

A chronology of events relevant to the proposed SW 24th Avenue extension

Prepared for the 20 Nov 2003 meeting of the Faculty Senate from information posted by the Natural Area Advisory Committee at <http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/24thAve.htm>.

Events in large type are particularly pertinent to the resolution the Senate will vote on.

1. The University of Florida's 2000-2010 Comprehensive Master Plan provides for no roadway through the southwest corner of campus between SW 34th Street and the Surge Area.
2. At the 12 Dec 2002 Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization meeting, under "Butler Plaza Transportation Issues," VP Ed Poppell discussed the University's position to support four-lane facilities for SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue.
3. At the 12 Dec 2002 MTPO meeting, members voted to (a) schedule a public hearing to consider amending the long range transportation plan, (b) contract with Renaissance Planning Group (RPG) to test alternative road networks both with and without the proposed Butler Plaza expansion and with four-lane and two-lane alternatives for SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue, and (c) request Alachua County Public Works Department (ACPWD) to develop cost estimates for the alternatives tested.
4. In December 2002, ACPWD put on hold its work on a two-lane divided SW 24th Avenue from SW 34th Street to SW 43rd Street, for which construction documents were 90% complete at a cost of approximately \$425,000.
5. The 22 Jan 2003 RPG report on tests of alternative road networks concluded that "the results of this analysis clearly indicate the adequacy of a two lane cross-section for SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue and that a four lane cross-section for either road is not warranted."

6. At a 31 Jan 2003 special meeting of the Alachua County Commission, VP Poppell "discussed why the University of Florida is involved with S.W. 24 Avenue; the University's new vision and presented a proposal for accelerating the construction of S.W. 24 Avenue as a 4-lane road." [The minutes of this meeting are at <http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/2003-01-31.pdf>.]

7. On 5 Feb 2003, the Natural Area Advisory Committee sent a unanimously approved letter to President Young, with copies to Vice-Presidents Poppell and Colburn, explaining the negative impact that the extension of SW 24th will have on NATL. It concluded, "In summary, the proposed road will unacceptably degrade an irreplaceable asset to many of UF's academic programs. For environmental science programs NATL is the equivalent of essential indoor laboratories for other disciplines. The Natural Area Advisory Committee fervently recommends that the University prevent this loss by refusing to donate the needed right-of-way." [NAAC received no acknowledgement or reply.]

8. At the 20 Feb 2003 MTPO meeting, Directory of Transportation Planning Marlie Sanderson reported that (a) the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee agree with the conclusions of the RPG traffic analysis that a four lane cross-section was not warranted and (b) the MTPO staff recommend that "the MTPO keep the existing two-lane divided configuration for SW 62nd Boulevard and SW 24th Avenue corridors as described in the adopted SW 20th Avenue Area Charrette Plan and not amend the long range transportation plan."

9. At the 20 Feb 2003 MTPO meeting, VP Ed Poppell stated that "the University of Florida is committed to recommending to the State of Florida Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund that right-of-way be provided for the extension of SW 24th Avenue east to Archer Road."

10. At the 20 Feb 2003 MTPO meeting, the 20-year transportation plan was amended to "construct SW 24th Avenue as a four-lane divided roadway from SW 43rd Street east to SW 34th Street" and to extend this facility "as a four-lane divided roadway from SW 34th Street east to Archer Road." Three County Commissioners and three City Commissioners voted for the amendment. (These were the minimum numbers of votes needed to amend the long range plan.)

11. On 26 Feb 2003, Tom Walker, Chair of the Natural Area Advisory Committee [NAAC], sent email to Jean Larson, Chair of the Faculty Senate, asking that the Senate consider the "pros and cons" of UF donating right-of-way for a four-lane 24th Avenue through NATL.

12. On 4 Mar 2003, in response to the NAAC's February 26 request for a Faculty Senate hearing on the proposed right-of-way donation, Jean Larson reported, "I brought your concern to the Steering Committee last week and it recommends looking at the proposed eastward extension of SW 24th Avenue in some venue other than the Faculty Senate, at least initially."

