



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

**MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 17, 2025
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING (IN PERSON)

Dianne Quilty, Mid County Representative, CAC Chair
Jill Hartman, West County Representative, CAC Vice Chair
Steven E. Hurt, Mid County Representative
Mary Ellen Kiss, South County Representative
Pauline Klein, At-Large Representative
Robert Logan, Mid County Representative

MEMBERS ABSENT

Priya Ahluwalia, South County Representative
James Kunard, South County Representative - Excused
Richard Russell, At-Large Representative - Excused
Steve Schoff, West County Representative -Excused

OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON

Laks Gurrarn, MPO Director
Mark Yaxis, MPO Planner
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Services Coordinator
Sierra Ray Scott, MPO Senior Administrative Assistant
Pam Barr, FDOT
William Roll, Kimley-Horn and Associates
William Weisspennig, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
Ariana Raldiris, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works Traffic Engineering
Shirley Ciampi, Charlotte County Transit
Tiffany Hummel, Charlotte County Transit
Lou Long, Charlotte County Public Schools
Alex Juskco, Citizen, Real Estate
Sean Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development
Charles Hines, Trust for Public Land
Elaine Allen-Emrich, Media

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Dianne Quilty called the CAC Meeting to order at 1:30 pm. A roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

All attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

4. Reports

A. Chair's Report

CAC Chair Dianne Quilty provided an update from the last MPO Board meeting. She welcomed both new and reappointed members to the committee. Ms. Quilty gave a brief overview of R-Cut intersections, explaining what they are, how they help reduce crashes, and where they have been recently implemented. She also led a short discussion on earmarks, what they are, how they function, and which projects could be affected. Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss provided clarification on the differences between Congressional earmarks and state earmarks.

B. City of Punta Gorda Report

No representative from the City of Punta Gorda was present.

C. Charlotte County Report

Ravi Kamarajugadda reported on several ongoing projects with developers, noting that commitments have been made to install signals once roadway improvements are completed. Pauline Klein asked when the traffic light at Sunseeker would become operational. Mr. Kamarajugadda explained that the timing is uncertain since the road is under FDOT's jurisdiction.

Mr. Kamarajugadda also shared a crash data dashboard he developed. He noted that, unlike data from the Sheriff's Office, this dashboard excludes crashes that occur in parking lots or those involving animal collisions. The dashboard tracks crashes by factors such as time of year and day of the week to help identify trends, address safety concerns, and reduce the number of fatal or serious injury crashes. His goal is to resolve as many issues as possible in a cost-efficient manner.

Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss asked how this data relates to the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. Mr. Kamarajugadda clarified that the dashboard uses current and up-to-date crash data, whereas the SS4A analysis relied on data from 2018 to 2022.

There was discussion regarding crashes that occur at county lines, specifically at the Sarasota County and Lee County boundaries, and how these crashes are counted. Dr. Kiss asked how such data is compiled when drivers are from outside counties or when Charlotte County drivers are involved in crashes that are recorded across the line. She noted that this information would be valuable when evaluating crash data for Charlotte County.

Bob Logan inquired about signal timing at two intersections on Quesada Avenue—one at Cochran Boulevard and the other at Forrest Nelson Boulevard—expressing concern about truck traffic leaving BJ's. Mr. Kamarajugadda explained that signal timing analysis is conducted only once every few years and can only be slightly adjusted by the county between those studies.

D. Sheriff's Report

Charlotte County Sheriff's Office representative Deputy William Weisspfennig reported that there was nothing specific to update at this time. He briefly discussed issues related to E-Bikes and associated traffic violations. He also noted several traffic trouble spots, particularly along Kings Highway, Cochran Boulevard, and US-41.

In response to a question regarding recent crashes, Deputy Weisspfennig reviewed crash data from May through August. He noted that peak crash hours occur between 12:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on weekdays. During this period, the traffic department conducted three weeks of targeted enforcement in several problem areas.

- Week 1: Officers issued citations for violations.
- Week 2: Officers monitored problem areas by parking visibly and observing violations.
- Week 3: Officers used unmarked vehicles to record violations.

Deputy Weisspfennig reported that this approach can reduce violations in targeted areas by up to 30%.

A discussion followed regarding traffic at Deep Creek Elementary during student pick-up and drop-off times. Pauline Klein expressed concern that congestion during these periods poses serious traffic and safety risks, noting that one incident resulted in a fatality when an ambulance was unable to pass through. Deputy Weisspfennig acknowledged the concern and suggested that Ms. Klein address the issue directly with the school board, as it cannot be resolved through enforcement measures alone.

Deputy Weisspfennig also reported that the Sheriff's Department recently added six new deputies and that the traffic department is now fully staffed.

5. 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

Jill Hartman had one correction to the joint meeting minutes regarding her title as Vice Chair for CAC.

