



FL Transportation Authority: Driverless Vehicles Will Replace Rail System

Rail systems are already being outmoded by autonomous vehicles because of expense. Autonomous mini-vans can pick people up wherever they are, and transport them to wherever they want to go. No, this is not science fiction or a Jetson's cartoon. □ TN Editor

The Ultimate Urban Circulator would deploy autonomous vehicles onto the current Skyway route and expand into other neighborhoods and developments.

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority is moving into the development phase of replacing the aging Skyway rail system with autonomous vehicles that could reach Brooklyn, Riverside and the sports complex anchored by EverBank Field.

The JTA Board of Directors voted unanimously Thursday to move into the development phase of what the staff is calling the Ultimate Urban

Circulator, which would deploy the driverless vehicles onto the current Skyway route and expand into other neighborhoods and developments.

JTA has arranged with a driverless vehicle manufacturer for a demonstration March 8 at Intuition Ale Works. JTA executives have been in discussions with multiple vendors and this demonstration will be an opportunity for those in the community to ride and learn more about the vehicles.

Brad Thoburn, JTA vice president of planning, development and innovation, said the staff would now develop a conversion plan, create a pilot program, and develop a station in Brooklyn. He said the staff must also reach out to the business community and other stakeholders to ensure there is community support. The staff, working with state and local leaders, must also develop a funding strategy.

The JTA opted to replace the Skyway because maintaining and expanding the current system is increasingly expensive. It does not have a timeframe or projected cost for moving forward with the revamped system.

Thoburn said JTA must also establish a timeline and determine which of the autonomous vehicles would work in Jacksonville and how many would be needed.

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