

**RE: Request for F.B. City Commission approval to apply for a Florida State SUN Trail grant and a Safe Routes to Schools Grant for a Fernandina trail from Citrona Dr. to Downtown, F.B.**

**Requesting Approval for:**

1. Funding of a “Planning Study” to assess environment and utility issues, to define the exact Fernandina Trail path, and provide a construction cost estimate. (Study cost est. \$6,000)
2. Hold a public meeting to get community input on the trail proposal.
3. City Grant Manager support in preparation of trail grant applications.
4. With community support, apply for a FL State SUN Trail Grant (Est. \$650,000 to \$1.3 M).
5. With community support, apply for a Safe Routes to Schools Grant (Est. \$650,000).
6. Support for obtaining property easements behind properties from Cedar St. to Ash St.
7. Maintenance responsibility for Fernandina Trail, if grant is awarded (Est. \$4,000/yr)
8. Designation of the Visitors Center (Train Depot) as a Trail Head.
9. Tree plan and support for planting canopy trees on the Fernandina Trail.
10. Wayfinding signage for the Fernandina Trail, if the grant is approved.

A 2017 Fernandina Beach survey found that 74% of residents walk or bicycle instead of using their car for a trip at least once a month; and 77% of residents had sidewalks and trails as their highest priority for improvement projects.

The Florida Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail will provide a path enabling Amelia Island residents and visitors to safely bicycle on many short trips including to the beach and weekend events; helping to reduce the traffic and parking problems on the island. It will also provide a path for students to bicycle to schools on Amelia Island. The Fernandina Trail is a segment of this Regional Trail.

The proposed Fernandina Trail will be a segment of the Cumberland to Timucuan Trail that will connect St. Marys, GA to Jacksonville, FL through Amelia Island; and connect two National Parks. This trail is also a segment of the National East Coast Greenway (ECG) Trail that will connect from Maine to the Florida Keys. As a result of being part of both Federal and State approved trails the Fernandina Trail is eligible for Federal and State Trail grant funding.

The Cumberland to Timucuan Trail (10 ft. wide, off-road, multi-use path) plan has been approved by the East Coast Greenway, F.B. City Commission, Nassau County, and the Florida DEP Greenways and Trails organizations to connect from the Georgia Trails to Duval County Timucuan Trails; via a water-taxi and five connected Amelia Island trails.

Three federal trail grants (\$7 million in funding for 13 miles of trails) have been awarded for three Amelia Island trails, which will connect to provide a continuous path from the Nassau River to Simmons Road. St. Marys and Fernandina Beach Cities have both agreed to provide incentives to establish a Water-Taxi to connect the two cities with an 8 mile ride on the Amelia and St. Marys Rivers. The RFQ for the Water-Taxi service was released on 8/16/19 with response due by 9/20/19. (Planned initial service is April 2020)

Nassau County has had trail “Planning Studies” done for an off-road trail connection from Simmons Rd. to Atlantic Ave., along Will Hardee and Citrona. The county construction funding decision is expected 1Q 2020 for this trail. This trail is the number one county priority for use of county mobility fee transportation projects on Amelia Island.

The Fernandina Trail grant application schedule is: F.B. City 3Q 2019, Nassau County and Nassau County Schools 4Q 2019, N. FL TPO 1Q 2020 (reprioritization planned), FDOT 3Q 2020.

It is requested the F.B. City Manager write a letter to the Nassau County Manager requesting:

1. Continue with A.I. Pky. Trail as the Nassau trail priority to TPO for Federal Trail Grant funds.
2. Submit the Fernandina Trail as the Nassau trail priority to the TPO for FDOT SUN Trail grant.
3. Support application of Hickory St. for a Florida FDOT Safe Routes to School Trail grant.
4. County fund Will Hardee and Citrona trails as the A.I. first priority project with mobility fees.
5. County fund North 14<sup>th</sup> St. trail as the A.I. second priority project with mobility fees.

A “Planning Study” is needed to determine the detailed route and construction cost estimate for the Fernandina Trail; the cost is estimated to be about \$6,000. The \$6,000 study could be funded from the \$30,000 F.B. City 2019 Trail Capital Budget; because it is planning for a capital project.

A city tree planting plan is also requested for this trail; trails need canopy trees (not palm trees) to shade users. If awarded a trail grant the city is required to accept trail maintenance responsibility; using average trail maintenance costs the maintenance cost would be about \$4,000/year.

