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# Legislative Action Plan

St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners  
Office of Grants and Legislative Affairs



## Improving Transportation Infrastructure

The population of St. Johns County is projected to double over the next 25 years. To address future infrastructure needs, the County is prioritizing the design and construction of new and upgraded roads in primary East-West and North-South corridors, roadways that support the First Coast Expressway, and a robust trail network from the St. Johns River to the Atlantic Ocean. State and federal resources are requested to address more than \$400 million in critical projects.

### East-West Corridors

Upgrade State Road 16, County Road 210, State Road 208, State Road 207, and State Road 206 to provide traffic relief, improve connectivity, fortify hurricane evacuation routes, and enhance safety for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

### State Road 16

St. Johns County requests \$20 million in state appropriations to design and construct a new 4-lane divided roadway with a multiuse path from International Golf Parkway to I-95.

### North-South Corridors

Address overcapacity along US 1 and I-95 and strengthen connectivity between employment centers and residential communities by completing extensions of County Road 2209, State Road 312/313, and related connectors.

### County Road 2209

St. Johns County requests \$10 million in state appropriations to complete the central segment of this roadway from International Golf Parkway to State Road 16. This project enhances access to the county interior and provides a north-south route that parallels I-95.

### Repair & Protect State Road A1A

Request the St. Johns Congressional Delegation urge the Federal Highway Administration to allocate emergency relief funds for the armoring and permanent repair of State Road A1A at Vilano Beach and Marineland. Identify additional resources to expand the sidewalk network.



## Trails and Greenways

Pursue state and federal resources to implement the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan, such as the Orangedale to Mickler Trail, the Vermont Heights to St. Augustine Trail, and the Mickler to Vilano Trail.



## Rail Safety

Request the Congressional Delegation urge the Federal Railroad Administration to fully fund the St. Johns Safe Rail Project, which protects a strategic rail corridor by eliminating a dangerous rail crossing at County Road 210A and US 1. The project will reroute existing traffic on CR 210A by constructing a westbound bridge over US 1, access ramps, and will incorporate a buffered crossing for bicyclists and pedestrians.

## Commuter Rail

St. Johns County supports the completion of the feasibility study for a transit line to connect the City of Jacksonville with the City of St. Augustine.





## Strengthening Community Resilience

### Central Public Safety Station

This 26,000 sqft. facility will extend operational capacity for the St. Johns County Fire Rescue and the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office. The station will provide services in a rapidly developing portion of the community, including an area that is currently outside recommended travel distance by the Insurance Services Organization (ISO).

Located on County Road 2209, this facility serves a primary north-south corridor and is located in immediate proximity to I-95 and the First Coast Expressway extension. The County anticipates the station will improve emergency response capabilities requiring heavy rescue. St. Johns County requests \$18 million in state appropriations.

### First Responders

Amend Florida Statutes to provide presumptive disability for emergency responders diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

### Regional Fire Training Facility

This all-hazards training facility directly addresses the growing first responder workforce shortage in northeast Florida. This state-of-the-art complex will include a drill tower, engineered live-fire flashover simulator, hazardous material training props, driving track, classrooms, dedicated water supply, and designated urban search and rescue training areas.

Serving a four-county region, the complex will improve regional training capacity, optimize training quality and efficiency, and is expected to prepare more than 500 new first responders for service in 5 years. St. Johns County requests \$15 million in state appropriations for phase 1.

Additional fire stations supported by the Regional Fire Training Facility will reduce the ISO fire rating in St. Johns County and provide annual insurance premium cost savings in the millions of dollars countywide.



### **Porpoise Point Beach Stabilization**

During the past seven years, a series of tropical cyclones and nor'easters have caused the Porpoise Point area to experience wave impacts, storm surge inundation, and beach erosion impacting underground public utilities, residential building foundations, and acres of environmental habitat.

The project will stabilize Porpoise Point by constructing a system of breakwaters and groins along with possible sand placement.

Completion of the stabilization project will allow the United States Corps of Engineers to initiate a sand tightening project to protect the federal navigation channel and reverse the erosion of Vilano Beach. St. Johns County requests \$9 million in state appropriations.

### **Beach Restoration Mandates**

St. Johns County opposes additional regulations related to contracting that may increase permit processing times and monitoring costs for beach restoration projects, or disrupt construction schedules, especially federal dredge projects unrelated to deepwater port maintenance. Such regulations will jeopardize the readiness of the United States Army Corps of Engineers to place beach quality sand on critically eroded beaches or in nearshore areas.

### **South Ponte Vedra Beach**

St. Johns County requests \$9.5 million in state appropriations to address beach erosion south of the Guana Reserve. This project will provide durable protection of property, public infrastructure, and vulnerable ecosystems, as well as enhance economic activity.

