

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA**

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING, OCTOBER 18, 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**

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

**STAFF PRESENT**

Gary Harrell, MPO Director

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Principal Planner

Betty-Ann Sherer, MPO 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**

##### H. Wayne Gaither, FDOT Southwest Area Office

Jesten Abraham, FDOT

Tanya Merkle, FDOT

Vitor Suguri, FDOT

Charles Counsil, CAC Chair

Jim Brown, CAC

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

Pastor Bill Frank, First Baptist Church of Punta Gorda

John Elias, Charlotte County Public Works

Robert Fakhri, Charlotte County Public Works

Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works – Transportation

Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development

William Roll, Kimley Horn and Associates

Brent Lacey, VHB

D’Juan Harris, Citizen

Richard Russell, Port Charlotte Citizen

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIRTUALLY**

Fabiana Solano, City of Punta Gorda

Andrea McDonough, Charlotte County Transit

Christy Davis, Charlotte County Transit

Tony Conte, Charlotte County School Board

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​**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 Bill Frank**

Pastor Bill Frank gave the invocation.

##### **3.** **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

Gary Harrell stated that an addition was needed to the agenda for discussion of the 2022 MPO State and Federal Legislative Position Statement. It was agreed that the item would be considered toward the end of the agenda and would become number #16 with the remainder of the agenda being renumbered.

Gary Harrell noted two typographical errors: (1) at the end of the agenda cover page, the next MPO Board Meeting would be corrected from December 9 to December 16, and (2) on Agenda Item #6, Mr. Burke would be corrected to Mr. Harris.

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

**5. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments.

**6. New MPO Director Appointment**

Janette Knowlton presented the agenda item. At the July 19, 2021 MPO Board Meeting, the MPO Board members gave direction to staff for the next steps to take in the hiring process for a permanent MPO Director. Human Resources staff received applications and vetted two candidates who were interviewed on September 17, 2021 at a Special MPO Board Meeting at the Charlotte County Administrative Center, Room 119. The interviewees were Joel S. Graeff and D’Juan L. Harris. Following these interviews, a Motion was approved to hire D’Juan Harris as the potential MPO Director. Human Resources staff was authorized to negotiate a hiring package with Mr. Harris, and then, the issue would return to the MPO Board at the next MPO Board Meeting to finalize approval.

Mr. Harris has completed negotiations and accepted the offer to serve as the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Director effective October 29, 2021. The current MPO Director Gary Harrell has agreed to remain on staff briefly to create an orderly transition and will retire on November 9, 2021.

***Commissioner Constance*** *made a motion to approve the hiring of D’Juan L. Harris as Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Director.* ***Commissioner Herston*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

On behalf of the MPO, Chair Tiseo welcomed D’Juan Harris, who was present in the audience.

**7. Chairs’ Reports:**

1. **MPO Board Chair’s Report**

Commissioner Tiseo had nothing to report.

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

CAC Chair Charles Counsil reviewed actions taken at the September 29, 2021 CAC Meeting.

He commented on favorable meeting attendance and agenda item recommendations. He praised Vitor Suguri’s excellent presentation and the commendable and detailed work that FDOT had done on the SR 776 Corridor Planning Study. Mr. Counsil stated that there had been lively discussion at the CAC on two topics: (1) the need to have the developers of large West County communities cover SR 776 transportation improvement funding through impact fees, and (2) the great displeasure of several CAC members with the use of roundabouts along the SR 776 corridor in multiple locations. On the latter topic, Vitor Suguri stated that there was no clear commitment to the use of SR 776 roundabouts at this time, and West County residents would be consulted on their opinions prior to implementing any such high-level recommendation. Another CAC Meeting comment had centered on the possible minimal use of the Charlotte Sports Park, which would indicate that funds could be better spent on other projects. The CAC Members recommended approving the SR 776 Corridor Planning Study with two members voting in opposition.

Charles Counsil described another CAC lively discussion on the issue of Baynard Drive, which parallels US 41 in Punta Gorda. It was noted that the proposal to close the US 41

median at Rio Villa Drive could impact Baynard Drive heavily. He described how the narrow two-lane street, although repaved 4-5 years ago, was flood prone and already eroding. The roadway was travelled by heavy vehicles given area restaurants and a large vehicle storage facility. CAC Members agreed with a Technical Advisory Committee recommendation made earlier that same meeting day to have City and County staffs coordinate on a solution.

