

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA**

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING, JULY 19, 2021

MURDOCK ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING

18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE, ROOM #119

PORT CHARLOTTE FL 33948

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Commissioner Joseph Tiseo,** Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Chair

**Commissioner Christopher G. Constance,** MD, Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Vice Chair

**Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch,** Charlotte County Commissioner

**Commissioner James Herston**, Charlotte County Airport Authority

**Mayor Lynne Matthews**, Punta Gorda City Council

**ADVISORY**

##### **FDOT District One Secretary L.K Nandam**

**STAFF PRESENT**

Gary Harrell, MPO Director

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Principal Planner

Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Services Coordinator

Wendy Scott, MPO Planner

Janette S. Knowlton, Charlotte County Attorney (MPO Legal Services)

Stacey Bjordahl, Charlotte County Assistant Attorney (MPO Legal Services)

**OTHERS PRESENT**

##### Commissioner Ken Doherty, Charlotte County Commissioner/LCB Chair

##### H. Wayne Gaither, FDOT Southwest Area Office

Jesten Abraham, FDOT

Bessie Reina, FDOT

Richard Oujevolk, FDOT

Vitor Suguri, FDOT

Zachary Tapp – FDOT (Atkins Global)

Babuji Ambikapathy, FDOT (VHB)

Lauren Brooks, FDOT (AECOM)

Charles Counsil, CAC Chair

Mitchell Austin, TAC Chair, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design

Pastor Fennis Huggins, Port Charlotte New Testament Church of God

Alan Skavroneck, LCB Vice Chair

Robert Fakhri, Charlotte County

Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works - Transportation

Patty Huff, Adventure Cycling Association

Betsy Calvert, *Sun*

Ned Baier, Volkert, Inc.

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIRTUALLY**

Kerry Irons, Adventure Cycling Association

Steven Andrews, FDOT

Wiatt Bowers, FDOT (Atkins Global)

Christopher Speese, FDOT (Atkins Global)

Brandon Bentley, FDOT (Bentley Architects and Engineers, Inc.)

Srinivas Kandala, FDOT (VHB)

Raja Pemmanaboina, FDOT (VHB)

Linda Sposito, City of Punta Gorda

Corey Chapman, CES

Cristian Lacera, CES

Andrea McDonough, Charlotte County Transit

Rich Wilson

​

​**1. Call to Order & Roll Call**

MPO Chair Tiseo called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. The roll call was taken, and all members were present.

**2. Invocation – Pastor Fennis Huggins**

Pastor Fennis Huggins gave the invocation.

##### **3.** **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**4. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda**

There were no additions and/or deletions to the agenda.

**5. Presentation of the “Peggy Walters” Citizen Mobility Award**

Gary Harrell described the local transportation contributions of Peggy Walters in years past. He also described the significant accomplishments of award recipient, Alan Skavroneck.

MPO Chair Tiseo presented the Peggy Walters Citizen Mobility Award to LCB Vice Chair Alan Skavroneck. Mr. Skavroneck expressed his thanks to all and recalled fond memories of Peggy Walters and her contributions.

**6. New MPO Director Appointment**

At the Special MPO Board Meeting on June 21, 2021, a Motion was approved to hire Thomas Burke as the potential MPO Director. Human Resources staff was authorized to negotiate a hiring package with Mr. Burke, and then, the issue would return to the MPO Board in another Special Meeting or at the next regular meeting to finalize approval.

Mr. Burke has withdrawn his name from consideration. The current MPO Director has agreed to remain on staff briefly as the hiring process starts over.

Commissioner Constance noted that the Director job is a pivotal position. He observed that a continued search was appropriate.

Janette Knowlton advised the MPO Board Members that all options were open to them regarding prior applicants. Mayor Matthews agreed with Commissioner Constance that future applicants needed to be a good fit for the organization who would last long term. Commissioner Tiseo noted that 10 revised interview questions had been circulated to members. Commissioner Deutsch agreed with other MPO Board Members that it made sense to readvertise the position.

