



## CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

### MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2025

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 Joseph Tiseo**, Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Vice Chair  
**Commissioner Ken Doherty**, Charlotte County Commissioner  
**Commissioner Thomas Thornberry**, Charlotte County Airport Authority  
**Councilmember Jeannine Polk**, Punta Gorda City Council

### ADVISORY MEMBERS

**Jamie Driggers, PE**, FDOT, Interim District One Secretary

### STAFF PRESENT

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Director  
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Services Coordinator  
Mark Yaxis, MPO Multimodal Planner  
Sierra “Ray” Scott, MPO Senior Administrative Assistant  
David Moscoso, Assistant County Attorney (MPO Legal Services)

### OTHERS PRESENT IN-PERSON

Pam Barr, FDOT  
Robert Fakhri, Charlotte County Public Works, TAC Chair  
Marc Ispass, Kimley Horn & Associates  
Elaine Allen-Emrich, Charlotte Sun  
Heidi Maddox, Transit  
Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development  
Dianne Quilty, CAC Chair  
Richard Russell, CAC At-Large Representative  
Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss, CAC South County Representative

Sam Besase, CAC West County Representative  
Carl Benge, City of Punta Gorda  
Richard Lehmkuhl, City of Punta Gorda

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

MPO Chair Constance called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. All MPO Board members were present.

### **2. Invocation – Pastor Bill Frank – First Baptist Church of Punta Gorda**

Pastor Bill Frank from First Baptist Church of Punta Gorda gave invocation.

### **3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Chair Commissioner Constance invite FDOT Interim District 1 Secretary, Jamie Driggers to introduce himself., Mr. Driggers, previously with District 2, shared that he will serve in this interim role for up to one year. With 24 years of FDOT experience, he looks forward to with the MPO Board to advance transportation opportunities in the region.

### **4. Addition and/or Deletion to the Agenda**

MPO Director, Lakshmi N. Gurram, noted that there were no additions or deletions to the agenda but there was one modification which was to the PowerPoint presentation attachment for agenda item 12.

*Commissioner Tiseo made a motion to approve the modification to the agenda packet. Commissioner Doherty seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.*

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

There were no public comments on agenda items.

### **7. Consent Agenda:**

- A. Approval of Minutes: [August 4, 2025, MPO Board Meeting](#)**
- B. [Draft MPO Board and Advisory Committees Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2026](#)**

*Commissioner Tiseo made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Doherty seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.*

### **7. Chairs' Reports:**

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

MPO Chair Constance reported that on the 30<sup>th</sup> he attended a meeting at the Burnt Store Road Corridor Coalition. In attendance were representatives from many of their local communities as well as staff from Lee and Charlotte County, the City of Punta Gorda, and the City of Cape Coral. This meeting was to discuss how to improve the safety of the corridor. One topic was specifically the safety of the two-lane portion of Burnt Store Rd. Interim options such as lowering of speed limits, elimination of passing lanes, illumination at key intersections, increased enforcement, illuminated speed signs, and construction of deacceleration lanes were discussed. The other planned improvements are five or ten years in the future, such as a "Green-T" intersection upgrade. Commissioner Constance explained how the current lack of deacceleration lanes is very dangerous and expressed interest in prioritizing intersection improvements at Vincent Ave. He brought forward concerns that were mentioned during the meeting about drivers continuing to speed and to pass in no-passing zones and reiterated the importance that enforcement would have. He believes a phased approach is worth looking into, even if most of the changes are south of the Lee County line. He thanked those who invited him to the meeting; he also stated that he felt the meeting was very fruitful. He believes this is very important to bring to the MPO Board and is something he wants to keep his eye on and continue to discuss moving forward.

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

CAC Chair Dianne Quilty reviewed the highlights of the September 17, 2025, CAC Meeting. All actionable items on the agenda were recommended for approval by the CAC to the MPO Board. Other items discussed by the CAC include:

Intersection improvements on SR-776 with Restricted Crossing U-Turn (R-CUT),

The top five projects from the project priorities list for FDOTs consideration,

Finally, presentation about the Gulf Coast Trail by Charles Hines.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was moved forward for MPO Board approval. Ms. Quilty explained that Shirley Ciampi from Charlotte County Transit presented statistics on trips, relayed transit information, and asked for anyone wishing Transit to speak at their Homeowners Associations or other meetings to reach out to her.

