

CHARLOTTE COUNTY - PUNTA GORDA

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE APRIL 28, 2021

**TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) MEETING**

**MEMBERS ATTENDING (Virtual and In-person)**

Linda Sposito, City of Punta Gorda Public Works

Ron Ridenour, Charlotte County Airport Authority

Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works

Don Scott, Lee MPO

Rick Kolar Alternate, Charlotte County Transit Division

Noah Fossick, City of North Port Planning and Zoning

Joshua Hudson, Charlotte County Economic Development

Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development

Tony Conte, Charlotte County Public Schools

Patrick Fuller, Charlotte County Emergency Management

Mitchell Austin, City of Punta Gorda

Robert Fakhri, Charlotte County Public Works

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Sgt. Tom Scott, Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office

Vacant, Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC)

Kathy Heitman, DeSoto County

**OTHERS ATTENDING (Virtual and In-person)**

Gary Harrell, MPO Director

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Staff

Sai “Sammy” Edara, MPO Staff

Wendy Scott, MPO Staff

Fabiana Solano, City of Punta Gorda

Matt Dockins, FDOT (RK&K)

Laura Brooks, FDOT

Heidi Maddox, CC Fiscal

Wally Blain, Tindal Oliver

Andrea McDonough, Charlotte County Transit Division

Patrick Bateman, FDOT

April Santos, Charlotte County Public Works

**1. Call to Order & Roll Call**

Mitchell Austin, TAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 A.M. The roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

**2. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

None

**3. Chair’s Report**

Mitchell Austin reported he got infected with COVID and was recovering for almost four weeks. He is nearly fully recovered but is still on the recovery journey. He mentioned this was his worst sickness he has ever experienced in his lifetime. He suggested everyone take the vaccine.

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

Gary Harrell introduced the FDOT staff that briefed the Committee on the Northbound US 41 Vision Study for the downtown Punta Gorda corridor. On behalf of FDOT, Consultants Matt Dockins and Lauren Brooks presented a preview of a survey developed to receive comments on the upcoming project including potential enhancements. They would be providing MPO staff with a link to the survey for distribution and requested that TAC Members distribute it widely to all of their contacts. Both the survey and project website would go live on April 30, 2021.

**5. Consent Agenda**

Mitchell Austin noted that item # 5-C had been added to the consent agenda. It was a UPWP Amendment regarding a funding increase of $747 to the MPO’s Transportation Disadvantaged Planning Grant (a companion item to #5-B). He recommended approval of all items as a package.

1. **Approval of Minutes: March 3, 2021 Meeting**
2. **MPO Board Resolution #2021-06 Authorizing FY 2021/2022 Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Planning Grant Agreement**

MPO Board Resolution #2021-06 authorizes the execution of an application for the annual planning grant that is received from the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged to help cover staff salaries for the provision of support services to the Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (LCB). It is forecast to be $23,842 for FY 2021/2022.

1. **UPWP Task 8 – Amendment for FY 2021/2022 Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Planning Grant Agreement**

The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged staff in an e-mail dated April 21, 2021 provided an anticipated funding amount of $23,842 for the FY 2021/2022 TD Planning Grant, which is an increase of $747 from prior year funding. Therefore, UPWP pages associated with Task 8 (Transit and Transportation Disadvantaged) require revision.

***Tony Conte*** *made a motion to approve the consent agenda.* ***Rick Kolar*** *seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.*

**6. FY 2021/2022 – FY 2025/2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Gary Harrell discussed the TIP process, including the ever-changing nature of it. Federal and State legislation require MPOs to adopt a 5-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP outlines federal and state capital improvements for transportation and is a staged, multiyear, intermodal program of transportation projects that is consistent with the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The Technical and Citizens’ Advisory Committees formally review the development of the TIP.

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Board is scheduled to review and adopt the TIP at the May 17, 2021 MPO Board Meeting. The Final Draft Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO TIP for FY 2021/2022 – FY 2025/2026 is Attachment 1 in the TAC Meeting packet. The MPO Board adopted the Project Priorities listed in this TIP on May 18, 2020.

The TIP requires an endorsement, stating the date of official MPO Board approval and verifying the TIP’s consistency with federal and state requirements. An MPO Board Authorizing Resolution approving the TIP satisfied the endorsement and was included in the document.

The Sarasota/Manatee MPO and the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO entered into an interlocal agreement formalizing and specifying regional planning projects and timeframes to produce those projects. The Agreement calls for each MPO to identify regional priorities and include said projects in the respective MPO’s TIP. Those priorities that were adopted last year are included, in accordance with the Interlocal Agreement in the TIP.

