



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY - PUNTA GORDA  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 2, 2023  
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING**

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON**

Charles Council, At-Large Representative, CAC Chair  
Della Booth, South County Representative  
Steven E. Hurt, Mid County Representative  
Richard Kirchhoff, West County Representative  
Mary Ellen Kiss, South County Representative  
Pauline Klein, At-Large Representative  
Steve Schoff, West County Representative

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Robert Logan, Mid County Representative  
Dianne Quilty, Mid County Representative, CAC Vice Chair

**VACANT POSITIONS**

One South County Representative  
One West County Representative

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON**

D'Juan Harris, MPO Director  
Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Principal Planner  
Betty-Ann Sherer, MPO Planner  
Wendy Scott, MPO Planner  
Mitchell Austin, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design  
Sgt Dustin Paille, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office  
Tony Conte, Charlotte County Schools  
Joe Blais, citizen

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Edith Perez, FDOT  
Katherine Chinault, FDOT  
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Services Coordinator  
Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works  
Elaine Allen-Emrich, Englewood Sun

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

CAC Chair Charles Council called the CAC Meeting to order at 1:30 P.M at the Charlotte County Transit Facility. The roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

## **2. Pledge of Allegiance**

All attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **3. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments received.

## **4. Reports**

### **A. Chair's Report**

Charles Council discussed an FDOT-sponsored Public Meeting regarding the Northbound US 41 Complete Streets Improvements from William Street to the Peace River Bridge. He attended on January 26, 2023, at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center in Punta Gorda.

Charles Council also described the February 17, 2023, Joint Meeting of the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda due to a great deal of public comment received from Burnt Store Marina area residents who stated their entry and egress traffic concerns. Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss elaborated about the shared major roadway in the Burnt Store Marina area and the tremendous amount of commercial traffic which cannot be accommodated and impacts Charlotte County residents as well as Lee County citizens. Charles Council noted that the timing is right to intervene with solutions, since the project is in the early stages.

Joe Blais asked to give public comment (belatedly under Agenda Item #3). He discussed (1) traffic gridlock on his journey to the meeting, (2) his appreciation of CAC participation by the Sheriff's Office representative, and (3) LRTP development and the need to review projects that had not yet been completed.

### **B. City of Punta Gorda Report**

Mitchell Austin described the current major capital improvement project, Harborwalk Phase II, where the finishing touches were being completed on minor punch list items (Gilchrist Park between Berry Street and Gill Street). He also discussed the City of Punta Gorda's longstanding issue in completing an multi use path loop around the city (on Airport Road between US 41 and Cooper Street) due the railroad's lack of response regarding the establishment of a pathway to safely assist citizens in low-income housing with accessing the area's commercial shopping.

### **C. Charlotte County Report**

Ravi Kamarajugadda stated that there were no major transportation projects in the County currently. Signals are still being improved by FDOT on US 41. He was receiving many streetlights repair requests primarily in the West County area. He noted that not all streetlights in the residential areas are maintained by the County. The County only maintains those in the Utility-controlled areas. He is forwarding residential requests to Florida Power and Light (FPL), and it takes approximately 30-40 days to complete repairs.

Steve Schoff asked about street signs repairs. Ravi Kamarajugadda stated that those signs maintained by the County are listed in a tally page on the County website with 80,000 repairs resulting from Hurricane Ian. He offered to check on the progress of the work.

Steve Hurt noted that debris pickup trucks have caused damage on side streets. He asked what action the County will take to repair these turn areas. Ravi Kamarajugadda stated that he would pass this concern on to the Public Works maintenance and operations staff to obtain additional information. He would then provide this information to Laks Gurrum or D’Juan Harris.

### **D. Sheriff’s Report**

Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office Sgt. Dustin Paille was welcomed to the CAC and thanked for his participation. He is involved with the traffic and marine patrol areas. He noted that Ravi Kamarajugadda was triaging signage issues. Chair Council inquired if there was a greater influx of non-resident traffic this year. Sgt. Dustin Paille stated that although no studies had been conducted, it was obvious that this was the case. He credited the situation to the fact that the area was swinging into tourist season just after Hurricane Ian. This resulted in the presence of out-of-town and out-of-state contractors doing repairs locally as the main contributing factor. He noted that this year due to Sports Park storm damage, there were no Spring Training traffic issues.