***Commissioner Constance*** *made a motion to direct staff to readvertise the MPO Director position, prescreen applications for the position and forward qualified applicants for MPO Board Member consideration.* ***Commissioner Deutsch*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Janette Knowlton indicated that it would be beneficial for MPO Board Members to provide her with any recommended additional revisions to the interview questions that had been provided to them. Commissioner Constance, Commissioner Tiseo and Mayor Matthews provided their suggestions.

Commissioner Tiseo inquired about how the MPO Director’s salary was funded. Gary Harrell provided background on the MPO’s tentative federal and state funding sources which would allow for a salary figure of plus or minus $100,000. Commissioner Tiseo noted that a constituent had asked about the source of the MPO’s funding and whether local funding was involved. Gary Harrell noted that although the MPO received some administrative services from Charlotte County, the MPO was officially a separate organization that worked on behalf of all three local governments, which was key to obtaining a successful MPO.

**7. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments. A request was made by Commissioner Constance to reorder future agendas to always place the Public Comments on Agenda Items section just after the Additions and Deletions to the Agenda. MPO Chair Tiseo concurred with this request.

**8. Chairs’ Reports:**

1. **MPO Board Chair’s Report**

Commissioner Tiseo had nothing to report.

1. **Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) Chair’s Report**

CAC Chair Charles Counsil reviewed actions taken at the June 30, 2021 CAC Meeting. He noted that the CAC Meeting was well attended with a quorum physically present. He commented on CAC Member responses to each of the FDOT presentations in the MPO Board agenda packet.

1. **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Chair’s Report**

TAC Chair Mitchell Austin reviewed actions taken at the June 30, 2021 TAC Meeting. He noted that the meeting had been full of great FDOT presentations and lots of discussion as reflected in the TAC Minutes.

1. **Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Chair’s Report**

BPAC Chair K. Steven Carter was unable to attend the MPO Board Meeting, so Gary Harrell reviewed actions taken at the June 17, 2021 BPAC Meeting. Many of the briefings received by the BPAC would be discussed at the MPO Board Meeting. One was the Adventure Cycling efforts under the US Bicycle Route (USBR) System. The route stretches from Georgia to Miami, Florida including USBR’s Route 15 which travels through Charlotte County along US 17 from Arcadia enroute to points south on US 41 in Lee and Collier Counties. A great amount of input was received regarding safe routes located just adjacent to US 41. The BPAC supported the Route 15 concept.

**9. Local Government Reports:**

1. **Charlotte County Airport Authority**

Commissioner Herston, Charlotte County Airport Authority Chair, provided MPO Board Members with an extensive document, *Charlotte County Airport Authority MPO Committee Report*. He reviewed key items. He was pleased that the Punta Gorda Airport won the FDOT Commercial Project of the Year Award (as discussed on sheet 30). He noted that 52 destinations were now serviced by the Airport and two airlines would soon be using the facility with the addition of Sun Country Airlines.

1. **City of Punta Gorda**

Mayor Matthews noted that the City of Punta Gorda report was in the MPO Board agenda packet.

She also commented on (1) the new 4-way stop sign at the dangerous intersection of Taylor Road and West Charlotte Avenue in Punta Gorda, (3) the upcoming hearing on July 27, 2021 regarding Burnt Store Road speed limit changes, encouraging BCC support on the issue which was raised by various Homeowner Association members in the area, and (3) the plans for a traffic light at the entrance to Home Depot on Burnt Store Road. Commissioner Tiseo asked Robert Fakhri to clarify current speed limits on Burnt Store Road for the MPO Board Members, and Mr. Fakhri responded.

1. **Charlotte County**

Commissioner Constance gave the County report on the following items:

* Burnt Store Road Phase 2 (Notre Dame to North of Zemel Road)
* Olean Blvd Widening (from US 41 to Easy Street)
* Various Intersection Improvements including Veterans Blvd at Cochran Blvd
* Sandhill Boulevard Phase I
* Flamingo/Edgewater Widening

Commissioner Constance asked County Staff to provide estimated completion dates on their staff reports.

