

Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization Board of Directors

February 2, 2026 | 3:00 pm

County Administration Building - Grace Knight Conference Room

12 SE 1 Street, 2nd Floor

Gainesville, FL 32601

1. CALL TO ORDER

- Chair Willits calls to order at 3.00pm.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Mr. Mark Sexton, County Communications Director, provided update on redesign of the conference room with new table, sound system, room format.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- No announcements

4. ROLL CALL & CONFIRMATION OF QUORUM

Members Present:

- Commissioner Marihelen Wheeler – Alachua County Commission
- Commissioner Mary Alford – Alachua County Commission (Vice-Chair) (**online**)
- Commissioner Ken Cornell – Alachua County Commission
- Commissioner Charles “Chuck” Chestnut IV – Alachua County Commission
- Commissioner Anna Prizzia – Alachua County Commission
- Commissioner Ed Book – City of Gainesville
- Commissioner Bryan Eastman – City of Gainesville
- Commissioner Casey Willits – City of Gainesville (Chair)
- Council Member Taylor – Rural Community Representative
- Ms. Tina Certain – Alachua County School Board Representative
- Mr. Adrian Hayes-Santos – Gainesville Regional Airport Representative
- Ms. Linda Dixon – University of Florida Representative (Non-voting)
- Ms. Achaia Brown – Florida Department of Transportation District 2 Representative (Non-voting)

Members Absent:

- Commissioner Cynthia Moore Chestnut – Alachua County Commission
- Commissioner Ingle – City of Gainesville
- Commissioner Desmon Duncan Walker – City of Gainesville

Quorum: Achieved

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5. AGENDA REVIEW

Motion to approve by Commissioner Eastman, **second** by Commissioner Cornell
Passed unanimously

6. MINUTES REVIEW

Motion to approve by Ms. Certain, **second** by Commissioner Chestnut IV
Passed unanimously

ACTION ITEMS

7.1 Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Board Appointments

By Resolution No. 95-3, the MTPO created a Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board, to which the MTPO appoints four (4) members, for the purpose of studying and making recommendations to the MTPO, City of Gainesville, and Alachua County solely related to the maintenance of policies, programs and facilities for the safe and efficient integration of bicyclists and pedestrians into the metropolitan transportation system. The MTPO currently has two vacancies for the BPAB and two qualified applicants.

Staff Recommendation: Appointment of the following two applicants to the BPAB (applications attached), both with three-year terms, extending from February 2, 2026 to February 1, 2029:

- Nicholas Cuevas
- Emily Hind

Deputy Director Moss provided background information.

There was no discussion.

MOTION & ACTION ITEMS

Motion to approve by Commissioner Prizzia, **second** by Commissioner Eastman
Passed unanimously

7.2 MTPO Renaming/Branding

Effective June 5, 2023, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced that all urbanized areas with populations greater than 200,000 are identified as Transportation Management Areas (TMA), which are subject to and eligible for special transportation planning and programming requirements and funding. As the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area (the "MTPO") is now expanded to include the entirety of Alachua County and covers a population of over 200,000, the MTPO is a TMA. As such, the MTPO Board will be considering a renaming / branding of the MTPO. Executive Director Whitfield will provide a presentation and recommendation of new agency name and branding. Board action and direction requested.

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Executive Director Whitfield presented background on the MTPO's designation as a Transportation Management Area (TMA) following expansion to include all of Alachua County and a population exceeding 200,000. She outlined potential new agency names, logo concepts, and the need for a comprehensive branding process. Board direction was requested on selection of a name and initiating full branding development.

Discussion on Branding

- Commissioner Prizzia supported hiring a professional branding firm (including UF options) and emphasized the need for a complete branding package/style guide, not just a logo.
- Mr. Hayes-Santos strongly supported hiring a professional firm and stressed that Gainesville must be prominently included in the name.
- Commissioner Alford supported a more accessible, action-oriented name to improve public connection.
- Commissioner Chestnut liked *Connect Alachua* but supported allowing a professional firm to develop the final naming and branding options.
- Council Member Taylor emphasized that the name must clearly represent both Gainesville and Alachua County.
- Ms. Dixon noted UF student design agencies can provide high-quality branding packages.

