

# **Amelia Island Trail (AIT) Team Meeting Minutes**

**5/13/15 Minutes**

1. **INTRO:** Phil Scanlan, Co-Chair of the Team, welcomed all to the meeting. Phil reviewed the Agenda and Team sheet (see att.) and the Excel AIT Project Plan. (see att.)

2. **BIKE FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT PLAN:** Kelly Gibson reminded the team that the City of F.B. received a Bronze Level Award for our 2013 Bike Friendly application. We will need to do more work on these items before our next planned Bike Friendly application, which will be a joint **City-County Island-Wide** application in the spring of 2017. That application preparation will begin June 2016, so we now have about 1 year to make significant enough progress on improvement items to have a chance for a Silver Level Award in 2017. A Silver Level Award will put Amelia Island at an award level equal to the best in all of Florida. (Gainesville and Miami)

Kelly (City) and Taco (County) will lead the application team and they would welcome volunteers to help.

3. **EAST NASSAU COMMUNITY TRAIL PLANS:** Mike Bell and Dan Camp from Rayonier and Terra Point reviewed a plan to make trails/paths a key part of the new 24,000 acre community plan in Yulee. The new community will be located north of A1A and east of I- 95. The community will be mixed-use, that is residential, commercial and business. The trails are to enable residents to walk or bike (or use a golf cart) in the development. Rayonier has donated land to the Nassau Schools and there is a plan to build an elementary school (K to 5) there in the fall of 2017. Homes to be built around the school and business offices and commercial locations around the homes. There is also a plan to provide a county park and YMCA as part of this new community.

The trails/paths will include a connection to the river.

Nassau County Mobility fees will be used to fund the trail development in this new community, which will include 50 miles of trails.

Rayonier has plans to relocate their Amelia Island (80 employees) and Jacksonville Headquarters (40 employees) offices to this new community in East Nassau.

4. **AIT SIGNAGE ISSUE:** Bill Moore and Scott Herring reported on the AIT signage issue and on an AIT Sign Improvement Policy, which County and FDOT have both approved. The AIT Sign Improvement Policy is based on the following principles:

- (1) Maintain and improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- (2) Improve the aesthetic impact of the sign installation.
- (3) Eliminate unnecessary and excessive signs.
- (4) Evaluate the appropriateness and compliance of all signs especially STOP vs. YIELD signs with the requirements of the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (DOT sign manual).

Our review using these principles results in the following AIT Sign Improvement Policy:

1. “NO MOTOR VEHICLE” signs can be eliminated (65%) and/or moved back from the intersections. This will improve safety and the scenic view on the trail by reducing signage, eliminating the sign “ski gate” effect at intersections.
2. Eliminate excessive signs including multiple signs at the same intersection and replace STOP signs with YIELD signs at entrances where there is minimal traffic and a clear view of potential traffic. STOP signs retained at roadways and sign height will be reduced.

The AIT sign policy change had been held up by FDOT due to an issue of what the **height** should be for the trail signs. AIT wanted trail signs to be lower than road signs. It appears FDOT will approve trail signs that are 5 ft high – but not 4 ft. high. We agreed that a 5 ft. height would be acceptable to AIT, which is lower than 7 ft. road signs.

Nassau County road engineering is in the process of becoming Local Agency Program (LAP) Certified so that Nassau County will be able to design future trail sign plans, and those plans will be consistent with the new Nassau County AIT Trail Sign policy approved by FDOT.

5. **NASSAU COUNTY & TPO UPDATE:** Peter King and Elizabeth DeJesus gave a trail grant update. The TPO grant project (the 2nd for the county) along **Simmons Rd.** is scheduled for design 7/15-7/16 and construction in 2017- 2018. This fast-tracked trail project has received overwhelming support from neighborhood associations, Nassau County Growth Management, the NF-TPO and

FDOT. This path will connect the parks at the beach to the ball parks at the airport.

Another TPO Grant application (the 3rd for the County) is for a four mile extension of the AIT along the **A.I. Pky.** from S. Fletcher/A1A to 8th St./A1A.

This Amelia Island Trail Phase II project was ranked #1 in the North Florida TPO Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) Multi use trails priority list last year and DOT selected it as a candidate project to be included in their work program. This project will be divided into four segments as identified in the application. DOT is planning to fund the design of all four segments in FY 2019 and tentatively plan on funding the construction of segment 1 (from Fletcher Ave. to Via Del Rey) in FY 2021. This will connect the existing A.I. Trail to the Buccaneer Trail and Via Del Rey to 1st. Ave., or to the future Ocklawaha Trail.

