

Minutes

GACTPO Board of Directors Meeting

April 6, 2026

Gainesville and Alachua County Transportation Planning Organization Board of Directors Meeting

April 6, 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 Commissioner Casey Willits called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- None.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- There were no announcements from the Chair.

4. ROLL CALL & CONFIRMATION OF QUORUM

Members Present:

- Commissioner Casey Willits – City of Gainesville (Chair)
- Commissioner Mary Alford – Alachua County Commission
- Commissioner Ken Cornell – Alachua County Commission
- Commissioner Marihelen Wheeler – Alachua County Commission
- Commissioner Charles “Chuck” Chestnut IV – Alachua County Commission
- Mayor Harvey Ward – City of Gainesville
- Commissioner Desmon Duncan-Walker – City of Gainesville
- Commissioner Ed Book – City of Gainesville
- Commissioner Bryan Eastman – City of Gainesville
- Commissioner Cynthia Moore Chestnut – City of Gainesville
- Commissioner James Ingle – City of Gainesville
- Council Member Monique Taylor – Rural Community Representative
- Ms. Tina Certain – Alachua County School Board Representative
- Ms. Linda Dixon – University of Florida Representative (Non-voting)
- Ms. Achaia Brown – Florida Department of Transportation District 2 Representative (Non-voting)

Members Absent:

- Mr. Adrian Hayes-Santos – Gainesville Regional Airport Representative (Vice Chair)
- Commissioner Anna Prizzia – Alachua County Commission

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5. AGENDA REVIEW

- Chair Willits discussed the agenda to be approved.
- **Discussion:** Commissioner Ingle made a brief lighthearted comment regarding the potential purchase of a gavel for the Chair. No substantive changes or reordering of the agenda were requested.
- **Motion:** Commissioner Cornell
- **Second:** Commissioner Alford
- **Vote:** Unanimous approval

6. MINUTES REVIEW

- Chair Willits discussed the minutes from March's meeting to be approved.
- **Discussion:** Commissioner Book noted that several names were misspelled in the draft minutes and requested those corrections be made prior to final adoption. Mentioned he will send the changes to Executive Director Whitfield. No substantive changes were requested.
- **Motion:** Commissioner Eastman
- **Second:** Commissioner Duncan-Walker
- **Vote:** Unanimous approval

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1. Executive Director Employment Contract

- Chair Willits opened the discussion by asking if Board Members had an opportunity to review the draft Employment Contract for the Executive Director and provided an overview of the proposed employment contract, that there explaining that the draft had been going back and forth between himself, as Chair, and Executive Director Whitfield, in coordination with Alachua County Human Resources as "help", since the TPO leans on the County. He explained that there are two (2) different contracts in the back-up documents. Chair Willits opened the item for discussion/ comments from Members of the Board.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Alford asked whether the residency requirement included in prior discussions remained an issue. Executive Director Whitfield confirmed that she had secured a residence in Gainesville and would be living close to downtown.
 - Commissioner Book expressed concerns about several contract provisions, including the length of severance, stating that 12 weeks appeared more typical than 20 weeks. He also questioned the suspension language, particularly the inclusion of advance notice requirements, and noted that such provisions were unusual in executive contracts.

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- Chair Willits responded that the draft contract was based on the County's framework for top-level employees and intended to balance practices used by both the City and County.
- Commissioner Cornell stated that his primary areas of focus were the severance term and vehicle allowance. He noted that he was comfortable with the proposed \$450 per month vehicle allowance and indicated less concern about severance so long as it aligned with established County standards.
- Executive Director Whitfield provided additional background regarding how the draft language had evolved since she first received it and the sources used for comparison.
- FDOT District 2 Representative Achaia Brown explained that reimbursement eligibility for personnel costs, including severance, is dependent on consistency with existing County policies. She stated that during earlier discussions the position had been characterized as equivalent to the County Manager or County Attorney, both of which include 20 weeks of severance. She cautioned that offering severance materially different from those standards could require use of local funds rather than federally reimbursable PL funds.
- County staff clarified that a Children's Trust contract referenced earlier was an outdated template and not an offer, and that the County's initial discussion point was 10 weeks of severance. Chair Willits noted that the intent had been to position the offer between City and County standards.
- Ms. Certain stated that she leaned toward a shorter severance duration given the funding structure and revenue sources of the TPO compared to other agencies.
- Several members discussed whether aligning with County executive standards would simplify reimbursement and contract administration. Commissioner Ingle stated that from a reimbursement standpoint, maintaining alignment with the 20-week standard would be easier. Commissioner Wheeler requested clarification following FDOT's comments, and Ms. Brown reiterated that deviations from County policy could affect reimbursement eligibility.
- Executive Director Whitfield explained that the contract would be funded using PL funds rather than local funds, and that local funding was not sufficient to independently cover severance costs outside reimbursable standards. She also described how MPO contracts vary statewide, with some requiring annual renewal and others remaining in effect until termination, and noted that this contract followed the latter approach.
- Discussion continued regarding the suspension provision in the contract. Commissioner Alford questioned why an employee would remain in position

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if suspension were warranted. County staff responded that the suspension language was not standard for County executive contracts and appeared to originate from a non-County template. Ms. Certain asked whether the Board could remove the suspension provision entirely; Executive Director Whitfield recommended revising the notice period instead.

