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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **STATE LEGISLATURE APPROVES FUNDING FOR THE AMELIA ISLAND TRAIL**

*Nassau County, Florida, June 15, 2022* – Nassau County, in partnership with the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), has taken a proactive approach in developing a safe and viable non-vehicular transportation system to improve mobility. Part of this effort includes development of the Amelia Island Trail, a multi-use path that allows residents and visitors to easily access the places they want to go without having to drive there. The trail's convenient location provides access to parks, beach accesses, and a variety of shopping and dining venues by foot or bicycle, thus reducing the need for a vehicle and alleviating traffic.

The County has been working closely with the City of Fernandina Beach and members of the Friends of the Amelia Island Trail to identify a path to extend the existing Amelia Island Trail from Simmons Road to the City of Fernandina Beach Waterfront. The initial estimate for this project came to approximately \$7.4 million and left the City and County searching for funding mechanisms. The County ultimately submitted this project to the TPO as a top priority project. Then, the County submitted a funding request to the House of Representatives and the Florida Senate to be considered during the 2022 Legislative Session.

We are pleased to announce that during the 2022 Legislative Session, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$5.1 million in Legislative Funding to Nassau County to be used to extend the Amelia Island Trail from Simmons Road to Hickory Street. The Trail route will follow the Will Hardee, Sadler Road, and 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridors. In coordination with the City of Fernandina Beach, additional funding will be needed to complete the segment from FBMS/FBHS to the Waterfront.

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Kelly Gibson, Planning Director for the City of Fernandina Beach, stated, “ Extending the trail offers additional off-road options for our community to support daily needs and increase recreational opportunities. This funding supports the over two decades of planning and coordination efforts to connect Amelia Island through walking and biking trails. Benefits of the trail extensions will serve our residents, tourists and local businesses for many years to come”.

Mike Pikula, President of the Friends of the Amelia Island Trail, stated, “From the perspective of Amelia Island’s many walkers, runners, and cyclists, this \$5.1 appropriation for construction of a northward extension of the Amelia Island Trail is tremendous news! We appreciate the County and the City of Fernandina Beach for supporting our efforts in developing the trail and for their commitment to improving the quality of life for our community”.

The Legislative funding will be made available to the County in 2023. Once received, the County will begin the design phase of the project.

The Board appreciates the Legislative Delegation for supporting its request for funding, particularly Senator Aaron Bean and former State Representative (now Secretary of State), Cord Byrd, as they championed for Nassau County to ensure our needs were met during this year’s Legislative Session. The Board also extends their gratitude to the City of Fernandina Beach for their support of our efforts to expand the trail and the Friends of the Amelia Island Trail for their partnership in development of the trail.

If you have any questions, please contact Deputy County Manager/Engineer, Robert Companion, at (904) 530-6010 ext. 6014 or e-mail [rcompanion@nassaucountyfl.com](mailto:rcompanion@nassaucountyfl.com).