

1 December 2003

Dr. Bernard Machen
201 South President's Circle, Room 203
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Dear Bernie:

Early this year the current University of Florida administration promised to propose an amendment to the UF Master Plan to allow a four-lane eastward extension of SW 24th Avenue across the Natural Area Teaching Laboratory [NATL]. This promise caused the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization to change its 20-year transportation plan for the Gainesville Urban Area in spite of counter recommendations by a traffic analysis and by professional staff. It also caused the Alachua County Commission to shelve design work on a two lane SW 24th Avenue and to contract instead for the design of a four-lane road aligned with the anticipated four-lanes of right-of-way across NATL. The key commitments were made in February and March, but the administration has neither proposed an amendment to the Master Plan nor has it provided a venue for the open discussion of the pros and cons of the proposed roadway.

A recent consequence of the Administration's unexpected endorsement of a road through NATL and of its failure to engage in discourse on the pros and cons of the road was a 52 to 21 vote by the Faculty Senate to "ask the administration to withdraw its 20 Feb 2003 and 25 Mar 2003 endorsements of the donation of right-of-way for a four-lane extension of SW 24th Avenue through the Natural Area Teaching Laboratory and Preservation Area 1."

When you take office in early January, you will need to--

(1) Decide whether the University should facilitate greatly increased commercial development immediate west of campus or encourage the area to develop as a bicycle-friendly, pedestrian-friendly student village. The latter was the University's position from 1997 until Dec 2002. The former will bring more traffic to the area and thus require a different road plan.

(2) Evaluate alternative means of mitigating traffic congestion west of campus. A relevant recent development is that the Florida DOT has budgeted \$17.4 million for the purchase of right-of-way to extend Hull Road from SW 34th Street westward to SW 62nd Boulevard. Hull Road is the main entrance to campus from the west. At its western end is currently a UF parking facility and shuttle bus terminal. The traffic-mitigating effect of an extension of Hull Road could be augmented by promoting express bus service from the west and by providing incentives to park immediately west of 34th Street and take shuttle buses to and from campus.

(3) Learn about NATL and its present and potential importance to UF programs in the environmental sciences.

The Natural Area Advisory Committee (NAAC) is eager to help you with (3). NAAC consists mostly of faculty from the eight departments and one school, in four colleges, who use NATL to teach more than 70 courses. It reports to the Lakes, Vegetation, and Landscaping Committee and has guided the development of NATL since 1994. NAAC maintains a web site to inform potential users about NATL (<http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/>). Last spring it added a section that posts documents and images that deal with all aspects of the proposed extension of SW 24th Avenue.

Enclosed are copies of some of the materials posted on the NATL web site. Once you move to Gainesville, NAAC anticipates that you will want to learn firsthand about NATL. Might you find time to meet several NAAC members at NATL and let us show you around and answer your questions?

Sincerely,

T. J. Walker, NAAC Chair

Enclosures:

- NATL pamphlet (NAAC roster is on the back)
- SEEP pamphlet (The Stormwater Ecological Enhancement Project is part of NATL)
- NATL Annual Reports for past three years
- NATL usage report (March 2000)
- Documents prepared for the Faculty Senate meetings of 18 Sep and 20 Nov 2003