



## 4.0 Existing Transit Services

### 4.1 St. Johns County Public Transportation (Sunshine Bus)

#### 4.1.1 Description of Services

St. Johns County, in coordination with the St. Johns County Council on Aging (SJCCOA), offers deviated fixed-route public transportation to riders of all ages in St. Johns County, Florida. The Sunshine Bus Company serves the St. Augustine, St. Augustine Beach and surrounding areas, as well as the Town of Hastings and Flagler Estates. The transit service connects customers with major shopping, education, medical and health, government destinations and beaches, including Flagler Hospital, the County Health Department, library branches, the county government complex, the Outlet Mall and other retail/grocery stores. Connections to Jacksonville's transit system (the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, JTA) can be made at the Avenues Mall in Jacksonville.

Route Deviations by reservation are available up to one-quarter of a mile from the bus routes. There is an additional \$2.00 fare for each deviation. Additionally, the Sunshine Bus transit system is flag-down system allowing passengers to board buses generally at any safe street corner or location along the bus routes. As shown on Figure 4.1, seven different routes are available, all covering different areas. These areas are generally described below for each bus route. Additional service characteristics of the routes operated by Sunshine Bus are provided in Table 4.1.

- Blue Line - US 1 and Downtown St. Augustine;
- Green Line - SR A1A in St. Augustine Beach, SR 206 and south US 1 areas;
- Orange Line - West St. Augustine areas;
- Purple Line - SR 16 Outlet Malls and the Avenues Mall areas, offering connections to Jacksonville's transit system (the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, JTA) at the Avenues Mall in Jacksonville;
- Red Line - SR A1A, Downtown St. Augustine and the St. Johns County Government Center & Courthouse Areas;
- Teal Line - Hastings and Flagler Estates; and
- Connector Line - US 1, St. Augustine South, Shores Village, Vilano Beach, County Government Center and Seabridge Square retail area.

The service is available every weekday beginning between 5:30 and 6:45 a.m. and ending between 7:05 and 8:05 p.m., depending on the bus route. Similar service hours are offered on Saturdays, except that the Teal Line begins at 8:20 a.m. and runs till 5 p.m. on Saturdays. Additionally, on Saturdays and on holidays buses do not stop at a few destinations that are served on weekdays: County Health Department, V.A. Clinic, Azalea Health, and the St. Johns River State College.

The regular fare to ride the bus is 1.00 per one-way trip. A reduced fare of \$0.50 per one-way trip (i.e., 50% off the regular fare) is available to seniors 60+, children 6 years old and under, persons with disabilities, students and anyone with a Medicare/Medicaid Card. In addition to the regular and reduced priced fare, an all-day pass is available for \$3.00 (\$1.50 for those that qualify); and a non-transferable



monthly pass is available for \$30 (\$15 for those that qualify). The monthly pass price increased from \$25 to \$30 (\$12.50 to \$15 for the reduced fare) in December 2015. This increase was the first fare increase since the deviated fixed-route fares were introduced.

**Table 4.1 Sunshine Bus Service Characteristics**

Route Name	Weekday Frequency	Saturday Frequency	Weekday Roundtrips	Saturday Roundtrips	Span of Service
Blue Line	130	130	6	6	6:45 a.m. to 7:25 p.m.
Green Line	130	130	6	6	6:45 a.m. to 7:25 p.m.
Orange Line	130	130	6	6	6:45 a.m. to 7:25 p.m.
Purple Line	215	215	4	4	5:30 am. To 7:15 p.m.
Red Line	130	130	6	6	6:45 a.m. to 7:25 p.m.
Teal Line	235	235	4	2	5:30 a.m. to 7:05 p.m.
Connector Line	50	50	14	14	5:30 a.m. to 8:05 p.m.

