

NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL

2016

**LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES**

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



"Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda."

2016 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.

2016 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



The following Regional Legislative priorities were determined by a consensus of the Legislative Policy Committee. The Committee was guided by the Home Rule philosophy to develop and implement community-based solutions.

Infrastructure

- ★ Support economic development prosperity and environmental protection through increased funding for water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure projects understanding the regional and statewide importance of these initiatives to provide for the increasing needs of our citizens.
- ★ Support maintenance of the current common law doctrine on utility relocation on the public right of way.

Local Government Revenue

- ★ Support legislation to protect and expand local government's revenue generating capacity, reduce cost-shifting to local governments, and reduce unfunded mandates.

Transportation

- ★ Support transportation funding 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 that improves the economy and quality of life,
- ★ Support funding for the Small County Road Assistance Program, the Small County Outreach Program, Transportation Regional Incentive Program and the Transportation Disadvantaged Program.





2016 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), Small County Outreach Program (SCOP), Community Incentive Grant Program (CIGP) and the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) 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), the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP), Community Incentive Grant Program (CIGP) and the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP).

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.

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS/SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER

Background: Baker County has two hurricane shelters and a population of 27,000. 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 a 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: Make available fair and equitable revenue sources for State and Local governments to meet needs.

OPPOSE EFFORTS TO PRIVATIZE THE NORTHEAST FLORIDA STATE HOSPITAL (NEFSH) AND DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (DOC) FACILITIES

Background: NEFSH and DOC are important employers in Baker County. Baker County's economy is heavily dependent on the jobs generated by these facilities.

Requested Action: Oppose legislation mandating privatization and contracting procedures without giving the affected facilities an opportunity to achieve similar savings internally.

Effect: A factually motivated decision should be made regarding the effectiveness of outsourcing NEFSH or DOC services. The current public provider of service should have an equal opportunity to continue to providing the level of service.

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) program. LSTA funds keep our State Library open, pays for the Florida Electronic Library (databases for all residents), and 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.

BUSINESS CLIMATE / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Background: To help encourage and support the expansion of local businesses and the development of new businesses.

Requested Action: *Restructure State QTI Incentive Program to Allow: Allow companies to receive 100% of credits in RAO counties without requiring local match, companies to carry credits forward if they can't be used in any given year, and LLCs to take advantage of tax credits. * Phase out the sales tax on commercial real estate leases since Florida is the only state that charges it

Effect: The business community pays more taxes and demands fewer services than any other segment of an economy so growing the business community provides more stability to the local and state economy.

REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION

Background: Ad valorem taxes have been insufficient and an inequitable source of revenue for small counties. Counties need to have the flexibility to levy additional sales tax at their discretion.

Requested Action: Allow counties the option to levy an additional sales tax.

Effect: The additional sales tax will create additional revenue for local governments that will affect the community as a whole and not limit the burden solely to property owners.



**Clay County
Legislative Priorities
not provided
in time for publication**

2016 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



LOCAL LEGISLATION FOR DERELICT VESSELS AND MOORING FIELDS – DESIGNATION OF THE ST. JOHNS RIVER AS A MARITIME HIGHWAY

Background: The City of Green Cove Springs respectfully requests the Legislative's consideration for enactment of an amendment to the Florida statutes providing law enforcement agencies the following:

- A.** To amend Florida Statute 327.32 and remove the civil liability to law enforcement when acting under color of law to prevent a derelict vessel from sinking, breaking loose from an anchor, drifting into open waters, and becoming a navigational hazard to other vessels.
- B.** To amend Florida State Statutes and treat the St. Johns River as "a highway" thus allowing law enforcement to ensure that unregistered, uninsured derelict vessels can be removed from waterways prior to sinking and becoming navigational hazards.
- C.** To amend Florida Statutes making it a criminal charge to operate, store, anchor a boat on public waterways if the vessel's registration is expired six (6) months or more. This is presently classified as a civil infraction and vessel owners never appear before a judge to answer the charge.

We researched the subject of derelict vessels in depth in 2009 and have found it to be cost prohibitive for small communities, such as Green Cove Springs, to adequately address this item. We would ask that the Legislature consider drafting umbrella legislation that establishes statewide standards, thus paving the way for smaller riverfront communities to proceed establishing mooring fields at the local level without costly expenditures. The support for this legislative concern is predicated on the potential adverse impacts to the River's quality for sustaining aquatic and marine life for present and future generations.

