

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA**

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 16, 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**

Commissioner Ken Doherty, BCC

Wayne Gaither, FDOT

Victoria Peters, FDOT

Mark Mathes, FDOT

Steven Davis, FDOT

Babuji Ambikapathy, VHB

Jim Chandler, Englewood Christian Church

Charlie Counsil, CAC Chair

Mitchell Austin, City of Punta Gorda, TAC Chair

Beaumont Hayner, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design

John Elias, Charlotte County Public Works

Robert Fakhri, Charlotte County Public Works

Patty Huff, Adventure Cycling Association/USBR 15

Richard Russell, Citizen

John Everson, Citizen

Donna Robichaud, Citizen

Joan Cromence, Citizen

Monica Richardson, Citizen

Ruth Brooks, Citizen/Bermont Road

Tom Ansley, Citizen/Bermont Road

J. Ansley, Citizen/Bermont Road

Dan Sutphin, Sun Newspapers

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE VIRTUALLY**

Linda Sposito, City of Punta Gorda

Kerry Irons, Adventure Cycling Association/USBR 15

Vitor Suguri, FDOT

Addie Clark, Kraemer

Lori Barnes

Becca Bonds

##### **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 delivered the invocation.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

D’Juan Harris described two additions to Agenda Item #10 Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report: (1) at the beginning, FDOT – Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) Update, and (2) under Joint Local and FDOT Discussion, C. Bermont Road (CR-74) Safety Discussion – FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri - Charlotte County. The Agenda Item #10 handout and TSMO presentation was distributed to MPO Board Members and posted to the MPO website. Additionally, it was noted that the BPAC Report had already been reviewed at the previous MPO Board Meeting and would not be repeated.

***Commissioner Deutsch*** *made a motion to approve the addition of revised Agenda Item #10 and deletion of the BPAC Report.* ***Commissioner Herston*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**5. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

John Everson spoke on the issue of US 41/Melbourne Street (Sunseeker Resort and anticipated Whiskey Joe’s area) traffic flow. Among his recommendations was a feed lane with a barrier at northbound US 41. He provided MPO staff with a [conceptual drawing](https://ccmpo.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/05%2016%202022%20MPO%20Meeting/Citizen%20map%20of%20melborne%20interchange.pdf) of his proposal.

Tom Ansley spoke regarding the passing dump truck noise level at the US 17/Bermont Road intersection as it adversely impacts approximately 200 Lakewood Village residents. He described a large number of dump trucks transiting the area of US 17 between Bermont Road and I-75 and astronomical noise levels (continuous 72 decibels) due to truck acceleration and deceleration even in the middle of the night. He also noted the vibration of items on the walls of his home.

Richard Russell of Port Charlotte also spoke regarding the US 41/Melbourne Street traffic issue. He suggested shifting southbound traffic trying to reach Whiskey Joe’s, condemning the Chevron gas station and creating a signalized service area. He stressed the need for a long-range solution to this problem.

**6. PUBLIC MEETING; FY 2022/2023 – FY 2023/2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

D’Juan Harris reviewed the Final FY 2023 - FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)/ Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement, which describes transportation planning activities and establishes the MPO budget for the fiscal years spanning from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2024. Included in the UPWP is a description of work to be accomplished and the cost estimates to carry out each work task activity. Federal and State regulations govern the types of activities that are eligible for federal and state funding.

Following approval of the Draft UPWP/Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement at the March 21, 2022 MPO Board Meeting, the Draft FY 2023 - FY 2024 UPWP was submitted to the appropriate reviewing agencies for comments. Comments received from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) were addressed and have been incorporated in this final UPWP.

As part of the UPWP process, the MPO was required to advertise that a Public Meeting would be held to solicit public input before the MPO Board adopted the UPWP. The MPO advertised twice within the past 30 days that a Public Meeting would be held at the May 16, 2022 MPO Board Meeting. Following the Public Meeting, a roll call vote was required to adopt the UPWP.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) have reviewed the document at their respective April 13, 2022 meetings and recommended that this UPWP be adopted by the MPO Board.