Discussion on Name Considerations

- Commissioner Cornell stressed that Gainesville needs to be included due to broader public recognition.
- Mr. Hayes-Santos supported "Gainesville Alachua County Transportation Planning Organization" with Gainesville emphasized.
- Commissioner Wheeler noted that "Alachua" alone could be confused with the City of Alachua and supported including both Gainesville and Alachua County.
- Commissioner Book supported including both jurisdictions and preferring the "TPO" naming convention.
- Commissioner Eastman supported a simple, clear name such as Gainesville & Alachua County TPO, noting clarity is more important than creativity.
- Ms. Certain supported including Gainesville and Alachua County and liked logo concepts that feature the county shape.

Discussion on "Connect Alachua"

- Positive feedback from some members (Prizzia, Chestnut) who found it modern and concise.

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- Concerns from others (Cornell, Wheeler, Eastman, Taylor, Book) about:
 - No reference to Gainesville
 - Possible confusion with the City of Alachua
 - Preference to let professionals refine or replace the concept

Additional Input

- Commissioner Willits asked about the project timeline and supported moving forward immediately with a name and branding procurement.
- Executive Director Whitfield stated that updates to the UPWP, website, and other documents are underway and placeholders can be used until branding is finalized.

ACTION ITEMS & MOTIONS

Motion by Mr. Hayes-Santos

To:

1. Adopt the name: Gainesville & Alachua County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO)

Second by Commissioner Wheeler

Amended by Commissioner Cornell

To:

2. Adopt the name: Gainesville & Alachua County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO),
3. Authorize the Executive Director to procure a professional branding/marketing firm to produce a full branding package (logo, style guide, implementation materials), and
4. Provide staff flexibility regarding final formatting elements (e.g., use of "&" vs "I") during branding development.

Passed unanimously

7.3 MTPO Office Space Location

The MTPO was previously staffed by the North Florida Regional Planning Council and recently by Alachua County's Transportation Planning Manager acting in the role of an Interim Executive Director with administrative support by County staff and consultant services. Meeting rooms for Board and committee meetings are provided in-kind by primary MTPO agency partners. With the hire of the new Executive Director and the direction from the Board to organize and staff the new agency, the MTPO Board will be considering potential office space lease options and relocation plan. Executive Director

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Whitfield will provide a presentation and recommendation of office lease space and relocation plan. Board action and direction requested.

Executive Director Whitfield provided background on the MTPO's current arrangement, noting prior staffing support from the North Florida Regional Planning Council and Alachua County under interim leadership. With the hiring of a full-time Executive Director and direction to establish a standalone agency, she presented office lease options and considerations for relocation. Board action was requested.

Discussion

Coordination with County Real Estate Management Office

- Commissioner Prizzia asked whether the County's Real Estate office had been contacted, noting that MTPO would not pay property taxes as a government entity and questioning the need for a dedicated board room.
 - Executive Director Whitfield responded that she had not yet contacted the County Real Estate Management (REM) office but could do so. She noted that several members had expressed interest in establishing an independent space to signal a "new beginning," and that having all committees meet in one location would support operational independence.

Budget, Staffing, and Broadcasting Considerations

- Mr. Hayes-Santos noted the MTPO pays the county's 1.5% infrastructure sales tax.
- Commissioner Willits asked about audiovisual support and current broadcasting arrangements.
 - Deputy Director Moss clarified that under the Staff Services Agreement, County Communications supports meeting publication and broadcasting.
- Commissioner Willits raised concerns about ensuring adequate technical expertise if meeting facilities are moved.
 - Executive Director Whitfield explained that even with relocation, she would continue coordinating with County staff as a vendor for broadcasting needs. A dedicated office would support interagency meetings, such as with FHWA, and maintain consistent daily hours.

Comparison to Other TPO Models

- Commissioner Book asked what other TPOs do regarding shared or independent space.
 - Executive Director Whitfield stated that many agencies undergo a transition period before establishing their own space. She described insights gained from attending MPOAC meetings and from upcoming

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consultations with the Miami TPO. Some TPOs share transit facilities or leverage federal funds to secure space.

- She expressed concern that smaller office options would limit future growth and recommended selecting a space with room for expansion.

Future Staffing & Office Needs

- Commissioner Willits asked about anticipated staffing capacity.
 - Executive Director Whitfield estimated 3–5 staff, recommending space designed for at least four employees to avoid being constrained.
- Mr. Hayes-Santos requested a budget showing how potential leases fit into long-term organizational planning, including staffing projections.
 - Executive Director Whitfield noted that preliminary budget materials were included in the packet.

