

The Break Room: Todd Clark, Mobility Coordinator, November 19, 2024

Narrator:

You've tuned in to another edition of The Break Room, a weekly conversation about how the city of St. Augustine works from those who do the work every day. Hosted by the city of St. Augustine's Communications director, Melissa Wissel, The Break Room offers a closer look at the different city departments and provides updates on current and upcoming projects and events. And now your host, Melissa Wissel.

Melissa Wissel:

Welcome to the Break Room and thanks for tuning in. The 31st annual Nights of Light season is upon us and that means residents and visitors will be coming to the nation's oldest city in droves to see one of the most spectacular holiday lighting displays in the nation. No, let's make that in the world. And when they get here, where are they all supposed to park? So I've got some shuttle information for you. And here to tell us all about park and ride shuttles is our mobility coordinator, Todd Clark. Todd, welcome back.

Todd Clark:

Oh, well, thank you. Thank you for having me back.

Melissa Wissel:

Are you ready?

Todd Clark:

Yeah, I'm ready. We got an exciting couple months coming up.

Melissa Wissel:

It always is.

Todd Clark:

Yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

And we always get by.

Todd Clark:

We'll get through the circus.

Melissa Wissel:

We have a new vendor this year or a primary vendor.

Todd Clark:

No We've actually lost a vendor. We lost Elite. And so now we just have Candies and I, I sleep really well at night when Candies is on the job.

Melissa Wissel:

Good.

Todd Clark:

They do. Good job. Absolutely.

Melissa Wissel:

And they do big buses, little buses, little bit of everything.

Todd Clark:

So we got a little bus and a big bus and their little buses, 28 seats and then their large bus is 56, which I think is really going to help us out on the north side of town with the health department because we kind of struggled with that the last few years with Elite because their buses were only about 12 to 24 seats.

Melissa Wissel:

And you get a lot of people that park up north side of town.

Todd Clark:

Yes. There's probably about 450 spots between the health department and the admin building.

Melissa Wissel:

So let's talk about locations while we're mentioning sizes, lots and spaces, talking about the north side of town, you just mentioned health department and admin. So go ahead and cue our listeners into where can I go to park? If I'm coming in from the north, from the south, where do I go?

Todd Clark:

So for the light up night on the north side of town, we're going to be using the health department at 200 San Sebastian View. And we also have overflow into the admin building which is just to the west of it. We also have 301 San Marco which is across the street from there's a restaurant called Doss. And there's a. It's next to Coco La Creme. We have that on the north side. On the south kind of southwest side of the mainland, we have the brown lot which is at 198 West King Street. And on the island we'll be using Anastasia Baptist Church and RB Hunt this year .

Melissa Wissel:

Only on Light Up Night.

Todd Clark:

Only on Light Up Night. So and as far as the north side of town, we will be using the north side of town. Also on Thanksgiving weekend. This is going to be the 29th and 30th as well as the 7th, 14th, 21st of December. The shuttle times are 1pm to 11pm on the 7th we do have the Christmas parade, so we'll be start shuttling at 8am

Melissa Wissel:

That's nice. We added that in a couple of years ago. So Light Up Night. Just so folks are listening in on when is light up night? It is the Saturday before Thanksgiving. That's November 23rd this year. And as Todd just mentioned, the shuttle on the island is only for light up night. Lots of folks come in from the island from the south and that's a really great shuttle. Where do we get dropped off and picked up if we're on the island on light up night only.

Todd Clark:

So on the island the shuttles will go to the corner. There's kind of like a. A STAR corner. It's El Gazar Flagler Boulevard, Gardo street. And we will drop off at that location and then you can walk down Alcazar street to the cul de sac. We'll have portable restrooms there. We'll have light towers to help, you know, guide people. So it'll be lit up and then you go over the bridge.

Melissa Wissel:

And walk into town.

Todd Clark:

Walk into town.

Melissa Wissel:

Some tips to our participants who like to come into town. I come in at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I park on the island or 5 o'clock or whatever time I come in. Is there a long line when I have to go back? Should I wait?

Todd Clark:

No, this is, this is very different from the 4th of July because on the 4th of July the fireworks ends and everybody's got to go home immediately. This is kind of a slow filtering back. Also, we want to mention that the island shuttle runs from 4pm to 11pm where the mainland runs from 1pm to 11pm

Melissa Wissel:

okay, so come later in the day on the island. But you can come in 01:00 ish to get those parking locations.

Todd Clark:

And some of the things we do want to go over as far as what's allowed on the shuttle and what's not.

Melissa Wissel:

Sure right ahead.

Todd Clark:

Just please, no alcoholic beverages or weapons and no, and no pets. But if you do have a service animal, that's, that's okay. As far as strollers are concerned in wheelchairs, they are allowed. It's preferable that they be able to be collapsed, but if they can't, you know, we can try to work that. We just can't block the aisle.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay. Do we have a handicap bus in specific for wheelchairs?