***Commissioner Constance*** opened the Public Meeting. No member of the public spoke.

***Commissioner Tiseo*** *made a**Motion to close the Public Meeting.* ***Mayor Matthews*** *seconded the Motion, and it carried unanimously.*

***Commissioner Tiseo*** *made a**Motion to adopt the Final FY 2023 – FY 2024 Unified Planning*

*Work Program (UPWP)/Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement and authorize the*

*MPO Chair to sign the Authorizing Resolution and transmit the document to FDOT. The motion*

*should allow staff to make minor changes and adjustments based on comments and input*

*received.* ***Mayor Matthews*** *seconded the Motion, and it carried unanimously. A roll call*

*vote was taken, and the Motion passed unanimously.*

**7. PUBLIC MEETING: Final FY 2023 – FY 2027 Transportation Improvement Program**

**(TIP)**

Federal and State legislation requires MPO’s 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’s Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The Draft Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO TIP for FY 2022/2023 – FY 2026/2027 is attached. The MPO Board adopted the project priorities listed in this TIP on May 17, 2021. The TIP will be submitted to FDOT for review no later than July 15TH 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 1ST of each year. Approval of the STIP allows leveraging of federal funding for metropolitan areas.

The Technical and Citizens’ Advisory Committees formally reviewed and recommended MPO Board adoption of the FY 2022/2023 – FY 2026/2027 TIP as presented at their April 13, 2022 meetings. Since then, MPO Staff received updated Transportation Performance Measures (TPM) fact sheets, TPM methodology and a data sources memo from FDOT which are addressed in the TIP. The TIP presented also included the updated Work Program (WP) snapshot summaries MPO Staff received on April 14, 2022.

The summary of changes to the current TIP are listed below:

* Section II – 2022-2026 Summary of Additions, Rescheduling and Deletions – Deleted
* Section IV – Updated Performance Measures & Work Program Snapshot dated April 21, 2022 (*Staff is looking for guidance from Charlotte County Transit to update Section 6 and Section 7, highlighted in Yellow*)
* Section VII - Updated Transit Projects WP Snapshot dated April 21, 2022
* Section VIII-Updated Aviation Projects WP Snapshot dated April 21, 2022

As part of the TIP process, the MPO was required to advertise that a Public Meeting would be held to solicit public input before the MPO Board adopts the TIP. The MPO advertised twice within the past 30 days that a Public Meeting would be held at the May 16, 2022 MPO Board Meeting. Following the Public Meeting, a roll call vote was required to adopt the TIP.

***Commissioner Constance*** opened the Public Meeting.

No member of the public spoke.

***Commissioner Tiseo*** *made a**Motion to close the Public Meeting.* ***Commissioner Deutsch*** *seconded the Motion, and it carried unanimously.*

***Commissioner Tiseo*** *made a**Motion to adopt the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*

*for FY 2022/2023 – FY 2026/2027 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.* ***Mayor Matthews***

*seconded the Motion, and it carried unanimously. A roll call vote was taken, and the*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

**8. 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 thanked John Everson for his interesting ideas, including the use of a barrier wall. He noted that FDOT had indicated that there may not be enough Right-Of-Way (ROW) at that location. He also observed that a traffic light eventually would be located a short distance to the north of the location at the Sunseeker Resort. He stated that a very long turn lane at that light may be the solution. He noted that other issues raised under Agenda Item #5 Public Comments would be addressed later in the meeting.

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

CAC Chair Charlie Counsil reviewed topics discussed at the April 13, 2022, CAC Meeting where a quorum had been present. He announced two CAC vacancies, one in South County and one in West County.

