



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING, MARCH 7, 2016
MURDOCK ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE, ROOM #119
PORT CHARLOTTE FL 33948

MEMBERS PRESENT

Commissioner Christopher Constance, Charlotte County Commissioner
Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch, Charlotte County Commissioner
Commissioner Ken Doherty, Charlotte County Commissioner
Commissioner James Herston, Charlotte County Airport Authority
Councilmember Tom Cavanaugh, Punta Gorda City Council

ADVISORY

Laura Lockwood Alternat for Billy Hattaway, FDOT District One Secretary

STAFF PRESENT

Bob Herrington, MPO Director
Gary Harrell, MPO Principal Planner
Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Planner II
Wendy Scott, MPO Planner II
Bekie Leslie, Administrative Services Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT

Derek Burr, FDOT Southwest Area Office Director
Lori Carlton, FDOT
John Burrage, CAC Chair
Venkat Vattikuti, TAC Vice Chair/Charlotte County Public Works
Rick Kolar, County Transit
Pam Barr, Charlotte County Fiscal Services/Transit
Debrah Forester, Charlotte County Economic Development
Emily Lewis, County Administration/Legislative Manager
Ned Baier, Jacobs Engineering

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

MPO Chair Christopher Constance called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. A roll call was taken, and the Chair noted that all members were present. He requested that Agenda Item #8A be added for a discussion of an intersection improvement at northbound US 41 left turn onto Murdock Circle.

Commissioner Doherty made a motion to add Agenda Item #8-A. Commissioner Herston seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Employee Recognition

Gary Harrell was recognized for his fifteen years of service to the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO, and Robert Herrington was recognized for his five years of service to the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO.

4. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments on agenda items.

5. Chairs' Report :

A. MPO Board Chair's Report

Commissioner Constance noted that under new Agenda Item #8-A, discussion would occur regarding two left turn lane extensions for NB US 41 at Murdock Circle.

Commissioner Constance also revisited the issue of removing the no right turn on red restriction from Nesbit Street onto Marion Avenue. He compared a similar limited sight issue on Retta Esplanade where the Wyvern Hotel obstructs the view and the speed limit is higher. He requested that FDOT reexamine his request and stated that it would help alleviate traffic congestion there. Councilmember Cavanaugh requested that the City Council have the opportunity to assess the situation.

B. Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) Chair's Report

CAC Chair John Burrage stated that CAC members are concerned about the lack of improvements to River Road. He also reviewed other CAC concerns including:

- Potential use of state owned land for right-of-way on Burnt Store Road
- Request for MPO support for widening bicycle lanes on Aquí Esta Drive

- Concern about the Long Range Transportation Plan's recommendation to have traffic bypass the traffic bottleneck in downtown Punta Gorda which could be a detriment to local businesses.
- Lack of a trucking layover location given the recent closure of the Jones Loop Road rest stop

Commissioner Deutsch stated that he appreciated the CAC members' service. He noted that River Road was now a priority for Sarasota County and Charlotte County government is being supportive of this project. He also noted that River Road's significance as a park entrance should be addressed.

Chair Constance stated that the County was pursuing the possibility of obtaining the state protected land for right of way on the eastside of Burnt Store Road.

Councilmember Cavanaugh stated that City of Punta Gorda officials were considering requests to widen Aquí Esta Drive bicycle lanes as a part of the next City Council meeting under the agenda item on designation as a Bicycle Friendly Community.

C. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Chair's Reports

TAC Vice Chair Venkat Vattikuti reported that the TAC had discussed prioritization of projects and recommended changing project order to make the intersection of US 41 and Murdock Circle a high priority.

Commissioner Heston stated that he serves as the Charlotte Harbor CRA Chair and requested that Debrah Forester give an update on the following two projects:

- Trails and Wayfinding – project has been submitted for Sibley Bay Road improvements
- Charlotte Harbor US 41 Gateway Project – PD&E segment from northern base of US 41 bridge to Parmely Street to include assessment of median cuts and curb cuts with possible speed limit analysis

Commissioner Constance asked Ms. Forester for a timeline on Phase 1A US 41 Gateway project. She indicated that it is 75-80% complete with a ribbon cutting scheduled for May 2016. She noted that Phase 1B Boardwalk construction was scheduled for September 2016. Commissioner Constance characterized the project as well done.

6. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

Laura Lockwood introduced Derek Burr as the new FDOT Southwest Area Office Director.

