

**MINUTES OF THE  
JACKSONVILLE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY  
BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2024 AND THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 2024**

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority Board of Directors Strategic Planning Retreat was held on Wednesday, August 28, 2024 and Thursday, August 29, 2024 at One Ocean Resort located in Atlantic Beach, Florida 32233.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Debbie Buckland, Aundra Wallace, Pat Sams, Megan Hayward and Ari Jolly.

**JTA STAFF PRESENT:** Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr., Cleveland Ferguson, Greer Gillis, Raj Srinath, Jeffery Smith, Ivan Rodriguez and Katie Smith.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Richard Milian, General Counsel

**Wednesday, August 28, 2024**

**WELCOME:** The Retreat was called to order by Chair Buckland at 8:49 a.m. She extended a welcome and a thank you to the Board for taking time to attend the retreat.

Chair Buckland provided the August Safety Message, "The Safe Way, Is the Only Way!"

**CEO REMARKS:** Mr. Ford welcomed the Board and staff to the 11th annual JTA Board of Directors retreat. The day-and-a-half gathering is a crucial component of board governance. It provides the opportunity for a deep dive into quality assurance and quality control, a thorough review of the past year, and a proposed plan for the upcoming year, ensuring appropriate policy guidance to move forward. He added that throughout the year, the Board dedicates numerous hours him and the JTA staff on policy direction, programs, projects, operations, and planning. When you consider this retreat, in addition to our one-on-one meetings, board workshops, board meetings, groundbreakings, ribbon cuttings, lunch and learns, and information on what is happening in the transportation industry and legislation that is shared with you throughout the year, you average 60 hours a year with the JTA staff – the Chair is even more as we have weekly briefings, adding another approximate 40 hours.

Mr. Ford stated that the Board's work, along with the collaboration with Katie Smith, JTA's Board Administrator, has been recognized as a best practice within board governance in

public transportation across the country. He thanked the board for their endorsement for him to serve as Chair of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and to the active involvement by several JTA Board Members who have or do serve on the APTA Board. This has allowed JTA greater visibility into best-practice resulting in more disciplined and professional engagement of the JTA agenda with our regulatory bodies.

Mr. Ford highlighted the opportunities JTA has had to share what sets the Authority apart from others in the industry. He then provided some examples of the impact that he, the Board and JTA staff have on the industry.

This recipe for success has generated more than \$350 million in discretionary, competitive funding for this region, supporting the development of the largest bus-rapid transit network in the southeast to repurposing one-of-a-kind transportation infrastructure with the safest technology that will remain ahead of surface transportation and cybersecurity threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while ensuring from the able-bodied choice rider to the differently-abled dependent customer mobility access regardless of where you live in Duval County. Mr. Ford stated that the week following the Retreat, the City of Jacksonville will see the fruits of how Board policy in 2015 translates into strategic action in 2017 with the birth of the Ultimate Urban Circulator (U<sup>2</sup>C) program, followed by securing USDOT grants in 2018 and 2021, and a local commitment by Jacksonville City Council in 2022, on behalf of the citizens of Northeast Florida. In 2024, right here, in Duval County, in the city of Jacksonville, the world will see a multibillion-dollar automotive manufacturer commit to building purpose-built Autonomous Vehicles (AV) for public transportation.

Mr. Ford shared that the retreat would begin with the latest iteration of service enhancements implemented on Monday, August 26, 2024, as part of the "Moving Forward: Better Mobility, Stronger Community" that the Board was briefed on at the July 2024 work session. The Board will also be able to view a snapshot—a mobile version of JTA's Insight, Discovery & Enterprise Analytics (IDEA Lab).

## **SESSION 1: MOVING FORWARD: BETTER MOBILITY, STONGER COMMUNITY**

The board received presentations from Lynn Opperman, AVP of Marketing, Communications and Customer Experience; Mary Smith, VP of People and Culture; Jason Montgomery, AVP, and Chief Data Officer; and Jeff Smith, SVP/COO. The team presented each of the elements of the Moving Forward: Better Mobility, Stronger Community campaign to date through January 2025. The Board engaged in Q&A throughout the presentation.

**A. Riders, Ridership & Service Delivery in Fiscal Year 2024:** Mr. Smith provided a comprehensive overview of JTA's services, ridership statistics to date, the service enhancements that were implemented on August 26, 2024 and data related to what the riders experienced in 2024.

**B. Service Enhancements:** Mr. Smith outlined the service enhancements for Fiscal Year 2025 and next steps to meet the needs of the public. Mr. Smith's presentation concluded with unaudited data related to the customer experience.

**C. Skyway Operations:** Mr. Smith shared updates including the Skyway State of the System Evaluate the cost to maintain the system in a state of good repair for the next eight years.

