

MTPO Board Meeting Minutes

Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization
for the Gainesville and Alachua County Area

Date: Monday, November 3, 2025

Time: 3:00 PM

Location: Grace Knight Conference Room

Alachua County Administration Building

12 Southeast 1st Street, Gainesville, Florida

1. Call to Order (Chair Wheeler)
2. Chair's Announcements (Chair Wheeler)
3. Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum (Chair Wheeler)

Commissioners present:

Wheeler

Ward

Book

Cynthia Chestnutt

Eastman

Willits

Prizzia

Cornell

Certain (School Board)

Hayes-Santos (Airport)

Taylor (Waldo)

UF-NV

Commissioners Absent:

Duncan-Walker
Ingle
Alford
Charles Chestnutt

Quorum was present

4. Agenda Review and Approval (Chair Wheeler)
Chair Wheeler provided an overview.
Cornell motioned to approve the agenda and Hayes-Santos seconded.
Motion carried.
5. Approval of Minutes (Chair Wheeler)
6. Action Items
No Action Items
7. Information Items
 - 7.1 FDOT Tentative Five-Year Work Program (Ms. Moss & Ms. DeBold)
 - *Draft Work Program District 2*
 - *Draft Work Program Alachua County*
 - *Comparison Chart*
 - *Presentation (Ms. DeBold)*
 1. **FDOT District 2 Tentative Work Program Overview**
 - **Alison Moss (MTPO staff) provided an overview of changes from the previous program, noting many projects were rolled forward.**
 - **Paige Debold (FDOT) presented the updated work program.**
 - **Comments on the tentative work program are due by November 20th at nflroads.com/vph.**
 2. **NW 43rd Street Median Project**

- **Commissioner Prizzia raised concerns about the median causing problems.**
- **Alison clarified it was a safety project initiated by Alachua County in partnership with FDOT.**
- **Waldo representative asked for location details—confirmed near the old police station entering Gainesville.**

3. Sidewalk and Pedestrian Improvements

- **Shelling Drive to SR 25: Widening for ADA compliance and pedestrian upgrades.**
- **Adrian Hayes-Santos suggested adding protected pylons west of US 441 due to high traffic and available space.**
- **Commissioner Willits noted the narrow sidewalk on the south side of eastbound lanes; Paige will follow up on width and design.**
- **Commissioner Prizzia asked about using native plants in landscaping.**
- **Alison raised the possibility of reallocating landscaping funds to safety projects, as discussed at the TAC.**
- **Commissioner Willits asked if FDOT is moving away from palm trees; Paige confirmed that seems to be the trend.**

4. Santa Fe Boulevard and SR 45 Projects

- **Santa Fe Blvd (SR 29 to NW 242) and SR 45 (SW 15th Ave to SR 26): Sidewalks added to fill gaps near schools.**
- **Board Chair Wheeler asked about improvements near Santa Fe High School; Paige noted a project exists, but construction is not scheduled until 2027.**
- **Concerns raised about increased activity and safety in high springs near the fire station, Wawa, and distribution centers close to the high school.**
- **Alison explained the process of integrating projects into the LOPP (List of Priority Projects) and SU funding, suggesting inclusion in the 2026 LOPP.**

5. University Avenue & SW 13th Street Lighting and Safety

- **Adrian Hayes-Santos emphasized the need for lighting improvements on University Avenue and SW 13th Street, citing high pedestrian accident rates.**
- **UF Representative noted the project has been in the work program since 2020 (Project #2076583) but keeps getting delayed.**
- **Commissioner Prizzia asked if resurfacing includes lighting; Paige will investigate.**
- **Alison confirmed the comment about lighting not extending far enough west.**

6. SE 15th Street and SW 20th Avenue Projects

- **Commissioner Chestnut mentioned SE 15th Street is being handled by Alachua County.**
- **Commissioner Book supported prioritizing the project due to safety and traffic concerns.**
- **Tina Certain (school board) asked about the “Loves” project and its relation to the student overpass; Alison clarified it’s a separate median project with a new signal and pedestrian crossing.**
- **A second project with a pedestrian HAWK signal is in design and closer to student crossings.**
- **Commissioner Willits emphasized future pedestrian growth near the university due to limited parking.**