Todd Clark:

So on the island, only one of the six buses that we'll have is not handicap accessible. So the other five will be handicap accessible and we'll cut loose. Probably four buses at I think 9 o'clock at night was what we did last year. And the two remaining buses will be handicap accessible. Candies buses, the large buses are handicap accessible.

Melissa Wissel:

And you mentioned the restrooms on the island. Do we have restrooms or porta potties or anything like that at the Health Department and the admin?

Todd Clark:

Yes.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay.

Todd Clark:

Yeah, we'll have, we'll have two porta potties at the health department, 301 and two at Broudy's. We will have light towers also at Broudy's and 301. We don't, we don't need them at the Health Department because it's a well lit parking lot.

Melissa Wissel:

The shuttles in general, great, great program. We run them holidays, nights of light season. And just a reminder to folks, the shuttles in December are on those Saturdays. And then you and I have talked, we're actually going to do it on the 4th of January.

Todd Clark:

Yes. So last the last two years, the parking garage closed down twice on the Saturday after New Year's Day. So that's usually our criteria for running a shuttle is that the parking garage is close, closes twice in one day. So we've decided to add January 4th. It is kind of a long holiday week because Christmas and New Year's Day are on Wednesdays this year. So we're going to run the shuttle on January 4th. And one thing we want to let folks keep in mind is that December 26th through the 30th shuttle will be at 198 West King street only. Will not be on the north side of town that week.

Melissa Wissel:

Broudy's lot only. between Christmas and New Year's. Okay. If you're just now tuning in, you're listening to the break room. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director and I have Todd Clark with us. He is our mobility coordinator. He is the pro on all things park and ride, shuttles, anything. One thing I did want to remind folks, we didn't really talk about it yet but is the website that we have citystaug.com/parkingspotfinder, we haven't really shared that or made a big to do about it but that is a really cool component of our parking information. Can you talk a little bit about what I can find on the parking spot finder?

Todd Clark:

Yeah, a lot of the parking. It's a company's called Modii and it's web based. So you just go onto the web and put in parking finder and St Augustine. It'll take you right to it. And what it'll show you is how many spots are approximately available in any given location. So you know you can, you can just put your, the little mouse over the top of Granada street by Price's Barbershop and I'll tell you that there's maybe three spots open.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay. And this is anytime, not just during nights of lights. That, that component on the web is always available. So that's again citystag.com/parkingspotfinder or like you said Todd, you can do a parking spot finder St. Augustine on your Google search and it'll find it. So let's talk a little bit about the STAR circulator. How's that doing? And I know we modify the hours for that here coming up soon to accommodate the traffic.

Todd Clark:

Yeah. So starting on light up night the STAR circulator normally runs from 10am to 10pm starting on November 23rd we will run it from 10am to 5pm and then we will restart the circulator its normal hours on January 6th.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay. So the Monday after,

Todd Clark:

and the STAR Rider is doing pretty well. It depends on how busy we are in the city and what time of year it is. We were doing probably 900 people a week during the summer when it was busy. Now we're down to about 500 people a week.

Melissa Wissel:

And remind our listeners what is the STAR Circulator? You and I know what it is.

Todd Clark:

So the STAR circulator is, it starts at the VIC and it's a free service and Old Town Trolley is our vendor and they will take you. It leaves the the clock circle and it will go to river and Fort restaurant that we have a stop there and it will stay there for about five minutes, let people off and then it'll move on. And then stop 2 is on Cathedral Place by the old bank of America just to the west of St. George Street. And it will stop there for about five minutes so people can unload and then people can get back on and then it returns back to the clock circle at the VIC.

Melissa Wissel:

So it's a really great transportation solution. I'm going to give a shout out to the program. I used it, I think I actually used it over fourth of July holidays this summer. But yeah, you park at the parking garage, hop on that shuttle and it's going to drop you down at the bottom of St. George... Like you said, they're up by Mary's and River and Fort and then bring you back around. Really convenient. Nice way to get around town. The reminder here folks is that the STAR circulator will not run its normal hours Starting on the 23rd, the 23rd, on light up

nights it goes to 10 to 5. We don't want to have to be trying to circle that during the 5 o'clock hour and everybody's in town trying to see the lights.

Todd Clark:

It'll just be too much traffic and it won't be able, we won't be able to get around in the five minute time frame that it needs to get around. It's actually a 15 minute trip, but not bad. No, it's actually very regular and it's very reliable. So for those people, if the weather's too hot or it's too cold or it's raining and you've got to get to your job or you just want to get to a restaurant, just hop on the STAR circulator, the garage and it'll take you to where.

Melissa Wissel:

And it's free.

Todd Clark:

Yep, totally free.