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

## **SESSION II (1): PEOPLE AND CULTURE**

**How We Are Supporting Service Delivery How Are We Doing:** Ms. Smith and Mr. Ferguson reviewed the recruitment and retention strategies in depth for the board. This included a discussion of the unaudited data related to employee engagement and satisfaction.

## **SESSION II (2): ADMINISTRATION**

**A. Audit and Compliance:** Mr. Ferguson introduced the audit and compliance team. Jason provided information related to the trends associated with audit and compliance. Cleveland provided a deep dive into the policies, procedures, processes and work instructions process and what the issues were to the JTA since the last quarterly report.

**B. Economic Development/Tod Update:** He then provided a comprehensive report on JTA's real estate holdings, transit-oriented development negotiations, and potential acquisition locations and quantified the non-farebox return on investment from the work of the executive leadership team's execution of the year's activities.

## **SESSION III: LONG-TERM FUNDING AND INVESTMENTS UPDATE**

**A. Investment Update (Reserves):** Mr. Srinath provided information on the Capital Needs & Funding Sources, JTA Reserves and total cash balance. In addition, he shared JTA's current operating reserve level and how that compares to peer transit agencies, and what is the adequate or the optimal operating reserve level for JTA. PFM was also in attendance to provide the Board with the quarterly Investment Report.

The Board had a detailed discussion on the reserves and how the Reserve Policy came into effect.

**B. Bonds Overview and Refinancing:** Mr. Srinath provided an overview of municipal bond financing considerations and certain key rules and regulations covering the issuance of municipal bonds. The presentation included a discussion of the upcoming Tender/Forward Delivery Refunding transaction of the Series 2015 Bonds to achieve debt service savings.

The Authority has approximately \$69.2 million of Series 2015 Local Option Gas Tax Revenue Bonds (2015 Bonds) outstanding. The Bonds have a debt service reserve fund with a balance of approximately \$8.5 million. Based on current tax law, the Series 2015 Bonds can be refinanced through a combination of tax- exempt tender and forward delivery refunding. Savings from the refinancing in today's dollars (net present value) is estimated to be \$13.9 million, which consists of \$5.6 million from debt service savings and \$8.3 million from the debt service reserve fund release.

The Board and staff discussed JTA's ratings history related JTA's Bonds.

**C. Current Year and Five-Year Projections:** Mr. Srinath presented a summary of the Fiscal Year 2024 outlook as well as a five-year forecast. Financial performance data included three different revenue (high, base & low) and expense assumptions as well as five-year mitigation funding/financing options.

The Board and staff discussed the Fare Policy. Mr. Milian provided the history of the policy.

#### **SESSION IV: SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT**

**D. Emerald Trail:** Ms. Gillis introduced the status of the Emerald Trail project by recounting the work performed since the inception of the Local Option Gas Tax 2 program in 2022. Since that time, the JTA has collaborated with Groundwork Jacksonville and the City of Jacksonville in completing an Memorandum of Understanding and Interlocal Agreement, developed a schedule for delivery of the projects, and applied for several federal grant applications. With the win of the Reconnecting Communities \$147M grant, the JTA must now deliver the project within six years – September 2031. The JTA engaged the design and construction industry to determine the best delivery model to deliver five complex segments within the short timeframe.

Ms. Gillis welcomed members of the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) to facilitate roundtables with the industry to garner feedback. Members of ACEC – Buckley Williams and Walter Kloss – presented findings from the industry roundtables to the

board members which included a discussion on the alternative delivery model that would allow for acceleration of the construction. ACEC recommended that the JTA consider an Owner's Representative for the program, a design-bid-build approach for Segment 3, a Construction-Manager-At-Risk approach for the remaining segments, and to advance work on development of the risk register, utility coordination and railroad coordination. Following the presentation, comments were made by Groundwork Jacksonville CEO Kay Ehas and City of Jacksonville Public Works Director Nina Sickler regarding their preferences for delivery. Mr. Ford stated that he will inform the Board at the September 2024 meeting on the final delivery model for the program.

Staff confirmed the Board's inquiries regarding JTA is ultimately responsible for the work on the five segments that will use federal funds.

## **SESSION V: INFLUENCING POLICY CHANGES IN NORTHEAST FLORIDA AND ITS EFFECTS**

Jessica Shepler, VP of Government Affairs & Economic Development provided a detailed overview of the state legislative session, local activities and recommendations. Ivan Rodriguez Chief of Staff led the board through a discussion of federal policy and its implications for our grant strategy in the coming year.

Chair Buckland called the Retreat to a recess and announced that the Retreat would reconvene at 7:45 a.m. the following morning, Thursday, August 29, 2024.