## **5. Consent Agenda:**

### **A. Approval of Minutes: November 30, 2022 Meeting**

*Steve Schoff made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mary Ellen Kiss seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.*

## **6. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report**

### **A. [Transportation Alternatives Application & Project Priority Planning Process \(4P\) Overview \(Edith Perez & Katherine Chinault\)](#)**

Edith Perez and Katherine Chinault delivered a [PowerPoint presentation](#):

Transportation Alternative (TA) projects are funded under Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The projects that are funded under TA are considered as enhancements since they are typically included in the transportation system.

Projects in the category include:

1. Safety Improvements
2. Multimodal Safety Improvements

All applications must be submitted through the GAP Application (Grant Application Program) to be considered for funding. It was emphasized that applications should include clear narratives, a breakdown of cost estimates, a detailed scope, the phase of project for which the funds are being requested, maps, photos, and an engineer's estimate. The more detailed and complete an application is, the easier it is to move through the process. Online resource links were provided as guidance.

The following submission deadlines were noted: Traffic Alternatives (TA), Congestion Management (CM) and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) applications are due by March 31, 2023 and County Incentive Grant Program (CIGP) applications are due June 30, 2023.

D’Juan Harris explained to CAC Members how City and County staff submit these applications with assistance from MPO staff as part of the State’s grant application process.

#### **7. 2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendments (Laks Gurram)**

Laks Gurram described the TIP Amendment process.

FDOT Staff requested that the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) approve the STIP/TIP Amendments to the FY 2022/23 – FY 2026/27 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) at the March 20, 2023, MPO Board Meeting.

He reviewed the criteria of when an amendment is required by FDOT

He briefed the committee members on projects noted below:

434965-5 Harbor View Road from Melbourne St to I75- the ROW phase has been added under the new segment

451358-1 US41 at Midway Blvd- new project – preliminary Engineering phase has been added

452491-1 5310 Operating – Small Urban UZA – New project – selected during the competitive application process for 5310 funding

452200-4, -5 Electronic Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment plan phase 1

These changes are required to be amended in the FY2022/23 through FY2026/27 TIP to receive federal funds and for planning consistency with State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Steve Schoff noted that project descriptions would have been helpful. Laks Gurram stated that unfortunately, the information comes straight from FDOT’s format.

**Pauline Klein** made a motion to recommend MPO Board approval of the amendment to the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2022/2023-FY 2026/2027. **Richard Kirchoff** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

## **8. 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Amendments – Laks Gurram**

Laks Gurram discussed the recommended 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Amendments. He presented the projects identified that require an amendment to receive federal and state funding for planning consistency purposes. Upon further review of the 2045 LRTP the MPO Staff identified projects that were not part of the 2045 LRTP.

1. Projects - SR 776 Corridor Study
2. Projects - Veterans Blvd Corridor Study
3. Projects - Carbon Reduction Program Projects

He indicated that the MPO is required to amend the Long-Range Transportation Plan when:

- › MPO amends the Long-Range Transportation Plan because of changes in the TIP
- › Major change to a project included in a LRTP; including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project phase initiation dates.
- › Deleting a full project from the Cost Feasible Plan (CFP)
- › Adding a new project where no phases are currently listed in the CFP
- › Moving a project from Needs Plan to CFP

Laks Gurram reviewed the projects consistent with the LRTP, projects in the 2022 Project Priorities and projects that are not consistent with both the LRTP and Project Priorities.

**Mary Ellen Kiss** made a motion to recommend MPO Board approval of the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) amendments. **Della Booth** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

## **9. 2050 LRTP Consultant Selection – Laks Gurram**

Laks Gurram reviewed recent events in the selection of the LRTP consultant:

The Charlotte County - Punta Gorda MPO and the three GPCs executed a contract on January 13, 2022, to provide General Planning Consulting services for the next three years.