7. Waldo Road and School Resurfacing

- **Waldo representative expressed concern about resurfacing near the new school not starting before school opens.**
- **Alison asked if the construction schedule could be advanced; Waldo rep agreed.**

8. Construction Quality and Transitions

- **Commissioner Prizzia requested contractors grind pavement edges to ensure smooth transitions between old and new surfaces.**
- **Alison noted it may not be completed yet, the roadway project.**

9. LAP Projects and Coordination

- *Commissioner Willits clarified that Alachua County is handling the north side of a project, while FDOT is managing the south side.*
- *Alison confirmed it's a single LAP-funded project with existing gaps being addressed.*

10. SW 20th Avenue Bridge Planning

- *Tina Certain asked about filling sidewalk gaps west of SW 20th Avenue.*
- *Alison said a RAISE grant was submitted for planning and design, with FHWA agreement in progress.*

11. Intersection Improvements and Project Updates

- *Intersection improvements at 39th Avenue and Waldo Road need updated descriptions.*
- *UF Representative asked about the SW 13th Street bike path from 11th Avenue to Museum Road—design was completed but construction phase is unclear.*
- *Alison referenced Project #432237, noting it may not match the same limits.*
- *Commissioner Willits mentioned decreased funding for a larger project further north, which remains a priority.*
- *UF is pursuing a similar LAP agreement with refined cost estimates.*
- *UF representative also highlighted a successful project at 4th Avenue and 16th Street.*

12. Interstate Median Safety

- *Commissioner Willits asked about scope and duration of interstate median projects due to frequent accidents.*
- *Paige will follow up on project scope.*
- *Board Chair Wheeler emphasized the importance of citizen input and proactive engagement.*

Citizen Comments:

1. SE Hawthorne Road & Prairie Creek Intersection Safety

Speaker: Burt Weatherington (area resident)

- **Concerns:**
 - **Over six fatalities and numerous accidents at the intersection near the boat park and Prairie Creek on SE Hawthorne Road in the past six months.**
 - **A recent overturned vehicle landed in his driveway, destroying his fence.**
 - **The area is extremely dark at night; recent curb signs are ineffective in fog or rain.**
 - **Vehicles frequently speed—up to 80 mph—during morning commutes.**
 - **A deceased individual was found in his yard; the area is experiencing increased homelessness and dangerous pedestrian conditions.**
 - **The intersection requires a traffic light due to complex lane crossings (two lanes in each direction).**
 - **Urged installation of street lighting from Lake Shore Drive to SE 34th Street to prevent further fatalities.**
- **Response:**
- **Paige Debold (FDOT) acknowledged she was unfamiliar with the intersection and encouraged Burt to send his concerns directly to the FDOT District 2 Secretary.**

2. Visibility Issues Near Power Boat Park

Speaker: Same

- **Concerns:**
 - **Poor visibility of curbs and new signage between Power Boat Park and the Fish Camp during rain and fog.**
- **Response:**
- **Noted for follow-up.**

3. Pedestrian Signal Conflicts at Intersections

Speaker: Shenall (Citizen)

- **Concerns:**
 - *Pedestrian signals and vehicle turn signals activate simultaneously, forcing pedestrians to assert themselves to cross safely.*
 - *Described needing to use an umbrella to signal drivers to stop.*
 - *Cited Minneapolis as a model for better pedestrian signal timing.*
- **Response:**
- *Board Chair Wheeler asked if this was a signal timing issue.*
- *Alison explained the issue stems from permitted left and right turns. Solutions being explored in the Safe Streets Plan include:*
 - *Leading pedestrian intervals (LPIs)*
 - *Protected-only turn phases*