In 1998, the St. Johns River was designated as one of 14 American Heritage Rivers by President William Jefferson Clinton. The City Council of Green Cove Springs also encourages the consideration of legislation supporting designation of the St. Johns River as a Marine Highway and the creation of an Inland Navigation District. The creation or designation of the Marine Highway and Inland Navigation District will further enhance economic growth and development opportunities for the various counties and cities along the St. Johns River as a waterborne transportation system that is parallel to the existing I-95, the Railroad (CSX & FEC), and will intersect with the new First Coast Expressway as promoted by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration.

Requested Action: A draft proposal for changes to Florida Statutes has been prepared. We recommend it be addressed much like an abandoned vehicle. Designate the St. Johns River as a Marine Highway.

Effect: Provides local governments enhanced authority over derelict vehicle and makes Northeast Florida more economically competitive

ECO-TOURISM: HISTORIC SPRING PARK AND SWIMMING POOL

Background: Spring Park is the focal point for our community and unique to the region. Spring Park, comprising of the 128 acre Green Cove Springs Nature Preserve, has a swimming pool that is fed by a mineral spring, cascades into a stream, and empties into the St. Johns River. It also provides public access to a free fishing pier and restrooms that are used by the entire region. It has enormous historical value and provides economic impact to the entire region. The Spring compromised the foundation of the antiquated ground floor restrooms and the top of the Old City Hall building. Demolition of the Old City Hall was completed in May 2015, thus paving the way for pool renovations, spring stabilization, and site improvements. Key phases include: • demolish Old City Hall structure overlooking the spring fed pool; • stabilize the springhead area; • renovate spring-fed swimming pool; and • conceptual plan is attached, along with \$2.1M budget estimate.

Financial support in the amount of \$700,000 has been received from the Clay County Board of County Commissioners. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of water as a resource in Florida and its significance at this local park site that has public access to the St. Johns River.

Requested Action: Financial support from State through its Springs restoration funding to fund the reconstruction of the restrooms and floor above to provide replacement ADA restrooms and an ADA walkway. Safeguard the historic mineral Spring and the historic chemical-free pool that the mineral Spring feeds. Continue to preserve the historic Spring and chemical-free pool and the family oriented Park that provides public access to the St Johns River. This project will take approximately 24 months to complete all planned phases.

Effect: Enhances the protection and enjoyment of Spring Park.

AUGUSTA SAVAGE ARTS & COMMUNITY CENTER (ASACC)

Background: Support public/private partnership to revitalize and convert this historically significant site that once served as Dunbar High School, the black high school campus in Clay County. It is named for the sculptor from Green Cove Springs, Augusta Fells Savage. She had a studio in Harlem, NY and was inducted into Florida Artists Hall of Fame in 2008. Assets include a Gym that is used for after school recreation and activities, classrooms that could become business incubators, a library that could become a museum, and a cafeteria that could become a Community for Performing Arts venue. The Industrial Arts Building was demolished in July 2015 with the vision and plan for the construction of a new building that will house the Food Pantry of Green Cove Springs, which provides emergency food for those in need in Clay County. The site is also the location for the Head Start Program of the Episcopal Children's Services. The site has revenue potential. It was the former home of Challenge Enterprises, Inc.

Requested Action: Financial support from the State to fund the reconstruction of this historically significant site for the future use of community support venues and providers and to provide educational and recreational activities for children.

Effect: Preserves significant historical cultural resources.



JACKSONVILLE HARBOR DEEPENING PROJECT

Background: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) conducted a comprehensive, year-long economic, engineering and environmental study of the project which was then peer reviewed and approved through outside agencies. The deepening was authorized by the 2014 Water Resources Reform and Development Act and the project is entering the final stages of planning, engineering and design in preparation for construction.

Requested Action: To complete this project collaboration will be needed from Duval County, the State of Florida, and the Federal Government. Please support this initiative by taking the appropriate steps to finalize funding and completion of this project.

Effect: The Harbor Point Deepening Project will reduce transportation costs and bring in the forecasted volume of goods into the Harbor on fewer, larger and more efficient ships; thereby improving competitiveness and growing jobs while driving down shipping costs for Americans and their Business'.

FILM AND ENTERTAINMENT INCENTIVES

Background: The Entertainment Industry Economic Development Act allocated \$242 Million over 5 Years (sunset June 30, 2015). Subsequently, the legislature in May of 2012, provided an additional \$42 Million and extended the sunset to June 30, 2016 (making it a six year program and provided a total of \$296 Million in credits).

