

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA**

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING

MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2022

CHARLOTTE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER

18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE, ROOM #119

PORT CHARLOTTE FL 33948

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch,** Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Vice Chair

**Commissioner Joseph Tiseo,** Charlotte County Commissioner

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

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

**ADVISORY**

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

**STAFF PRESENT**

D’Juan Harris, MPO Director

Bekie Leslie, Administrative Services Coordinator

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Principal Planner

Betty-Ann Sherer, MPO Planner

Wendy Scott, MPO Planner

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

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Tanya Merkle, FDOT

Charlie Counsil, CAC Chair

Mitchell Austin, City of Punta Gorda, TAC Chair

Beaumont Hayner, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design

Pauline Klein, BPAC Chair

John Elias, Charlotte County Public Works

Robert Fakhri, Charlotte County Public Works

Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works

Daniel Sutphin, *Sun-Herald*

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE VIRTUALLY**

Linda Sposito, City of Punta Gorda

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

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

**2. Invocation – Pastor Jim Chandler**

Pastor Jim Chandler was not available to give the invocation, so MPO Chair Constance gave it.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

D’Juan Harris noted that there was recent information as part of Agenda Item #13 in light of Friday’s Lee County MPO Board Meeting. The agenda item handout was distributed to MPO Board Members and posted to the MPO website.

***Commissioner Deutsch*** *made a motion to approve the addition of Agenda Item #13 recent information to the agenda.* ***Commissioner Tiseo*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**5. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments on agenda items.

**6. Chairs’ Reports**

1. [**MPO Board Chair’s Report**](https://ccmpo.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/7A-MPO-Board-CHAIRS-REPORT.doc)

Chair Constance commented on two issues:

* The issue of Veterans Blvd. speed limits was discussed, since the three County Commissioners present where concerned about increased traffic and speeding on the roadway. They wished to know if and how the speed limit had changed over time. Commissioner Tiseo noted that the portion of Veterans Blvd segment from Cochran Blvd to Loveland Blvd is averaging an accident every 4.1 days. Commissioner Herston had been present as a young engineer at the roadway’s inception and had coversheets indicating that the western portion of the roadway had a 50-mph speed limit while the eastern portion had a 45-mph speed limit. Commissioner Tiseo stated that this was evidence that the roadway was never designed for a 55-mph speed. He noted that these problems need to be addressed in Corridor Study.
* Commissioner Constance had spoken with Collier County Commissioner Bill McDaniel regarding the Agenda Item #13 Regional Coordination Proposal and had recommended that Commissioner McDaniel reach out to Commissioner Tiseo regarding the proposal. Commissioner Tiseo stated that he had not been contacted by Commissioner McDaniel. Commissioner Tiseo had spoken with Charlotte County Attorney (MPO Legal Services) Janette Knowlton who had indicated some concerns regarding the proposal including Sunshine Law implications. Commissioner Deutsch also expressed reservations about the real purpose or benefit of such a meeting, especially considering MPO Board Members’ many other commitments.

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

CAC Chair Charlie Counsil discussed topics reviewed at the March 9, 2022, CAC Meeting where a quorum had been present. Recognition was made of the passing of Jim Brown, longtime CAC member and past Chair. Jim Brown was a longtime, vocal advocate for Burnt Store Road safety improvements. It was appropriate that he saw the conclusion of the project. Charlie Counsil observed that the CAC had lost a good member.

The CAC had discussed gridlock on Cochran Blvd between Peachland Blvd and Veterans Boulevard. County staff had advised that the ongoing Veterans Blvd Corridor Study must be completed before definitive action could be taken in that vicinity. The CAC had unanimously approved the request for UPWP forwarding.

Charlie Counsil announced two CAC vacancies, one in South County and one in West County. He noted that current CAC members attend faithfully in person or online. He gave kudos on streamlined CAC meetings that were short but effective.

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

TAC Chair Mitchell Austin described the TAC meeting as being productive as reflected in the agenda items.

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

BPAC Chair Pauline Klein gave a brief synopsis of topics at the February 24, 2022, BPAC Meeting, including Punta Gorda as a more bike friendly community, participation of a Charlotte County Sheriff’s Deputy at the start of each meeting, various agenda items requiring action, a Charlotte County bicycle and pedestrian facilities map review, a Charlotte County staff report, and a presentation by FDOT District One Bicycle-Pedestrian Coordinator Deborah Chesna.

