



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

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 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
Pastor John Boutchia, Calvary Baptist Church
Wayne Gaither, FDOT
Victoria Peters, FDOT
Keith Robbins, FDOT
Vitor Suguri, FDOT
Steven Andrews, FDOT
Edie Rosenthal, FDOT
Babuji Ambikapathy, VHB

Jay Winter, SCALAR
Kristin Caruso, SCALAR for FDOT
Dianne Quilty, CAC Vice-Chair
Pauline Klein, BPAC Chair
Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works, TAC Vice-Chair
John Elias, Charlotte County Public Works
Robert Fakhri, Charlotte County Public Works
Don Scott, Lee County MPO
Zinnia Vargas, Charlotte County Fiscal
Heidi Maddox, Charlotte County Transit
Jerry Livingston, Charlotte County Fiscal
Delmis Castillo, Charlotte County Utilities
Betty Rosario, Charlotte County Utilities
Janina Stamoulis, Charlotte County
Robert Hancik, President Burnt Store Lakes Property Association
Jerry Newmin, Burnt Store Marina Punta Gorda Isles, Section 22 Master Homeowners Association
Fathy Abdalla, Kisinger Campo Associates
Chantae Gillett, Citizen
Ayisha Ferrera, Citizen
Elaine Allen-Emrich, *Sun Newspapers*

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE VIRTUALLY

Tony Conte, Charlotte County School Board
Mary Ellen Kiss, CAC Member
Elizabeth Sporillo, Charlotte County
Thomas Lloyd, Charlotte County

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 John Boutchia

Pastor John Boutchia delivered the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. Addition and/or Deletion to the Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda. D’Juan Harris described minor corrections on Agenda Item #15-A correcting “Collier” to “Charlotte.”, and modifications to FDOT report. This item was corrected on the MPO website.

5. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Robert Hancik, President Burnt Store Lakes Property Association, referenced agenda item #19 and spoke regarding the connection of Vincent Avenue to Burnt Store Road at the Lee County Line FPIN #436928-1-22-01. Vincent Avenue is the southern border of Charlotte County running West to East with the North half of the road in Charlotte County and the South half in Lee County. He expressed concern over disjointed traffic flow in the area including marina and truck traffic. Most importantly, he stated that besides the increase in traffic, the type of traffic and loads induced by the divided design onto the area's residential streets, property owners are financially responsible for the maintenance and repaving of the roadways through their Municipal Benefit Service Unit (MSBU). He requested that Burnt Store Lakes POA members be consulted as the design progresses and wanted the MPO Board to consider the group's input. [Documents submitted at meeting](#)

Jerry Newmin, Burnt Store Marina Punta Gorda Isles, Section 22 Master Homeowners Association referenced agenda item #19 and spoke regarding the Burnt Store Road Lee County Expansion. He echoed Robert Hancik's views. [Documents submitted at meeting](#)

6. 20 Year Service Recognition – Bekie Leslie, Administrative Services Coordinator

D'Juan Harris recognized Bekie Leslie for her twenty years of dedicated service to the MPO. He stressed her importance to the organization, especially as it relates to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) development. He thanked her for her assistance over the past year and 2 months since he had been working as head of the MPO team. Commissioner Constance echoed the remarks of Mr. Harris, stating that Bekie Leslie possessed great institutional knowledge. Commissioner Deutsch stated that Ms. Leslie had to sit next to him for the last twelve years during MPO Board Meetings, and she had provided great service to the community.

7. 2023 Election of Officers

Commissioner Constance turned over chairing the meeting to Stacy Bjordahl (MPO Legal Services) to receive nominations for 2023 MPO Officers.

Mayor Matthews nominated Commissioner Constance to serve as the MPO Board Chair. Commissioner Tiseo seconded the nomination. Commissioner Herston nominated Commissioner Deutsch, but there was no second. Commissioner Constance was declared MPO Board Chair by a unanimous vote.

Commissioner Constance nominated Commissioner Tiseo to serve as MPO Board Vice-Chair. Mayor Matthews seconded the nomination. Commissioner Herston nominated Commissioner Deutsch for MPO Board Vice Chair, but there was no second. Commissioner Tiseo was declared MPO Board Vice-Chair by a unanimous vote.

Mayor Matthews nominated Commissioner Herston to serve as the MPOAC Representative. Commissioner Deutsch seconded the nomination. There being no other nominations, Commissioner Herston was declared MPOAC Representative by a unanimous vote.

