



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

**MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 25, 2025  
BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY (BPAC) COMMITTEE**

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING (IN PERSON)**

Laura Rossi, Chair, South County Representative  
Brian Blankinship, South County  
Pauline Klein, Bicycle Club Representative  
Philipp Pfäeffli, Bicycle Business Representative

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Robert Logan, Mid-County Representative  
Jan Dick, South County Representative - Excused  
James Wernicke, Vice Chair, West County Representative - Excused  
Ben Turner, West County Representative - Excused

**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  
Norma Garcia, Charlotte County Public Schools  
Carl Benge, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIRTUALLY**

Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works  
Marc Ispass, Consultant, Kimley-Horn

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

BPAC Chair Laura Rossi called the meeting to order at 2:03 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**

There were no public comments.

### **4. Consent Agenda:**

- A. Approval of Minutes: Joint Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)/Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Bicycle/Pedestrians Advisory Committee (BPAC) Meeting - July 16, 2025, Meeting**
- B. Draft MPO Board and Advisory Committees Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2026**

*Laura Rossi made a motion to approve the minutes of the Joint CAC/TAC/BPAC meeting at the upcoming November 20, 2025 BPAC meeting.*

*Due to a lack of quorum, all members present unanimously agreed to defer the approval to the November 20, 2025 BPAC meeting*

***Brian Blankinship** made a motion to move the Draft MPO Board and Advisory Committees Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2026 for the November 20, 2025 BPAC meeting. **Pauline Klein** seconded the motion. Due to lack of quorum all members present unanimously agreed to move this item to the MPO Board for approval.*

### **5. Reports**

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

BPAC Chair, Laura Rossi had nothing to report.

#### **B. Charlotte County Report**

Ravi Kamarajugadda reported on the status of maintenance along Tucker's Grade east of I-75. He explained that an agreement has been reached regarding ownership of that section of road and noted that an update from FDOT CTST liaison, Sara Linares, is expected within the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Kamarajugadda then addressed any questions from the members. Chair, Laura Rossi, asked why the posted speed limit signs in the school zones on Peachland Blvd were raised to 20 mph. Mr. Kamarajugadda explained that the change is the result of a multi-county study regarding adequate speeds within school zones which also requires school zone times be posted. He explained that all the school zone signs in the county would be changed moving forward. Laura Rossi asked who she should speak to about these changes, particularly the change allowable speeds within school zones. Mr. Kamarajugadda stated that transportation engineering staff, James Richardson, would be the best contact. There was a brief discussion on this topic.

### **C. City of Punta Gorda Report**

Carl Benje reported that three Complete Street projects are being presented to the 1% sales tax board for review. The Sales Tax Board will provide a recommendation on whether these projects should be forwarded to the City Council for consideration. Those streets are Cooper St, Airport Rd and East Virginia Ave. Mr. Benje also mentioned the bike lane connection on US-41 NB at Peace River Bridge. He will investigate which jurisdiction is responsible for the right-of-way in that area. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Gurram noted that a more detailed presentation on this topic will be provided during the Members Comments portion of the meeting, where further discussion would be more appropriate.

### **D. Sheriff's Report**

A Charlotte County Sheriff's representative was not present.

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

FDOT staff was not present.

### **7. 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 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.

- UPWP Resolution 2025-04
- FDOT UPWP Revision Form
- FDOT Technical Memorandum 22-01REV-1

Laks Gurram introduced this amendment and explained the purpose of it to the members present.

***Brian Blankinship** made a motion to unanimously consent to recommend the MPO Board 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. **Pauline Klein** seconded the motion. Due to lack of quorum all members present unanimously agreed to move this item to the MPO Board for approval*

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

At the August 4, 2025 MPO Board Meeting, the MPO Board approved and opened for a 30-day public comment period of the Draft 2050 LRTP, which ended 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 presented today includes all comments received (Attachment 1).

MPO Staff have advertised twice since the August 4<sup>th</sup> MPO Board meeting. The public comment period officially closed on September 5, 2025 and will be officially adopted by the MPO Board on October 2, 2025,

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

Laks Gurram introduced Marc Ispass, who presented virtually on this topic and completed document.

Brain Blankinship asked if the Tucker's Grade improvement will include multiuse trails. Mr. Kamarajugadda stated they are still being discussed as the project is not at that stage of planning yet.

***Pauline Klein** made a motion to unanimously consent that the MPO Board adopt the Draft 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP); **Brian Blankinship** seconded the motion. Due to lack of quorum all members present unanimously agreed to move this item to the MPO Board for approval*

## **9. 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 along the coast 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 Construction dollars for the next phase. 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.

