



NASSAU COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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County Manager

JOHN A. CRAWFORD
Ex-Officio Clerk

MICHAEL S. MULLIN
County Attorney

MEMORANDUM

TO: Hon. Thomas Ford, Chairman, Nassau County Board of Commissioners (BOCC)

FROM: Taco E. Pope, AICP, County Manager

**CC: Members of the Nassau County BOCC
Michael S. Mullin, Esq., County Attorney
Mark Anderson, Mark Anderson Governmental Consulting**

DATE: October 31, 2021

RE: 2022 Legislative Requests

Each year, in coordination with the Nassau County Legislative Delegation, the Board of County Commissioners submit a prioritized list of requests for the Florida Legislature to consider. County Staff has worked with members of the Delegation, partner agencies, and the County's contract lobbyist to prepare for a successful 2022 legislative session.

State Senator Aaron Bean, Chair of the Nassau County Legislative Delegation, announced a Delegation meeting for Wednesday, November 10, 2021 from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. in the Nassau County Commission Chambers.

County Commissioner Thomas Ford, Chair of the Nassau County BOCC, called a Special Meeting of the Nassau County BOCC for November 3, 2021, to consider and set legislative priorities for the 2022 legislative session. Below are eight requests for the BOCC to consider.

The following requests are in no particular order. If the BOCC chooses to direct staff to submit two or more of the below items, or others discussed at the Special Meeting, staff respectfully requests the BOCC, by motion, prioritize the items.

1. County Road 121 (\$9,000,000):

County Road 121, formally State Road 121, is a forty (40) mile long roadway connecting US Hwy 1 near the Florida-Georgia border south to US Hwy 90 in Duval

County. Roadway traffic is predominantly freight traffic serving regional scale timber, sand mine, landfill, and truck traffic. Currently, CR121 is a Nassau County maintained road with a classification of 'major collector'. The roadway conditions are mostly fair to poor, depending on the segment. The current estimate to mill and resurface the full length of the roadway is \$18.9 million.

It is estimated that the AADT (vehicle per day) on the roadway will increase from 2,200 in 2018 to over 10,940 AADT by 2040. This increase in interregional and interstate traffic is consistent with growth projections tied the buildout of regional industrial complexes and job centers in northern and western Duval County and western Nassau County, i.e. the Crawford Diamond Industrial Complex, ICI Villages, Cecil Commerce Center, etc. As these economic growth centers of regional and state significances buildout, the importance of CR121 to support interregional and interstate commerce will increase.

Elevating the status of the roadway supports the goal of the State of Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) 2016 Policy Plan which states, "More quality options for interregional connections are needed across the state; strategic efforts are needed to close key connectivity gaps". CR121 will have an increased impact on transportation within the SIS. CR121 will expand transportation choices and integrate modes for interregional and interstate trips, increase connectivity of economic regions, provide alternative evacuation routes, improve Florida's global competitiveness and support economic expansion with increased freight mobility, trade development and multi-modal freight options.

The Legislature graciously appropriated funds, although a grant agreement from FDOT has not yet been received, to resurface 50% of the roadway as part of the 20/21 session. Nassau County respectfully requests the State Legislature appropriate \$9 million to complete the resurfacing project and ensure the viability of the CR121 corridor to support the SIS, interregional and interstate commerce, and protect Florida's global competitiveness.

2. American Beach Community Water and Sewer Project - Septic to Sewer Conversion (\$1,850,000):

American Beach, established in 1935, is a historic African-American coastal community in Nassau County, Florida currently served by private well and septic. The conversion from private well/septic to public water/sewer is a pursuit more than two decades in the making. This initiative was catalyzed through a partnership between the American Beach Community, new County administration, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Nassau Legislative Delegation, and Florida Governmental Utility Authority.

Over the past three years, amazing progress has been made. Earlier this year, an

American Beach Water/Sewer District Citizens Advisory Board was created and a community election/“Straw Ballot” was held to assess the desire of the community to be assessed to install public water/sewer. The independent tabulation of results was overwhelmingly in support of the project: a 64% response rate with 86% of valid votes supporting the assessment. The conversion project is fully designed, and construction is set to commence in Q2 of 2022 with substantial completion in Q3 of 2023.

It is the Board of County Commissioners’ desire to fully fund the septic to sewer conversion and avoid placing an annual assessment on individual property owners of this small disadvantaged historic African American coastal community that is vulnerable to storm surge. Nassau County respectfully requests the State Legislature appropriate \$1.85 million in the form of a grant to cover the remaining funding gap to complete construction of the septic to sewer conversion and thus avoid the need to assess the individual property owners. Total project cost is estimated at \$10,657,899; the requested \$1,850,000 represents seventeen (17) percent of the total project cost.