During the sheriff's report, Ms. Quilty explained, Pauline Klein brought up traffic at Deep Creek Elementary School. Ms. Klein stated that an ambulance was unable to get through the cars that were stacked for parent pick-up and there was a death as a result. Ms. Quilty wanted to make sure this concern was brought to the MPO Board for possible action.

Commissioner Constance expressed concern about the tragic event. He explained this was discussed at the last land use meeting, and the stacking issues should be addressed. He outlined one suggestion of an offsite parking area, where parents can wait to pick up their children. He also stated that they must get the developer in the area to understand that Harborview Rd. is a failed road and that something must be done to alleviate this problem moving forward. He also

reiterated that stopping a vehicle in a traffic lane is illegal and a traffic violation, which should be watched and ticketed more closely.

Commissioner Tiseo remarked that for that particular school the schoolboard was planning to reconfigure their internal drive lanes to accommodate more pickup vehicles. There is no rule in the design of a school to allow for a certain amount of expected stacking for parents to pick up their child. He stated that it has gone beyond picking up from school and evolved into parents parking outside the school for as long as an hour or more blocking traffic. People are also parking at bus stops in the street at the stop bar rather than on the side or on the shoulder. Commissioner Tiseo mentioned that this is not only illegal, but very dangerous. Commissioner Constance took a moment to state that the stacking of cars was not anticipated by schools when they were built, as things have changed and less students are riding the bus and/or walking to school.

Commissioner Thornberry stated that he was very familiar with the problem in this area and also outlined that there are similar issues with Sally Jones Elementary as well. He also described that the crossing guard has taken to directing traffic so that cars can pass over the double lined median and be able to pass the cars that are stacked in line. He suggested that for a short-term remedy, a deputy directing traffic may be warranted.

Commissioner Doherty agreed that this is a huge problem, one that is not new and is not isolated for one school either. He described that one school, Port Charlotte Middle School, is doing things a little differently by stacking many cars off Orlando Blvd, but that it still causes issues on Midway at pickup and drop off times. He believes it may be effective to invite the school superintendent to the upcoming transportation meeting so he may have the opportunity to hear the concerns and join in the conversation. Commissioner Constance agreed this is a good idea and suggested that Hector Flores be contacted regarding this.

Commissioner Constance also took a moment to speak on the topic of e-bikes, as they were mentioned during the CAC meeting and discussed at the Babcock Ranch public hearing. He explained that the item did not pass but the problem persists and should be mentioned during the upcoming transportation meeting. Commissioner Doherty stated that the classifications on these modes of transportation change dynamically and faster than ordinances can be put in place. He agreed that implementing a speed limit might be the only way to enforce it. He agreed that this is something that should be discussed at the transportation meeting because e-bikes are becoming an essential mode of transportation for people and should not be outright banned. Commissioner Constance reported that after speaking with Sheriff Bill Prummell, Sheriff Prummell agreed to support implementing a clear and enforceable rule to ensure consistent enforcement and public understanding.

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

Laks Gurram reported that, per the TAC Bylaws, in the absence of both the Chair and Vice Chair, the MPO Director is designated to serve as the non-voting Chair for the TAC. He reported that TAC members are developing a list of projects from the project priority list to submit to FDOT for consideration. They also discussed UPWP, the Gulf Coast Trail, and the 2050 LRTP, all of which will be discussed during items 11, 12, and 13. Charlotte County staff also discussed several projects including intersections along US-41 @ Acline Rd, Toledo Blade Blvd ,

Centennial Blvd and the Buc-ee's. County staff also presented a safety dashboard that tracks serious injuries and fatalities in the county, which will be made into an agenda item for the next board meeting. Mr. Gurram also stated that the TAC discussed changes to school zone speeds. Commissioner Constance asked how the new school zone speeds are being determined; staff explained that school zone limits are set relative to the posted speed limit. .

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

BPAC Chair Laura Rossi reported that the committee moved the LRTP for approval by the board and heard the presentation about Florida Gulf Coast Trail Connector. There were three other topics discussed at the meeting. First there has been some movement on determining who is responsible for maintenance on Tucker's Grade east of I-75 due to the condition of the pavement on that section.

