

NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL

# 2012

# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

*“Bringing Communities Together  
to Advance the Regional Agenda.”*

NORTHEAST FLORIDA  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

NEFRC  
6850



BAKER ★ CLAY ★ DUVAL ★ FLAGLER ★ NASSAU ★ PUTNAM ★ ST. JOHNS



# 2012 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



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### Committee Purpose:

*"Work collectively and promote regionally."*

### Committee Philosophy:

*This committee is guided by the Home Rule Philosophy to develop and implement community-based solutions.*

### Committee Responsibilities:

*To serve as the forum for the Northeast Florida Regional Council Board of Directors to collect its local governments' legislative priorities to promote a regional agenda.*

# 2012 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



*The following Regional Legislative priorities were determined by consensus of the Legislative Policy Committee and are listed below:*

## Online Travel Companies – Tourist Development, Local Option and State Sales Tax Collection

- ★ Online travel companies (OTCs) do not collect or remit the full taxes on what they charge for hotel rooms, unlike the lodging establishments within our state. Local communities are thereby deprived of revenues they would use for economic activity, infrastructure projects and community programs that would come from tourist development taxes, local option sales taxes and revenue sharing from the state sales tax that are not being remitted by the OTCs. The OTCs are seeking a tax exemption from the Legislature after having failed to obtain the exemption in the last two Legislative Sessions.

The Legislature should not grant a tax exemption to these online travel companies.

## Maintain State Aid to Public Libraries & Multi-Library Cooperatives

- ★ The State Aid to Libraries grant program benefits all libraries in our state. State Aid also brings \$8 million in federal funds to Florida through the Library Services and Technology (LSTA). LSTA funds keep our State Library open, it pays for the Florida Electronic Library (databases for all residents), and it funds our Multi-Library Cooperatives (MLC's).

Fund the State Aid to Libraries program at least at the minimum maintenance of effort level.

## Transportation Funding

- ★ Support transportation funding legislation that provides a dedicated and recurring source of revenue, including local option fuel taxes, rental car surcharges, or other taxes or fees, to fund local government essential transportation projects and programs and the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP).

Support transportation funding legislation that improves economic development, quality of life, the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP), the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP).

Support legislation that ensures adequate funding for maintenance and improvement of evacuation routes.

## Protect Local Revenue

- ★ Oppose legislation and initiatives that negatively impact local governments budgets or restrict local government's ability to collect sufficient revenue to provide needed facilities and services.

## Water Supply

- ★ Support legislation that addresses the need for water conservation, water reuse and an adequate and reliable water supply for Florida and the Northeast Florida Region to meet the future needs of the state's growing population and the needs of the environment, agriculture, industry and mining.



## 2012 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



### **SMALL COUNTY ROAD PROGRAMS**

**Background:** The Small County Road Programs are critical to meeting Baker County's transportation needs. The Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) provide necessary transportation funding for road improvements.

**Requested Action:** Support continuation and increase monies generated by statewide gas tax collections to the State Transportation Trust Fund to provide essential transportation programs such as the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP).

**Effect:** Continuation of these vital programs will enable counties to make much needed road improvements, create jobs, correct environmental problems created by runoff and stimulate the local economy.

### **RETURN TO PREVIOUS OPERATING POLICIES OF THE STATE HOUSING INITIATIVES PARTNERSHIP (SHIP) PROGRAM**

**Background:** The need in rural communities is for housing rehabilitation and new construction for low and moderate income persons. The waiting lists for these programs continue to increase. The "Sadowski Act" created a permanent funding source that was redirected by the Legislature during the last session.

**Requested Action:** Reinstate funding source.

**Effect:** Restoration of SHIP funding will immediately increase the number of low and moderate income individuals receiving assistance, create jobs to stimulate housing industry, eliminate slums and blight and conserve energy by providing more energy efficient homes for citizens.

### **HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS/SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER**

**Background:** Baker County has two hurricane shelters and a population of 25,000. The County is a "recipient county" for urban Duval and other nearby coastal communities. The County has daily needs for facilities to serve senior citizens. Property has been acquired and plans prepared for a building that can meet both needs. Matching funds assistance from the State would allow the construction of a facility that will meet local and regional needs.

**Requested Action:** Support funding for dual purpose facility.

**Effect:** Will provide a multi-purpose building for our senior citizens and also provide a shelter for evacuees and their pets for local and regional residents in the event of a major hurricane.