CAC Members had discussed under their County Report, the FDOT proposal to eliminate the left turn option at Rio Villa Drive and the US 41 median. It was noted that an alternate route along Baynard Drive is deteriorating, cracking and collapsing. There was also concern about the troublesome area where Baynard Drive and Aqui Esta Drive intersect. In this area, efforts to navigate are complex, and the layout is strange. This area is a major ingress and egress for Punta Gorda Isles. CAC Members expressed concern where FDOT’s action (Rio Villa Drive left turn median closure) could create a problem on a local street.

CAC Members had also received an FDOT report from Tanya Merkle regarding the proposed new I-75 interchange, which recently had received media attention and combined review by local governments. Additionally, the CAC Members had unanimously endorsed the MPO’s draft UPWP and TIP. Also discussed was the update to the US Bicycle Route 15. Charlie Counsil commented on the altered route approved by the City of Punta Gorda, noting that it made sense, and CAC Members were looking forward to it moving ahead,

CAC Members were impressed with the draft of the Veterans Blvd Study and the amount of study done by FDOT in its analysis. A salient point was the lack of turning ability on Veterans Blvd at Loveland Blvd. The CAC was assured that the concern would be addressed.

Chair Constance questioned if the traffic flow for the Punta Gorda area of US 41 and Rio Villa Drive had ever been on an MPO Board agenda in the past. Mayor Matthews did not believe that it had, except as reviewed as part of FDOT’s US 41 Vision Study. Mayor Matthews stated that an unintended consequence in this area was also numerous accidents at Aqui Esta Drive and US 41 where vehicles in the northbound US 41 left turn lane were often stuck extending into the US 41 left “through traffic” lane. She noted that it was a massive, horrible mess that would only get worse as development progressed. She reiterated that this was one of only two ingress/egress routes for Punta Gorda Isles. She requested that FDOT associates listen to these concerns. Commissioner Constance requested that the topic be added to the agenda moving forward. He stressed that nothing should happen at the intersection until the left turn extension on Aqui Esta Drive was addressed, since currently full repercussions were unknown. Mayor Matthews noted that this was a big issue of citizen concern.

Secretary Nandam clarified FDOT’s position regarding traffic in this area. He noted that in response to Mayor Matthews’ concerns regarding the insufficient northbound US 41 left turn lane at Aqui Esta Drive, FDOT would address the problem of lane storage as part of a resurfacing project that included the intersection improvement. Construction would commence soon. Secondly, he noted that the median opening at Rio Villa Drive would not be completely closed, but rather restricted to “left turns only” out of Rio Villa Drive onto US 41 southbound. FDOT staff had done a comprehensive evaluation looking at both intersections together. Commissioner Constance questioned the timing of the traffic data collection to see if it reflected high season demand. Secretary Nandam stated that it was likely tied to high season and conducted pre-pandemic. Commissioner Constance appreciated this but felt that the data might be stale at this time.

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

TAC Chair Mitchell Austin described the April 13, 2022 TAC meeting as reflected in the agenda items, including UPWP/TIP/Project Priorities/US BR 15.

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

MPO Board Members pulled this item under Agenda Item #4, since they already had received a briefing from BPAC Chair Pauline Klein on the February 24, 2022, BPAC Meeting at the March 21, 2022 MPO Board Meeting.

**9. 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, including details of a recent Honor Flight, discussion on County impact fees, hangars, and other upcoming projects. Commissioner Tiseo inquired about the self-serve fuel facility lease. Commissioner Herston stated that it currently was being constructed under the general aviation side of the Punta Gorda Airport which he believed would own it. Mayor Matthews described the

excitement of attending the return of the local Honor Flight (73 veterans and their guardians) on Saturday, May 14, 2022. This was the first Honor Flight departing and returning out of the Punta Gorda Airport. The reception included several hundred enthusiastic attendees. She characterized it as awe-inspiring and noted that event video was posted on her Facebook page.

