



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

**MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 20, 2025
BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY (BPAC) COMMITTEE**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING (IN PERSON)

Laura Rossi, Chair, South County Representative
Pauline Klein, Bicycle Club Representative
James Wernicke, Vice Chair, West County Representative
Ben Turner, West County Representative

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING VIRTUALLY

Brian Blankinship, South County

MEMBERS ABSENT

Philipp Pfäeffli, Bicycle Business Representative - Excused
Robert Logan, Mid-County Representative
Jan Dick, South County Representative - Excused

ADVISORY MEMBERS

Daniel Werden, Charlotte County Public Schools
Mike Koenig, Charlotte County Community Services
Carl Benge, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design
Tanya Merkle, FDOT
Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works
Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development

OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON

Laks Gurram, MPO Director
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Services Coordinator
Ray Scott, MPO Senior Administrative Assistant
Mark Yaxis, MPO Multimodal Planner
Kim Amontree, Citizen
Richard Russell, CAC Member
Betty-Ann Sherer, Charlotte County Transit
Debbie Coudret, Citizen
Nick Scott, Citizen

OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIRTUALLY

Kayla Huetten, Consultant, Benesch
Walter Breuggeman, FDOT

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

BPAC Chair Laura Rossi called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. Members, staff and consultants introduced themselves. A quorum was not present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Laura Rossi opened the floor for public comments. James Wernicke, vice chair, was accompanied by two members of the Coastal Cruisers bicycle club. They were seeking clarification of the new proposed ordinance that does not allow e-bikes (bicycles capable of running on electric power) on Charlotte County parks trails and pathways. Ravi Kamarajugadda stated it was undergoing staff review prior to being brought to the Board of County Commissioners. There was discussion regarding the classifications of e-bikes, including which classes of e-bike will be permitted, and whether exceptions would be made for special events.

Debbie Coudret, citizen, described her experience with using the crosswalk on US 41 at the Carmalita St. roundabout in Punta Gorda. She explained that cars are not stopping for pedestrians or bicyclists waiting in the crosswalk and asked if the crossings could be moved further back into the side streets rather than being so close to the roundabout itself. Laks Gurram requested that Ms. Coudret send the MPO an email with her concerns for follow-up with FDOT staff.

4. 2026 Election of Officers

BPAC members present at the meeting unanimously agreed to table Items 4 and 5 until the first meeting of 2026, due to the lack of quorum

5. Consent Agenda:

- A. Approval of Minutes: Joint Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)/Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) & Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) – July 16, 2025**
- B. Approval of Minutes: Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) – September 25, 2025**

6. Reports

A. Chair's Report

BPAC Chair, Laura Rossi reported that she helped Brian Blankinship draft a letter about the development, Willow by Toll Brothers, near Royal Rd and Tuckers Grade Blvd. She also mentioned that the Miami-Dade TPO, Broward MPO, and Palm Beach MPO would be hosting their annual Safe Roads Summit on Feb 25-26, 2026. She suggested MPO staff and committee members to attend the summit which would be beneficial to attend.

B. Charlotte County Report

Ravi Kamarajugadda fielded questions. Laura Rossi asked about Tucker's Grade, which has been programmed into the next resurfacing project. However, there is no date set due to lack of funding. There was also discussion about the addition of "Sidewalk Ends" signs that have been installed at the bridge on Beach Rd. in Englewood.

C. City of Punta Gorda Report

Carl Benge reported that Punta Gorda elected a new vice mayor, Jeannine Polk. He also mentioned the Alligator Creek pedestrian bridge project would be taken to the City Council on December 3rd. There was some discussion regarding the bridge to clarify who would be responsible for building and ultimately maintaining it. Tanya Merkle stated that the decision needs to be made sooner so the programmed dollars could stay within the county. Laks Gurram explained that once the project is deleted from the Work Program the funds allocated to the specific project will be going to general funds and may not come back to the county. It was also mentioned that the NB US-41 Peace River Bridge bike lane connection had been addressed. Mr. Gurram stated there were pictures of the update in the Member Comments section of the meeting.

