



JOINT MEETING OF THE CHARLOTTE COUNTY-PUNTA GORDA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION BOARD AND LEE COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION BOARD

**Burnt Store Road Presbyterian Church, Stewart Hall,
11330 Burnt Store Road, Punta Gorda, Florida
Friday, February 16, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item #1 - Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Charlotte County Commissioner/MPO Chair Christopher Constance.

The Lee County MPO Board roll was called by Lee County MPO staff. A quorum was present. Lee County MPO Board Members in attendance included Lee County Commissioners Cecil Pendergrass, Kevin Ruane, Raymond Sandelli, Brian Hamman and Mike Greenwell; City of Cape Coral Mayor John Gunter and Councilmembers Dan Sheppard, Keith Long, Tom Hayden and Richard Carr (alternate); City of Fort Myers Councilmembers Johnny Streets, Jr. and Teresa Watkins Brown; Town of Fort Myers Beach Councilmember John R. King; City of Sanibel Vice-Mayor Michael Miller; City of Bonita Springs Councilmembers Laura Carr and Chris Corrie (alternate).

The Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO Board roll was called by Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO staff. A quorum was present. Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO Board members in attendance included Charlotte County Commissioners Christopher G. Constance, Stephen R. Deutsch, and Joseph Tiseo; Charlotte County Airport Authority Commissioner Paul Andrews; and City of Punta Gorda Mayor Lynne Matthews.

Others in attendance included the following – L.K. Nandam, Wayne Gaither, Victoria Peters, Pam Barr, Jessica White, Kathy Finney, Abra Horne, Steven Andrews, and Jimmy Vilce with FDOT; Kristin Caruso with Scalar; Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO staff D’Juan Harris, Lakshmi Gurram, Wendy Scott, Bekie Leslie, and Betty-Ann Sherer; Lee County MPO staff Don Scott, Ron Gogoi, and Calandra Barraco; Lee County MPO Legal Advisor Derek Rooney, Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Legal Advisor Kimlyn Walker; members of the public - Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss, Richard Russell and Dianne Quilty (CC-PG MPO Citizens Advisory Committee), Maria Briggs (Lee County MPO CAC), Derek Felder (Lee County MPO LCB), Vicki Welsch, and William Welsch. Local government staff present were Shaun Cullinan with Charlotte County Planning and Zoning, Robert Fakhri with Charlotte County Public Works, Brittany Metzler with City of Punta Gorda, and Tony Palermo with City of Fort Myers.

Agenda Item #2 – Invocation – Pastor Bill Frank – First Baptist Church of Punta Gorda

Pastor Bill Frank with the Baptist Church of Punta Gorda gave the invocation.

Agenda Item #3 - Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Agenda Item #4 - Chairs’ Comments

Chair Constance and Chair Pendergrass provided welcome comments.

Chair Constance requested Agenda Item #16 (Public Comments) be considered before Agenda Item #15 (Member Comments).

Agenda Item #5 - Public Comments on Agenda Items

The following members of the public provided public comments on agenda items: Derek Felder (Agenda Item #12 related to Proposed Regional Passenger Rail Study Request) and Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss (Agenda Item #9 related to Burnt Store Road Corridor Projects). Her comments are available here: [02 16 2024 Joint MPO CC Lee Public Comments Kiss](#)

Agenda Item #6 - Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Deutsch moved the agenda item change requested by Chair Constance under Chairs' Comments (Agenda Item #4), and Commissioner Ruane seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #7 - Review and Comment on the Joint Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) Project Priority List

Mr. Scott and Mr. Harris discussed the new Joint Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) Project Priority List. (All presentation slides for each agenda item have been combined and posted in a link at the end of the minutes.)

Mr. Scott stated that newly commenced projects had been deleted and project costs were updated. Mr. Harris noted that Charlotte County's addition to Joint TRIP List was the 1000 feet segment of Burnt Store Road north of the Lee/Charlotte County Line to Wallaby Lane. Mr. Harris indicated that \$2M is noted as a placeholder estimate amount for the right-of-way phase. This estimate is subject to change. Each MPO Board will vote separately on their respective Joint TRIP lists at their regular March 2024 Board Meetings.

Agenda Item #8 - Charlotte County Community Development Update

Mr. Harris introduced Mr. Shaun Cullinan, Planning and Zoning Official, Charlotte County Community Development Department. Mr. Cullinan provided a Power Point presentation as an update on future developments along the Burnt Store Road Corridor in Charlotte County as outlined in the Burnt Store Area Plan. These proposed developments could serve as an indicator of additional needed capital infrastructure improvements necessary in the near future, especially since growth is thriving in the area.