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, Northbound US 41 Vision Study, intersection treatments as they relate to the US 17 repaving project, Gilchrist Park/Harborwalk Phase II project, wayfinding signage in the downtown area, speeding and passing vehicles in a no passing zone on Tripoli Blvd. between Madrid and Monaco due to FDOT closure of the median at Madrid and US 41 (ties to the need for a traffic light on Burnt Store Road at the Home Depot exit driveway to divert traffic and improve safety), a proposed joint meeting between the City Council and the Charlotte County Airport Authority, and a new sidewalk maintenance risk assessment and repair program to identify City liability concerns.

She provided an update to her report by stating that wayfinding signage was now almost complete.

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

Commissioner Tiseo mentioned two tragic fatalities that occurred recently on Burnt Store Road in the earthen collapse at a job site. He described this as very unfortunate and offered prayers for the families of the two deceased young men.

Commissioner Tiseo was happy to report that the Olean Blvd. project was close to completion. He also noted that the FDOT corridor traffic study now includes Veterans Blvd. He reported that the study was still on track and would impact next steps on Veterans Blvd. Commissioner Constance noted that there was no language regarding four lanes in the area of the Flamingo Blvd. connection at Collingswood Blvd. Commissioner Tiseo responded that the BCC has made it clear. John Elias corroborated that the project was in the County’s schedule.

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

1. **FDOT – Transportation Systems Management and Operations Update**

Mark Mathes and Steven Davis gave a Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) presentation. It was also posted on the MPO’s website: [STMC Operations Review (ccmpo.com)](https://ccmpo.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/05%2016%202022%20MPO%20Meeting/2022-05-16%20draft%20RTMC%20Operations%20Review_Charlotte_MPO.pdf)

Steven Davis noted that FDOT’s Arterial Operations staff was working closely with County Staff on many projects.

Commissioner Deutsch mentioned problem intersections at both US 41/Forrest Nelson Blvd, and SR 776/Flamingo Blvd.

Commissioner Herston asked Steven Davis about signal timing for posted speed limits and how these signals are switched to an actuated side street system during various times of day.

Discussion followed regarding the history and safety concerns on right turn lanes at the intersection of Harbor View Road and US 41 northbound (lack of ability to turn right on red and resultant traffic stacking). FDOT Staff pledged to work on alternates to Harbor View Road and find a solution to the stacking of cars on Harbor View Road. Some of the suggestions received from Commissioners were to allow at least one right lane turn on red. FDOT Staff indicated that they will take a look at this intersections with proposed recommendations. A similar right turn lane situation exists at US 41 and Olean Blvd, but the sight lines are better, since they are not as skewed. FDOT staff pledged to report on Olean Blvd. and US 41 signal flow and traffic data collection at the next MPO Board Meeting in coordination with County staff.

Commissioner Deutsch asked FDOT staff about issues with signals running through complete cycles that prevented timely turning ability for drivers awaiting intersection access. Mark Mathes stated that this adjustment could be accomplished with delay on left plus right turn detector techniques.

Discussion followed regarding signal timing along the SR 776 Corridor. Some adjustments on side streets would be revisited with County staff since signals were not in free mode but rather a coordinated pattern. The signal installation at Gulfstream Blvd. project would be ready before school began in the Fall.

It was reported that FDOT District One was in the process of connecting to local Transportation Management Centers (TMCs) and their signal and video connections. This connection was not fully functional yet. It was envisioned as a timely staff force multiplier that would progress to an active arterial management and then, corridors. Currently, a dashboard was displayed at the bottom left of screens for major incidents along the freeway. An example was given of a major incident closing I-75 where a need developed to make a route timing change within two minutes to adapt to traffic flow. FDOT now oversees all of Sarasota and Manatee Counties with arterial management. Given its proven success, Secretary Nandam recommended that his staff work with County staff to determine what the Charlotte County community desired.

