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UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Student Government
Office of the Student Body President

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8 August 1998

The City Commission
City of Gainesville
200 East University Avenue
P.O. Box 490-19
Gainesville, FL 32602-0490

Dear Members of the City Commission:

First, I apologize for not being able to be with you, in person, this evening as I am in Washington, D.C. for meetings which were scheduled long before I knew that tonight's very important RTS "Later Gator" Resolution was going to be presented. Since I cannot be with you in person, I am writing this letter to express the University of Florida Student Government's strong support for this resolution and its underlying concept.

Several months ago I met with Mayor Delaney to outline an agenda for heightened interaction and deeper dialogue between the Gainesville city government and UF's student government. This frank exchange of both ideas and concerns was the genesis for the concept now known as the "Later Gator." "Later Gator" is an important and necessary improvement to the services already provided by Gainesville's Regional Transit System. A vote for the resolution that is before you tonight is a vote for greatly enhancing transit to all sectors of the Gainesville economy during the late night and early morning hours.

Strictly from a student perspective, the "Later Gator" bus service will allow my fellow Gators to move safely, quickly and efficiently from campus or from their individual residence to the downtown area, the Oaks Mall, to the businesses at the corner of Archer Road and 34th Street and to virtually every high traffic area in the city between the hours of 8:00 PM and 3:00 AM, Thursday thru Saturday. As the University of Florida is forced to offer greater night-time educational opportunities, these ranging from classes and labs to 24 hour library access, it is important that we, the City and the University together, provide an efficient, user-friendly avenue for these students to get wherever they need to be after leaving campus. "Later Gator" is this avenue; but, the "Later Gator" is more than just a night-time student shuttle. It is a way for us to enhance community safety, it is a way for us to alleviate many of our infrastructure and parking problems, it is a way for us to create jobs, and, most importantly, it is a way for us to potentially save lives.

All of these benefits, I hope, will compel you to vote for the resolution before you. Tonight's resolution is an important first step in securing the funding necessary to begin providing the "Later Gator" service. Your affirmative vote tonight, combined with the sincere dedication and raw energy of everyone involved in making this a safer city, can make the "Later Gator" RTS service enhancement a reality.

On behalf of UF's Student Government, I pledge our full support, both financial and otherwise, to making this idea a reality and to making this city a national model of coexistence between a major university and its host community. Thank you for allowing us to be here tonight, with special thanks to RTS Director, Perry Maull; City Manager, Wayne Bowers; and to Gainesville Mayor Paula Delaney for all of their help in making the "Later Gator" a cornerstone of our community's future bus services.

Good Evening! And, as always, Go Gators!

With Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John T. McGovern".

John T. McGovern
Student Body President

Later Gator

Night Bus Service for Students of the University of Florida

Current Situation

Currently all RTS bus routes stop service between 8 PM and 9 PM, Monday through Friday. On Saturdays service stops between 6 PM and 7 PM. The UF Student Government has identified a need for students to have access to safe, reliable, and comfortable public transit much later into the evening and early morning hours. UF SG has identified many reasons that students need to travel during nighttime hours, including but not limited to the following popular destinations: night classes, the library, laboratories, work, recreation, shopping, restaurants, and entertainment.

Public Transit Vision Statement

On January 12, 1998, the City of Gainesville City Commission adopted the following vision statement for public transit: "To become a premiere university community transportation system which provides a variety of flexible transportation services that promote accessibility, comfort, a sense of fun, and community pride." Night bus service is consistent with this vision statement for public transit in Gainesville.

Night Bus Service Objective

UF Student Government, UF Administration, and the City of Gainesville agree that it should be an objective to provide public transit service to meet the mobility requirements of UF students by operating all student oriented bus routes until at least midnight on a six day a week basis and that additional after midnight service be operated to provide a safe ride home for students after regular bus service stops. This objective should be fully implemented by Fall Semester, 1999.

Interim Night Bus Service

Prior to implementing full night service, interim service should be provided on selected weekends during the Fall Semester, 1998. Service would start with the weekend beginning September 3. The interim service should consist of modified existing routes which will link a substantial number of both on-campus and off-campus student housing areas with destinations, such as the Reitz Union, the Libraries, downtown, the Oaks Mall, Butler Plaza, etc. If successful, this service would be expanded to every weekend during the Spring Semester.

The interim night bus service should be operated at frequent intervals to be an attractive option for students who, for the most part, have automobiles available to them to make their trips. Students should not be expected to wait for a bus more than just a few minutes, to maximize their security at bus stops during night hours. The service standard should be a minimum of 15 minute frequency on all routes. The campus-downtown connector which is the backbone of the night service should have 10 minute frequency.