**7. Local Government Reports**

1. **Charlotte County Airport Authority**

Commissioner Herston, Charlotte County Airport Authority Vice Chair, provided MPO Board Members with a detailed packet of information on Airport activities. He reviewed key items.

Commissioner Constance noted that it appeared from the data that the Airport was working on its best year ever. Commissioner Herston commented that 53 cities were now served from the Airport (some seasonal). All flights were on Allegiant Airlines except for on Sun Country route. A highlight of the capital improvement summary report was the new general aviation facility on Challenger Blvd with hangars and the future relocation of the Airport restaurant.

Commissioner Tiseo inquired about any issues with aviation fuel sales in light of world events. Commissioner Herston stated that there was plenty of fuel available, but he did not know about impacts on pricing. Commissioner Constance sought verification that Runway 422 was currently shut, and Runway 1533 was active. Commissioner Herston verified that he was correct, and work would be completed on Runway 422 at the end of the year, conceding that there was currently a temporary noise issue for some residents.

1. **City of Punta Gorda**

Mayor Matthews had provided the City of Punta Gorda report for the MPO Board agenda packet. Projects listed in the report were: the Historic City Hall renovation, proposed median opening changes on US 41 from Rio Villa to Payne Street, Gilchrist Park/Harborwalk Phase II project, wayfinding signage in the downtown area, Northbound US 41 Vision Study, safety enhancing intersection treatments for wrong way signage on one-way streets, and speeding concerns on City streets.

Mayor Mathews commented on the successful legislative passage of the I-75 Purple Heart Highway designation in Charlotte and Lee Counties. She appreciated State Senator Albritton’s assistance with achieving this. She also commented on the City Council’s review of the Adventure Cycling Association’s revised US Bicycle Route 15, which was a safer route travelling along US 17 and through Punta Gorda utilizing the Harborwalk.

Mayor Matthews also remarked regarding the huge and serious problem of speeding on Burnt Store Road (as she had stated previously at the Joint Meeting with the Lee County MPO). Discussion followed and included various approaches to the problem in this multijurisdictional area, such as a needed signal at the Home Depot area, attention to the mobile home park entrances/exits, increased traffic enforcement by city and county law enforcement with the issuance of traffic tickets and use of flashing radar feedback speed signage. Commissioner Tiseo commented that the tremendous traffic increase in the area due to the presence of more visitors and residents meant that the roadways would face even more growth. Mayor Matthews noted that clearly a problem existed, and the local jurisdictions must work together jointly to abate this issue. Secretary Nandam described the increased pandemic effect of driver aggressive behavior, now made worse by the large 2022 peak season traffic levels. He noted an increase of close to 10 fatalities per day statewide.

1. **Charlotte County**

Commissioner Tiseo gave the county report on the following items including timelines:

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

Commissioner Tiseo praised Kings Highway from I-75 to US 41 with its series of right turn lanes, characterizing it as a much safer way to exit a busy roadway. He stated that he could not understand why Veterans Blvd. had no right turn lanes. Commissioner Herston stated that it was a result of 1980s design and budgetary restrictions. Commissioner Constance noted the huge population growth in that area. Commissioner Tiseo stated that the number of daily trips had doubled from 12,000 at inception to 25,000 presently. He observed that accident rates are huge with many rear end accidents.

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

Tanya Merkle represented FDOT for the discussion

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

**FDOT Led Discussion**

1. **US 41 at Olean Blvd (Tanya Merkle/Wayne Gaither-FDOT/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)**

Tanya Merkle stated that FDOT Traffic Operations was working on this project. Commissioner Constance praised the effective use of a blinking yellow turn light at the intersection of Olean Blvd. and Harbor Blvd.

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

Tanya Merkle had no update on this item. John Elias stated that the project was included under design for the entirety of the Edgewater Corridor. L.K. Nandam noted that a meeting had occurred between FDOT and Charlotte County staff regarding the intersection. Funding in the Work Program had been moved out due to FDOT’s resurfacing needs. County staff was developing estimates for the intersection improvements. He noted that FDOT at a minimum will “definitely” fund all the signal change equipment for the intersection. If the intersection work goes forward before the widening, FDOT staff was requesting that Charlotte County separate out the turn lanes on Flamingo Blvd to resolve capacity constraints correctly. John Elias pointed out that development on the north side of the intersection may impact the project.