Commissioner Constance nominated Commissioner Tiseo to serve as the MPOAC Alternate Representative. Commissioner Herston seconded the nomination. There being no additional nominations, Commissioner Tiseo was declared MPOAC Alternate Representative by a unanimous vote.

Commissioner Constance resumed chairing the meeting.

8. PUBLIC MEETING: FY 2022/2023– FY 2026/2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Roll-Forward Amendment

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) provides the MPO with a roll forward report that includes projects in the previous state fiscal year that were not commenced, have uncommitted portions of projects that have started or have funds remaining on completed projects. These projects automatically roll forward in FDOT's Work Program but need to be accounted for in the MPO's new TIP. The amendment was required to account for these projects (Attachment 1) in the FY 2023 through FY 2027 TIP.

Commissioner Tiseo made a motion to close the Public Meeting. Commissioner Herston seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Commissioner Tiseo made a motion to amend the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2022/2023 – FY 2026/2027 adding: Roll-forward projects from FY 2022/2023 which could not be obligated during the State's Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2022.

Commissioner Herston seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

9. PUBLIC MEETING: Public Participation Plan Revision (PPP)

Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO recently revised the Public Participation Plan (PPP) to include language that allows for virtual and hybrid (in-person and virtual) public involvement in the MPO's planning processes. This revision will effectively provide efficient and practical accessibility for public engagement in all the MPO's meetings from a remote location. The PPP was previously revised on July 20, 2020, and addresses all comments received from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in September 2022.

The PPP is a federal requirement as set forth in FHWA's 23 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 450.316. MPOs are required to revisit provisions listed in the PPP prior to every update of the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). This update remains in compliance with all federal regulations and was advertised in the local newspaper, distributed to the local libraries, and posted on the MPO's website to meet the 45-day public review and comment period.

This Plan was reviewed by the BPAC at their November 17, 2022 meeting as well as the TAC and CAC Committees at their November 30, 2022 Meetings and they recommended Plan adoption by the MPO Board.

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

Commissioner Tiseo made a motion to adopt the revisions to the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's Public Participation Plan. **Commissioner Herston** seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Chairs' Reports

A. MPO Board Chair's Report

Chair Constance stated that he would be saving his comments until the FDOT portion of the agenda.

B. Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) Chair's Report

CAC Vice-Chair Dianne Quilty reported on the November 30, 2022 CAC Meeting, where a quorum had been present. She was substituting for CAC Chair Charles Council. She noted that both Mr. Council (as Chair) and Ms. Quilty (as Vice-Chair) had been reappointed to serve as CAC officers. She noted that the CAC currently had two vacancies. West County CAC Member Steve Schoff had inquired at the CAC Meeting regarding the activation of the new light at the intersection of SR 776 and Wilmington Blvd in front of the Englewood Home Depot.

C. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Chair's Report

TAC Vice-Chair Ravi Kamarajugadda substituted for TAC Chair Mitchell Austin and reported on the November 30, 2022 TAC Meeting, where a quorum had been present. Both Mitchell Austin (as Chair) and Mr. Kamarajugadda (as Vice-Chair) have been reappointed to serve as TAC Officers. He reviewed TAC recommendations as found in the meeting agenda.

D. Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Chair's Report

BPAC Chair Pauline Klein reported on the November 17, 2022 BPAC Meeting, where a quorum had been present. She referenced BPAC Minutes found in the meeting packet. She noted that the BPAC members appreciate Bekie Leslie's assistance to the committee. Pauline Klein was enthusiastic about the PPP revisions done by Betty-Ann Sherer. She noted that the BPAC had reviewed other items including crash data, commenting that BPAC Members were concerned about increased fatalities. She thanked County employees regarding replacing signage following Hurricane Ian, especially those located in school zones.

11. Local Government Reports

A. Charlotte County Airport Authority

Commissioner Herston, Charlotte County Airport Authority Vice Chairman, provided MPO Board Members with a detailed packet of information on Airport activities entitled [Charlotte County Airport Authority – MPO Committee Report, December 15, 2022.](#)

He reviewed key items, including discussion at the day's Airport Authority Meeting. He noted that passenger figures were in record territory projected at 1.8 million despite closures due to Hurricane Ian. He noted that gas sales were down. He described how a roadway was been done away with in the Challenger Blvd. area. Mayor Matthews inquired about repair of a cracked runway. Commissioner Herston stated that there had been an insurance claim submitted through the contractors for a stress crack which had been repaired immediately.