3. SR200/A1A Widening from CR107 to Amelia Island Parkway (2.8 miles) - Yulee/Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, FL (\$1,200,000):

In 2021, the FDOT completed widening SR200/A1A [part of the State’s Strategic Intermodal System (SIS)] from I-95 to CR107 through Nassau County. At the intersection of SR200/A1A and CR107, the roadway reduces from six-lanes to four-lanes as it approaches the Amelia River/ICW and access to Amelia Island via the Shave Bridge. The Shave Bridge is the only viable access to Amelia Island from I-95. Completing the widening project from CR107 over the Amelia River/ICW to the intersection with the Amelia Island Parkway allows roadway capacity to be maintained and eliminates the current bottleneck at the entrance to Amelia Island and the key manufacturing and tourist destinations located thereon, e.g., Rayonier Advanced Materials Mill, Westrock Paper Mill, Port of Fernandina, the Ritz Carlton Amelia Island, Omni-Amelia Island Plantation Resort, and historic Fernandina Beach.

The intersection with the Amelia Island Parkway is the primary driver decision point for those visiting, working, or delivering to/on Amelia Island. Drivers either continue east/north to Historic Fernandina Beach, Port of Fernandina, Rayonier Advanced Materials Mill, and Westrock Paper Mill or, in the alternative, south to the Ritz Carlton Amelia Island, Omni-Amelia Island Plantation, and other resort properties/amenities. The intersection of SR200/A1A and Amelia Island Parkway is a more practical and appropriate point for a lane reduction than the intersection at CR107. CR107 does not access Amelia Island and has no outlet other than looping back to SR200/A1A further west.

Nassau County respectfully requests the execution of a feasibility study and related PD&E as means to prepare for allocation of funds to widen SR200/A1A from County Road 107 to the Amelia Island Parkway. This project will include major intersection

improvements at SR200/CR107 and SR200/Amelia Island Parkway. This project will also include the widening of the Shave Bridge from 4-lanes to 6-lanes. This project should be designed with the Trans Nassau Multi-use Trail and Amelia Island Trail projects as critical components and drivers of the cross-section. This segment of SR200/A1A is part of the State's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) and is of State interest.

4. Department of Juvenile Justice – Sheriff's Work Ethics and Training (SWEAT) Program (\$110,000):

The SWEAT Program is designed to redirect "at-risk" youth by way of community service, mentoring and academic assistance in attempt to reduce juvenile delinquency rates. The SWEAT Program formalizes a mentoring system with the additional ability to hire tutors from the local school system for the youth. It also provides a "sweat" component in which the youth participate in stents of physical labor rather than spending time in detention. The tutoring and mentoring component combined with the "sweat" component, provide the necessary tools to break some of the generational cycles of poverty, dysfunction and lack of education while promoting self-esteem, improving life skills as well as leadership and professional skills and reducing or preventing truancy and substance abuse.

The Nassau County program was modeled after the well-established Clay County program. Nassau is currently in its third year of delivering the program. In order to continue the SWEAT program in Nassau County, the BOCC requests the State appropriate program funding for the upcoming year. These funds will be utilized to support the Nassau County SWEAT program and continue to redirect "at-risk" youth, reducing the burden on the juvenile justice system and improving the lives of the youth involved.

5. Northeast Florida Public Safety Training Facility - Phase 2 (\$5,950,000):

With a county population of 92,992 and a regional population of 1.6 million, Nassau County and the Jacksonville MSA are one of the fastest growing MSAs in the Country. This rapid urbanization has resulted in a higher volume of calls for law enforcement and fire/rescue services and has also changed the complexity and severity of the situations local public safety personnel face on a day-to-day basis. This trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future as the northeast Florida region is predicted to grow exponentially over the coming decade.

As such, the evolution of the local environment requires we augment our training and development capacities. In response, Nassau County has commenced the process of developing the Northeast Florida Regional Public Safety Training Facility capable of matching the public safety needs of the citizens of Nassau County and its surrounding region. In 2017, the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners dedicated forty (40) acres of County owned land off of CR-108 about three miles west

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of I-95 to construct a regional scale public safety training facility. Nassau County has fully designed the campus and commenced construction of Phase 1 of the project in March of 2021 with a target date for completion of Q2-22. Phase 1 is locally funded at a cost of \$3.2m. Full build-out of the campus has a cost of approximately \$17,000,000 (2021 dollars). Nassau County has a reoccurring dedicated funding source for the project. However, the County lacks the resources to construct the indoor training facility and classrooms. The indoor training facility has a cost of approximately \$5.9 million, representing thirty-four (34) percent of the total project cost.

