



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

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING, OCTOBER 23, 2017
MURDOCK ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE, ROOM #119
PORT CHARLOTTE FL 33948

MEMBERS PRESENT

Commissioner Christopher Constance, Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Vice Chair
Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch, Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Chair
Commissioner Ken Doherty, Charlotte County Commissioner
Commissioner James Herston, Charlotte County Airport Authority
Council Member Nancy Prafke, Punta Gorda City Council

ADVISORY

L.K. Nandam, FDOT District One Secretary

STAFF PRESENT

Gary Harrell, MPO Director (*effective after Agenda Item #10*)
Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Planner III
Wendy Scott, MPO Planner II
Bekie Leslie, Administrative Services Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT

Laura Herrscher, FDOT
Bessie Reina, FDOT
Zac Burch, FDOT
D’Juan Harris, FDOT
John Burrage, CAC Chair
Mitchell Austin, TAC Chair/City of Punta Gorda
K. Stephen Carter, BPAC Chair
Joshua Moye, Assistant Charlotte County Attorney (MPO Legal Services)
Art McGinnis, Purple Heart Chapter Commander
Andrea R. Hayden, St. Nathaniel’s Episcopal Church

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

MPO Chair Stephen R. Deutsch called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The roll call was taken, and all members were present.

2. Invocation

Reverend Andrea R. Hayden (St. Nathaniel's Episcopal Church) gave the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. Addition and/or Deletion to the Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

5. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Art McGinnis introduced himself as the local Purple Heart Chapter Commander who is also associated with numerous veterans' organizations. He spoke regarding the need to recognize Charlotte County as a Purple Heart Community, preferably through signage on I-75 regarding this status, as well as a mention of the Vietnam Wall Memorial in Punta Gorda. He noted that currently there is large signage identifying Charlotte County as a Purple Heart Community on Toledo Blade Blvd and elsewhere in adjoining Counties (Lee and Sarasota), which are also Purple Heart Counties. He indicated that he had spoken with MPO Chair Deutsch about coordinating signage efforts with these two Counties. He would like to see recognition for veterans and the community through this signage. Chair Deutsch stressed that it would be fitting to have this type of recognition. Secretary Nandam indicated that there would be further discussion of this matter during the FDOT report.

Chair Deutsch requested that Agenda Item #10 be taken up at this point in the meeting.

10. MPO Director Appointment

Chair Deutsch noted that Gary Harrell had been on the MPO staff since 2001 and had served twice as the MPO Interim Director. He praised Mr. Harrell's extensive planning background and MPO experience, noting that the MPO could not be in any better hands. Chair Deutsch also referenced former MPO Director Bob Herrington's strong letter of endorsement regarding Mr. Harrell.

Commissioner Doherty stated that Mr. Harrell had a wonderful understanding of the transportation cast of characters, especially in adjoining Counties. He observed that there was no need to spend time and money searching through additional candidates for MPO Director.

Council Member Prafke stated that she had the pleasure of dealing with Mr. Harrell since 2006 when she was a volunteer with Team Punta Gorda, and highly recommended him for the position.

Commissioner Constance noted that Mr. Harrell has done an excellent job with his grasp of concepts, people, citizens and FDOT. He noted that it would be a waste of money to conduct a search for a new MPO Director, when in the end, Mr. Harrell likely would be hired anyway.

Commissioner Herston agreed that the MPO Board could find no one more qualified for the MPO Director position.

Commissioner Doherty made a motion to approve Gary Harrell as MPO Director. Commissioner Herston seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

A discussion followed regarding Mr. Harrell's compensation package. Mr. Harrell was willing to receive the same salary that his predecessor had initially received (\$85,000 annually). He declined receiving the County medical benefits package, since he already obtains medical benefits through another health plan.

Commissioner Doherty made a motion to approve Gary Harrell's starting salary and the appropriate benefits package including the retirement package for the MPO Director. Council Member Prafke seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

MPO Director Gary Harrell thanked everyone for their support and stated that he looked forward to working very hard for the community.

6. Chairs' Reports:

A. MPO Board Chair's Report

Commissioner Deutsch stressed the need to make improvements to SR 31 and CR 74, especially due to increased vehicular activity in the area. He stated that a serious accident had occurred on SR 31 recently.

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

John Burrage reported on the October 16, 2017 CAC Meeting. He praised FDOT staff for their follow-up on many CAC Members' concerns. He also stated that CAC Members enjoyed being copied with the FDOT Weekly Road Watch Report. He noted that the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County representatives did not attend the meeting due to conflicts in their schedule, and the Committee was looking forward to the status of Burnt Store Road ROW acquisition.