Charles Counsil stated that he was looking forward to working with D’Juan Harris in the future as the new MPO Director.

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

TAC Chair Mitchell Austin noted that there had been good discussions at the September 29, 2021 TAC Meeting, and TAC Members had provided recommendations. Regarding the SR 776 planning study, he stated that FDOT had focused on safety for all and the need for highway lighting. He noted that any recommendations in the document regarding land use and community development may require that changes be made to support them.

Mitchell Austin spoke regarding the General Planning Consultant (GPC) selection process. He stated that results showed a clear consensus by the Selection Committee regarding the top three consulting firms. He applauded MPO staff for their efforts in the GPC selection process.

Mitchell Austin stated that City and County staffs recently had a quick virtual meeting on the subject of Baynard Drive. Efforts going forward will require direction from both boards (Charlotte BCC and the Punta Gorda City Council). Commissioner Constance remarked that he would like guidance on lowering the speed limit on Nesbit Street, where he felt there was no need to be going faster (given that it was a dead-end road and a parking area). Mitchell Austin said he would defer the question to the City’s technical and engineering staff on this matter. In the past, there was the thought that it should be used as an alternate for bicycle traffic. Commissioner Constance recommended that a speed reduction be done now to get citizens used to it. He was concerned that someone was going to be injured. He hoped that the City would address this issue, especially given the presence of the Vietnam Wall Memorial where people should be respectful. Mayor Matthews stated that his words were well received.

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

Gary Harrell reviewed actions taken at the October 7, 2021 BPAC Meeting, where the BPAC Member response had been similar to that of TAC and CAC Members. The SR 776 Corridor Planning Study final briefing was received by the BPAC. Regarding the Baynard Drive discussion, the possibility of adding bicycle/pedestrian facilities was of interest. This concept had been studied previously in some of the City planning documents. Gary Harrell noted that perhaps the potential for funding such enhancements might become available.

**8. Local Government Reports:**

1. **Charlotte County Airport Authority**

Commissioner Herston, Charlotte County Airport Authority Chair, provided MPO Board Members with a wide-ranging packet of information on Airport activities. He reviewed key items. He referenced the passenger graph on page 10, noting the good news that the passenger count is being maintained. Commissioner Herston stated that the Airport soon will be announcing a second airline serving the facility.

1. **City of Punta Gorda**

Mayor Matthews noted that the City of Punta Gorda report was in the MPO Board agenda packet. Projects updated were: Historic City Hall renovation, median opening changes on US 41 from Rio Villa to Payne Street (including concerns of additional impacts to Baynard Drive), Harborwalk Area 2B, wayfinding signage downtown, and the U.S. Bicycle Route program. She described a good discussion with the U.S. Bicycle Route representatives at the latest City Council meeting. City staff will be meeting with them on alternates including use of the Harborwalk to obtain the flavor of Punta Gorda or the alternatively the Jones Loop Road route on the City’s outskirts.

1. **Charlotte County**

Commissioner Constance 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
* Sandhill Boulevard Phase I
* Flamingo/Edgewater Widening

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

Jesten Abraham reviewed the listed projects:

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

**FDOT Led Discussion**

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

Jesten Abraham reported that there would be a presentation at the next meeting.

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

Jesten Abraham had nothing specific to report on this intersection, noting that the SR 776 Corridor Study would be discussed later in the meeting.

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

Jesten Abraham had no comment on this particular project, stating that the SR 776 Corridor Study would be discussed later in the meeting.

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

Jesten Abraham had nothing to report on this project.

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

Jesten Abraham stated that public hearings had been held in the summer, and he had no additional information to report.

**Joint Local and FDOT Discussion**

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

Jesten Abraham stated that FDOT staff is having ongoing discussions with County staff.

Commissioner Constance noted that Right-of-Way (ROW) purchase was moving ahead. He observed that it is sometimes important to discuss developments such as fast-tracking funds for ROW purchase of the entire project length (both segments). Secretary Nandam remarked that the goal is to get the ROW funded, but he cautioned that by State Statute, preservation of roadways comes first compared to new projects. He noted that the final figures were not yet known. He stated that the path was to complete design and fund ROW, so that these could be leveraged when any funding opportunities become available. Commissioner Tiseo inquired about the likelihood that federal funding would become available to complete both segments. Secretary Nandam reviewed recent actions taken by the Congress toward passage of the transportation bill. Overall, he characterized new funding as pretty limited when broken out by MPO.

