



**OFFICE OF THE CITY
COUNCIL**

Honorable Randle DeFoor
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20220609 Noticed Meeting CM DeFoor RE Public Transportation in Murray Hill

Minutes

Meeting Time: 6:00 P.M.

Meeting Location – at Edgewood Avenue Christian Church, 1041 Edgewood Ave S, Jacksonville, FL 32205

Attendance: Council Member Randy DeFoor, Member of the Florida House of Representative Angie Nixon, JTA Chief Operating Officer Charles Frazier, JTA Assistant Vice President of Operations Khisha Dukes, JTA Director of Planning Services Michael Epstein, JTA Director of Customer Engagement Cheryl Riddick, Murray Hill Preservation Association (MHPA) President Kate Truslow, MHPA Board Member Jose Lazcano, MHPA Board Member Len Burroughs, House District 14 staffer Taj Johnson, House District 14 staffer Michelle Worley Executive Council Assistant Brooks Dame, Pastor Tina, Ms. Stephanie Moir, Mr. John Peck, Ms. Ann Shaffer

Full list of attendance is available with Legislative Services.

Minutes:

Council Member Randy DeFoor welcomed the community and thanked Murray Hill Preservation Association and the Edgewood Avenue Christian Church for co-hosting the town hall. She emphasized the importance of good public transportation to a high quality of life and thanked Jacksonville Transportation Authority and its leadership. She expressed her hope JTA would fix this problem and thanked neighbors for their petition and advocacy on this topic. Council Member DeFoor set public comment expectations.

Representative Angie Nixon shared she is committed to advocating on behalf of neighbors. Council Member DeFoor thanked Representative Nixon for her attendance.

COO Charles Frazier conducted a safety presentation and introduced himself. He shared he was previously the deputy director for Palm Transportation in South Florida. COO Frazier is responsible for rebuilding transportation services in Jacksonville. He shared 8 or 9 routes were retired in the last two years due to the pandemic and lack of operators to provide the service. COO Frazier expressed his intent to find a solution to solve this issue. He stated the JTA would not reduce additional routes. JTA was still understaffed, which is a national issue due to limited drivers with these specialized licenses and training. COO Frazier shared JTA has over 100 driver vacancies. Neighbors are not traveling as they did pre-pandemic, ridership down 50%. He stated the goals were to improve reliability and increase access to



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transit. He shared JTA would be making adjustments to routes and transit lines and advised neighbors to see the flyers in the back.

JTA Director of Planning Services Michael Epstein provided an overview of existing routes in Murray Hill: route 53, route 51, route 14, route 32, and the First Coast Flyer Orange Line. Director Epstein detailed the existing ReadiRide Woodstock zone and the expansion to come on Monday.

JTA Assistant Vice President of Operations Khisha Dukes detailed the June 13th service enhancement, including 9 of the 13 zones for ReadiRide. The zone would double in size to allow for more neighbors to be able to get to work, to FSCJ campus, and the Regional Transportation Center downtown. The cost of the trip was \$2 and needs to be booked in advance.

JTA Director of Customer Engagement Cheryl Riddick spoke to the advantages of the ReadiRide service. It is a curb-to-curb experience. She offered "Travel Training" to provide one on one training to help folks navigate the fixed route system, how to board busses, how to move through the system. This training will help provide mobility opportunities and is excellent for helping neighbors learn how to ride public transportation for the first time.

Council Member DeFoor thanked the JTA Officers and opened public comment.

Ms. Stephanie Moir shared the removal of Bus Route 15 had ruined her practical transportation to work and access to supermarkets. The alternative routes extended the trip and Ms. Moir had resorted to using Uber which impacted her food budget, to get to work. Ms. Moir stated she would be unable to go to see the 4th of July celebration due to the reduced public transportation currently in Murray Hill.

Mr. Jose Lazcano reminded attendees of the Bus 15 original Route. He noted it traveled through the Park and King Town Center, Stockton Street and College Intersection, and 5 Points. The disruption of the route hurt neighbor's social lives and work. Mr. Lazcano expressed his support for bringing the Bus Route 15 back.

Ms. Barbara Chavez voiced her concern for the public transportation available for her needs and asked for the trolley to be considered in addition to restoring Bus Route 15.

Mr. John stated he was long time loyal rider and was aghast at the reduction of routes. He confirmed Murray Hill had a large population of seniors and needed more than the ReadiRide system. Mr. John would like to see an increase in quality of customer service in the late and early hours of the day.