Budget Alignment & Prioritization

- Mr. Hayes-Santos emphasized the need to finalize the MTPO's budget before committing to long-term space, citing negotiable commercial lease prices in Gainesville and suggesting downtown as a logical location.
- Commissioner Prizzia agreed, noting that items such as legal, accounting, and County-provided services were not clearly reflected in the current budget. She stressed keeping focused on staffing and project delivery rather than conference room buildouts, especially given the recent \$70,000 investment in the existing meeting room.
- Commissioner Cornell commended Executive Director Whitfield's efforts and emphasized that budget development should precede decisions on physical space. He supported future independence but asked for clarity on the timeframe for negotiating a lease.
 - Executive Director Whitfield stated there was no harm in exploring terms with properties like the Segal Building while recognizing conditions could be developed.

County Resources, Flexibility & Interim Arrangements

- Commissioner Alford expressed enthusiasm about establishing a future office and noted that surplus furniture is available from UF and the County. She asked about staff presence.
 - Executive Director Whitfield anticipated regular in-office staffing (such as 9 am – 5 pm) for at least the next 2 – 3 years, with flexibility for staff to work from home as needed to deal with personal matters, allowing for work-life balance.

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- Mr. Mark Sexton provided background on the cost and technology required to replicate the County's current meeting room capabilities, including closed captioning, signal routing, fiber, and control systems.

Concerns About Timing & Lease Length

- Commissioner Eastman noted the original plan was to house staff temporarily in County space for ~6 months, similar to models in other small TPOs. He cautioned against committing to a 10-year lease before core organizational needs—staffing, budget, workflow—are fully established.
- Commissioner Willits echoed concerns about long-term commitments and supported maintaining meetings at the current facility while exploring separate office space options.
 - Executive Director Whitfield indicated that mid-sized options with a small conference table could be considered.

Recommendation to Prioritize Organizational Setup First

- Mr. Hayes-Santos reiterated that foundational items—staffing, budgeting, organizational structure—should be completed prior to relocating.
- Ms. Certain expressed reluctance to advance lease exploration without seeing a full budget. She recommended engaging County real estate staff to protect public interests and urged development of a transition plan using existing resources.
- Mr. Hayes-Santos opposed spending time on lease negotiations before establishing core needs.
- Commissioner Book supported continued work but preferred the shortest lease possible and retaining the current meeting space.

MOTION & ACTION ITEMS

Motion by Commissioner Cornell

To:

1. Direct the Executive Director to bring back a transition plan including:
 - A detailed budget,
 - A staffing plan, and
 - A timetable for utilizing County resources prior to executing any Letter of Intent (LOI).
2. Allow the Executive Director Whitfield to explore office space options, including working with real estate professionals (both public and private) and develop potential LOIs for future consideration.

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3. Maintain current meeting arrangements during this transition period.

Second by Commissioner Book.

Passed unanimously

- Public comment: None.
- Commissioner Wheeler thanked Executive Director Whitfield for her efforts and boldness.
- Commissioner Book emphasized the importance of fiscal efficiency and building staff capacity.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

8.1 RTS 5-Year Major Transit Development Plan (TDP) Update

As required by FDOT, RTS is providing an annual informational update regarding its 5 Year Transit Development Plan. Presentation will include information on plan achievements and challenges, as well an update on specific projects and programs. Following this meeting of the MTPO Board, RTS will submit its update to FDOT by March 1, 2026.

Mr. Jesus Gomez, RTS Representative provided an overview of the annual update to the 5-Year Transit Development Plan (TDP), including recent achievements, ongoing challenges, and updates on specific RTS projects and programs. Following the MTPO meeting, RTS will submit the TDP update to FDOT by March 1, 2026.

Discussion

Funding, Ridership, and Long-Term Sustainability

- Mr. Hayes-Santos expressed concern about declining ridership and the financial trajectory of RTS. He noted that while the current TDP adjustments are appropriate, the system needs additional investment, including the possibility of increased general fund contributions, to avoid further cuts and long-term decline.
- Commissioner Willits noted that the City recently began allocating general revenue to RTS—approximately \$500,000—as an acknowledgment of the system’s importance. However, these funds come from one-time balances and may not be sustainable. He warned of a potential “death spiral” if ridership-based funding continues to fall.