***Linda Sposito*** *made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Transportation Improvement Program FY 2021/2022 – FY 2025/2026, and Authorizing Resolution # 2021-05.* *The Motion should allow for transmittal of the document to FDOT, including the ability for staff to make minor changes and adjustments based on comments and input received.* ***Tony Conte*** *seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.*

**7.** **2021 Project Priorities**

Laks Gurram noted that the MPO Board was required to annually develop a List of Project Priorities (LOPP) as part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process and to submit the list to FDOT. The MPO received project candidates from the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County which include Highway, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Congestion Management/Transportation System Management (CM/TSM) projects, and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) projects. The proposed 2021 Project Priorities list was attached. He then gave a summary of the LOPP:

**Highway Projects**

The current number one MPO Highway project priority is the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan. These funds will supplement MPO Planning funds to cover the cost for the LRTP update. The number two project priority, Harbor View Road is divided into two segments. Design (PE) is underway for the entire segment from Melbourne St to I-75. The Right-of -Way (ROW) phase for Segment One (Melbourne St to Date St) is funded in FY 2022/2023 and Construction (CST) in FY 2025/2026. Segment Two (Date St to I-75) ROW and CST are unfunded. The number four MPO Highway project, Edgewater Dr. from Midway Blvd. to Collingswood Blvd. is a Joint TRIP priority project with the Sarasota/Manatee MPO. Charlotte County is requesting $2.2 million towards PE. The number five project priority is the SR 776 Corridor study that is scheduled to be finalized in July 2021. Based on the results of the study, improvements on SR 776 will be prioritized going forward. The number six project priority North Jones Loop Road (Burnt Store Road to Piper Road) currently is undergoing a Feasibility Study prior to the Project Development & Environmental (PD&E) Study. The next phase requested is Design.

**Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Projects**

TAP projects are generally listed in priority order alternately between the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County. Charlotte County’s number one Project Priority, a Multi-use Trail on Taylor Road from U.S. 41 (south) to Airport Road, is divided into two segments. Segment One from N. Jones Loop to Airport Rd is programmed for Design (PE) in FY 2023/2024. The next phase requested is for ROW if needed, or Construction if ROW is not required based on the Design. The second segment of the Taylor Road Multi-use Trail listed as the number two TAP Project Priority, is from US 41 (South) to Jones Loop Road. The next phase requested is Design. The number three TAP project defines a long-term goal of Multi-use Trails for the entire length of the urbanized section of US 41. It is broken into segments for affordability. TAP Project Priority (3A), Multi-use Trail on US 41 east side from Melbourne St to Kings Hwy is programmed for a Planning Study in 2025/2026. The next phase requested is Design after the Planning Study is complete. The remaining US 41 Multi-use Trails/sidewalks 3B to 3F are unfunded and the next phases requested are Design and Construction. Priorities 4-11 are a series of Complete Streets treatments, wayfinding signage and lighting requests that are all unfunded. The next phases requested is Design/Construction. Priority 11 is a US 41 pedestrian bridge over the south branch of Alligator Creek that is funded for Design in FY 2024/2025. The next phase requested is for Construction.

**Congestion Management/ Transportation System Management (CM/TSM)**

The previous Number One Congestion Management project was the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) County-wide Master Plan Communications System. The project has been funded and removed from the Project Priorities List. The recommendations from this project will be addressed based on the outcome of the study. The new number one project priority, intersection improvements for SR 776 at the Charlotte Sports Park, is programmed for Design in FY 2024/2025. The next phase requested is Construction. The number two intersection improvement, SR 776 @ Gulf Stream Blvd, is not funded. The next phase requested is for Design and Construction. Priorities 3-8 are intersection improvements that are unfunded and requested to be programmed for Design/ Construction. The projects are: SR 776 at Biscayne

Blvd. (Priority 3); Cornelius Blvd. (Priority 4); and Jacobs St (Priority 7); and US 41 at Easy St. (Priority 5); Forrest Nelson Blvd/Crestview Circle (Priority 6); and US 41 at Carousel Plaza (Priority 8).

Robert Fakhri requested that a project be added to the Project Priorities to implement the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Master Plan study which is a project that has recently kicked off. It is a half million-dollar study to coordinate technology. The amount required for the new priority would be determined by the results of the ITS Master Plan study.