4. NW 83rd Street Safety Near Santa Fe College

Speaker: Galloway (Santa Fe College Student)

- **Concerns:**
 - *NW 83rd Street is a known safety concern for students.*
 - *The Student Government Association (SGA) understands improvements are scheduled for 2028.*
 - *Urged the Board to consider the urgency of student safety and explore options to accelerate funding and construction.*
 - *Expressed intent to return for future meetings to continue advocacy.*
- **Response:**
- *Board acknowledged the concern and welcomed continued engagement.*

5. University Avenue Crossings & Sweetwater Trail

Speaker: Commissioner Eastman

- **Concerns:**

- **Requested attention to University Avenue pedestrian crossings and integration with the Sweetwater Trail.**
- **Response:**
- **Alison confirmed the issue is under staff review and will be included in the official comment letter.**
- **Paige Debold committed to addressing the concerns.**

7.2 Transition Update

Update on recruitment for Executive Director

1. Job Posting and Screening Timeline

- **Alison announced:**
 - **The job posting is live and will close on November 14.**
 - **The search firm MGP is handling the process and will begin preliminary screening immediately.**
 - **Alison reviewed the overall hiring process and timeline.**
 - **Candidate interviews are tentatively scheduled for January 5.**

2. Interview Scheduling and Board Participation

- **Commissioner Cornell Prefers the full board to participate in interviews.**
- **Adrian Hayes-Santos Suggested holding a meeting in the second week of December to avoid the long delay until January.**
- **Emphasized the importance of interviewing and making a decision sooner.**
- **Commissioner Willits: Open to either a smaller committee or a December meeting. Noted availability around December 11, despite compliance training that day.**
- **Tina Certain Asked Adrian to clarify preference—full board or subcommittee.**
- **Adrian confirmed preference for full board.**

- **Commissioner Prizzia:** Suggested using a subcommittee with open attendance to all board members. Noted the difficulty of coordinating calendars and encouraged everyone to provide maximum availability to Alison.
- **Commissioner Eastman** Cited holiday schedules and time off as reasons for pushing interviews to January.
- **Mayor Ward** Asked about the possibility of an evening meeting.
- **Commissioner Eastman:** Emphasized the need for full board approval and avoiding delays that could risk losing candidates.

3. Interview Format and Candidate Pool

- **Alison** Requested a 5-hour block for consecutive interviews with up to 5 candidates. Could reduce to 3 candidates if needed.
- **Tina Certain:** Preferred keeping the pool at 5 to maintain flexibility.
- **Commissioner Book** Supported the small committee approach with open attendance. Proposed a December 15 meeting to ratify a decision.
- **Commissioner Prizzia:** Noted an existing meeting on December 1, but acknowledged that making a selection by then would be difficult due to holiday travel.
- **Board Chair Wheeler:** Asked whether it's better to hire before year-end.
- **Commissioner Prizzia:** Emphasized the importance of moving quickly to retain candidates.
- **Commissioner Book:** Stressed that the priority is simply to hire the right person, regardless of exact timing.

4. Final Scheduling Decision

- **Alison: Confirmed the job posting closes November 14. The review committee will meet on November 23. Candidates will need at least a week to make travel arrangements.**
- **Board Chair Wheeler: Noted that scheduling interviews during the holidays may be difficult.**
- **Commissioner Willits: Suggested moving the December 1 meeting to December 15, which works better for his schedule.**
- **Alison: Asked FDOT if the change would affect performance measure adoption.**
- **FDOT Representative (Achia): Confirmed it's fine as long as adoption occurs before February.**
- **Board Chair Wheeler: Made a motion to reschedule the meeting to December 16.**
- **Commissioner Willits: Seconded the motion.**
- **Alison: Reiterated flexibility to reduce the candidate pool to three if needed.**
- **Motion passed unanimously.**

7.3 Interim Executive Director Report (Ms. Moss)

- *Other MTPO hires*
- *General Planning Consultant Contract – including Complete Streets Corridor Studies for SW 13th Street and SW Archer Rd*
- *Other minor Professional Services Contracts*
- *Subcommittee meetings – scheduling as needed*

1. Housekeeping & Staffing Update

Alison:

- Announced that the MTPO is planning to hire additional staff.
- Noted that a General Planning Consultant contract would be helpful to support ongoing work.