### **AD VALOREM PROPERTY TAXES**

**Background:** Legislation requires local governments to roll back property millage rates regardless of public supported local needs and priorities. As a result, local governments must raise taxes in other areas to balance the budget. A "one size fits all" approach punishes conservative, fiscally responsible communities and causes public dissention. The State objective of fewer taxes at the local level is diminished.

**Requested Action:** Review all sources of State Revenue and eliminate exemptions.

**Effect:** Fair and equitable revenue sources for State and Local governments that are available to meet needs.

### **OPPOSE EFFORTS TO PRIVATIZE THE NORTHEAST FLORIDA STATE HOSPITAL (NEFSH)**

**Background:** NEFSH is an important employer in Baker County. Efforts by the 2009 Legislature to privatize NEFSH were successfully defeated by local lobbying efforts. More than likely this issue will resurface again in the 2012 Session.

**Requested Action:** The State of Florida should direct the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) or other appropriate "independent" agency to objectively determine the effectiveness of outsourcing NEFSH services.

**Effect:** A factually motivated decision should be made regarding the effectiveness of outsourcing NEFSH services. As one of the largest employers in the County and as the lowest cost-per-patient State facility in Florida, both the local economic and employment benefits of the hospital will be preserved and the State will be able to maintain a fixed amount of mental health services in Northeast Florida.

### **PUBLIC LIBRARIES: STATE AID TO LIBRARIES & MULTI-LIBRARY COOPERATIVES**

**Background:** The State Aid to Libraries grant program benefits all libraries in our state.

**Requested Action:** Fund the State Aid to Libraries program at least at the minimum maintenance of effort level.

**Effect:** State Aid pays for many activities in our public libraries; State Aid also brings \$8 million in federal funds to Florida through the Library Services and Technology (LSTA). LSTA funds keep our State Library open, it pays for the Florida Electronic Library (databases for all residents), and it funds our Multi-Library Cooperatives (MLC's). The minimum maintenance of effort (MOE) level will ensure the funding for our local MLC's and ensure that Florida receives its full share of federal dollars through LSTA.



### **UNFUNDED MANDATES**

**Background:** Unfunded mandates are statutes or regulations that require a state or local government to perform certain actions, yet provide no money for fulfilling the requirements. These requirements include but are not limited to legal aid, environmental protection, pensions, Medicaid Assistance, State Court Systems, and other policy areas. When a federal government imposes a law or regulation without necessary funding, it becomes the responsibility of the state or local government to pay for the implementation of the law.

**Requested Action:** Reduce the annual cost shifting from the federal government to the state and local governments.

**Effect:** A reduction in unfunded mandates will give local governments the control and ability to provide necessary programs and services to taxpayers and operate within their adopted yearly budgets without having the need to adjust for unexpected funding reductions.

### **TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

**Background:** Rapid growth in the past has resulted in a continuing need for transportation network improvements that would have a positive impact on hampered economic development potential, ongoing traffic congestion, and needed quality of life projects.

**Requested Action:** Replenish the Transportation Trust Fund and use the fund for transportation projects only. Do not use that revenue fund as a bill payer for unrelated budget line items. A fully funded FDOT allows local governments to effectively work with and leverage local and regional projects benefitting the citizens. Initiatives such as TRIP and the Transportation Disadvantaged programs are beneficial to both the state and local government and need to be fully funded.

**Effect:** Increased traffic network demand with a reduced revenue stream has stressed state and local government's ability to meet regional/community needs and protect quality of life and economic development needs.

### **PROTECT LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S REVENUE**

**Background:** Recent legislative policies and constitutional amendments have created restrictions and exemptions to the overall tax base of local governments, thereby reducing their overall tax revenue resulting in the need for higher taxes or reduced services, or some combination of the two.

**Requested Action:** Oppose property tax legislation or other similar initiatives that serve to reduce the overall tax base or revenue streams of local government without providing some offset so local government can exercise 'home rule' and determine what is best for its citizens.

**Effect:** This will allow local government to best serve its citizens without undue regulations, unfunded mandates or legislative degradation of 'home rule'.