On February 9, 2023, the MPO Staff issued a Task Approach to all three of the MPO's GPC consultants to prepare a Power Point Presentation as to how each consultant would develop the MPO's 2050 Socioeconomic Data and the 2050 LRTP Update. The LRTP Subcommittee consists of members from MPO Staff, TAC and CAC members. The subcommittee met with the corresponding consultants and their staff on February 27, 2023, for in-person presentations at the MPO Office. The LRTP Subcommittee ranked the consultants based on the criteria identified

He noted that while initially there are three consultants being considered, VHB dropped out and presentations were given by Kimley-Horn and Benesch.

Upon tallying the scoring criteria, the subcommittee unanimously recommended Kimley-Horn as the consultant to perform the 2050 Socioeconomic Data development and 2050 LRTP update.

He informed that the MPO Staff with the support of the LRTP Subcommittee will develop a detailed scope of services. A Work Assignment Order will be signed by the MPO Chair and executed between the MPO and the Consultant, a Notice to Proceed will be issued to begin work on the project.

He also noted the individual task deadlines and informed that the deadlines are hard deadlines.

MPO Staff was requesting TAC/CAC Committee members' input and support of the subcommittee's recommendation. The MPO Board would consider support of the recommendation at the meeting scheduled for March 20, 2023.

Pauline Klein inquired about the project budget, and Laks Gurram indicated that the estimate was \$400,000.

*Della Booth made a motion to endorse the LRTP Subcommittee's recommendation of Kimley-Horn to develop the MPO's 2050 Socioeconomic Data and the 2050 LRTP Update; authorize the MPO Staff to develop a Work Assignment Order and Scope of Services with Kimley-Horn and request the MPO Chair sign the adopted Work Assignment Order. Richard Kirchoff seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.*

#### **10. Review of FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program FY 2024 through FY 2028 (FDOT & D'Juan Harris)**

D'Juan Harris stated the MPO Board and Advisory Committees annually review FDOT's Draft Tentative Work Program (DTWP), which includes the new fifth year (FY 2028) of project programming based upon State and MPO priorities. At the previous committee meeting, the FDOT DTWP had not been released. It is now presented for CAC Members to review and provide comments.

The DTWP will form the basis for the MPO's next Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to be adopted and submitted to FDOT by July 15, 2023.

He noted that MPO staff has not provided comments to FDOT, since the MPO's advisory committees had not had an opportunity to review the document. Comments received at the March 2, 2023 advisory committee meetings would be compiled in a letter and provided to FDOT for their consideration.

D'Juan Harris led the discussion on the importance of the LRTP's Cost Feasible Component feeding into FDOT's Draft Tentative Work Program. He described how the project pipeline of 15 years or longer moves through phases of planning, design, right-of-way (ROW) and construction. This effort results in spending the taxpayer dollars wisely. He described the \$17 million truck parking project at the site of the old rest area on Jones Loop Road just off I-75, noting that construction may be advanced. He also noted that all last year's deferrals are returned to FDOT's Draft Tentative Work Program.

Pauline Klein inquired about what improvements were needed at the location of the truck parking project. D'Juan Harris stated that a state-of-the-art facility was being discussed by FDOT. Southwest Florida has a deficiency of truck parking facilities This is significant since truckers have a mandatory daily time limit on driving hours.

Sgt. Dustin Paille noted that the roadway asphalt at the location is currently in poor condition, and a full revamp of the parking area is needed.

D’Juan Harris requested that CAC Member concerns be forwarded to him to send to FDOT. Steve Schoff spoke regarding SR 776, observing that he was discouraged to see no additional lanes planned, but rather only turn lanes added, which he believed would not alleviate the congestion. He compared it to when plumbing blockages occur.

D’Juan Harris noted that planning for congestion involves taking a multimodal approach. Steve Schoff also commented on how issues with bodies of water are present in Charlotte County with no way around it. He discussed River Road concerns and current plan insufficiencies.

Mary Ellen Kiss mentioned the issue of ROWs on major roadways. She wondered what is being done on a broader scale regarding ROWs.

