

CHARLOTTE COUNTY - PUNTA GORDA

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

**MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 17, 2020**

**TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) MEETING**

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

Mitchell Austin, City of Punta Gorda

Linda Sposito, City of Punta Gorda Public Works

Amy Paglialuga, Charlotte County Airport Authority

Patrick Fuller, Charlotte County Emergency Management

Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works

Nicole Galehouse, City of North Port Planning and Zoning

Donald Scott, Lee MPO (In-Person)

Tony Conte, Charlotte County Public Schools

Joshua Hudson, Charlotte County Economic Development

Andrea McDonough, Rick Kolar Alternate, Charlotte County Transit Division

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development

Kathy Heitman, DeSoto County

Sgt. Tom Scott, Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office

Vacant, Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC)

**OTHERS ATTENDING**

Jesten Abraham, FDOT

Gary Harrell, MPO Director

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Staff

Sai “Sammy” Edara, MPO Staff

Wendy Scott, MPO Staff

Noah Fossick, City of North Port Planning and Zoning

April Santos, Charlotte County Public Works

Robert Fakhri, Transportation Engineer, Charlotte County Public Works

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

Mitchell Austin, TAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:31 A.M. The roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

**2. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

None

**3. 2020 Election of Officers**

Gary Harrell opened the nominations for 2021 TAC Chair***.*** He asked for nominations and election of the TAC Chair.

***Linda Sposito*** *and* ***Ravi Kamarajugadda*** *nominated* ***Mitchell Austin*** *as TAC Chair. There were no other nominations.* ***Tony Conte*** *made a motion to close the nominations.*  ***Don Scott*** *seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously, and* ***Mitchell Austin*** *was declared TAC Chair by unanimous acclimation.*

*Newly-elected Chair* ***Mitchell Austin*** *called for nominations for TAC Vice Chair.* ***Linda Sposito*** *and* ***Tony Conte*** *nominated* ***Ravi Kamarajugadda*** *as TAC Vice Chair. There were no other nominations.* ***Tony Conte*** *made a motion to close the nominations.* ***Linda Sposito*** *seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously, and* ***Ravi Kamarajugadda*** *was declared TAC Vice Chair by unanimous acclimation.*

**4. Chair’s Report**

None.

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

Jesten Abraham introduced himself as the new FDOT District One liaison for Charlotte County. He has replaced Michael Tisch who has left for employment with Collier County. He reported on the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP), which has a statewide long-term focus. The FTP was now in draft form and could be found online at floridatransportationplan.com. Comments could be sent to [planning@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:planning@dot.state.fl.us) . Mr. Abraham mentioned that the FTP is open for public comments until December 3, 2020. He noted that FDOT is still working on the Tentative Five-Year Work Program which normally would be released in November, but due to revenue shortfalls it release is delayed until early next year. The delay is due to complications of the COVID pandemic that this document was not yet available.

**6. Consent Agenda**

1. **Approval of Minutes: September 15, 2020 Meeting**

***Linda Sposito*** *made a motion to approve the consent agenda.* ***Donald Scott*** *seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.*

**7.** **Draft 2021 MPO Legislative Position Statement**

Gary Harrell discussed the draft 2021 MPO Legislative Position Statement (LPS). To ensure submittal prior to the commencement of the 2021 Florida Legislative Session, this document would be brought to the MPO Board at the December 7, 2020 Meeting for consideration of adoption. When finalized by the Board, this position statement would be used to set the MPO’s legislative platform for advocacy in the 2021 Florida Legislative Session. The MPO Board’s LPS would be provided, at a minimum, to the area’s legislative delegation to assist them in accurately identifying what the MPO’s position was on issues that affect transportation planning. The legislative delegation may use this information when considering legislation affecting the MPO. Gary Harrell stated that no State or Federal funds were used in the preparation of this legislative position statement.

The MPO LPS focused on those issues most relevant to the MPO. Gary Harrell explained each item on the Florida MPO Advisory Council (MPOAC)’s recommended 2021 Legislative Position Statement (*adopted by the MPOAC Governing Board on October 29, 2020*), which formed the framework for the MPO’s LPS. Additionally, two issues were considered by the TAC Members for addition to the document:

* Designation of I-75 throughout Florida as a Purple Heart Highway
* Allowing local, regional and statewide advisory boards to conduct business utilizing virtual quorums while still providing the opportunity for public participation.

