




Joint Meeting Minutes
Sarasota/Manatee & Charlotte County-Punta Gorda
Metropolitan Planning Organizations

DATE: Monday, January 23, 2023

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Venice Community Center
 326 South Nokomis Avenue
 Venice, Florida 34285

	<u>Wireless Access Available</u> OPEN WiFi No Password Required
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JOINT MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 23, 2023

1. Call to Order and Confirmation of a Quorum: Joint Chairs

Commissioner Ron Cutsinger, Sarasota/Manatee MPO and Commissioner Christopher G. Constance, MD, Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Commissioner Constance led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Nanette Eubanks, Clerk to the Board, confirmed a quorum was present.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Board

Chair, Commissioner Christopher Constance, MD	Charlotte County
Vice Chair, Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch	Charlotte County
Commissioner Joseph Tiseo	Charlotte County
Commissioner James Herston	Charlotte County Airport Authority
Mayor Lynne Matthews	City of Punta Gorda

Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board

Chair, Commissioner Ron Cutsinger	Sarasota County
Commissioner Joe Neunder	Sarasota County
Commissioner Mark Smith	Sarasota County
Commissioner Kevin Van Ostenbridge	Manatee County
Commissioner Mike Rahn	Manatee County
Commissioner Vanessa Baugh	Manatee County
Vice Mayor Liz Alpert	City of Sarasota
Commissioner Jen Ahern-Koch	City of Sarasota
Vice Chair, Mayor Gene Brown	City of Bradenton
Councilmember Jayne Kocker	City of Bradenton
Commissioner Pete Emrich	City of North Port
Mayor Barbara Langdon	City of North Port
Mayor Shirley Groover Bryant	City of Palmetto
Commissioner Mike Haycock	Town of Longboat Key
Councilmember Mitzie Fiedler	City of Venice
Mayor Judy Titsworth	ITPO
Commissioner Carlos Beruff	Sarasota Manatee Airport Authority

FDOT District One Non-Voting Advisor

Secretary L.K. Nandam



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Sarasota/Manatee MPO Staff

David Hutchinson Executive Director
Ryan Brown, Planning Manager
Nanette Eubanks, Clerk to the Board
David Machado, Fiscal Coordinator
Prakrati Shrivastava, Multimodal Planner
Rachel McClain, Fiscal Technician
Grace Scigousky, Public Involvement Coordinator
Wenonah "Nina" Venter, Senior Planner

Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Staff

D'Juan Harris, MPO Director
Lakshmi N. Gurram, Principal Planner
Bekie Leslie, Administrative Services Coordinator
Betty-Ann Sherer, Planner
Wendy Scott, Planner
Stacy Bjordahl, Assistant County Attorney/MPO Legal

Others

Charlotte County Commissioner Ken Doherty
Former Sarasota County Commissioner Charles Hines, Trust for Public Land
Wayne Gaither, FDOT
Victoria Peters, FDOT
Joshua Jester, FDOT
Robin Birdsong, FDOT
Katie Sherrard, FDOT
Don Naylor, FDOT
Tanya Merkle, FDOT
Joshua Jester, FDOT
Deepika Fields, Stantec (FDOT)
Mitchell Austin, City of Punta Gorda
Paula R. Wiggins, Sarasota County
Megan Lui, Sarasota County Transit
Debbie McDowell, City of North Port
Anthony Friedman, City of North Port
Corinne Arriaga, City of Sarasota
Alvimarie Corales, City of Sarasota
Nikesh Patel, City of Sarasota
Clarke Davis, Manatee County Public Works
Dave Gammon, Charlotte County Economic Development Office
Joshua Hudson, Charlotte County Economic Development Office
Tony Conte, Charlotte County Public Schools
Michael Miller, City of Sanibel (MPO)
Doug Hattaway, Trust for Public Land
Katie White, Office of Greenways and Trails/Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Jerald Bailey, Department of Health
Carmen Monroy, Stantec
Donnie Holcomb, HDR
Colleen McGue, Kimley Horn
Nick Kuhn, Kimley Horn
Ned Baier, Volkert, Inc.
Dianne Quilty, Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO CAC
Alice Haber, Venice CAN
Danny Williams, Public
Rich Garrett, Citizen/Bike Advocate
John Robinson, Citizen/Bike Advocate
Elaine Allen, Sun Newspaper



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2. Public Comment

Charles Hines discussed the Florida Gulf Coast Trail Forum that would follow the Joint Meeting, inviting all to participate.