Steve Hurt inquired about the Harborview Road project. D’Juan Harris gave an update on this project and noted that the MPO has partnered with the County by providing a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary Grant letter of support. The importance of providing State elected officials with citizen letters of support also was discussed.

**11. Draft FY 2023/2024 - FY 2027/2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) -- Laks Gurram**

Laks Gurram noted that Federal and State legislation requires MPOs to adopt a 5-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP outlines federal and state capital improvements for transportation and is a staged, multi-year, intermodal program of transportation projects that is consistent with the MPO’s LRTP. The Technical and Citizens’ Advisory Committees formally review the development of the TIP.

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO is scheduled to review and adopt the TIP at the May 15, 2023, MPO Board Meeting. He informed the members the TIP and will be brought back to the committees on April 26, 2023.

**12. Draft 2023 Project Priorities – Discussion Laks Gurram**

The MPO is required to annually develop a List of Project Priorities (LOPP) as part of the TIP process. A preliminary list of project priorities along with project applications will be submitted to FDOT District One by March 31, 2023. The project priorities must be approved by the MPO Board and submitted to FDOT by July 1, 2023.

The MPO received candidate projects from the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County. These projects include Highway, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Congestion Mitigation/Transportation System Management (CM/TSM), and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) projects. Attachment 2 is the list of project priorities previously



approved by the MPO Board at the May 2022 meeting. [2022 Project Priorities 05312022-Final.xlsx \(ccmpo.com\)](#)

He mentioned that the Draft 2023 Project Priorities document (Attachment 1) presented reflects the changes based on the Draft Tentative Work Program that was released in

December 2022. Below is the Draft LOPP MPO Staff recommends local jurisdictions submit a project priority application for consideration of funding:

- Harbor View Road from Date Street to I-75 – Road Widening (CST)
- SR 31 at CR 74 Intersection Improvements – Roundabout (Funded/Delete)
- N. Jones Loop @ Piper Road – Roundabout – (PE)
- SR 776 @ Flamingo Blvd. – Intersection Improvements (Funded/Delete)
- SR 776 @ Charlotte Sports Park - Design and Construction Turn Lanes (CST)
- SR 776 at Biscayne Drive – Design and Construction Turn lanes and Signal (PE&CST)
- SR 776 at Cornelius Blvd. - Design and Construction Turn Lanes (PE&CST)
- SR 776 at Jacobs Street - Design and Construction Turn Lanes (PE&CST)
- SUN Trail – from SR 776 at Gulf Cove to US 41 (CST)
- Cooper Street – Complete Street Improvements
- US 41 Bridge Approach Decorative Finish Street Lights
- US 41 MURT Bridge at S. Alligator Creek – (PE&CST)
- US 41 SB Harborwalk Phase II – ADA ramp improvements

Attachment 1: [12 Attachment 1 2023 Project Priorities Draft.pdf \(ccmpo.com\)](#)

Mary Ellen Kiss inquired about the status of one thousand feet of roadwork needed in Charlotte County on Burnt Store Road at the Lee County Line. Laks Gurrum stated that the project is found in the 2045 LRTP. D’Juan Harris noted that the project is funded, and work commences on or after July 1 of the current year on the Lee County portion.

Laks Gurrum referenced the list of projects including funding for the 2050 LRTP, Harborview Road and the Sun Trail project. Pauline Klein asked about the Jones Loop Road project, and Laks Gurrum described the three segments of the project. He stressed that due to its multi-jurisdictional nature, a great deal of state and local coordination was required.

Steve Schoff noted confusion over deletions at Flamingo Blvd. Staff explained that once funded through construction, projects get deleted from the Priority List to make room for other projects in the pipeline or add new projects.

### **13. Safety Performance Measures Targets Discussion (Betty-Ann Sherer)**

D’Juan Harris stated that although CAC Members had already reviewed the safety performance measures targets in the past, FHWA had now provided the baseline (flattened) performance data. The November 2022 data was raw, but this new data has been flattened for comparison.

Betty-Ann Sherer gave a presentation on safety performance measure targets. MPOs are required annually to adopt these targets for tracking progress towards the Statewide/MPO



targets for each of the transportation performance measures and meeting Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements.