Also discussed were an interstate incidents report, the Road Ranger program, Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC) large wreckers, Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Teams Wrong Way Driving Updates with LED sign activation, Traffic Vision artificial intelligence camera, and the Road Ranger Truck Mounted Camera (a District One pilot program).

Commissioner Herston inquired whether cameras could do traffic counts when an intersection is impacted with interstate closure. Mark Mathes responded that currently this was not possible with the present cameras.

It was also noted that District One has connected vehicle plans currently underway.

Following the TSMO presentation, Secretary Nandam reported that Governor DeSantis had appointed former FDOT District Five Secretary Jared Perdue as the Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation and Bill Watts as the new Assistant FDOT Secretary.

Secretary Nandam reported that under new Federal allocations, Florida would receive a 35% increase in formula allocations. He forewarned MPO Board Members that projects would be impacted by inflation, supply chain issues and labor shortages. Therefore, cost estimates would be increasing, and the next five-year program would be impacted. Perhaps the increases in revenue would help stabilize the program. Infrastructure Bill discretionary funding could be sought on projects like Harbor View Road improvements with more opportunities to go after those kinds of programs.

Victoria Peters, alternate for Tanya Merkle who could not be present, reported on an upcoming District One Safe Speed Workshop on June 14, 2022 from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at the FDOT Fort Myers Southwest Area Office (SWAO) Building on Daniels Parkway behind the rest area. It would be repeated on September 13, 2022 at the Manatee Operations Center.

Victoria Peters described the 5-Year Work Program Cycle, noting that this summer, there would be the new fifth year FY 2028 developed with new projects recently received from the MPOs.

**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)**

Victoria Peters stated that FDOT Traffic Operations was working on this project and had just given their update earlier in the meeting

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

Victoria Peters noted that this item was also part of the earlier Traffic Operations briefing. It would be brought back at a later date in light of ongoing discussions with County staff.

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

Victoria Peters stated that this project had been removed from the Work Program due to lack of funding. FDOT would look for opportunities to reinsert it into the Work Program.

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

Victoria Peters stated that a meeting was held on April 6, 2022 to facilitate stakeholder governmental staff coordination on this initiative. The stakeholders were requested by FDOT to

coordinate and develop one or more alternatives. Then a feasibility study would be done by FDOT.

Commissioner Tiseo asked FDOT staff about the possible timeline for Work Program restoration of the SR 776 at the Charlotte Sports Park project, given extensive feedback received on this issue. Wayne Gaither stated that the project was pulled to balance the budget and FDOT would make every effort to move deferrals back into the Work Program in a timely manner. Secretary Nandam stated that the design phase priced at $187,000 should be restored. He noted that other SR 776 intersections identified will need prioritizing by the MPO Board. It was uncertain where the Sports Park project would fall on the MPO’s prioritized list.

Commissioner Constance commented on the I-75 Interchange, stressing the need to analyze how it will cross over to Kings Hwy. He speculated that Commercial Way could be used, or a connection could be accomplished along Water Authority land. D’Juan Harris stated that a coordination meeting would be held on June 9, 2022, with staff from the stakeholder governments. Commissioner Constance noted that all areas under discussion are located in DeSoto County, so there was a need to reach out to the Heartland TPO. John Elias remarked that high-level conceptual discussions had already included DeSoto County. Commissioner Tiseo stated that a joint meeting between the Charlotte County BCC and the City of North Port would be held and requested that DeSoto County be included in that conversation.

**Joint Local and FDOT Discussion**

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

Victoria Peters commented that FDOT will look at all possible funding opportunities. FDOT will continue to meet with local staff. Commissioner Constance described a new improvement regarding infrastructure. He stated that a main from Charlotte Harbor Utilities plus a sewer line would be addressed on the front end of the roadway improvement effort.