Mayor Matthews inquired about the future Airport restaurant reopening. Commissioner Herston stated that it had been leased with a restaurateur. Commissioner Tiseo asked if the Airport's traffic pattern would change when the new runway opens. Commissioner Herston confirmed that residents will see a change.

B. 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 city will be utilizing the Gulf Theater at the Military Museum for City Council and all Board and Committee meetings for the foreseeable future while City Hall renovations are in progress.
- Gilchrist Park/Harborwalk Phase II project update was given. It was nearing completion. Hurricane-damaged landscaping must be replaced. The YMCA building was over 50% destroyed and would be discussed at the next Council meeting.
- Continued complaints of speeding and passing vehicles in a no passing zone from residents on Tripoli Blvd. between Madrid Blvd. and Monaco Drive which comes from FDOT closing off the median at Madrid Blvd. and US 41. There are numerous vehicles speeding and cutting across Tripoli Blvd. to exit at the light at Monaco Drive and US 41 with drivers who are not observing the 25-mph speed zone. This is further evidence that a traffic light is desperately needed on Burnt Store Road at the Home Depot exit driveway to divert traffic and improve safety for these residents. Mayor Matthews described a big push to fix the issue.
- Since Hurricane Ian, the city has been in restoration mode. Many City offices have been temporarily relocated due to damage. The City Manager's staff are in the Lashley Park Community Room. The Urban Design, Code Enforcement, Zoning and Planning staff are in the old City Council Chamber and outside the building in two remote trailers until the City Hall Annex offices are restored.
- A post-storm debris, traffic light, signage, wayfinding, sidewalk, seawall update was given.
- City Hall renovation update was provided.

- Boca Grande drainage project update was given.
- Improvements to the intersection of Turtle Dove Blvd and Whippoorwill Blvd were described.

Regarding Hurricane Ian recovery, Mayor Matthews thanked the County and FDOT for replacement of signage and lights, etc. She stated that law enforcement from other communities had helped with traffic control for some weeks. She described the City's timeframe for seawall repairs, describing a meeting with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for 12 miles of reimbursement. This would be a two-year process. All City debris on land had been collected. The City of Punta Gorda was working next on canal cleanup.

Commissioner Tiseo inquired if some of the seawall was new since the passage of Hurricane Irma. This led to discussion regarding FEMA's position in favor of the use of riprap after Irma vs. the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) position against it to protect the sawfish population.

Commissioner Constance asked Mayor Matthews about the City's presence in both the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the City's separate Safety Center EOC during storm events. He believed that the two functions needed to be embedded in the County EOC Building given the flood risk at the City's Safety Center. He noted that Commissioner Doherty was also present at the MPO Board Meeting (so that four County Commissioners were present) and the County should ask about enlarging the County EOC building, which he believed could house firefighters here for training in EOC when not needed for an emergency event. Mayor Matthews noted that typically all parties meet, and the 1% sales tax enhancements won't cover all planned expansions. She agreed that the County and the City need to work together cooperatively on many issues. Commissioner Tiseo observed that housing costs could be charged to firefighter trainees to finance a dormitory at the County EOC.

C. [Charlotte County](#)

Commissioner Tiseo gave the County report on the following items including timelines:

- Various Intersection Improvements
- Flamingo Blvd/Edgewater Drive Widening
- Charlotte Harbor CRA – Parmely Street Road Widening and Sidewalk

In light of his Charlotte Harbor CRA experience, Commissioner Herston was surprised to see the item on Parmely Street listed, since Johnson Engineering was paid previously for this effort. John Elias noted that Commissioner Herston was correct about the design already existing. However, he noted that two locations had changed conditions since that study's completion. John Elias also stated that the signal at SR 776 and Gulfstream Blvd. had been activated a few days prior.

FDOT Secretary Nandam reported that Flamingo Blvd. funding which had been moved out of the Work Program had been restored and could be given to the County to complete the project.

12. Consent Agenda:

- A. **Approval of Minutes: July 18, 2022 MPO Board Meeting**
- B. **MPO Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2023 - DRAFT**
- C. **Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) Appointment/Reappointment**
- D. **Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Reappointments**

Commissioner Tiseo made a Motion to approve Consent Agenda Items 12 A, 12 B and 12 D. Commissioner Herston seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Regarding Agenda Item 12 C, a vote of MPO Board Members was required to fill three CAC vacancies.

