



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

**MINUTES OF THE APRIL 24, 2025
BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY (BPAC) COMMITTEE**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING (IN PERSON)

Laura Rossi, Chair, South County Representative
James Wernicke, Vice Chair, West County Representative
Ben Turner, West County Representative
Brian Blankinship, South County
Jan Dick, South County Representative

MEMBERS ABSENT

Robert Logan, Mid-County Representative
Pauline Klein, Bicycle Club Representative
Philipp Pfäeffli, Bicycle Business Representative

OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON

Laks Gurram, MPO Director
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Services Coordinator
Ray Scott, Administrative Support Staff - STTAR
Norma Garcia, Charlotte County Public Schools
Carl Benge, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design
Adrianna Gehrke, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design
Betty-Ann Sherer, Charlotte County Transit
Marc Ispass, Consultant, Kimley-Horn

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

BPAC Chair Laura Rossi called the meeting to order at 2:01 pm. Members, staff and consultants introduced themselves. A quorum was present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

4. Reports

A. Chair's Report

BPAC Chair, Laura Rossi, reminded the committee to be a leader for all when out as a pedestrian- follow the rules of the road and be a good example.

B. Charlotte County Report

Ravi Kamarajugadda reported. They are working on grant applications for intersection improvements on Midway and US 41. James Wernicke asked a question about Sun Trail funds being awarded. Laks Gurram explained that he would be going over this information in agenda item 7. There was some discussion about the project application due dates to request SUN Trail monies.

James Wernicke followed up this question by explaining that he had told his MSBU that many Sun Trail projects can take up to 5 years, for possible implementation.

Mr. Kamarajugadda stated that he has been in contact with FDOT regarding the ownership of the section of road at Tucker's Grade east of I-75. They have not come to a final conclusion yet but hope to have one by next meeting.

There was some discussion regarding sidewalk connections between US 41 , Tucker's Grade. connecting Royal Road. Mr. Kamarajugadda stated that builders are required to have a sidewalk along Tucker's Grade as part of agreement.

C. City of Punta Gorda Report

Carl Benge reported that they are meeting with FDOT Staff tomorrow to discuss their SS4A grant as well as current projects to get up to speed.

D. Sheriff's Report

A Charlotte County Sheriff's representative was not present. A handout was distributed, and any questions should be sent to MPO staff.

5. Consent Agenda:

A. Approval of Minutes: March 6, 2025 Meeting

B. MPO Board Resolution Authorizing FY 2024/2025 Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Planning Grant Agreement

Brian Blankinship made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. James Wernicke seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

6. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

A FDOT representative was not present but provided an update via email stating they were working on pinpointing out who owns the section of Tucker's Grade discussed during previous meetings.

7. 2025 Draft Project Priorities - FINAL

Laks Gurram gave the presentation and reviewed changes since the previous meeting.

Florida Statute 339.175(8) requires every MPO must develop its annual List of Project Priorities (LOPP) based on the goals, objectives, and policies outlined in its adopted 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan. The LOPP plays a vital role in developing the subsequent draft of the FDOT Five-Year Work Program as well as the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). These priorities provide a critical link to FDOT's work program.

Project Priorities development timeline:

- March 31, 2025: Preliminary list of project priorities applications to FDOT.
- May 19, 2025: MPO Staff will present the final list slated for adoption.
- June 30, 2025: Transmit approved list to FDOT

The project priorities include:

- Highway Projects
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Projects
- Congestion Mitigation/Transportation System Management (CM/TSM) Projects
- Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) Projects

MPO Staff will provide an overview of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 List of Project Priorities. The final list will be presented at the May 19, 2025 MPO Board meeting for adoption. The prioritized list is then transmitted to FDOT for consideration of funding during development of the FY 2027 through FY 2031 Draft Tentative Work Program.

Below is a list of projects received by MPO Staff from local entities for consideration in the 2025 LOPP:

- Harbor View Road from Melbourne St to Date Street – Road Widening (ROW & CEI)
- Harbor View Road from Date St to I-75 – Road Widening (ROW & CST)
- US 41 MURT Bridge at S. Alligator Creek – (CST)
- Burnt Store Rd. from Vincent Ave to Wallaby Lane (ROW, CST)
- Emergency Vehicle Preemption Devices (CST)
- Veterans Blvd @ Atwater St - Turn Lanes (CST & CEI)
- SR 776 at Biscayne Drive –Turn lanes and Signal (PE, CST& CEI)
- SR 776 at Charlotte Sports Park. – Add Turn Lanes (PE&CST) – Revised cost

1. [2024 Project Priorities – Approved by MPO Board May 2024](#)
2. [2025 DRAFT Project Priorities](#)
3. [2025 TRIP Regional Project Priorities](#)

Regarding preemptive devices there was a question of whether the devices are being considered for all roads. County Staff are considered 88 proposed signals which includes state and local roads. Ravi Kamarajugadda pointed out that they are launching a pilot program with 10 signals first.