Source: Sunshine Bus’s revised June 2015 route schedules; ETM, 2016

The Sunshine Bus Company transit system provides several opportunities for bus riders to transfer from one Sunshine Bus Company line to another, located at key activity centers within the community. Scheduled to connect at the same times throughout the day, four bus routes (Blue, Green, Orange and Red Lines) begin and end at the “Bus Depot” (located at the northwest corner of A1A and Pope Road), and the other three bus routes (Purple, Teal and Connector Lines) begin and end at the Seabridge Square shopping area (located at the northwest corner of US1 and Highway 312). The Blue and Orange Lines serve the Seabridge Square area as well. Connections can also be made at other places throughout the transit system such as the County Government Center/County Health Department (Red, Connector, Purple and Teal Lines) and Flagler Hospital (Blue, Connector and Orange Lines). Although recent development at the Seabridge Square shopping center has required the removal of a bus shelter from the parking lot, County and SJCCOA staff are planning to construct two bus pullouts along US 1, emphasizing the county and SJCCOA’s commitment to maintaining connectivity for customers.

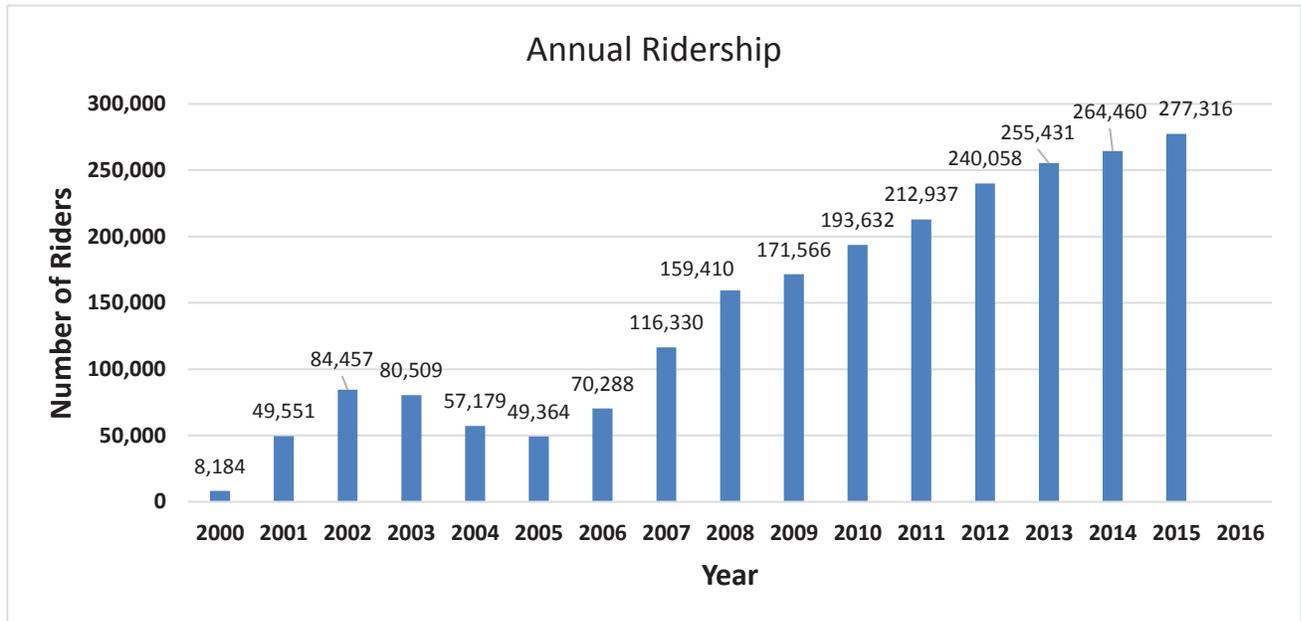
Over the past year, the Sunshine Bus Company implemented a modification of the Connector Line, by extending transit service to Vilano Beach and the St. Augustine South Subdivision. The modified route alignment traverses US 1 to May Street and the Vilano Causeway. Another vehicle was acquired to help provide this service; and to improve how frequent buses run on the modified bus line. Since the last major TDP update in 2011, 52 bus stop signs were installed along the US 1 corridor and 20 signs were installed along King Street. During the past year, Sunshine Bus Company placed several signs near the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB) and has surveyed other locations throughout the developed areas of the county to provide better accessibility to the visually impaired, simultaneously enhancing safety and traffic control for the general public *as well as people with other disabilities*. Staff continues to work on the placement of bus stop signs and have tentatively identified sign locations on San Marco Blvd., within the city of St. Augustine along the Red Route and along Green Route as well as in the City of St. Augustine Beach.