She also reported that Brian Blankinship gave a presentation on the need for a bicycle and pedestrian connection between Tucker's Grade and US-41 and stated that the BPAC will be drafting a letter to the development company, Toll Brothers, regarding this issue. Commissioner Constance questioned if it was possible to hold the developer from creating their required stretch of sidewalk (only in front of their development) and to connect to Royal Rd. He also pointed out that that section would be going over railroad tracks, which would make the connection very expensive. Ms. Rossi stated that there is an access road along the backside of the railroad that could be leveraged. She stated that there are local bikers who exit the multi-use trail and ride along the access road rather than biking along US-41. Commissioner Constance asked if there was already a multi-use trail in that area, which there is not, and he agreed that finding a solution to this problem is important.

BPAC also discussed the justification for the change in posted speed limits in school zones, specifically on Peachland Blvd, and were also in contact with James Richardson, who explained the changes.

Ms. Rossi brought up the final topic, which was the need for a bicycle connection at the US-41 NB bridge in Punta Gorda. Currently there is no connection for cyclists, they have to get off the sidewalk, cross a section of grass towards the vehicle travel lanes, and enter the bike lane from there. There is also a brand-new sidewalk placed with a utility pole in the middle of it, which is hindering bicyclists from navigating it. Commissioner Constance requested the photos of the sidewalk be sent to the board.

#### **8. Local Government Reports:**

##### **A. Charlotte County Airport Authority**

Commissioner Thornberry provided [comments](#) in advance and the following discussion:

Commissioner Thornberry reported they have one ground project on Challenger Blvd. that is still on hold. He wanted to touch on the highlights which include the opening of the new rental car facility north of the Bailey Terminal. Allegiant announced new service to New Orleans starting in November and Atlantic City in February. There is also seasonal service with Sun Country to

Minneapolis from December through April. Passenger numbers are increasing, up to 20% compared to last year. Improvements to Bailey Terminal are slated to be completed in 2027 and the new hanger, which should be done in early 2026. He also reiterated that the air show will be on November 1 and 2 and welcomed everyone to come out and support the airport and the community.

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

Councilmember Polk provided a City of Punta Gorda project update in advance, which can be read [here](#).

### **C. Charlotte County**

Commissioner Tiseo provided the County [report](#) in advance and opened for discussion.

Commissioner Constance stated he would be bringing these project updates to the transportation meeting as he is concerned by the amount of time that is being taken at Edgewater Dr. He expressed concern about the holdup and expects clarification on why the project has not progressed. Commissioner Tiseo explained that while funding has been secured for all three design phases, only two of the three phases have received construction funding. However, efforts are underway to ensure the project is shovel-ready should additional funding become available.

Commissioner Doherty believes it to be critical to have administration get an agenda ready and for priority projects to be on that agenda for the transportation meeting.

Commissioner Constance also had a comment on new R-CUT, in particular at Lettuce Lake. He stated that he has noticed a decrease in dangerous stacking in that area and believes the new R-CUT to be much safer and more efficient.

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

Mr. Wayne Gaither, FDOT, reported that District 1 currently has a project for truck parking on Jones Loop Rd. near the airport. They have applied for a grant of \$11.6 million through the National Highway Freight Program. He also mentioned the Draft Tentative Work Program, which is in accelerated session this year.

On Friday, October 24<sup>th</sup> at 11 a.m., FDOT will conduct a formal in-person presentation of the DTWP simultaneously at both D1 Headquarters in Bartow and at the Southwest Area Office in Ft Myers. Additionally, a virtual self-guided online Public Hearing, which can be accessed via the SWFL Roads and FDOT.GOV websites will be available from 10/20-10/24, along with any in-person project review appointments that may have been scheduled.

Commissioner Tiseo inquired about the scope of work associated with the grant. Mr. Gaither responded that the grant would support the development of a truck parking facility where drivers can stage during federally mandated rest periods, which typically occur every 8 to 10 hours of driving. He noted that the facility is expected to be a light-use site, primarily intended for rest and equipped with basic amenities.

Commissioner Tiseo also asked whether the property designated for the facility had been surplus. Commissioner Constance confirmed that the property had indeed been surplus prior to the development of this plan.

Additionally, Commissioner Tiseo requested further details regarding the grant, specifically whether it would fully fund the project. He asked that this information be provided to the board for review.