Commissioner Deutsch inquired about the normal duration time of a signal. L.K. Nandam stated that the maximum signal time is up to 255 seconds, but he recommended not going above 3 minutes. Commissioner Deutsch suggested cutting the timing to 120 seconds from 180 seconds., since drivers race to make the light. Commissioner Tiseo stated that a right hand turn stacking lane would be appropriate at the location.

Commissioner Constance stated that development in the Flamingo area is happening now, and details such as design specifications, necessary land acquisition, etc. needed to be determined immediately. He stated that the county might have to advance the money for the southern portion of the project. John Elias stated that he understood the urgency and discussions were already underway with the developer. Members also discussed the future traffic needs of the West Port community.

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

L.K. Nandam stated that the SR 776 Corridor Study had identified needed intersection changes. FDOT will examine bringing the project back into the Work Program. The MPO Board would need to identify the correct prioritization of SR 776 intersection improvements. The project involved adding a second right turn lane. L.K. Nandam noted that despite increased revenues estimates coming from the State Legislature, the flip side was that unit prices from contractors were currently increased 15% or higher. He stressed that Charlotte County, City of Punta Gorda and FDOT need to collaboratively work on joint funding initiatives. Growth was defining the need for improvements, and gas tax revenues cannot be the only funding source.

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

Secretary Nandam noted regarding the design that approaching traffic was not high enough to justify right turn lanes on the project, so FDOT was now going to a single lane approach without slip lanes. He stated that the trucks would be able to negotiate all turns. The project construction had advanced from FY 2026 to FY 2025. The MPO Board Members agreed to remove this item from the future FDOT Discussion List.

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

Tanya Merkle reported that completion of the final master plan was still underway. Commissioner Constance commented that the MPO had coordinated with both the City of North Port and the Sarasota/Manatee MPO, and all agreed on this needed interchange.

**Joint Local and FDOT Discussion**

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

Laks Gurram stated that a joint meeting had been held with Charlotte County and FDOT staff members regarding this project. Project Right-of-Way (ROW) was totally funded. The Melbourne Street to Date Street portion was funded for Construction, and an application requesting Construction funds had been received for the section from Date Street to I-75.

1. **US 41 SB @ Melbourne Street - Signalization (Wayne Gaither-FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)**

MPO Board Members and staff from various agencies agreed that this area was very concerning and complex, especially in light of the Whiskey Joe’s and the Sunseeker developments. It was realized that the problems would only worsen when these projects were completed, so a good solution was necessary soon. A map of the entire area was projected for discussion (including on the east side of US 41 the Chevron gas station, vacant Sunseeker-owned property, existing Charlotte County Right-of-Way, and adjacent residential areas. D’Juan Harris stated that Wayne Gaither had agreed at a recent meeting with FDOT to confirm what access management was granted. The MPO applied for a Corridor Planning or Operational Analysis Study on US 41 from Melbourne Street to Harbor View Road. Various suggestions included the use of flyovers as on Colonial Blvd in Lee County (Tiseo), taking of the gas station by eminent domain (Tiseo), or due to safety concerns, closure of the left turn lane on US 41 at Melbourne Street (Nandam/Herston).

**9. Consent Agenda:**

1. **Approval of Minutes: December 16, 2021, Meeting**
2. **Approval of Minutes: Joint Regional Charlotte County-Punta Gorda and Lee County MPO Board Meeting – February 18, 2022**
3. **Approval of Minutes: February 18, 2022 – MPO Board Special Meeting**
4. **2021 FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Statement**
5. **Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Appointment**
6. **Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Resignation and Appointment**

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

**10. Draft FY 2023 – FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)/Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement**