At-Large: Charles Council or Steven Leskovich
Mid-County: Dianne Quilty/Robert Logan/Richard Russell

Chair Constance asked members to complete their ballots and return them to Bekie Leslie for tallying.

At this point in the meeting, Chair Constance moved to address Agenda Item 13, and then, upon its completion, returned to Agenda Item 12-C to announce voting results as follows:

- **Charles Council received the majority of votes for the CAC At-Large position.**
- **Dianne Quilty and Robert Logan received the majority of votes for the two CAC Mid-County positions.**

D’Juan Harris stated that in the future, such committee appointment votes would be a separate action item on the agenda, rather than part of the consent agenda.

*Mayor Matthews made a Motion to appoint **Charles Council** to the CAC At-Large position and **Dianne Quilty** and **Robert Logan** to the CAC Mid-County positions. **Commissioner Tiseo** seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.*

13. MPO Director’s Annual Evaluation

Pursuant to the terms of Paragraph 1, of the First Amendment to the Interlocal Agreement for Administrative Services between Charlotte County and the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO, the MPO Director is subject to an annual performance evaluation conducted by the MPO governing board. This is the first performance evaluation of Mr. Harris as the MPO Director.

Stacy Bjordahl related actions taken by Attorney Janette Knowlton to finalize the evaluation of Mr. Harris. She noted that the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) was retroactive to August 3, 2022 and the 4% pay for performance was retroactive to October 12, 2022. The second action was intended to be accomplished at the October MPO Board Meeting which had been cancelled due to Hurricane Ian’s impact in the area.

Commissioner Constance noted that D’Juan Harris was doing an extremely proficient job. Commissioner Tiseo stated that in his evaluation of Mr. Harris, he had established a baseline score on this first evaluation so that he could now measure his accomplishments going forward. Mayor Matthews praised the work of Mr. Harris as exemplary and responsive, noting that he followed up on all requests. She was very pleased with this level of communication and was glad that the MPO Board had selected him for the MPO Director position. Commissioner Constance concurred that Mr. Harris always provided good pre-agenda information.

Commissioner Herston described the Director’s recent actions at MPOAC Meetings, observing that he is a superstar amongst MPO Staff Directors, and the MPO was fortunate to have hired him.

Commissioner Tiseo made a motion (1) to approve the \$1.92 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for the MPO Director which was implemented across the board by the County for all exempt and non-exempt employees (retroactive to August 3, 2022) and (2) to approve the pay for performance 4% increase set forth by the MPO Board for the MPO Director and make it retroactive to October 12, 2022). Commissioner Herston seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

14. Draft 2023 MPO Legislative Position Statement

At Florida’s 2023 Legislative Session, legislators will meet under their normal operating schedule next year with Monday, March 7, 2023 scheduled as the opening day of session. The intent of this agenda item is to inform and educate all pertinent parties of the MPO’s position on substantive legislative issues that impact transportation planning policy in Charlotte County.

The MPO does not actively participate in any lobbying initiatives, and this position statement will be provided to the Charlotte County Legislative Delegation as a guide to understand the MPO’s position on a wide range of transportation issues.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC) provided a draft policy position statement on behalf of Florida’s 27 MPO’s on October 30, 2022. Key provisions related to transportation are listed below:

- Supports an increase in transportation investment through dedicated and sustainable funding, including innovative financing options; encourages partnerships between public and private entities; and facilitates the expedited delivery of projects.
- Regulates distracted driving by prohibiting the handheld use of electronic wireless communication devices and other similar distracting devices while operating a motor vehicle on any roadway.

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

D’Juan Harris discussed language carried over from the prior year’s Legislative Position Statement which if enacted, could allow groups such as the Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (LCB) and the Florida Metropolitan Planning

Organization Advisory Council to allow members who were participating virtually to count as part of their meeting quorums.

Mayor Matthews made a motion to approve the 2023 MPO Legislative Position Statement, authorizing MPO staff to include any recommended changes for the final draft that will be submitted to the area's Legislative Delegation for reference purposes. Commissioner Herston seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

15. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

Secretary Nandam noted that FDOT District One had taken a direct hit from Hurricane Ian. Speaking on behalf of FDOT, he thanked local staff for their efforts in the restoration of signage and signals, as well as roadway repairs. He praised the success of access restoration projects for Pine Island (bridge in 3 days) and Sanibel (barges in 5 days) with connections reestablished at a record pace. He noted that it was a heartfelt and proud moment for FDOT to make it happen.

