

# Update: Citizens' Task Force for Safe Walking and Biking

For the News-Leader

At Tuesday's City Commission meeting commissioners enthusiastically endorsed the 12 recommendations for safe walking and biking improvements in the community presented by the Citizens' Task Force on Walking and Biking Safety. Commissioners indicated they would advocate with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Nassau County and the Amelia Island Tourist Development Council (AITDC) and allocate up to \$95,000 in capital funds in the 2023-24 budget for local projects.

The advocacy agenda includes the following projects:

**South Fletcher.** In a letter dated June 19, 2023, the city asked FDOT to repair South Fletcher Avenue as quickly as possible and make safety improvements. Improvements include smoothing and repairing South Fletcher from Main Beach with an emphasis around the six stormwater drain covers. High visibility and other crosswalks should be added at the beach accesses and traffic calming

devices added along South Fletcher. A sidewalk should be added south of Sadler Road.

**Atlantic Avenue repaving and renovation project from Eighth Street to South Fletcher.** FDOT is planning improvements and the city asked for a safety study to measure vehicle, pedestrian and bike traffic. Signage, lights and crosswalks should be added to make it safe. The study should also determine the safe speed for this zone.

**Schools to downtown waterfront trail.** An offroad trail from the high school to the waterfront at Ash Street. The city has asked for this trail to be funded as quickly as possible to provide a safe crosstown link between important community resources.

**Crossing South Eighth Street at Clinch Drive.** FDOT to make crossing improvements and do a speed limit assessment.

**Bicycle commuters use the Shave Bridge and ride in danger.** FDOT to re-stripe and mark bike lanes on South Eighth Street from the Amelia Island

Parkway to the Shave Bridge as soon as practical. The city supports the county effort to explore the feasibility of trail on the north/west side of South Eighth Street from Sadler Road to the Shave Bridge.

**Citrona Drive safety improvements.** The city will ask the county to focus on this important route to our schools including lighting, bicycle lanes and sidewalks. The county should explore the potential for a multi-use trail along Citrona.

**North 14th Street trail.** The city will support the county in an effort to put a trail on North 14th Street connecting Atlantic Avenue to Old Town and eventually the Dee Dee Bartels Boat Ramp. As an interim solution, the county should immediately use striping, share the road signage and other tools to calm traffic on this busy road.

**Promote cycling to the beach and slow traffic with the Amelia Island Tourist Development Council.** The city will ask the AITDC to use public service ads encouraging cycling to the beach and

place bike racks at every beach access and encouraging visitors to "get on island time" and slow traffic.

The city commissioners agreed to proceed on four local projects to improve safety and allocate fiscal year 2023-24 capital funds up to \$95,000:

**TextMyGov application.** The city staff are currently implementing this digital tool to make our community safer. Residents can use the app to report safety problems in real time.

**Lime Street connector.** The city will pave the 400-foot path from Lime Street to South Seventh Street through the park. A sidewalk on Lime Street will connect the path to South Eighth Street and the lighted signal. Cost estimate is \$10,000-\$20,000.

**Beech Street (South Eighth to South 10th) parking and sidewalk improvements.** The city commission supports the city staff effort to improve Beech Street from South Eighth to South 10th to maximize the available parking, add landscaping to slow traffic and provide a sidewalk or trail for safe walking and

biking. These improvements will provide a model for Beech Street from South 10th to South 14th. Beech Street is on the repaving schedule for 2025 so these improvements will be accelerated and coordinated with the re-design process. Cost estimate is \$60,000-\$75,000.

**Fifteenth Street connector from Amelia Park to Bosque Bello.** This low-intensity street provides a north-south connector from Amelia Park to Bosque Bello with a small amount of improvements: signage, crosswalks, push to cross lights and a potential 600-foot paved path from Dade Street to Amelia Circle. Cost estimate is \$20,000-\$40,000.

Task Force members are Mike Spino, Tom Camera, Robin Lentz, Doug Roselle, Elaine Roberts and Valerie Feinberg.

City staff: Lorelei Jacobs, grants administrator; Victoria Guadagnino, Utilities engineer; Daphne Forehand, planner; Jeremiah Glisson, Public Works director; Catherine Vorrasi, Parks and Recreation director; and Kelly Gibson, Planning and Conservation director.

