

New Location for Trolley Stop, Change in tour times & fares

The Chamber of Commerce is moving the trolley stop to the Visitor Information Center at the intersection with North Oregon & C Street. This move is being done after a great deal of consideration on a number of issues.

Last summer we experienced an increase in the drive time for the tours to 55 minutes. This is due to the increased traffic in town. The trolley's turning radius requires a wide swing into the oncoming lane, so there has to be plenty of clearance.

Sadly, many drivers through town are not courteous and do not give the trolley any leeway. The first turn onto California Street from the stop at the Beekman Bank corner causes the most problems.

Keeping in mind that the drive time needs to remain at 45 minutes in order to allow for loading and unloading, we began exploring other options. Since we operate the Visitor Information Center in the historic railroad depot next to the post office we realized that it had the following attractive qualities:

1. It would open up the parking spots on 3rd Street currently used as the trolley stop. We would swap the two parking spots adjacent to the information center.
2. Information center staff have the information and resources to assist visitors and trolley riders with how best to experience Jacksonville. They refer people to the many attractions, wineries, stores and restaurants as well as special events.
3. Information Center staff will also be able to sell tickets for both cash and credit and be able to answer visitor questions about the trolley tours. This will free the drivers up to focus on loading and unloading the trolley.

It will also streamline communications about tour availability on those occasions when the trolley is out of its normal rotation.

*A big thanks to Sue Tucker at Trolley Stop Antiques who has been selling tickets by credit card for us over the past two seasons. Activity there indicated that people desire to purchase their tickets whenever they are of the mind to and not just when they get on the trolley – regardless of paying by credit card or cash.

4. This location has plenty of benches as well shade from two large trees and deep eaves to protect people from the rain & sun while they are waiting for the trolley.
5. Although it is extremely premature, the Chamber has begun looking at the possibility of converting part of the block of 3rd Street into a pedestrian park. Testing the trolley in another location allows us to determine whether the trolley is a must have in planning the park.
6. An immediate benefit will be removing the trolley from the congestion that will occur during the balcony reconstruction project at the US Hotel.

Some downtown members are concerned that not having the trolley in the center of town will limit its visibility and have a negative impact on trolley ridership and the ability for riders to explore their stores while waiting for tours. The Chamber Board of Directors is committed to exploring options to ensure these issues are mitigated.

The new route will better highlight all of downtown, along with the rest of our city. It ends with a full run down 5th Street, turning right on California on past the Library.

We are working with city staff on enhanced signage as they replace all of the little directional arrow signs. We have requested **over 20** of those signs (nearly every intersection that has one of those sign posts will have an arrow for the Info Center/Trolley Stop. We will also have signage at the old trolley stop.

We also hope to develop a promotional concept to encourage trolley riders to continue supporting the local businesses. Those ideas are still in the planning stages but may involve a punch card that trolley riders will show merchants to get a stamp/punch. They can then exchange the card for a promotional item at the Info Center or some other location to be determined

The information center receives a significant level of traffic and it is the first stop for many people visiting town – specifically those who have looked us up in advance or those using the D Street Parking Lots. We realize that the location lacks visibility but think the enhanced signage will address this.

We will begin trolley tours Friday, April 28 and they will run Fridays – Mondays for the month of May. In June we will go to daily tours.

Fares will be \$6 for adults and \$3 for children over 3. Tickets are only sold on the day of the tour. This is a very slight increase that is needed to address increasing costs. The board approved this \$1 increase in acknowledgement that the fare has not increased for decades. Another change is that all children who take a seat will also be charged.

We are still in fundraising mode to pay off the trolley. Donations can be made online at JacksonvilleTrolley.com or the Visitor Information Center, 185 North Oregon Street.