**10. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report**

Jesten Abraham led the discussion. He explained that FDOT receives the adopted Work Program every year in July following passage by the Legislature. FDOT expected to send the report out by Friday of the current week. He noted that there would be a condensed next cycle, given an early legislative convening next year. He also commented on Mobility Week to be held on October 29-November 5, 2021. A list of events would be found soon on the FDOT website. [Mobility Week 2021 (fdot.gov)](https://www.fdot.gov/projects/mobilityweek/mobilityweek2021.shtm)

1. **Update and discussion with FDOT on local issues**

**FDOT Led Discussion**

1. **US 41 Pilot Corridor Vision Plan (Bessie Reina-FDOT)**

Bessie Reina noted that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One

completed a Corridor Vision Plan for US 41 last year in Charlotte County, for a length of

approximately 28 miles from the Lee County line to the Sarasota County line. This plan

proposed several strategies to improve the current conditions. The plan assessed the land use

adjacent to the corridor, local municipal policies (e.g. Community Redevelopment Areas),

concurrent planning, and public input. The goal was to formulate a Corridor Vision Plan that

will be reflective of where the community would like to be and how FDOT, as a partner, can

better understand the area’s needs. Following the US 41 Pilot Corridor Vision Plan

presentation, MPO Board Members commented on the plan proposals. She reviewed the eight

segments that had been developed along the route and answered MPO Board Members

questions.

Discussion followed regarding signalization that would be needed on US 41 in the Sunseeker

Resort area. Secretary Nandam provided guidance on how the project would be funded.

Commissioner Herston stated that if the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment

Agency (CRA) remains in place, the signalization could be a potential project on which the

Committee could provide assistance to FDOT.

Regarding Segment 5 in Downtown Punta Gorda, Mayor Matthews noted that at the last City

Council meeting, discussion had occurred with FDOT regarding an alternate bike route to US

41 proposed by the City Staff for either Nesbit Street or Taylor St. She also described

extensive discussions with FDOT regarding creating a series of north bound left turn only

lanes to defeat the current left lane where traffic rapidly accelerates in order to quickly merge

just before the bridge (a.k.a. “the rocket lane”). She commented that nine openings exist

between Olympia Avenue and the US 41 northbound bridge. Discussions had also centered

on a proposed right turn only lane at the Wyvern Hotel on US 41 and the possibility that Retta

Esplanade could be closed by development at the Marketplace location, making a traffic light a

moot point.

Commissioner Constance asked about the Multi-Use Trail being on the railroad (east) side of

US 41 vs. the residential (east) side in Punta Gorda. Secretary Nandam noted that in the short

term residents need assistance with crossing the roadway safely and in the long term, a Multi-

Use Trail would be constructed on the west side

Bessie Reina concluded by providing a summary by phase and addressed next steps.

Commissioner Constance noted that on the aerial treatment of segment 4, where possible some landscaping could be added.

1. **NB Tamiami Trail (US 41) Vision Study (****Richard Oujevolk/Jesten Abraham-**

**FDOT/Mitchell Austin-City of Punta Gorda)**

Richard “OJ” Oujevolk covered the background on the project. The Northbound Tamiami Trail (US 41) Vision Study is a cooperative partnership between the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, and local governments to enhance an existing resurfacing project by focusing on safety for all corridor users and the Downtown Punta Gorda Community. The study concentrates on the northbound, three-lane, one-way section of Tamiami Trail (US 41) from William Street to the Peace River Bridge in Downtown Punta Gorda within Charlotte County, FL. This study combines multiple project phases including: Planning, Project Development and Environment (PD&E), and Design to accelerate the project schedule and maximize the value of the project. It serves as a subset of the US 41 Pilot Corridor Vision Plan discussed in Agenda Item 10.I.A.