2. Timing of Job Postings and Hiring

- Adrian Hayes-Santos questioned whether job postings should be delayed until the new Executive Director is hired.
- Alison responded:
 - The plan is to advertise positions as soon as possible, but actual hiring would wait until the new Executive Director is in place.
 - Acknowledged the concern and said they had considered delaying, but emphasized the need to move forward due to the lengthy county hiring process.
- Commissioner Prizzia clarified that posting positions is not the same as hiring, and supports moving forward with postings.
- Alison added:
 - Job descriptions are still being finalized.
 - One option is to post descriptions now and allow the incoming director to shape them before hiring.
 - Suggested hiring an entry-level planner now and delaying senior-level hires.

3. Board Member Perspectives on Process

- ***Commissioner Cornell emphasized that the new Executive Director should have input on hiring their support staff.***
- ***Commissioner Eastman noted the trade-off: starting the process now may help with timelines, even if the new director makes final decisions later.***
- ***Commissioner Prizzia pointed out that hiring takes time—even hiring an intern took three months—so having a candidate pool ready would be beneficial.***
- ***Waldo Representative asked whether an entry-level hire could be promoted if the new director supports them.***
- ***Alison explained that provisional hiring is difficult under current county procedures.***

- **Commissioner Cornell reiterated the importance of having a pool of candidates ready for the new director to consider.**

Subcommittee meeting schedule

Alison I don't think we need them at this time

Board Chair Wheeler – No additional questions.

7.4 MV/Paratransit Discussion (Mr. Hayes and Mr. Gomez)
Discussion related to paratransit services provided by MV Transportation shifting to being performed in-house by City of Gainesville's Regional Transit System (RTS)

1. Overview and Status Update

- Mr. Hayes (Alachua County Staff) and Mr. Gomez (RTS) provided an overview of the ongoing transition discussions with the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Commission.
- Mr. Gomez confirmed that RTS will take on paratransit services.
- The transition is targeted for March 2026, but depends on what MV Transportation (MV) decides regarding their role as the current CTC.

2.  City and County Roles in CTC Transition

- Commissioner Eastman noted:
 - A City Commission meeting in December will address the issue.
 - Expressed support for RTS taking over as the Coordinated Transportation Contractor (CTC).
- Commissioner Cornell stated:
 - At the next MTPO meeting, MV Transportation will present cost estimates.
 - The City of Gainesville will also provide cost estimates for assuming the service.
- Alison shared that Achia Brown has scheduled a meeting with CTD and FDOT staff to discuss contingency plans if MV declines to continue as CTC.
 - If MV withdraws, the state may declare an emergency procurement to secure a new provider.

- Emphasized the importance of monitoring the situation to avoid service gaps.

3. Rural Service and Local Provider Ideas

- Waldo Representative raised concerns about rural passengers and asked:
 - Whether municipalities could operate their own vans or buses to provide services similar to MV.
- Board Chair Wheeler supported the idea.
- Commissioner Cornell responded:
 - While conceptually appealing, the current system is a patchwork of private providers.
 - Serving 15,000 riders reliably is a significant challenge and would take time.
 - Expressed doubt that Gainesville or smaller communities could fully take over by March 1st.
- Board Chair Wheeler disagreed, believing it could be done.

4. Coordination, Structure, and Service Models

- Commissioner Prizzia emphasized:
 - The need for a single coordinating entity to manage services.
 - Supported the idea of local drivers serving their communities.
- Board Chair Wheeler asked if RTS could advise on service coordination.
- Mr. Gomez confirmed RTS could contract out services and manage them collectively.
- Commissioner Willits suggested an Uber-like model for MV.
- Commissioner Prizzia cautioned that such a model could eliminate employee benefits.
- Commissioner Willits reiterated the importance of having a CTC in charge of operations.