The School Trail and Fernandina Trail would complete the Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail and the ECG Trail on Amelia Island, and position Amelia Island to be the best place in Florida to walk, run, and bicycle safely; making Fernandina Beach eligible for the Florida “Trail Town” designation.

In 2016 the TPO funded a \$50,000 professional Amelia Island trail study and plan for how best to make local roads safe for bicycle path connections. This plan developed by Sprinkle Consultants provides street by street recommendations for making low-cost bicycle safety and connectivity improvements on all Amelia Island streets. This Amelia Island bike trail plan will be used as the guide for annual F.B. trail path improvements that can be made with the F.B. Trail Capital Budget.

**Reasons why Fernandina Trail should be a high priority for a FL State SUN Trail Grant:**

1. The FL DEP Greenways and Trails organization has approved the Cumberland to Timucuan Trail as one of the Florida Regional Trails; which is required for SUN Trail grant eligibility.
2. The Florida Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail is also a path segment of the National East Coast Greenway.
3. There are 5 Amelia Island trails and a water taxi needed to complete the Cumberland to Timucuan Trail: three trails have been awarded Federal Trail Grants, Nassau County is planning to fund a 4<sup>th</sup> trail with mobility fees (funding decision expected 1Q 2020), and the cities of Fernandina Beach, FL and St. Marys, GA have agreed to fund incentives for a private water-taxi service between the two cities. (First service expected Spring 2020)
4. Nassau County has never received a Florida State SUN Trail grant, while other N. Florida TPO counties have received both Federal Trail grants and Florida Sun Trail grants.
5. A SUN trail grant for the Fernandina Trail would result in 100% completion of the Florida Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail and the Amelia Island segment of the ECG.
6. The Fernandina Trail will provide a connection to downtown F.B. providing an alternative transportation option that will help reduce Fernandina Beach traffic and parking problems.
7. There are no other transportation capacity increase construction plans for Amelia Island.
8. Amelia Island has about 25,000 residents and 600,000 tourists per year, and is still growing.

**Attachment 1: Amelia Island and Fernandina Trail Route Plan**

**A. The Florida Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail (also National ECG Trail) will connect:**

- Two National Parks (Cumberland and Timucuan)
- Two States (GA and FL)
- Three Counties (Camden in GA, and Duval & Nassau in FL)
- Two Cities (St. Mary's in Ga, and Fernandina Beach in FL)
- Five State Parks (Crooked River in GA, Fort Clinch and Amelia Island State Parks in Nassau, and Big & Little Talbot State Parks in Duval).

**B. Federal Grants have been awarded (13 miles \$7 million) for three connected A.I. trails:**

1. **The Amelia Island Trail**, a 6 mile off-road multi-use trail from the Nassau River to Peters Point was constructed in 2013 with a Federal grant of \$2.1 million. An AIP Non-profit has undertaken funding cutting vines that are killing the great oaks along part of this trail.
2. **The Amelia River to Sea Trail**, a 3 mile off-road multi-use trail is being completed this year along Bailey Rd. and Simmons Rd. from the Amelia River to the Ocean and was funded with a Federal grant of \$1.8 Million and \$0.3 million in developer contributions. The county has a tree planting plan for the River to Sea Trail.
3. **The Amelia Island Pky. Trail**, a 4 mile off-road multi-use trail has been funded with a federal grant of \$2.8 million and is being engineered this year with construction planned for four annual phases from 2022 to 2025. It is expected the county will develop a tree planting plan.

**C. Two additional connected trails (6 miles) are in the initial phase of planning**, to provide an off-road multi-use 10 ft. paved path to connect from Simmons Trail to downtown F.B. Marina.

1. **School Trail:**

Nassau County is planning for a mobility fee increase to the average that other Florida counties charge; if approved an off-road School Trail (4 miles) on Will Hardee and Citrona is the number one priority for Amelia Island using county mobility fee transportation funding. This trail will connect to the F.B. High School and the F.B. Middle School, both on Citrona.

