



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

**MINUTES OF THE APRIL 24, 2024
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING (IN PERSON)

Steven E. Hurt, Mid County Representative, CAC Vice-Chair
Jill Hartman, West County Representative
Richard Russell, At-Large Representative
Mary Ellen Kiss, South County Representative
James Kunard, South County Representative

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dianne Quilty, Mid County Representative, CAC Chair – excused
Pauline Klein, At-Large Representative - excused
Richard Kirchhoff, West County Representative – excused
Robert Logan, Mid County Representative – excused
Steve Schoff, West County Representative
vacant, South County Representative

OTHERS PARTICIPATING

D’Juan Harris, MPO Director
Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Principal Planner
Wendy Scott, MPO Planner
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Services Coordinator (virtually)
Pam Barr, FDOT (virtually)
Shirley Ciampi, Charlotte County Transit
Brittany Metzler, City of Punta Gorda
Tim Ritchie, March Against Mosaic.

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Vice Chair Steve Hurt called the CAC Meeting to order at 1:30 pm. A 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 on agenda items.

4. Consent Agenda:

A. Approval of Minutes: March 6, 2024 Meeting

Richard Russell made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Jill Hartman seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

5. Reports

A. Chair's Report

CAC Vice Chair Steve Hurt had nothing to report. He requested the status of a citizen request from Debbie Coudret who had spoken at the previous CAC Meeting regarding the need for a third lane on Henry Street in Punta Gorda. It had been recommended that she might attend the March 6, 2024 MPO Board Meeting where she could provide her comments. D'Juan Harris noted that she did not attend the meeting. He reported that all items recommended at the last CAC Meeting had been approved by the MPO Board.

B. City of Punta Gorda Report

Brittany Metzler had nothing to report. James Kunard inquired about the construction on Henry Street to address storm water drainage. Brittany Metzler described a sidewalk improvement project on West Henry Street. She also discussed road closures on Henry Street due to the force main project.

C. Charlotte County Report

D'Juan Harris noted that no representative from Charlotte County was present. If CAC Members had any Charlotte County matters to address, they could reach out to Mr. Harris via email.

D. Sheriff's Report

No one from the Sheriff's Department was present.

6. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

Pam Barr joined the meeting late and remotely due to illness. (*She reported at the end of Agenda Item #10*). D'Juan Harris described the information that she had reported at the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting in the morning.

7. Final FY 2025 – FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Final Draft FY 2025 - FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)/FDOT Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement describes transportation planning activities and establishes the MPO budget for the fiscal years spanning from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2026. 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/FDOT Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement at the March 21, 2024 MPO Board meeting, the draft FY 2025 - FY 2026 UPWP was submitted to the appropriate reviewing agencies for comments. Comments received from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Florida Department of Transportation were addressed and have been incorporated in this final Draft UPWP.

D’Juan Harris discussed a recent UPWP revision due to comments received from FHWA. A recommendation has been made to display a 2.5% set aside on page 43 under Task 6 - Complete Streets Planning in the amount of \$15,556. All MPOs are already accomplishing these tasks, however, FHWA wants multimodal planning efforts emphasized and highlighted in the UPWP.

Mary Ellen Kiss inquired regarding what CAC Members could do to help stem the tide of a movement to eliminate MPOs. D’Juan Harris stated that it would take an act of Congress to make that change. He described language in recent proposed State of Florida legislation to consolidate MPOs, including a request that the Lee County MPO and the Collier MPO consider merging. He noted that urbanized populations bled over into multiple counties, so the line of thinking was that there might be cost savings. He noted that the proposed legislation may return. He recommended that CAC Members should show up and encouraged everyone to stay engaged. They should also tell their neighbors about the great work MPOs accomplish in their community. D’Juan Harris noted that the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO will become a TMA after certification of the 2030 census (since the population will be greater than 200,000), and mergers might be proposed.

Mary Ellen Kiss and Richard Russell expressed interest in a reconsideration of Charlotte County’s 2020 population figure which had been only two individuals shy of the 200,000 figures. D’Juan Harris stated that per discussions at the MPOAC meeting and with the U.S. Census Bureau, challenging the count was not allowed by federal statute.