13. On 5 Mar 2003, NAAC sent email to President Young requesting that he describe how a four-lane road through NATL will benefit the University. (This was followed up to make sure the e-mail had been received; no reply was forthcoming.)

14. At the 25 Mar 2003 meeting of the Alachua County Commission, President Charles Young stated (in a letter) that the University “will recommend through its Master Plan amendment process that sufficient right-of-way be given to the City of Gainesville/County of Alachua to provide the necessary land to connect SW 24th Avenue to Archer Road.”

15. At its 25 Mar 2003 meeting, the Alachua County Commission voted 3 to 2 to direct its Public Works Department to begin work toward the construction of SW 24th Avenue west of SW 34th Street as a four-lane divided roadway.

16. On 26 Mar 2003, President Young appoints a Focus Group to study the academic impact of the proposed extension and how it might be mitigated.

17. By August 2003, Alachua County Public Works Department (ACPWD) had contracted to have SW 24th Avenue from SW 34th Street to SW 43rd Street designed as a four-lane divided road that shifts northward to align with the proposed right-of-way through the UF campus. The design was to be completed by 31 May 2004 at a cost of \$388,286.

18. At its 8 Sep 2003 meeting, the Lakes, Vegetation and Landscaping Committee voted “to oppose the 24th Avenue extension through NATL.” [This led to the current Senate action item.]

19. On 25 Sep 2003, the Natural Area Advisory Committee sent a unanimously approved letter to President Young, with a copy to Vice-President Poppell, suggesting three ways that Young might end the confusing situation in which the University seemed to be delaying the start of the Master Plan amendment process, which is needed to effect the right-of-way donation, while allowing Alachua County to spend its road money to design a road that depends on the donation occurring. The letter included petitions signed by 124 faculty asking the Administration to start the amendment process without farther delay. [NAAC received no reply.]

20. At its 7 Oct 2003 meeting, the Alachua County Commission voted 3 to 2 to send a letter to U.S. Representative Cliff Stearns asking for \$12.5 million in federal transportation funds for the design and construction of a four-lane SW 62nd Blvd/SW 24th Ave from SW 20th Ave to Archer Road. The letter stated that “This project is supported by ... the University of Florida.”

21. At its 14 Oct 2003 meeting, the Alachua County Commission voted 3 to 2 to enter into an agreement with Clark Butler that requires the County to use its best efforts to sign a construction contract, by 1 Oct 2004, for a four-lane divided SW 24th Avenue from SW 34th Street west to SW 43rd Street, and to substantially complete construction within 12 months of the date of the contract.

22. At the 16 Oct 2003 meeting of the Faculty Senate, President Young stated that the SW 24th Avenue Focus Group was considering all aspects of the proposed extension including “the pros and cons of whether or not there ought to be a road.” He also stated that the Group “is composed overwhelmingly of faculty.” [A transcript of Young’s remarks is at <http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/Young16oct03.doc>.]

23. At the 27 Oct 2003 meeting of the SW 24th Avenue Focus Group, VP Poppell, who convenes and chairs the Group, passed out a roster of members and a reiteration of the Group’s charges. The charges are to “Identify and assess the potential impacts this proposed road may have on the University’s academic and research programs” and “Identify or develop measures or alternatives that could mitigate or minimize any impacts this proposed road may potentially create for the University.” Of the eight currently active members, only one is a tenured faculty member with no administrative appointment. The others are administrators (n=2), tenured faculty with administrative appointments (n=3), nontenured faculty (n=2).

[Poppell’s handout is at <http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/FGnew.pdf>.]

24. At its 4 Nov 2003 meeting, the Alachua County Commission learned that Clark Butler would not sign the agreement that the County had approved on 14 Oct 2003 and voted 3 to 2 to stop planning for a four-lane SW 24th Avenue between SW 34th and 43rd Streets and to resume work on the two-lane, charrette version that had been shelved since Dec 2002.

25. At its 14 Nov 2003 meeting, the Focus Group learned that a four-lane extension is still under consideration by the Administration.