FDOT has been conducting extensive outreach to obtain input on the top priorities and potential safety/operational improvements for the corridor. Outreach has included meetings with elected/appointed officials, weekly meetings with City of Punta Gorda staff, presentations to the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Committees and Board, stakeholder focus group meetings, and one-on-one stakeholder discussions. FDOT also developed a newsletter, website, and online questionnaire (achieving approximately 250 responses) to seek additional input. FDOT is in the process of developing draft concepts for the subject corridor based on feedback received to date from the elected/appointed officials, MPO committees, members of the public, and stakeholders. FDOT will share the draft concepts with key project stakeholders throughout the coming months. Interested parties are asked to periodically check the project website for the posting of new information. Information is available at [Northbound Tamiami Trail (US 41) Vision Study (swflroads.com)](http://swflroads.com/us41/tamiami-trail-vision-study/).

Discussion continued regarding a slide on Feasibility Analysis Results. Secretary Nandam stated that in terms of physics, the results reflect the pure dynamics of what happens to victims at various speeds. However, improved technologies may decrease the likelihood of injury, and additional traffic volume may increase it.

Richard Oujevolk introduced a revised slide with a new graph for Feasibility Analysis Results – Operations/Travel Speeds. Commissioner Deutsch asked if motorcycles were also considered, and Richard Oujevolk stated that although they were not a major issue, they were also a concern. Commissioner Constance inquired if crashes were occurring in the afternoon/evening on weekends given the number of hospitality establishments in that area where the drinking of alcohol is an issue.

Discussion next focused on how best to accommodate bicyclists in the US 41 Corridor. Commissioner Constance noted that if bicyclists could not be accommodated due to the limitations of an 8 foot sidewalk on US 41, why they could not be shifted to adjoining roads permanently. He asked Mayor Matthews if the City could adjust its Comprehensive Plan to address this issue. Mayor Matthews stated that the City is working with FDOT to use Nesbit Street as a “share on road” with decals. The Punta Gorda Councilmembers had unanimously agreed that it was beneficial to route bicyclists off of US 41 in the Northbound Downtown Corridor.

Richard Oujevolk reviewed the next steps for the project and indicated that he would be working together with the Design Team constantly.

1. **US 41 Designated Intersections – (Harbor View Rd/Edgewater Dr.; Rio Villa Drive (Jesten Abraham/Wayne Gaither-FDOT)**

Jesten Abraham reported that there was no update at this time, but a presentation was planned for the next MPO Board Meeting. All information was available at

[US 41/SR 45 (Tamiami Trail) Payne Street to Rio Villa Drive, Charlotte County (swflroads.com)](http://www.swflroads.com/us41/paynetoriovilla/) . Project Manager Zachary Tapp could be reached at Zachary.Tapp@dot.state.fl.us .

1. **SR 776 Corridor Study Presentation (Vitor Suguri-FDOT)**

Babuji Ambikapathy discussed how the SR 776 Corridor Study was initiated by FDOT District One to address congestion, mobility, and safety issues along SR 776 in Charlotte County and develop recommendations for improvement strategies to benefit the users of the corridor. The study limits are from the Sarasota County Line on the west end to US 41 on the east end. Commissioner Tiseo asked if the study was expanding to Loveland Blvd. Vitor Suguri stated that this matter was being reviewed internally to better understand the County’s goals. An answer would be available by week’s end. It was noted that Veterans Blvd was both a County road and an accessed managed roadway. The objective of this study is to conduct safety, operational, and multimodal analysis and develop and prioritize intersection-specific improvements for the short-, mid-, and long-term periods. It should be noted that this study did not evaluate the widening of SR 776.

To achieve this goal, the Study Team examined several key elements including existing and future traffic volumes, field observations, historical crash data, operational analysis results, stakeholder input, programmed and planned improvements, and FDOT/FHWA guidelines.

The recommended study improvements included an array of traditional and innovative options ranging from the addition of turn lanes, innovative intersection types, operational, safety, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), multimodal, lighting, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), and planned improvements for both the auto and non-auto modes (pedestrians, bicycles, and transit).

The Corridor Study started in November 2020 and is anticipated to be completed in July 2021. The Study Team recently presented the draft recommendations to the MPO TAC and CAC on June 30, 2021. After the presentation to the MPO Board, the Study Team will finalize the report and coordinate with FDOT and the MPO on amending the TIP and LRTP to incorporate the study findings.

