

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA**

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING, MAY 17, 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**

##### Wayne Gaither, FDOT Southwest Area Office, for 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**

Jesten Abraham, FDOT

Charlie Counsil, CAC Vice Chair

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

Pastor Glenn Ferguson, Christ Community United Methodist Church

Patrick Bateman, FDOT

Linda Sposito, City of Punta Gorda

David Dangel, Inwood Consulting Eng.

Linda Grother, citizen

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIRTUALLY**

Laura Herrscher, FDOT

Richard Oujevolk, FDOT

Zachary Tapp – FDOT

Fabiana Solano, City of Punta Gorda

Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works

John Elias, Charlotte County Public Works

Rick Kolar, Charlotte County Transit

Andrea McDonough, Charlotte County Transit

Christy Davis, Charlotte County Transit

Tony Conte, Charlotte County School Board

Sunil Doddapaneni, ARCDIS

Ryan Baderschneider, Comprehensive Engineering Services, Inc

Cristian Lacera, Comprehensive Engineering Services, Inc

##### **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 Glenn Ferguson**

Pastor Glenn Ferguson 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. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments.

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

Gary Harrell described the TIP process:

Federal and State legislation requires 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’s Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Members had received the Draft Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO TIP for FY 2021/2022 – FY 2025/2026 in the MPO

Board packet. The MPO Board adopted the project priorities listed in this TIP on May 18, 2020. The TIP is to be submitted for review by FDOT no later than July 15 of each year. Once approved by both FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the TIP is then

incorporated into the State TIP, (STIP) by October 1 of each year. Approval of the STIP allows federal funding for metropolitan areas.

As part of the TIP process, the MPO is required to advertise that a Public Meeting will be held to solicit public input before the MPO Board adopts the TIP. The MPO has advertised twice within the past 30 days that a Public Meeting will be held at the May 17, 2021 MPO Board Meeting. Following the Public Meeting, a roll call vote is required to adopt the TIP.

Gary Harrell noted that since the last MPO Board Meeting, an FDOT snapshot revision had been incorporated in the TIP to change amounts associated with programs; however, no new projects had been added, deleted or deferred. The Technical and Citizens’ Advisory Committees formally reviewed and recommended MPO adoption of the FY 2021/2022 – FY 2025/2026 TIP as presented at their April 28, 2021 meetings.

*At this point in the meeting, Wayne Gaither arrived to field any questions that MPO Board Members might have.*

Commissioner Constance stated that he was not comfortable with adopting the TIP since it contained a plan to split the Harbor View Road project into two segments. Instead, he requested that FDOT guarantee full road completion in one major project. Commissioner Tiseo noted that as a sales tax priority, local funding would play a substantial role as recently discussed at the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Meetings. Commissioner Herston observed that some project funding for utility work on the project had been noted at the previous MPO Board Meeting. Commissioner Constance reiterated that he would not be able to support the TIP if this issue was not resolved to his satisfaction. Wayne Gaither stated that he could not make such a commitment on behalf of FDOT at the meeting. He commented that most definitely further discussions were needed on the project given FDOT’s current budget, which did not have full project completion funded. He acknowledged that the $12 Million for utilities now in place does move the project in the right direction, but he stressed that the construction funding portion is still too large to complete overall without segmenting. Jesten Abraham commented that if the TIP was not approved, that action would jeopardize all federal funds for projects contained within the document. He noted that FDOT staff understood the MPO Board’s concern for funding the Harbor View Road project and was working with various agency staffs to resolve the issue. It was noted that during the upcoming FDOT development funding phase in July there would be the opportunity to address the issue and many more answers would surface. Fully funding the project would be very difficult, but it would not preclude the ability to do back-to-back funding so that construction would be ongoing.

Harbor View Road discussions next centered on the topic of utilities, as well as the exploding population growth in the area and the potential availability of additional transportation funding that now would be available due to the Legislature’s removal of the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES)project in Southwest Florida Counties. Commissioner Deutsch stressed the need to be proactive and work together,

observing that the funds are there and should be reappropriated. He stated that he would vote for TIP approval because it was necessary to do so.