5. Funding and Procurement Challenges

- Chair Wheeler asked about funding options.
- Mr. Gomez explained:

- The CTC (not the city or county) is eligible to receive certain state grants that private companies cannot access.
- Mr. Hayes noted:
 - Pricing discussions have occurred, but further talks with the City Manager are needed.
- Alison reiterated:
 - If MV declines the role, the state would need to procure a new provider under emergency conditions.
 - Options are limited, and the timeline is tight.

Citizen Comments:

1. Historical Perspective on Paratransit Service

Speaker 1 (Former RTS Board Member):

- Recalled past RTS board meetings where paratransit issues were regularly reported, especially around timeliness and rider treatment.
- Expressed concern that RTS still faces similar challenges today.
- Noted that MV Transportation (MV) has made improvements in these areas.
- Warned that RTS assuming CTC responsibilities could turn into just another income stream, potentially compromising service quality.

2. Urgency, Equity, and Service Continuity

Speaker 2 (Shenell):

- Criticized the City's decision to pursue CTC transition without fully evaluating MV's capabilities or the financial implications.
- Argued that MV has specialized expertise and mapping tools that the City lacks.
- Quoted Commissioner Book's statement that the system must be "up and running on day one"—emphasizing the urgency for continuity.
- Shared personal reliance on paratransit and fears of service disruption.
- Expressed frustration over City spending priorities:
 - Funding for pond revitalization, Tom Petty Park repaving, and belly trash cans
 - No funding for paratransit, despite its critical importance

- Highlighted the silence of many patient riders who don't speak out.
- Called attention to union jobs at MV, noting that drivers have families and deserve consideration.
- Expressed feeling ignored by both City and County, and skepticism that the new system will be ready in time.
- Raised practical concerns:
 - Will RTS honor existing paratransit tickets?
 - Are marginalized communities being considered in this transition?

3. Call for Compassion and Inclusion

- Urged Commissioner Willits and Mayor Ward to show compassion and prioritize the needs of vulnerable riders.
- Stressed that paratransit users are often overlooked, and their voices must be heard in planning and decision-making.

8. Agency Reports/ Partner Updates

- Florida Department of Transportation - **None**
- Alachua County School Board - **None**
- Gainesville-Alachua County Regional Airport

1. Airport

- **Record-Breaking Passenger Volume**
- **Adrian Hayes-Santos reported that September was the busiest month in the airport's history.**
- **Reconstruction efforts are ongoing, but a potential federal government shutdown may interfere with grant funding for airport projects.**

2. Marketing and Route Promotion

- **Commissioner Chestnut-Walker asked about current marketing efforts.**
- **Hayes-Santos responded that, to his knowledge, there is no active marketing campaign, but the airport has**

been promoting the Miami route, which has shown strong performance.

3. Air Traffic Control Operations

- *Board Chair Wheeler inquired whether air traffic controllers are currently staffed at the airport.*
- *Hayes Santos confirmed that controllers are present and operational.*

4. Community Feedback on New Routes

- *Commissioner Prizzia noted that the direct flight to Dallas has been well received in the community.*
- *Hayes Santos confirmed that the Dallas route is performing well.*
- *Let me know if you'd like this formatted into a formal memo or included in a broader meeting summary. I can also help track grant-related risks or prepare communications around airport service updates.*

- University of Florida – *None*

9. Upcoming Meetings of Interest

MTPO Meetings –

- Upcoming TAC/CAC Meetings – *November 19, 2025, at 2pm (TAC) and 6pm (CAC)*
- Next Board Meeting – *December 1, 2025, at 5pm*

10. Member Comments

MPOAC Conference Reflections

- *Waldo Representative shared that attending the MPOAC (Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council) conference was highly educational and informative.*