Commissioner Tiseo took a moment to explain the FDOT list for the benefit of the interim FDOT District 1 Secretary, Mr. Driggers, stating that they've made great progress on getting things off the list while ensuring that important projects remain subjects of discussion until they are resolved.

### **FDOT Led Discussion**

	<b>FPID #</b>	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>
A.	N/A	<p><b><u>US 41 at Olean Boulevard</u></b> (Pam Barr/Wayne Gaither-FDOT/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County) Project is being completed by the subcontractor, TransCore. The work has not yet been performed as the mast arm is on back order.</p>
B.	446340-1	<p><b><u>SR 776 at Flamingo Boulevard</u></b> (Pam Barr/Wayne Gaither -FDOT/ Robert Fakhri - Charlotte County) Commissioner Constance took a moment to point out on the new aerial photo that the developer is moving along and that this is an important bypass especially during spring training.</p> <p>Mr. Robert Fakhri reported that the project is nearly complete and progressing at a standard pace. Commissioner Constance expressed a desire for the county's side of the process to move more quickly to stay aligned with overall progress.</p> <p>Commissioner Tiseo inquired whether any aspects of the project were being delayed by the county. Mr. Fakhri confirmed that there were no hold-ups on the county side and that all components were moving forward evenly.</p> <p>Commissioner Constance asked about a deceleration lane, which is part of the developer's side. Commissioner Doherty wanted to know the status of the FDOT permit on the north side of the intersection.</p>
C.	N/A	<p><b><u>I-75 Possible New Interchange North of Kings Hwy Interchange</u></b> (Pam Barr/Wayne Gaither-FDOT) There has been no additional information for this but discussions between the Sarasota/Manatee MPO and Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO are ongoing. Commissioner Constance took a moment to explain to Mr. Driggers that the interchange at Kings Hwy is a failed interchange and that to alleviate the problem it was best to move north to Sarasota County. Commissioner Doherty pointed out that an operational evaluation of Kings Hwy and Veterans has been added to the 2050 LRTP cost feasible. Commissioner Constance wanted to make sure it</p>

		was noted that the improvements at Kings Hwy and the new interchange at Raintree/Yorkshire will work together, it's not one or the other, it's both.
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### Joint Local and FDOT Discussion

	FPID #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION
A.	434965-1 434965-2 434965-3 434965-4 434965-5	<p><b><a href="#">Harbor View Road Combined Funding Strategies</a></b>  <b>(Wayne Gaither-FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)</b></p> <p>Mr. Fakhri explained that right of way acquisition continues on segment one as well as coordination with utilities. Commissioner Constance pointed out that this project has been ongoing for eleven years and is critical infrastructure especially during evacuations. He explained that the unfunded part of the project is critical.</p> <p><b><a href="#">FDOT 12/05/2023 PUBLIC HEARING DOCUMENTS</a></b></p>
B.	446391-1	<p><b><a href="#">US 41 from Kings Hwy to Peace River Bridge Planning/Operational Improvements Study</a></b>  <b>(Wayne Gaither-FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)</b></p> <p>Robert Fakhri explained that they are still working on the LAP and preparing the advertisement for the consultant. Commissioner Constance reiterated that there is a very important project to keep on the list because there have been multiple deaths at that location.</p>
C.	N/A	<p><b><a href="#">Bermont Road (CR 74) Safety Discussion</a></b>  <b>(FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)</b></p> <p>This is a discussion of whether or not this road is being considered and analyzed for the SIS program. Commissioner Constance asked if this road needs to be added to their legislative priorities. He stated that the road was added to the Highway Infrastructure System about five years ago due to the infrastructure around it such as the airport and US-17. He briefly explained the limits of the project and the benefits for FDOT to consider as a state-maintained facility. Commissioner Constance raised concerns about the roadway conditions, noting that the speed limit is relatively high and the area is poorly lit at night. He emphasized that mining operations and frequent truck traffic are common along the corridor, which may pose safety risks for drivers and workers in the area. Commissioner Tiseo reiterated that the road is being considered for the State Intermodal System.</p> <p>Mr. Gaither stated that the road is on their radar despite having relatively low volumes, the road has high percentages of freight movement. He stated he would continue to work with the district and central office to keep an eye on the road's status. He suggests that they continue to make improvements to the road itself using existing funds and programs.</p> <p>Commissioner Tiseo also asked if FDOT was looking to exchange roads at this time. Mr. Gaither answered that it was not out of the question that this</p>

