

# The Florida Times-Union

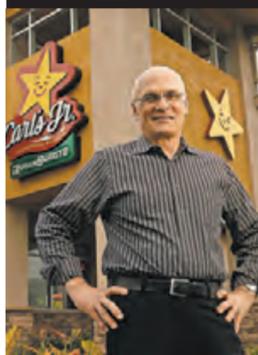
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## BOLLES FALLS TO COCOA IN TITLE GAME

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# 'Vastly different' Skyway proposed

JTA recommends system have driverless cars, be expanded to Riverside, stadium complex

By Sebastian Kitchen  
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The Jacksonville Transportation Authority staff on Thursday recommended replacing the Skyway rail system with driverless vehicles that would travel the current Skyway route and an added corridor between Riverside and the downtown sports complex.

The agency's executive staff is uncertain of the cost or the time frame to move

forward on the high-tech vehicles and creating the route that would begin near EverBank Field on one end and Riverside on the other. Other stops could include the site of the Riverside Arts Market, Five Points, Brooklyn, old city hall and the Shipyards, which is under consideration for development near the sports complex.

The JTA staff recommended the proposal to the agency's board at its Thursday afternoon meeting.

"We call it Skyway, but it will be vastly different than it is today," JTA CEO Nathaniel Ford told the JTA board. He said the agency is considering emerging technologies hoping the system will be around for 40 or 50 years.

SKYWAY continues on A-4



The new Skyway would have driverless vehicles and travel between Riverside and the downtown sports complex. (Rendering provided courtesy of JTA)

# 1921 - 2016 GODSPEED JOHN GLENN

Fighter pilot, astronaut, politician — and true American hero — dead at 95



John Glenn talks with astronauts on the International Space Station on Feb. 20, 2012 in Columbus, Ohio. Glenn, who was the first U.S. astronaut to orbit Earth and later spent 24 years representing Ohio in the Senate, has died at 95. (Jay LaPrete/Associated Press)

By Seth Borenstein  
Associated Press

**J**ohn Glenn, whose 1962 flight as the first U.S. astronaut to orbit the Earth made him an all-American hero and propelled him to a long career in the U.S. Senate, died Thursday. The last survivor of the original Mercury 7 astronauts was 95.

Glenn died at the James Cancer Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, where he was hospitalized for more than a week, said Hank Wil-

son, communications director for the John Glenn School of Public Affairs.

John Herschel Glenn Jr. had two major career paths that often intersected: flying and politics, and he soared in both of them.

Before he gained fame orbiting the world, he was a fighter pilot in two wars, and as a test pilot, he set a transcontinental speed record. He later served 24 years in the Senate from Ohio. A rare setback was a failed 1984 run for the Democratic presidential nomination.

His long political career enabled him to return to space in the shuttle Discovery at

age 77 in 1998, a cosmic victory lap that he relished and turned into a teachable moment about growing old. He holds the record for the oldest person in space.

More than anything, Glenn was the ultimate and uniquely American space hero: a combat veteran with an easy smile, a strong marriage of 70 years and nerves of steel. Schools, a space center and the Columbus airport were named after him. So were children.

The Soviet Union leaped ahead in space

GLENN continues on A-4

# 'House of horrors' suspect charged with murder; buried body ID'd

Neighbors relieved; police say 'highly likely' there are more victims

By Dan Scanlan  
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Neighbors said for years Russell David Tillis hurled insults and threats at them, once chained a woman to his fence and was ultimately arrested in May 2015 after turning on officers with knives before luring them into his yard booby-trapped with half-buried



Tillis



Gunter

neighbors were elated with the latest turn in the long-running case. It had been months since a woman's dismembered body was dug up in his backyard in February while he was in jail.

The sobering news is that there may be more victims based on what he has said in jail since his original arrest nine months ago, Assistant Chief Scott Dingee said. He said Tillis sought out vulnerable young females with a histo-

TILLIS continues on A-5



This is the condemned Jacksonville property on East Bowden Circle of Russell David Tillis, where the dismembered remains of Joni Lynn Gunter were found buried in February. Tillis was charged with her murder late Wednesday. (Dan Scanlan/Florida Times-Union)

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## GLENN

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exploration by putting the Sputnik 1 satellite in orbit in 1957, and then launched the first man in space, cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, in a 108-minute orbital flight on April 12, 1961. After two suborbital flights by Alan Shepard Jr. and Gus Grissom, it was up to Glenn to be the first American to orbit the Earth.

"Godspeed, John Glenn," fellow astronaut Scott Carpenter radioed just before Glenn thundered off a Cape Canaveral launch pad, now a National Historic Landmark, to a place America had never been. At the time of that Feb. 20, 1962, flight, Glenn was 40 years old.