Coordination With the University of Florida

- Commissioner Prizzia asked about UF’s long-range transit planning, noting mixed information about UF’s discussions with MV Transportation and potential changes to on-campus service. She requested more clarity on UF’s plans.

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- Ms. Dixon stated she did not have current information but could follow up if specific questions were provided.

Need for RTS Budget Transparency

- Commissioner Cornell agreed the Board needs a clear understanding of RTS's budget, future funding projections, and the implications of operating as a regional system. He requested a full budget presentation at the next Board meeting.

MOTION & ACTION ITEMS

Motion by Commissioner Cornell

To request that:

1. RTS and the City provide a full budget presentation at the next MTPO meeting, including:
 - Current RTS fund balance
 - Operating budget
 - Multi-year financial projections
2. RTS formally ask UF to present or provide a written update on its long-range transit plans for the next three years.
3. A representative from UF be included in the discussion when the update is provided.

Second by Commissioner Prizzia

Passed unanimously

Additional Comments

- RTS staff provided background on recent service cuts.
- Commissioner Cornell provided historical context on the RTS budget and emphasized the need for sustainable long-term planning.
- RTS noted it maintains a prioritized list of projects for the next ten years, assuming optimal conditions.

8.2 RTS December Ridership Report

- A table summarizing RTS ridership for December was provided to the Board as an informational item
- Mr. Hayes-Santos requested that RTS provide ridership data for the past five years to allow for trend analysis and better understanding of long-term system performance.

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8.3 MV/Paratransit Discussion

Opportunity for City and County to discuss continued paratransit services for City of Gainesville and Alachua County. City staff to provide an update regarding 'insourcing' its paratransit services, and for potentially becoming the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) and providing paratransit services for Alachua County. County staff to share information on contingent contract with MV Transportation.

Growth Management Director Hayes and Mr. Gomez, provided an overview of upcoming changes to paratransit services, including the City's transition to "RTS Plus" and the County's continued coordination with MV Transportation for service outside the RTS area. Discussion included readiness for launch, communication efforts, service boundaries, and coordination between agencies.

Discussion

RTS Plus Service Launch

- Commissioner Prizzia asked whether rides were already occurring.
 - Mr. Gomez explained that RTS Plus launches March 1, and vehicles with new logos are ready for operation and that users may begin scheduling trips 15 days in advance, starting mid-February.

Application, Booking, and Payment

- Commissioner Book encouraged strong public messaging and shared that he downloaded the RTS Plus app.
 - Mr. Gomez explained:
 - App name: RTS Plus
 - Users can schedule rides in advance, track trips similar to Uber, and call by phone.
 - Payment options mirror current MV Connect methods.
- Commissioner Willits asked for the phone number
 - Mr. Gomez confirmed it remains the same as the MV Connect app.

Public Outreach & Education

- Mr. Gomez reported RTS has a list of 10,000 users and is conducting workshops and online scheduling sessions.
- Commissioner Wheeler asked about coordination with the School Board for children needing special transportation.
 - Mr. Gomez noted that RTS attends monthly School Board meetings and that ADA paratransit is offered in addition to under-18 programs.

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Comparisons & Service Models

- Council Member Taylor referenced similar micro-transit systems in West Palm Beach.
 - Mr. Gomez explained that this model is closer to micro-transit, which is being evaluated as a concept.

Special Events & Service Area Clarification

- Commissioner Wheeler noted the 2027 World Masters Games and the opportunity for RTS to shine.
 - Mr. Gomez confirmed that RTS met with event organizers, but they chose a different direction for transportation planning.

County/City Service Boundaries

- Growth Management Director Hayes clarified that beginning March 1, trips outside Gainesville city limits will continue to be served by MV Transportation, while RTS Plus will serve trips within the RTS service area.
- Commissioner Willits stated that service area maps are confusing and requested a simple, clear graphic showing:
 - Where to call RTS Plus, and
 - Where to call MV.
- Ms. Certain asked about ridership for areas such as Waldo, Archer, and Jonesville.

Coordination & Public Communication

- Commissioner Prizzia suggested that MTPO assist by creating a public-facing flyer to clarify services.
 - Growth Management Director Hayes confirmed City and County staff will coordinate with MV and RTS to align materials.
- Commissioner Willits emphasized the importance of consistent messaging and avoiding brand confusion.

Action Item

- Board requested that City and County staff coordinate with MV Transportation and RTS to develop and distribute unified, easy-to-understand public information materials explaining service boundaries and how to access RTS Plus versus MV Transportation.