He noted that CAC members were concerned about River Road being ranked #1 while Burnt Store Road was ranked #2 on a joint MPO TRIP list with the Sarasota/Manatee MPO (as compared with the joint MPO TRIP list with the Lee County MPO which ranked the Burnt Store Road project as #1). Discussion centered on how both projects were highly recommended for approval and of great importance to the community.

John Burrage noted that CAC Members recommended for MPO approval of Agenda Item #11, FY 2017/2018 – FY 2021/2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment.

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

Mitchell Austin reported on the October 16, 2017 TAC Meeting. He stated that TAC Members had recommended all items presented on the agenda. He noted that there are no new projects in FDOT's District One Draft Tentative Work Program for the new fifth year. Commissioner Constance observed that he had heard this is the case in other jurisdictions, and he asked for information on the topic from FDOT staff.

D. Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Chair's Report

K. Stephen Carter stated that the BPAC Members had discussed roundabouts at the October 12, 2017 Meeting. They expressed concern regarding roundabout standards, especially requiring enough visible signage and lighting. Members were also glad to see the Charlotte County Regional Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan moving forward.

7. Local Government Reports:

A. Charlotte County Airport Authority

Commissioner Herston provided a packet of materials regarding the following Airport Authority activities:

- Tower Operations Report, Hanger Information and List of Allegiant Cities Served
- Passenger Activity Report (reflecting the impact of Hurricane Irma)
- Fuel Purchases (also influenced by Hurricane Irma)
- CEO's Report – Development Update (including the progress of the 5-Year Airport Master Plan)

Commissioner Doherty asked about the difference in hanger classifications, and Commissioner Herston stated that each was dependent upon wingspan.

Commissioner Deutsch made remarks regarding the Air Show and installation of an Airport historical marker regarding flight training.

B. City of Punta Gorda

Council Member Nancy Prafke reported on a recent traffic issue that developed on US 41 NB and US 17 EB (Marion Avenue at the Post Office exit) involving right lane closures due to the painting of the Wyvern Hotel. City personnel did not oversee this closure which stretched over several days, yet they received many complaints from residents regarding it. The City would appreciate FDOT attention to these types of matters on state roadways in the future.

Council Member Prafke reported that the Gilchrist Park Phase One Project is in progress with a target completion date by year's end. During the City's Founders' Day Week in early December 2017, the City Manager will lead a Bicycle Tour that includes an expected launch occurring from the Park's gazebos. She appreciated FDOT's assistance with the Gilchrest Park project.

Council Member Prafke stated that the City had received FDOT's permission for the pedestrian bridge over the north branch of Alligator Creek, and there is now 90% design plan completion.

Council Member Prafke also noted that the City Council had reviewed changes proposed at the Nesbit Street/Marion Avenue intersection and found that no changes were warranted.

C. Charlotte County

Commissioner Doherty provided a Roadway Update document covering:

- Burnt Store Road Phase 2 (Notre Dame to North of Zemel Road)
- Edgewater Drive (Harbor to Midway)
- Midway Blvd (Sharpe Street to Kings Highway)
- Olean Blvd (US 41 to Easy Street)
- Piper Road (Henry Street to US 17), including coordination of utilities with the City of Punta Gorda
- Placida Road Multi-Use Path and Utilities Improvement (Rotonda Blvd W. to Boca Grande Causeway)

8. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

D'Juan Harris reported that the Context Classification & FDOT Design Manual Workshop (part of the Complete Streets program) had been rescheduled to November 6, 2017 from 1:00-5:00 pm at FDOT District One, 801 North Broadway Avenue, Bartow, Florida. Mr. Harris also stated that as a carryover from the previous MPO Board Meeting, the FHWA presentation on Interchange Justification Report (IJR) would be on the agenda at the Joint MPO Board Meeting with the Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board to be held on January 22, 2018 at 10:30 am, Venice Community Center, 326 Nokomis Avenue S, Venice, Florida.

D'Juan Harris addressed the following items under the FDOT Report:

A. FDOT District One Draft Tentative Work Program – FY 2018/2019 – FY 2022/2023

Discussion was moved to the end of the Agenda due to technical problems with the video presentation.

B. I-75 Possible New Interchange North of Kings Hwy Interchange

No discussion on this item. There will be a report to the Joint MPO Board Meeting with Sarasota/Manatee Board Meeting in January as reported earlier.

C. I-75 Southbound Exit at Kings Hwy-Update

The needed lane extension is almost completed thanks to the quick response of FDOT District One Secretary L.K. Nandam and other FDOT staff.

D. US 41 Northbound at Murdock Circle Left Turn Lanes Extension-Update

The project is now being let, and the completion date should be mid to late Spring 2018.