As of June 2013, all tax credits allocated through 2016 for the General Production Queue and Independent and Emerging Media Queue have been allocated. This means that no additional funds are available.

Requested Action: Support legislation that provides a consistent, reliable and predictable tax credit funding mechanism for the film and entertainment industry in Florida.

Effect: A positive impact on the State and the Northeast Florida Region by increasing Film and Entertainment Production throughout the State and Region.

UNFUNDED MANDATES

Background: Federal and State mandates that require local governments to perform actions but provide no funding for those actions create an added burden on local taxpayers and may displace other essential local government priorities.

This is especially true during an economic recovery with reduced ad valorem 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 and collectively serve the citizens of Florida by providing adequate funding for initiatives mandated by Legislature 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.

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PUBLIC RECORDS LAWSUITS

Background: Cities and counties as well as other numerous government entities are required to comply with public records laws in Chapter 119, Florida Statutes. Several individuals and entities around the State have developed a cottage industry designed to produce technical violations of the public records laws. These individuals and entities have filed thousands of public records requests and hundreds of lawsuits, not necessarily interested in obtaining public records, but achieving a settlement and personal financial gain at the expense of tax payers.

Requested Action: Reform public records laws to discourage or eliminate schemes designed to generate technical violations of those laws for profit.

Effect: Limit financial burden on local governments in dealing with these onerous public record requests and lawsuits.

UTILITY RELOCATION

Background: Under Florida common law, local governments have utilized their home rule authority to construct transportation projects and require utilities to relocate utility equipment when necessary while requiring utility companies bear those costs when the utilities are located in a public easement. This legislation would have a significant negative fiscal impact on municipalities and be contrary to common law established over 100 years ago while shifting millions of dollars of cost to already-stretched local property taxes and tax funds at both the local and state level. This will also kill many needed transportation projects and lead to more congestion and lower quality of life for residents.

Requested Action: Defeat any legislation that increases the financial burden on local and state governments for relocating utilities related to transportation projects.

Effect: Maintain the responsibility of utilities to relocate utility equipment in the public right-of-way or public easement for transportation projects.

ENHANCE FUNDING FOR WATER, WASTEWATER, AND STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Background: Florida local governments must be equipped with the adequate funding and tools necessary to protect State natural resources and citizens living within these areas from development impacts and fallout from weather related incidents. The small pool of funds recently allocated by the Legislature for water infrastructure projects has been unsubstantial relative to rapidly growing regional needs and environmental challenges throughout the State. Flagler County understands this well having doubled in population in the last decade.

Requested Action: Increase funding to adequate levels for water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure projects understanding the regional and statewide importance of these initiatives.

Effect: Enable local governments to ensure safe drinking water and proper treatment of wastewater and stormwater, in turn protecting critical natural resources throughout the State.

REVISING THE COST SHARING MODEL FOR JUVENILE DETENTION COSTS

Background: Over the past several years, the Florida Legislature has considered various fixed cost-share models for juvenile detention costs, but has failed to pass the committee process. Every county government in Florida supports a fair 50/50 cost share split between state and local government, however the State Legislature continues to oppose revising the current practice.

Requested Action: Support legislation evenly splitting the juvenile detention cost share 50/50 between state and county government.

Effect: An even cost sharing model that allows counties to pay for actual costs incurred on a prospective basis, rather than estimated costs with annual reconciliation will create a more fair, consistent, and accountable financial practice.

2016 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



PROVISION OF RECREATIONAL LANDS AT COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL SCALE

Background: Since the inception in July 2001, the State of Florida has purchased 710,144 acres for preservation. The amount of land purchased for recreational use and trails is a small percentage of the total acreage.

Requested Action: Florida Forever and Florida Communities Trust should increase percentages based on the needs of current and future population of Florida citizens. In partnership with local governments, lands can be identified for acquisition that will preserve property and provide for recreational uses.

Effect: The provision of recreational amenities protects property values, stabilizes neighborhoods, promotes health, and attracts jobs to Nassau County.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Background: The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) Technical Assistance Grants to local governments and regional planning councils assist counties and municipalities in developing economic development strategies and meeting the requirements of the Community Planning Act.

Requested Action: The demand for these grants has outstripped the DEO's supply of funds. The funding to DEO for these grants should be expanded.