- **Motion:** Commissioner Cornell moved to approve the employment contract with the following modifications:
 - Section 4: Severance of 20 weeks with a 30-day notice requirement
 - Section 7: Vehicle allowance of \$450 per month
 - Moving expense reimbursement extended to six months
 - Revisions to suspension notice provisions
- **Second:** Commissioner Duncan-Walker
- **Follow-Up Discussion:** Commissioner Eastman expressed concern about contracts that continue indefinitely without an affirmative Board renewal, stating a preference for periodic approval. Commissioner Cornell responded that annual performance evaluations already provide an opportunity for accountability and that requiring affirmative renewal could create unnecessary uncertainty.
- **Vote:** Approved, one dissenting vote (Commissioner Willits)

7.2. Rebranding and Website Update

7.2.1. Logo Design

- Staff and MVP Marketing presented three logo concepts developed following Board direction at the February 2, 2026, meeting.
- **Discussion:**
 - Members discussed color schemes, imagery, and symbolism. Commissioner Alford stated she preferred Option 1 but was concerned about the orange color palette. Commissioner Wheeler and several others echoed concerns about color associations and suggested using blue and green tones commonly associated with nature, bike facilities, and regional identity.
 - Mayor Ward stated that he appreciated all designs and favored an option that differentiated the organization but cautioned against spending excessive time or resources on logo selection.
 - Commissioners Duncan-Walker, Cornell, Eastman, Taylor, and Ingle supported Option 1 with modifications. Discussion included incorporating Gainesville skyline elements, transportation symbolism (bike, pedestrian, and vehicle elements), and ensuring the design worked well in black-and-white, embroidery, and digital formats.
 - Executive Director Whitfield stated that staff recommended Option 1 and confirmed that the design firm could revise colors and imagery consistent with Board direction.

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- **Motion:** Commissioner Eastman moved to approve Option 1, with direction to revise the color scheme to blue and green and incorporate Gainesville-specific skyline elements.
- **Second:** Commissioner Cornell
- **Vote:** Approved, one dissenting vote (Mayor Ward)

7.2.2. Website Update and URL

- Staff presented updates to the agency website and discussed domain name options.
- **Discussion:** Members emphasized ease of use, clarity for the public, and avoiding punctuation such as hyphens.
 - Several members expressed support for a short, intuitive URL. Consensus emerged around using “gactpo.org” to simplify public access and recall.
- **Motion:** Commissioner Cornell moved to approve gactpo.org as the official website URL.
- **Second:** Commissioner Duncan-Walker
- **Vote:** Unanimous approval

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

• Directors Updates

8.1. FY 24–26 UPWP De-obligation Approval

- Executive Director Whitfield reported that the previously approved UPWP amendment to de-obligate funds had received final approval at all levels and that FDOT had issued the Letter of Authorization.
- Commissioner Ingle asked about the intended use of approximately \$75,000 in systems planning funds. Executive Director Whitfield explained that the funds could support transit planning, congestion management, signal systems, and other eligible planning activities consistent with the MPO Handbook.

8.2. Draft FY 26–28 Changes in State Regulations

- Executive Director Whitfield provided an update on newly issued FDOT guidance, stating that de-obligated funds from FY25/26 would be returned to the TPO based on available state funding. New guidance puts de-obligated funds back into a state “bucket” to be reallocated statewide and returned to the GACTPO based on funding availability. Staff will continue to coordinate with FDOT and monitor any impacts and implications of the state budget to the UPWP.

8.3. Online Interactive TIP Update

- Executive Director Whitfield provided an overview of the new interactive Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) platform, explaining that future TIP updates would be based on FDOT Work Program snapshots and that the platform would

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improve transparency and ease of public access. The TIP will be linked from the updated GACTPO website.

