 1, 2026 gives staff enough time, Mr. Ford confirmed that he and staff believe so.

Chair Wallace asked for additional clarification on what the customer cost is for the additional miles after the first eight miles, so the public understands what the cost difference is to use the service. This will also allow the JTA to show the delta it absorbs for the service.

Mrs. Shepler also shared that the JTA receives federal funding to use toward transportation services, including Connexion. However, Connexion Plus is a premium service and not eligible for federal funding.

Director Horner stated that he feels the process of addressing this complex issue with

Connexion and Connexion Plus was handled well. The JTA took the matter to the community and listened to what they shared. Mr. Ford provided clarification that the Board approval of the change to the original Connexion Plus portion of the Pilot will go to the Board for approval under Old Business during the Board meeting following the work session. Director Horner added that he likes that there will be a subcommittee to monitor and audit the six-month pilot. He would like the subcommittee reports to include ridership numbers for Connexion Plus.

Director Sams shared that she echoes Director Horner's comments. There was discussion on the possibility of setting tiers based on income level. Staff will be reviewing the options and determining what is allowable.

Chair Wallace asked if there is an income verification process in house and Ms. Obora said JTA does not. Mr. Milian stated that he feels there are some legal concerns related to Title VI when looking at a tiered cost approach.

IV. LONG RANGE PLANNING AND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

a. First Coast Regional Rail Study: Mrs. Gillis shared that at the September 2024 Board Retreat, the Board was briefed on the funding of JTA doing a Commuter Rail Feasibility Study and staff is going to provide an update of where that study is. She provided background on the study for First Coast Regional Rail, which was included in the MobilityWorks 2.0 Program that was created from the Local Option Gas Tax (LOGT).

Mrs. Gillis share the overview of the work to date on the study covering downtown Jacksonville to St. Augustine and history of work and review that had been done previously and the findings. She stated that stakeholders were advised of the study to share their input. There was an industry peer review and the key takeaways included: Understanding CSX and FEC's value proposition and outlook on the project, determining regional governance, extending service north to the airport and as far south as Daytona, find external champions for the project and prioritize the development of the framework agreement with the railroads.

Chair Wallace inquired about the regional governance – does that mean that a separate governance for the regional rail would be needed. Mrs. Gillis responded yes, or a larger regional area for the JTA. Mr. Ford confirmed this is for a study, not JTA trying to implement or force commuter rail service. Director Wallace reiterated – this is just a study! The JTA was tasked with overseeing this study under the LOGT list of projects. City Council asked that this study be on the list of projects at a cost of \$3.3M.

The details of the roadmap to advance regional rail service were provided. Phase 1 was the

visioning workshop – route and terminal options. Planning for Phase 2, incorporating an outline of railroad agreements to include framework, purchase and sale agreement, construction agreement and purchase of sale agreement. Mrs. Gillis then shared the steps for the path forward now that Phase 1 is complete. Phase 2 which will initiate railroad engagement that is estimated to take approximately 8 – 12 months to work to a framework agreement. Then the study will move to Phase 3 which includes the engagement of engineering firm(s) and will take approximately 12 – 18 months to reach the end of the study and be ready for planning, development and engineering (PD&E).

Director Sams inquired about the appetite for commuter rail. Mrs. Gillis responded that the appetite is mixed, the City of Jacksonville and the City of St. Augustine are excited; however, the railroads are mixed due to their freight operations.

b. Supplemental Phasing Agreement Amendment: Mrs. Gillis stated that staff will bring the Approval of Contract Amendment for Supplemental Phasing Agreement II for Phase 1 of the Bay Street Innovation Corridor (BSIC) to the Board for approval at the meeting following the work session. She shared details of the amendment that will provide an extension of time to allow all paperwork and billing to be finalized within the six-month extension.

V. ROUNDTABLE: Mrs. Gillis provided information to walk the Board through the PD&E study for Phase III of the Ultimate Urban Circulator (U²C) Neighborhood Extensions. She provided an overview of the study which includes community engagement, preliminary engineering, environmental analysis and study documents, as well as the importance of doing these types of studies for projects. A PD&E allows for a locally preferred alternative for a project. A historical view of the PD&E efforts for JTA projects back to 2002 was shared.

Mrs. Gillis then shared the preliminary design of the neighborhood extensions for the north, west, south and southeast corridors. A snapshot of the 18-month project schedule was also shared with the Board. Staff will bring feedback from the community back to the Board for review. An overview and timeline of the grant award for this study was provided, as well as the procurement process to award a contract for the PD&E study.

Mrs. Gillis confirmed Chair Wallace's inquiry that if the contract is for more than the grant award, local funding will be used for the rest of the contract cost. He asked that if the study is not completed within the timeline provided by the USDOT, the funds from the grant would need to be returned and it would have an impact on future grant awards as well. Mrs. Gillis confirmed that is correct. Chair Wallace stated that this presentation was for informational purposes only and will come to the board at a later time.

VI. ADJOURN: There being no further business, the work session adjourned at 2:02 p.m.

SEAL

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Max Guber', written over a horizontal line.

Max Guber, Secretary

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Aundra C. Wallace', written over a horizontal line.
Aundra Wallace, Chair