3. Opening Comments

Chair Constance appreciated the opportunity to hold the joint MPO Meeting.

D’Juan Harris, Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO (CC-PG MPO) Director, noted that per the language listed in both MPO’s Interlocal Agreements, the assembly of both MPO Boards at the meeting was referred to as the Southwest Florida Transportation Planning Alliance. As an added layer of regional planning coordination, both MPOs also had held a Joint Technical Advisory Committee Meeting on January 9, 2023, in Sarasota. A variety of regional transportation planning topics were discussed including:

- Proposed new I-75 interchange
- I-75 North and Central Corridor Master Plan Updates
- Regional Transportation Projects & SUN Trail Updates
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure discussion

David Hutchinson, Sarasota/Manatee MPO (S/M MPO) Executive Director, referred to the 2020 Census new Urbanized Map handout. He described areas of residential overlap in both the Port Charlotte/North Port area and the Bradenton/Sarasota/Venice area. The entire area included approximately 1 million people now, and it was experiencing very high rates of growth. He noted that regional cooperation enables all to obtain better transportation options in the future.

Self-introductions were made by MPO Board Members and staff members.

4. FDOT Update

Victoria Peters from FDOT discussed upcoming public meetings to be held regarding:

- [441942-1 State Road \(SR\) 31 from SR 80 \(Palm Beach Boulevard\) to SR 78 \(Bayshore Road\) Project Development and Environment \(PD&E\) Study \(swflroads.com\)](#)
- I-75 Southwest Connect™ I-75 North Corridor Master Plan from south of State Route (SR) 777 (River Rd.) in Sarasota County to north of Moccasin Wallow Rd. in Manatee County (link to live Q&A session, February 21, 2023, 6 pm-7pm, EST [Registration \(gotowebinar.com\)](#))

She also noted that FDOT had held trainings in Bartow on January 18, 2023 with the morning session focused on grants and the afternoon session dealing with a Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) update.

FDOT District One Secretary L.K. Nandam commented on his new role as statewide FDOT Interim Assistant Secretary for Strategic Development. He anticipated filling this role for the next three months. John Kubler would be substituting for him as Interim FDOT District One Secretary. Commissioner Constance congratulated L.K. Nandam on his new role, while also expressing the desire that he return to his role as head of District One Secretary long term.

5. Regional Discussion Items (May Require Action)

a. Long Range Transportation (LRTP) Projects (Charlotte-Punta Gorda MPO, Sarasota/Manatee MPO)

1. [Proposed New I-75 Interchange at Yorkshire/Raintree and Prerequisite Projects](#)



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Ryan Brown described recent regional meetings and updates to area maps. He noted that prior to the development of an Interstate Justification Report (IJR), an assessment of local roadways and economic development in the area needed to be completed. He referenced a Joint Resolution between the City of North Port and Charlotte County regarding the proposed interchange. Laks Gurram stated that the proposal had been noted in the last three Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) updates. Staff was making certain that the needed connecting roadways were in place for FDOT review.

David Hutchinson stated that when the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Plan Update is finalized, the Cost Feasible Plan should contain these new proposed interchanges at the appropriate phases. Also, the new I-75 studies should include the recommendation to further study new interchanges. Chair Constance believed this was a “common sense” approach. Secretary Nandam noted that the determining factor is the year of need/failures of adjacent interchanges data. That factor would drive when the project is programmed in the pipeline. He stated that FDOT makes every effort to include such items and always considers local input. The ongoing coordination effort on this project is an example of this.

Chair Cutsinger pointed to the population growth of 26,000 annually as evidence that I-75 efforts were already behind. He described the desperate need to address gridlock due to growth in the I-75 corridor. He inquired if there was action needed by the joint MPOs to raise the alarm based upon this dramatic increase. David Hutchinson indicated that the Boards would be hearing more on that during the meeting presentations. Auxiliary lanes were planned for I-75 in Sarasota during prolonged periods of traffic congestion. Mayor Barbara Langdon noted that alternative forms of transportation are needed. Vice Mayor Alpert inquired about any efforts on high-speed rail. Ryan Brown responded that high speed rail was being discussed at statewide meetings.