2. **Fernandina Trail:**

The Fernandina Trail is a proposed off-road, multi-use, 10 ft. wide paved path (2 miles) to connect from the School Trail on Citrona to downtown F.B. Marina via a Hickory St. route:

- From Citrona west on Hickory St. to 9<sup>th</sup> St. (Alongside school sports fields)
- From Hickory north on 9<sup>th</sup> to Gum. (One Block)
- From 9<sup>th</sup> west on Gum to 3<sup>rd</sup>
- From Gum north on 3<sup>rd</sup> to Cedar
- From Cedar to Ash St. See below

From the corner of Cedar and 3<sup>rd</sup> St to Ash St. there appears to be room to provide a 10 ft. paved path segment on the back of properties between the railroad tracks; to be evaluated in the "Planning Study". Property easements would be required. This would bypass the congested developed street area between Cedar and Center St.; on 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Beech St., 2<sup>nd</sup> St., and Ash St. This section of path was recommended for study as a pedestrian path in the F.B. Waterfront CRA Guide. (Sec. 3, page 7)

There are four property owners involved in this section where easements would be needed:

- Amelia Community Theatre
- Robert and Loretta Erickson
- Stratton and Stuart Moore (Real Estate Rep. Phil Griffin)
- City of F.B.

Robert Erickson has told Friends of Amelia Island Trails, Inc. – CEO Phil Scanlan that he is willing to entertain providing an easement for a bicycle path on the rear of his property. The other property owners are also being contacted to determine their willingness to entertain providing easements for a Fernandina Trail, 10 ft. wide paved path, at the rear of their property.

If the property easement path along the back of properties is not available the street path on the front of properties to be evaluated in the Planning Study would be:

- |                         |                                   |             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| -From Cedar,            | north on 3 <sup>rd</sup> to Beech | (One Block) |
| -From 3rd,              | west on Beech to 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | (One Block) |
| -From Beech,            | north on 2 <sup>nd</sup> to Ash   | (One Block) |
| -From 2 <sup>nd</sup> , | west on Ash to Front St.          | (One Block) |

From the corner of Ash and Front this trail could use the marina boardwalk to connect to the water-taxi to St. Marys and connect to a sidewalk being planned by the city from Ash St. to Center St. and the TDC Train Depot.

TDC Train Depot should be the Fernandina Trail Head; it has rest rooms, water fountain, trail information, and bike racks.

**D. A water-taxi service (8 miles) is planned from F.B. to St. Marys, GA for April 2020 initial service.** (RFQ for service released 8/16/19 with responses due 9/20/19)

### **Florida Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail Summary**

On Amelia Island the Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail will include 19 miles of off-road paved multi-use paths (5 trails).

To the north a water-taxi is planned for an 8 mile water-taxi to St. Marys for a total 27 mile trail.

To the south FDOT has agreed to consider adding a 10 ft protected multi-use path on the Nassau River Bridge, to replace the off-road fishing bridge path that will not be repaired or maintained.

### **Trails to the north and south**

To the north St. Marys has a plan for developing a continuous ECG 10 ft. wide trail north from St. Marys. St. Marys is also improving their waterfront and repairing their marina. New restaurants are under construction. The water-taxi service will enable a transfer to the Cumberland Ferry for day trips.

To the south, a 10 ft. path is being developed in the Timucuan National Park from the Nassau River Bridge to the Mayport Ferry.

**Attachment 2** – Draft Letter to County

**DRAFT**

Michael Mullin  
Nassau County Manager

8/16/19

Mike

I would like to thank Nassau County for the support you have given to constructing off-road multi-use paved trails as a safe alternative transportation mode on Amelia Island. With county support we have been awarded three federal trail grants for Amelia Island from the N. FL Transportation Planning Organization (TPO).

With over 25,000 residents and over 600,000 tourists per year on Amelia Island, an island that is only 3 miles by 12 miles in size, off-road multi-use trails are a good option for alternative transportation on short trips to events and to the beach; helping to reduce traffic and parking problems. The one constructed off-road multi-use trail on the island has averaged 400 users per day.

Recognizing there has been no road transportation capacity increase on Amelia Island over the past 20 years and none is planned for the future; an Amelia Island multi-use trail connection to downtown Fernandina Beach will provide a good alternative transportation alternative.

The city of Fernandina Beach would like to request Nassau County's support for a multi-use trail connection on Amelia Island from the three existing multi-use trails funded with Federal grants on the south end of the island to downtown Fernandina Beach. Attached is a trail proposal for that connection to downtown Fernandina Beach that would also complete the national East Coast Greenway and the State Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail on Amelia Island.

