



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

DATE: Monday, January 27, 2025

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

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



Wireless Access Available
OPEN WiFi
No Password Required

JOINT MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 27, 2025

[\(Link to Meeting Full Recording\)](#)

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

Commissioner Christopher G. Constance, MD, Chair, Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO, called the meeting to order at 11:13 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. It was noted that a **quorum of both MPOs was present.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO

Commissioner Christopher Constance, MD, Chair
Commissioner Ken Doherty
Commissioner Joseph Tiseo, Vice Chair
Councilmember Jeannine Polk

Charlotte County
Charlotte County
Charlotte County
City of Punta Gorda

Sarasota/Manatee MPO

Mayor Gene Brown, Vice Chair
Councilmember Jayne Kocher
Commissioner Mike Haycock
Vice Mayor Pete Emrich
Commissioner Barbara Langdon
Mayor Dan West
Mayor Liz Alpert
Commissioner Jean Ahearn-Koch
Mayor Nick Pachota
Commissioner Jason Bearden
Commissioner George Kruse
Commissioner Mike Rahn
Commissioner Teresa Mast
Commissioner Joe Neunder, Chair
Commissioner Mark Smith
Commissioner Carlos Beruff
Vice Mayor Mike Haycock

City of Bradenton
City of Bradenton
Town of Longboat Key
City of North Port
City of North Port
City of Palmetto
City of Sarasota
City of Sarasota
City of Venice
Manatee County
Manatee County
Manatee County
Sarasota County
Sarasota County
Sarasota County
Sarasota-Manatee Airport Authority
Island Transportation Planning Organization (Town of Long Boat Key)

FDOT District One Non-Voting Advisor

Wayne Gaither, FDOT Director of Southwest Area Office

Sarasota/Manatee MPO Staff

Ryan Brown, Deputy Director/Planning Manager
Nanette Eubanks, Assistant Clerk to the Board
David Hutchinson, Executive Director
David Machado, Fiscal Manager
Varshini Renikunta, Multi Modal Planner

Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Staff

Lakshmi N. Gurram, Principal Planner
D’Juan Harris, MPO Director
Bekie Leslie, Administrative Services Coordinator
Wendy Scott, Planner
Sierra Ray Scott, Administrative Support - STARR



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Wenonah "Nina" Venter, Senior Planner
Nick Chiavini, Transportation Planner
Rachel McClain, Fiscal Analyst

Others Present

Pam Barr, FDOT
Tanya Merkle, FDOT
Nathan Kautz, Kittelson & Associates, Inc.
Kimlyn Walker, MPO Legal Service
Tom Patazki, Sarasota/Manatee CAC
Jennifer Fehrs, Town of Longboat Key
Alvimarie Corales, City of Sarasota
Jim Boldt, Vice Mayor, City of Venice
Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development
April Santos, Charlotte County
Chad Ray, Charlotte County
Prony Bonaire Fils, Manatee County
Megan Lui, Breeze Transit
Paula Wiggins, Sarasota County
Corrine Arriaga, City of Sarasota
Nikesh Patel, City of Sarasota
Rachel Ebner, American Structurepoint
Clarke Davis, Manatee County Public Works
Danny Williams, Citizen
Irene Anderson, Resident

2. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

3. Opening Comments

Mr. David Hutchinson, Executive Director, Sarasota/Manatee MPO (S/M MPO), made the following comments:

- Provided an overview of the history and purpose of the Joint MPO Meetings, especially to benefit several new members on both MPO Boards present at the meeting.
- Described the latest version of the interlocal agreement between both MPOs which now includes the Lee County MPO as a participant due to the 2020 Census classification in the Boca Grande area (*found in agenda item 5.a.*)

Mr. D'Juan Harris, Director, Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO (CC-PG MPO), made the following comments:

- Emphasized that regional cooperation through joint MPO meetings was essential to promote the implementation of major game-changing regional transportation improvements over the long term.
- Noted that good planning is the foundation for the future.

Chair Christopher Constance thanked Co-chair Joe Neunder and the Sarasota/Manatee MPO for hosting the meeting in Venice. He introduced Councilmember Jeannine Polk (new) and Commissioner Ken Doherty (returning). He also noted that Commissioner TJ Thornberry was unable to attend the meeting. Chair Constance acknowledged



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new members on the S/M MPO Board (Commissioner Jason Bearden, Commissioner George Kruse and Commissioner Teresa Mast). He noted that Mr. Wayne Gaither was present on behalf of FDOT District One Secretary LK Nandam.

4. FDOT Report

FDOT SWAO Director Wayne Gaither reported on the following:

- Commented that the new legislative season meant that earmarked project opportunities exist.
- Cautioned that earmarks were not without repercussions, since no additional funding is provided (instead funding is taken from the Transportation Trust Fund and the Project Priorities List is reprioritized in the FDOT Work Program).
- Discussed SU funding (currently available to the S/M MPO with the CC-PG MPO eligible following the 2030 Census) and the need to ensure contingency by using every dollar available for eligible projects in FDOT's District One each year.
- Highlighted cost increases resulting in the need to work with local communities to fill funding gaps and to coordinate early with the MPO staffs to foster the progression of higher Project Priorities.

