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October 31, 2025

The Honorable Rory Diamond
Jacksonville City Council
117 W Duval Street
Jacksonville FL, 32202

Subject: JTA Response to Questions Regarding the Ultimate Urban Circulator (U²C) Program

Dear Council Member Diamond and Members of the Jacksonville City Council,

On behalf of the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA), please find attached responses to your questions sent on October 16, 2025, regarding the Ultimate Urban Circulator (U²C) program.

The U²C represents one of the most significant mobility and economic innovation initiatives in Jacksonville's history. It is designed to modernize the former Skyway system and expand access to safe, sustainable, and autonomous public transportation solutions across Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

The JTA remains committed to transparency, collaboration, and fiscal responsibility as we advance this transformative program. We share the City Council's interest in ensuring that every phase of the U²C is implemented strategically, efficiently, and in a manner that maximizes value for the taxpayers of Jacksonville.

Our responses provide detailed information regarding the program's scope, funding sources, procurement process, governance structure, partnerships, and anticipated benefits to the community. Thank you for your continued engagement and partnership in shaping Jacksonville's transportation future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Nathaniel P. Ford Sr.", is written over a horizontal line.

Nathaniel P. Ford Sr.
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment: Responses to Council Member Diamond's questions.

1. Who is ultimately accountable within JTA (or the City) for delivering each phase of U2C design, construction, operations, maintenance?

- a. The JTA is solely accountable for delivering each phase of the U2C Program. Specifically, the Authority's Automation and Innovation Department is responsible for leading the implementation of the U2C Program under the supervision of SVP/Chief Infrastructure Development Officer Greer Johnson Gillis, and at the direction of CEO Nat Ford, with approval and oversight by the JTA Board of Directors.

2. What controls and check-points will the Council have to review cost estimates, changes, and scope before major decisions are made?

- a. The JTA is solely responsible for delivering the project. The JTA Board of Directors receives regular updates on the program and project development and weighs in on all major decisions, including all contract awards. These meetings are attended by the JTA's Council liaison and are open to the public ensuring transparency in the decision-making process. In addition, the City reviews the JTA budget annually and can address project costs and budgets during budget hearings.

3. How will JTA ensure transparency in subcontractor selection, procurement, and budgeting for U2C?

- a. The JTA ensures transparency by following an established procurement process that complies with all federal, state and local regulations and requirements. This includes publicly noticed and accessible procurement evaluation meetings in compliance with regulations. The JTA contracts directly with the prime contractor and is not involved in the contractor's subcontractor selection.
- b. Procurement Rule 002, Federal Procurement Policy, State Procurement Policy.

[Procurement Rule No. 002 Redline 100124 Final.pdf](#)

4. Has there been or will there be an independent audit or review of the U2C program's risks, budget estimates, and performance metrics?

- a. As part of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements, an independent Project Management Oversight Consultant (PMOC) retained by the FTA conducts regular reviews to monitor progress, assess risks and ensure adherence to established milestones and timelines.

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- b. Quarterly meetings are held throughout the entire lifecycle of the project to provide updates on metrics, milestones, progress, budget, and risk. The last review meeting with the PMOC was held on June 19, 2025, the next meeting will be scheduled for the end of November, 2025. In addition, the OP54 Readiness review approval from PMOC was received for the Bay Street Innovation Corridor Project, stating the JTA was prepared for service operations in June 2025.
- c. Additionally, the JTA undergoes an FTA Triennial Review*, for examining recipient performance and adherence to current FTA requirements and policies.
- d. The JTA undergoes an annual FDOT single audit** in accordance with 2 CFR part 200. The annual single audit must be performed by an independent auditor who is required to determine and report on whether the subrecipient organization has internal control systems that reasonably assure it is managing federal assistance programs in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- e. If federal funds are used for Phase II or Phase III of the U2C Program, the JTA will undergo all federal and state required audits.