		<p>road might be part of a swap. Mr. Driggers stated that the road is a high priority and conversation needs to happen.</p> <p>Commissioner Doherty added that in the 70s this was a state road, but it was switched off the system since then. He explained that this road really must return to the state.</p> <p>Commissioner Constance reminded that Burnt Store Rd. used to be a state road as well, but the county took it back. He stated that it's been four laned to the county line over the last fifteen years and reiterated that CR-74 once did and should return to state control.</p>
D.	436928-3	<p><b><a href="#">Burnt Store Road – From Lee/Charlotte C/L to Wallaby Lane</a></b> (FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County) Mr. Fakhri stated that this road design is ongoing with the department. There is also coordination with Lee County, who is responsible for the 60% plan</p>
E.	N/A	<p><b><a href="#">Burnt Store Road @ Home Depot</a></b> Signal/Access Management Mr. Fakhri stated that this is a city priority and is not a priority for the county. Councilmember Polk requested that Mr. Gurram weigh in on the topic. He explained that this project could possibly be put on the project priority list for the next cycle. Councilmember Polk reminded the board that people avoiding using that left turn to get out of Home Depot are choosing instead to travel through the Burnt Store Meadows development, which is upsetting those who live in the community due to the traffic issues. She stressed that this should stay on the FDOT list as a priority.</p>
F.	N/A	<p><b><a href="#">SR 776 @ Toledo Blade Intersection</a></b> Discussion The developer did send a traffic study and Mr. Fakhri stated that they sent in comments. They anticipate a resubmittal soon, which is to be followed with other analysis. Commissioner Constance requested a summary of the study to be sent to all Board members</p>

### **City of Punta Gorda Led Discussion**

	FPID #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION
A.	N/A	<p><b><a href="#">Crosswalks and ADA Projects</a></b> Locations that have been identified have been sent to the safety department at FDOT. Mr. Gaither stated that this will require a longer discussion at a future date and FDOT will be reaching out to city staff. He stated it would be a long-term discussion about what the city is looking for and what can be done. Councilmember Polk said that the walkability of the city is really important.</p>

### **10. 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 shall be subject to an annual performance evaluation conducted by the MPO Governing Board.

This evaluation marks the first formal performance review of Mr. Gurram in his role as MPO Director.

1. [MPO Board Annual Performance Evaluations](#)
2. [2025 MPO Director Evaluation Tally Sheet](#)

Commissioner Constance introduced the evaluation, stating that Mr. Gurram earned a total of 176 points with an average of 35.2. He opened the item for discussion. Commissioner Tiseo wanted to make sure that the pay increase would be retroactive to the date that the county implemented the increase for all employees. He also explained his scoring, stating that he does not give the maximum (5) often, instead setting his expectation at 4, which he says is standard for him with all employees that are new to their role. Commissioner Constance agreed and stated that his expectations are the same. Mr. Gurram thanked the MPO Board members for the opportunity to serve as the MPO Director, stating that it is a great privilege for him.

*Commissioner Doherty made a Motion to approve the pay for performance increase (4%) set forth by the MPO Board for the MPO Director and make it retroactive to the date the County implemented its increase. Commissioner Thornberry seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.*

## **11. FY 2025-FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendment**

On August 4, 2025, the Charlotte County–Punta Gorda MPO received a request from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to amend the FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). This request was made pursuant to federal regulations outlined in 2 CFR §200.308 and 49 CFR §18.30(f), which require updates to reflect changes in key personnel.

This amendment specifically addresses the transition of Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO under new leadership of Lakshmi N. Gurram, who was appointed as the permanent MPO Director on March 31, 2025.

To ensure continued compliance with federal requirements and maintain accurate documentation, the amendment also replaces Resolution 2024-01 with Resolution 2025-04 in the UPWP.

1. [UPWP Resolution 2025-04](#)
2. [FDOT UPWP Revision Form](#)
3. [FDOT Technical Memorandum 22-01REV-1](#)

*Commissioner Tiseo made a motion to approve an amendment to the FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). 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. Commissioner Doherty seconded the motion which was carried unanimously.*

## **12. Final Draft 2050 Long Range Transportation (LRTP)**

At the August 4, 2025 MPO Board Meeting, the Board approved and opened a 30-day public comment period for the Draft 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which concluded on September 5, 2025. This process fulfills the MPO's Public Participation Plan and meets the federally mandated minimum public review period required for LRTP adoption.