Ms. Lockwood stated that FDOT has an ongoing dialogue regarding needed improvements to River Road.

Lori Carlton described: (1) a resurfacing project on US 41 (from Cross Street to Cochran Boulevard) and (2) four US 41 intersection improvement projects. These latter four projects were let on February 24, 2016 as “goes with” companions to the resurfacing project; so although done at the same time, they will retain their separate identities.

Commissioner Deutsch noted that FDOT was doing an excellent job on its project at the north end of US 41 from Enterprise Blvd to the Sarasota County Line.

Commissioner Herston stated that he had reviewed improvements planned for US 41 and Harborview Rd. He noted the absence of any type of handicapped access features on the east side of intersection. Lori Carlton believed that the project had been let on Feb 24 and agreed to consult with the FDOT project manager on this issue.

7. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Minutes: December 7, 2015 Meeting**
- B. Approval of Minutes: January 25, 2016 Joint Charlotte-Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board Meeting**
- C. FY 2014/2015 – FY 2015/2016 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendments and De-Obligation of PL Funds**
- D. Amendment to the Transportation Planning Funds Joint Participation Agreement**
- E. Public Participation Plan (PPP) Revision**
- F. Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Appointment**

Bob Herrington stated that agenda item #8-E must be pulled from the Consent Agenda since the federal law requires that the PPP advertisement must be run at least 45 day prior to approval. He noted that notice of the PPP Revision would be advertised soon and brought back at the May 3 MPO Board Meeting.

Commissioner Doherty made a motion to approve the balance of the Consent Agenda (without #8-E). Commissioner Deutsch seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

8. Draft FY 2016/2017 – FY 2017/2018 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Bob Herrington described the FY 2016/2017 and FY 2017/2018 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) which lists the MPO transportation planning activities and establishes the MPO budget. The State Fiscal Year begins on July 1, 2016. The UPWP includes a narrative of the work to be accomplished and the cost estimates for each task activity. Federal and state regulations, as reflected in the State of Florida Department of Transportation Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement, govern the types of activities that are eligible for federal and state funding. The timeline for the adoption of the FY 2016/2017 and FY 2017/2018 UPWP is listed below:

- March 15, 2016 – Deadline for MPO to transmit the Draft FY 2016/2017 and FY 2017/2018 UPWP/Agreement to FDOT District One and reviewing agencies.

- April 15, 2016 – Deadline for District and reviewing agencies to provide the MPO with comments on the Draft FY 2016/2017 and FY 2017/2018 UPWP/Agreement.
- May 3, 2016 – The MPO Board reviews the comments and adopts the Final FY 2016/2017 and FY 2017/2018 UPWP/Agreement for distribution to the District and reviewing agencies.
- Within 10 working days of receipt – FDOT District One reviews the MPO adopted Final FY 2016/2017 and FY 2017/2018 UPWP/Agreement. The MPO and District One staff resolves any outstanding issues. The District transmits the comments and responses to the FDOT Public Transportation Office and FHWA.

The Draft FY 2016/2017 and FY 2017/2018 UPWP includes Section 5305 (d) Transit Planning grant funds; Transportation Disadvantaged Planning funds and FHWA PL funds.

Commissioner Doherty made a motion to direct the MPO Staff to forward the Draft FY 2016/2017 and FY 2017/2018 UPWP/Metropolitan Planning Organization agreement to appropriate reviewing agencies, allowing staff to make appropriate revisions as needed. Commissioner Herston seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Added Item:

8-A. US 41 at Murdock Circle Intersection Improvement

Commissioner Constance inquired of FDOT staff about the procedure for fast-tracking a project (as had been done in the past). He stated that on urgent projects, there had been the possibility of programming them with the County doing the work and then having FDOT reimburse the County at a later date. He stated that the estimated costs were likely \$250,000 to \$350,000.

Laura Lockwood stated that this procedure was known as an “advanced reimbursement” in the Work Program. FDOT has backed away from this technique over the last five or six years, because of the higher level of risk given fluctuating costs and federal/state policies. Although not giving a firm denial, Ms. Lockwood cautioned that FDOT was not as comfortable with this approach recently. Chair Constance asked for any advice Ms. Lockwood would have on quickly completing this project in light of the degraded situation. Ms. Lockwood recommended giving this project a high priority on this year’s list, and then, allowing FDOT to analyze the traffic flow and current conditions. This effort would require developing a good scope of work and obtaining an accurate cost estimate. Once into this summer’s workload programming, FDOT might consider programming the project design phase a little sooner in the Work Program.