Secretary Nandam also thanked local staff for enduring the challenges of the past few years regarding the Work Program, expressing how glad he was to see the new Work Program project restorations. Commissioner Constance appreciated the efforts made by FDOT within the region. He asked about the damage to the Seminole Gulf Railroad. Secretary Nandam noted that there were no emergency funds available for this private enterprise and stated that FDOT was assisting the organization with low interest loans. Commissioner Constance stated that it was very important to get the railroad back up and running as soon as possible.

FDOT Led Discussion

A. FY 2024-FY 2028 FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program

The MPO Board and committees annually review FDOT's Draft Tentative Work Program (DTWP). The DTWP (Attachment 1) covers available allocated funding for transportation projects consistent with FDOT plans and MPO priorities. The report included in the packet is based upon the November 17, 2022 snapshot of programmed transportation projects within Charlotte County from Fiscal Year 2024 through Fiscal Year 2028.

On May 16, 2022, the MPO Board adopted its 2022 project priorities for this year (Attachment 2) and submitted them to FDOT for inclusion in the FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program for consideration of funding to the greatest extent possible. The FY 2024 through FY 2028 Draft Tentative Work Program includes funded projects that will be included in the MPO's next Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to be adopted and submitted to FDOT by July 15,

2023. For federal funding compliance, the MPO's TIP, Long Range Transportation Plan and FDOT's Work Program must be consistent for transparency and planning purposes.

Victoria Peters presented a YouTube video, *FDOT Five Year Work Program*. She stressed the importance of communication between FDOT and its local partners in the development of the

FY 2024 through FY 2028 Work Program. Victoria Peters reviewed the Summary of Changes for Charlotte County projects in the Work Program.

Mayor Matthews stated that the City of Punta Gorda was adamantly opposed to the reduction of lanes on US 17 (Olympia Avenue) from US 41 to Cooper Street from three lanes to two vehicle lanes and a bicycle lane and referred to the FPIN # 446596-1. She noted that this roadway was a key emergency evacuation route, and the city definitely did not want this change to occur. Commissioner Constance was in total agreement with the mayor's sentiment regarding the removal of a lane of automobile travel.

He recommended that bicycle traffic be shifted to Virginia Avenue as a much safer alternative. Victoria Peters assured Mayor Matthews that FDOT would review this issue.

Commissioner Constance appreciated FDOT advancing the roundabout at SR 31 and CR 74, noting that there was a need to enlarge the roundabout to prepare for the inevitable need for four lanes of roadway there. He said "no passing" zones and widening in certain stretches for passing lanes were warranted. Secretary Nandam stated that expanding roundabouts promotes speed reductions, reduces T-bone accidents at intersections. Commissioner Constance observed that it makes economic sense to plan for growth in the area.

B. US 41 at Olean Blvd (Victoria Peters/Wayne Gaither-FDOT/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)

It was noted that Hurricane Ian recovery had delayed work on this project. Supply chain problems meant a 6-month delay following plan approval. Commissioner Constance noted that there was a double red arrow, and FDOT was considering an option of right turn on red for the right turn lane only. Commissioner Constance stated that the County's sign shop could assist with the project. Secretary Nandam stated that FDOT was already coordinating with the County.

C. SR 776 at Flamingo Blvd (Victoria Peters/Wayne Gaither-FDOT/ Robert Fakhri -Charlotte County)

Commissioner Constance thanked FDOT for re-instating the project which was deferred the prior year. He noted the realigning of the intersection.

D. SR 776 at the Charlotte Sports Park – Intersection Improvements (Victoria Peters/Wayne Gaither -FDOT/ Robert Fakhri -Charlotte County)

Commissioner Constance thanked FDOT for re-instating this project in FY 2025. There was discussion of the addition of right turn lanes. Biscayne Drive also was being worked on with staff.

E. I-75 Possible New Interchange North of Kings Hwy Interchange (Victoria Peters/Wayne Gaither-FDOT)

FDOT was working with MPO and County staff as well as local staff in the adjoining region to the north. On January 9, 2023, a Joint TAC meeting for the two MPO Committees was scheduled. The possible new I-75 interchange would also be on the agenda at the January 23, 2023 Joint MPO Board Meeting.

Joint Local and FDOT Discussion

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

FDOT added more Right-of-Way (ROW) funding to the project. Additionally, a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary grant was being applied for to leverage funding for the entire segment. Secretary Nandam stressed that the point was to get this effort to a “shovel ready” project status. FDOT was working with County staff to submit for grant funding.