Chair Constance discussed the following topics with Mr. Cullinan: concern for wildlife, needed commercial properties located in developments (given driving distances to Cape Coral or Punta Gorda commercial hubs), color coding of the lake portions on commercial sections of the presentation map, and Flatwoods Initiative/waterflow issues.

Agenda Item #9 - Status of the Burnt Store Road Corridor Projects / East West Connection Update

Mr. Scott provided a Power Point presentation on the Status of the Burnt Store Road Corridor Projects and Robert Fakhri, Traffic Engineer with Charlotte County Public Works, gave the East West Connection Update. The information can be found at the following links:

[Map of the Burnt Store Road Corridor in Charlotte and Lee Counties](#)
[Burnt Store Road East/West Connection Study Presentation](#)

Commissioner Hamman inquired about project funding and construction timing. Chair Constance also requested to be kept informed regarding the upcoming PD&E phase. Mr. Fakhri also fielded questions regarding the potential Tucker's Grade roundabout.

Mayor Gunter stated that Cape Coral has a high priority for Burnt Store Road as a major evacuation route and stressed the importance of strongly advocating with State and Federal officials regarding the roadway to achieve swift completion. Discussion also arose regarding shared use paths and Sun Trail efforts.

Agenda Item #10 - Status of the SR 31 Projects

Mr. Scott discussed the status of various SR 31 projects in Lee County. Mr. Harris indicated that the design of the roundabout at the intersection of SR 31 and CR 74 is complete. Construction for this project is estimated to commence in late summer to mid-fall of 2024.

Commissioner Greenwell, who lives in the SR 31 area, expressed concern over the large number of accidents between the Caloosahatchee River and the entrance to Babcock Ranch. He noted that a dangerous lack of shoulders along the roadway inhibits ambulance access. Mr. Scott observed that there was no easy fix for this problem. He also responded to questions regarding accelerated construction schedules on the roadway. It was also reported that right-of-way and construction phases were unfunded on SR 78 from I-75 to SR 31.

Agenda Item #11 – Review of the Regional Lee/Charlotte-Punta Gorda/Sarasota Manatee MPO’s Interlocal Agreement

The agreement will be taken to each separate MPO Board. Mr. Scott stated that the three MPO Boards were required to coordinate, and described how the Boca Grande area was now located in the Sarasota/Manatee MPO’s urban area. A written agreement was necessary to cover requirements. Chair Constance noted that good stewardship was necessary on regional cooperation.

Agenda Item #12 - Information on the Proposed Regional Passenger Rail Study Request and Current Plans and Projects in Florida Providing Potential Connectivity

Mr. Scott and Mr. Harris provided a presentation on the Proposed Regional Passenger Rail Study Request and Current Plans and Projects in Florida Providing Potential Connectivity. The MPOAC currently was involved in promoting a Southwest Florida rail effort. Mr. Scott observed that the current Amtrak connecting service was not the same as high-speed rail passenger service. He described the current Brightline service on Florida’s East Coast and the next portion planned for Orlando to Tampa. Plans in the southeastern US states were also displayed.

Mr. Scott described efforts to resolve bridge issues in Florida’s rail corridor.

Agenda Item #13 - Next Meeting Date

Ms. Bekie Leslie noted the 2025 joint meeting would be held on February 14.

Agenda Item #14 - Staff Comments

Mr. Scott stated that it was nice to see everyone at the recent Burnt Store Road Town Hall Meeting which had included a large turnout. Chair Constance appreciated the efforts of John Elias (Charlotte County Public Works Director), Don Scott, and D’Juan Harris at the event.

Agenda Item #16 - Public Comments *(order reversed)*

No public comments were made.

Agenda Item #15 - Member Comments

Among the comments made were discussion of: progress made in the region post-Hurricane Ian, significance of the Burnt Store Corridor to both Counties and the excellent recent Town Hall Meeting, importance of Pine

Island Road growth, concern over proposed legislation impacting MPOs and the MPOAC, evidence of pre-existing collaboration efforts between the two MPOs including informative and productive annual meetings, the need to advocate with the State Legislature regarding MPO-related bills as well as those impacting local budgets/home rule/term limits, invitation to the upcoming Lee County Fair, a Lee County resiliency plan currently in development that could be shared with interested local governments, and farewell remarks from Councilmember Streets and Commissioner Sandelli.

Agenda Item #17 - Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m.

All meeting presentations can be viewed at the following link: [Joint MPO Presentations](#)

An audio recording of the meeting can be accessed at the following link: [Joint MPO 02/16/24](#)

All interested parties are invited to appear and be heard on each of the above items. Written comments filed with the MPO will be considered. Copies of all of the above proposed documents are available by calling the Lee MPO Office at 239-244-2220 or the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Office at 941-883-3535.

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