Effect: The provision of these DEO grants will result in increased economic opportunities for the citizens of Nassau County and increased fiscal resiliency.

TRANSPORTATION

Background: Past growth has resulted in continued needs for transportation network improvements. The lack of improvements impacts desired quality of life projects, causes increased traffic congestion and hampers 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: • 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). • 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.

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

(PUBLIC WORKS) WATER & SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

Background: In order to promote both economic development and to reduce the impact of septic systems and individual wells on the environment it is necessary to provide additional grant funding for the expansion of water and sewer infrastructure. By providing additional grant funding this will allow for lower income areas to more easily take advantage of programs to implement central water and sewer and to reduce the impacts of septic tanks and individual wells.

Additional grant funding for system expansion(s) and fast track permitting of water and sewer system expansion will also allow for enhanced economic development. Having the ability to quickly get water and sewer to sites already approved for industrial development will increase Florida's economic competitiveness in attracting industry.

Requested Action: • Provide additional grant funding in both the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Economic Opportunity for the expansion of funding sources to provide water and sewer to eliminate septic systems and individual wells and also for Economic Development purposes.

Effect: By allowing for additional funding sources to expand water and sewer for economic development purposes and to provide for the elimination of well and septic systems in environmentally sensitive area, this will have a direct positive impact on economic development and reduction in environmental impacts in environmentally sensitive areas.

PUBLIC LIBRARY: STATE AID TO LIBRARIES

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 public libraries.

Requested Action: Nassau County supports funding the State Aid to Libraries program at the 2014-15 level of \$27,409,823. The second item is continued funding to our MLC's.

Effect: State Aid pays for many activities in FL public libraries. In Nassau County this includes: library materials, furniture and equipment, Internet access, software, supplies, etc. Please restore \$5 million to State Aid program, back to 2014-15 level of \$27,409,823. If the State Aid program does not receive the increase, Nassau County loses over \$15,000 in funding.

State Aid also brings approx. \$8 million in federal funds to Florida through the Library Services and Technology (LSTA). LSTA funds keep our State Library open, pays for the Florida Electronic Library (databases for all FL residents), and it funds our Multi Library Cooperatives (MLC's).

PUBLIC LIBRARY: CONTINUE FUNDING TO MULTI LIBRARY COOPERATIVES (MLC)

Background: Florida has been divided into 5 MLC's. Our local MLC is the Northeast Florida Library Information Network (NEFLIN). The MLC's provide many unique services to Florida libraries, such as free professional training for all library staff; professionals and support staff. They encourage and establish cooperation between libraries; public, school, college and special libraries, and they provide the basic structure for our interlibrary loan system at a reduced rate.

Requested Action: Nassau County supports funding the MLC's statewide, at the current level of \$1.5 million.

Effect: Funding for the 2014-15 fiscal year is \$1.5 million. The MLC's are supported by membership dues, and receive state funding as match on its fees. The MLC's, including NEFLIN, maintain minimal fees for their services so that all libraries may participate in this service. Continued funding for the MLC's ensures full federal funding for our state through LSTA.



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 carry out much needed road improvements.

PROTECT OFFSET FUNDING FOR FISCALLY CONSTRAINED COUNTIES

Background: The passage of Amendment 1 has caused dire consequences for Florida's small, fiscally constrained counties where property tax revenues are already inadequate to pay for essential services. The doubling of the homestead exemption to \$50,000 has a negative fiscal impact in small counties, and it further exacerbates their financial situation.

Requested Action: To provide a dedicated recurring Legislative appropriation that would continue the funding level in fiscally constrained counties to that which existed prior to the passage of Amendment 1.

Effect: With a dedicated recurring resource appropriation to offset the loss of revenues for the fiscally constrained counties, Putnam County will be in a more tenable position to provide a moderate level of services to our citizens and be assured that the appropriation will be in place on an annual basis.

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. Putnam County is currently operating a public water utility, and is embarking on the construction of a regional wastewater utility.

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, as well as, the reduction in effluent impacting the local waterways.

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

Background: There is a need in rural communities for housing assistance for rehabilitation and new construction for low and moderate income persons. Waiting lists continue to increase even though the Legislature has redirected funding previously established by the Sadowski Act under the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP).

