

MEMORANDUM

4 August 2003

TO: The MTPO of the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council

FROM: Tom Walker, chair UF's Natural Area Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Status of UF's commitment to provide ROW for an eastward extension of SW 24th Avenue

Summary: Last spring UF administrators publicly committed to changing the UF Master Plan to allow a four-lane extension of SW 24th Avenue through its Preservation Area 1 and Natural Area Teaching Laboratory. Prior to doing this it consulted none of the committees that are supposed to advise on changes in land use. Since doing it, it has thwarted efforts by the Faculty Senate and the Natural Area Advisory Committee to have the proposed change in land use referred to the land-use committees that must be consulted in the Master Plan amendment process. President Young only promised to *recommend* the donation of right-of-way. To remove the uncertainty as to whether the land will indeed be donated, the MTPO should request that the UF Administration start the amendment process early in the Fall Semester and complete it expeditiously. Until the Master Plan is amended it will be unwise to spend scarce transportation dollars to design a SW 24th Avenue that assumes a future eastward extension through UF property.

On 31 Jan 2003, County Commission Chair Rodney Long asked UF VP Ed Poppell to deliver a commitment from the University that it would allow a four-lane extension of SW 24th Avenue to be built on campus land.

At the 20 Feb 2003 meeting of the MTPO, Poppell declared 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."

At the 25 March 2003 meeting of the Alachua County Commission, Long read a letter from UF President Charles Young in which Young wrote 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."

Those two events resulted in the MTPO amending its 20-year plan on February 20th and in the County directing its staff on March 25th to cease planning for a two-lane SW 24th Avenue.

It is unclear how UF Administration decided to make its commitment. It consulted none of the land-use committees it is supposed to consult—namely, Lakes, Vegetation, and Landscaping; Transportation and Parking; Preservation of Historic Buildings and Sites; and Land Use and Facilities Planning. These committees must be consulted before the UF Master Plan can be amended, yet, during Spring Semester, the Administration thwarted efforts by the Faculty Senate and Natural Area Advisory Committee to have the proposed changes in land use referred to these committees for action. Details of these efforts are posted at <http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/24thAve.htm#history>.

Not only has the UF Administration not begun the amendment process needed to fulfill its commitment, it has resisted efforts by others to have it started. Therefore, I encourage the MTPO to join the Faculty Senate and the Natural Area Advisory Committee in requesting that the UF Administration start the amendment process no later than the first few weeks of Fall Semester. Until the amendment to the UF Master Plan is approved, it will be unwise to spend scarce transportation dollars to design a SW 24th Avenue that assumes a future eastward extension through UF property.