MPO staff reviewed the Draft LRTP package and submitted comments to the consultant for incorporation. The LRTP Adoption Package now includes all received comments (see Attachment 1).

Since the August 4 meeting, MPO staff has advertised the public comment period twice, with the official close scheduled for the October 2, 2025 MPO Board Meeting. Adoption by this date ensures compliance with the MPO's requirement to complete the LRTP update by October 5, 2025.

The completed 2050 LRTP, along with the Technical Appendix, provides comprehensive data supporting the plan's development.

Additionally, at the September 17, 2025, TAC/CAC meeting and the September 25, 2025 BPAC meeting, the committees reviewed and recommended approval of the Final Draft 2050 LRTP.

1. [2050 LRTP Adoption Package](#)
2. [Power Point Presentation](#)
3. [2050 LRTP Resolution of Adoption](#)

Mr. Gurram introduced Marc Ispass from Kimley-Horn, who presented.

During discussion Commissioner Doherty asked about the study for I-75. He appreciated the efforts to include this portion in the LRTP and reiterated that the county needs to put the study on a list of priority projects. Mr. Gurram stated that the first step would be to put in the application for the next cycle between 2031-2035, which would start in November. The upcoming project priorities will be presented in March and will be adopted around May. He stated that he would follow up with County staff to ensure the project priority application will be submitted during the next cycle.

Commissioner Constance inquired about the county's inclusion in the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), noting that full integration may not occur until 2041. He also asked whether participation in the SIS would generate revenue for the county.

Mr. Ispass explained that SIS planning is structured in phases: the first five years, the second five years, and a long-range component focused solely on capital projects. He noted that future

roadway designations and funding opportunities depend on decisions made by the state, which informed the data used in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

Mr. Gurram added that US-17 is currently designated as an SIS facility, in addition to I-75, which is already part of the county's SIS network

Commissioner Constance also asked about the timeframes for the operational studies listed in the cost feasible projects. Mr. Ispass explained that though it says cost feasible it may also mean the study is partially funded because the later phases are prone to change depending on the outcomes of the studies. Mr. Gurram took a moment to explain that there is a southern connection being looked at by Lee County for a possible interchange at Del Prado Blvd. to connect it to I-75.

***Commissioner Constance opened the Public Meeting.***

Richard Russell expressed his concern about two projects; Melbourne and US-41 and Harborview and I-75. He is concerned about the traffic patterns are going to be like when they are build. He stated that 14,000 cars a day will be visiting the Buc-ee's and that is going to be a massive undertaking for a two-lane road. He wondered when a solution beyond the current two-lane configuration would be brought for discussion at a meeting.

Sam Besase, discussed several projects including traffic signals along Gasparilla Rd., SR-776 right turn, problems with stacking at school pick-ups, at L.A. Ainger Middle in particular where people park in the dirt making deep ruts, or blocking traffic. He also noted comments on Facebook regarding portions of west county that have vegetation blocking sight lines on SR-776. He wonders about contraflow being used here. He also wanted to know about Bridge 113 in Rotunda.

***Commissioner Tiseo made a Motion to close the Public Meeting. Commissioner Doherty seconded the Motion, and it passed unanimously.***

***Commissioner Doherty made a Motion to adopt the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Authorize MPO Staff to make necessary modifications to the LRTP document based on comments received during the public review period. Commissioner Tiseo seconded the motion.***

*A roll call vote was taken, and the Motion passed unanimously.*

### **13. Florida Gulf Coast Trail Connector Update**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), Inc., a nonprofit organization, began leading efforts in 2022 to create the [Florida Gulf Coast Trail in Southwest Florida](#) (Video). This ambitious project aims to establish one of the longest continuous trails in the state, ultimately spanning approximately 420 miles. The trail will traverse seven counties including Hillsborough, Pinellas, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee and Collier

TPL is collaborating with local partners to transform a fragmented trail system into a connected regional network that promotes outdoor recreation, alternative transportation, and economic development.

The Florida Gulf Coast Trail will serve as a vital corridor for residents and visitors alike, linking communities, enhancing access to nature, and supporting Florida's thriving outdoor tourism industry.

Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO Staff is actively coordinating with District 1 FDOT Staff and the SUN Trail Coordinator on the SUN Trail projects to secure funds for next phase which is Construction. Below are the three projects that are programmed for Design.

- Construction of Segment 1 SR 776 from US41 to Gillot Blvd
- Construction of Segment 2 SR 776 from Gillot Blvd to Myakka State Forrest
- Construction of the South Fork at the Alligator Creek Pedestrian Bridge.

Commissioner Constance welcomed, and thanked Charles Hines for serving as commissioner in Sarasota County for eight years and now taking on the TPL in stride. Mr. Hines reiterated what Mr. Russell said earlier about staying ahead of things, which he stated is very important. He also wanted to take a moment and appreciate that transportation needs are brought up by the board at every meeting to ensure these discussions are ongoing rather than asking staff and having to wait to give an answer.

Commissioner Constance thanked Mr. Hines for his time. He also shared a brief story about Central Park and the foresight of the planners to build that oasis in the middle of the city, while down here we are constantly playing catch up to keep connectivity and turn places into destinations. Commissioner Tiseo asked how things worked within TPL, which is a 501c national non-profit. Mr. Hines explained that they are not a land broker but instead receive donations from national and corporate donors. Sometimes, he answered, local governments will hire TPL to do a deal due to their expertise and ability to do so. He stated that it doesn't matter if the state is "red" or "blue" because "green" is very popular with voters.

Commissioner Tiseo asked if TPL operates like a mitigation bank? Mr. Hines stated that rather than being a traditional land trust, TPL is more like a conduit. What they do is negotiate and close on a deal while holding the land as money comes for the deal to close, but they do not hold or manage land for long. Commissioner Tiseo asked what happens if TPL is holding land and the funding doesn't come through. Mr. Hines stated that they continue to hold the land for as long as they need to.

For more information and to see Mr. Hines's full presentation, see the links below.

1. [Gulf Coast Trail Connector PPT](#)
2. [SUN Trails – Charlotte County](#)
3. [Florida Gulf Coast Trail Brochure](#)
4. [Webinar Information Flyer](#)

## **16. Public Comments**

Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss spoke briefly, thanking everyone who attended the Burnt Store Rd. meeting on Tuesday the 30<sup>th</sup>. She stated it helped the public to understand cross-county and cross-jurisdictional difficulties of enforcement with regards to speed, passing lanes, etc. She stated that the interim steps they take prior to the widening project require significant investment in enforcement. She feels that the meeting was very positive and productive. She also stated that Don Scott, director of Lee MPO, commented that the Burnt Store Rd. widening has achieved priority status in Lee County, and she hopes they will also move the widening project up sooner than the currently programmed 2031.

## **17. Staff Comments**

Mr. Gurram took a moment to go back to the informational SUN Trail projects presentation, which focused on three funded projects in the SUN Trail network. None of the projects are funded for construction yet. He stated that they are proposing alternates on some projects based on recommendations from the county. Commissioner Tiseo asked if the trails should be added to the list as something to update on the agenda. Commissioner Constance suggested putting it in the joint local/FDOT discussion. Commissioner Doherty agreed that it should be put on the agenda. Commissioner Thornberry pointed out that building these pathways is like constructing a mini-road and could cause significant impacts to the environment, especially in the Myakka State Preserve.

Commissioner Constance wanted to know the bridge at Alligator Creek estimate, which is \$1.7 to \$2 million. Commissioner Tiseo wanted to know if the projected funds are in the 20-year CIP, which Mr. Gurram stated he would reach out to county staff for an answer.

## **18. Member Comments**

Commissioner Tiseo wanted to know who had officially committed to attending the MPOAC meeting on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. They decided that Tiseo will attend this meeting, but they would discuss who would commit to the next two meetings of the MPOAC between the other members of the board.

Commissioner Doherty wanted to put in a safety concern about the intersection at Midway Blvd. And US-41. He stated he saw a near miss accident there and wondered if they could get with public works to provide a better warning for the right turn lane of the U-turns people are taking at that intersection.

## **19. Adjournment**

The next MPO Board Meeting will be a regular MPO Board Meeting on Monday, December 15, 2025, 2:00 p.m. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:14 pm.