Bob Logan made a motion to approve the Joint Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)/Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Bicycle/Pedestrians Advisory Committee (BPAC) Meeting - July 16, 2025, Meeting as amended. Jill Hartman seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously with one abstention from Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss.

Steve Hurt made a motion to approve the Draft MPO Board and Advisory Committees Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2026. Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

6. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

A. SR 776 @ Biscayne Drive

This presentation has been rescheduled for the next round of meetings in November and will be brought forward to the December MPO Board.

Pam Barr reported that at least eight intersections on SR 776 have been converted to Restricted Crossing U-Turn (RCUT). Jill Hartman requested information on which intersections were completed and which remain programmed and asked that this information be sent to her. Dr. Kiss inquired about Burnt Store Road, where Steve Andrews had submitted a Memorandum of Understanding indicating that the PD&E was accepted and transferred to Lee County. She also requested this information be provided.

FDOT asked the MPO to identify its top five projects from the project priorities list, in case funding becomes available that must be used within a short timeframe. CAC members were encouraged to submit their major concerns, ranked in order, to the MPO for consideration.

Pam Barr also updated regarding a public hearing will be held on the new Tentative Work Program for FY 2027–2031. Hearings will take place the week of October 20–24, with in-person meetings scheduled at 11:00 a.m. at both the District One head office in Bartow and the Southwest Area Office (SWAO) office.

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

Steve Hurt made a motion 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 which was carried unanimously.

8. 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 Gurrum introduce Charles Hines, who presented on this project.

Jill Hartman asked if the Pioneer Trail in Englewood is included in the connector project. She said it was shown as portion black on the map presented by Mr. Hines.

Mr. Gurrum then provided a brief update on the SUN Trail projects in Charlotte County. Dianne Quilty inquired about the design status of SUN Trail project from Gillot Blvd to US-

41 on SR 776. Mr. Gurram explained that design work has not yet begun but a memorandum of agreement will be executed soon

Dr. Kiss asked how existing trails will connect to the Gulf Coast Trail Charlotte Harbor Preserve. Mr. Gurram explained that when Burnt Store Road is widened, the trails will be reviewed and adjustments to the connecting trails will be proposed.

9. 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 4th MPO Board meeting. The public comment period will officially closed on September 5, 2025 and 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 William Roll, consultant from Kimley-Horn and Associates, who presented the final draft 2050 LRTP.

During the discussion, Bob Logan asked how the unfunded projects might eventually be financed. Mr. Roll explained that funding decisions are determined at the national level. He noted that while inflation is a concern, the project accounts for this by adjusting revenues and expenditure accordingly. Steve Hurt asked about the average rate of inflation, and Mr. Roll responded that over a 15-year period, the increase is approximately 8-9%.

Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Draft 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP); Bob Logan seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

14. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

15. Staff Comments

Shirley Ciampi shared new data from Charlotte County Transit. As of August 2025, nearly 75,000 trips have been completed. Of these, about 4,000 were on same-day trips, and approximately 8,000 were scheduled using the mobile app. The mobile app now has nearly 1,000 users in its first year.

She also provided a breakdown of trip purposes:

- For riders ages 14–60, the majority of trips are work-related.
- For riders age 61 and older, most trips are for medical appointments.

Ms. Ciampi also introduced Tiffany Hummel as the new Business Services Supervisor at Transit and announced that a senior dispatcher has joined the team.

Additional updates included:

- A new driver vendor contract will begin in October, providing more drivers and reducing unmet trip requests.
- Charlotte County Transit received a National Association of Counties award for the Charlotte Rides mobile app.
- The Transit Development Plan update will be completed in November.
- In June, Transit Director Heidi Maddox graduated from the Florida Transit Leadership Academy and received the Commissioners Award for Customer Service.

Ms. Ciampi encouraged committee members to contact her if they are aware of any HOAs or public meetings where Transit presentations would be valuable.

Laks Gurram welcomed the new Multimodal Planner, Mark Yaxis, to the MPO. He also shared his recent attendance at the 2025 Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) Annual Conference in St. Pete. Mr. Gurram suggested that, at future Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (LCB) meetings, participating agencies will be providing a brief presentation about their organization and services.

16. Member Comments

Bob Logan asked who would be addressing concerns with the school board regarding Deep Creek Elementary. Shaun Cullinan responded that developers are in discussions with local entities and are committed to working with the school to help mitigate impacts. However, he clarified that developers are only responsible for addressing impacts related to their own projects and are not required to correct pre-existing issues.

17. Adjournment (Next CAC Meeting – November 19, 2025)

Bob Logan made a motion to adjourn the CAC meeting. Steve Hurt seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:32 pm. The next regularly scheduled CAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 19, 2025 in-person at 1050 Loveland Blvd, Port Charlotte, Florida 33980 at 1:30 p.m.