The five Safety Performance Measures are:

1. Number of Fatalities
2. Number of Serious Injuries
3. Fatality Rate per 100 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)
4. Serious Injuries per 100 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)
5. Total Number of Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries

The MPO Board adopted FDOT's "Vision Zero" target for all five of the Safety Performance Measures at the December 15, 2022, Board Meeting. The MPO was required to accept FDOT's adopted targets or develop its own targets on or before February 27, 2023, to remain in compliance with FHWA requirements for use of federal funding.

Betty-Ann Sherer reviewed the updated local and statewide data for the 2017-2021 timeframe.

Steve Hurt wondered if the data was suspect, noting that the problem is the way roadways are designed to accommodate bicyclists. He believed that there was a need to separate bicyclists from other vehicular traffic.

D'Juan Harris noted that many hard-core bicyclists represented on the MPO's Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) would disagree with that assessment.

Mary Ellen Kiss and Pauline Klein discussed the dangers of bicycling on Rampart Blvd. in the Deep Creek area. D'Juan Harris agreed that he prefers measures to obtain separation between bicyclists and other types of vehicles, whenever possible.

Pauline Klein observed that the data for 2020 and 2021 probably was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Canadian seasonal residential population in Charlotte County has now returned post-pandemic.

#### **14. Census Data Discussion (D'Juan Harris)**

D'Juan Harris noted that every ten years the Census Bureau provides updated population counts and designates the urban areas. For the already designated MPOs in our region, the updated geographical areas include the following activities over the next eighteen months: the potential designation of Transportation Management Areas (over 200,000 population), the adjustment of Urban Area boundaries, the development of Apportionment Plans and the creation of an updated functional classification of roadways in cooperation with FDOT. The new urban area boundaries and the population associated with those boundaries impacts the MPO's distribution of Planning funds and the allocation of Surface Transportation Block Grant funding.

The Census Bureau released its new urban area population numbers at the end of December 2022 with the maps released the following month. CAC Members were provided boundary maps for the Port Charlotte-North Port and Bradenton-Sarasota-Venice (southern portion) urban areas. The population and land area changes since the 2010 census are shown in the tables below (note that as the area changes, the urban area name/order of the name has changed as well):

He mentioned that the Port Charlotte-North Port urban area population increased by 30,407 people and the land area increased by 14.8 square miles. One of the issues that the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO will be dealing with is that the population is two people short of the 200,000-population threshold to become a Transportation Management Area (TMA).

He also indicated that an early designation is possible through concurrence of the United States Department of Transportation Secretary and the Governor of the State of Florida. The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Board will further assess the benefits/disadvantages of requesting an early TMA designation with discussion scheduled to occur at the March 20, 2023, MPO Board Meeting.

### **15. Public Comments**

Joe Blais referenced the recent lead *Charlotte Sun* article by Nancy Semon regarding the biggest issues facing Charlotte County, noting that planning cannot be done in a vacuum. While there was no shortage of planning, it was a matter of execution.

### **16. Staff Comments**

D’Juan Harris stated that MPO staff is accepting nominations through June 30, 2023, for the Peggy Walters Award. Last year, the award was given posthumously to Jim Brown. He also reported that it does not seem like the MPO offices at the East Port Environmental Campus will be restored.

D’Juan Harris thanked those groups that had provided strong letters of support for the Safe Streets for All Grant. He also noted that the MPO Board packet will contain information on the MPO’s noteworthy practices that recently were provided at the MPO’s annual certification conducted with FDOT staff. The MPO was deemed a low-risk organization based upon the assessment. He referred CAC Members to the MPO website’s new Transportation Planning 101 collection of animated videos spearheaded by Betty-Ann Sherer.

### **17. Member Comments**

There were no member comments.

### **18. Adjournment (Next CAC Meeting – April 26, 2023)**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:18 p.m. The next regularly scheduled CAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, both virtually and in-person at the Charlotte County Community Foundation, 227 Sullivan Street, Punta Gorda, Florida 33950 at 1:30 p.m.