David Hutchinson commended Secretary Nandam for FDOT’s focus on land use recommendations as tied to transportation planning, especially how to direct self-contained future development. Commissioner Jen Ahern-Koch inquired about the distance between the proposed interchanges. Ryan Brown stated that it was approximately 2.5 miles, and directional options were being studied to provide various alternative traffic flows. It was anticipated that some traffic would be drawn away from the Kings Highway interchange in Charlotte County.

Commissioner Ahern-Koch made a motion for Joint MPO Board Meeting Member consensus regarding the ongoing evaluation of the process and continued support of the proposed new I-75 interchange at Yorkshire/Raintree and prerequisite projects. **Commissioner Herston** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

2. [River Road](#)

Staff provided an update on River Road improvements. The portion of roadway from I-75 to US 41 is currently under construction and will be a much need improvement to the roadway network in South Sarasota County. With the northern segment nearing completion, attention has turned to the southern segment of River Rd from US 41 to Winchester due to an ever-growing population and the need to provide better connectivity to Charlotte County.

This segment is identified as an FDOT Partnership Project in the Sarasota/Manatee MPO 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The program utilizes FDOT Other Roadway (OR) funds and requires a local match in order to access the funds.

In Charlotte County the S. Winchester Blvd project from Placida Rd to SR 776 was completed in 2015 as a four-lane divided roadway. N. Winchester Blvd from SR 776 to S. River Rd was complete in 2003 as a two-lane roadway funded from the 1998 Sales Tax Extension. The N. Winchester Blvd project was contracted and managed by Sarasota County but funded by Charlotte County from sales tax extension tax revenues. The completion of these two segments provides



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a vital link between West County and I-75 for traffic circulation and emergency evacuation. In the current 2045 MPO's 2045 LRTP, intersection improvements were proposed at SR 776 & Winchester Blvd.

This project likely would still need supplemental funds from local, state, and federal sources in order to be programmed in the earlier time band than identified in the 2045 LRTP. Ongoing cooperation amongst all jurisdictions, the private sector, MPOs, and FDOT will be necessary in order to allocate the funds required for this effort.

Chair Constance stated that in the late 1990s, \$12.5 million in funding from Charlotte County was used to fund the roadway connection in Sarasota County. Commissioner Deutsch provided MPO Board Members with an editorial published in the *Charlotte Sun Herald* on Friday, January 20, 2023 (page 4B) entitled "How to fund critical South River Road." He noted an error where Indiana Avenue instead should have been Placida Road. He emphasized the importance of completing River Road in its entirety as a lifesaving evacuation route and described recent problems with the roadway including drainage issues during the passage of Hurricane Ian.

Chair Cutsinger noted that this roadway, which is located in his district, has been a concern from the start. He praised Congressman Steube's action to obtain earmarked funding for the project. There was currently a proposal from a firm to collaborate with a developer. Efforts were underway to bring forth a proposal that would create a design/build package which included \$6 million for the design portion. Fortunately, almost all Right-of-Way (ROW) had been acquired.

b. [Joint Transportation Regional Incentive Program \(TRIP\) Project Priority List](#)

Ryan Brown and Laks Gurram briefly updated Members on the status of the TRIP Project Priority List, which would return to the individual MPO Board Meetings later this year. The strategy was to segment large package projects to obtain funding with the three County areas taking turns with project priority placement on the list. Laks Gurram noted that based upon population, whenever the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO becomes a Transportation Management Area (TMA), additional funding would become available.

Ryan Brown and Laks Gurram indicated that at the January 2021 Joint MPO Board meeting, both MPO Directors recommended the TRIP Priority List ranking based on the current amount of TRIP funds that are distributed throughout District One. They also indicated that neither MPO has received any additional TRIP monies towards the current TRIP Priority List since the recommendation was made. Based on the direction received from the Joint MPO Board, the ranking of the TRIP projects remains as proposed.