### **Thursday, August 29, 2024**

Chair Buckland reconvened the Retreat at 7:48 a.m. She recognized that Council Member (CM) Rahman Johnson had joined the Retreat. She shared that CM Johnson is the new Council Liaison for the JTA Board and welcomed him.

Chair Buckland then turned the floor over to Mrs. Gillis to present the items that were not covered under System Development on day one of the Retreat as planned.

**A & B. U<sup>2</sup>C and Bay Street Phase 2 and Phase 3:** Mrs. Gillis and VP, Kiet Dinh provided a progress update to the Board on all three phases of the Ultimate Urban Circulator (U<sup>2</sup>C) Program. Mrs. Gillis expressed gratitude to the Board for the confidence that they have in the team to deliver the very first Autonomous Vehicle (AV) public transportation revenue service in the nation and stated that the JTA is on-track to deliver this service in June 2025. Mr. Dinh provided

a progress update on Phase I of the U<sup>2</sup>C Program, the Bay Street Innovation Corridor (BSIC). Mr. Dinh then shared details on the construction progress to-date on the Autonomous Innovation Center, the progress of the manufacturing, assembly, delivery, and testing of the fleet of 14 AVs, and the plans and progress of the construction activities on the corridor. Additionally, Mr. Dinh shared details on forthcoming planned key BSIC milestone dates in Fiscal Year 2025. He Dinh also shared an update on the JTA-led State of Florida Automated Transit Vehicles Procurement and upcoming AV pilot and demonstration projects. Ms. Gillis concluded the presentation with a progress update on the Project Development and Environmental (PD&E) and 30 percent Design procurement for the Phase II Skyway Conversion, public-private partnership Advisors engaged to support Phase II efforts, and the PD&E procurement for the Phase III Neighborhood Extensions.

**C. MobilityWorks 2.0:** Ms. Gillis provided an updated on the projects under the MobilityWorks 2.0 Program. For Fiscal Year 2024, the JTA focused on community engagement and stakeholder outreach to advance phases of the 17 projects in the program. After kicking off the inaugural Regional Capital Infrastructure Summit to attract industry and small businesses to the program, the JTA engaged the community with feedback on the various propulsion for the St. Johns River Ferry new ferry vessel and completed the feasibility study. The JTA kicked off the NW Jacksonville Improvement Corridor project by enhancing bus stops along the Soutel Road Corridor with new amenities and infrastructure, and in collaboration with the Cultural Council held an art competition. The community selected the seven art pieces to be displayed on shelters located at the Soutel Road bus stops and hub. The JTA advanced 3 of the 10 complete streets projects (University Boulevard, Merrill Road, and 8<sup>th</sup> Street) and won a federal appropriation for a 4<sup>th</sup> project (Phillips Highway). Staff upgraded over 100 bus stops bringing them into ADA compliance – exceeded their target of 50 bus stops for the fiscal year. The JTA completed the Commuter Rail Feasibility Study and held a second industry peer review. Lastly, the JTA advanced the Emerald Trail project by moving forward with PD&E for Segment 3 and advancing procurement for the PD&E for Segments 4, 6, 7, and 8. The JTA submitted and won the Reconnecting Communities grant for \$147M allowing the JTA to advance completion of the project by September 2031. All of the project information is shared with the community on the Program website.

## **SESSION VI: MOVING FORWARD: COMMUNICATION DISCUSSION**

Cleveland Ferguson led the discussion through JTA's communications approach Moving Forward.

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

## **SESSION VII: MOVE2027 KPIS**

**A. Fiscal Year 2024 Accomplishments:** Mr. Ferguson provided an outline of Fiscal Year 2024 accomplishments and shared a video highlighting JTA's year in review.

**B. Fiscal Year 2025 Goals and Objectives:** The Board discussed the Fiscal Year 2025 Goals and Objectives for Year 4 of the MOVE 2027 Plan. The Board agreed with moving to year 4 of the MOVE Plan with the staff recommendations as presented.

## **SESSION VIII: LEGAL UPDATE/CEO ANNUAL EVALUATION**

Mr. Ferguson provided a legal update related to JTA's Administrative Rule 000, and the board provided assent to move forward with the Public Meeting and Public Hearing process.

Mr. Milian, JTA General Counsel, provided a legal update and outlined the CEO's annual evaluation processes.

**ROUNDTABLE/REPORT OUTS:** There was no roundtable discussion.

Mr. Ford provided closing remarks.

Chair Buckland thanked staff for all of the information that was provided and the Board for taking the time to attend and be engaged over the last day and a half.

There being no further business, the Retreat adjourned at 10:51 a.m.

  
Debbie Buckland, Chair

SEAL

  
Aundra Wallace, Secretary