Mayor Matthews asked Wayne Gaither when Olympia Avenue would be resurfaced between NB US 41 and Cooper Street, especially in light of the many resident email complaints that she had received. Wayne Gaither noted that he had talked with the FDOT project manager regarding adding this segment for repaving, and it was now part of the plan.

Mayor Matthews inquired about consideration of adding a traffic light in front of the Sunseeker project. It was agreed that under letter A in the FDOT led discussion portion of the report, there would be discussion of this topic at the next MPO Board Meeting. An extensive

discussion followed on the need to address the ability to make a left turn from US 41 SB onto Melbourne Street at the foot of the bridge area across from the SunSeeker Resort.

Commissioner Deutsch pointed out that Mr. Richard Russell had spoken on this issue in the past and provided some suggestions. Secretary Nandam thanked MPO Board Members for their comments on this complex roadway area. He noted that the timing is right to conduct

analysis. He observed that Melbourne Street is a County Road, so County staff needs to coordinate with FDOT on this matter as a County led initiative. Commissioner Deutsch stated that FDOT expertise and creativity was needed, since traffic in the area was going to increase. Commissioner Tiseo observed that County staff not MPO staff will be impacted, so he pledged to bring the matter to the BCC’s consideration at the next day’s meeting. Gary Harrell noted that the TIP and work program reflects FY 2024-2025 plans to address these issues. Commissioner Tiseo stated that with the Sunseeker Resort opening scheduled for Spring 2023 in addition to the Melbourne Street piece, there was the potential for a coming traffic mess. Gary Harrell mentioned a sidewalk project (Melbourne Street to Kings Highway) had been altered to a planning study at the request of the CRA.

**10. Consent Agenda:**

1. **Approval of Minutes: July 19, 2021 MPO Board Meeting**
2. **Approval of Minutes: September 17, 2021 MPO Board Special Meeting**
3. **Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board**

**(LCB) Appointment**

1. **MPO Board and Advisory Committees Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2022**

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

**11. FFY 2021 FTA Section 5305 (d) Grant Application**

Gary Harrell explained that annually, Section 5305(d) Funds are allocated to the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and administered through the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for the purpose of metropolitan transit planning. This year’s allocation of FTA funds is for $90,411.

Agency participation for FYY 2021 is as follows:

* Federal (80%) $72,329
* Other (20%) $18,082

***Commissioner Constance*** *made a motion to approve the FFY 2021 Section 5305(d) Planning*

*and Technical Studies Grant Application including MPO Board Resolution #2021-04, to*

*authorize the MPO Board Chair to sign all required documents, and the staff to make minor*

*changes and adjustments as needed (including minor funding adjustments).* ***Commissioner***

***Deutsch*** *seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.*

**12. FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – FTA Section 5305(d)**

**Amendment**

Gary Harrell noted that the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO is amending the FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), FFY 20 – FFY 21 FTA for Task 8-Transit and Transportation Disadvantaged Planning by updating FFY 20 remaining encumbrances and

adding the updated funding allocation for FTA 5305(d) – Task 8 funds in the FY 2022 UPWP. All changes are highlighted with the footer explaining these changes. Budget actions will: (1) Update FFY 20 funding to reflect remaining encumbrance of $51,065 (through June 30, 2021), (2) Add Federal funds for FFY 2021 Task 8 - FTA Section 5305(d) in the amount of $72,329 and Local funds of $9,041, and (3) Reflect the remaining encumbered FFY 2020 Local Funds of $6,383

Gary Harrell noted that the UPWP is a budgetary document and must reflect what funding is

still available to expend. Bekie Leslie reviewed the change pages to address Commissioner

Constance’s questions.

***Commissioner Deutsch*** *made a**Motion to approve the amendment to the FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), FFY 20 – FFY 21 FTA Task 8 – Transit and Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Planning, adjusting the FFY 20 to reflect remaining encumbrances and updating the following allocation received from FDOT. The Motion allows for transmittal of the amendment to FDOT and allows staff to make minor changes and adjustments as needed (including minor funding adjustments) based upon input received from FDOT.* ***Commissioner Constance*** *seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.*

**13. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) - Final SR 776 Presentation**

Gary Harrell introduced Vitor Suguri who gave a presentation updating MPO Board Members on an earlier SR 776 discussion. The final SR 776 Corridor Study is a 180-page report, and there is also over 1000 pages of supporting data. No changes to recommendations or priorities were made in the formal draft since the previous presentation.