D’Juan Harris stated that the federal discretionary grants process is underutilized, and these grants can be found in the Notice of Funding Opportunities. He described how it took 60-80 hours of his time to prepare the request for the Comprehensive Safety Plan, but millions of dollars of funding for projects might be available once it was complete. D’Juan Harris noted that in his opinion after reviewing www.grants.gov, there are a plethora of grants which are being underutilized as reflected in increased figures shown. He stated that someone has to show the initiative to apply. Steve Hurt asked if he found a grant at the website, whom he should contact. D’Juan Harris stated that he should contact his jurisdiction and noted that sometimes a partial match would be required. Based upon his experience with Palm Beach Schools, James Kunard observed that the requirements make it challenging for staff at times.

Describing his experience with the recent Safe Streets For All grant, D’Juan Harris noted that many webinars and trainings had been available, and it was not as difficult to apply as it used to be.

D’Juan Harris discussed a recent document revision due to comments received from FHWA. A recommendation has been made to display a 2.5% set aside on page 43 under Task 6 - Complete Streets Planning in the amount of \$15,556. All MPOs are already displaying these funds, however, FHWA wants multimodal planning efforts highlighted.

Richard Russell asked how MPO consultants are selected. D’Juan Harris noted that the MPO has three general planning consultants that it utilizes. Discussion followed regarding the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) requirements. D’Juan Harris noted that it is the County’s responsibility.

It was mentioned that the graph on page 78 of the document was difficult to read. Bekie Leslie stated that it had been received from outside the MPO.

James Kunard made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Final Draft of the FY 2025 -FY 2026 UPWP/Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement and authorize the MPO Board Chairman to sign all required documents. The motion allows for transmittal of the document to FDOT and required agencies including the ability for staff to make minor changes and adjustments based on comments and input received. Mary Ellen Kiss seconded the motion which was carried unanimously.

8. Final FY 2024/2025 – FY 2028/2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Draft FY 2024/2025 - FY 2028/2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that is presented today satisfies the Federal and State legislative requirements 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 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Board is scheduled to review and adopt the TIP at the May 20, 2024, MPO Board Meeting. The Draft Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO TIP for FY 2024/2025 - FY 2028/2029 is included as Attachment 1 in the agenda packet. The TIP contains summary pages for each programmed project and the project summaries may be found on pages 74 through 107. Projects are categorized into Highways, Aviation, Transit, Miscellaneous, Maintenance and MPO planning funds. These categories are color coded in this iteration of the TIP for easy reference.

The following summary provides major highlights of the FY 2024/2025 - FY 2028/2029 Draft TIP.

- The FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program (FY 2024 to FY 2028), lists a total of 67 projects, grant programs and ongoing maintenance activities programmed for funding totaling \$215,211,891. Breakdown by funding source is as

follows:

\$35.8 million State (23%)
\$109.4 million Federal (51%)
\$40.5 million Local (26%)

- Performance-Based Planning: FDOT provided updates on performance-based planning and performance measures found on pages 25 through 59. The four core measures include: Safety, Pavement and Bridge Condition, System Performance, and Transit Asset Management/Transit Safety
- Public Review Period: The review period is from April 20, 2024, to May 20, 2024. MPO Board is scheduled to adopt the TIP at the May 20, 2024, MPO Board Meeting.

Laks Gurram noted revisions to the funding portion of the document. He reviewed the percentages located in the bulleted section above. Harbor View Road efforts were discussed. As revised in an FDOT email, revenues have declined due to increased costs, and this funding shortage is reflected in the Work Program. The TIP has been advertised for 30 calendar days as specified in the MPO's Public Participation Plan (PPP).

Richard Russell referenced an item on page 75 (US 41 Kings Hwy to Peace River Bridge) and inquired about project status. Laks Gurram reported that the project would start after July 1, 2024. The County had not yet put it out for bid. It will be a Local Agency Program (LAP) project, and funds must be used per the LAP agreement and reimbursement requirements. Richard Russell inquired about the bridge project numbers on page 92, wondering if the numbers were firm. D'Juan Harris that these were FDOT standard operating and maintenance projects. It is a requirement to list all these projects in the TIP.

James Kunard asked whom to speak to regarding the Harbor View Road project. D'Juan Harris responded that any project with federal funding for Right-of-Way (ROW) must provide all interested parties with equal access to information. Otherwise, if disregarded, it could result in a finding and jeopardize funding. Charlotte County and FDOT Staff are responsible for the project and would like to know the status of the ROW map. Phase 2-R involves relocating and identifying utilities (60%).