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

Victoria Peters noted that there had been much feedback and discussion regarding this issue. Staffs would need to coordinate. John Elias stated that the County staff had met with the contractor to eliminate landscaping, including the removal of native and non-native material. Commissioner Constance agreed with the assessment that a geometry issue exists with drivers

flying while exiting the northbound US 41 Peace River Bridge. Commissioner Tiseo commented on the proposal to close Melbourne Street that was floated. He remarked that unintended

consequences of closing it may evolve. At the last MPO Board Meeting, Secretary Nandam had mentioned the possible closure of the southbound US 41 left turn lane at Melbourne Street, while

allowing the use of alternate ways to access the commercial and residential area. He stated that Charlotte County will need to take the lead on the roadway. Commissioner Tiseo clarified that FDOT had not ordered the closure of the roadway. Secretary Nandam agreed that it was only a possibility, but the concept must be vetted. He confirmed that a signal cannot be put at the foot of the US 41 bridge. Commissioner Constance observed that signage could be used on US 41 to

direct traffic appropriately. Mayor Matthews confirmed that it was not the City’s position to add traffic in the downtown area due to south bound US 41 drivers’ inability to make a left turn prior to bridge crossing. Commissioner Constance stated that the traffic light at the Sunseeker Resort should funnel traffic safely to Kings Hwy.

1. **Bermont Road (CR 74) Safety Discussion (FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri- Charlotte County)**

All three MPO Board Members who represent Charlotte County and John Elias commented on the need for safety improvements on Bermont Road (CR 74). County Commissioners had directed Charlotte County staff to do a specific workshop on Bermont Road in the near future.

Commissioner Deutsch discussed the long term need for additional bridge crossings at both the Myakka and Peace Rivers. Secretary Nandam observed that the path forward is to get these future crossings into the Comprehensive Plan and the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). He noted that a Bermont Road resurfacing project will evaluate all US 17 intersections from I-75 to Bermont Road.

Commissioner Constance asked John Elias about how a mistake could be avoided on a Charlotte County land purchase in the proposed interchange areas at both Yorkshire Street and Raintree Boulevard. John Elias stated that Charlotte County staff is working with Administration to set aside a significant portion of the Bachmann tract where it aligns with Veterans Boulevard. Secretary Nandam recommended coordination between the FDOT team and County staff.

Regarding Bermont Road, Commissioner Constance inquired how it might be placed on the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) list (as had been successfully done with Piper Road). Secretary Nandam stated that Bermont’s traffic numbers did not qualify in the past. He indicated that he would ask the question again.

**11. Consent Agenda:**

1. **Approval of Minutes: March 21, 2022 Meeting**
2. **MPO Board Resolution Authorizing FY 2021/2022 Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Planning Grant Agreement**

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

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

Laks Gurram reviewed new material that was incorporated into the document since the last MPO Board Meeting.

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, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Congestion Management/Transportation System Management (CM/TSM) projects, and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) projects. Attachment 1 is the proposed 2022 Project Priorities list.

At the April 13, 2022, TAC/CAC Meeting the Charlotte County Staff made minor revisions and additions to the list. Below are the proposed changes:

1. Under Highways #4, SR 776 the project limits are from Midway Blvd. to SR 776
2. Under TSM/CM # 3, SR 776 @ Flamingo Blvd., Charlotte County Staff is requesting funds for CST
3. Under TSM/CM # 4, Add signal @ SR 776 & Biscayne Blvd

***Commissioner Tiseo*** *made a Motion to adopt the 2022 Project Priorities including the Joint TRIP Project Priorities with Charlotte and Sarasota/Manatee MPO, and Lee County MPO for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program Cycle.* ***Mayor Matthews*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**13. U.S. Bicycle Route 15 Alignment – Discussion**

D’Juan Harris introduced Patricia (Patty) Huff from Adventure Cycling Association, a non-profit member organization focused on travel by bicycle, provided history and background of the US Bicycle Route (USBR) System. Ms. Huff presented draft proposed alignments of USBR 15 in Charlotte, Lee and Collier Counties for public input. The existing segment of USBR 15 is 14 miles long from the Georgia State Line to Madison, Florida (Madison County). There is a proposal to extend the USBR 15 Route from Madison to Miami for an additional 496 miles with the route traversing Charlotte, Lee and Collier Counties. The proposed route map and road-by-road direction in Charlotte, Lee and Collier Counties was shown in the presentation.