Specific support requested from Nassau County includes:

1. Construction funding, with county mobility fees, of a multi-use path on Will Hardee and Citrona Ave. to connect from the Simmons Rd. Trail to Atlantic Ave. (I understand this is the number one Amelia Island project priority for a transportation improvement to be funded with mobility fees, if new county mobility fees are approved later this year.)
2. Continued support of the Amelia Island Pky Trail as the number one county priority for Federal grant funding with the N. FL TPO. I understand this trail is being engineered this year and is programmed for federal funding over the next 4 years in 4 phases.
3. Submittal of a proposed Fernandina Trail, a key segment of the Florida Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail, as the number one county priority for a FL State SUN Trail grant with the N. FL TPO. (I recognize that in the past Nassau County has been limited by the TPO to submission of only one trail to the TPO for a trail grant. However, in discussions with the N. FL TPO they have agreed Nassau County can submit one trail for the Federal Grant opportunity and a second trail for the state grant opportunity. Both Duval and St. Johns Counties have submitted two trails to the TPO and both counties received federal and state trail grants.) (See attached Fernandina Trail proposal)

4. Add a multi-use trail along North 14<sup>th</sup> St. from Atlantic Ave. to the County Dee Dee Bartels Boat Ramp and Park, as the second priority for an Amelia Island mobility fee funded alternative transportation project. This path would also connect Old Town to Downtown Fernandina Beach and to the back-door of Fort Clinch. This is a heavily used bicycle route now; due to the lack of a shoulder and vehicles towing boats on this road it is a safety concern for bicyclists.

The cities of Fernandina Beach and St. Marys, GA have joined together to provide incentives for a private water-taxi between the two cities, which is a key inter-state segment of the national East Coast Greenway Trail. The RFQ for this service has been issued and we have requested initial service for April 2020.

With the three federal grants we have received for trails on the south-end of Amelia Island, and the water-taxi connection to Georgia, we are in a good position to take the next step that will complete the Florida Regional Cumberland to Timucuan Trail and the national East Coast Greenway Trail. This trail completion will also provide an important trail connection to downtown Fernandina Beach and enable students to bicycle safely to the Fernandina Beach High School and Middle School.

Dale Martin  
Fernandina Beach City Manager

**Attachment 3: Fernandina Beach City and Nassau County Comprehensive Plan support multi-use (bicycle and pedestrian) paths**

Both the Fernandina Beach and Nassau County 2030 Comprehensive Plans include goals and plans to support alternative transportation options, including bicycle paths.

**Fernandina Beach Comprehensive Plan:**

Goal 2: Multi-modal Transportation Element

The multi-modal Transportation Element contains objectives and policies to further mobility planning efforts, --- ensures a safe and effective roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, and multi-use pathways network.

Multi-modal Transportation Element Highlights:

1. Encourages energy efficient transportation options
2. Promotes stronger connections to roadway, bicycle, multi-use pathways and sidewalk facilities.
6. Minimizes reliance on the existing roadway network and encourages reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through alternative transportation options.
7. Supports efforts towards completing trail opportunities and sidewalk Connections.

Mobility Planning Policy 2.01.02 Incorporate Policies as part of its mobility plan:

- J. Pedestrian, bicycle, and community transit facilities amenities and enhancements such as landscaped and shaded routes and shelters.

Policy 2.01.03

The city shall develop policies which strive to reduce its per capita Vehicle Miles traveled (VMT) by 20% by 2030, consistent with the goals of the Federal Transportation Policy and Planning Act.

Policy 2.02.02

Proposed roadway improvement projects shall be evaluated, ranked, and added to the Roadway Improvement Program based on the need to:

- K. Provide sidewalks and bike paths where none currently exist.

Goal 6: Recreation and Open Space Element Highlights:

8. Emphasize pedestrian and bicycle access to parks and recreation areas.

**Nassau County Comprehensive Plan -- Transportation Element:**

**Multi-Mode Transportation Options**

Multi-modal is defined as involving several travel modes, including automobile, public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian.

When the existing roadway network faces congestion problems, other modes of transportation must be explored rather than rely solely on the automobile. An example is bike and pedestrian connections.

Federal transportation legislation requires that TPO's develop a multi-mode transportation plan.

Ultimately, a successful transportation system must offer options to the public. It must be multi-modal in design.

Timely alternatives to the single occupant vehicle must be pursued to encourage the use of alternative travel modes to reduce dependence on the automobile.