Commissioner Deutsch thanked Commissioner Herston for volunteering to review this intersection problem. Commissioner Deutsch recommends shortening by 50-75 feet the expanded left turn lane length given the need for crossover traffic in the area of the two medical buildings. He also recommends installation of more “stay to the right” signage. He described how seasonal traffic is compounding this problem.

Bob Herrington suggested substituting this project for a currently programmed project. Mr. Herrington offered to draft a formal letter for the MPO Board Members to review and approve incorporating the suggestions discussed.

Commissioner Herston noted that he would have been on time to the MPO Board Meeting had it not been for this left turn lane issue. Ms. Lockwood indicated that it was often possible to receive FDOT approval to substitute projects and coordination with MPO staff could occur early in the cycle. Commissioner Herston asked if it were possible for Charlotte County to request to perform these left turn improvements as any developer would, especially given the approximate price. Ms. Lockwood stated that this approach could be considered as long as FDOT could review the design plans and verify that state standards were being followed. Chair Constance weighed the various options of doing State roadwork within the standard programming system vs. needing the work completed as soon as possible, especially given the fact that the entire intersection was not being changed. Venkat Vattikuti noted that the right turn lane onto US 41 south at the intersection was included in the County Capital Improvement Plan. He noted that the impact of having additional left turn lane length will not initially be apparent. Chair Constance noted that traffic timing also will influence traffic flow at the intersection.

Chair Constance stated that there was consensus among MPO Board members for FDOT, MPO and County staff to coordinate on this project. Chair Constance reiterated that time is of the essence with this project. Laura Lockwood indicated that if the project is made a high priority, FDOT will look at the project sooner than later and maximize use of funds.

9. 2016 Project Priorities Discussion

Bob Herrington stated that the MPO is required to annually develop a list of project priorities as part of the Transportation Program (TIP) process and to submit the list to FDOT. FDOT has asked that the priorities be submitted by Mid-March 2016 to begin the review process, and that the final project priority list be submitted not later than July 1, 2016. Annually the MPO receives project candidates from the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County. The project candidates include: Highway projects, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) projects, and Congestion Management/Transportation System Management (CM/TSM) Box. The MPO packets contained Attachment 1 (list of the project priorities adopted in 2015 and their status) and Attachment 2 (the Prospective Project Priorities list with the new projects identified in italics for 2016).

Bob Herrington described the staff recommendations for the various types of project funding and requested that the draft list be submitted to FDOT to start the review process.

Commissioner Doherty recommended that the Highway Projects list be reordered regarding the County projects:

- #5 (Burnt Store Road Phase II) becomes #1
- #1 (Harbor View Road) becomes #3
- #3 (Piper Road) becomes #5

Commissioner Doherty stressed that such action would be consistent with all of the requests being made to State government to make Burnt Store Road the highest priority. City projects #2 and #4 would remain in place.

Commissioner Doherty noted that the TSM projects list was in a different format that did not contain prioritization of intersection improvements. He stated that the US 41 at Murdock Circle left turn intersection improvement should become the next highest priority (second) following the ITS Master Plan system. Bob Herrington reviewed how the intersection improvements were being implemented as one big project done in phases. Chair Constance requested input from County staff on these various US 41 phases. Venkat Vattikuti estimated the Murdock Circle intersection project could run in the range of \$300-\$350,000. He used the example of the US 41 improvements that had been described earlier under FDOT staff comments (letting of the resurfacing and 4 “goes with” intersection improvement projects), noting how some cost savings may occur with this type of approach. He also described how “shelf ready” projects are often selected from the list when FDOT funding becomes available. Commissioner Doherty asked Mr. Vattikuti to discuss the phase status of various US 41 intersections. Mr. Vattikuti indicated that only US 41 intersection at Easy Street had been designed and was ready for construction. Commissioner Doherty noted that the first step to be accomplished at this meeting was to place the US 41 at Murdock Circle intersection on the priority list. Venkat Vattikuti verified this fact and commented on how staff frequently coordinates with FDOT based upon immediate local needs.