E. SR 31 at CR 74 Intersection-Safety Project Regarding Recent Fatalities

Hurricane Irma delayed the installation of the rumble strips on CR 74 by County employees. They will be installed soon. Plans for other improvements include rigid pavement reconstruction of the intersection with concrete (programmed for construction in FY 2020/2021), as well as the construction of a single lane roundabout with the possibility of expansion to two lanes (still under study). Complicating factors in the PD&E study include utilities and protected land near the project area. Commissioner Deutsch noted that the roadway edges on each side of the roadway are seriously deteriorated. He stated that there is a tight timeline to deal with this intersection given the area's population growth. He observed that this situation requires immediate attention.

L.K. Nandam stated that the CR 74 roadway edges described by Chair Deutsch will be reviewed by FDOT together with County staff to see if additional improvements are warranted as revealed in the PD&E and the design processes. This complete intersection project will be coordinated with FDOT's Concrete Pavement Office, so if the intersection starts as a single lane roundabout with the possibility of expanding to two lanes, FDOT staff will need to take future needs into account (such as the Babcock Ranch development). Partnership opportunities will be examined. Secretary Nandam noted that it is a good thing that this intersection qualifies for Concrete Pavement funding. He observed that the PD&E Study will pave the way for the land acquisition process where more Right-of-Way may be acquired for future expansion than is initially needed. He stated that he hoped to provide a timeline for the concept of the project development before the next MPO meeting. Commissioner Constance stated that it was wonderful that additional funding may be available for this intersection project, since a very big, safe and passable intersection is required because of Babcock Ranch and future economic development in the area.

F. US 17 at Nesbit St. Intersection Re-Design

D'Juan Harris stated that the question of allowing a right on red from SB Nesbit Street onto US 17 (Marion Avenue) had been vetted through FDOT's Traffic Office. Given the line of sight issues plus the proximity to the US Post Office, the FDOT response was negative for such a redesign. A discussion followed by Commissioner Constance in favor of the redesign and Council Member Prafke in opposition to such a change. Secretary Nandam stated that FDOT traffic concerns cannot support the re-design of an intersection allowing "right on red" traffic conflicts because of sight distance requirements, heavy opposing traffic movement and pedestrian movements. He offered that FDOT staff would do a final reexamination of the

intersection re-design proposal in cooperation with City staff and follow-up with the conclusions to the MPO Board.

G. I-75 Purple Heart County Signage

Mr. Harris reported that inquiry was made at the FDOT Headquarters level regarding placement of Purple Heart signage on I-75, and the response was negative. However, FDOT staff is moving forward to work with the Charlotte County on placement of such signs on Charlotte County's arterial roadways.

L.K. Nandam added that FDOT Southwest Area Office Director Steve Walls is leaving FDOT to work out of state. His replacement will be hired soon.

9. Consent Agenda:

- A. Approval of Minutes: August 7, 2017 MPO Board Meeting**
- B. MPO and Advisory Committees Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2018**
- C. 2017 Charlotte County Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) Evaluation**

Commissioner Constance asked to pull item 9B regarding the MPO and Advisory Committees Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2018.

Commissioner Doherty made a motion to approve the balance of the Consent Agenda (excluding Item 9B). Commissioner Constance seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Following discussion, Commissioner Constance made a motion to approve the MPO and Advisory Committees Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2018 including a tentative meeting change from August 6, 2018 to July 30, 2018. Members agreed to the change unanimously.

11. PUBLIC MEETING: FY 2017/2018 – FY 2021/2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment

Gary Harrell reported that the MPO staff received a request from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to amend the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's FY 2017/2018 – FY 2021/2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The first amendment is to change the limits of a current project:

FPN 4383781: SR 776 from *Willow Bend Drive to Collingsworth Blvd.* limits changed to SR 776 from *Flamingo Blvd. to Sam's Club Entrance.*

Additionally, two transit grants were awarded to Charlotte County that are required to be in the TIP with the specific award amounts:

FPN 4419791: Charlotte County Transit FTA 5307 Small Urban Non-Budgeted, Capital Grant, FTA Funding \$720,546; Local Funding \$720,546 for FY 2018

FPN 4419801: Charlotte County Transit FTA 5339, Small Urban Smart Starts, Capital Grant, FTA Funding \$757,083; Local Funding \$189,271 for FY 2018

Chair Deutsch opened the Public Meeting regarding the SR 776 TIP Amendment. No one wished to speak.

Commissioner Constance made a Motion to close the Public Hearing. Council Member Prafke seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Commissioner Constance made a Motion to amend the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2017/2018 – FY 2021/2022 changing the limits of FPN 4383781: SR 776 from Willow Bend Drive to Collingswood Blvd. to SR 776 from Flamingo Blvd. to Sam's Club Entrance. Commissioner Prafke seconded the Motion. The motion carried unanimously by a roll call vote.