D’Juan Harris stated that the FY 2022/2023 through FY 2023/2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)/Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement describes the transportation planning activities and establishes the MPO budget for the next two State Fiscal Years. The State Fiscal Year begins on July 1, 2022. The UPWP includes a narrative of the work to be accomplished and the cost estimates anticipated for each task activity. Federal and state regulations govern the types of activities that are eligible for federal and state funding. The MPO has agreed to participate in the Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) program, starting with the State Fiscal Year FY 2022/2023 through FY 2023/2024 two-year UPWP cycle. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will serve as the CPG lead grant agency in accordance with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 8100.D.Under the CPG, the FTA and FHWA annually deliver lump sum appropriations to the MPO to allocate to MPOs for approved metropolitan planning activities or tasks. The federal funds are leveraged by the MPO categorically as FTA 5305(d) and FHWA planning (PL) funding. The MPO will utilize the CPG agreement to combine the MPO FTA 5305(d) and FHWA PL funding allocations into a single grant that is administered by FHWA.

The Draft FY 2022/2023 – FY 2023/2024 UPWP also includes Transportation Disadvantaged Planning funds and Section 5307 funding (for Charlotte County Transit Development Plan annual progress reports).

***Commissioner Tiseo*** *made a**Motion to forward the Draft FY 2022/2023 – FY 2023/2024*

*UPWP/Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement to appropriate reviewing agencies,*

*allowing staff to make appropriate revisions as needed.* ***Commissioner Deutsch*** *seconded the*

*Motion, and it carried unanimously.*

**11. Draft FY 2022/2023 – FY 2026/2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

D’Juan Harris noted that 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, multi-year, 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, which was discussed at the March 9, 2022 TAC/CAC Meetings.

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO is scheduled to review and adopt the TIP at the May 16, 2022, MPO Board Meeting. The Draft Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO TIP for FY 2022/2023 - FY 2026/2027is Attachment 1. The MPO Board adopted the project priorities listed in this TIP on May 18, 2021.

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO entered into an interlocal agreement with Sarasota – Manatee MPO and Lee County MPO, formalizing and specifying regional planning projects along with time frames to produce those projects. The agreement calls for each MPO to identify regional priorities and include those projects in the respective MPO’s TIP. Those priorities that were adopted by Joint MPOs Board members are included, in accordance with the interlocal agreement in the TIP.

MPO Board Members were asked to review and comment on the Draft FY 2022/2023- FY 2026/2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). It was noted that Harborwalk should be displayed as one compound word (on page # II-12).

**12. Draft 2022 Project Priorities - Discussion**

Laks Gurram stated that the MPO is 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. FDOT had asked that the initial priorities be submitted by February 12, 2022 to begin the review process. A preliminary list of project priorities is due for submission to FDOT District One by March 15 annually. The project priorities must be approved by the MPO Board and submitted to FDOT by July 1, 2022.

The MPO received candidate projects from the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County. These projects included Highway, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Congestion Mitigation/Transportation System Management (CM/TSM), and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) projects. Attachment 1 is the list of project priorities previously approved by the MPO Board at the May 2021 meeting.

The Draft 2022 Project Priorities (Attachment 2) presented will be revised if warranted based upon input received by the Committees and at this MPO Board meeting (March 21, 2022). The

final draft will be presented at the April 13, 2022, TAC and CAC Meetings and May 16, 2022 MPO Board meeting for approval. Below is the Draft LOPP received from member entities:

* Harbor View Road from Date Street to I-75 – Road Widening
* Edgewater Drive from Midway Blvd. to SR 776 – Road Widening
* SR 31 at CR 74 Intersection Improvements – Roundabout
* N. Jones Loop @ Piper Road – Roundabout
* SR 776 @ Flamingo Blvd. – Intersection Improvements
* SR 776 @ Charlotte Sports Park - Design and Construction Turn Lanes
* SR 776 at Biscayne Drive – Design and Construction Turn lanes and Signal
* SR 776 at Cornelius Blvd. - Design and Construction Turn Lanes
* SR 776 at Jacobs Street - Design and Construction Turn Lanes
* SUN Trail – from SR 776 at Gulf Cove to US 41
* Cooper Street – Complete Street Improvements
* US 41 Bridge Approach Decorative Finish Street Lights
* US 41 MURT Bridge at S. Alligator Creek – No Application
* US 41 SB Harborwalk Phase II – ADA ramp improvements

MPO Board Members were asked to review and comment on Highway, TAP and CM/TSM Box

and TRIP Project Priorities for 2022

Laks Gurram mentioned that in the Highways section of the list under the Edgewater project, the text would be changed from “Collingswood Blvd” to “SR 776.”