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

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

PRESERVATION OF RODMAN RESERVOIR (LAKE OCKLAWAHA) AS A FUTURE WATER SOURCE

Background: Rodman Reservoir (Lake Ocklawaha) stores, at normal levels, approximately 21 billion gallons of water. More than 646 million gallons of water flow over the Kirkpatrick Dam into the St. Johns River per day. This volume of water makes Rodman a potential source of surface water that could provide potable water. Rodman Reservoir (Lake Ocklawaha) protects the St. Johns River from an overload of nutrients by filtering the water that flows into Rodman before it flows over the Kirkpatrick Dam into the St. Johns River.

Requested Action: Continue to support the preservation of Rodman Reservoir (Lake Ocklawaha) as a wildlife refuge, potential water resource and a filter of excessive nutrients for the citizens of Putnam County. Support the traditional drawdown of reservoir water levels.

Effect: The preservation of Rodman Reservoir (Lake Ocklawaha) will enable Putnam County to evaluate its viability as a water source when planning for a central water system to serve parts of Putnam County west of the St. Johns River, and to protect the St. Johns River from excessive nutrients.

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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** – Include in the FDOT Work Program adequate funds to move this critical project from County Road 2209 to I-95 to construction at the earliest possible date; and 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.
- **State Road 312, including the State Road 313 Bypass** – Request \$95 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 preliminary Interchange Modification Report.
- **First Coast Expressway** – Include in the FDOT Work Program adequate funds to move this critical project of the First Coast Expressway from I-95 to US-17 to construction at the earliest possible date; ensure the highest funding prioritization for this critical First Coast Expressway segment eligible for the greatest possible range of funding resources.
- **County Road 210 Overpass at U.S. 1** – St. Johns County requests \$23 million in State funds for construction of a full interchange, including ramps, for the CR 210 overpass over U.S. 1 as phase two of this interchange project.
- **N.E. Florida Regional Airport Charter** – Request Legislative Delegation support for re-adoption of the N.E. Regional Airport Charter with amendments as they are related to the powers, duties, and obligations of the Independent Special District as requested by St. Augustine – St. Johns County Airport Authority.

Effect: Funding these transportation improvements will relieve traffic congestion, clarify transportation authority, and reduce 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 (TMDL) Regulations** – 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 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 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.

PROTECTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE OPTIONS

Background: The Florida Legislature has previously enacted legislation constraining the ability of local government to raise the revenue necessary for local government to provide programs and services, construct necessary public infrastructure, and sustain the quality of life desired by the residents residing within their jurisdiction. These actions have and will continue to inhibit the ability of local government to recover from the recent recession affecting the state and Nation.

Requested Actions:

- **Oppose legislation with the potential to further constrain local revenue** – request that the Florida Legislature oppose any legislation that would further erode the ability of local government to capture revenue in the form of ad valorem values, impact fees, concurrency compensation, and/or user fees.
- **Support revisions to current unfunded mandates and/or legislation impacting local revenues** – request that the legislature support revisions to current unfunded mandates, legislation, and the Florida Constitution that negatively impact local control and the ability of local government to rightfully capture the revenue necessary to meet community service demands.

Effect: These requested actions would restore local control to the appropriate levels of local government and allow local government to properly fund the programs and services, construct necessary public infrastructure, and sustain the quality of life desired by the residents residing within their jurisdiction.



MAINTAIN AND FUND BEACH RENOURISHMENT

Background: Studies have shown that Florida’s beaches are economic engines that sustain jobs and the economies of many counties and cities because of their attraction to visitors, both domestic and foreign. In addition, beaches are a recreational resource for local residents, and provide as well protection for both private and public property that is adjacent to the ocean. Past renourishment projects have especially benefited the beaches of such cities in northeast Florida as Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach and St. Augustine Beach, and have also contributed to the economic well-being of these cities areas adjacent to them.

Requested Action: To request the State of Florida to cooperate with local governments and agencies to ensure that adequate funding of \$5 million over the next five years to assist with existing funding, federal and local, for beach renourishment.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Background: St. Johns County has minimal public transportation. As the County has residential population and the number of tourists have grown, the lack of adequate public transportation has created congestion and other traffic-related issues.

Requested Action: Include and adequately fund this critical project and by doing so create a strategic model of public transportation for small cities. This will also promote easy, affordable access to the County’s historic areas, as well as its beach areas, and will help maintain the positive momentum of the tourist industry in St. Johns County.

2016 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities



Development of the Initiatives for the Legislative Committee



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 **33** 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, common 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.