## The GR Supra – Toyota's winning partnership strategy

BRIAN DOUGLAS  
For the News-Leader

In a market where sedans are less popular than SUVs and pickup trucks, sportscars are a challenging conversation to start in an automaker's product planning meeting. Try to make a compelling case for the sexy two-seater that grab enthusiast magazine and website real estate and someone's bound to point out that Jeep has been a cash cow brand for decades making SUVs and now pickup trucks. But what if the company teams with another automaker who faces the same challenge? Toyota did just that a decade ago when it partnered with Subaru to develop its GT86 sports coupe. That sportscar is primarily a twin to Subaru's BRZ model from the chassis to boxer engine. And both brands have done reasonably well with the affordable offerings.

Perhaps a more interesting partnership is Toyota's GR Supra, a venture with luxury automaker BMW where the

German mechanicals under the skin are the same, but the bodies and sports strategy take very different paths. In 2018 when BMW designed its second generation of the Z4 sportscar, it moved from a retracting hardtop to a canvas-topped roadster. It also retained the strategy of offering a four-cylinder engine as well as its silky inline six. In contrast, Toyota designed a sharp-edged coupe body that looks and acts ready for a racetrack and that's been a winning strategy.

I first encountered Toyota's new Supra at a press introduction where a racetrack was part of the venue and was pleasantly surprised at how it performed when pushed aggressively. I know, it's a Bimmer under the Toyota sheetmetal, but it seemed more willing to attack the twisties than I recalled from my last Z4 experience. And when the GR Supra arrived in my driveway a couple of weeks ago for this test, it sported an available six-speed, manual gearbox, an option not even offered in the BMW. If that's surpris-

ing, it shouldn't be. The German automaker has focused its track athletics on the M2 and M3 coupes and assumes that grand touring in Mercedes SL style is what its owners want in its Z4 roadster.

Although I wasn't on a racetrack during my week of testing, I did get enough time in this stylish coupe to experience that its performance matched the F1 style. The 3.0-liter, turbocharged six produces 382-horsepower and that's just right to move this 3,400-pound coupe around with alacrity. And although the paddle-shifting, eight-speed automatic posts quicker acceleration times along with a smidge better fuel economy, the close-ratio, six-speed gearbox with rev-matching downshifts really connects the driver to the machine.

Toyota's GR initials stand for the automaker's Gazoo Racing, a performance initiative begun by former CEO Akio Toyoda who was as comfortable in a Nomex race suit behind the wheel as he was in pinstriped attire behind a desk. So the nicely dialed in



PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTOEDITOR

The new Supra takes styling cues from Formula One.

suspension is firm and crisp and four-pot Brembo brakes up front clamp down nicely when needed. The exhaust tone does its part with a crackle at high-rev shifts, but otherwise isn't too Harley like. And with this focus on sportiness, Toyota's Supra handily outsells its BMW

cousin. Perhaps there's a lesson here...

Brian Douglas has driven everything with wheels during his career in the automotive technical, marketing and journalism professions. He currently writes automotive and travel features for lifestyle magazines and is a

guest correspondent in radio and television venues. Douglas has served as an honorary judge at Concours d'Elegance events and is co-founder and past president of Western Automotive Journalists, a professional automotive media organization. He can be reached at [brian@autoeditor.com](mailto:brian@autoeditor.com).

## Saturday, August 12th, Fernandina Harbor Marina

FOOD • ENTERTAINMENT  
SILENT AUCTION

AMELIA ISLAND  
COME MAKE MEMORIES®



**NEW TOURNAMENT FORMAT** Featuring a 3 Mile Eastern Boundary. Visit [www.nsfarodeo.com](http://www.nsfarodeo.com) for complete 2023 rules and other tournament details. "See you at the scales!"

**KINGFISH DIVISION – 1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE \$10,000**

(BASED ON 110 PAID BOATS WITH 80% PAYOUT)

**LADY ANGLER, YOUTH ANGLER AND TRAVELER AWARD**

EARLY BIRD ENTRY IS \$250 THROUGH JULY 31<sup>ST</sup>. THEN \$350 THROUGH AUGUST 10<sup>TH</sup>, THEN \$400 AUGUST 11<sup>TH</sup>.