8.4 New MTPO Positions

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Based on direction from the Board to organize and staff the new agency, the Executive Director is preparing position descriptions for the hiring of a Director of Contracts and Finance Administration and a Director of Transportation Planning and Development as the initial personnel positions needed to staff the MTPO. The first position is a new position being developed by the Executive Director and the second is a reframing and refinement of the Director of Multimodal Transportation Planning position previously developed. With the website development, the MTPO will post "We are hiring" and will post these two (2) positions. The recruitment of these positions will include job/career center postings on the relevant professional planning and engineering websites. No Board action needed at this time.

Executive Director Whitfield requested that, based on the discussion of the office space location and direction from the Board to develop a transition plan, this item be moved to a later meeting.

Motion by Ms. Certain

Second by Commissioner Wheeler

Passed unanimously.

9. AGENCY REPORTS / PARTNER UPDATES

None

10. UPCOMING MEETINGS OF INTEREST

March 2nd for next MTPO Meeting.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS (GENERAL)

No comments.

12. MEMBER COMMENTS

1) Commissioner Prizzia: Speed Limit Setting

- Commissioner Prizzia raised concerns about increasing speeding and traffic fatalities, particularly on residential roads and areas recently repaved. She noted a specific recent complaint and asked whether the Board was interested in a broader discussion on lowering speed limits, increasing enforcement, and identifying engineering solutions. She also expressed interest in speaking with the Sheriff regarding enforcement needs.

Discussion

Engineering, Enforcement, and Design

- Commissioner Cornell stated that without roadway engineering interventions to physically slow vehicles, lower posted limits alone are often ineffective. He

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emphasized the need for design changes but noted limitations on many county roads lacking complete streets features.

- Commissioner Prizzia responded that design solutions—such as adding trees and other calming elements—are possible.
- Mr. Hayes-Santos supported the need for better roadway design but emphasized identifying sustainable funding to support such improvements.

Speed Limit Policy Evidence & Timing

- Commissioner Alford referenced research indicating that lowering posted speeds leads to drivers adjusting closer to those limits.
 - Deputy Director Moss confirmed research supports that reduced speed limits can help lower travel speeds.
- Commissioner Eastman noted that repaving periods provide ideal opportunities to make changes, and that the Board should identify the right timing window for adjustments.

Funding, Cross-Agency Coordination and MTPO Role in Studying Speed Limits

- Commissioner Prizzia noted that various agencies have resources that could be allocated to speed-management efforts.
- Commissioner Eastman emphasized the MTPO's role in prompting FDOT to conduct studies that support speed-management work.
- Several members noted speeding issues on major corridors, including Newberry Road, and shared examples of locations with recurring problems.
- Commissioner Willits asked if research suggests that simply lowering limits can reduce car-on-car crashes on state roads.
 - Deputy Director Moss explained that the MTPO can conduct studies related to speed-setting, including context-sensitive approaches and target speed analysis for communities and urban clusters.
- Commissioner Prizzia proposed bringing forward a speed-management study for MTPO review.

MOTION & ACTION ITEMS

Motion by Commissioner Prizzia

To direct staff to bring back a proposal for an MTPO-led study on speeding and speed-limit setting, including context-sensitive strategies and target speeds.

Second by Commissioner Cornell

Passed unanimously

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Additional Comments

- Ms. Leistner (City of Gainesville) noted the City applied for a Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant to study safety issues, including along the SW 13th Street corridor, and is working with FHWA on the study timeline.
- Commissioners discussed ongoing and planned safety studies on several corridors.

2) Commissioner Cornell

- Commissioner Cornell offered praise and a welcome to the new Executive Director

3) Council Member Taylor

- Ms. Taylor raised interest in a pedestrian crossing study to support installation of a push-button crossing near the Matheson Museum.

4) Commissioner Willits

- Commissioner Willits added that the Mayor is interested in a similar concept for a future greenway connection.

5) Commissioner Eastman

- Commissioner Eastman noted that FDOT is repaving that section and that this may provide a cost-effective opportunity for improvements.
 - Ms. Leistner confirmed the request was submitted to FDOT as part of the repaving project.

6) Commissioner Alford

- Commissioner Alford shared updates from the recent MPOAC meeting and noted she was elected to the MPOAC leadership team.

13. ADJOURNMENT