FDOT Community Liaison Pam Barr reported that currently work was progressing on the FDOT joint certifications for both MPOs with draft completion scheduled by mid-February 2025. Packets will be sent to Central Office by June 1, 2025. In prior years, both MPOs had been classified as low risk, and she was hoping this status would continue.

5. Regional Discussion Items

a. Interlocal Local Agreement for Joint Regional Transportation Planning and Coordination – Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota/Manatee MPOs

This item was previously discussed by Dave Hutchinson in his opening comments (*Agenda Item 3*).

At this point in the Joint Meeting, agenda item 8.a.ii, Barrier Island Implementation Plan was added to the Joint Meeting agenda. It was carried over from the Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board Meeting held earlier in the morning).

Ryan Brown introduced Nathan Kautz with Kittelson and Associates who gave the Barrier Island Implementation Plan presentation. The plan aims to address critical transportation infrastructure and mobility challenges across a series of interconnected barrier islands in the S/M MPO region. An interactive mapping tool was discussed:

[Barrier Island Congestion Analysis - Streamlit](#)

Following the presentation, Chair Constance, Commissioner Tiseo, Vice Mayor Haycock and Commissioner Smith expressed concern with the seasonal dates selected for review in the study. Their general consensus was that the timing for data collected should be shifted later in the calendar year to better capture the peak of snowbird season. Mr. Krautz stated that the dates could be further evaluated. He also responded to Commissioner Tiseo's question regarding the impact to the data from events such as the COVID pandemic and hurricane impacts including hotel closures. Mr. Krautz stated that historic data projections will be utilized which don't remove these impacts but do mute them.

b. Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) Coordination (Charlotte-Punta Gorda MPO, Sarasota/Manatee MPO)

1. Sarasota Manatee MPO and Charlotte County MPO LRTP Progress Updates
2. District One Regional Planning Model (D1RPM) Coordination



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Ryan Brown presented the S/M MPO - Jan 2025 Update and described the project timeline. He noted that a system evaluation survey is available and should be completed by January 31, 2025. The consultant was finishing up the cost revenue section of the plan and moving on to the cost feasible portion.

Laks Gurram reported on the CC-PG MPO Update - 2050 LRTP Moving Charlotte Forward. The project consultant, Kimley Horn and Associates, was not available for the meeting. He covered the LRTP project timeline. Public outreach efforts include an LRTP survey (available on the MPO's website) and at least ten workshops.

c. River Road

Ryan Brown and Laks Gurram gave an update and referenced handouts. It was noted that great progress was being made in the north segment in Sarasota County. Mr. Gurram stressed that River Road is a major evacuation route for the Englewood side of Charlotte County. He applauded plans to expand north Winchester Blvd to four lanes in the S/M LRTP which would assist Charlotte County residents in the Rotonda area. He also described the CC-PG MPO's recent SR 776 Corridor Study which includes Winchester ~~Read~~Blvd, Pine Street and Beach Road which feed into Sarasota County. An FDOT Public Workshop is planned for the second week of February 2025.

Wayne Gaither stated that he would try to confirm the exact completion date of the north River Road project and report it later in the meeting. Ryan Brown noted that the S/M MPO is aware of improvements needed on River Road south of US 41. Chair Constance stated that Charlotte County had contributed \$13 million in 1998 to Sarasota County to move Charlotte's citizens out of harm's way. He commented on the gravity of the roadway for evacuation purposes and appreciated the S/M MPO's efforts to continually improve River Road.

d. Regional Trails

Wenonah "Nina" Venter from the Sarasota/Manatee MPO began by mentioning ~~the 2025~~the 2025 Greenway and Trails Summit hosted by multiple agencies on February 5-6, 2025 at the Venice Community Center with a registration deadline of January 31, 2025. She reviewed ongoing Florida Gulf Coast Trail activities in Sarasota and Manatee Counties (both Legacy Trail and Gateway Greenway projects). She reviewed a list of these projects including those currently in the Sun Trails application or Sun Trails funded phases. Ongoing safety improvements also were noted. Commissioner Jen Ahearn-Koch requested that Ms. Venter provide her with a full copy of her trails presentation so that she might share it with her constituents.

Laks Gurram updated Sun Trail projects and funding sources in Charlotte County. Unfortunately, the Harbor Walk project was ~~completely destroyed~~destroyed following Hurricane Milton in October 2024. Disaster funding was being sought. Three funded projects were analyzed, and the goal was to make all modes of transportation safe. Chair Constance raised the issue of how to make the Harbor Walk project more resilient. Ninety percent of docks had been destroyed in both MPO regions. Resiliency needs to be built into the plan. D'Juan Harris, speaking on his past LAP project manager experience with the Harbor Walk project, observed that the use of composite decking had doubled the project price. Recommendations also existed to build these types of projects higher. Chair Constance observed that perhaps floatable efforts would work. At the time of construction, everything recommended was done for the project, but it was unimaginable what had happened because of the storm surge.

e. Joint Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) Project Priority List

Ryan Brown reviewed his MPO's projects and remarked that the S/M MPO also coordinates with the Polk TPO to pursue TRIP funding. TRIP funding is not very substantial. Laks Gurram noted that his MPO's highest priority project is always Harbor View Road, and all funding options are always under review.