Mary Ellen Kiss discussed the \$150,000 for the Burnt Store Road project which is split out from the Lee County portion. There is 1000 feet of work for which Charlotte County does not qualify (since it does not receive population-based funding). D'Juan Harris described how Congressman Steube had obtained an appropriation for \$2 million with a match requirement. The design is still good. Construction funding on the Charlotte side could come from FDOT if they concur. There are ongoing project changes. D'Juan Harris advised members of the public to attend the public meeting/workshop to get all the details. These will occur in late summer/early fall 2024. Mary Ellen Kiss stated that it might be as late as 2025 perhaps. D'Juan Harris stated that he would poll Don Scott at the upcoming MPOAC Meeting. Mary Ellen Kiss asked where Lee County was on the Design Build. D'Juan Harris stated that he is not aware of the details/logistics. FDOT may recommend the consultant.

Mary Ellen Kiss made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Final - Draft FY 2024/2025 - FY 2028/2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Jill Hartman seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

9. 2024 Draft Project Priorities

The MPO is required annually to develop a List of Project Priorities (LOPP) as part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process and to submit the list to FDOT for consideration of funding. FDOT requested the initial priorities be submitted by March 29,

2024, to initiate their review process. A preliminary list of project priorities was submitted to FDOT District One on March 29, 2024. However, the final List of Project Priorities must be approved by the MPO Board and submitted to FDOT by June 28, 2024.

The MPO received preliminary candidate projects from Charlotte County. The City of Punta Gorda's candidate projects are contingent upon City Council determinations to be made at their future City Council Meeting. These candidate projects are seeking state and federal funding from these three categories:

1. Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
2. Congestion Mitigation/Transportation System Management (CM/TSM)
3. Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP)

The Draft 2024 Project Priorities presented today reflects the changes that were proposed since the March 6, 2024, TAC/CAC and March 21, 2024 MPO Board Meeting. The final draft provided today includes the project recommendations from the State Road 776 and Veterans Boulevard. The Final Draft LOPP received from member entities is listed below:

- Harbor View Road from Date Street to I-75
- Veterans Blvd @ Loveland Blvd
- Veterans Blvd @ Norman St
- Veterans Blvd @ Torrington St
- Veterans Blvd @ Orlando Blvd
- SR 776 @ Charlotte Sports Park
- Burnt Store Rd from Lee County line to Wallaby Lane
- Veterans Blvd @ Atwater St
- Veterans Blvd @ Yorkshire St
- Veterans Blvd @ Harbor Blvd
- SR 776 @ Biscayne Drive

Laks Gurram noted the projects listed on the left side are the County projects for next year's TIP document. This informs FDOT a year ahead that these are projects of local interest. \$43M is funded toward highways for Harbor View Road. He reviewed other projects such as those for the Sun Trail and carbon reduction (applied toward sidewalks). Ron Gogoi asked if these were projects funded going forward. It was noted that the spreadsheet displays previously funded projects. D'Juan Harris stated that it shows what carbon reduction funds were received last year. Laks Gurram stated that just because a project is removed, it doesn't mean they are taken away. That is because the projects are funded and moving forward. D'Juan Harris expected construction to commence on the SR 31/CR 74 roundabout later this year. The US 41/Carmalita Street roundabout construction won't start until 2026. The Veterans Blvd at Cochran Blvd intersection project would be removed from the list.

Richard Russell commented on the \$10 Million dedicated to utilities ROW on Harbor View Road, as well as \$9-10 Million for construction of Phase 1 only. He expressed the sentiment that costs should be shouldered from impact fees. It was noted that this was a question for County Administration. Laks Gurram noted that the breakout is shown on page 67.

Mary Ellen Kiss inquired if the CAC could make a recommendation to investigate further the use of impact fees to fund the costs of transportation. D’Juan Harris noted that impact fees are capped. That is a County and State legislative issue and not in the MPO’s purview. He added that the MPO is not allowed to lobby.

Jill Hartman spoke regarding local impact fees, discussing a recent newspaper article about how Charlotte County was slow to raise these fees and is now caught up in legislative requirements. Laks Gurram commented that sidewalks are not required in Charlotte County as in neighboring Counties.

Richard Russell made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the identified 2024 Transportation Improvement Program (Highway, TAP, CM/TSM and TRIP) Project Priorities for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program Cycle (FY 2026 through FY 2030). Mary Ellen Kiss seconded the motion which was carried unanimously.