### **PUBLIC LIBRARIES: STATE AID TO LIBRARIES & MULTI-LIBRARY COOPERATIVES**

**Background:** The State Aid to Libraries grant program benefits all libraries in our state.

**Requested Action:** Fund the State Aid to Libraries program at least at the minimum maintenance of effort level.

**Effect:** State Aid pays for many activities in our public libraries; State Aid also brings \$8 million in federal funds to Florida through the Library Services and Technology (LSTA). LSTA funds keep our State Library open, it pays for the Florida Electronic Library (databases for all residents), and it funds our Multi-Library Cooperatives (MLC's). The minimum maintenance of effort (MOE) level will ensure the funding for our local MLC's and ensure that Florida receives its full share of federal dollars through LSTA.



## 2012 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



### **JACKSONVILLE PORT MILE POINT AND CHANNEL DREDGING INITIATIVE**

**Background:** The Mile Point navigational hazard severely impacts Jacksonville's port facilities by limiting the hours ships are able to enter and leave the port. Because of the cross currents, ships can only navigate through Mile Point (where the Intracoastal Waterway and St. Johns River meet) during a four hour window, twice a day. This causes unacceptable delays to shippers and prevents Northeast Florida from utilizing the port, which generates about \$19 billion annually, to its full potential. Once the Mile Point issue is resolved, the river channel must be dredged to a depth of 50 feet so the port will be able to accommodate larger freighters expected on the East Coast once the Panama Canal widening project is completed in 2014.

**Requested Action:** Partner with Duval County to gain Congressional funding that will enable the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to move forward on the port initiative that is essential to the economic development of Northeast Florida.

**Effect:** This Mile Point initiative will add approximately 3,500 new jobs to Northeast Florida and will be the initial step in preparing for the post-Panama ships, the arrival of which is expected to create another 25,000 jobs.

### **TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX**

**Background:** Legal disputes between online travel companies (OTCs) and local governments have arisen regarding the application of the tourist development tax. The Revenue Estimating Committee estimates that the annual negative impact to local governments is \$28.7 million as measured in FY 2011-12.

**Requested Action:** Cooperate with the Tourist Development Councils (TDC) and Municipalities across the state and stop the practice of the online booking services not remitting the proper amount of bed taxes to the TDCs. Oppose specifically provisions from last session CS/CS/HB 493 which would allow these unfair practices to continue. Specifically have the Attorney General help in the following cases, Orange County v. Expedia, Inc. et al, Orbitz LLC vs. Broward County, and Orbitz LLC vs. Miami-Dade County.

**Effect:** In the face of a continuing decline in revenues at the state and local level, local community homeowners and other landowners will benefit if the full taxes are collected from visitors who use OTCs. These collections will reduce their ad valorem tax burden in paying for community programs and projects that assist citizens and businesses and promote job growth & economic activity.

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM**

**Background:** The Affordable Housing Act of 1992 established a Local Government Trust Fund for the purpose of funding local affordable housing initiatives through documentary stamp tax collections. The City of Jacksonville has received more than \$100 million since the Act's inception to further local housing activities. Since 2004, however, the city has lost an estimated \$42.3 million because the Florida Legislature has been sweeping the funds from the Trust Fund into General Revenue. Over the last several years, the state has continued to collect the documentary stamp tax for the Trust Fund, but the Legislature has not allocated the funds for their intended purpose and instead swept money into the General Revenue Fund. As a result, in Fiscal Year 2010-2011 the city lost about \$6.6 million, which would have resulted in more than 500 jobs and an economic impact of \$50 million. In the upcoming budget year, the estimated allocation for the City will be \$5.2 million, if not swept into General Revenue.

**Requested Action:** Fully fund the Local Government Trust Fund (SHIP)

**Effect:** In addition to furthering the City's Affordable Housing Program and objectives, restoring the trust fund dollars will result in an additional 500 jobs and an economic impact of \$42.1 million to the City.

### **UNFUNDED MANDATES**

**Background:** Federal and state mandates that require local governments to perform actions but provide no funding for them to fulfill the requirements create an added burden on local taxpayers and may displace other essential local governmental priorities. This is especially true during an economic downturn with reduced property tax revenues available to finance local government. While unfunded mandates take control out of the hands of local government, local taxpayers end up paying the bill. A majority of unfunded mandates have originated in the State Legislature.

**Requested Action:** Cooperate with local governments to collectively serve the citizens of Florida by providing adequate funding or stop passing unfunded mandates.

