REMARKS FOR OPENING OF THE
Amelia River-to-Sea Trail
September 23, 2019

Good Afternoon, Everyone. I'm Mike Pikula and I'm President of Friends of the Amelia Island Trail, Inc., a non-profit organization formed just to facilitate trail building in Nassau County. We believe trails can connect places and people, promote fitness, and improve day-to-day lives in our communities. We've been active in the Amelia Island community since about 2003, working to create safe places for people to walk, run and ride.

Our Amelia Island Trail Team has sponsored several other sidewalks, trails, and bicycle lanes. This trail, the Amelia River-to-Sea Trail, is our second major trail, following the very successful Amelia Island Trail which opened in 2013. I want to note that the person who wrote much of our application for our organization's initial non-profit status was working in a private law firm at the time and is here today. Yep, it was none other than Mr. Mike Mullin. Thank you, Mr. Mullin.

I'd like to tell you some of the history leading to construction of this new trail. Living nearby, I started seriously working on this project about 6 years ago in early 2013, beginning with face-to-face coordination with representatives of the nearby homeowner associations. Numerous other endorsements followed including the Chamber of Commerce, the YMCA, etc. As the proposed route would cross City and County boundaries, both City and County governments were involved. After more groundwork, meetings and coordination, Nassau County staff led by Mr. Taco Pope put together and submitted a formal application in record time for the

North Florida Transportation Planning Organization on April 11, 2013. The North Florida TPO holds the purse strings for **federal** transportation money apportioned to Duval, St Johns, Clay and Nassau Counties. Our application was competitively selected, and funding was programmed for a design. It didn't hurt that another Nassau County notable was our representative on the TPO at the time. That would be Commissioner Danny Leeper. Thanks Commissioner Leeper! Federal funding through the TPO in the amount of $1,720,000 was soon assured, a design contract was awarded, plans were drawn, consultants hired, then construction followed… and VOILA'!! After 6 years we have our new trail!! And we are here today to open a major part of it to the public.

But Wait!! There's more to this story. A few years ago I attended a County Commission meeting to discuss another trail idea. Mr. Jack Healan was there to pitch his new Crane Island development. We talked in the hallway after that meeting and verbally formed a partnership to extend this trail farther westward to his development and the Amelia River. He incorporated the trail into his plan that would give the general public access to a park on the River. We're working on that now. And that is how we'll get from the **ocean** to the **river** and is the genesis of our trail's descriptive name…the **Amelia River-to-Sea Trail**! Thank you ever so much, Mr. Healan.

And that folks, is my story about how the Amelia River-to-Sea Trail came to be…and I'm sticking to it!

So, with that background, I need to call out some of the key people who made this trail possible. How many people does it take to build a multi-use trail? Well, let's start counting…

° Trail Logo Design…Susan Henderson, and Amelia Island Graphics.

- FDOT's Urban Office in Jacksonville.
- Construction Contractors Florida Infrastructure, and Engineering Consultants from Element Engineering, with Robert Companion, now Chief of Nassau County's Engineering Department, serving as overall project manager.
- Crane Island Developers and trail partners Jack Healan Sr., Jack Healan, Jr., and John Hillman.
- Nassau County Officials…Commissioners Aaron Bell, Pat Edwards, Thomas Ford, Justin Taylor and especially Danny Leeper who has been a leader in road and trail development in NE Florida through his work with the NFTPO. The man of many hats, County Manager and Attorney, Mr. Mike Mullin. Taco Pope who put all the details together and led it thru the complex TPO process. Let's not forget a few who are no longer here: Scott Herring, Peter King, Jonathan Page, Ted Selby, and David Hallman. Others include Adrienne Burke, Kailey Porter, the Nassau County Sign Shop, and the Road and Bridge Dept.
- On the City of Fernandina Beach side: Commissioners Johnny Miller, Len Kreger, Phil Chapman, Mike Lednovich, and Chip Ross, and their predecessor Commissioners; staff members Kelly Gibson, Lorelei Jacobs, Nan Voit and Rex Lester.
- Additionally, we received support from the local running, walking and cycling clubs on Amelia Island.
- And I want to give special thanks and recognition to Mr. Bill Moore who is an essential element of this whole quality of life business on Amelia Island.
- Thanks also goes to the Community Leaders and residents in 7 subdivisions adjacent to the trail: Egans Bluff, Egans Bluff II, Isle De Mai, Persimmon Cove, Landyns Lake, Ocean Reach, and Egans Landing.

Now that construction on much of the trail is complete, Friends of the Amelia Island Trail will be installing trailside amenities, including benches, bike racks and bicycle service stations. Many thanks to our generous donors who will make these enhancements possible!

OK, I've gone on for too long, but I do want to let everyone know this is not our final trail project on Amelia Island. There are 4 others in various stages of planning to include:

° A continuation of the Amelia Island Trail from S Fletcher westward along the Parkway to A1A.
° An east-west "Schools to Downtown Waterfront" Trail from Citrona Dr alongside Hickory and Gum Streets to S 3rd St and the Amelia River downtown.
° A north-south trail alongside Will Hardee and Citrona Drive.
° And a north-south trail alongside North 14th St from Atlantic Av over Egans Creek to Pogy PL and the County boat ramp.

Thank you all for your past and future support for multi-use trails on Amelia Island!

Volunteers from the North Florida Bicycle Club will lead riders out on the trail for a test drive!