

# money

## AIR TRAVEL

For some passengers, new warnings bring new hurdles

Story, F-2

# Driverless transit vehicles could replace Skyway rail



Vasilis Karavidas, a test and operation engineer for Easy Mile, talks to passengers about his company's autonomous vehicle. The Jacksonville Transportation Authority and World Class Jax worked with Easy Mile to demonstrate an autonomous vehicle that took passengers around a course under the Hart Bridge approach alongside Gator Bowl Blvd. on March 8. (Bob Self/Florida Times-Union)

## JTA plans would place routes in existing business locations

By Drew Dixon  
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Samantha Bass said Intuition Ale Works has been drawing steady crowds for the most part since it opened last year on Bay Street in the thick of Jacksonville's sports complex. But business could always be better, especially if there are additional transit options for customers.

So when Bass along with others at the brewery saw Jacksonville Transportation Authority officials demonstrating an autonomous vehicle across the street earlier this month, she said the transportation concept could only bring an additional boon to Intuition.

"The parking situation down here can be a little bit tricky, especially on event [game or concert] days," said Bass, the assistant taproom manager at Intuition. "I think having a transit system that allowed people to park elsewhere pos-

sibly practically for free or for less money could save \$25 or \$30 that you pay just to park near the stadium.

"I think that would help us a lot to bring people over here. They wouldn't have to worry about parking," Bass said.

And that's exactly the economic impact JTA officials see the autonomous vehicles providing for the local business community.

While the agency showed how the driverless vehicles work on March 8, as the rounded red-and-black vehicle navigated its way seamlessly through the parking lot across from Intuition, the broader plans call for extension of routes that will ramp off of the existing Skyway rail system. The JTA board voted in February to move forward with development plans to replace the current rail cars with the autonomous vehicles that

TRANSIT continues on F-4

## Business districts targeted by autonomous Skyway

Jacksonville Transportation Authority officials are already beginning plans to extend the existing Skyway people mover in downtown with autonomous vehicles. Those driverless vehicles would ramp down off the existing Skyway tracks and extend well into several business districts on Jacksonville's north and south banks of the city's core.



Note: Not intended to show street alignment. That will be determined in project development with public input. Source: JTA. Steve.Nelson@jacksonville.com



sunday notebook  
roger bull

## Indoor 6x6 soccer fields are coming to Baymeadows

Plans are under way to build a large, indoor soccer facility in the Baymeadows area. It'd go in at the end of Baymeadows Way West, off of Philips Highway and about a mile north of Baymeadows Road. The 7.87 acres of vacant land are up for rezoning before Jacksonville City Council.

It's going to be a 50,000-square-foot facility, said Ciaran McArdle, the co-founder and CEO of XL Sports World, who has a Scottish accent that fits his name well. It will include two 6x6 turf soccer fields as well as fields for futsal, a version of soccer played on a hard surface.

XL Sports has seven locations along the East Coast, from Maine to Orlando, and has been adding two a year lately. McArdle said it will have its own leagues as well as rent space to other teams and even other sports. Eventually, outdoor fields will be added, he said.

The total price tag is \$5 million and it will take about a year to build.

## Downtown dining

In case you missed the story last week, Morton's the Steakhouse is opening a restaurant inside Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront hotel. It closed its Southbank location five years ago and it's going into a space left vacant when Plaza III closed in 2009.

## Mandarin

Howdy Russell has worked for The Loop, for Larry's Giant Subs and has been an investor in Maple Street Biscuit Co. Now he's opening his own restaurant for the first time.

**Jumpin Jax House of Food** is going into the spot on San Jose Boulevard in Mandarin recently vacated by Red Elephant Pizza. It will serve salads, chicken sandwiches, burgers and pizza, he said, that you can order and pick up at the counter. His partners also have experience. Charles Moles was with The Loop, Panera Bread and Maple Street, while Chris Fusco owns five Larry's Giant Subs franchises in town.

Russell said they're shooting for opening the first of May.

## More dining

Both **Dickey's Barbecue Pit** restaurants closed quietly last month. The San Jose Boulevard location opened in 2012, but the one on Bonnelle Road, just off Butler Boulevard and Philips Highway, had only opened a couple of months ago. The Dallas-based chain had 78 franchises in 2007 and 600 by 2017. According to Entrepreneur.com, the investment to open a franchise ranges from \$280,819 to \$481,819.

And permits were issued for:

**11825 San Jose Blvd., new Waffle House**, \$250,000, 1,635 square feet, Waffle House Inc.  
**13423 Beach Blvd., ten-**

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The planned XL Sports facility on Baymeadows Road would feature two indoor soccer fields. (Source: XL Sports.)

## Affluence and online shopping are correlated

By Sarah Halzack  
The Washington Post

There's no doubt online shopping is a wave roiling the retail industry — and our culture, for that matter.

But it's a wave that's not sweeping up all shoppers in quite the same way.

According to new data, the rise of online shopping across the United States is rather uneven, with more affluent states marching more quickly toward a lifestyle in which buying happens on a screen instead of at the mall.

Adobe, whose software runs under many retail websites, analyzes data on billions of website visits to create its Digital Price Index, a real-time snapshot of online consumer spending. Analysts there studied digital shopping patterns over a one-year period that ended in February 2017. Their measurements included state-by-state breakdowns of growth in total e-commerce spending, as well as online spending per person.

The Adobe research revealed substantial choppiness in year-over-year growth rates in total spending. For example, states near the coasts such as



Amazon.com packages are scanned on a conveyor belt before they are shipped out from a fulfillment center in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin)

New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, New Jersey and California saw some of the strongest surges in online shopping. (Big pickups weren't limited to the eastern and western seaboard; Texas and Mississippi also posted robust e-commerce growth.)

Maryland saw an 8 percent increase in spending, and Virginia saw a 7 percent uptick.

Meanwhile, online spending retreated or held steady in a handful of states, including Idaho and South Dakota.

But things get especially interesting when per-person online spending is plotted against the most recent Census Bureau figures for state-level median income.

A noticeable correlation in the data suggests that affluent consumers are adapting to online shopping especial-

SHOPPING continues on F-4

## Health savings accounts poised for a major expansion

By Chad Terhune & Julie Appleby  
Kaiser Health News

Health savings accounts are poised for a major expansion by Republicans in Washington, D.C., and that could mean millions more customers — and fees — flowing to a handful of companies.

Investors are betting on it, bidding up shares of HSA provider HealthEquity by about 35 percent since the November election. It's one of the best performing stocks on Wall Street since Donald Trump won the White House.

Another big beneficiary might be Optum Bank, the industry leader, with more than 3 million of these accounts and about \$7 billion in assets it manages for consumers. It's owned by

the nation's largest health insurer, UnitedHealth Group.

For years, these companies and others have been lobbying lawmakers for changes that could become reality with a Republican-controlled Congress and Trump administration.

The GOP health plan reflects the party's broad consensus for giving more Americans access to HSAs, which allow people to put aside money tax-free for medical expenses.

"There is an excitement in the business now," said Steve Neeleman, founder of Utah-based HealthEquity and a former trauma surgeon. "There are definitely things Washington can do to make HSAs more entic-

ACCOUNTS continues on F-4