During the four-hour, 55-minute flight, Glenn uttered a phrase that he would repeat frequently throughout life: "Zero G, and I feel fine."

"It still seems so vivid to me," Glenn said in a 2012 interview with The Associated Press on the 50th anniversary of the flight. "I still can sort of pseudo feel some of those same sensations I had back in those days during launch and all."

Glenn's ride in the cramped Friendship 7 capsule had its scary moments. Sensors showed his heat shield was loose after three orbits, and Mission Control worried he might burn up during re-entry when temperatures reached 3,000 degrees. But the heat shield held.

Glenn was born July 18, 1921, in Cambridge, Ohio, and grew up in New Concord, Ohio. His love of flight was lifelong; John Glenn Sr. spoke of the many summer evenings he arrived home to find his son running around the yard with outstretched arms, pretending he was piloting a plane.

Glenn's goal of becoming a commercial pilot was changed by World War II. He left Muskingum College to join the Naval Air Corps and soon after, the Marines.

He became a successful fighter pilot who ran 59 hazardous missions, often as a volunteer or as the requested backup of assigned pilots. A war later, in Korea, he earned the nickname "MiG-Mad Marine."

Glenn's public life began when he broke the transcontinental airspeed record, bursting from Los Angeles to New York City



Mercury astronaut John Glenn, and his wife, Annie, ride in the back of an open car with Vice President Lyndon Johnson during a parade in Glenn's honor in Washington on Feb. 26, 1962. (Associated Press)

in three hours, 23 minutes and eight seconds. With his Crusader averaging 725 mph, the 1957 flight proved the jet could endure stress when pushed to maximum speeds over long distances.

In New York, he got a hero's welcome — his first tickertape parade. He got another after his flight on Friendship 7.

He first ran for the U.S. Senate in 1964 but left the race when he suffered a concussion after slipping in the bathroom and hitting his head on the tub. He tried again in 1970 but was defeated in the primary.

For the next four years, Glenn devoted his attention to business and investments that made him a multimillionaire. In 1974, Glenn ran for the Senate again and won.

Glenn represented Ohio in the Senate longer than any other senator in the state's history. He became an expert on nuclear weaponry and was the Senate's most dogged advocate of nonproliferation. He was the leading supporter of



Astronaut John Glenn retrieves a paper airplane from pilot Steven Lindsey (right) aboard the space shuttle Discovery on Nov. 1, 1998. The first U.S. man to orbit the Earth, he became the oldest, launched into orbit at age 77. (NASA)

the B-1 bomber when many in Congress doubted the need for it.

Glenn said the lowest point of his life was 1990, when he and four other

senators came under scrutiny for their connections to Charles Keating, the notorious financier who eventually served prison time for his role in the cost-

ly savings and loan failure of the 1980s. The Senate Ethics Committee cleared Glenn of serious wrongdoing but said he "exercised poor judgment."

He announced his impending retirement in 1997, 35 years to the day after he became the first American in orbit, saying, "There is still no cure for the common birthday."

Glenn returned to space in a long-awaited second flight in 1998 aboard the space shuttle Discovery. He got to move around aboard the shuttle for far longer — nine days, compared with just under five hours in 1962 — as well as sleep and experiment with bubbles in weightlessness.

In 1943, Glenn married his childhood sweetheart, Anna Margaret Castor. They had two children, Carolyn and John David.

The couple spent their later years between Washington and Columbus. Both served as trustees at their alma mater, Muskingum College.

Glenn spent time promoting the John Glenn School of Public Affairs at Ohio State University, which also houses an archive of his private papers and photographs.

## SKYWAY

Continued from A-1

Ford recommended the board formally approve moving forward with autonomous vehicles at its January meeting, a move that would give the staff direction to further develop costs, engineering and options.

The proposed system would combine elevated tracks, including those now used for the Skyway, and travel on the ground level.

"What we really, really like about the autonomous vehicle technology is it is truly flexible," said Brad Thoburn, JTA vice president of planning, development and innovation.

The new vehicles would likely cost less but have a shorter life expectancy, Thoburn said. He said that could be a positive since the technology is quickly advancing and evolving, and JTA would not be locked in for as long.

The new vehicles are much lighter, would likely be battery-powered and the infrastructure would be less intrusive, Thoburn said. However, the new vehicles would likely be slower, he said.

Thoburn and Ford have said they must determine when the technology is right to move forward, particularly with some current technological and legislative impediments. They also want to access every potential funding source and ensure the project is federal-aid eligible.