On January 26, 2022, the City of Punta Gorda approved a Letter of Support for the USBR 15 Route through the city. Approval of this proposal was then forwarded to the MPO Board for their approval. Next, it will move forward to the Charlotte Board of County Commissioners for their approval. BCC approval is needed for FDOT to request the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) designation of USBR 15.

At the April 13, 2022, TAC/CAC meeting, Charlotte County Staff suggested this presentation be made before the Charlotte Board of County Commissioners for their approval. Charlotte County Staff suggested the inclusion of a map to identify the jurisdictional boundaries of USBR 15 in

Charlotte County. The presentation included the recommendations from the TAC/CAC Members and the City of Punta Gorda.

***Commissioner Tiseo*** *made a Motion to approve the proposed route alignment of the USBR 15 Route in Charlotte County.* ***Commissioner Herston*** *seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**14. Veterans Corridor Planning Study - Existing Conditions Presentation**

Wayne Gaither introduced Babuji Ambikapathy of VHB Consultants who provided an informational presentation on the existing conditions of the Veterans Corridor Planning Study.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, is conducting a Corridor Planning Study for Veterans Boulevard between US 41 and Kings Highway in Charlotte County, Florida. The subject corridor is a 6.9‐mile 4-lane divided roadway. The overall objective of this study is to improve mobility, safety, reliability, and connectivity for people who drive, walk, bike, and use transit within the study corridor.

This study will document the following:

1. Existing conditions including corridor characteristics, travel patterns, operational analysis of all modes, and safety assessment
2. Future conditions including traffic forecasts, access management review (for 2045), operational analysis of all modes and safety analysis, to develop potential safety, operational, and multimodal improvements for the Veterans Boulevard corridor. The identified improvements will be prioritized for short-term (2025), mid-term (2035), and long-term (2045) conditions through close coordination with the Project Steering Committee. The proposed recommendations are subject to change and will be implemented by Charlotte County Staff based on the availability of funds.

Based on the results of the Existing and Future conditions analysis recommendations (based on safety, operational, and multi-modal) along Veterans Boulevard within the study limits will be developed. These improvements can include (but are not limited to) signalization, mid-block crosswalks, access management, intersection lighting, basic and enhanced intersection improvements, and improved signage.

The Final Draft will be presented at the July 6, 2022, TAC/ CAC meeting and the July 18, 2022, MPO Board meeting for final review and approval of the recommendations derived the study

Commissioner Tiseo noted that Norman Street was not listed in the study. Although FDOT had not identified it as a key location, he believed that Norman Street should be added, since it was

adversely impacted (unlike the Torrington Street and Orlando Blvd. residential areas where there was access). He had concerns that the MPO Board had not been consulted. Norman Street has a full median cut, while Loveland Blvd. does not have a full cut. Commissioner Constance concurred that including Norman Street made the most sense. He requested that FDOT Staff include Norman Street in the July 18, 2022, MPO Board presentation.

**15. Public Comments**

Richard Russell wondered about what FDOT’s maximum distance for traffic lights is. He felt there was enough distance between his proposed one at Melbourne Street and the future Sunseeker Resort entrance intersection. He also believed that barricades used in the Florida Keys should be studied for Bermont Road. He noted that US41 could benefit from roadway solutions as used in the Clearwater, Florida area. Blinking yellow lights could be utilized so that motorists could proceed and not waste gas. He also stated that Flamingo Blvd. at SR 776 could benefit from a flyover. He also questioned why a member of the Charlotte County School Board was not present on the MPO Board.

