



Executive Summary

The Sunshine Bus Company offers deviated fixed-route public transportation to riders of all ages in St. Johns County, Florida. As part of the county's commitment to providing public transportation services, St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners (SJCBOCC), in cooperation with its contractor, the St. Johns County Council on Aging, Inc. (SJCCOA) completes a transit development plan (TDP). This document contains a major update to St. Johns County's TDP.

TDP Requirements

Each transit agency in Florida that receives state transit block grant funding is required to prepare a TDP to ensure that the provision of public transportation services is consistent with the travel needs and mobility goals of the local communities that are served by the transit system. By establishing a strategic focus and mission for the transit services, the TDP can serve as a guide in the future development of the transit system that will meet the needs of the community.

The TDP is a ten-year plan. The Florida Department of Transportation requires that a major update of the plan is produced every five years, with minor updates completed in each of the interim years. Florida's interest in TDPs is governed by Sections 339.135 and 339.155, Florida Statutes, as described in Chapter 14-73, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C). According to Florida Administrative Code: Rule 14-73.001, TDPs should include the following elements:

- Public involvement plan and process;
- Situation appraisal of factors within and outside the transit provider that affect the provision of transit service;
- Vision, mission and goals and objectives;
- Alternative courses of action;
- Ten-year implementation program; and
- Relationship to other plans.

Public Involvement

A specific program of public involvement was developed in order to engage the community in this planning effort. Described in a TDP Public Involvement Plan, there were multiple opportunities to provide input during the TDP's development. Through meetings, phone calls, interviews and surveys, public input represented a variety of perspectives within the community. Input was collected from existing transit customers, agency stakeholders, elected officials, bus drivers, and the general public.

The typical Sunshine Bus rider is dependent on public transportation. In a survey of Sunshine Bus riders, the vast majority of survey respondents indicated they rode the bus at least every week (86%), made less than \$20,000 a year (72%) and would not be able to drive themselves if Sunshine Bus were not available (95%). Since the last TDP major update, completed in 2011, surveys of Sunshine Bus riders consistently indicate they want more transit service. Transit enhancements most commonly suggested by current riders are: greater frequency, more service hours and Sunday service. More frequent transit



service is necessary to attract additional transit riders, including individuals who do not currently ride public transit.

The results of an online survey of St. Johns County residents, businesses and employees, revealed significant support of public transportation within the community. For example, a majority of online survey respondents indicated they would use public transportation if it was available to them (74%) and agree that there is a need for additional or improved public transportation within St. Johns County (88%). Most agree that an effective public transportation system is important for the economy (92%); and agree that public transportation should be improved to reduce congestion (91%). When asked to choose between different areas of the County, about 60% of online survey respondents stated they most need public transportation in the St. Augustine/St. Augustine Beach area.

Existing Conditions

St. Johns County's population is currently the fastest growing county within Northeast Florida. Over the TDP's ten-year period, land use changes and growth are anticipated as there are many large developing areas. These large developing areas are generally located in the northern portion of the county, in densely populated areas closer to Jacksonville, north of the City of St. Augustine. The highest concentrations of transit dependent individuals, however, are generally located within the St. Augustine Urbanized Area and southwest portions of the County near Hastings and Flagler Estates. The majority of jobs, large employers and other major destinations are also located within the St. Augustine Urbanized Area. Sunshine Bus's deviated fixed-route buses currently serve the St. Augustine Urbanized Area, Hastings and Flagler Estates.

There are also large employers, major destinations and points of interest not currently near Sunshine Bus's coverage area. These are mostly located within the northeast (Nocatee and Ponte Vedra area), northwest (Julington Creek area) and World Golf Village area of the County. Based on demographic characteristics, these areas of St. Johns County are generally represented by higher median household incomes. Challenges with providing effective and efficient transit service to these areas of the county include the ability to attract these individuals to use transit, the county's expansive geographic area and development patterns that are not transit friendly.

From a regional perspective, the TDP identifies cross-county commuting trends as well as needs for public transportation between St. Johns County and nearby counties. Many St. Johns County residents travel to Jacksonville to work. Although this is true for St. Johns County overall, greater percentages of residents living in northern St. Johns County travel to Jacksonville to work as compared to the St. Augustine area and southern St. Johns County. In addition, St. Johns County residents travel to Jacksonville for medical and retail services. Fifty-three (53%) of online survey respondents need public transportation between St. Johns County and other counties. When asked which counties, most chose Duval County, followed by Flagler County and Putnam County.

Since 2005, Sunshine Bus's deviated fixed-route ridership has increased every year. Over the five-year period from FY 2010 through 2014, the number of riders on Sunshine Bus's deviated fixed-route transit system have increased a by 40%, from 185,864 to 259,402 passengers. A review of Sunshine Bus's performance as compared to other similar transit agencies (referred to as the peer group), revealed that



deviated fixed-route service efficiency and cost effectiveness are good while the same for demand response services are poor, compared to the peer group. Cost per revenue mile and cost per revenue hour are much lower than the peer group average, for deviated fixed-route service.

The following list presents a summary lists of mobility and transit service needs in St. Johns County, as informed by quantitative service analyses and public comments.

- Increased frequency (e.g. shorter wait times)
- Enhanced service providing greater and more direct access to major employment centers, activity centers and services
- Extended span of service that includes more trips in the early morning and late evening periods
- Sunday service
- Enhanced communication systems, design features and amenities on vehicles and at bus stops
- Improvements to bus schedules to make them easier to understand

Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives

The 2016 Major Update to the St. Johns County TDP presents updated goals, objective and strategies; alternative courses of action; and a ten-year implementation program to address the community's need for transit.

VISION: To provide the opportunity for every person in St. Johns County to enjoy wellness, longevity and quality of life choices within a strong, healthy community through the provision of public transportation.

MISSION: To provide safe, affordable and reliable mobility options.

GOAL 1 – CUSTOMER FOCUS: Maintain and continuously improve customer-focused service and products.

GOAL 2 - MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY: Provide mobility and access to meet current and evolving mobility market needs and opportunities, and to improve the economy.

GOAL 3 – INTERAGENCY AND REGIONAL COORDINATION: Enhance and improve multimodal coordination and connectivity to promote travel efficiencies and effectiveness.

GOAL 4 – EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY: Provide an Effective and Efficient Public Transportation System.

GOAL 5 – QUALITY OF LIFE: Enhance economic prosperity, livability and environmental sustainability within the service area.

GOAL 6 – EDUCATION AND TRAINING: Inform the community on the value of a quality public transit system and develop a highly qualified Sunshine Bus workforce.

GOAL 7 – CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS: Establish the appropriate infrastructure necessary to maintain and expand fixed-route and paratransit services in the future.



TDP Ten-Year Implementation Program

Recommended transit service enhancements for the next ten years were determined based on public and stakeholder input and an evaluation of transit needs. In addition to maintaining current transit services, several service and capital enhancements are proposed over the TDP's ten-year horizon. TDP enhancements include modification to existing bus routes, the addition of new bus routes and capital improvements.

Transit ridership forecasts reveal that if no transit service enhancements are implemented over the next ten years there will likely be minimal ridership increases. Implementation of the TDP transit program is expected to increase ridership, emphasizing the need for enhanced public transportation services in St. Johns County. As transit demands and services increase, sustainable and dedicated funding sources are required to offset revenue shortfalls.