(Enter the Kingfish Tournament, stay at a participating hotel, get a \$100 hotel voucher (limited to first 24) and a Traveler Award Entry)

**RODEO DIVISION – 4 SPECIES PAID**

(BASED ON 100 PAID BOATS WITH 80% PAYOUT)

**1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE - \$1,300 2<sup>ND</sup> PLACE - \$700**

EARLY BIRD ENTRY IS \$100 THROUGH JULY 31<sup>ST</sup>. THEN \$125 THROUGH AUGUST 10<sup>TH</sup>, THEN \$150 AUGUST 11<sup>TH</sup>.

FLORIDA'S OLDEST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER  
**NEWS LEADER**  
AMELIA ISLAND • FERNANDINA BEACH • NASSAU COUNTY

**Ameris Bank** MORTGAGE SERVICES

**KW KEY WEST BOATS**  
**OCEAN OUTBOARD MARINE**

**Budweiser**  
**Dave Turner Plumbing**

**For details and to register visit**  
**[www.nsfarodeo.com](http://www.nsfarodeo.com)**

**Pick up your boat number Friday, August 11th from 3 to 7 p.m.**

**Mandatory Captains Meeting at 7 p.m. at Fernandina Harbor Marina**

## Florida retailers look for lift from tax 'holiday'

News Service of Florida

Florida retailers hope for a boost to summer sales with the start Monday of a back-to-school sales tax "holiday."

The tax holiday, which will last through Aug. 6, will allow shoppers to avoid paying sales taxes on clothes, shoes, school supplies and personal computers. Lawmakers and Gov. Ron DeSantis also approved a second similar holiday that will be held during the first two weeks of January, providing a chance to replenish supplies at the start of the spring semester.

Florida Retail Federation President and CEO Scott Shalley expressed cautious optimism for the upcoming discount period, as "some of our stores have been down a little bit."

"Hopefully, the back-to-school sales tax holiday will incentivize folks to get out and about and patronize a local retailer," Shalley said.

National chains such as Office Depot, Best Buy, Kohl's and Target have already announced back-to-school sales, with some including discount programs for students and teachers.

Deloitte Consulting has warned that strained household budgets and continued high prices after two years of inflation could dampen the back-to-school season.

"Parents are likely to be strategic about their spending to help ensure children are set up for success at the start of the school year by renewing school supplies but perhaps holding off on new clothing until needed," Nick Handrinos, Deloitte vice chairman and U.S. retail, wholesale and distribution and consumer products leader, said in a statement.

Deloitte Consulting projects consumers will spend an average of \$597 a student in grades kindergarten through 12th grade as they prepare for school.

The projected average is down 10 percent from 2022, but is a 12.2 percent increase from 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic. Spending on apparel is expected to be down 14 percent from last year, with spending on technology down 13 percent.

The projected drop in technology spending is, in part, related to many parents making purchases during the pandemic because of remote learning, according to Deloitte.

Shalley said electronics will still be a driver of sales efforts during the upcoming tax holiday. "Everything we've seen shows projections up mostly on the back of electronics," Shalley said. "So, whether that's laptops or pads or calculators, we're still seeing an increase in that area."

The two back-to-school holidays were included in a broad tax package (HB 7063) approved in May. They are expected to make up \$160.6 million of the \$965.6 million in tax savings in the package.

Bill Herrle, state executive director of the National Federation of Independent Business Florida, said the upcoming holiday is a chance to help local businesses in "difficult economic times."

Here is a look at what lawmakers included in the back-to-school holiday:

- Shoppers won't have to pay sales taxes on clothes, wallets, bags, backpacks, fanny packs, footwear and diaper bags that cost \$100 or less. Not included are briefcases, suitcases, garment bags, skis, swim fins, roller blades and skates.

- Shoppers won't have to pay sales taxes on pens, pencils, erasers, crayons, notebooks, notebook filler paper, legal pads, binders, lunch boxes, construction paper, markers, folders, poster board, composition books, poster paper, scissors, cellophane tape, glue, paste, rulers, computer disks, staplers, staples, protractors, compasses and calculators that cost \$50 or less.

- Shoppers won't have to pay sales taxes on learning aids and puzzles, ranging from flashcards and memory games to puzzle books and toys intended to teach reading or math skills, that cost \$30 or less.

- Shoppers won't have to pay sales taxes on personal computers and related accessories – such as keyboards and monitors – that cost \$1,500 or less. Not included are cell phones, video game consoles and digital media receivers.