Tom Ansley, Lakewood Village resident, expressed his concern regarding Bermont Road, noting that four laning it doesn’t solve his neighborhood’s problem. Their issue is on US 17 and includes truck noise.

Monica Richardson also addressed the major traffic noise problem on Bermont Road. She stated that four laning Bermont Rd would make their issue worse. She described four stop lights present in a very short distance, with trucks reviving up. She pointed out that much of the semitruck traffic was a result of avoiding the interstate weigh station. She noted that a sound wall in front of residential area might be of benefit. She also believed that allowing the US Bicycle Route on that stretch of US 17 would result in fatalities.

Ruth Brooks, Lakewood Village resident, stated that the newspaper article spurred her interest in the Bermont Road situation. She described a recent 20-foot container that a truck dumped in front of their community which may have contained olive oil. Trenches remain on US 17 to absorb this oil, which she said was an eye sore and a safety concern. She counted twelve dump trucks and three semitrucks waiting at the intersection that morning. Besides controlling these dangerous driving conditions, she stressed that additional patrolling was needed. She suggested that cameras be placed at Bermont Road and US 17, since dump trucks frequently sped through red lights, so the situation needed monitoring.

**16. Staff Comments**

D’Juan Harris briefed MPO Board Members on recent activities including:

* Virtual Meeting on March 29, 2022 with communities along Burnt Store Road discussing future development
* Charlotte County Economic Development discussion with Dave Gammon
* I-75 and Yorkshire/Raintree Interchange Coordination on April 6, 2022/next meeting June 9 at North Port City Hall
* Introduction Meeting on April 22, 2022 with Charlotte County Sheriff Bill Prummell
* MPO Staff participation in the Port Charlotte High School Bicycle Safety Event on April 28, 2022 done in response to a student fatality
* Meeting held on May 2, 2022 with former FDOT District One Secretary Billy Hattaway, who is now working for Fehr & Peers
* FDOT District One Vision Zero Workshop at Sarasota-Manatee Operations Center
* Open period for nominations for the Peggy Walters Citizens Mobility Award

D’Juan Harris thanked the MPO Staff for dealing with numerous last-minute additions to the meeting agenda packets. He indicted his appreciation for all of their hard work.

**17. Member Comments**

Commissioner Deutsch stated that there had been a great deal of good information received at the meeting, and he urged all present to drive safely.

Commissioner Tiseo reiterated important items discussed at the meeting: (1) needed involvement of DeSoto County on the interstate exchange issue, (2) requested input from Secretary Nandam on future programming on Bermont Road and (3) the addition of Norman Street. at Veterans Blvd. to the Veterans Blvd. Corridor Planning Study.

Responding to those citizens present who had US 17/Bermont Road intersection noise complaints, Commissioner Tiseo noted that perhaps noise wall installation only could be accomplished at the time of roadway planning. Secretary Nandam confirmed that noise walls are looked at only when roadways are being planned. Commissioner Constance inquired about a situation where a roadway now has greatly increased recent traffic demands and wondered if there would be an opportunity to study it. Secretary Nandam stated that there was no such opportunity to his knowledge, but he offered to check into the issue. Commissioner Tiseo inquired if the four laning of Bermont Road would allow for noise wall study. Because the community fronts the US 17 intersection improvement area, he reasoned that perhaps that could be the opportunity to reassess the noise levels. Commissioner Tiseo noted that the neighborhood is located at a major commerce point. The roadway was never sold as a residential road, but rather zoned in Charlotte County as an agricultural and mining area. As Florida gets busier, more traffic would be converging at this location. Commissioner Tiseo told citizens that they came to the day’s meeting and were heard. He noted that FDOT District One Secretary Nandam would investigate opportunities to further address the issue.

**18. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 5:28 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, July 18, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. at the Charlotte County Administration Center, 18500 Murdock Circle, Building B, Room #119, Port Charlotte, Florida.