John Elias had met with the Finance team to finalize details with agencies including Real Estate Services and the MPO. He noted that staff had to be conscious of how ROW is obtained.

Secretary concurred that the federal process must be followed. Commissioner Tiseo remarked that the strategy wisely addressed the entire roadway portion. Commissioner Constance noted that he never wanted to deal with only a portion at a time and emphasized that FDOT understood this and wanted the connection. Commissioner Tiseo stated that in this case, the State had moved the project forward. Commissioner Constance observed that even when the answer from FDOT was a negative response, they still work toward an ultimate solution.

B. US 41 SB @ Melbourne Street – Access Management (Wayne Gaither-FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)

The MPO had requested a planning corridor study from FDOT for the portion of US 41 in Charlotte Harbor from the north end of the US 41 Peace River Bridges to Kings Hwy. D’Juan Harris recommended that the item either be renamed or removed from the list. Commissioner Constance requested that the item remain on the list. He noted that Southbound traffic at the Melbourne cut through is a major issue waiting to happen, especially since school buses are proceeding across the northbound US 41 lanes of traffic. Secretary Nandam stated that the item could be left on the list, but he liked the Staff Director’s suggestion to rename the item. It would encompass changes into the planning study, and then, implementation could be considered. D’Juan Harris noted that the study would encompass the entire corridor and address issues such as gaps in sidewalks, etc. This renaming approach was deemed acceptable to the MPO Board and Mr. Harris agreed to make the name change.

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

John Elias gave an update on recent discussions at the Charlotte County BCC Meetings regarding Bermont Road based upon data provided by Robert Fakhri and an expensive project funding request stretching out to FY 2035. Commissioner Constance inquired about the possibility of utilizing Economic Development funding, as well as monies for safety for small zones. He noted that Bermont Road is a County Road that will become part of the State’s Strategic Intermodal System (SIS). Secretary Nandam noted that finding funding would be difficult. He stated that FDOT will look at partnership opportunities, such as establishing

passing zones. Commissioner Tiseo inquired if the Charlotte County BCC had made the roadway a priority for funding at the state level. Commissioner Constance stated that he didn't believe it had been done, since it comes through the Work Program. Commissioner Tiseo stated that the BCC could make the case to make it a legislative request. Secretary Nandam did not advocate that approach, although the member projects where line-item funding is allocated. Those projects funded outside of the Work Program mean there is an impact elsewhere. Overall funding is not increased. However, he explained how some earmarked projects have been accomplished through General Revenue funding rather than transportation funding. Commissioner Tiseo noted that the Bermont Road project might be a candidate for a special member bill. Secretary Nandam explained that transportation improvements follow a process, while Member projects tend to be for the next fiscal year. He recommended that BCC Members could ask their staff which projects were "shovel ready." Commissioner Tiseo noted that sometimes extensions were allowed.

Commissioner Constance requested a brief update on River Road in Sarasota County from Secretary Nandam, who reported that the construction phase would be starting on the roadway in a few months. Commissioner Constance requested an update on River Road at the Joint MPO Board Meeting with the Sarasota/Manatee MPO in Venice, Florida on January 23, 2023.

Secretary Nandam noted that two meetings, postponed by the hurricane would be held in the FDOT District One Headquarters Building Auditorium in Bartow, Florida on Wednesday, January 18, 2023. The morning session (9-11:30 am) would be led by the head of Policy and Planning, while the afternoon session (1-3 pm) would focus on a SIS Update.

Commissioner Herston asked for information on the status of the Harbor View Rd/US 41 right turn on red issue. Although a complicated issue, Robert Fakhri and FDOT staff were working on this matter which likely would be done in a similar manner as the project on Olean Blvd at US 41.

Victoria Peters wished all present happy holidays. Secretary Nandam thanked Commissioner Deutsch for his truck parking area suggestion at location of the old I-75 rest stop on Jones Loop Road.

16. FDOT District One Safety Office Presentation

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is committed to emphasizing safety as the number one priority for consideration in all transportation projects and initiatives. The goal of the State and District Safety Offices is to continually improve the safety of the traveling public.

FDOT's District One Safety Administrator, Keith Robbins, gave a presentation summarizing the department's current efforts to reduce the incidence and severity of traffic crashes in District One. FDOT's ultimate goal is to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries down to zero. Mr. Robbins presentation detailed FDOT's Target Zero initiatives as well as the Federal Highway Administration's Safe System principles.