D. Sheriff's Report

A representative from the sheriff's office was not present, but the crash data report for bicycle and pedestrian accidents from June 11 to September 11 was provided and distributed.

E. Charlotte County Transit Report

Betty-Ann Sherer [reported](#) on Transit activities. She presented from slides regarding overall increases to annual ridership, same day trips, trips booked through the Charlotte Rides app, new clients for each month, and new accounts created on the Charlotte Rides app. Other data points she shared was "How did you hear about Transit" and Trips by Purpose. The presentation can be found [here](#).

7. FDOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator Report

Tanya Merklel did not have a formal report to share. She did, however, explain that central office will not be soliciting for new SUN Trails projects during this cycle year as

the available funding will be required to support currently programmed projects. There was a question regarding who is responsible for maintaining SUN Trails once they are built, if FDOT has any influence over ordinances within FDOT constructed facilities, and the classification of e-bikes based on speed.

Walter Breuggeman presented on the intersection improvements made on SR-776 at Biscayne Dr. and Cornelius Blvd. This presentation can be found [here](#).

8. FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendment – Transit Efficiency Study

In accordance with federal requirements, the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) must be amended when revisions occur to the approved Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) budget as reflected in the adopted UPWP.

The Charlotte County–Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is requesting an amendment to the FY 2026 UPWP to incorporate additional funding received by Charlotte County Transit.

The study is funded by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 Operating and Capital Assistance in the amount of \$50,000 to procure consulting services for the completion of a Transit Efficiency Study.

The study will evaluate transit operations, identify opportunities for new or improved services, and analyze the use of high-capacity vehicles to enhance long-term efficiency and sustainability.

Due to lack of quorum all members present unanimously agreed to move this item to the MPO Board for approval.

9. FY 2024/2025 – FY 2028/2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment

FDOT Staff requested the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) approve the following STIP/TIP Amendments in the current FY 2026/2026 through FY 2029/2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at the December 15, 2025, MPO Board Meeting:

- 1. 410119-2 Charlotte County Transit FTA 5311 Operating Assistance. This is a new project for Transit and requires a formal amendment to add it to the TIP in FY 2026.**

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.

Due to lack of quorum all members present unanimously agreed to move this item to the MPO Board for approval.

10. FY 2027 – FY 2031 FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program (DTWP)

The MPO Board and Advisory Committees annually review FDOT's Draft Tentative Work Program, which includes the new fifth year (FY 2031) of project programming based upon State and MPO priorities. This is an opportunity for the committee to review and provide comments on the FDOT's Draft Tentative Work Program.

The Draft Tentative Work Program will form the basis for the MPO's next Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to be adopted and submitted to FDOT by July 15, 2026. For federal funding to flow to the state and local governments, the TIP and FDOT's Work Program must be consistent.

The FDOT District One Draft Tentative Work Program FY 2027 through – FY 2031, for Charlotte County is Attachment 1. Summary of changes to the currently Adopted Work Program are summarized in Attachment 2.

11. 2026 FDOT Safety Performance Measures

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 Performance 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 2026 Safety Performance Measures and target goals are listed in the table below:

2026 Safety Performance Measures

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	STATEWIDE TARGET	CC-PG MPO TARGET
Number of Fatalities	0	0
Number of Serious Injuries	0	0
Fatality Rate per 100 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)	0	0
Serious Injuries per 100 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)	0	0
Total Number of Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries	0	0

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 December 16, 2024, MPO Board Meeting. The MPO has until February 27, 2026, to accept the FDOT targets for 2026 or develop its own targets. MPO Staff recommends the MPO Board support and adopt FDOT's 2026 targets.

Laura Rossi asked if it were possible to obtain data for non-motorized and motorized vehicle transportation as a whole and able to compare those fatalities. Ravi Kamarajugadda explained that he was able to add this to the dashboard and he would share it at the next BPAC meeting. Citizen Debbie Coudret asked if further improvements could be made to intersections to increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. There was brief discussion on what types of intersections are included in the data.