Commissioner Deutsch discussed concerns at the Harley Davidson dealership and adjoining Twisted Fork Restaurant/West Villages Development under discussion on SR 776 at Torrence Street. He thanked Secretary Nandam and staff for meeting with the SR 776 businesses and trying to address their concerns. He asserted that the most critical area is from Torrence Street to Flamingo Blvd. He noted that two thousand new homes were being established there, which would result in a constant traffic situation that must be addressed. Commissioner Deutsch also raised concern about Centennial Blvd and suggested that perhaps a roundabout will be needed. Secretary Nandam stated that in the future, all developments such Centennial Park will need more conversations between FDOT and the County.

Commissioner Constance appreciated the presentation and hard work. He agreed with the rankings. MPO Chair Tiseo questioned Babuji Ambikapathy (slide 21) about exclusive turn lanes at the Sports Park entrance and the potential use of a double hashed left turn lane. Babuji Ambikapathy responded that data obtained during the pandemic was not good because of limited attendance at the Sports Park. He agreed to revisit Commissioner Tiseo’s request.

MPO Chair Tiseo noted that elements of items D, E and F were covered in this discussion. Gary Harrell stated that the presentations would not be brought back to the MPO Board, but the items E and F would still be kept on the agenda.

1. **SR 776 at Flamingo Blvd. (Jesten Abraham/Wayne Gaither -FDOT/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)**

Jesten Abraham reported that construction was programmed for FY 24/25.

1. **SR 776 at Charlotte Sports Park-Intersection Improvements (Jesten Abraham/Wayne Gaither-FDOT/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)**

Jesten Abraham reported that design was programmed for FY 24/25.

Vitor Suguri was asked about the next action for the MPO Board regarding the SR 776 Corridor Study. Following discussion, Secretary Nandam recommended that the SR 776 Corridor Study be updated based upon the comments received at the current meeting. It would be put on the MPO Board agenda once available. Regarding FDOT interaction with developers, Secretary Nandam stated that FDOT gets involved only regarding access and not with the approval process for developers.He stated that developers can’t be asked to backtrack, and these matters should be done at the time of zoning (as on roadway improvement projects). Commissioner Deutsch observed that another classic example of this situation was the development on SR 776 at Biscayne Drive.

1. **SR 31 Roundabout (Jesten Abraham/Wayne Gaither -FDOT/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)**

Zachary Tapp, the design project manager, presented the SR 31 at CR 74 Roundabout Project Update. FDOT District One, is designing improvements to the intersection of SR 31 (Babcock Ranch Road) and CR 74 (Bermont Road) in Charlotte County. The proposed improvement consists of designing a single-lane roundabout to improve overall safety and increase intersection capacity. The limits of proposed improvements extend approximately 1,700 feet in both the northbound and southbound direction along SR 31 and approximately 1,000 feet in both the westbound and eastbound direction along CR 74. A roundabout Feasibility Study was completed in 2013 and crash data was reviewed from 2013 to 2019. During this time, 24 angle crashes occurred relating to CR 74 vehicles turning onto or crossing SR 31 which included four fatalities. The project is contained in the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization’s 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan. The design project is currently at Phase II (approximately 60%) plans.

Commissioner Herston inquired regarding the project’s storm water management. He questioned if the size was primarily dictated by fill or because of storm water requirements. Zachary Tapp agreed to return with the requested information.

1. **I-75 Possible New Interchange North of Kings Hwy Interchange (****Jesten Abraham/Wayne Gaither-FDOT)**

Jesten Abraham had no new update for this project. Information is available here: [I-75 Central Corridor | Southwest Connect (swflinterstates.com)](https://www.swflinterstates.com/i75-central-corridor/)

**Joint Local and FDOT Discussion**

**A. Harbor View Road Combined Funding Study (Wayne Gaither-FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)**

Jesten Abraham had no new update for this project. He noted that FDOT is continuing to work with the County.

Commissioner Constance stated that these Agenda items under the FDOT Report are placeholders for funding purposes. FDOT realizes the significance of these projects. He described the importance of “shovel ready” projects that could utilize federal funding if available. He mentioned a potential $20 Million earmark that might become available for this projecct.