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Mr. Claud Myers echoed his neighbors statement "Bring Bus Route 15 Back" and suggested JTA explore ways to encourage local citizens to become bus drivers.

Ms. Judy Kratz shared that she encountered a rude driver on her most recent bus ride on Route 14. She encouraged JTA to bring back Bus Route 15 and expand routes to Lenox and McDuff.

Ms. Debbie Mendez-Vigo reported the new public transportation routes did not go into the heart of Riverside Avondale, where pharmacies, restaurants, and other stores were.

Ms. Eileen McMillen wished for Bus Route 15 to be restored to continue to provide services to seniors in the Murray Hill area.

Ms. Faye Carter thanked the audience for the good turn-out. She expressed her concern that the research JTA used to support removing Bus Route 15 was inadequate. She vouched for the need for Bus Route 15 to be restored.

Mr. Joseph Kennelly shared Bus Route 15 was the only way to get to Walmart and this was vital for the seniors who live in Murray Hill. He would rather sacrifice the People Mover downtown.

Mr. Kenneth Robley agreed that his story reflected many he had heard tonight. He encouraged JTA to bring back Bus Route 15 or a partial return during peak transit hours.

Mr. Michael Prince stated he lives nearby at Sundale Manor and was new to the area. He expressed his desire to get Bus Route 15 back online and to restore bus shelters with benches.

Mr. Larry Frasier stated he lived in Murray Hill since 1971 and that Bus Route 15 was vital to the elderly people in this neighborhood. He stated it was a matter of social justice and that it wasn't fair to remove Bus Route 15.

Ms. Kimberly Luft shared she was a teacher at the Beaches and has lived along Post Street for about 10 years. She shared she had two walk hours to get to the bus route that served her. She reported her close friend who also rode Bus Route 15 could not walk that distance and the route needed to be restored.

Ms. Emma Salters has lived in Murray Hill since 1992 and riding the JTA bus since she was a little girl. She expressed her desire for the route to return and restore services to seniors who relied on these services.

Mr. Rufus Parks share he lived at Sundale Manor and currently must walk over a half mile to get to his new bus route. He encouraged JTA to bring Bus Route 15 back.



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Ms. Anna Shaffer stated that she bought her home in Murray Hill partially because there were 3 routes through Murray Hill. She echoed her neighbors wish to bring back more bus shelters. Uber prices were too high to be an acceptable solution.

Mr. John Peck noted that Bus Route 15 used to take neighbors to the library. Bus Route 31 and 14 were not adequate for the Murray Hill Community. He also stated these options were not available on Sundays.

Mr. Len Burroughs introduced himself as a CPAC representative for Murray Hill. He stated that he moved into Murray Hill because the good public transportation allowed his household to only have one car. He requested a route be restored going through Riverside.

Mr. Richard Shieldhouse stated he did not believe Covid-19 was the cause of the bus removal. He stated there are routes to malls on the other side of the river that no one went to. Mr. Shieldhouse was not pleased with the Flyer Bus route or schedule. He suggested service should be rethought and agreed JTA needed to bring the Bus Route 15 back.

Ms. Becky Allison shared she lived in the Sundale Apartments and that the cost of the current services provided by JTA were not worth it. She outlined what additions and routes made sense to her.

With no other speaker requests, Council Member DeFoor thanked everyone and closed opened public comment. She addressed JTA and surmised that maybe ridership had decreased because the new routes were not where people were. It needed to be fixed. She requested JTA look at the routes, ridership, on 15, and look at a plan to fill this gap in service.

Mr. Charles Frazier agreed his job was to solve transportation problems. He thanked the neighbors for sharing their experiences. He recommended his team look at the options and come back together. He would also offer training in the community for existing services. Representative Nixon asked for a solution in the next 2 weeks be submitted to her and Council Member DeFoor. She also asked COO Frazier to ride the bus. Mr. Frazier accepted. Council Member DeFoor thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:07 PM

Minutes prepared by Brooks Dame, Executive Council Assistant to Council Member Randy DeFoor. The following items were submitted for public record and can be accessed by contacting the Legislative Services Division:



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20220609 Minutes Noticed Meeting CM DeFoor RE Public Transportation in Murray Hill

cc: Council Members and Staff

Margaret "Peggy" Sidman, Director/Council Secretary
Merriane Lahmeur, Chief, Legislative Services
Yvonne Mitchell, Chief, Administrative Services Division
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