Rail Trail Expansion Opportunity

- ***Commissioner Prizzia reported:***
 - ***Met with stakeholders about a potential River-to-Newberry rail trail project.***
 - ***The initiative would be a collaboration with the State of Florida.***
 - ***Funding is still being sought, but the project could significantly benefit bike and trail connectivity in the region.***

Citizen Engagement and Recognition

- ***Tina Certain emphasized that citizen members should be formally recognized at the board table.***
- ***Citizen Member Kathy Norman:***
 - ***Introduced herself as the coordinator of the Eastside Alumni Band.***
 - ***Expressed her desire to be more involved in the community, noting that she has often remained in the background.***

Surveillance Technology and Privacy Concerns

- ***Board Chair Wheeler referenced an email about Flock license plate cameras, including one previously installed on 39th Street.***
 - ***Raised concerns about private data collection and resale by third-party vendors.***
- ***Commissioner Prizzia:***
 - ***Confirmed she had previously raised concerns about license plate surveillance.***
 - ***Legal counsel is reviewing data privacy and ownership, ensuring data is not sold for private gain.***
- ***Commissioner Book clarified:***
 - ***Data ownership resides with the contracting institution—whether it's the City, County, or School Board.***

- **Mayor Ward reflected on the ethical complexities of surveillance:**
 - **Acknowledged its role in solving crimes, such as the 2021 hit-and-run case where the driver was identified using camera footage.**
 - **Cautioned that widespread surveillance creates a “grey area” where everyone is constantly monitored.**

11. Public Comments (General)

Erica Hernandez, Trust for Public Land

1. Project Overview

- ***Erica introduced a community-driven initiative to develop a rail-to-trail corridor connecting High Springs to Newberry.***
- ***The project involves collaboration with the railroad and has gained momentum due to new leadership at CSX.***

2. Ownership and Management

- ***The State of Florida is expected to take ownership of the corridor.***
- ***Local governments would partner with the state to manage the trail.***

3. Community Impact

- ***The trail is designed to encourage visitors to linger in local communities rather than simply pass through.***
- ***The project aims to support economic development, recreation, and connectivity in the region.***

4. Future Engagement

- ***Erica expressed interest in returning to the Board with a formal presentation to share more details.***
- ***She emphasized a desire to collaborate with the MTPO and local partners moving forward.***

Unnamed Citizen

1. Senior Fare Card Incident

- ***On October 22, the speaker boarded a bus without their Over-65 fare card.***
- ***The driver correctly requested the card but did so in an angry and confrontational manner.***
- ***The bus began moving while the next passenger was still walking toward it, prompting the driver to yell about staying behind the yellow line.***

2. Impact on Rider Experience

- ***The speaker was late to Santa Fe College due to the incident, which involved Bus Route 23, one of the last buses available at that time.***
- ***Expressed concern about customer service standards and the need for greater attention to rider experience.***

3. Missed Boarding Opportunity

- ***Recounted another experience where a potential rider approached the bus at a red light, but was instructed to walk a block ahead, causing them to miss the bus.***
- ***Questioned why drivers don't allow boarding when passengers are in a safe position, especially when the bus is stopped.***

4. Call for Service Improvements

- ***Urged RTS and the MTPD to prioritize compassionate and flexible service, especially for vulnerable and time-sensitive riders.***
- ***Advocated for a "get as many on as possible" approach when safety allows.***

Thomas Hargard, Former RTS Driver

1. Boarding at Traffic Lights

- **Thomas explained that RTS drivers generally avoid stopping to pick up passengers at red lights due to safety risks from nearby traffic.**
- **Emphasized that curbside or designated stops are preferred to ensure safe boarding.**

2. Safety vs. Timeliness

- **Stated that a driver's primary responsibility is to transport passengers safely to their destinations.**
- **On-time performance is secondary to safety.**
- **Reinforced that RTS drivers are trained to prioritize safety above all else in their operations.**

12. Adjournment

Chair Wheeler adjourned the meeting.

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