9. AGENCY REPORTS / PARTNER UPDATES

- **Jesus Gomez, Regional Transit System (RTS)**
- Mr. Gomez provided a detailed overview of recent RTS ridership trends and service characteristics, highlighting a 47 percent increase in ADA ridership over the past year. He explained that ridership data is primarily based on boardings and badge scans, which allow RTS to track usage by affiliation where identifiers are available.
- Chair Willits asked whether the reported figures reflected the financial savings associated with reduced City subsidies in recent months. Mr. Gomez responded that the figures presented represented boardings rather than financial expenditures but noted that RTS could explore providing additional context regarding cost impacts.
- Executive Director Whitfield asked for clarification regarding how boarding locations are recorded, and Mr. Gomez confirmed that the data reflects where riders board vehicles.
- Commissioner Ingle asked whether the Board could receive more detailed data moving forward. RTS staff indicated that the data had just been finalized and committed to distributing it to Board members.
- Mayor Ward noted that while the data was not inaccurate, it did not fully tell the story of RTS ridership. He emphasized that approximately 72 percent of riders affiliated with the University of Florida are not only students but also faculty and staff who live in Gainesville and that future reporting should distinguish amongst those groups so the information is not misinterpreted.
- Mr. Gomez stated that RTS does have the ability to distinguish between UF students, faculty, and staff, as well as Santa Fe College affiliations, and could present that breakdown at a future meeting. Commissioner Cornell agreed, emphasizing that separating faculty and staff ridership would be important to understanding travel behavior and funding responsibilities.
- Council Member Taylor asked for clarification regarding an “8 percent” ridership figure attributed to the County. Mr. Gomez clarified that the percentage referenced applied to that specific reporting month.
- Chair Willits asked whether RTS was able to distinguish between City and County employees using identification badges. Mr. Gomez responded that City identification is tracked, and that County identification may also be available but would need to be verified with staff.
- Council Member Taylor raised concerns related to MV Transportation’s provision of paratransit service in rural areas, stating that she had received reports from

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constituents claiming MV would not provide pickups. Deputy Director Moss confirmed that MV remains under contract for rural service but acknowledged that there have been concerns and that staff would investigate specific complaints.

- Ms. Certain asked for clarification regarding how paratransit trips are categorized, particularly where trips terminate and how identifiers are captured when badges are scanned. Mr. Gomez stated that RTS does have that information and could clarify categories, locations, and identifiers in a future report. She further asked whether this data could be reported retroactively, and Mr. Gomez indicated that RTS could look back historically, although the length of available records would need to be confirmed.
- Ms. Certain also noted that Santa Fe College has similar data available and asked whether RTS could coordinate reporting between institutions. Mr. Gomez confirmed that both Santa Fe College and UF faculty, staff, and student data are available.
- Commissioner Ingle emphasized that for UF-related ridership, the most important factor is not the route taken but rather who is paying for the service, and how those costs align with ridership patterns.
- Ms. Linda Dixon (University of Florida) confirmed that RTS badge data allows differentiation between Santa Fe College and UF riders, including faculty, staff, and students.
- Council Member Taylor asked for clarification regarding the County's ridership percentage and how that figure should be interpreted in the broader context of service provision.
- Discussion continued regarding MV Transportation's performance during the transition of certain paratransit services. Mr. Gomez explained that in a small number of cases where MV service failed, riders were asked to contact MV directly for reimbursement, after which RTS could issue replacement ride credits. Ms. Certain asked whether those issues identified at prior meetings had been resolved, and RTS staff stated that only a limited number of cases had been reported but that follow-up was ongoing.
- Commissioner Wheeler asked whether RTS tracks public school students utilizing the transit system. Mr. Gomez responded that RTS does track ridership by age category, including riders under 18 and riders over 65, and that those figures could be provided. Commissioner Wheeler asked whether RTS engages in outreach or education efforts for students using the system, and Mr. Gomez responded affirmatively.
- Executive Director Whitfield noted the importance of ensuring coordination among agencies and stated that staff had scheduled a meeting on the 21st to bring relevant partners together to address data consistency and service coordination.
- Throughout the discussion, Board members emphasized the need for clearer, more disaggregated data to inform funding decisions, evaluate equity impacts, and better understand the relationship between ridership, service provision, and paying

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entities. RTS staff committed to returning with enhanced data and clarifications at a future meeting.

10. UPCOMING MEETINGS OF INTEREST

- April 15, 2026 – Bike/Ped Community Engagement Meeting
- April 29–30, 2026 – MPOAC FMPP Training & Directors Meeting
- May 1, 2026 – MPO Institute

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS (GENERAL)

- No comments.

12. MEMBER COMMENTS

- Council Member Taylor thanked Executive Director Whitfield for conducting field visits to observe transportation conditions and suggested similar visits to other municipalities.
- Ms. Certain raised safety concerns along US 301 in Hawthorne following recent accidents involving school buses and large trucks.
- Chair Willits announced that the next meeting would be held at 3:00 p.m on May 4th.

13. ADJOURNMENT