The new public safety training center will allow for enhanced capabilities of officers and firefighters to be developed across the region. This will include, routine refresher and remedial training using the actual equipment used in service, and training regularly with co-workers and partner agencies within the region, as opposed to, sending mixed training units out of the county. The coordinated training effort will enhance response and performance in emergency operations for regional natural disasters, active shooter events, and other threats. We anticipate a reduction in the overall crime rate and emergency response times for police and fire rescue; new operational capabilities for regional agencies that are currently not present; reduction in line of duty injuries and/or death with enhanced training opportunities; and enhanced regional collaboration and joint training maneuvers. Nassau will also be able to facilitate compliance with all annual continuing education and training for law enforcement and fire rescue personnel.

6. US Hwy 301/Crawford Road Intersection Improvements (\$1,550,000):

The Crawford Diamond Industrial Park (CDIP) is a McCallum Sweeney certified 'mega site' located in western Nassau County. The access to the CDIP is currently via US Hwy 301 and Crawford Road. The intersection of the referenced roads needs to be improved to accommodate freight traffic.

On Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 1:30 p.m. the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners will host a ribbon cutting ceremony in celebration of the re-opening of the newly improved Crawford Rd. The improvements included paving the 6.5 mile-long, two lane dirt road connecting County Road 121 with the existing paved portion of Crawford Road. The \$6.95 million project is critical to improving mobility, promoting job growth, and attracting industry to western Nassau County. The Crawford Road paving project provides access to the Crawford Diamond Industrial Park and adjacent industrial lands which are strategically situated to become a future industrial and technological epicenter supported logistically by a robust roadway and railway transportation hub.

To further the improve access to this critical job center, Nassau County respectfully request the construction of intersection improvements at US Hwy 301 and Crawford

Road. These improvements include extending turn lanes, creating acceleration/deceleration lanes, and other similar modifications. The \$1,550,000 request represents 18% of the total combined Crawford Road improvement project cost of \$8,500,000.

7. Amelia Island Trail Phase 4 (3 Miles) - Nassau County, FL (\$5,119,474):

Amelia Island is home to 36k individuals and hosts more than 1,500,000 visitors annually. As the Island's popularity as a world class destination & key contributor to Florida's tourism economy grows, the vehicular transportation network is insufficient and unsustainable for both local and state roadways [including segments of Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS)].

As a barrier island with sever constraints to expand roads, Nassau has taken a proactive approach, in partnership with the NFTPO, to develop a safe and viable non-vehicular transportation system in the form of a shared use path network that runs from the southern tip of the Island to downtown Fernandina Beach on the north end of the Island. The Island network is not merely a leisure trail, this is an alternative mobility system for daily commuters.

The AIT Phase 4 is the final 3 miles of the Island system's primary 17 mile north-south spine. The total cost of the 17-mile trail network is \$17,598,964. \$12,479,490 has already been funded. The request is for the final \$5,119,474 (29% of the total project cost) to complete the project.

8. Tourism Expansion via Ecotourism/Water Access Improvements - Nassau River (\$755,025):

Nassau County, Florida is diligently working to expand the tourism economy off Amelia Island through the development of new products on mainland Nassau County. The Amelia Island Tourist Development Council, in concert with the BOCC, have developed a hub and spoke model for the County's future tourism economy that is intended to leverage natural resources on mainland Nassau County as a means of diversifying and expanding tourism.

The most popular off-island activity for tourists is exploring the County's canopy covered black water creeks and marshland areas. Nassau County is currently developing the \$6,892,400 Tributary Regional Park located on the Nassau River just east of the Four Creeks State Forest. To leverage construction activities currently underway, Nassau County respectfully requests assistance in further developing the local tourism economy by funding a commercial scale kayak launch and community dock at the Tributary Regional Park. The requested facility plays a critical role in creating access points to the blueway trail that are spaced in such a manner, 3-5 miles, to allow commercial adventure outfitters to take tourist on excursions. Spacing of more than 3-5 miles between water access points is too great a distance for novice

paddlers to enjoy. The proposed improvements expand the overall blueway plan and connectivity along the Nassau River including expanding the accessibility to water access points in the Four Creeks State Forest. These efforts will have a positive impact on state-wide tourism. The requested \$755,025 represents ten percent (10%) of the total \$7,647,425 Tributary Regional Park project cost.