The County repainted the crosswalks at the intersection of Sadler and 14th St. – a very busy intersection where the crosswalks had worn away. The 2013 Bike Friendly assessment had noted the need for this repainting as a feedback item.

The TPO has agreed to fund a **bike-pedestrian trail plan for all of Amelia Island** that study will begin in July 2015. The TPO will provide more information on that study plan as it evolves. This plan should be very helpful to our Amelia Island trail planning and helpful for our next application to the American Bicyclist Association for an Amelia Island wide assessment.

## **6. OCKLAWAHA TRAIL PROPOSAL:**

This paved path would run north from Bill Melton Rd. (Trail Head at the FB Golf Club Parking lot) using the existing dirt road used for mosquito truck spraying to Egan's Lake. Then go east along the Ocklawaha ROW, using a boardwalk, to First Ave. Egan's Lake is a very scenic spot, and would include a viewing station. The paved path would be through wooded areas already cleared for the mosquito control path. First Ave. could then be taken north to Simmons Rd. (and a connection to Simmons planned off-road path) and on to Sadler Rd. (just across from the entrance to Egans Greenway Trail).

The Egans Creek Greenway Trail could then be taken to connect to Atlantic Ave. and across to Ft. Clinch Trails which reach the north end of the island.

At the south end of this trail Via Del Rey would provide a connection to the Amelia Island Pky. bicycle lanes and the planned A.I. Pky. off-road path. The A.I. Pky. bicycle lanes and planned off-road path will connect to the AIT off-road Trail

to reach the south end of the island and to 8th St. sidewalks that go north to the city of Fernandina Beach.

This path had been approved by the City Commission as a future paved Recreation path to be added to the Amelia Island Multi-use off-road path network. The County and City will also submit this path to the NE FL TPO as a proposed future additional trail project.

7. **AMELIA – BIG TALBOT TRAILS CONNECTION ISSUE:** Mike Pikula reported that due to severe erosion the planned path under A1A to provide a safe connection for bicyclists has been deemed not possible by FDOT and Jacksonville. Initially FDOT and Jacksonville had decided to provide no alternative safe crossing. However with support from the AIT Team a Nassau County and TPO request was made to FDOT create a safe crossing before the opening of the new trail. Mike described the new safe crossing plan which will be a crosswalk just north of the entrance to Big Talbot Park. The cross walk will have a button to activate flashing yellow lights both north and south of the crosswalk when crossing A1A. This new crossing is in design FDOT (contractor is RAM) and no schedule is available just yet, however project completion is now expected in the next few months. FDOT had a plan to maintain the 55 mph speed limit at this planned crosswalk. **AIT has made an appeal to FDOT to implement a slower speed limit at this planned crossing and that appeal is still being evaluated by FDOT.**

8. **BIG TALBOT TRAIL STATUS:** Ranger Michelle Waterman Talbot Islands State Parks, provided an update of the Big Talbot trail construction plans.

When the Big Talbot to Amelia Island trail connection is completed we will have a continuous 12 miles of off-road path on Amelia Island and Big Talbot Island.

Michelle agreed to host **a joint Duval-Nassau trail opening celebration and ribbon cutting** at the Big Talbot State Park when the connection between the Amelia Island Trail and the Big Talbot trail is completed. Invites would be made to local government leaders who have supported this effort and to walking, running and bicyclist clubs.

#### 9. **FL-GA WATER-TAXI TRAIL CONNECTION PLANS**

The NPS will begin requiring bike racks in the future on the St. Marys Ferry to Cumberland to enable riders to bring their own bikes.

Work has begun to see if we can help initiate a Water-Taxi service (with bike

racks) between St. Marys, GA and Fernandina Beach, FL. Leaders of both cities, the ECG and Friends of AIT are all supporting this effort as a key part of the East Coast Greenway (ECG). Both City Commissions (F.B. and St. Marys) have passed resolutions of support for this proposed water-taxi service and in the resolutions both have agreed to wave dock fees for 2 years and to provide marketing support for the taxi service – via web sites and event announcements. We are also in the process of applying for a joint FL/GA TPO grant to cover the first 2 years of gas for the water-taxi service. We believe, these incentives will enable a new service to build up to the 30 passengers/day needed to support a self sustaining water-taxi service.