* https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2025-04/Fiscal-Year-2025-Contractor-Manual_0.pdf

** [https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/transit/state-management-plan/fdot_state-management-plan_12-12-2023-1-\(1\)-final.pdf?sfvrsn=c9a984ac_1](https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/transit/state-management-plan/fdot_state-management-plan_12-12-2023-1-(1)-final.pdf?sfvrsn=c9a984ac_1)

5. What recourse does the City or Council have if the project fails to meet key benchmarks?

- a. The JTA is ultimately responsible for delivery and management of the project and the City or Council has no recourse if the project fails to meet key benchmarks.

6. What is the current total projected cost of U2C through all phases?

- a. The current total projected cost of the U2C through all phases is \$400 million in capital with an annual O&M cost estimated at \$15-\$19 million, depending on level of service.
- b. Phase I of the U2C Program has a total capital cost of \$65 million. In addition, Operations and Maintenance costs for the first 5 years is \$7.3 million per year.

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- c. The initial planning level cost for Phase II is \$240 million, as documented in the TCAR I Study. Costs are refined during each phase of project development. Phase II is currently undergoing PD&E study, the projected design and construction cost will be refined through the PD&E process by early 2026. Subsequently, construction cost estimates will be updated during each phase of design.
- d. The planning level cost for Phase III is \$95 million, as documented in the TCAR II Study. Costs are refined during each phase of project development. Phase III will be undergoing a PD&E study starting in January 2026, the projected design and construction cost will be refined through the PD&E process by late 2027. Subsequently, construction cost estimates will be updated during each phase of design.

7. What portion of that cost is already committed versus still to be determined?

- a. All costs for U2C Phase I have been committed. This included \$12.5 million in Federal, \$12.5 million in State and \$40 million in JTA funds.
- b. There is \$240 million currently committed for U2C Phase II through the LOGT funding. This is 100% of the planning level cost estimate for Phase II. Costs will be refined during the PD&E efforts to determine if additional funding is necessary for design and construction phases.
- c. There is currently \$5.65 million committed for U2C Phase III. This includes \$1.7 million in federal and \$3.9 million in local funds.

8. How dependent is the U2C on the local option gas tax, federal or state grants, or other new funding sources?

- a. Like all public infrastructure investments, the U2C Program requires funding comprised of local, state, and federal sources. Essential public services like law enforcement, fire prevention and response, public health services, public transportation, road maintenance and traffic management, and others require funding to ensure they are available to all citizens and supports the function of complex society.

9. If anticipated funding sources fall short, what is JTA's fallback or scaling plan?

- a. The U2C Program is a phased program, and funding is secured as each phase advances. The JTA will not move forward with a project phase until full funding is secured.
- b. In addition, we will continue to monitor and aggressively pursue additional funding to secure the necessary funds to deliver each phase of the project.

10. What is the estimated lifecycle operating and maintenance cost once U2C is fully built out?

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- a. Full system estimates, as documented in the TCAR II Study, estimate lifecycle operating and maintenance costs between \$15- \$19 million. The system is assumed to gain efficiencies for future phases through infrastructure deployed during Phase I and advancements in automated vehicle technologies over the life of the full system build out.

11. What is the risk that cost overruns or delays will require additional city funding?

- a. The JTA has a positive track record when it comes to delivering projects, and even supplementing City projects, such as the Better Jacksonville Plan, with funds to deliver essential projects to our community.
- b. The U2C Program is a phased program and funding is secured as project phases advance. The JTA will not move forward with a project phase until full funding is secured reducing risk of cost overruns or delay in project delivery.
- c. At this time, we do not anticipate asking the City for more funding to support the U2C Program. We will continue to aggressively pursue funding opportunities.

12. What ridership levels (daily, monthly, yearly) does JTA project for each phase of U2C?

a.

U2C TCAR II, Scenario 1D, 7 minute frequency, mixed-traffic, 2035 Projection	Average Daily	Estimated Monthly*	Estimated Annually*
Phase I - Bay Street	280	6,067	72,800
Phase II - Skyway Conversion	6,190	134,117	1,609,400
Phase III - Neighborhood Extensions	1,650	35,750	429,000
Full System	8,120	175,933	2,111,200

*Calculated from Average Daily. Not produced by model.