Student Employment Opportunities

A key element of the Later Gator service will be recruiting UF students as bus operators, supervisors, and vehicle maintenance staff. UF students will benefit in two ways from the new night service: first

through safe and convenient transportation for their travel at night and secondly through job opportunities provided to their fellow students. RTS will provide a complete training program for these student positions.

Private Sector Participation

Another key element will be support from the private sector through their purchase of advertising on the buses assigned to the Later Gator service. The interim night service will require a minimum of 9 buses. RTS will utilize 13 smaller buses for this service, including spares. Through their purchase of advertising space private sector would finance the repainting of these 13 buses. The private sector sponsors would be able to advertise both inside and outside of the buses.

Promotion of Later Gator Service

Night bus service must be extensively promoted. Riding the bus has not been socially acceptable in Gainesville in the past. Riding the bus has only been associated with persons who have had no choice, except to ride the bus. Only in the past year has riding the bus actually become an option for UF students, or for that matter the public in general. Unlike day bus service to the UF campus, there are relatively no parking problems associated with getting around Gainesville at night. To be successful night bus service will have to be viewed as the "in thing" to do by a majority of UF students. One way that the bus can be promoted is by private sector involvement, such as joint promotions, sponsoring the painting of a bus, etc. UF Student Government and UF Administration will also need to be supportive through their actions, such as providing improved passenger shelters with enhanced lighting around campus and promoting the use of the bus for various UF sponsored activities, such as getting to sporting events on campus, etc. Similarly the City of Gainesville with private sector support needs to provide passenger amenities in the downtown area.

Cost Estimates

Cost of service has been estimated on the basis of 5 routes with 9 buses. Buses would operate with 15 minute frequency, except for the campus to downtown connector which would operate every 10 minutes. The cost estimate used the rate of \$38.50 per hour from the current UF Campus Shuttle contract. The estimated total cost of service for both Fall and Spring Semesters is \$240,000. The FDOT grant, if approved, would pay for half the cost. The local share of the cost is proposed to be split among the following: City of Gainesville, \$40,000; UF Student Government, \$40,000; Private Sector, \$20,000; and Alachua County, \$20,000. The County's share is based on the percentage of the night bus service that operates in areas outside of the City of Gainesville which is estimated to be 23%.

Summary

Night bus service can be another way that public transit can be shown to be a useful community service. In other university communities night bus service is being used as heavily as service during daylight hours, because it is attractive and socially acceptable mode of travel. The Later Gator service needs to be viewed in that same manner in Gainesville.



City of Gainesville
Text File Report
Resolution

City Hall
200 East University Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601

Legislative File Number **980308**

..Title

Resolution authorizing the City Manager, or his designee, to file an application and to execute a joint participation agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation to fund a service demonstration for night bus service.

..Explanation

The Regional Transit System (RTS) has prepared a weekend night bus service proposal for the Fall Semester. The service, tentatively named, "Later Gator" would be provided for the extended weekend: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. Service would be on 5 specially designed routes operating from approximately 7 PM to 3 AM and using 9 buses. Service would be operated every 10 minutes on the route between the UF campus and downtown and every 15 minutes on the other 4 routes serving residential areas with high concentrations of UF students. Service would initially be provided for football weekends only during September (September 3, September 10 and 24). Every weekend service would begin on October 10 and continue until the weekend of December 17, except that no service would be provided during the Thanksgiving Day break.

An authorizing resolution by the City Commission is required by the Florida Department of Transportation, before it can award a service development grant to the City.

..Fiscal Note

The estimated cost of this service for the both the Fall and Spring semesters is \$240,000. The Florida Department of Transportation makes available service development grants on a 50% state, 50% local basis for up to two years to finance new transit service. The City of Gainesville will apply for a grant of \$120,000 from FDOT for this project. Local share for this project will be requested from the City of Gainesville, the University of Florida Student Government, Alachua County, and the private sector. Service will be provided only if matching funds, in the amount of \$120,000, are secured through contracts with the partners named above.

..Recommendation

It is recommended that the City Commission hear a presentation by staff on this project and approve this authorizing resolution.

Resolution No. _____

Passed: _____

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO APPLY FOR AND EXECUTE A JOINT PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (FDOT) TO RECEIVE GRANT FUNDS FOR A SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR NIGHT BUS SERVICE IN THE GAINESVILLE URBANIZED AREA

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the transit partners: the City of Gainesville, Alachua County, the University of Florida, and the UF Student Government to enhance public transit service serving the University of Florida main campus located in Gainesville and Alachua County;

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville urbanized area has given a high priority to enhanced transit service in the urbanized area;

WHEREAS, the above named transit partners have determined that a demonstration of night bus service in Gainesville will provide safe and reliable transportation for UF students and other members of the community who need to travel around the Gainesville urbanized area after current bus service has ceased;

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Transportation makes available service development grants to transit systems for the purpose of demonstrating enhanced transit service.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA:

1. The City Manager or his designee is authorized to file and to execute a joint participation agreement on behalf of the City of Gainesville, Florida with the Florida Department of Transportation.
2. That the City Manager or his designee is authorized to implement the service development project in an expeditious manner, contingent upon award of an FDOT grant and provision of matching funds being authorized.