The latter issue could benefit groups needing to fulfill their duties, such as the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards (LCBs) and the MPOAC Governing Board. This language would also be shared with County staff for consideration in legislative outreach efforts, per LCB Chair/Commissioner Ken Doherty’s suggestion at the November 12, 2020 LCB Meeting.

***Linda Sposito*** *made a Motion to recommend that the MPO Board approve the Draft 2021 MPO Legislative Position Statement including the additional statement regarding designating I-75 throughout Florida as a Purple Heart Highway, authorizing its distribution to the area’s Legislative Delegation and others.* ***Tony Conte*** *seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.*

**8. 2021 FDOT Safety Performance Measure Targets**

Gary Harrell stated that the MPOs are required to adopt Safety Performance Measure Targets every year for tracking progress towards the Statewide/MPO targets. The Transportation Performance Measures meet Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements.

FHWA has established five national Safety Measures which all State Departments of Transportation and MPOs must address. Unlike other performance measures applicable only to the National Highway System (NHS), the safety performance measures apply to all public roads. The safety performance measures are:

1. Number of Fatalities

2. Number of Serious Injuries

3. Fatality Rate per 100 million Vehicle Mile Travelled (VMT)

4. Serious Injuries per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT)

5. Total Number of Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries

The MPO Board last adopted FDOTs “Vision Zero” targets (*goal of no fatalities or injuries*) for all five of the safety performance measures at the October 28, 2019 meeting. The MPO has until February 26, 2021 to accept the FDOT targets for 2021 or develop their own targets. MPO Staff recommends the MPO Board re-adopt the Safety Performance measures adopted last year. He likened this approach to that taken by the airline industry, which considers no fatalities or injuries to be acceptable.

***Ravi Kamarajugadda*** *made a Motion* *to recommend that the MPO Board adopt FDOT safety*

*targets for all five national safety measures.* ***Linda Sposito*** *seconded the motion. The motion*

*passed by a unanimous vote.*

**9. Public Comments**

None.

**10. Staff Comments**

Gary Harrell gave an update on the recently completed work of the Southwest-Central Florida Connector Task Force of the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (**M-CORES**) Program. The Task Force had met to complete its work on October 20, 2020 and by November 15, 2020, their report would be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature. (*please see* <https://floridamcores.com/southwest-central-florida-connector-task-force/> ). He noted that many diverse groups, such as environmental, farming and educational interests, had provided commentary on this proposed toll road project. The mission of the Task Force had been to provide guidance and instruction to state decisionmakers. Members included Commissioner Constance representing the MPO and Commissioner Doherty representing the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners. It was Commissioner Constance’s hope that Southwest Florida could learn from the lessons of overdevelopment of Florida’s East Coast and encourage development in the middle of Florida where it was needed. Commissioner Constance stressed this approach, especially in light of sea level rise and hurricane vulnerabilities. Commissioner Doherty emphasized that the local FDOT Work Program should not be impacted adversely by the M-CORES initiative which will be very costly. Gary Harrell described the Task Force’s approach to environmentally sensitive areas. It focused on environmental lands avoidance if possible, and where necessary, constructing roadways that would be friendly to wildlife. Emphasis was given to the survival of the Florida Panther, calling on techniques such as the utilization of wildlife underpasses.

Gary Harrell provided comments regarding the MPOAC Governing Board Meeting held on October 29, 2020 in Orlando, where an in-person quorum was required and had been difficult to achieve. FDOT Secretary Thibault had addressed the members, discussing: (1) the problem of FDOT staff recruitment and retention, and (2) the significant reduction in FDOT revenues due to the impact of COVID-19 that had recently exacerbated the decline in transportation revenues that were gas tax dependent. FDOT is in the process of examining large shortfalls that will impact the outer years of the Work Program which is forecast to suffer a $1.4 Billion decline. Secretary Thibault had described this shortfall as challenging and did not expect a return to normalcy until FY 2029. The rare benefit of this issue was that out of necessity, a conversation on other transportation revenue sources likely would be forthcoming. In December 2020, another State revenue estimating conference would be held, and recent trends have indicated that the revised estimates might not be as bad as had been expected.

**11. Member Comments**

None.

**12.Adjournment (NEXT TAC MEETING – March 3, 2021)**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:48 a.m. The next regularly scheduled TAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 3, 2021 at the Eastport

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