Chapter 11:
Socio-Cultural Effects & Environmental Justice
INTRODUCTION
This chapter documents the identification and evaluation of socio-cultural effects and environmental justice. Compliance with environmental justice is required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and reinforced by the Executive Order on Environmental Justice, #12898 (February 11, 1994).

Environmental justice prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin and requires the inclusion of minority and low-income populations in the planning process. This process ensures that the following three major components are addressed in the planning process.

- Avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental impacts, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations.
- Ensure the participation of the traditionally under-served and under-represented segments of the population in the transportation plan development process.
- Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

The LRTP development process included efforts to assess countywide performance with regard to socio-cultural effects and environmental justice. The potential positive and adverse impacts of proposed transportation projects were considered for transportation projects identified in the 2035 LRTP. Efforts in this focused on impacted areas with a high concentration of minority, low-income, and other traditionally under-served and under-represented populations. These population segments were identified through Census demographics and discussions with representatives of social service agencies in Charlotte County. To facilitate discussion, a workshop was held with representatives of social service and other agencies throughout the county.

It should be noted that the 2000 Census data are available at the block group geographic level, which allows the data to be mapped at the smallest level of geography available from Census. A number of the figures illustrating the county’s demographic data in this chapter have been created using data from the US Bureau of Labor, University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), and the Florida Legislature’s Office of Economic and Demographic Research. At the time this report was published, the 2010 US Census data was not yet available, so other data presented is 2000 Census Data. The remainder of this chapter includes the following topics:

- A Demographic and Socio-Cultural Profile for Charlotte County. The Demographic and Socio-Cultural Profile was developed as a starting point for integrating socio-cultural and environmental justice impact assessment concepts into the long range transportation planning process. This profile provides a summary of population, employment, demographic, and socio-cultural related information for Charlotte County.

- A System Level Analysis, which is a "top-down" approach to measuring the performance of the County’s transportation system and is the first step of the potential impact analysis. Basic performance measures within and outside the environmental justice areas are examined to analyze how mobility is being provided to the areas of the county with high minority and low-income populations through the course of the LRTP. The results of the system-level analysis reflect the potential impacts of the overall 2035 Transportation Plan from both a countywide or system-level perspective, while highlighting the community impacts and environmental justice.

- A Community Level Analysis, which is the second step of the potential impact analysis. The community level analysis first identifies major trip generators within the county that are likely to attract a variety of population segments and that have the potential for being impacted by transportation projects. This analysis also includes the identification of environmental justice areas (high concentrations of minority and/or low-income populations) and areas with higher elderly population.

- A summary of the Public Involvement activities undertaken during the LRTP process specific to the socio-cultural/environmental justice assessment is documented.

- A summary of impacts the socio-cultural effects and environmental justice assessment had an Impact on the 2035 Transportation Plan.
DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PROFILE

A Demographic and Socio-Cultural Profile for the 2035 LRTP was developed to provide a snapshot of Charlotte County. The profile is a compilation of demographic data and community characteristics. The types of data used in this profile are identified by the FDOT and FHWA as critical to the assessment of community values and environmental justice. The following data are included in the profile:

- Population growth and density
- Age composition
- Racial/ethnic composition
- Employment growth and density
- Households below poverty level

Geographic Profile

Charlotte County is located along the west coast of Florida and is bordered by Sarasota and Desoto Counties to the north, Lee County to the south, and Glades County to the east. The county has one municipality: Punta Gorda, the County seat.

Population Profile

The following tables and figures, along with the captions for each, illustrate the demographic and socio-cultural profile developed for Charlotte County. According to the socioeconomic data developed for Charlotte County as part of the 2035 LRTP, the population of Charlotte County is anticipated to grow by an average annual rate of 1.78 percent over the next 29 years. Due to the previous significant urban development experienced along the coast, the high growth areas in the future are expected to be just west of I-75 and at Babcock Ranch. This is consistent with both other County planning assumptions and recent development activities.

Map 11-1 shows the areas that are projected to experience the highest growth, based on the 2035 socioeconomic data. Map 11-2 shows the population density in Charlotte County for 2007, and Map 11-3 shows the population density in Charlotte County projected for 2050.

Map 11-4 shows the projected absolute change in employment for Charlotte County from 2007 to 2035, based on the socioeconomic data developed for the 2035 LRTP Update. In addition, Map 11-5 shows the 2007 employment density for Charlotte County, while Map 11-6 shows the 2050 employment density for Charlotte County.

SYSTEM LEVEL ANALYSIS

System Level Analysis reflects the potential impacts of the overall 2035 Transportation Plan from a county-wide or system level perspective. This perspective includes broad measures of performance for the county as a whole for gauging the county’s progress in addressing community and environmental justice impacts. This analysis uses 2000 Census data to identify geographic areas of the county with a high proportion of low-income and minority populations relative to other areas in the county. Roadway miles and public transportation services are analyzed for these areas and compared to the county as a whole.