3. That the City Manager or his designee is authorized to provide matching funds contingent upon contributions accepted from the City of Gainesville, Alachua County, the University of Florida, and the private sector.

4. This resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

Dated the _____ day of _____ A.D. 1998

Paula M. DeLaney
Mayor

ATTEST:

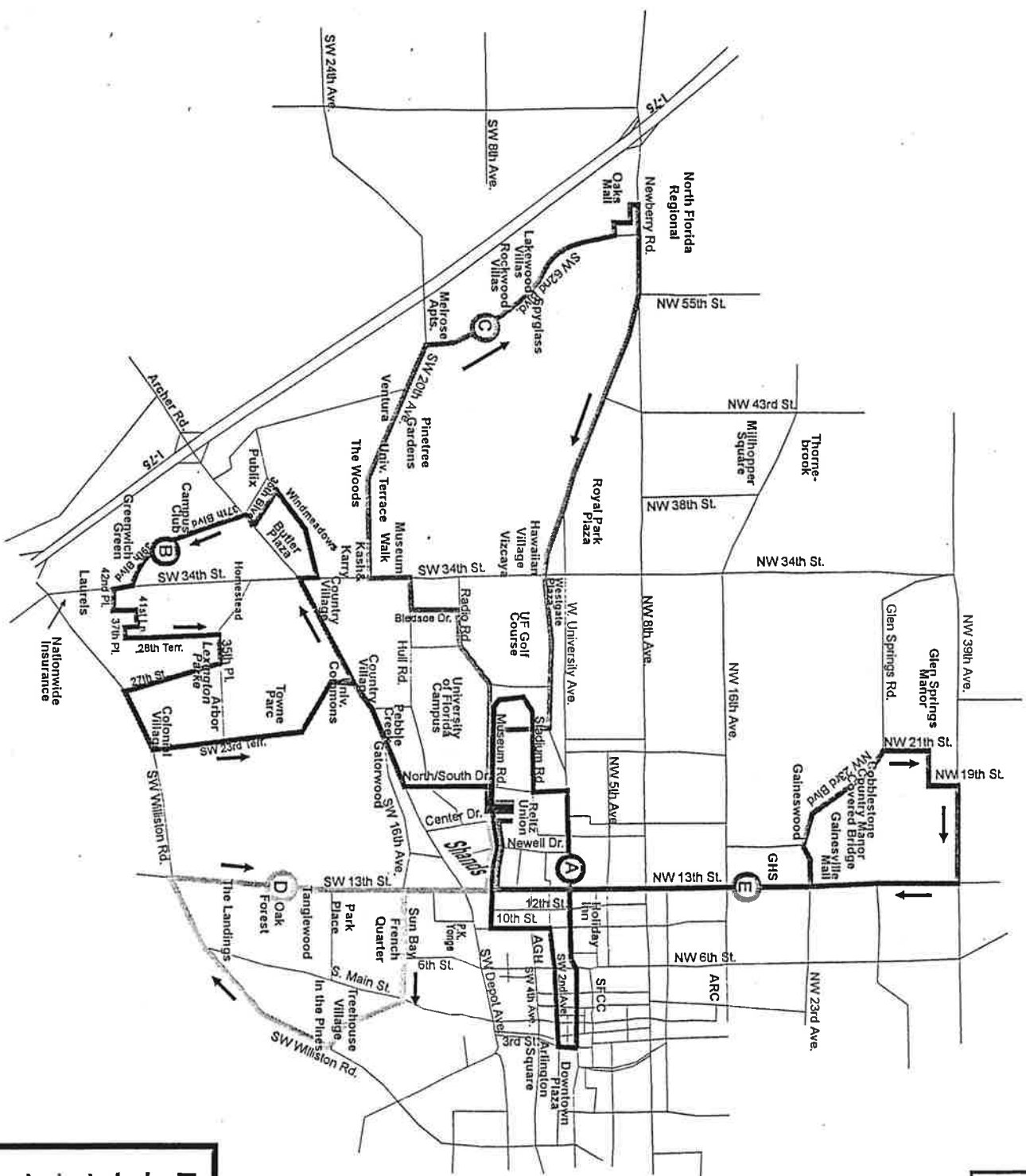
APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY

Kurt Lannon
Clerk of the Commission

Marion J. Radson,
City Attorney



**REGIONAL
TRANSIT
SYSTEM**
Phone 334-2600



LEGEND

- A** Downtown to UF
- B** Lexington Park to UF
- C** Oaks Mall to UF
- D** The Landings to UF
- E** Cobblestone to UF