This is an important connection to provide a safe ECG trail connection between GA and FL and to increase tourism visits to both cities, and to allow FL residents and visitors a waterway connection to the St. Marys ferry to Cumberland Island National Park.

#### **10. FDOT PLANS**

FDOT was not able to have a representative at this meeting or the prior AIT meeting. Derek Dixon is now the District 2 Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator.

**11. OLD TOWN PATH PROPOSAL:** Michael Harrison provided a briefing on the current Old Town (prior referred to as Seton Bridge) Path proposal. Happy to report that RockTenn has removed the gate across Estrada Street, thereby returning a significant area to citizen use. Parks & Rec. Advisory Committee voted to recommend adoption as a pocket park (Seton Park) with amenities including an information kiosk, drinking water fountain, benches, picnic table, and parking. Also to include an ADA accessible viewing dock approx. 16’ wide by 10’ deep at the end of garden St. overlooking the river and the sunset.

Michael described a Right-Of-Way (ROW) that has been planned with the help of city and county planners.

1. Start at San Carlos State Park (Plaza).
2. Through Old Town as follows:
  1. Estrada to Garden to pick up future viewing platform at Amelia River.
  2. Along Garden St. to Commandant to Someruelus St. to New St.
  3. Along Someruelus via wooded unpaved section to Magnolia.
3. Through Bosque Bello cemetery, exiting at SE corner on N 14th St at N 14th St. extension.
4. S along the west side of N 14th St. to Atlantic Avenue.

Notes:

1. We would like eventually to start at Ft. Clinch State Park, cross Egan's Creek, along Ladies Street to San Carlos State Park, and then on.
2. All ROW are on State or County or City property.

It was suggested to also include the Deedee Bartels Boat Ramp Parking area as a Trail Head for this trail since it has plenty of parking and rest rooms, and the County sees the Park as more than a boat ramp.

We are hopeful with a defined ROW a grant may be obtained from the State Historic Grants organization for part of this trail.

12. **NORTH FLORIDA BICYCLE CLUB (NFBC):** Don Eipert updated the group on NFBC activities. Interest and participation in bicycling in Nassau County and especially on Amelia Island has doubled in the past few years. The Bike club membership is now over 1000. The NFBC now sponsors 6 group rides/week group in Nassau County. One every day but Sunday. All levels of riders are welcome – helmets required for a ride.

A new beginners ride is held every Wed. on the new Amelia Island Trail odd-road path. Learn more at [www.AmeliaCycling.com](http://www.AmeliaCycling.com)

13. **FRIENDS OF THE AMELIA ISLAND TRAIL, INC. (NON-PROFIT):** Mike Pikula updated the team on the activities of the Friends of Amelia Island Trail.

An information Kiosk was constructed by Friends of The Amelia Island Trail at Peters Point at the north Trail Head for the new Amelia Island Trail. The cost to design, permit and construct this Kiosk was approximately \$3,000. AIT Logo placards have been installed. Six kiosk informational display panels have been installed, including ECG trail and Amelia Island trail maps. The Friends of AIT is also planning a smaller Trail Kiosk for Amelia Island State Park.

Ten "Trail Rules" rules have been approved by Nassau County Planning and Zoning Board and Nassau Commission. These trail rules have been posted at both Trail Heads and at 2 locations along the trail.

Friends of Amelia Island Trail has also constructed 2 low-cost bike racks, using 2x4s, for placement along the Amelia Island Trail.

Meeting attendees were reminded to renew their membership in Friends of The Amelia Island Trail, Inc. for the year 2015. See the web site:  
[www.AmeliaIslandTrail.org](http://www.AmeliaIslandTrail.org)

Our non-profit Friends of Amelia Island Trail web site developed by Don Eipert. This site includes Amelia Island Trail “Maps”, photos, numerous links to other related sites, construction updates, and a chronological “Event” listing of walk, run and ride events on the island. See [www.AmeliaIslandTrail.org](http://www.AmeliaIslandTrail.org) Please help us keep this up-to-date by sending info on new walk, run or ride events to Mike at [AFEagle31@aol.com](mailto:AFEagle31@aol.com).

14. **TRAIL PARTNERS:**

Phil Scanlan included a list of 43 trail partner organizations that are involved in helping create the Amelia Island Trail network. (See list of all 43 on the Agenda att.)

Phillip Scanlan  
Amelia Island Trail Team, Co-Chair

Mike Pikula  
Amelia Island Trail Team, Co-Chair