**Effect:** A reduction in unfunded mandates would increase local government's ability to collect sufficient revenue to provide needed services and facilities.



### **MAINTAIN FDOT TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES**

**Background:** The Florida Department of Transportation remains a key element in keeping county and regional infrastructure safe and abreast of continued growth. Therefore, planning and oversight to coordinate the funding and the time schedule for projects is essential to ensure orderly growth.

**Requested Action:** Maintain funding from the State gas tax and other sources for all aspects of transportation, including the FDOT 2.5% matching funds for FAA airport projects.

**Effect:** Transportation projects will ensure that long-term needs will be met during an affordable cost period and an economically critical period for employment in the region and the State.

### **ONLINE TRAVEL COMPANIES – TOURIST DEVELOPMENT, LOCAL OPTION AND STATE SALES TAX COLLECTION**

**Background:** Online travel companies (OTCs) do not collect or remit the full taxes on what they charge for hotel rooms, unlike the lodging establishments within our state. The OTCs want preferential treatment, penalizing our local hotels and motels. Local communities are thereby deprived of revenues they would use for economic activity, infrastructure projects and community programs that would come from tourist development taxes, local option sales taxes and revenue sharing from the state sales tax that are not being remitted by the OTCs. The OTCs are seeking a tax exemption from the Legislature after having failed to obtain the exemption in the last two Legislative Sessions.

**Requested Action:** The Legislature should not grant a tax exemption to these largely out of state companies.

**Effect:** In the face of a continuing decline in revenues at the state and local level, local community homeowners and other landowners will benefit if the full taxes are collected from visitors who use OTCs. These collections will reduce their ad valorem tax burden in paying for community programs and projects that assist citizens and businesses and promote job growth & economic activity.

### **RESTORE FUNDING FOR THE FLORIDA FOREVER PROGRAM**

**Background:** Flagler County's long standing land acquisition program has been strongly supported by its citizens for over two decades. While land conservation enhances the quality of life, it also promotes sustainable development, protects natural resources and provides park land and open space in proximity to its citizens.

**Requested Action:** Support the return of full funding for Florida Forever for the 2012-13 fiscal year as the program helps further local land conservation dollars and preserves the delicate systems unique to Florida.

**Effect:** Restoration of Florida Forever funding will facilitate local governments' ability to engage in important land acquisition and conservation projects. These projects are a critical component of statewide environmental preservation efforts.

### **MAINTAIN STATE AID & LIBRARY COOPERATIVE FUNDING**

**Background:** During the 2011 Legislative Session, a proposal was forwarded to eliminate State Aid to Public Libraries. A similar proposal is expected during the 2012 Legislative Session. State Aid to Public Libraries is a recurring source of aid which would provide \$26,000 to Flagler County during FY2012-13. In addition, multi-type library cooperatives and multi-county library cooperatives derive a significant portion of their funding from State Aid to Public Libraries.

**Requested Action:** Maintain recurring funding for State Aid to Public Libraries.

**Effect:** The elimination of this funding would have a direct \$26,000 impact on the Flagler County Public Library System. In addition, this proposal would eliminate the Northeast Florida Library Information Network (NEFLIN) and all other multi-type library cooperatives in Florida. Moreover, it would negatively impact Flagler County's reciprocal borrowing agreements with St. Johns and Volusia Counties and its ability to participate in inter-library loans. Finally, Flagler County would also be eliminated from qualification for several Federal grants. In today's economy, local library services are utilized by more patrons. The funds are critical in helping to minimize duplication of certain materials.



## 2012 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



### **MEDICAL INSURANCE**

**Background:** Skyrocketing medical insurance premiums make it virtually impossible for smaller counties to provide affordable medical insurance coverage to their employees.

**Requested Action:** Allow small counties to participate in and benefit from the larger group medical insurance benefit of the State of Florida, pursuant to Section 110.1228, Florida Statutes. The current law is being interpreted by the state as allowing separate risk pools for each participating county, which interpretation nullifies any benefit of participation. The law needs a sentence clarifying that small counties will be included in the same risk pool as state employees.

**Effect:** Enable small counties to provide affordable medical insurance coverage for its employees.

### **PUBLIC LIBRARIES: STATE AID TO LIBRARIES & MULTI-LIBRARY COOPERATIVES**

**Background:** The State Aid to Libraries grant program benefits all libraries in our state including Nassau County. The grant consists of two parts: Operating and Equalization. Even though Nassau County will no longer receive the Equalization portion of the grant, we will still be eligible for the Operating portion. As the lower 34 economic counties drop from the Equalization program, Operating grants will increase for all libraries.