Commissioner Deutsch remarked on the need for signage instructing drivers to keep right except to pass, as well as efforts to get drivers to use automobile signals. He praised recent success with

getting the extension of turn lanes on US 41 at Murdock Circle. Also, he stated that truck drivers needed to be educated on not driving in the left lane, which forces auto drivers to pass on the right. He observed that there needs to be basic traffic respect, as well as education on how to drive on roundabouts. He stated that the roundabouts are working on Edgewater Drive, but there is a need to educate the public regarding them. Bicyclists and motorcyclists are targets on these roundabouts, so there needs to be education across the board.

Keith Robbins stated that education of drivers and driver behavior are important. He noted that this involves working with law enforcement, and only so much can be done with engineering. Driver certification and education are under a separate department. The Charlotte County Sheriff

applies for FDOT grant programs to pay officer's overtime. Commissioner Deutsch stated that there should be a focus on getting information placed on media. Keith Robbins noted that four public safety announcements had been done recently. Secretary Nandam noted that although crashes will happen, prevention of fatalities was key.

17. 2023 Safety Performance Measures Target Discussion

D’Juan Harris stated that MPOs are required annually to adopt Safety Performance Measure Targets for tracking progress towards the Statewide/MPO targets for each of the transportation performance measures and meet Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements.

FHWA has established five national Safety Measures which all State Departments of Transportation and MPOs must address. Unlike other performance measures applicable only to the National Highway System (NHS), the Safety Performance Measures apply to all public roads. The 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 last adopted the FDOT’s “Vision Zero” targets (goal of no fatalities or injuries) for all five of the Safety Performance Measures at the February 18, 2022 MPO Special Board Meeting. The MPO has until February 27, 2023 to accept the FDOT targets for 2023 or develop its own targets. MPO Staff recommends the MPO Board support and adopt FDOT’s 2023 targets.

Commissioner Deutsch commented that Hurricane Ian obviously created traffic signage and signal issues. People were courteous initially but then became rude after about a week. Given the goal of zero, it might be possible to trend lower, and data could be analyzed for the last five years. He believed that the Edgewater Drive roundabouts would reflect reductions in serious accidents. D’Juan Harris stated that the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Action Plan

Grant currently being pursued would also result in improvements and provide baseline traffic safety data for all of Charlotte County’s federal aid eligible roadways.

Mayor Matthews made a Motion to approve the FDOT 2023 Safety Performance Measures. **Commissioner Herston** seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Commissioner Tiseo had to leave at this point in the meeting.

18. Veteran's Boulevard Corridor Planning Study Final Report

Vitor Suguri and Babuji Ambikapathy delivered the presentation.

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.

The planning study documented and assessed 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 are 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 contingent upon the availability of funds.

The planning study team presented findings and recommendations to the MPO Board, Advisory Committees, and the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners. All comments are incorporated in the final planning report. Next steps are for Charlotte County to develop engineering cost estimates for recommended project priorities listed in the report and coordinate with the MPO on order ranking of priorities during the annual development of the MPO's Listing of Project Priorities (LOPP).

Commissioner Constance inquired about a paving program and was told that it would be accomplished all at once. Improvements not included in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) would be added later.

Mayor Matthews made a motion to endorse the Veterans Boulevard Corridor Planning Study Report and approve integration of the report's recommended priorities into the annual List of Project Priorities (LOPP). The new priorities will be amended into the MPO's 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) at a future MPO Board Meeting. **Commissioner**

Herston seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

19. Burnt Store Road Project Development and Environmental (PD&E) Study Presentation

FDOT is currently conducting a Project Development & Environmental (PD&E) Study for Burnt Store Road from Van Buren Parkway to just North of the Charlotte County line (approximately 1000 feet). The study is evaluating alternatives for improvements to Burnt Store Road that include widening from the current two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane divided roadway. The study also includes an evaluation of bridge options over the Gator Slough Canal. The current estimated completion date of the PD&E Study is late summer 2023.

FDOT's presentation was included in the meeting packet. The link below provides additional information on the project:

[436928-1 Burnt Store Road Project Development and Environment \(PD&E\) \(swflroads.com\)](https://www.swflroads.com/436928-1-Burnt-Store-Road-Project-Development-and-Environment-PD&E)

Steven Andrews and Kristin Caruso gave the project presentation. Staff was leaning toward recommending Alternative Two.

