Introduced by the Council Member Gulliford:

RESOLUTION 2016-784-A

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE NORTH FLORIDA FREIGHT RAIL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (PHASE II) AND ITS BID FOR FUNDING VIA THE FASTLANE GRANTS PROGRAM UNDER THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION; DIRECTING LEGISLATIVE SERVICES DIVISION TO FORWARD A COPY OF THE ADOPTED RESOLUTION TO THE JACKSONVILLE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, U.S. Department of Transportation on October 28, 2016, the United States Department of Transportation (U.S.DOT) announced the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects (FASTLANE Grants) program with approximately $850 million in available funds for FY2017; and

WHEREAS, the Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-term Achievement of National Efficiencies (FASTLANE) Grant is a program created under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, to fund critical freight and highway projects across the country; and

WHEREAS, for over two and a half decades Northeast Florida has wrestled with fixing a transportation bottleneck spanning both sides of the St. Johns River in Downtown Jacksonville; and

WHEREAS, the convergence of two Class 1 railroads (CSX and Norfolk Southern), and FEC Railroad have created a bottleneck that has grown by an "order of magnitude" as freight traffic, highway traffic and the Northeast Florida community has grown; and
WHEREAS, the chokepoint causes rail backups to the south of the historic Downtown rail terminal across the St. Johns River onto the south bank of Downtown blocking access to Baptist Medical Center (both the Trauma 1 Center and the Nemours Children Hospital), block access to San Marco neighborhood, and creates backups on the I-95 ramps; and

WHEREAS, this chokepoint also impacts the flow of goods via rail from other points in the Southeastern United States into and out of Florida; and

WHEREAS, the improvement in Florida’s ports, such as our own JAXPORT, will increase freight capacity and rail freight traffic through this bottleneck; and

WHEREAS, the elimination of the chokepoint will have a positive impact on freight rail capacity on Florida’s east coast creating economic benefit to the Southeastern United States; and

WHEREAS, the North Florida Freight Rail Enhancement Program is a multi-phased freight improvement plan to enhance Jacksonville’s standing as “America’s Logistics Center”; and

WHEREAS, the North Florida Freight Rail Enhancement Program (PHASE II) will improve rail fluidity in the region, which will in turn expedite statewide and national freight movement; reduce vehicle conflicts on streets leading to downtown Jacksonville; and improve safety and air quality; and

WHEREAS, the project Improves freight and trains will be able to travel more efficiently through the area unencumbered by switching delays; and

WHEREAS, the project removes system constraints and upgrades operations to improve efficiency/safety of operations; and

WHEREAS, the project’s track modifications and signal upgrades will reduce delay and vehicle conflicts in congested area; and improve roadway access to nearby hospitals and trauma center; and
WHEREAS, the North Florida Freight Rail Enhancement Program (PHASE II) would improve freight and mobility in the area adjacent to the Jacksonville Regional Transportation Center and the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center on the Northbank, and to the multiple crossings on the Southbank next to Baptist Hospital and other businesses and residential locations; and

WHEREAS, earlier in 2016, Florida’s Department of Transportation, with support from the City of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, the North Florida TPO, the freight carriers, community and business leaders, submitted an application in the first round of the FASTLANE Grant for the North Florida Freight Rail Enhancement Program (PHASE II); and

WHEREAS, the Jacksonville Regional Transportation Center, at the historic Downtown rail terminal, is an intermodal hub connecting local, regional and intercity transportation services including First Coast Flyer Bus Rapid Transit and Skyway Automated Express service currently in operation, and local and intercity bus facilities that will begin construction in 2017; and

WHEREAS, the full development of the Jacksonville Regional Transportation Center, including passenger rail service, will have a positive impact on the City’s economy and support the economic redevelopment of Downtown Jacksonville, specifically the La Villa neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority Board at its March 17, 2016 Board meeting has considered and approved the FASTLANE grant projects; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

Section 1. The City of Jacksonville hereby supports the North Florida Freight Rail Enhancement Program (Phase II) and its bid for funding via the FASTLANE Grants program under the United States Department of Transportation, a program created to fund
critical freight and highway projects across the country.

Section 2. Directive to Circulate. The City Council's Legislative Services Division is hereby directed to forward a copy of this adopted resolution to the Jacksonville Transportation Authority.

Section 3. Effective Date. This Resolution shall become effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective without the Mayor's signature.

Form Approved:

[Signature]

Office of General Counsel

Legislation Prepared By: Margaret M. Sidman

G:\SHARED\LEGIS.CC\2016\Reso\Gulliford JTA - Fastlane Grant Reso 2016.doc