Melissa Wissel:

We love, we love free. That's great. Let's talk a little bit reminding folks. I know this isn't quite in your area of expertise. Let's just remind folks though about the mobile app. Yes, we want folks to be using the mobile app. Park St Aug is the, the app. And the one thing I do want to remind folks because we deal with it with our social media is reminding folks if you use the mobile app but you didn't register your license plate yet as a resident, you won't receive that discount.

Todd Clark:

That's correct. So the mobile app is a tool that anybody can use and it and it will charge you \$2.50. However, if you are a St. John's county resident and you do want to get the discount, you do need to go to our website which is parkstaug.com and you'll want to go to the port that is sign up for resident discount. You're going to attach your driver's license and your registration, you're going to fill out the form and it takes, it could take up to maybe four weeks for approval. But then you will get an email that says you are approved for registered

discount. And at that point when you put your license plate in, it will know that you get a discount. One thing to do, keep in mind, if you have a zero in your license plate, it is a zero, not an O. They do not put I tell people zero. No, Oscar.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay.

Todd Clark:

it's not an O. Yeah, it's a zero.

Melissa Wissel:

And the parking garage, again, same thing. If you've got that resident discount, it's a license plate reader.

Todd Clark:

Yeah, we do, we have license plate reader. The reader will pick up your license plate and the clerk inside the booth will know to charge you the resident discount if there they. We do have a misread occasionally, but they are able to access the Internet and I'm pretty sure they can tell.

Melissa Wissel:

That you're just that you're get you that discount.

Todd Clark:

Yeah, your resident discount.

Melissa Wissel:

The park and ride shuttle you mentioned earlier. We kind of sort of mentioned it, but I also want to go back and be clear. We have a holiday Christmas parade on the 7th this year and the hours of the shuttle will be early. The park and ride shuttle.

Todd Clark:

Yeah, it's going to be 8am we're starting.

Melissa Wissel:

So if I want to come in for the parade, I can actually go park at one of those locations.

Todd Clark:

Yes. Yeah. And we'll have a bus that's ready to go at 7:30. So you're there at quarter to quarter to eight and you need to get into town. We will take you down if you're there. We won't, we don't have to start exactly at 8:00.

Melissa Wissel:

Right. But if I'm going to use the parking garage, we also using that Modii app, or parking spot finder is one way to know as you're driving into town. We also have signs around. I don't know if people are aware of what, what the signs are if they notice it, but we do have digital signs.

Todd Clark:

We do. There is one on West Castillo Drive has your traveling east. Well, it would be eastbound and there is one digital sign there and there also is one, I believe it's on Orange street, very close to the clock circle. And that would be if you're traveling westbound.

Melissa Wissel:

And that just tells you if you're coming towards the parking garage, whether it's worth keeping on going or whether you should turn around and go somewhere else.

Todd Clark:

You can also go to Modii and it will give you an approximation of how many spaces are available.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah, that Modii parking spot finder is actually really cool. We probably should do a little more to tell people about it.

Todd Clark:

Yeah, it's really a very good tool and we're hoping down the road that it's going to maybe do some other things like maybe tell you when the Bridge of Lions is up. Right now we don't have that capability and eventually we're hoping to have the STAR Circulator on live time to where you'll be able to click on a link and you'll actually see where the STAR circulator is physically in live time.

Melissa Wissel:

We had that. I do, I will say a couple of years ago we were able to push that information out. The other thing you mentioned, the STAR circulator, something to keep in mind for folks that use the Broudy lot, you know, the long term vision which is coming is the parking garage that will go on the corner there. That that circulator is going to be a service that we're going to expand upon. So you're going to be very busy.

Todd Clark:

Yes. And well, we're. And we're hoping that we can break ground next summer. Obviously there's still a design that has to be finished and then they've got to take it to the commission, get approval and hopefully we're going to get started. It'd be great if we can break ground next summer. Should take about 18 months to build.

Melissa Wissel:

Fingers crossed.

Todd Clark:

Yeah, 12 to 18 months.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, thank you, Todd, for all the information about Nights of Lights Shuttles. We do have a website. We've got a link on the homepage citystaug.com check it out. Come down, park and ride. Don't deal with the traffic and let us do the driving for you.

Todd Clark:

It was an honor to be here. Thank you very much.

Melissa Wissel:

Have you back?

Todd Clark:

Yeah, we'd love to come back.

Melissa Wissel:

If you missed part of this broadcast and want to go back and listen from the beginning, you can find this and other podcasts at citystaugradio.com. we're on Spotify, Apple podcast, Spreaker and more. We want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city. Stay connected with us, follow us on social. You'll see us at @citystaug. You can find us on Facebook X and Instagram. And until next time, thanks for tuning in.

Narrator:

You've been listening to The Break Room, a weekly program addressing projects and programs offered by the city of St. Augustine. Join us each week as the city's communications director, Melissa Wissel, has in depth conversations with the people who make our town work to meet the needs of our community. See you at this time next week for another edition of The Break Room.