Wendell Davis
President, Northeast Florida Regional Council
Clay 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 10 regional planning councils statewide.

The NEFRC is governed by a 35-member Board. Two-thirds are elected officials and one-third 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

To be a dynamic network of local governance, providing visionary leadership, advocacy, and coordination between counties and local, state and federal governmental agencies to preserve and enhance the quality of Northeast Florida's economic, natural, built and social environment.



"Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda."

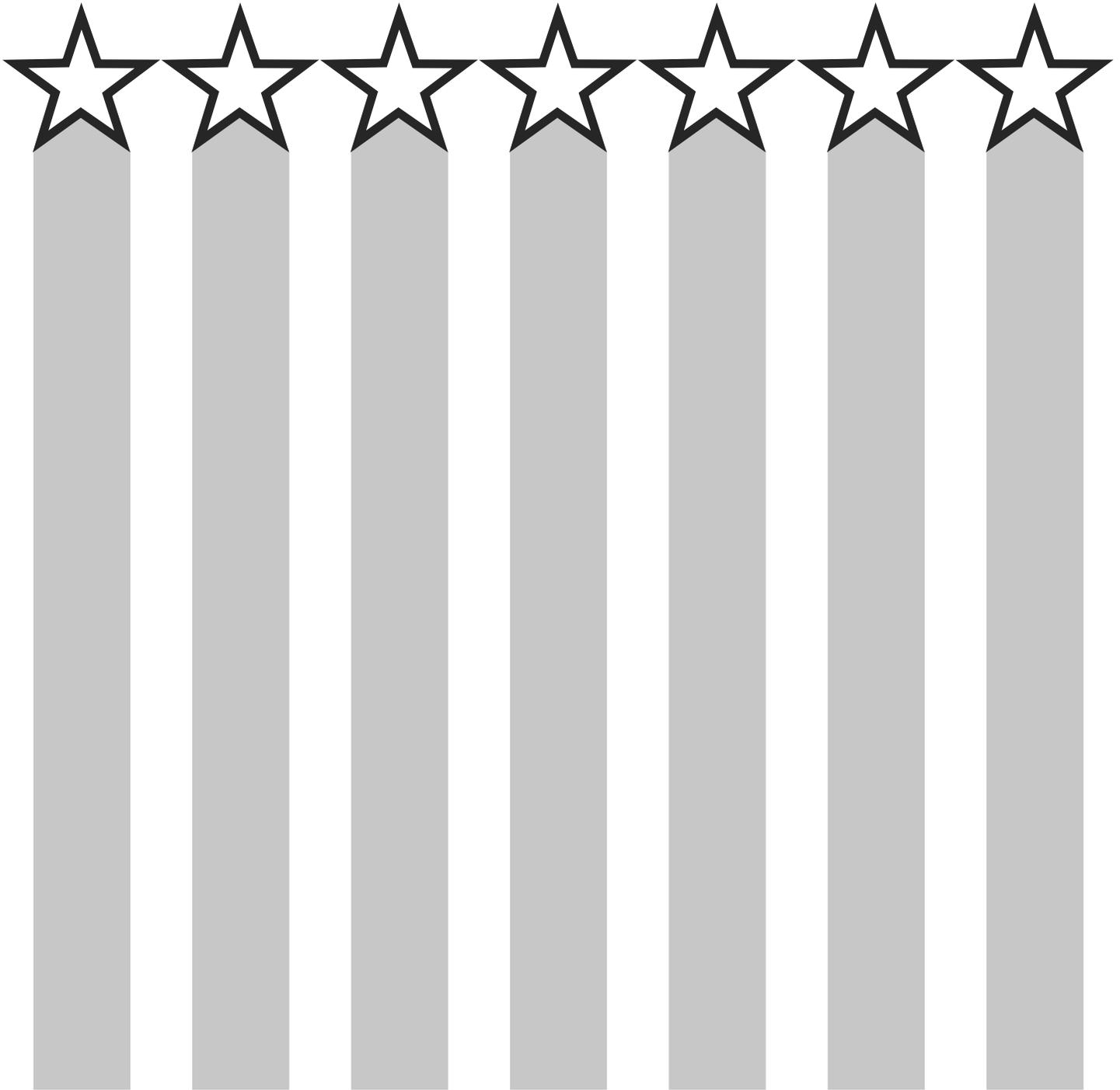
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NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL

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