Commissioner Deutsch wanted two transportation issues noted on the record:

* The need to widen River Road from US 41 to Winchester in Sarasota County as quickly as possible
* The need for a second Myakka River crossing in West County (since when there is a problem on SR 776 at the bridge, Winchester/River Road is the only alternate route currently).

Discussion arose regarding the proposed roundabout on Jones Loop Road east of I-75. A development facility was proposed to the east of the location. L.K. Nandam noted that FDOT was considering converting the closed rest stop at that location to a truck parking facility. He observed that a roundabout would work very well there. The funding for a truck parking facility would be taken from the design funds for a rest area on I-75, since FDOT analysis had shown that the need had dwindled at that location.

Mayor Matthews commented on the left turn lanes at Aqui Esta Dr on page 3. She stated that FDOT had committed to extend the NB left turn lane on US 41. She characterized the situation there as very dangerous. L.K. Nandam stated that it would be done in conjunction with a resurfacing project. He agreed to check on the timeframe.

**13. Regional Coordination Proposal for the Collier, Lee and Charlotte-Punta Gorda MPO Boards**

D’Juan Harris described recent developments regarding a proposal to establish a regional coordination collaborative between the Collier County, the Lee County, and the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPOs.

At last month’s Lee County and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Joint MPO Board meeting, staff discussed regional coordination options that were proposed by one of the Collier County Commissioners. The regional coordination options discussed included forming an Ad Hoc subcommittee from the three MPO Boards that would meet periodically to make recommendations on regional issues that would then be brought back to each MPO Board for further discussion and action. Direction was provided for the attorneys of each of the MPOs to coordinate on the item and bring it back to each MPO Board to address.

At the Lee County MPO Board Meeting on March 18, 2022, there was no support to proceed with this proposal as drafted. Lee County MPO’s legal counsel indicated that supporting Collier MPO’s proposal would generate numerous legal implications pertaining to Sunshine Law. His recommendation was for the MPO’s to consider holding an annual Regional Symposium/Workshop to discuss pertinent regional issues with FDOT. No action was taken, and the proposal discussion was returned to the Collier MPO to consider alternatives.

*Chair Constance next asked for Public Comments.*

**15. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**14. Staff Comments**

D’Juan Harris provided MPO Board Members with a staff activity sheet, stating it had been a busy three months. He reported that the MPO Office now had new carpet.

Mayor Matthews commented on the successful Purple Heart initiative effort. Following the Governor signing the law, signage would be placed on I-75 sometime after July 1.

D’Juan Harris stated that the MPO had completed an excellent FDOT Certification on March 8, 2022, with no findings/corrections.

Commissioner Constance stated that he had no complaints for D’Juan Harris and commended him on his good pre-agenda work.

**16. Member Comments**

Commissioner Deutsch described numerous years of effort on achieving the Purple Heart Highway designation. He said that the news was received with great excitement at the recent Purple Heart Association Meeting. He stated that Charlotte County has 29,000 veterans.

Commissioner Herston commented that the new MPO carpet was beautiful. He thanked L.K. Nandam for sharing his extensive engineering expertise.

Commissioner Tiseo stated regarding a proposed regional meeting with two MPOs to the south (Agenda Item #13) that it could still occur whenever the situation arises. Commissioner Constance asked L.K. Nandam if there had ever been a regional meeting. L.K. Nandam responded that a staff level meeting had occurred at the district level but had not included MPO Chairs. Commissioner Constance noted that a great example was the recent M-CORES effort, which he characterized as an interesting process, despite being thwarted. Commissioner Tiseo observed that lack of a Collier County MPO quorum at joint Meetings with the Lee County MPO, did not bode well for the proposal.

Chair Constance appreciated the efforts of MPO partners including all Committee Chairs who had given reports.

Secretary Nandam had an update on the Mayor’s US 41 request regarding the left turn lane extension at the Aqui Esta intersection. The project was let in January 2022 with construction planned for summer 2022. Mayor Matthews expressed her thanks.

Chair Constance stated that it had been a great meeting.

**17. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 4:03 P.M. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, May 16, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. at the Charlotte County Administration Center, 18500 Murdock Circle, Building B, Room #119, Port Charlotte, Florida.