Chair Constance asked if there was any advantage to having the County cover pre-designing an intersection, especially since the project already included right-of-way in order to make it more palatable to FDOT. Laura Lockwood noted that local agency design potentially could be provided if using FDOT staff. Chair Constance asked FDOT staff if Charlotte County decided to cover the design cost so that the project is ready to commence, would the work get done faster. Laura Lockwood stated that this was a possible option. She noted that FDOT staff needs to look at the state of the Work Program regarding projects scheduled for earlier years to see what projects they can get moving. She observed that partnering with another agency for contributions is always helpful. Mr. Vattikuti stated that although the MPO Board can make a recommendation, local dollars being dedicated for design work would need to be taken back to the BCC for approval. Bob Herrington responded to an observation from Commissioner Herston that a two part process would be followed: (1) submitting needed project priority information for the US 41 at Murdock Circle intersection project and (2) requesting that FDOT consider the project for an advance reimbursement.

Venkat Vattikuti noted that historically there had been a long list of TSM US 41 intersection improvements. In 2009, the top priorities of US 41 intersections at Cochran and at Murdock Circle were addressed for the first time. Since that time, traffic patterns have changed. He stated that a similar issue has developed at Veterans and Kings Hwy, where triple left turns are now warranted. Chair Constance wanted to know if the poles are being located at the furthest position to accommodate the need for future lanes. Mr. Vattikuti indicated that this consideration was part of the visioning process.

Chair Constance stated that although not an action item, it was the MPO Board members' consensus that the priority list be reordered per Commissioner Doherty's recommendation.

Chair Constance requested that public comments be taken before staff and member comments. Bob Herrington stated that the adjustment to the agenda order also would be made for future meetings.

11. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

10. Staff Comments

Bob Herrington reviewed a list of recent activities of the MPO staff. He also noted two handout items:

- MPO Director's letter to Steve Holmes, Executive Director of the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, regarding the MPO's recommendation that the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners through its Transit Division be designated as the Community Transportation Coordinator for the next five year term
- FDOT's 2015 Florida Transportation Trends and Conditions pamphlet

Chair Constance asked Bob Herrington to further describe his participation in the autonomous vehicle webinar. Mr. Herrington briefly discussed it and indicated that he would update MPO Board members as further information becomes available.

12. Members Comments

Commissioner Donny expressed a desire for the MPO to participate in a regional transportation summit to consider long range transportation planning for all the MPOs in the FDOT District One region. The summit would meet from time to time to examine the transportation needs of the entire Southwest Florida region. Bob Herrington stated that similar alliances existed in both the Central Florida and Tampa Bay areas. He indicated that currently in the District One area, these efforts were done at a staff level through the Coordinated Urban Transportation Studies (CUTS) meeting. Mr. Herrington was directed to draft a letter for the MPO Chair's signature to the Chairs of all the District One area MPOs to propose such a regional summit of MPO Chairs and MPO Directors in conjunction with FDOT. Laura Lockwood noted that FDOT District One would support such an effort given the Southwest Florida area's commonalities and often coastal concerns.

Commissioner Herston reported on the substantial increase in Punta Gorda Airport passenger counts compared to the same time last year. He stated that the bid was out to add an additional parking lot. He also indicated that the grand opening of the expanded terminal was approaching in May 2016. He referenced an article in the *Atlantic City Press* stating that Punta Gorda Airport passengers' pay the lowest fare among travelers at the top 200 airports in the nation (\$89.18). Chair Constance thanked him for his update and praised the greatly increased passenger activity this year.

Councilmember Cavanaugh acknowledged the transit article written by Commissioner Deutsch in the morning edition of the *Charlotte Sun-Herald* and the constant efforts the County is making to improve transit service.

Chair Constance commented on recent action taken by the Sheraton Four Points hotel owner to provide private shuttle service for Punta Gorda hotel visitors to the Englewood Area beaches with a return trip to bring Englewood visitors into Punta Gorda for the day.

Commissioner Deutsch commented on many recent transit improvements, noting that some additional recommendations and suggestions will be coming before the BCC. He noted that citizens who had recently tried riding the bus were pleased with the service, including new veterans' services. He stated that publicizing the service plus making additional improvements was the way to go for now. He noted that although some advocates still want the County to implement fixed route service, he can't see it working in the area. He cited examples of satisfaction with the current service from passengers when he took their comments on a recent transit trip.

Chair Constance verified that the new MPO Board Meeting date would be May 3, 2016. Bob Herrington stated that the need to reschedule was based upon the timing of deliverables due to FDOT by May 15 annually.

13. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:27 P.M. The next scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, May 3, 2016.

DRAFT