***Ravi K.*** *made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the identified 2021 Project Priorities for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program Cycle.* ***Rick Kolar*** *seconded the Motion, and it was passed unanimously.*

**8. 2021 Regional Transportation Project Priorities**

Gary Harrell and Laks Gurram reviewed the 2021 Regional Transportation Project Priorities:

Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP)

To be eligible for TRIP funding, regional transportation areas must be established by interlocal agreements; a network of regional roadways must be identified; and regionally significant projects must be prioritized by the regional entity. Those steps have been completed. Per the Interlocal Agreements with Sarasota/Manatee MPO and Lee County MPO, procedures exist for prioritizing TRIP projects annually, it requires that projects alternate by County in an equitable fashion. The same listing order is maintained until projects receive funding or are removed by the respective MPO. The MPO Staffs have established a Joint TRIP Project List for Charlotte County-Punta Gorda - Sarasota/Manatee MPOs and Lee County and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPOs. These were provided for TAC Member review.

Regional Transportation Alternatives Program (RTAP)

FDOT has provided guidance through the “FDOT-District One Regional Transportation Alternatives Program (RTAP) Policies,” in an effort to fund regionally significant trails. Each “Regional Entity” (i.e., the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO and the Sarasota/Manatee MPO) must submit ranked RTAP lists of priorities for funding consideration. The “regional” (RTAP) list must be approved by the “Regional Entity,” pursuant to regional interlocal agreements.

The MPO staffs of Sarasota/Manatee and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPOs made a procedural recommendation for their respective MPO Boards to approve an RTAP list that had been coordinated between staffs. The MPO Directors have worked together and have established a Joint Regional RTAP Project List for Charlotte County-Punta Gorda - Sarasota/Manatee MPOs.

***Ravi K.*** *made a Motion to recommend MPO Board approve the 2021 Joint Charlotte County-Punta Gorda - Sarasota/Manatee MPOs and the Joint Charlotte County-Punta Gorda - Lee County MPOs Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) Project Priority Lists; and the 2021 Joint Charlotte County-Punta Gorda - Sarasota/Manatee MPOs Regional Transportation Alternatives Program (RTAP) Project Priority List.* ***Linda Sposito*** *seconded the Motion, and it was passed unanimously.*

**9.** **North Jones Loop Road Feasibility Study – Update**

Patrick Bateman gave an update on the North Jones Loop Road (CR 768) Feasibility Study from Burnt Store Road (CR 765) to Piper Road. The project manager is Richard Oujevolk. The North Jones Loop Road project is the MPO’s number six item under the Highway project priorities. The purpose of the Planning Feasibility Study is to evaluate the potential widening of North Jones Loop Road up to six lanes. The project will include mobility, safety, intersection, emergency response, and evacuation improvements. The study will investigate improvements with the goal to strengthen the regional transportation network and ensure local mobility for commuters and freight truckers, evacuation and emergency responders, pedestrians and bicyclists. Gary Harrell noted that this was a busy and rapidly developing area where future need was projected.

**10. SR 31 Babcock Project Development & Environment Study - Update**

Patrick Bateman, FDOT Project Manager, gave a presentation on the State Road 31 Project Development and Environment Study in Lee and Charlotte Counties near Babcock Ranch. This study was being performed by Inwood Consulting, and their project manager, David Dangel. This study would evaluate capacity improvements for SR 31 from SR 78 (Bayshore Road) in Lee County to Cook Brown Road in Charlotte County. FDOT recently had held its Public Hearing for this study.

The SR 31 corridor serves as the primary north-south connection through a predominantly rural area of unincorporated Lee and Charlotte Counties. The Florida Department of Transportation is assisting in the development of a PD&E study to evaluate the potential widening of SR 31 from North River Road (County Road 78) to Cook Brown Road. The total project length is approximately 5.3 miles.

**11. Public Comments**

None.

**12. Staff Comments**

Sai “Sammy” Edara announced that she was resigning from the MPO staff in May, since she was leaving the area to marry and then, relocate to Ohio.

Gary Harrell announced that Gene Klara of the MPO staff was retiring on May 11, 2021.

Mr. Harrell stated that he would be retiring as well with a target date of July. An MPO planner vacancy is currently being advertised on both the MPO and County websites.

**13. Member Comments**

None.

**14.Adjournment (NEXT TAC MEETING – June 30, 2021)**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:31 a.m. The next regularly scheduled TAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 30, 2021 at the Eastport

Environmental Campus, 25550 Harbor View Road, Port Charlotte in Training Room B beginning at 9:30 a.m.