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Ryan Brown reported that the morning's crash on I-75 (~~milemarker~~~~mile marker~~ 203) was now cleared. Wayne Gaither followed up on the earlier River Road north segment completion question, reporting that FDOT's schedule was for the early months of calendar year 2027 or perhaps sooner.

At this point in the Joint Meeting, agenda item 5.b.3. was discussed

3. Proposed New i-75 Interchange at Yorkshire/Raintree and Prerequisite Projects

Ryan Brown discussed an earlier white paper:

[Yorkshire/Raintree Interchange Planning White Paper](#)

Until an Interstate Justification Report (IJR) is warranted, it is important that additional local road improvements are completed. Discussions continue between the two MPOs regarding better connections on Hillsborough Blvd. and US 41. Coordination on local improvements is ongoing with Sarasota County and the City of North Port.

Laks Gurram discussed the recent Veteran's Blvd Corridor Study developed through the efforts of the MPO and FDOT. Several intersections that would lead to the future interchange are contained in the Project Priorities list, and various intersection improvements are envisioned especially for safety purposes. Project consideration continues for both Yorkshire Street and Harbor Blvd. Staff is working on including various roadways into the District One model.

D'Juan Harris responded to a question from Commissioner Doherty regarding what needed to be accomplished as far as the local roadway network in the potential interchange area. It was important not to conduct an IJR prematurely. He estimated that the IJR might be 10-15 years away. Discussion followed regarding how the interchange might help the grade F situation in Charlotte County at the Kings Highway interchange. The need was to funnel Charlotte County traffic north. Commissioner Barbara Langdon noted that North Port had just rewritten its Land Use Development (expanding activity area #6) and funding a master planning effort in the potential interchange area. Staff has been considering needed infrastructure improvements from Charlotte County to the west. A joint meeting between the City of North Port and Charlotte County will occur soon, and Commissioner Langdon requested that the topic be placed on that agenda. She emphasized the need to work together based upon requirements in the above White Paper. Commissioner Tiseo and Mr. Harris discussed the County's work on Veterans Blvd intersection improvements, ~~which~~ ~~was~~~~which was~~ proceeding slowly with an estimated 2-4 years for each project. Commissioner Doherty (who has an upcoming Florida Association of Counties trip to Washington, DC, scheduled on March 3-4, 2025), Commissioner Tiseo and Wayne Gaither discussed how to effectively relay regional interest in the proposed new I-75 interchange to federal officials. Wayne Gaither noted that these conversations typically start at the district level and then flow upward, since FHWA is responsible for the highway and FDOT maintains it. Commissioner Doherty indicated that he would like to discuss the topic further. Commissioner Tiseo stated that an approved script was needed for BCC approval prior to approaching federal officials on behalf of the County.

6. Board Member Comments

Councilmember Jeannine Polk described concerns about trucks speeding on Harbor View Road and the potential to restrict truck traffic along it until improvements occurred in the future. She noted that parts of it run through residential areas with bicyclists and pedestrians. She characterized it as a terrible connection between US 41 and I-75. Chair Constance agreed with her assessment and stated that the matter would be discussed at the next day's Charlotte BCC meeting. He stated that speed limits might be addressed and/or truck traffic may need to be removed before it destroys the roadway.

Commissioner Ahern-Koch applauded the discussion on constructing for resiliency from storms. Mayor Gene Brown praised the importance of conferring about regional traffic concerns at these joint meetings. Commissioner Tiseo welcomed all new MPO Board Members and recommended that they obtain an acronym list from staff to better



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understand the MPO language. Vice Mayor Haycock noted that he would miss all the friendly faces and urged his MPO Board not to forget about Longboat Key's projects. Commissioner Doherty was glad to be back on the MPO Board. Commissioner Langdon stated that she values these meetings, especially since the City of North Port has much in common with Charlotte County given the proximity.

Chair Neunder praised the great meeting and observed that for the coastal community, these conversations are meaningful and valuable.

Chair Constance stated as a practicing physician, he was aware that the two major storms had inflicted a great deal of damage including the permanent closure of the Punta Gorda hospital due to flooding. He praised Sarasota's 5 star, A-rated health care system which was driving a great deal of retiree interest in Sarasota County. Although Advent Health owns the property where the Punta Gorda hospital was located, it may not be rebuilt. He noted that health care is important, and good roadways add to it.

7. Adjournment of Joint Regional Meeting

Chair Constance adjourned the meeting at 12:34 p.m.