### 4.1.2 Ridership Trends

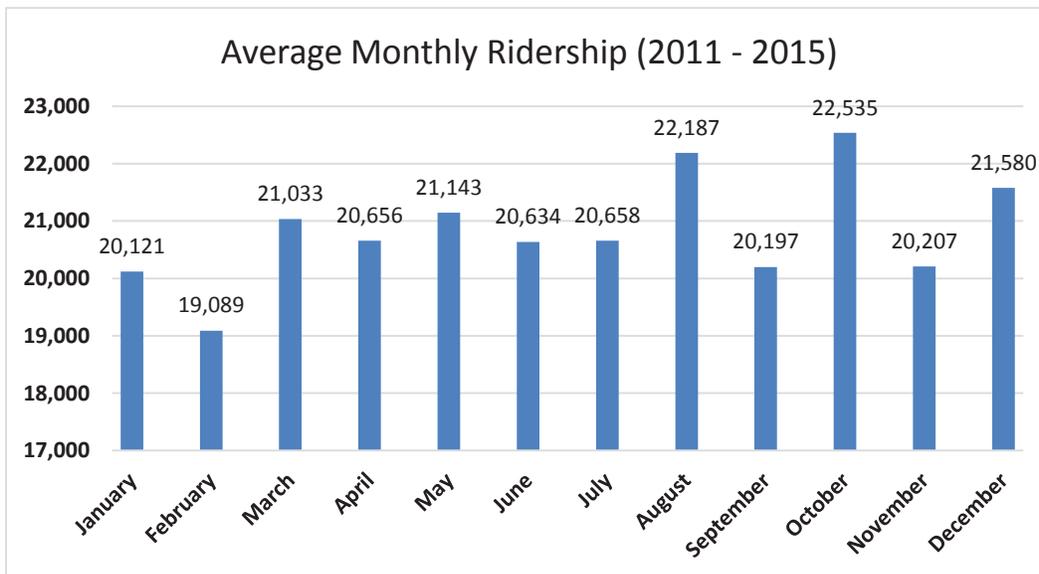
Annual ridership and average monthly ridership trends are shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. Since 2005, ridership has increased every year. In 2005, the transit system experienced a ridership decrease due to modified bus routes that took time for riders to adjust. Based on the data, February is the lowest ridership month, while October and August are high ridership months.

**Figure 4.2 Sunshine Bus Annual Ridership, 2000 - 2015**



Source: St. Johns County Council on Aging, 2000 - 2015

**Figure 4.3 Sunshine Bus Average Monthly Ridership, 2011 - 2015**



Source: St. Johns County Council on Aging, 2011 - 2015



## 4.2 Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Service<sup>9</sup>

The SJCCOA is the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for St. Johns County and is the primary transportation entity for Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) bus riders. As the CTC, the SJCCOA is responsible for coordinating, providing, and/or contracting for TD transportation services within St. Johns County. The TD program was established at the statewide level to provide coordinated transportation services to generally the elderly, disabled, economically disadvantaged, children at risk and individuals who have no other means of transportation. The TD population is defined under Chapter 427, Florida Statutes.

St. Johns County's TD services are provided on a subscription and demand response basis, 24 hours per day and seven days per week. Although the demand response services operate under a 24-hour advanced notification basis, SJCCOA staff frequently provide transportation services on a same-day basis to be more responsive to the needs of transportation users. Generally reservations are needed by Friday in order to access the service on weekends. Subscription services are provided to those programs which transport individuals six days per week. An example of the subscription service is the Older Americans Act Nutrition programs. Regular operating hours are from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. The fare is generally \$2 per trip.