Secretary Nandam made the key point that after approval of MPO priority projects, local staff should be directed to apply for the funding.

c. [I-75 Master Plan Central Corridor Study Update & Presentation – Southwest Connect \(FDOT\)](#)

Joshua Jester provided an update on the FDOT Southwest Connect I-75 Master Plan Central Corridor Study. The planning and feasibility study (FPID No.: 448864-1) is from north of Bayshore Rd. (SR 78) in Lee County to south of River Rd. (SR 777) in Sarasota County. The study is evaluating strategies for the mainline and interchanges, including managed lanes, that will improve accessibility, mobility, and safety. Completion of the master plan is scheduled in Summer 2023.

Joshua Jester identified future levels of service (LOS). Funding strategy options were reviewed, as were needed minor signalization improvements slated for the Sumter Blvd. and the Toledo Blade Blvd. interchange areas.



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Regarding the proposed new I-75 interchange (Yorkshire/Raintree), it was reported that staff level local/regional meetings and coordination were ongoing with three options being scrutinized with connections to Veterans Blvd. FDOT had plugged traffic information into the traffic model to see the potential impact on the interstate as a whole (as displayed in a graphic with blue areas showing traffic increases and purple areas indicating traffic decreases). Traffic reduction in volumes at the adjacent interchanges resulted.

Commissioner Herston inquired about how airports were considered. Joshua Jester stated that special analysis was made for airports, universities, and beaches. Additionally, signalization at Veterans Blvd. and Kings Highway was discussed.

Mayor Matthews raised issues of concern in the Punta Gorda area given the enormous amount of construction occurring in South Charlotte County. She commented on the following concerns: (1) traffic issues on the two Peace River Bridge crossings at I-75 and US 41 (demonstrating the need for an additional bridge), (2) growth along Burnt Store Road westward including Burnt Store Marina (with 15,000 homes planned for that corridor), (3) development in the Tuckers Grade area, and (4) growth along both sides of US 17 east of I-75. She urged FDOT to reassess the intersections in South Charlotte County. She described four major accidents in South County last week including a rollover accident in the City of Punta Gorda. Mayor Matthews also noted that US 17 and Jones Loop Road were emerging as major evacuation routes locally and for the City of Cape Coral, and these locations needed to be placed at the forefront.

David Hutchinson stated that FDOT would be presenting an update on the Southwest Connect I-75 Master Plan Northern Corridor Study for the segment from River Road/SR 777 to Moccasin Wallow Road at a future Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board Meeting. Additionally, a public meeting would be held on this project, as well as an additional meeting on the tentative Work Program. Chair Cutsinger agreed with this deferral recommendation. Chair Constance invited Joshua Jester to make a presentation at the next Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Board Meeting.

Secretary Nandam gave a realistic assessment of the costs to accomplish all needed projects, reckoning an \$8 billion price. He noted that there would be interim improvements like signalization projects. He commented that gas tax revenues would not fully cover needed improvements. Therefore, the region must work together to establish priorities. Commissioner Deutsch noted that major road projects do not happen rapidly. He asked when consideration would be given to additional bridge crossings of the Myakka and the Peace Rivers, given gridlock and exponential population growth. Secretary Nandam suggested that when developing the next Long Range Transportation Plan Update (LRTP), MPO staff should evaluate the need for new river crossings as the first step in the process.

d. [Sarasota/Manatee & Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPOs 2021 Joint Meeting Minutes \(For reference purposes only no action required\)](#)

The minutes of the most recent previous meeting of the two MPOs were provided as an informational item.

6. Board Member Comments

- City of Sarasota Vice Mayor Alpert noted the importance of considering more growth in the region.
- Commissioner Constance thanked the Florida Gulf Coast Trail organizers for providing lunch to participants at the follow-on Florida Gulf Coast Trail Forum and recognized several elected officials present.

7. Adjournment of Joint Regional Meeting

Commissioner Constance appreciated the meeting's hot topic discussions. Regarding items deferred at the meeting, Chair Constance stated that the Sarasota/Manatee Board Meeting actions could be monitored by the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO. Commissioner Constance adjourned the meeting.