Vitor Suguri described how this Corridor Study was initiated by FDOT District One to address congestion, mobility, and safety issues along SR 776 in Charlotte County and develop recommendations for improvement strategies to benefit the users of the corridor. The study limits are from the Sarasota County Line to US 41. The objective of this study is to conduct safety, operational, and multimodal analysis and develop and prioritize intersection-specific improvements for the short-, mid-, and long-term periods. It should be noted that this study did not evaluate the widening of SR 776.

To achieve this goal, the Study Team examined several key elements including existing and future traffic volumes, field observations, historical crash data, operational analysis results, stakeholder input, programmed and planned improvements, and FDOT/FHWA guidelines.

The recommended improvements included an array of traditional and innovative options ranging from the addition of turn lanes, innovative intersection types, operational, safety, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), multimodal, lighting, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), and planned improvements for both the auto and non-auto modes (pedestrians, bicycles, and transit).

The Study started in November 2020 and was completed in July 2021. The Study Team presented the final recommendations to the TAC and CAC on September 29, 2021 and they recommended the MPO Board endorse the Study. The Study presented includes comments received from the TAC and CAC members. The finalized report will be used in the TIP and LRTP to incorporate the study findings.

Commissioner Tiseo asked if the SR 776 Study had been extended to include Veterans Blvd. Secretary Nandam stated that $120,000 has been budgeted by FDOT to complete a separate Veterans Blvd. study.

Vitor Suguri noted that 24 intersections had been included in the SR 776 Corridor Study. Commissioner Constance commented that neighborhood connections would need to be handled by the County. Vitor Suguri stated that some of these connections already existed. Commissioner Constance observed that often bridges would be required and asked which agency would cover these costs. Secretary Nandam stated that with these off-system improvements, requests should be made through the MPO Board. Commissioner Tiseo pointed to the Sunseeker Resort area example as a display of cooperative efforts among agencies. Secretary Nandam noted that history shows that not all solutions are on the state highway system, and organizations also must figure out the local network around it.

Commissioner Constance raised a question on intersection priorities. He stated that the SR 776 study and its data is still a fluid document and wondered about the ability to make adjustments. Vitor Suguri agreed that it was not a static document, so change can be made as needed. A timeline question arose regarding the Veterans Blvd Study which was now extending from US 41 to Loveland Blvd. Vitor Suguri stated that it would take as much time as needed, roughly one year.

Secretary Nandam stated that FDOT will take the lead to do the Veterans Blvd. study.

***Commissioner Deutsch*** *made a motion to approve MPO Board Resolution # 2021-07 to support the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) – Final SR 776 Study and authorizing the MPO Chair to sign the Resolution.* ***Commissioner Constance*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**14. Baynard Drive Discussion**

Gary Harrell stated that FDOT had proposed a project for resurfacing US 41 from Payne St. to Rio Villa Drive. As part of the resurfacing project, FDOT has proposed improvements to median crossings at several intersections. One proposal is to close the median crossing at Rio Villa Drive which would necessitate drivers desiring to travel north on US 41 to first go south and then make a U-turn at the next median opening. The other option is for drivers on Rio Villa Drive to travel north on Baynard Drive to Aqui Esta Drive and use the traffic signal to turn north on US 41.

Baynard Drive is a Charlotte County road and is a narrow two-lane road in poor shape. The City of Punta Gorda has requested Charlotte County look at Baynard Drive for improvements as it is expected to experience increased traffic once the US 41 median at Rio Villa Drive is closed. This discussion was held at the request of MPO Board members so that possible solutions and a recommended way forward to this challenge might be found.

Gary Harrell noted that the MPO was being used as a forum for discussion, despite Baynard Drive being a County road. Commissioner Tiseo observed that direction needs to be given to local staffs. Gary Harrell stated that staff had already been meeting. Commissioner Deutsch noted that the process has started and will provide recommendations.