10. FY 2023/2024 – FY 2027/2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment

FDOT Staff requested the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) approve the following STIP/TIP Amendment in the current FY 2023/24 – FY 2027/28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at the May 20, 2024, MPO Board Meeting:

- **452491 1 5310 OPERATING-SMALL URBAN UZA-CHARLOTTE COUNTY BOCC**

A STIP/TIP amendment is required to the MPO’s TIP and the Statewide STIP when a major change occurs to a project. These changes include: addition or deletion of a project, a major change in project cost, project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope (i.e., changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes). [23 C.F.R. 450.104].

An amendment requires public review and comment, demonstration of financial constraint, or a conformity determination, if applicable. The proposed TIP amendment is included as Attachment 1 of the agenda packet.

D’Juan Harris noted that this funding goes into the old TIP. Projects must be kept in line. Regarding this funding for Transit, Heidi Maddox had clarified at the morning TAC meeting and Shirley Ciampi confirmed that this was two-year funding through Dec 2026 for spending purposes. This was effective through June 30 of the current TIP, as required for compliance.

At this point, Pam Barr joined the meeting and stated that the funding must stay congruent for Public Transportation Grant Agreement (PTGA) funding.

James Kunard made a motion to recommend the MPO Board approve the amendment to the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2023/24 – FY 2027/28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Jill Hartman seconded the motion which was carried unanimously.

Pam Barr also noted that Victoria Peters was transferring to FDOT District 4. Additionally, FDOT had other staff member liaison vacancies.

11. Public Comments

Tim Ritchie introduced himself as a leader of the March Against Mosaic. He spoke regarding water quality and unchecked growth concerns in the region. He is in favor of a building moratorium for ten years. He wondered if developers' rights are more important than citizens' rights. He noted that air, land and water are key. He had flown over, photographed and documented all of the Mosaic properties to see how much land they are consuming. He noted that they are using 27 million gallons of water per day, which impacts Gulf Coast rivers from Tampa to further south. He noted that Mosaic, which does phosphate mining, wants to build off of Kings' Hwy. D'Juan Harris stated that these concerns were County issues. Community Development Director Shaun Cullinan sometimes attends the CAC Meetings. He also stated that Mr. Ritchie could come to the 2050 LRTP Workshop. Tim Ritchie requested that attendees check his Facebook page. D'Juan Harris thanked him for coming to the meeting.

12. Staff Comments

Wendy Scott stated that the MPO had moved to new office space. She also noted that the Peggy Walters Award would be open for nominations until June 30, 2024.

Laks Gurram commented that the new MPO office address was 1050 Loveland Blvd in Port Charlotte (where the next CAC Meeting would be held). He also noted that the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) will be adopted by the October 5, 2025 deadline. Several Workshops will be held. Meeting invites will be sent, and information will be on the MPO website. The Charlotte County Transit Development Plan (TDP) is also underway with public outreach opportunities.

D'Juan Harris discussed progress on the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan. He thanked Richard Russell and Mary Ellen Kiss for their participation on the project subcommittee. A high injury dashboard is being developed. Two recent pop-up events were held at Punta Gorda's Pedal and Play Day and a Port Charlotte High School bicycle safety event. Currently, public workshops were being held so citizens could voice their opinions at strategic locations County-wide.

D'Juan Harris stated that he would be leaving the MPO with a target date of February 14, 2025. He would be handling his health concerns. He wanted to finish up the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan and requested that that citizens encourage local governments to submit

applications for projects. He noted that a great deal of funding was available and stated that he will be here in spirit.

13. Member Comments

Steve Hurt stated that he was sorry to hear about the upcoming departure of Mr. Harris. He noted that everyone wished him well.

Richard Russell asked if DeSoto County was covered by an MPO. D’Juan Harris described the new Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization composed of the six inland counties of DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee and the urbanized area of Highlands County including the cities of Sebring and Avon Park.

[HRTPO – Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization](http://heartlandregionaltpo.org)

heartlandregionaltpo.org The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO has coordinated with the HRTPO and has discussed an interlocal agreement to sync up projects on Kings Hwy improvements. Richard Russell stated that he hated to see you Mr. Harris leave and wished him good health.

14. Adjournment (Next CAC Meeting – June 19, 2024 @ 1050 Loveland Boulevard)

Richard Russell made a motion to adjourn the CAC meeting. Mary Ellen Kiss seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:19 p.m. The next regularly scheduled CAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 19, 2024 in-person at 1050 Loveland Boulevard, Port Charlotte, Florida 33980 at 1:30 p.m.