Responding to a question, Jesten Abraham noted that the Harbor View Road PD&E had been completed for the entire roadway segment. He stated that he would check on the design phase status to determine what was needed. Commissioner Constance believed that it was already programmed in its entirety. Jesten Abraham remarked that estimates would have to be updated, citing a figure of $21 Million in the prior year. FDOT was well aware of the priorities and would have more answers in July. Commissioner Constance inquired hypothetically regarding if TIP passage occurred at the day’s meeting and the situation changed, could the plan then be adjusted to complete in the Harbor View Road project as a single project. Jesten Abraham noted that the 5-year work program was a plan that could be adjusted.

Commissioner Deutsch commented on the need to accelerate improvements in the multi-county area of River Road similar to those accomplishments made on Burnt Store Road. He characterized the roadway as a priority given the growth of West Charlotte County.

Commissioner Herston remarked that he would be supporting the TIP because of the aviation projects listed in it. He noted that utility work in the area must be addressed given the 200 miles of new water lines east of 75, and he stated that he currently was exploring the issue.

Commissioner Tiseo opened the Public Meeting. No one wished to comment.

***Commissioner Constance*** *moved to close the Public Meeting, and* ***Commissioner Deutsch*** *seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.*

Commissioner Tiseo appreciated FDOT participation in the Harbor View Road project which was not a state road. He observed that a public workshop held by FDOT had addressed several design alternatives. He praised the good relationship established with FDOT. He stated that it was important to get the project done, especially with the huge savings for taxpayers that would result in accelerating it. He understood the importance of all the other programs in the TIP, and trusted that FDOT would work with the MPO and County in good faith to try to advance the Harbor View Road improvements as one project.

***Commissioner Deutsch*** *made a motion to adopt the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for FY 2021/2022-FY 2025/2026 and authorize the MPO Chair to sign the Authorizing Resolution and transmit the document to FDOT.**The motion should allow the staff to make minor changes and adjustments based on comments and input received.* ***Commissioner Herston*** *seconded the Motion. It was approved by a 4-1 roll call vote with* ***Commissioner Constance*** *dissenting.*

Commissioner Constance requested an update on the repaving of US17 from Cooper Street to US 41 and requested FDOT consideration of the possibility of accelerating the project. FDOT staff agreed to advise the MPO Board on the ratings and provide further details.

**7. Chairs’ Reports:**

1. **MPO Board Chair’s Report**

Commissioner Tiseo had nothing to report.

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

CAC Vice Chair Charles Counsil reviewed actions taken at the hybrid April 28, 2021 CAC Meeting and described ongoing concerns at the Burnt Store Road construction site relating to dump truck traffic.

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

TAC Chair Mitchell Austin reviewed actions taken at the April 28, 2021 TAC Meeting. He was pleased to announce excellent meeting participation both virtually and in person. He stated that there had been good discussion on agenda items as reflected in the meeting agenda packet.

**8. 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 also discussed the future agenda for the upcoming Airport Authority Meeting on Thursday which included renewal of the racetrack agreement. Commissioner Tiseo commented upon recent emails that he had received regarding needed racetrack noise mitigation. Commissioner Herston agreed to bring the matter up at the Thursday meeting.

1. **City of Punta Gorda**

Mayor Matthews noted that the City of Punta Gorda report was in the MPO Board agenda packet. She commented on the City’s new draft sign code ordinance amendments scheduled for adoption at the May 19, 2021 City Council Meeting which would reflect content neutral provisions in consideration of recent US Supreme Court decisions.

Mayor Matthews stated that the City was working with FDOT to assist with soliciting input for their public hearing for the proposed median opening changes on U.S. 41 from Rio Villa Drive to Payne St. That morning, she sent a letter to FDOT regarding proposed median closures of great concern. This included focus on Acline Road at US 41, a Fire Department ingress and egress location where she stressed there was a need for full opening and FDOT consideration of reinstallation of a traffic light that was once needed during construction on Burnt Store Road that required an extensive detour.

