

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

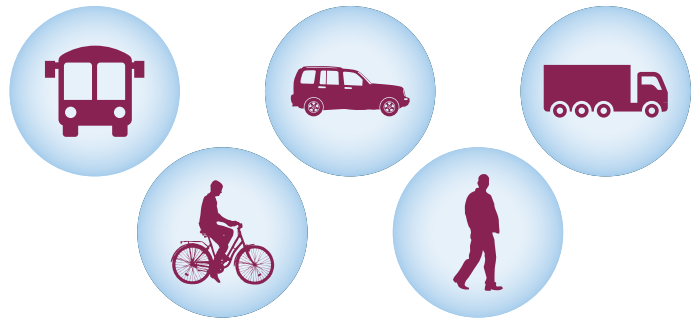
About the MPO

The United States Congress passed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962, which required the formation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000. MPOs are federally funded transportation policy-making organizations made up of local government and transportation providers. Congress created MPOs to ensure that existing and future expenditures of governmental funds for transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (“3-C”) planning process. Statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes are governed by federal law (23 U.S.C. §§ 134-135). Transparency through public access to participate in the planning process and electronic publication of plans is now required by federal law.

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda (CC-PG) MPO was created in July 1992 and is made up of representatives from the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners, the Charlotte County Airport Authority, the City of Punta Gorda, and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One Secretary.

Overview of the Plan

MPOs are required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to complete a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to identify strategies to ensure current and future mobility needs. The analysis used to develop the plan is based on population and employment projections and the expected travel patterns and amount of travel for the next 25 years to the year 2040. The plan is updated every five years to refine the long-term strategy for the transportation system based on changes in transportation needs and future outlook for the county.



The short-range component of the LRTP is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which covers the first five years. The TIP identifies, prioritizes, and allocates funding for transportation projects and is updated annually. Projects must be in the LRTP to be added to the TIP.

The LRTP meets federal guidelines with the adoption of a set of goals and objectives that allow potential projects’ performance to be measured. This ensures the highest performing projects are the focus.

Background

The key aspect of the CC-PG MPO’s mission is to ensure future mobility for residents and visitors in Charlotte County and Punta Gorda, as well as a portion of southwest DeSoto County within the MPO’s planning area boundary. To do so, the MPO guides the transportation planning process, including development of the LRTP.

The 2040 LRTP updates the previous 2035 LRTP adopted in 2010. The Plan identifies cost feasible highway, freight,

When discussing the transportation planning area of the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO throughout the LRTP documentation, the area is typically referenced as Charlotte County but includes the southwestern portion of DeSoto County located within the planning area boundary as well (see Figure 1-1).

transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects through the year 2040. The improvements identified in this Plan will address future mobility needs and will enhance safety and security within the planning area boundary. **Figure 1-1** shows the CC-PG MPO’s Planning Area.

2040 Plan Highlights

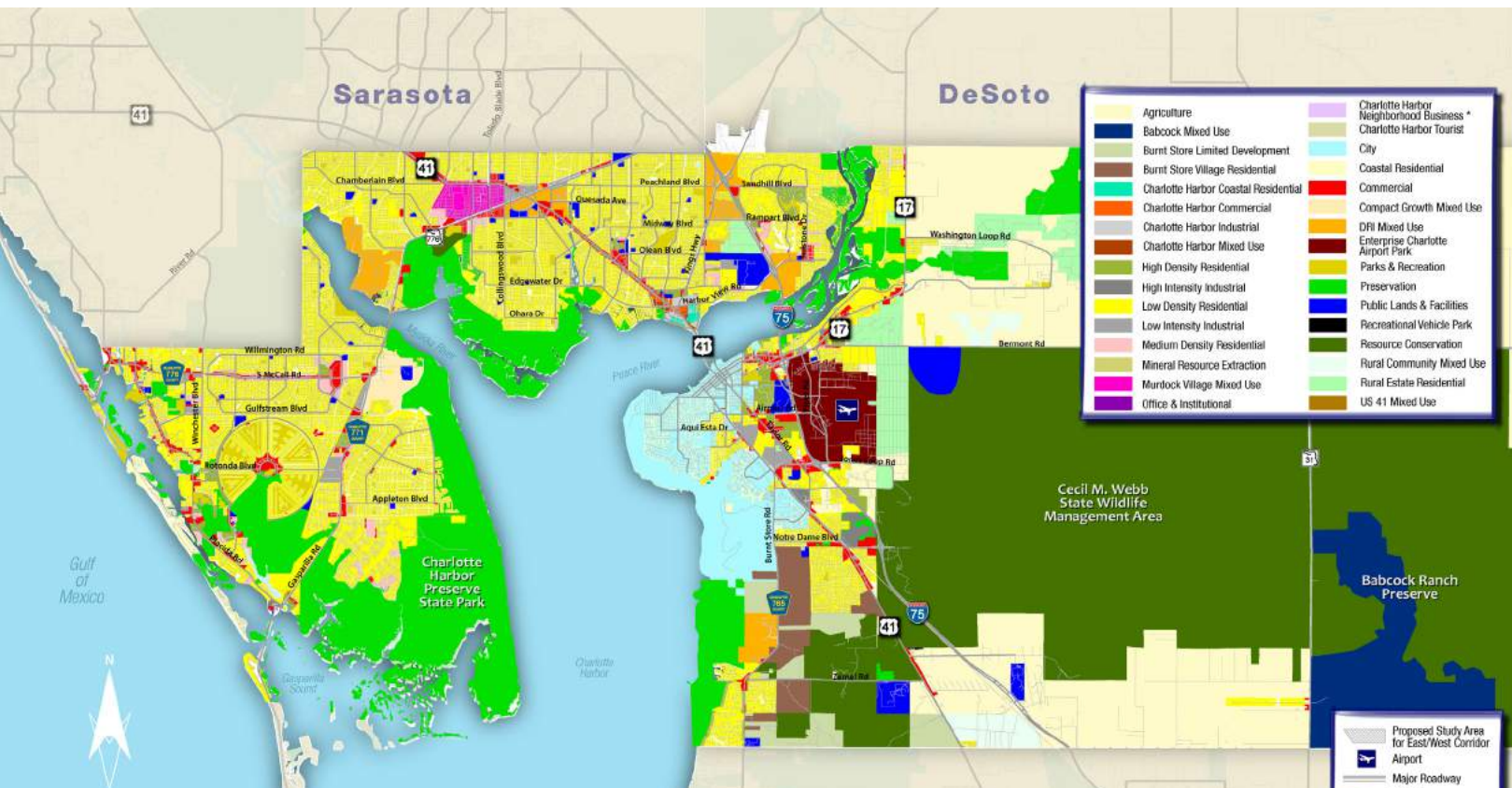
The LRTP sets forth a vision to address the transportation system needs through cost feasible improvements in Charlotte County over the next 25 years. The multimodal plan documented in this report outlines highways; public transportation (transit); and bicycle, pedestrian, and multi-use trail facilities. One purpose of this plan is to address federal and state requirements by identifying projects that are cost feasible for each mode of travel.