**Requested Action:** Fund the State Aid to Libraries program at least at the minimum maintenance of effort level.

**Effect:** State Aid pays for many activities in our public libraries; in Nassau this includes: all library materials, furniture and equipment, telecom and Internet access, maintenance contracts for software and equipment, supplies, etc. The minimum maintenance of effort for this program is \$21.2 million. State Aid also brings \$8 million in federal funds to Florida through the Library Services and Technology (LSTA). LSTA funds keep our State Library open, it pays for the Florida Electronic Library (databases for all residents), and it funds our Multi-Library Cooperatives (MLC's).

### **PUBLIC LIBRARY: CONTINUE FUNDING TO MULTI-LIBRARY COOPERATIVES**

**Background:** Florida has been divided up into 6 MLC's. Our local MLC is the Northeast Florida Library Information Network (NEFLIN). The MLC's provide many services to Florida libraries, such as free training for all library staff both at the professional and para-professional levels. They continue to encourage cooperation between our libraries; public, school and college libraries, and provide the basis for the interlibrary loan system at a reduced rate.

**Requested Action:** Maintain the minimum maintenance of effort level for the MLC's statewide, at \$1 million.

**Effect:** The MLC's were reduced by one this year, there are now 5 in operation. Funding for this fiscal year was \$1 million. Again we are asking the minimum maintenance of effort (MOE) level of \$2.1 million be maintained for State Aid. This will ensure the funding for our local MLC's and ensure that Florida receives its full share of federal dollars through LSTA.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

**Background:** Past growth has resulted in continual needs for transportation network improvements that impact desired quality of life projects, increased traffic congestion and hampered economic development potential. Increased traffic network demand with a reduced revenue stream has stressed state and local government's ability to meet regional/community needs and protect quality of life and economic development needs.

#### **Requested Action:**

- Replenish the Transportation Trust Fund and use the fund for transportation projects only. Don't use that revenue fund as a bill payer for unrelated budget line items. Initiatives such as TRIP and the Transportation Disadvantaged programs are beneficial to both the state and local government and need to be fully funded.
- Support transportation funding legislation that provides a dedicated and recurring source of revenue, including local option fuel taxes, rental car surcharges, or other taxes or fees, to fund local government essential transportation projects and programs and the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP).
- Support transportation funding legislation that improves economic development, quality of life, the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP), the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP).
- Support legislation that ensures adequate funding for maintenance and improvement of evacuation routes.

**Effect:** A fully funded FDOT allows local governments to effectively work with and leverage local and regional projects benefitting the citizens.





### **RETURN FULL FUNDING OF THE STATE HOUSING INITIATIVES PARTNERSHIP (SHIP) PROGRAM**

**Background:** County SHIP funds were reduced in 2008-2009 resulting in the wait-listing and subsequent cessation of application acceptance for this program. In July 2011, new funding of \$350,000 was approved which was a substantial reduction from 2007-2008 levels of \$688,000.

**Requested Action:** Restore full funding of each County's SHIP allowance as projected prior to the reduction act.

**Effect:** Restoration of maximum SHIP fund amounts will immediately increase the number of individuals receiving SHIP assistance, and will positively affect the property tax roll.

### **POTABLE WATER SYSTEMS AND WASTEWATER FACILITIES FUNDING**

**Background:** Counties and other local governments have increasingly become involved in providing the public with potable water and effective wastewater treatment facilities through publicly owned and operated utility systems.

**Requested Action:** Increase the grant funding for wastewater and potable water supply utility systems.

**Effect:** Enable counties to expand or establish systems that will result in improved drinking water and reduce environmental pollution from ineffective and inefficient wastewater systems. Establishment of wastewater systems will have a direct and positive impact on economic development along the business corridors.

### **SMALL COUNTY ROAD PROGRAMS**

**Background:** The Small County Road Programs are critical to assisting Putnam County in addressing transportation issues. The Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) have provided necessary transportation funding for continued road improvements.

**Requested Action:** Support continuation of monies generated by statewide gas tax collections to the State Transportation Trust Fund to ensure that essential transportation programs such as the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) are fully funded.