Commissioner Constance requested that the City provide information on the topic of sign code ordinance requirements to the County for further BCC review. He and Mayor Matthews

discussed their dislike of FDOT’s proposed action to close the US 41 median at Rio Villa Drive (regarding the impact to the entire Aqui Esta Drive area). Wayne Gaither stated that the project was still in the public comment period and urged that MPO Board comments be submitted to the project management staff. Gary Harrell noted that this could be a follow up item at the next meeting under the FDOT report. Mayor Matthews stated that the County needs to participate in the discussions since Baynard Drive is also impacted by the proposals and needs reinforcement.

Mayor Matthews reported that she met the prior week with mobile home park residents on Burnt Store Road regarding the possibility of dropping the speed limit on Burnt Store Road for the first mile starting west from US 41 South where there is a huge truck traffic problem given ongoing building projects. Perhaps a new ingress and egress road would be required near the water tower. Additionally, she noted that the traffic light at Home Depot was much needed and should be of high importance to the County since sales tax funds had been designated for its installation.

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

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

Wayne Gaither and Jesten Abraham led the discussion.

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

**FDOT Led Discussion**

1. **FY 2021/2022 – FY 2025/2026 FDOT Tentative Work Program (Jesten Abraham)**

Jesten Abraham stated that there was no update. The item referenced a document that was presented at the March MPO Board Meeting. It was the consensus of the MPO Board to delete the item from the list.

1. **City of Punta Gorda Corridor Visioning Study (Jesten Abraham-FDOT/Mitchell Austin-City of Punta Gorda)**

Jesten Abraham noted that the project had expanded and been renamed. It involved the northbound US 41 (Tamiami Trail) through downtown Punta Gorda. Information was available at [Northbound Tamiami Trail (US 41) Vision Study (swflroads.com)](http://swflroads.com/us41/tamiami-trail-vision-study/) including a questionnaire.

1. **Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) (L.K. Nandam-FDOT/Commissioner Christopher Constance-MPO)**

Wayne Gaither requested that the item be pulled in light of passage of Senate Bill 100 which eliminated the Southwest Florida portion of earlier legislation. Commissioner Constance stated that removal from the list was satisfactory, however, he wanted to make certain that the funding be retained in this area. It was the consensus of the MPO Board to delete the item from the list.

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

Jesten Abraham reviewed how a presentation had been provided at the last Joint MPO Board Meeting with the Lee County MPO Board. Work was underway to have a draft master plan available by Spring 2021 with a completion date of Fall 2022. Public hearings had been scheduled. Information was available here: [I-75 Central Corridor | Southwest Connect (swflinterstates.com)](https://www.swflinterstates.com/i75-central-corridor/)

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

Jesten Abraham indicated that the project was currently in the design phase, and FDOT was still working closely with the County staff.

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

Construction was planned in FY 2025, and there was continued coordination between the staffs.

1. **Intersection Improvements on SR 776 at the Charlotte Sports Park (Jesten Abraham/Wayne Gaither -FDOT/Joanne Vernon-Charlotte County)**

Jesten Abraham reported that the SR 776 Corridor Study was underway. FDOT Staff was working to create the report with a presentation scheduled for the next MPO Board Meeting.

Commissioner Tiseo stated that the Study was critical for the West Port development as well as additional construction on Veterans Blvd including hundreds of apartments. He wanted the item kept on the list for continued monitoring.

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

Jesten Abraham reported on this item which had been previously mentioned by Mayor Matthews under the City of Punta Gorda report. The public hearing was held on May 6, 2021 regarding US 41 at Rio Villa Drive. 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](mailto:Zachary.Tapp@dot.state.fl.us) , and the comment period would end on May 20, 2021.

Mayor Matthews commented that it was difficult to read the maps on the website. Jesten Abraham stated that he would reach out to the project manager to try to make the materials more user friendly.

Discussion followed regarding line of sight issues on US 41 at the intersection of Harbor View Road/Edgewater Drive. Wayne Gaither stated that staff would explore potential options. The item was left on the list until it could be addressed fully. Commissioner Herston offered to do some drawings regarding line of sight intersections on US 41 including the one at Olean Blvd.