Commissioner Herston inquired if there had been any discussion on reducing shoulders or the median along Harbor View Road. Jesten Abraham stated that he would investigate this issue and report back.

 **11. Consent Agenda:**

1. **Approval of Minutes: May 17, 2021 MPO Board Meeting**
2. **Approval of Minutes: June 21, 2021 MPO Board Special Meeting**

##### **Citizens’ Advisory Committee and Local Coordinating Board Reappointments**

##### **FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendment**

***Commissioner Constance*** *made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.* ***Commissioner Deutsch*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**12. PUBLIC MEETING: FY2021/2022 – FY 2025/2026 Transportation Improvement (TIP) Roll-Forward Amendment**

Gary Harrell noted that the MPO has received a request from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) (Attachment 1) to amend the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO’s FY 2021/2022 - FY 2025/2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to “roll-forward” certain project phases into the first year of the new FY 2021/2022 - FY 2025/2026 TIP.

The State’s Fiscal Year ends on June 30, and the Federal Fiscal Year ends on September 30. Most projects scheduled in the current year of the TIP commence work in the State’s current fiscal year. However, it is sometimes necessary to defer the work beyond the current year of the approved TIP. For example, projects that did not get authorized by June 30 require a TIP Amendment to “roll-forward” these project phases into the first year of the new FY 2021/2022 - FY 2025/2026 TIP.

A Public Meeting is required to solicit public input. The MPO has advertised twice within the past 30 days that a Public Meeting will be held at the July 19, 2021 MPO Board Meeting. Following the Public Meeting, a roll call vote of the MPO Board is required to adopt the TIP amendment.

The proposed Roll-Forward amendment was not available at the time of the TAC/CAC meetings, however, the MPO Staff provided the report to the Committee members when it became available for their comments and input. No comments were received.

MPO Chair Tiseo opened the Public Meeting. No one wished to comment.

***Commissioner Constance*** *made a motion to close the Public Meeting.* ***Commissioner Deutsch*** *seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.*

***Commissioner Constance*** *made a motion to amend the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO’s*

 *TIP for FY 2021/2022 – FY 2025/2026 adding: Roll-forward projects from FY 2021/2022*

*which could not be obligated during the State’s Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021.*

***Mayor Matthews*** *seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**13. US 41 Bicycle Route Proposed Alignment - Presentation**

Gary Harrell introduced Patty Huff from the Adventure Cycling Association; a nonprofit member organization focused on travel by bicycle which had done a presentation for the BPAC. She gave a history and background of the US Bicycle Route (USBR) System and presented a draft proposed alignment of USBR 15 in Charlotte, Lee, and Collier Counties for public input. The existing segment of USBR 15 is 14 miles long from the Georgia State Line to Madison, Florida (Madison County). There is a proposal to extend the Route from Madison to Miami for an additional 496 miles via Charlotte, Lee, and Collier Counties. The proposed route map and proposed road-by-road direction in Charlotte, Lee and Collier was shown in the presentation.

At the February 25, 2021 Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Meeting, the

committee members provided feedback on the proposed route in Charlotte County including a

limited use of US 41 as a proposed Route and eliminating Taylor Road. Committee members

also suggested using existing City of Punta Gorda bike and trail facilities where possible and

consider established routes along “quieter” roadways for improved rider safety and aesthetic

value.

At the June 17, 2021 BPAC Meeting, a revised presentation of the proposed route was presented for their comments. The presentation now includes these recommendations from the BPAC members.

Patty Huff emphasized that jurisdictional support was needed, and the routes can be changed twice a year given current conditions. Mayor Matthews commented on the issue of how to connect Airport Road and Aqui Esta Drive in Punta Gorda. She did not recommend these roadways for cycling, stating that it was very tight in that area that is sometimes misidentified as Cooper Street. Gary Harrell noted that some of the established bike routes had been identified, and they are for experienced cyclists. Commissioner Constance wanted to reinforce that the routes should avoid the downtown. He suggested a route that went from US 17 all the way down Piper Road to Jones Loop. Patty Huff stated that she was present to get the MPO Board’s feedback. The progression had been from BPAC to MPO, and both local agencies (City of Punta Gorda/Charlotte County) would have the final say.