**Effect:** Continuation of these vital programs will enable small counties to carryout much needed road improvements.

### **PUBLIC LIBRARIES: STATE AID TO LIBRARIES & MULTI-LIBRARY COOPERATIVES**

**Background:** The State Aid to Libraries grant program benefits all libraries in our state.

**Requested Action:** Fund the State Aid to Libraries program at least at the minimum maintenance of effort level.

**Effect:** State Aid pays for many activities in our public libraries; State Aid also brings \$8 million in federal funds to Florida through the Library Services and Technology (LSTA). LSTA funds keep our State Library open, it pays for the Florida Electronic Library (databases for all residents), and it funds our Multi-Library Cooperatives (MLC's). The minimum maintenance of effort (MOE) level will ensure the funding for our local MLC's and ensure that Florida receives its full share of federal dollars through LSTA.



## 2012 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



### **PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Background:** In many circumstances, new businesses who are seeking a site for relocation or expansion request financial incentives by local, regional and statewide entities as an inducement to make a final location selection.

**Requested Actions:** Amend Sections 286.0113 and 288.075, Florida Statutes, to enhance the confidentiality of economic development activities.

**Effect:** Having the ability to negotiate in the "shade" would allow St. Johns County and other public agencies throughout the state to be more competitive with other states when vying for large-scale economic development projects.

### **TORT REFORM AND LIMITATION OF LIABILITY**

**Background:** Protecting public funds from frivolous lawsuits and claims by revising applicable Florida Statutes is an important public interest.

**Requested Actions:** Amend Sections 768.79, 57.105, 68.081-68.09, 336.045, and 380.276(b), Florida Statutes, to protect public funds from frivolous claims.

**Effect:** Protecting public funds from frivolous claims would enable public bodies to utilize scarce resources to protect and promote the public health, safety, and welfare.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

**Background:** St. Johns County's road network has not kept up with the County's rapid growth, resulting in severe congestion on several key roadways.

#### **Requested Actions:**

- State Road 9B - Make the critical State Road 9B roadway eligible for the greatest possible range of funding resources by designating it as a Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Facility; and include in the FDOT Work Program adequate funds to move this critical project, particularly those sections between County Road 2209 and I-95, toward construction at the earliest possible date.
- State Road 312, including the State Road 313 Bypass - Request \$116 million in state funds for the design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of the State Road 313 Bypass from State Road 207 to State Road 16; and Request \$30 million for the State Road 313 Bypass from State Road 16 North to Woodlawn Road.
- I-95 Interchange with County Road 210 - Request \$45 million in state funds for long-term improvements to the I-95 interchange with County Road 210 as specified by the forthcoming Interchange Modification Report.
- County Road 210 Overpass at US 1 - Request \$38 million in state funds for construction of the County Road 210 overpass over US-1 (as a phase one improvement), and \$11 million in state funds for construction of interchange ramps for the County Road 210 overpass over US-1 (as a second phase).

**Effect:** Funding these roadway improvements will relieve traffic congestion and reduce the associated risks to the health, safety and well-being of the users of those roadways.

### **WATER QUALITY/UNFUNDED MANDATES**

**Background:** Many statutory and constitutional restrictions have been placed on local property taxes, while at the same time general purpose local governments have been assigned unfunded mandates, with the majority of these unfunded mandates originating in the Legislature. The costs associated with compliance with new regulations present a significant hardship for local governments when provisions for funding compliance is lacking.

**Requested Actions:** Request the State to cooperate with local governments to collectively serve the citizens of Florida in the best way and be considerate of local governments when passing unfunded mandates.

- Total Maximum Daily Loads - Request \$60 million in State funds over the next five years to assist in complying with the existing unfunded mandates for TMDL's contained within the County's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. Alternatively, this funding could come from a specific and dedicated revenue source, authorized by the Florida Legislature, which is not currently available to local government jurisdictions.
- New Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Proposed Regulations (Numeric Nutrient Criteria) - Request the Florida Legislature direct the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to initiate the collection and analysis of adequate, timely, and appropriate data upon which to base the establishment of Numeric Nutrient Criteria (NNC) regulations specific to Florida. Also request, in the strongest manner, that the EPA delay further action until Florida has had sufficient time to study and understand the impact of these new regulations on our unique environment and fragile economy. Finally, request the Florida Legislature provide sufficient funds to allow timely compliance with the FDEP regulations when they are adopted. Ideally, this funding would come from a specific and dedicated revenue source that is not currently available to local government jurisdictions.