This 2040 LRTP represents a significant effort to address the long-term transportation needs of Charlotte County, Punta Gorda, and the southwest corner of DeSoto County.

Key highlights of this plan include:

- Focusing on other modes besides the personal automobile; this includes a significant investment in bicycle and pedestrian facilities in conjunction with road widening projects, multi-use trails facilities, and implementation of Fixed Route and Flex Route public transportation
- Improving safety and protecting community investment without widening roads
- Focusing on congestion management strategies along portions of US 41 and SR 776 so that congestion and safety are addressed through alternative measures other than widening roads
- Focusing on community character in the City of Punta Gorda by redesigning the two main corridors (Marion and Olympia Avenues) to be multimodal focused instead of automobile focused

Figure 1-1: Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Planning Area



- Addressing preservation of the transportation system through increased funding for road maintenance, beyond what is required by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) federal guidelines
- Continuing to build on regional connections by widening the final segment of Burnt Store Road connecting to Lee County, widening Kings Highway north of I-75 connecting to DeSoto County, and completing the widening of I-75 through central Charlotte County; the portion of US 41 in north Charlotte County connecting to Sarasota County is currently being widened

About this Document

The 2040 LRTP is organized into 11 chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the plan, the purpose of the plan, and why the plan is updated every five years.

Chapter 2 Goals and Objectives of the Plan

This chapter presents the MPO's policy-related goals and objectives adopted by the MPO Board to guide the development process, and the measures of effectiveness that were used to determine if the objectives were achieved.

Chapter 3 Developing the Plan

This chapter presents the approach and planning assumptions used in the plan, including the anticipated population and employment growth.

Chapter 4 Public Involvement

This chapter outlines the public engagement process taken throughout the update of the 2040 LRTP.

Chapter 5 Costs and Revenues

This chapter describes the assumptions and anticipated funding amounts for the next 25 years from federal, state, and local sources. Cost assumptions for the improvement projects are also included.

Chapter 6 Defining the 2040 Needs Plan

This chapter outlines the Needs Plan for all modes from 2021-2040. Included in this chapter is the Existing Plus Committed (E+C) Network that outlines the existing transportation system with the improvements committed to be built by 2020. The Needs Plan includes the roads (highway), public transportation (transit), and bicycle and pedestrian improvements identified as needed without financial constraints applied.

Chapter 7 Defining the 2040 Cost Feasible Plan

This chapter outlines the evaluation criteria and approach used by the CC-PG MPO to prioritize the Needs Plan projects and create a fiscally-constrained Cost Feasible Plan.

Chapter 8 Congestion Management

This chapter outlines the Congestion Management Process to improve traffic operations and safety through operational improvements or strategies that reduce travel demand.

Chapter 9 Other Transportation Program Elements

This chapter outlines the following elements of the transportation program: goods movement, transportation safety and security (including hazard mitigation), assessment of the socio-cultural effects, environmental mitigation and Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM), and advancing technologies.

Chapter 10 Performance Evaluation

This chapter describes the performance of the 2040 Cost Feasible transportation network compared to the E+C Network.

Chapter 11 Plan Implementation

This chapter documents issues and activities the MPO may consider addressing in future planning efforts.