The map of the area was displayed. Commissioner Constance inquired if the median still would be closed at US 41 and whether traffic studies had been done. Robert Fakhri reported that 93 cars had used the median during the day in a recent Charlotte County study. Commissioner Constance stated that he was looking for more specificity. He wanted to see the time of day at that location as well as crossings at Aqui Esta Drive. County staff was currently doing traffic counts. Commissioner Constance stated that he didn’t agree with data collection in a vacuum. He stressed that counting the number of left turns in the area was needed. John Elias and Ravi Kamarajugadda described staff efforts including the placement of two cameras at both locations (Aqui Esta Drive/Baynard Drive and Rio Villa Drive/Baynard Drive). Additional information would be forthcoming. Secretary Nandam wanted to make certain that all intersections were examined. One issue was that Baynard Drive is not designed to handle heavy traffic.

Mayor Matthews described her numerous conversations with FDOT staff on this issue and noted that she had forwarded approximately 50-75 emails from concerned residents. At least two-thirds of them did not want the median closed. She characterized the situation as a combination of a lot of problems. She had stood for a half hour with FDOT staff and observed that traffic backs up for several blocks, especially in season. The median closure would result in traffic being diverted on Baynard Drive to Aqui Esta Drive to make the left turn. She stated that residents feel safer turning with a traffic light. Businesses in that corridor get major truck traffic plus large RVs use the storage area there. The road needs widening since it has no shoulders and is barely passable with two cars. She requested that FDOT consider installing a signal at Rio Villa Drive. Secretary Nandam noted that traffic doesn’t warrant a traffic signal at that location. Safety is FDOT’s major priority. The safest alternatives were being recommended. Mayor Matthews did not believe that only 93 cars transiting the area was the norm. Commissioner Tiseo observed that there were similar issues with access roads on US 41. Mayor Matthews noted that they were wider. Commissioner Tiseo noted that these roadways were hard to rectify given their design. Mayor Matthews noted that Aqui Esta Drive was a main ingress road in and out of Punta Gorda Isles. Commissioner Tiseo remarked that Baynard Drive is not on FDOT’s roadway system, and staffs are working together and would provide solutions. John Elias stated that staffs had met and discussed: gathering data, preventing parking along Baynard Drive, drainage improvements and widening. The need for a bicycle facility was the only new topic. Mayor Matthews noted that bike paths on Baynard Drive might not be warranted, given the bike path on the east side of US 41. Commissioner Constance stated that the timing of the light at Aqui Esta Drive was concerning. He felt that cars would be backed up and would be at the mercy of the traffic signal timing. He felt that on demand timing is troublesome. He agreed to discuss with the issue with County staff post-meeting

**15. Review Committee for General Planning Consultant (GPC) Recommendations**

Gary Harrell described how periodically the MPO may require the services of a General Planning Consultant (GPC) to provide support to the MPO transportation planning activities set

forth in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The contract term limit for the GPC services is three (3) years. The support of the Consultants may include aiding the MPO staff for work assigned on a task basis in the development of the 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan and other MPO related planning efforts as directed by the MPO Board. The support could include providing technical assistance and related public participation activities in transportation planning relative to GIS; scenario planning; transit systems planning; and development of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). The consultant(s) will also assist the MPO staff by providing additional resources to accomplish assignments authorized by the MPO Board consistent with its UPWP. The scope of services for each assigned task may be done by the consultant(s) under one or more GPC contracts.

A Review Committee consisting of Chairs of TAC, CAC, BPAC and two members of the MPO Staff ranked the four (4) consultants responses based upon: Firm’s Credentials (20 points); Qualifications of Person Assigned to Project (25 points); Previous Performance on Similar Jobs (20 points); Ability to Complete on Time and Within Budget (25 points); References (5 points) and Office Location (5 points). All consultants are pre-qualified to do business in the State of Florida.

The MPO received proposals from four Consultants interested in providing GPC services. Review Committee members reviewed and scored all four Consultants proposals based on the Criteria outlined in the Request for Proposals (RFP). The Review Committee recommended that the MPO Staff take the results from this initial ranking to the TAC/CAC for their review of the process and that the top three Consultants firms be presented to the MPO Board for their consideration at the October 18th MPO Board meeting. The Review Committee also recommended to cancel the Oral presentations that was scheduled for September 20, 2021 because there was a clear consensus for the top three firms.