**Effect:** These requested actions will ease the burden of these unfunded mandates on local government.

### **PUBLIC LIBRARIES: STATE AID TO LIBRARIES & MULTI-LIBRARY COOPERATIVES**

**Background:** The State Aid to Libraries grant program benefits all libraries in our state.

**Requested Action:** Fund the State Aid to Libraries program at least at the minimum maintenance of effort level.

**Effect:** State Aid pays for many activities in our public libraries; State Aid also brings \$8 million in federal funds to Florida through the Library Services and Technology (LSTA). LSTA funds keep our State Library open, it pays for the Florida Electronic Library (databases for all residents), and it funds our Multi-Library Cooperatives (MLC's). The minimum maintenance of effort (MOE) level will ensure the funding for our local MLC's and ensure that Florida receives its full share of federal dollars through LSTA.

# 2012 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



The Legislative Policy Committee of the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) was created to address critical concerns within the member counties which comprise the Region. It is composed of at least one delegate from each county (Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns), which includes the current President of the NEFRC.

This Committee is guided by the *Home Rule Philosophy* to develop and implement community-based solutions.

The legislative priorities of each county within the Northeast Florida Regional Council's membership and other regional stakeholders were collected. Each entity was requested to determine at least three priorities which most significantly represented the critical needs and concerns of their communities and constituents. The cumulative list totaled **31** priorities.

Through the gathering and analysis of all priorities submitted by each county individually, the Legislative Policy Committee collectively determined the top **5** "Regional priorities" which represented the most critical concerns of the Northeast Florida Region.

*All priorities were reviewed to include background, requested action and effect.*

*Additional information regarding all legislative priorities for the counties is available upon request.*



**Honorable Kenny Eubanks**  
Putnam County Commissioner  
Legislative Policy Committee Chair

*"I believe in the power of cooperation and that we are never stronger than when we pool our resources for the betterment of our Regional community.*

*Serving as Chairman for this committee has allowed me to see first hand, that although we come from different counties with unique perspectives, we embrace many of the same critical issues that affect the quality of life in our communities and our Region.*

*The resources and expertise of the Northeast Florida Regional Council affords us a greater opportunity to work collectively and promote Regionally."*



## About the Northeast Florida Regional Council

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) is a regional government agency serving seven counties—Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns—and their 27 municipalities. Formed in 1977 by an interlocal agreement pursuant to Florida Statutes, Chapter 163, it is one of 11 regional planning councils statewide.

The NEFRC is governed by a 35-member Board, two-thirds of whom are elected officials and one-third who are gubernatorial appointees.

The NEFRC provides a wide scope of services and programs including strategic planning, Development of Regional Impact reviews, economic development, regional transportation, natural resources, affordable housing, emergency preparedness and technical assistance.

The Northeast Florida Regional Council is committed to continuing its regional initiatives in support of shared visions, values and goals.

### Our Mission

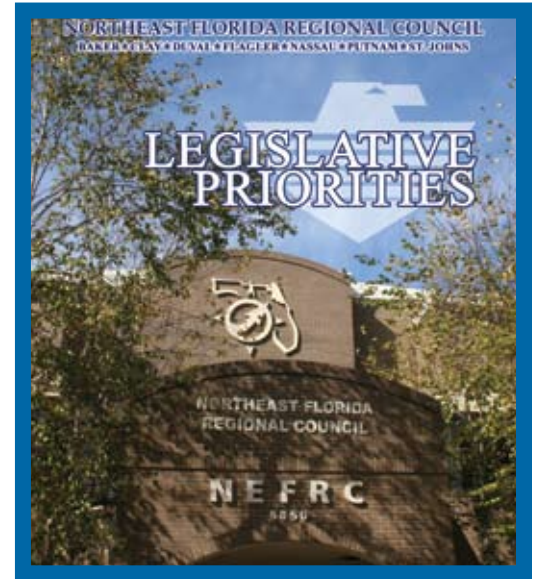
Our Mission is to provide visionary leadership and coordination between counties and governmental agencies to preserve and enhance the quality of Northeast Florida's natural, man-made, economic and social environment.

#### For additional information:

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*"Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda."*