Figure 11-1: Charlotte County Historic and Projected Population Growth

This figure presents the historic and projected population growth in Charlotte County from 1940 to 2035. Sources:

1. Historical population figures provided by the US Census Bureau and BEBR.
2. BEBR low, medium, and high population projections dated March 2009.
3. Socioeconomic data developed as part of the 2035 LRTP.
Map 11-1: Absolute Growth in Population 2007-2035
Map 11-2: Dwelling Unit Density 2007
Map 11-3: Dwelling Unit Density 2050

Dwelling Units per Square Mile

- 0
- 4.5 - 6
- Less than 4.5
- 6 - 8
- 8+

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11/5
Map 11-4: Absolute Growth in Employment 2007-2035

- Map areas:
  - A: Port Charlotte
  - B: Punta Gorda North
  - C: Punta Gorda South

Legend:
- 0 - 100
- 101 - 500
- 501 - 1,500
- 1,501 - 2,000
- 2,001 +
Map 11-5: Employment Density 2007

Charlotte Harbor

Gulf of Mexico

Employees per Square Mile

- 0
- 1 - 5
- 5 - 10
- Less than 1
- 10+
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Map 11-6: Employment Density 2050

- Employees per Square Mile
  - 0
  - 1 - 5
  - Less than 1
  - 5 - 10
  - 10+
Charlotte County historically has had a stable median age group of approximately 54 years; however, between 2010 and 2030, the median age is projected to increase significantly, from 55.1 years to 61.1 years, based on projections developed by BEBR. Source: Florida Statistical Abstract, 2009

Charlotte County’s population is predominantly white (94%); 4% is African-American and 2% can be classified as belonging to other racial groups. Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

The overall breakdown of the population by age shows that 34% of the population is 65 years or older. Source: Florida Statistical Abstract, 2009

Charlotte County is a service/retail-based economy; 64% of the employment is service or retail related.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Employment (June 2008)</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2,315</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Health Services</td>
<td>8,446</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Activities</td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure &amp; Hospitality</td>
<td>5,860</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources &amp; Mining</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>1,413</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional &amp; Business Services</td>
<td>4,044</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade, Transportation, &amp; Utilities</td>
<td>8,969</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34,238</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Charlotte County, along with the rest of Florida and the United States, is feeling the effects of the current recession. Consistent with communities nationwide, the unemployment rate in Charlotte County is currently the highest level seen over the last 10 years. Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

*2010 data shown for year-to-date through November

**Figure 11-5: Charlotte County Average Annual Unemployment Rate (1999 to 2009*)**

The per capita income in both Charlotte County and Florida has historically been steadily increasing, with Charlotte County consistently reflecting the same percent growth seen statewide. In 2007, the personal per capital income in Charlotte County was $27,628, while the Florida per capita income was $38,417. Source: Florida Legislature, Office of Economic and Demographic Research

**Figure 11-6: Per Capita Personal Income, Charlotte County and Florida**

The median income in Charlotte County was $36,379 in 2000, compared to a median income $36,309 in Florida. In addition, 8% of the population in Charlotte County and 12% of the state population are considered poor or living below the poverty level. Florida’s poverty threshold for a family of four was $21,386 in 2007. Source: Florida Statistical Abstract 2008

**Figure 11-7: Historic Poverty Thresholds, Florida**
DEVELOPING AND DEFINING CRITERIA
The primary objective of the system level analysis is to develop system-wide measures of effectiveness to assess the extent to which Charlotte County is providing mobility to areas with high minority and low-income populations. The following criteria was used to conduct the system level analysis:

- Number of Highway Lane Miles within Minority and Low-Income Areas - This measure shows access to the roadway network.

OVERVIEW OF ANALYSIS AND RESULTS
The system level analysis measures how well Charlotte County is providing mobility to areas of the county with high minority and low-income populations. Efforts were undertaken to measure the number of highway lane miles within and outside environmental justice areas in Charlotte County. The results are summarized below:

- The 2015 Committed network will provide 105.9 total centerline miles within the areas.
- The 2035 Cost Feasible plan network provides an additional 2 miles of service these areas, for a total of 108.6 centerline miles.

COMMUNITY LEVEL ANALYSIS
A community level analysis was performed using various Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software tools. The community level analysis first identifies areas having the potential for being impacted by transportation projects included in the 2035 Needs and Cost Affordable Plans. In addition to the identification of environmental justice areas (high concentrations of minority and/or low-income populations) and areas with higher elderly population, this also includes development of a community facilities inventory (i.e., parks and recreation facilities, libraries, schools, and hospitals in Charlotte County). In addition, various law enforcement agency and fire station locations for the county also were identified.

Facilities Inventory
As previously mentioned, community-based facilities in Charlotte County were identified to identify major trip generators or employers within the county and that are likely to attract a variety of population segments due to their community-oriented nature. Community facilities identified for Charlotte County as part of this analysis include parks and recreation facilities, libraries, schools, and hospitals. A summary of these facilities, excluding law enforcement agency and fire station locations, is presented below. In addition, a detailed list of these facilities is provided in Appendix 11-A.

Parks and Recreation Facilities
There are 63 park facilities within Charlotte County that span a total of 5,255 acres. These include wilderness parks, river parks, memorial parks, neighborhood parks, recreational and athletic complexes, and community centers.