Mayor Matthews requested an update from FDOT on the traffic backlogs at the left turn arrow on Northbound US 41 at Aqui Esta Drive. Jesten Abraham reported that several short-term solutions were under consideration. Gary Harrell noted that recently at the US 41 Corridor Study Public Meeting several concerns were raised for this intersection. The opportunity existed to add the project under Agenda Item #11 Project Priorities since the issue needed proper study.

**Joint Local and FDOT Discussion**

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

This item already had been discussed extensively under Agenda Item 6. PUBLIC MEETING: FY 2021/2022 – FY 2025/2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Continued discussions between staffs would be ongoing.

**10. Consent Agenda:**

1. **Approval of Minutes: March 22, 2021 Meeting**

##### **MPO Board Resolution Authorizing FY 2021/2022 Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Planning Grant Agreement**

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

**11. 2021 Project Priorities**

Gary Harrell reviewed the draft 2021 Project Priorities List.

The MPO Board 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. The MPO receives project candidates from the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County which include Highway Projects, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Projects, Congestion Management/Transportation System Management (CM/TSM) projects, and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) projects.

**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 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. Right-of -Way (ROW) phase for segment One (Melbourne St to Date St) 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. County is requesting $2.2 million towards PE. The number five project priority, 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) 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 LOPP. The recommendations from this project will be addressed based on the outcome of the study. The new number one project priority is intersection improvements for SR 776 at Charlotte Sports Park is programmed for Design in FY 2024/2025. The next phase requested is Construction. The number two intersection improvement at SR 776 @ Gulf Stream Blvd is not funded. The next phase requested is for

Design and Construction. Priorities 3-8 are intersections 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).

At the TAC Meeting the Charlotte County Staff has asked the MPO to consider adding a project to identify and implement the project outcomes from the County wide ITS master plan. The study is initiated in 2021 and scheduled to be completed by 2023. The ITS master plan study evaluates the County's information, communication and technology systems and to determine future needs. As noted by Gary Harrell, this was the only change to the draft list presented at the previous MPO Board Meeting.

***Mayor Matthews*** *made a Motion to amend the 2021 Project Priorities List to add a Congestion Management project for the extension of the Northbound US 41 left turn lane at Aqui Esta Dr.* ***Commissioner Constance*** *seconded the Motion.*

Commissioner Constance noted the current ITS signalization. He requested that staff provide a future status report on when the current County’s ITS system is not functional (i.e., the schedule of when the system is off at night and on during the daytime). Regarding the Harbor View Road entry on page 1, Commissioner Constance requested estimated figures in parentheses for those items currently marked “To Be Determined” (TBD).

***Commissioner Deutsch*** *made a motion to adopt the identified 2021 Project Priorities for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program Cycle as amended.* ***Commissioner Constance*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**12. 2021 Regional Transportation Project Priorities**

Gary Harrell described the TRIP and the RTAP list development process:

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, requiring 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 and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPOs.

Gary Harrell noted that the Harbor View Road project was ranked in first place. Often, the top project receives some funding when available.

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

Gary Harrell noted that the listed sidewalk projects are segmented. The top ranked project was for the Alligator Creek portion where construction funding was being sought.

Commissioner Constance asked why the entire list for the TRIP projects listed for Sarasota-Manatee. Gary Harrell stated he would inquire of Sarasota-Manatee MPO what their other TRIP projects were since their rankings were not sequential but showed gaps.

Commissioner Constance noted that the pedestrian bridge programmed over Alligator Creek could possibly use that funding for a signal in the same area. He commented that a workshop may be required with the new MPO Director and staff to go over the MPO process on how things are planned.

***Commissioner Constance*** *made a motion to 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 and Sarasota/Manatee MPOs’ Regional*

*Transportation Alternatives Program (RTAP) Project Priority List.* ***Mayor Matthews***

*seconded the Motion, and it was approved unanimously.*

Commissioner Deutsch asked where the MPO Board could add their support to River Road widening in Sarasota County. Gary Harrell believed it could be made in the comments. Remarks could be provided to the Sarasota/Manatee MPO Executive Director and the point could be reemphasized at the annual Joint Meeting.