At their September 29, 2021 meetings, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) and October 7, 2021 BPAC meeting, recommended the MPO Board approve the top three professional consulting firms, as presented, and authorize the MPO Chair to sign said contracts. The top three firms recommended by the Review Committee’s based upon their qualifications are listed below in ranking order include:

1. Kimley Horn & Associates
2. Tindale-Oliver & Associates
3. VHB & Associates

***Commissioner Deutsch*** *made a motion to approve the three professional consulting firms for general planning consultant services, as presented and to authorize the MPO Chair to sign these three GPC contracts.* ***Commissioner Constance*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

16: Draft 2022 MPO Legislative Position Statement

Gary Harrell noted that the 2022 Florida Legislative Session meets earlier than normal this year. This item was being brought to the Board for adoption of the Annual 2022 MPO

Legislative Position Statement prior to the start of the Session. When adopted by the Board, this position statement will be used to set the MPO’s legislative platform for advocacy in the 2022 Florida Legislative Session. The Board’s Legislative Position Statement will be provided, at a minimum, to the area’s Legislative Delegation to assist them in accurately identifying what the MPO’s position is on issues that affect transportation planning. The Legislative Delegation may use this information when considering legislation affecting the MPO. The MPO Legislative Position Statement focuses on those issues most relevant to the MPO.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC) drafted a recommended Legislative Position Statement to be considered by the MPO Boards. In previous years, the MPO Board had added:

* Designation of I-75 throughout Florida as a Purple Heart Highway
* Support for adding CR 74 (Bermont Road from US 17 to the Glades County Line) to the state roadway system to make it eligible for the State’s Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) funding.
* Allowing local, regional, and statewide advisory boards to conduct business utilizing virtual quorums while still providing the opportunity for public participation.
* Ensures adequate transportation planning funding is provided for State required planning products such as the five-year update to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP); Est. $400,000.

***The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO supports Federal legislation that:***

* Ensures adequate transportation planning funding is provided for Federally required planning products such as the five-year update to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP); Est $400,000.

The Draft 2022 MPO Legislative Position Statement was provided.

No State or Federal funds were used in the preparation of this Legislative Position Statement.

***Commissioner Deutsch*** *made a motion to approve the 2022 MPO State and Federal Legislative Position Statement, authorizing its distribution to the area’s Legislative Delegation and others.* ***Mayor Matthews*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**17. Public Comments**

Richard Russell, a citizen from Port Charlotte, had heard the MPO Board’s earlier comments under Agenda Item #9 regarding the future Sunseeker Resort/Whiskey Joe’s area of at the northern end of the US 41 bridges. He proposed a solution to condemn the Race Trac gas station and make a T-intersection. He noted that Main Street is another issue, and he understood that there would be a traffic signal there. He also stated that marine life and water

quality is at risk if Mosaic gets rezoned. He wanted DeSoto County to be urged to vote against the rezoning and asked everyone to support the upcoming rally to inform the public.

**18. Staff Comments**

Gary Harrell said that a CAC volunteer member was still needed for the West County area, as well as a disabled representative for the Charlotte County Transportation Local Coordinating Board (LCB). He noted that this would be his last meeting. He remarked that public service is extremely necessary and satisfying. He appreciated his almost 50 years in public service.

**19. Member Comments**

Commissioner Constance thanked Gary Harrell for his dedication and public service, calling him a consummate professional. He noted that the MPO also would be well served with Mr. Harris taking over as MPO Director.

Mayor Matthews stated that it had been her pleasure to work with Gary Harrell who had been exemplary in his job. She appreciated the training that he had provided to her. It was her desire to continue working with the MPO.

Commissioner Deutsch thanked Gary Harrell for remaining for additional months as the MPO hired a new director and wished him the best of luck. He asked that consideration be given to the signalization for Cochran at Veterans Blvd, as well as Forrest Nelson at US 41. He also stressed the importance of finding ways to cross the Myakka River in the West County area.

Commissioner Constance thanked Gary Harrell for agreeing to stay longer during the MPO Director hiring process. Such dedication spoke to his professionalism.

Commissioner Tiseo joked that the MPO Board had said farewell to Mr. Harrell so often that it needed to be a permanent agenda item. He noted that he wanted to say again how impressed he was with the way Gary Harrell could navigate the technical issues. He observed that Gary Harrell’s work reflected in the staffs’ work as well. The staff was very productive while functioning as a small group. They knew where to find the money and had brought in millions in funding. He wished Gary Harrell “Bon voyage.”

**20. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:49 P.M. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, December 16, 2021 (**a revised date**) at 2:00 p.m. at the Murdock Administration Center, 18500 Murdock Circle, Building B, Room #119, Port Charlotte, Florida.