Commissioner Constance asked that Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs be considered for the project. Commissioner Herston inquired about flowthrough of water in the area. Commissioner Constance asked if any South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) funding would be utilized for stormwater treatment. Kristin Caruso noted that SFWMD was not concerned about treatment of the water, since there is no "dirty water" generated. Their chief concern was water flow being restricted. Commissioner Herston inquired about how much pipe capacity was assumed for flowthrough pipe. Jay Winter said the concern was not to impede flow. Design would be considered as appropriate for the area. The Charlotte portion tended to be drier than the Lee County area.

20. Charlotte County Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS)/Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Master Plan Presentation

Robert Fakhri stated that Charlotte County Public Works is developing an Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS)/ Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Master Plan to improve the flow of vehicle traffic and improve safety on Charlotte County's and the City of Punta Gorda's roadways.

Goals of the Master Plan include:

1. Improve Charlotte County's ability to manage traffic signals and equipment
2. Provide Traffic Management Center with real time data for network operations
3. Improve incident response times
4. Prepare for implementation of emerging transportation technologies
5. Analyze performance measures to assess the overall effectiveness of the system

The Master Plan study is scheduled to be completed in Spring 2023. Based on the results provided from the study, the County will move forward with developing cost estimates and an implementation plan for ATMS/ITS recommendations.

Commissioner Deutsch asked about ineffective traffic signals at US 41 and Harbor Blvd. where opposing traffic is vying to make left turns and one driver beats another to the intersection, thereby forcing the late arriver to wait through an entire traffic cycle before turning left. He wondered if modifications could be made to allow both sides to make left turns before flow returned to the US 41 major artery.

Commissioner Herston asked if real time data was being given consideration. Fathy Abdalla responded that cameras were being utilized to accomplish this effort. Blue tooth usage vs. privacy issues were discussed. Information sharing between agencies was also considered.

Commissioner Constance inquired about which entity owned the fiber. Fathy Abdalla stated that Charlotte County owns it on County roads but not State roads. Commissioner Constance stated that EOC should connect with the Traffic Management Center in some fashion.

Commissioner Herston requested that the Airport Authority be added to the stakeholder's list for this project.

21. Public Comments

There were not public comments.

22. Staff Comments

D'Juan Harris provided the following comments regarding the MPO's Hurricane Ian response:

Our MPO staff had to quickly mobilize and move our essentials from the Eastport Campus to a conference room at Murdock to get our office back up and running after Ian. The Executive Director of the Lee MPO, Don Scott, took a day out of his busy schedule and assisted us with the move. I also want to thank Hector Flores for coordinating with us and finding a suitable location to accommodate the MPO staff so quickly.

Our MPO partners statewide also reached out shortly after the storm to see what they could do to assist. Beth Alden of the Hillsborough TPO loaned us a hotspot so that staff that did not have internet could proceed with essential duties. Ryan Brown of the Sarasota/Manatee MPO, hand delivered the hotspot to us the same day Beth offered it up to us. I also want to thank Dave Hutchinson for reaching out and offering to allow us to utilize his office space and equipment if we did not have a suitable space to use.

Also want to thank and acknowledge FDOT staff that went above and beyond to assist us after Ian. Abra Horne provided constant updates on roadway conditions and other pertinent transportation related issues after the storm, despite dealing with her own personal adversity. I want to thank Wayne Gaither and all the liaison staff for keeping the coordination going for development of the work program. Shout out to Victoria Peters, Edith Perez and Lori Carlton-

Greene for their resilient efforts to keep coordination rolling to ensure Charlotte County would have a productive and progressive work program cycle.

23. Member Comments

Commissioner Constance observed that D’Juan Harris was the hardest working MPO Director in the state.

Commissioner Herston noted that he was now participating on the MPOAC’s Freight and Rail Committee. He commented on the Charlotte County Airport’s economic impact. He observed

that the Charlotte County BCC should consider air use taxes. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas

Mayor Matthews thanked FDOT and Charlotte County staff for the remarkable hurricane-related response which was highly commendable. She wished all a wonderful holiday season.

Commissioner Deutsch wished all a Merry Christmas and stated that next year will be better following the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Ian.

Commissioner Constance wished all a happy holiday season. He recommended that everyone drive safely and enjoy their family.

24. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:26 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, January 23, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. in a Joint Meeting with the Sarasota/Manatee MPO at the Venice Community Center, 326 Nokomis Avenue South, Venice, Florida.