# *Commissioner Deutsch made a Motion to endorse the concept of the US Bike Route 15 in*

# *Charlotte County with future route to be determined by the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte*

# *County. Mayor Matthews seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.*

**14. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**15. Staff Comments**

Gary Harrell said that the meeting’s FDOT briefings were important to the MPO. They assisted in coalescing the great thoughts and were excellent. He expressed his thanks to FDOT. He noted that as indicators of how involved these presentations can become, changes had been made after packet distribution. It was a dynamic situation that could become embarrassing at times, but ultimately, he was happy that the presentations were improved.

*At this point, Commissioner Constance exited the meeting.*

**16. Member Comments**

Commissioner Deutsch thanked Gary Harrell and his spouse for being flexible about Gary’s retirement departure date. Commissioner Deutsch asked Secretary Nandam for consideration of adjusting the traffic signal at US 41 and West Tarpon Blvd intersection. A request was also made to review the intersection of Flamingo Blvd and SR 776 where traffic stacks due to a lengthy signal timing.

Commissioner Deutsch gave a presentation on Cheney Road/Way Issues (June 2021) regarding parking problem on Cheney Way across from the Cheney Brothers facility. This issue was discussed by Airport Authority Executive Director Jim Parrish at the last Charlotte County Airport Authority Meeting. There were a number of issues at this location arising from truck queuing, including the impact on potential future development, the need for the Airport Authority to prepare the ground on three acres in the area, the installation of no parking signs along the road and a request that FDOT consider reopening the former rest stop area to truck traffic during the nighttime hours of 6 pm to 6 am. Particularly concerning was that the problem had negatively affected the CCAA effort to lease property in the area to another important distribution center.

Secretary Nandam stated that this truck queuing issue was typical for warehouse areas. He noted that the same situation was occurring in Lakeland, Florida. Often companies were required to build a staging area in front of their facilities during the approval process. He had spoken with County Administration regarding the matter and identified FDOT Freight Coordinator Keith Robbins as the FDOT designated contact person who has already reaching out to all stakeholders. As far as the old rest stop area where maintenance is an issue, FDOT had already leased the area to the Sheriff’s Department and the Tax Collector for their purposes. Once the need was defined with all parties, the topic would be addressed. Commissioner Tiseo wondered if perhaps Cheney Brothers could look at their security protocols, utilize their on-site roads and fencing for stacking, and consider reconfiguring their area. Commissioner Deutsch stated that he was starting the discussion in his role as the County’s Airport Liaison. Commissioner Tiseo referenced a future meeting’s Plan Use Agenda for discussion of a nearby private freight area at US 17 and Piper Road. Commissioner Deutsch stated that he had no answers and was just sharing the issue to brainstorm it.

Commissioner Herston commented on the hiring of the new MPO Director. He stated that he likes to hire from within, noting how MPO Director Gary Harrell and FDOT Secretary Nandam had worked their ways up from the bottom.

Mayor Matthews noted that FDOT had not been prepared to comment on Agenda Item #10. I. C that involved the potential closure of the Rio Villa intersection at US 41 and a potential unintended consequence from that action. She observed that if the Rio Villa access was closed, the County would need to repair Baynard Drive to include the ability to exit at the light on Aqui Esta Drive. She noted that there was also an RV storage unit there. She noted that given the size of some RVs drivers cannot easily use narrow Baynard Drive, which can create a very serious safety hazard.

Mayor Matthews thanked FDOT for consideration to doubling the length of the left turn lane on US 41 at Aqui Esta Drive which would greatly improve safety.

MPO Chair Tiseo thanked Gary Harrell for accommodating the MPO Board during the extended MPO Director selection process.

**17. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:41 P.M. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, October 18, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. at the Murdock Administration Center, 18500 Murdock Circle, Building B, Room #119, Port Charlotte, Florida.