13. On what basis was this ridership estimate made?

- a. The JTA utilized standard industry procedures and sources for forecasting the U2C ridership.
- b. The JTA utilized the FTA's Simplified Trips-On Project Software (STOPS) to estimate ridership for the U2C Program. The Simplified Trips-on-Project Software (STOPS) is a series of programs designed to quickly estimate

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transit project ridership using readily available census data, transit ridership, schedule information, and metropolitan planning organization forecasts of demographic growth. In its basic form, STOPS performs many of the same computations of transit level-of-service and market share found in model sets maintained by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) throughout the United States.

- c. The JTA used regionally adopted data from the North Florida TPO's 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. Northeast Florida Regional Planning Model (NERPMAB1)**

* <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2024-09/STOPS-Overview.pdf>

** <https://sites.google.com/view/nerpm2020/home>

14. To date, what is the actual ridership observed?

- a. The NAVI continues to operate along the Bay Street Innovation Corridor (BSIC), connecting the core of Downtown Jacksonville to the Sports & Entertainment District. From June 30 through October 30, 2025, the NAVI service carried an average of 76 passengers per day, with total ridership of 6578 passengers.
- b. We anticipate continued ridership growth as development progresses throughout Downtown Jacksonville, and we remain confident in our original projection of 280 daily passengers by 2035 along the BSIC contingent upon the build out of the full system and the realization of the significant development happening in Downtown Jacksonville

15. If actual ridership falls short of projections, what is the threshold for scaling back or canceling phases?

- a. Ridership projections are a critical part of transit planning, but they are not the sole determinant of a project's success or continuation. If actual ridership falls short of projections, we do not rely on a single numeric threshold to scale back or cancel phases. Instead, we take a multi-faceted approach that considers both quantitative and qualitative factors. In addition, when evaluating ridership projections for new transit services it's essential to understand that ridership trends evolve over time, and initial performance may not reflect long-term potential.
- b. Similar to many new highways, new services often require time to build ridership, especially when they are introduced ahead of planned development, population growth, employment expansion, or major activity centers in the corridor. In these cases, transit is proactively positioned to

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support future demand, and early ridership may appear modest until surrounding conditions mature. We anticipate continued ridership growth as development progresses throughout Downtown Jacksonville, and we remain confident in our original projection of 280 daily passengers by 2035 along the BSIC contingent upon this activity and build out of the full system.

- c. After a reasonable assessment time for a new service, the JTA will follow a protocol addressing underperforming services. This is standard procedure in management of transit services. A root-cause analysis would be conducted to determine cause or conditions leading to underperformance, multiple options would be evaluated and potential solutions to remedy service. Service management is an iterative process.
- d. Canceling a federally funded project before it's useful life and operating requirements have been met will result in grant payback and a waste of taxpayer dollars.

16. How will U2C integrate with existing JTA bus routes, the Skyway, First Coast Commuter Rail (if applicable), and other modes?

- a. The U2C is already integrated into the existing JTA network. As future phases come online, the system will be further integrated into JTA's transportation network. Aligning, but not duplicating existing services.
- b. NAVI currently shares stops with 5 fixed-route bus stops and is adjacent to the Central Skyway Station, providing easier transfers between services and providing connectivity Downtown.
- c. Integrated transportation planning is a core principle the JTA utilizes to meet our mission of providing seamless mobility to our community.

17. How many of the autonomous vehicles to be purchased have already been contracted or reserved?

- a. Currently 14 autonomous vehicles have been purchased and deployed as part of Phase I of the U2C program.
- b. In addition, 100 autonomous vehicles have been reserved to purchase. This includes 14 Holon urban autonomous vehicles under contract, and 86 HOLON urban autonomous vehicles reserved with an option to purchase.