He said the agency must keep the current Skyway system and vehicles running until JTA begins the conversion. Overhauling the system, Thoburn said, likely would require it to be shut down for about 18 months.

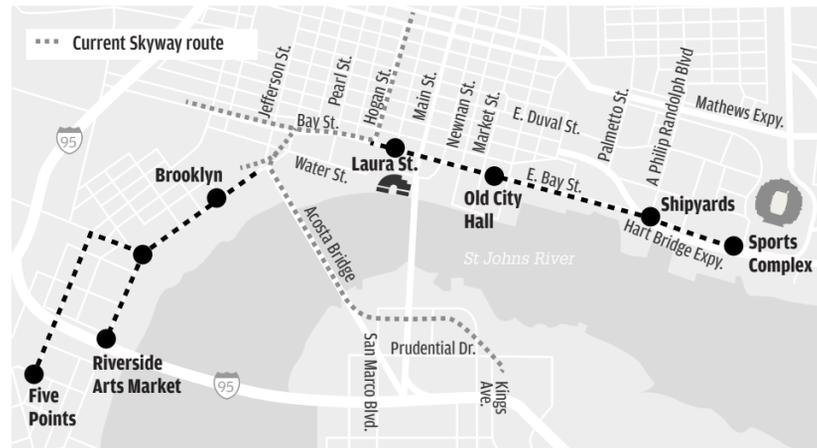
While transforming the Skyway could take years,



A Skyway train makes the turn from Hogan Street to West Bay Street. The current system debuted 27 years ago. (Bob Self/Florida Times-Union)

## Modernizing and expanding the Skyway

Jacksonville Transportation Authority staff recommended modernizing the Skyway rail system to include autonomous vehicles and create a corridor from Five Points in Riverside to the sports complex including EverBank Field. This is the proposed corridor:



Source: Jacksonville Transportation Authority

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Thoburn said JTA could break out and expedite certain sections such as one going into Brooklyn along Riverside Avenue.

Ford said the staff looked at systems around the world, particularly downtown people movers. He

said the proposal is a culmination of work that began a year ago when the board indicated it wanted JTA to keep, modernize and expand the Skyway, and created an advisory committee.

"It is beyond conceptual.

It is rapidly developing," Thoburn said of autonomous vehicles.

JTA unveiled Skyway 27 years ago, a high-tech driverless system ahead of its time, but the system never lived up to expectations. The 2.5-mile system was

expensive and was never expanded to reach as many areas as hoped. JTA officials agreed expanding the current system was cost prohibitive with the age of the vehicles and would not take advantage of new technology. Thoburn said the current system limits opportunities for expansion.

While the elevated concrete structure over portions of downtown streets and the St. Johns River is sound, the vehicles are obsolete and expensive to repair.

Updating the system would create the need to purchase not only the high-tech vehicles, but also change the current infrastructure. The current Skyway has a concrete guide beam that will have to be removed to allow the new vehicles to travel the path.

With the new routes on the ground level, there will also be the need to separate them from pedestrians and traffic for safety and so those do not interrupt movement of the shuttles. Thoburn envisions dedicated lanes when the vehicles operate at street level.

He said JTA wants more people to move downtown and this would allow for people to move around downtown. Thoburn said the current Skyway does not really allow people to get around downtown.

"It's really important for the development of downtown," Thoburn said.

He said, echoing an official with the Jacksonville Sports Council, that "it's about connecting the Jacksonville experience." Thoburn pointed out downtown Jacksonville and adjacent neighborhoods are spread out. JTA has not determined the exact stops or route.

After incorporating the new technology and focusing on creating a route into

Riverside and the sports complex, Thoburn said JTA hopes to expand into other areas in future phases and possibly create a circulator into San Marco and the proposed development The District that could cross the river from the Southbank and back into the Shipyards and sports complex.

The proposed Five Points to sports complex route and the addition of a route into The District would help develop downtown, Thoburn said.

Board members were responsive to the presentation.

Board member Ari Jolly said the presentation was exciting and "quite progressive." She said she was also excited about a proposed river crossing with a transit and pedestrian bridge creating a "true loop" connecting people to future housing areas.

While the new system would incorporate driverless shuttles, Thoburn said, the staff does not want to recommend a specific vehicle to the board yet. He said companies are making strides with the technology.

With the elevated track already in place in Jacksonville, Thoburn said, the city is poised to "ride the wave of autonomous vehicle technology." He said the situation could open JTA up for funding and partnership opportunities, with the federal and state governments and public-private possibilities. Thoburn said the goal is to develop the "ultimate urban circulator."

Thoburn said the system operates better, more efficiently, at an elevated level because it is not at the mercy of traffic.

"The reliability cannot be beat," he said.

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