Commissioner Deutsch stated that the MPOAC Institute course for MPO members was an excellent preparation and for the MPO process. Many acronyms are explained, and the course required lots of work, it was not a social event, although it was good for MPO members from other areas to share their experiences. He expressed a desire to return for a refresher now that the COVID pandemic was being brought under control and the Institute could again meet face to face.

**13. FY 2020/2021 – FY 2021/2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Task 8 Amendment**

Gary Harrell reviewed the 2 UPWP Task 8 Amendments:

* $747 funding increase to the MPO’s Transportation Disadvantaged Planning Grant
* Adjustment to fiscal years and dollar amounts to compensate a consultant to produce two Transit Development Plan (TDP) Annual Progress Reports including all four tasks associated with each.

***Commissioner*** ***Deutsch*** *made a Motion to* *approve the Amendment to the FY 2020/2021 FY 2021/2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Task 8 – Transit & Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Planning to reflect a funding change to $23,842 for the FY2021/2022 TD Planning Grant.* ***Commissioner Constance*** *seconded the motion, which passed*

*unanimously.*

***Commissioner Deutsch*** *made a Motion to* *approve the Amendment to the UPWP Task 8, FTA Section 5307 to reflect the contract amount of $28,291 for FY 21 and FY 22 and an additional $22,254 for production of the two Transit Development Plan Annual Progress Reports including all four tasks associated with each. Motion allows for transmittal of the amendments to FTA and FDOT and for staff to make minor changes and adjustments based upon input received.* ***Mayor Matthews*** *seconded the Motion which passed unanimously.*

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

Patrick Bateman, FDOT Project Development Engineer, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the North Jones Loop Road Feasibility Study from Burnt Store Rd to Piper Rd, including the study objectives.

The North Jones Loop Road is the MPO’s number six priority under 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 from CR 765 (Burnt Store Road) to Piper Road in Charlotte County, Florida. The project will include mobility, safety, intersection, emergency response, and evacuation improvements. The study will investigate improvements with the goal to improve the regional transportation network and local mobility for commuters and freight truckers, evacuation and emergency responders, pedestrians and bicyclists.

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

Patrick Bateman provided a PowerPoint presentation on the SR 31 Corridor PD&E Study from SR 78 (Bayshore Road) to Cook Brown Road. He is the project manager. David Dangel was also present in the audience.

The State Road (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.

**16. Hiring of Permanent MPO Director**

Janette Knowlton headed the discussion. Gary Harrell, the current MPO Director, has given notice of his intent to retire in July 2021. MPO Chair Tiseo asked that Gary Harrell submit a revised letter of resignation with recommended wording provided by Legal Staff. The MPO Board members were requested to give direction to staff that the MPO Director position be advertised through various outlets and set the timeline for the hiring process. Charlotte County Human Resources staff will pre-screen applications for the position and determine that job applicants meet minimum requirements for the position. Gary Harrell was asked to assist with screening the applications to help with developing a short list of candidates.

It was expected that special MPO Board Meetings would be necessitated to complete the hiring process.

**17. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**18. Staff Comments**

Gary Harrell noted that Commissioner Constance’s suggestion of a future MPO workshop was a good idea. He characterized the MPO Director’s work as “sometimes picking up pennies in different pockets,” involving the detail work which was often only known from experience. He reported that staff was currently in the process of hiring a planner. Staff was also reviewing the hiring of General Planning Consultants (GPC) for placement under contract for a period of time when the 2050 LRTP update would be developed. He stressed the importance of the top project priority, which was to obtain funding from non-planning funds to pay for the next LRTP. He noted that unfortunately, MPO funding was a formula-based approach, and there seldom were enough planning funds to cover all costs.

Wayne Gaither stated that it had been wonderful working with Gary Harrell.

**19. Member Comments**

Commissioner Constance asked if MPO Director hiring-related meetings would be called at the MPO Chair’s discretion. Commissioner Tiseo answered in the affirmative.

**20. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:07 P.M. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, July 19, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. at

the Murdock Administration Center, 18500 Murdock Circle, Building B, Room #119, Port Charlotte, Florida.