Libraries
Charlotte County operates four libraries providing an excellent knowledge base for Charlotte residents. They are located in Englewood, Port Charlotte, and Punta Gorda.

Schools
The Charlotte County School Board currently operates 2 high schools, 4 middle schools, and 10 elementary schools. In addition, the Charlotte County School Board operates four other facilities, including technical, adult, and other educational centers.

Hospitals
Charlotte County is served by four major hospitals/clinics, as well as a number of other wellness and other healthcare facilities, including urgent care centers, a weight management center, and nursing homes.
Community Level Analysis
As indicated earlier, the community level analysis was performed using various GIS software tools. First, the facilities identified earlier in this chapter as having the potential for being impacted by transportation projects were mapped on the GIS. Second, using 2000 Census data, the following transportation disadvantaged populations were mapped by Census Tract:

- Percent below poverty
- Percent of zero vehicle households
- Percent minority
- Percent under 16 years of age
- Percent elderly

This analysis leads to identifying areas with socio-cultural values/impacts in Charlotte County with regards to future transportation projects. The major results of this analysis, together with the Needs and Cost Affordable Plan project information, were presented to the attendees from various public agencies through consensus building discussion groups, as presented later in this chapter. The results of this analysis allowed these representatives of traditionally under-served and under-represented population segments to evaluate the potential negative or positive impact of a transportation projects on the identified community areas.

The following section fulfills the Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Program Management Handbook, Long Range Transportation Checklist, US Code Requirement B-16 as stated below:

“In developing the plan, did the MPO seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems such as low-income and minority households? [23 C.F.R 450.3 16(a)(1)(vii)]”

The section immediately following describes the efforts undertaken to consider the needs of the transportation disadvantaged.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES
A two-hour Environmental Justice Workshop was conducted by the MPO on May 18, 2010 in an attempt to ensure the full and fair participation of Charlotte County citizens by involving the potentially affected public in the development of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan. Attendees were provided a series of hard copy handouts describing the history, and overview of the Environments Justice concept, explaining to participants that this principle has its origin in the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Title VI). Participants were then described a series of transportation planning related environmental justice areas including MPO and State and Federal Planning, preliminary design, right-of-way procurement, project development and construction, and project maintenance and improvements. Discussions and a slide presentation followed that aided participants in understanding where environmental justice areas are currently designated in Charlotte County. Maps of designated roadway and transit needs were then presented with participants being prompted to add environmental justice areas or transit service improvements where considered most in need of inclusion. MPO staff aided and guided participants in three (3) exercises whose results are included below regarding traditionally underserved and under represented areas, the potential roadway improvements, and transit expansion and improvements. The following is a summary of the input received from the attendees who prepared responses to the three workshop exercises.
Environmental Justice Areas
Attendees commented and included additional environmental justice areas where pockets of minority or low income county residents may be identified for future targeting and effort by the MPO for improved public participation of these groups. The following are the areas that were identified for inclusion as environmental justice defined locations during the Workshop:

- US 41/ Cooper St Corridor in Punta Gorda
- Harbour Heights/ Harbor View road nearest I-75 (Exit 171) area
- Mobile home parks along US 17 north of I-75 (Exit 171) area
- Low income and elderly areas east of US 17 including Duncan Road, Bermont Road (US 74), and Washington Loop Road
- Charlotte Park area and portions of Tropical Gulf Acres
- Areas north and east of the Cultural Center and north along Midway Blvd to Beacon Drive

Roadway Improvements
- Improve Punta Gorda local routes to airport through US 41 and along Airport Rd
- Consider widening of Peachland Blvd. from Kings Highway to Veterans Blvd.

Transit Improvements
- Implementation of the fixed route bus system along US 41
- Integrate fixed route to regional transit service (SCAT and LeeTran) to surrounding counties
- Consider local transit service to Punta Gorda Area
- Transit fare for Dial-A-Ride should be lowered by a Dollar and elimination of $1.00 dollar charge for riders crossing the Peace and Myakka Rivers.
- Consider feeder route bus services to US 41 in areas where there is higher concentration of affordable housing complexes (Cultural Center area)
- Consider a local Transit route to Punta Gorda Isles as majority of the population in the city lives in the area.

When asked about the funding allocations of $10 million, members agreed to provide $9 million of the money towards providing fixed route and 1 million to provide regional transit service. When asked if the $3 fare for the County’s Dial-A-Ride Transit Service is right, the members responded that multi ride passes must be in place with discounts and some members commented that the fare should be lowered by a dollar.

SUMMARY
The public involvement activities conducted for the environmental justice public workshop concluded that a number of improvements deemed necessary by the community were already included in the 2035 LRTP (e.g., major road improvements, increased transit frequency and span of service, etc.) Where appropriate, the recommendations from this analysis were incorporated into the 2035 LRTP and will be used in future transportation planning activities such as the Five-Year Transit Development Plan Update. The use of discussion groups with participants representing minority and low-income populations proved to be quite successful and will be used as appropriate in future MPO planning activities.
Map 11-7: Areas of Potential Impact

- **Environmental Justice Areas**
- **Portion of DeSoto County included in Charlotte County Urban Service Area**

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