## Youth Mental & Behavioral Health

St. Johns County urges the Legislature to develop bold solutions to address the mental health crisis in this State, with a focus of the critical needs of children and young adults.

### Provider Capacity

Streamline the reciprocity of licenses, eliminate certain license requirements incongruent with level of care, and provide licensure equity between state employees and the private sector.

### Innovation

Explore opportunities to improve the existing programmatic framework and provide additional resources to enhance service delivery, such as elevating mobile response teams and expanding telehealth options, as well as encouraging provider collaboration at a regional level.

## Vaping Products and Minors

Modify section 569.315, F.S., providing flexibility for local governments to enact ordinances establishing minimum distances between schools and the commercial sale of nicotine products.

### Youth Sports

Recognizing the correlation between physical health and mental health, provide resources to local governments for sports infrastructure and development youth sports programs.

### Libraries Build Strong Communities

Sustain State Aid to Public Libraries funding (F.S. 257.17) from the current \$17,304,072 to a minimum of \$17,500,000 in recurring funds, in conjunction with \$6,000,000 in non-recurring funding, which would begin to restore the State's support for library services back to prior recent years.





## Sustaining Economic Prosperity

### **World Golf Hall of Fame Site**

Pursue \$5 million in state appropriations or competitive funds to acquire the World Golf Hall of Fame building and other ancillary buildings. St. Johns County will identify community needs and evaluate future opportunities that align with the existing site.

### **School Capacity**

St. Johns County urges the Legislature to identify and modify outdated requirements that raise the cost of new school construction and/or set construction cost maximums for school district capital projects.

### **Vilano Beach Street Improvements**

This project continues the revitalization of the Vilano Beach town core by replacing hardscape, landscape, irrigation systems, and electrical access for seasonal lighting. St. Johns County requests \$250,000 in state appropriations.

### **Affordable Housing Compatibility**

Revise the Live Local Act to restore local government review of multifamily housing projects proposed for land zoned for commercial or industrial uses.

### **Property Assessed Clean Energy**

Revise chapter 163, F.S., to clarify local government authority to regulate Pace Program entities and protect property owners from predatory lending practices.

### **Genovar Park & Boat Ramp**

St. Johns County requests \$3 million in state appropriations to design and construct enhancements at this 31-acre park, including a regional boat ramp.

### **Southwest Water Reclamation Facility**

This project eliminates approximately one million gallons a day of treated effluent being discharged to the Matanzas River and enhances the quality of reclaimed water delivered to customers. St. Johns County has identified state and federal funds for this project.

## Utility Relocation Costs

Request the Legislature oppose legislation that would require local governments to fund the relocation of infrastructure for private and public utilities.

## Hastings Water Infrastructure

Improvements are necessary to bring the water system level of service up to current standards for fire flow, storage, and reliability. This project will provide critical water infrastructure, such as storage for fire flow delivery, raw water wells and pipeline, treatment capacity, and watermain grid rehabilitation. St. Johns County has identified state and federal funds for this project.

## Unfunded Mandates

Request the Legislature oppose legislation that requires utilities to expend funds providing information, reports, or other documents to the State without providing a funding source for development of those reports. Specifically, the Legislature should pay careful attention to unfunded reporting mandates related to SB 712 (2020), HB 53 (2021), SB 64 (2021), and HB 1379 (2023).

## Strengthen SB 64

Modify current law to provide that an alternative water source, if available, must be used first and that no Consumptive Use Permits will be issued except for emergency use.





# Protecting Natural & Historic Resources

## State Museum of Black History

St. Johns County encourages the Museum of Black History Task Force to provide due consideration to the City of St. Augustine as the future site location of a new state museum honoring the history of African Americans in Florida. The County also requests the Legislature support the mission of the Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center.

## Old Matanzas River Restoration

Urge the Legislature to dedicate resources to the Department of Environmental Protection or the St. Johns River Water Management District to develop a long-term solution for this critical habitat that will provide benefits that extend beyond county boundaries. St. Johns County anticipates the Old Matanzas River Ecosystem Restoration Project will require a regional holistic approach.

## Historic Farming Communities

Request the State Delegation support legislation that identifies historic farming communities throughout this State and provides pathways for these communities to conserve working lands and facilitate new investment.

The legislation should also identify opportunities to encourage recreation and agritourism by expanding state designated scenic agriculture corridors.

## Other Critical Restoration Projects

The Legislature should also prioritize other regional ecosystem restoration projects, such as Deep Creek, and the St. Johns River Eelgrass Restoration Initiative.