In addition to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, the SJCCOA has transportation agreements with several entities such as social service agencies, nursing homes, hospitals and funding agencies (such as the Agency for Health care Administration). St. Johns County contracts with the SJCCOA to coordinate daily veterans administration (VA) transportation service to Gainesville, called DAV (Disabled American Veterans). The DAV uses volunteer drivers who receive a stipend. There are also other human/social service transportation providers, such as ARC (Association for Retarded Citizens), that provide specialized transportation services.

The SJCCOA as the CTC has an informal goal to shift annually 15-20% of paratransit riders to the public transit system, the Sunshine Bus system. Figure 3.16 (in Section 3.0) illustrates common paratransit destinations and indicates that the majority of common paratransit destinations are within the Sunshine Bus coverage area. Paratransit (demand response) service is generally more expensive to operate than fixed-route service because it covers the entire county, is door-to-door service and provides some cross county trips as well. SJCCOA provides a run to and from Jacksonville, three time a week.

## 4.3 Inter-County Transit Connections

### 4.3.1 Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA)

Interconnections between the Sunshine Bus and JTA may occur at the Avenues Mall near Southside Boulevard and US 1/Philips Highway. Passengers of the Sunshine Bus's Purple Line may connect with JTA's Philips 7-bus route, six days a week.

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<sup>9</sup> 2012-2016 St. Johns County Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP)



#### **4.3.2 Greyhound Connector/ Ride Solutions (Putnam County)**

Putnam County's Ride Solutions coordinates a Greyhound connector bus route that provides daily intercounty connections between Hastings and St. Augustine (in St. Johns County), Palatka (in Putnam County) and Gainesville (in Alachua County). Two trips are provided per day, one trip in the morning and one trip in the afternoon. In St. Augustine the bus leaves the Seabridge Square (1777 US 1 South) at 6:55 a.m. and 5:55 p.m., and the St. Augustine Parking Garage and bus loop (1 Castillo Drive) at 7 a.m. and 5:50 p.m. In Hastings (on SR-207), on-demand stops are allowed in the morning at 6:20 and 7:15 a.m. and in the afternoon at 5:25 and 6:15 p.m. Bus fare is \$2.

#### **4.3.3 Amtrak**

Intercity rail service does not currently serve St. Johns County. The closest Amtrak stations are located in Jacksonville and Palatka.

#### **4.4 Private Carriers**

As a tour destination, there are a number of tour bus, trolley and other carriers that transport visitors to points of interest in St. Augustine. There are franchise transportation businesses such as Old Town Trolley Tours, Ripley's Red Trains and the carriage rides. The Old Town Trolley offers a free beach bus serving St. Augustine Beach, and one of the stops on the Old Town Trolley Tours route is designated a Beach Bus Stop. In addition to franchise transportation businesses, there are driver-for-hire businesses that need to be licensed (inspected and insured) with the City of St. Augustine. Driver-for-hire businesses include taxis and airport shuttles as well as pedicab (bicycle), ghost tour/hearse, private van pool and golf cart transportation providers. Appendix H contains a list of these private carriers.

#### **4.5 Other Multimodal Transportation Opportunities**

The North Florida TPO's *Cool to Pool* commuter matching and tracking system assists commuters with finding carpool partners anywhere in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau or St. Johns counties. The system protects commuter privacy and uses proximity, destination, travel route, schedules and preferences to help find carpool partners. Traditionally, with the guaranteed ride home component, individuals that carpool, vanpool, bike or walk from home to work at least three days per week and live in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau or St. Johns counties have been able to register to receive free emergency taxi rides.

Uber is also available in St. Augustine which allows people to arrange transportation, similar to taxi service, with the use of a mobile application. In some cities across the country transit agencies are considering partnerships with Uber and similar companies to e mobility within their communities. For example, these partnerships may enhance access to and from the public transit system, improving mobility for what is often referred to as the first and last mile portions of a trip.