Due to lack of quorum all members present unanimously agreed to move this item to the MPO Board for approval.

12. Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) Designation/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Chapter 427.0157, Florida Statutes, requires that the LCB review and approve the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that will be signed by the newly designated Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) and the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) for the next five-year period. The draft document is attached. Currently, the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) through its Transit Division serves as the CTC for Charlotte County. On May 13, 2025, by resolution, the BCC expressed a willingness to serve in this role for the next five-year period commencing July 1, 2026. The most recent CTC Evaluation reflects Charlotte County Transit's ability to perform as CTC.

At the December 15, 2025, meeting, the MPO Board will consider recommending to the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) the designation of the Charlotte County area CTC for the next five-year period commencing July 1, 2026. As part of this recommendation process, the MPO Board will consider approving MPO Board Resolution #2025-03 for forwarding to the CTD.

The final step in this CTC designation process will require a presentation by the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO staff at a CTD business meeting in early 2026. Once CTD approves the new Charlotte CTC designation, the new MOA will be finalized and a new Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) developed by Charlotte County Transit and MPO staff will be reviewed and approved at the September 3, 2026, LCB Meeting.

Due to lack of quorum all members present unanimously agreed to move this item to the MPO Board for approval.

13. Charlotte County Transit Development Plan (TDP)

Under the latest version of the State TDP Rule 14-73.001, the MPO Board will be presented with the TDP annual update at the December 15, 2025, meeting. Laks Gurram introduced Kayla Huetten from Benesch, who shared [this](#) presentation. Pauline Klein asked about the viability of including bike racks on transit buses, which Ms. Sherer stated has been discussed and transit is aware of the growing desire from the public for this addition.

14. Public Comments

During the public comments section, CAC member Richard Russell mentioned that aging drivers may skew high in the datasets presented under Item 11 because of the disproportionate amount of people in the area over the age of 65. There was discussion on census data and whether these percentages are being compared appropriately. Pauline Klein also mentioned that time-of-day is an important factor when considering causation.

Further discussion followed on the possibilities of ferry services for the hospital in Punta Gorda. Carl Benge explained that Advent Health is not likely to reopen the damaged facility and are looking for new locations that are possibly further away from Charlotte Harbor.

15. Staff Comments

Laks Gurram shared the following comments – House Bill 283 (2026) and an identical bill to HB 283 has been filed in the Senate by Senator Rodriguez, SB 498 titled School Zone and Pedestrian Safety, which proposes new requirements for the design and construction of crosswalks in school zones and on roads with speed limits over 35 mph. Specifically, it mandates the inclusion of traffic control devices such as Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons. Chair Laura Rossi mentioned the wording of the bill including areas outside of school zones as well. Mr. Gurram also thanked the members of the BPAC and wished them a happy holiday season.

16. Member Comments

Pauline Klein shared that she had been in Kenya recently and noted that speed bumps are much more common there as a traffic calming measure, which she stated was very effective.

Brian Blankinship presented about the [letter](#) he drafted regarding Willow at Toll Brothers and the sidewalk along Tuckers Grade. Shaun Cullinan from Community Development stated that the proposed location is FPL owned easement. The discussion led to Mr.

Blankinship wishing to withdraw the draft letter from BPAC. Laks Gurram suggested alternate sidewalks on US 41 to access Tuckers Grade.

There was a brief discussion on why the ordinance about e-bikes were not brought to BPAC prior to being reviewed for the Board of County Commissioners.

Ben Turner announced that this was his last meeting, and he would be retiring from the committee. Members and staff expressed their gratitude for his longstanding participation on the committee.

Photos were shared of the updates to the sidewalk and bike path on the US-41 NB Peace River Bridge.

17. Adjournment - (Next BPAC Meeting – March 12, 2026 @ 2:00 p.m. 1050 Loveland Blvd. Port Charlotte, FL 33980)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:17 p.m. The next regularly scheduled BPAC meeting will be held at the Loveland MPO Office, on March 12, 2026, at 1050 Loveland Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33980