Chair Deutsch opened the Public Meeting regarding the Transit FTA Transit Section 5307 and 5339 TIP Amendment. No one wished to speak.

Commissioner Constance made a Motion to close the Public Meeting. Council Member Prafke seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Commissioner Constance made a Motion to Amend the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2017/2018 – FY 2021/2022 adding:

FPN 4419791: Charlotte County Transit FTA 5307 Small Urban Non-Budgeted, Capital Grant, FTA Funding \$720,546; Local Funding \$720,546 for FY 2018

FPN 4419801: Charlotte County Transit FTA 5339, Small Urban SS, Capital Grant, FTA Funding \$757,083; Local Funding \$189,271 for FY 2018. Council Member Prafke seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by a roll call vote.

A. FDOT District One Draft Tentative Work Program – FY 2018/2019 – FY 2022/2023

Due to technical difficulties, the FDOT Work Program Presentation was not available at the meeting, and would be provided as soon as possible after the meeting.

FDOT staff returned to the subject of the Draft Tentative Work Program document (Agenda Item 8A), offering to answer any questions that MPO Board Members might have regarding the materials that had been distributed. Staff stated the comment period centered around a week long ePublic hearing from October 16-20. Additionally, FDOT staff was available for direct meetings for the public to take comments in person.

Council Member Prafke asked for clarification on the absence of funding in the new fifth year.

FDOT staff responded that because of cost increases to existing projects the District needed to stabilize projects already in the pipeline for the first four years. Funds available for new projects on a yearly basis is cyclical. FY 2022/2023, the new fifth year reflects a lower year, but there were projects added to the first four years in the Work Program including several resurfacing projects and the I-75 Rest Area. Commissioner Deutsch observed that funds have

been allocated but have we appropriated which is a reflection in the fifth year. Secretary Nandam noted that the five-year work program for FY 2018 – FY 2023 fluctuated up and down because of increase in cost estimates and changes in scopes, etc.

12. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

13. Staff Comments

Gary Harrell provided MPO Board Members with a summary of recent staff activities. One activity not included on the list was recent staff participation in the development of the Charlotte County Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan. At the next MPO Board Meeting, Mr. Harrell hoped to have more information on the progress of the Master Plan. He mentioned some of the innovations the consultant was using including a drone to get a layout of possible trail routes.

Mr. Harrell indicated that he would provide MPO Board Members with the FDOT Work Program Presentation video when available.

14. Members Comments

Commissioner Constance passed out National Association of Counties briefing documents addressing infrastructure nationwide. He noted that autonomous vehicles were one of the innovations. He had let the appropriate officials with the Columbus, Ohio proving track affiliated with Ohio State University know that the new Babcock Development would be a good beta project. Regarding the Work Program, he felt that State dollars spent on federal interstate highways projects such as rest areas should not be counted against the County when issuing funding, especially since they could be considered a negative incentive economically by discouraging traffic from exiting and spending funds locally. He thanked FDOT staff for doing the right thing and moving quickly to extend the SB I-75 Kings Hwy interchange deceleration lane. He noted that the rapid actions of Secretary Nandam and his staff had culminated in a savings for the taxpayers. He thanked Secretary Nandam for listening to the local request.

Commissioner Deutsch noted that Commissioner Constance currently heads up the Florida Association of Counties, which will bring attention to Charlotte County.

Council Member Prafke thanked FDOT staff (Mr. Harris) for working with the City of Punta Gorda on various transportation issues.

Commissioner Doherty noted that once the I-75 SB Kings Highway exit ramp work is completed, it will be a tremendous improvement. Regarding transportation funding, he observed that it was obvious that time is running out on financing that is strictly tied to gas tax revenues. Commissioner Constance noted that this fact was well known on the Federal side as well. Some sort of fee (perhaps per tire) to monetize the vehicle as well (including autonomous ones) was under consideration. Commissioner Doherty remarked that it would be helpful to know what the State is considering legislatively to address the funding shortfall

issues. Secretary Nandam reported that technology and funding will be an issue, and there is a question of what to do for a revenue source. He noted that FDOT is taking steps to be well prepared for technological changes. FDOT has partnered with Florida Polytechnic University, which has a testing ground for every type of scenario. He also described a grant for a truck platooning study and connected vehicle testing for traffic signals, with testing in Gainesville and Tallahassee. Seventy-five percent of the funding is obtained from state tourism dollars.

Chair Deutsch wished Mr. Harrell good luck and offered him his congratulations on being named MPO Director.

15. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:09 P.M. The next scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, December 18, 2017.

DRAFT