Laks Gurram introduced the topic and spoke briefly on the presentation and the Gulf Coast Trail within Charlotte County as Charles Hines, the Trust for Public Land Program Director for the Florida Gulf Coast Trail, was not able to attend the meeting. Some discussion followed regarding allowing fishing on the planned improvements to the Alligator Creek Pedestrian Bridge, which is expected to accommodate a twelve-foot trail that will be separated from the sidewalk. Brian Blankinship asked if the slides regarding the right of way amounts for the proposed connectors could be sent to him.

#### **10. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

#### **11. Staff Comments**

Laks Gurram took a moment to welcome the MPOs new Multimodal Planner, Mark Yaxis.

#### **12. Member Comments**

Brian Blankinship presented a proposal to relocate a county-required sidewalk from Tucker's Grade to a different area along the Toll Brothers at Willow property, with the goal of connecting additional multiuse trails. Mr. Gurram explained that the developers are only obligated to construct the sidewalk on Tucker's Grade.

Members of the BPAC expressed support for establishing a connection; however, during the discussion, they agreed on pursue an alternative connection that would exclude the private roads within the community. This decision was based on concerns that gates be installed, potentially limiting public access to the path since the roads are privately owned.

The BPAC members agreed to prepare a letter to be sent to the County outlining their recommendation.

Philipp Pfaeffli displayed photos showing sidewalks and lack of bike lane connections on US 41NB near Peace River Bridge. He expressed concern that bicyclists must cross over dirt and an uneven lip to access the bike path on US 41 NB bridge.

During the discussion, Carl Bengé stated that he would follow up with the Punta Gorda Department of Public Works to address the issue. Mr. Pfaeffli also inquired about the potential investment required to implement the missing section of path, to which Mr. Bengé responded that it would represent a significant investment from FDOT's standpoint.

Mr. Pfaeffli raised concerns about a nearby intersection of two paths just south of the US 41 NB area, where one path merges into another before sharply returning to its original alignment. He noted that a utility pole is positioned nearly in the center of the path, creating an additional safety concern. Mr. Bengé confirmed that this issue would also be discussed with the Department of Public Works.

During this time, Pauline Klein asked about when construction of the Harbor View Road widening would begin. Mr. Gurram explained that this project is currently in the right of way acquisition phase. The Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) is working to acquire the ROW for the entire segment of road now, rather than waiting until funding for construction is secured for second segment. He added that the BoCC is also considering the use of eminent domain for some of the properties involved in the ROW.

Mr. Gurram stated that construction must start before June of 2026 because construction dollars are currently in place for the first segment of Harbor View Road from Melbourne Street to Date Street. Discussion continued regarding the Buc-ee's and the large-scale housing development planned for the southeastern portion of Harbor View Road. During the conversation, Ms. Klein stated, the area will likely be a nightmare to traverse for the next ten to fifteen years. Mr. Gurram stated that, despite initial concerns, studies have shown that traffic generated by the Buc-ee's development will remain primarily on the interstate, with minimal overflow into local roadways. Another question came forward about the southbound section of Harborwalk by both Pauline Klein as well as Philipp Pfaeffli as to why it was still not open since the demolition of the hotel/Hurricane Charley's restaurant. Carl Bengé explained that the seawall and sidewalk were damaged during Hurricane Milton. He further noted that a meeting with legal department took place this week to determine responsibility for repairs. Mr. Bengé stated he would share the outcome of that meeting once available, as Harborwalk remains a priority for the city.

Chair Laura Rossi briefly inquired about the possibility of allowing BPAC members to designate alternates in order to improve the committee's ability to maintain a quorum at future meetings.

In response, Mr. Gurram explained that alternates are not currently permitted, as BPAC members are appointed directly by the MPO Board. However, Ms. Rossi expressed interest in exploring whether the MPO Board could consider allowing alternatives for committee members to help ensure consistent participation.

**13. Adjournment - (Next BPAC Meeting – November 20, 2025 @ 2:00 p.m. 1050 Loveland Blvd. Port Charlotte, FL 33980)**

*Brian Blankinship made a motion to adjourn the BPAC meeting. Pauline Klein seconded the motion. Due to lack of quorum all members present unanimously agreed.*

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 pm. The next regularly scheduled BPAC meeting will be held at the Loveland MPO Office, on November 20, 2025, at 1050 Loveland Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33980