Laura Rossi asked if the county requirements for each intersection could be updated to reflect the preemption devices, thus being able to update them during other intersection improvements. There was some discussion on whether this was possible.

As there was an earlier question about the Sun Trail projects, there was some focus on these project priorities. It was explained that these projects were programmed through design. Construction is currently unfunded for these projects. FDOT attempts to program these projects through construction within a certain amount of time to keep designs from sitting and costs changing over time.

James Wernicke asked how the Sun Trail plans to cross the Myakka River. Mr. Gurram answered that he would leave that up to the engineers to find out.

There was a question on the distribution of monies when projects are removed from the list and if the money already allocated is moved to another project. Mr. Gurram stated that the monies will be moved into general funds and doesn't guarantee if they will be available for another project withing the county.

Brian Blankinship made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the final 2025 Project Priorities (Highway, TAP, CM/TSM and TRIP) for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program Cycle FY 2027 to FY 2031. **Ben Turner** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

8. FY 2025/2026 – FY 2029/2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – FINAL

Federal and State legislation require MPOs to adopt a five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP outlines federal and state capital improvements for transportation and is a staged, multi-year, intermodal program of transportation projects that is consistent with the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The Technical and Citizens' Advisory Committees formally review the development of the TIP.

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO is scheduled to review and adopt the TIP at the May 19, 2025 MPO Board Meeting. The attachment below is the final version of the Draft Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO TIP for 2025/2026 – FY 2029/2030.

[Final Draft 2025/2026 – FY 2029/2030 Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#)

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO entered into an interlocal agreement with the Sarasota – Manatee MPO and Lee County MPO, formalizing and specifying regional planning projects along with timeframes to produce those projects. The agreement calls for each MPO to identify regional priorities and include those projects in the respective MPO's TIP. Those priorities that were adopted last year are included, in accordance with the interlocal agreement in the TIP.

Laks Gurram gave a presentation on the required document. He noted that the final FDOT snapshot had been received and included. There was a question about how our county fares with state funding compared to other counties. Discussion followed stating that larger counties do get more money, but they have to share those dollars with other MPOs, which are often larger and have more projects.

There was a question whether the federal budget cuts are going to affect the county at a local level. Laks Gurram stated that FDOT did turn down the carbon reduction funds and no additional funding cuts were directed to the MPO at this point of time.

***James Wernicke** made a motion to recommend the MPO Board review and approve the Final Draft FY 2025/2026 through FY 2029/2030 Transportation Improvement Program. **Ben Turner** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.*

9. Regional Interlocal Agreement between Heartland Regional TPO and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO

The purpose of this Interlocal Agreement is to provide a structured forum for communication and coordination between the MPOs and to ensure joint regional cooperation regarding transportation planning in accordance with Section 339.175, Florida Statutes; 23 C.F.R. Part 450, Subpart C; and other applicable federal legislation.

In particular, the Agreement commits the parties to work together in good faith and with due diligence to develop joint regional transportation planning products and processes for the two MPOs in the region. An important goal is to create a regional transportation forum that identifies potential project priorities for funding through the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP). This agreement strengthens regional transportation planning by ensuring that projects are strategically prioritized and aligned with federal and state regulations.

[Interlocal Agreement for the Creation of a Regional Transportation Forum between the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization \(TPO\) and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization \(MPO\)](#)

***Brian Blanksinship** made a motion to recommend the MPO Board approve the Interlocal Agreement for the Creation of a Regional Transportation Forum between the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). **James Wernicke** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.*

10. 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Needs – Update

Mark Ispass gave BPAC Members an update on the 2050 LRTP Needs.

The MPO is required to update its Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) at least every five years. The next update of the LRTP will have a horizon year of 2050 and must be adopted by the MPO Board by October 2, 2025.

The MPO Staff has received the preliminary results of the 2023 Existing plus Committed (E+C) Network Deficiency Analysis from FDOT. Per this analysis, the MPO will be able to identify the needed roadway projects based upon future (2050) travel demand.

These network changes will initially be based on the previous 2045 LRTP Roadway Needs. Added to the 2045 Needs will be comments received from the public during the outreach activities currently underway as well as input from the MPO Board and advisory committees. Updates for the model development process will also include revisions to the allocation of population and jobs based on the LRTP Subcommittee's review and comments.

Initial outreach on the 2050 Needs has been underway including the three public workshops that were held on February 10, 11 and 12, 2025 where more than 50 individuals attended and provided input on the development of the LRTP. Additional outreach activities include a short survey and an interactive mapping exercise. Both items are available on the MPO's website; www.ccpmpo.gov. MPO Staff and the Consultant met with the Steering Committee on February 26th, 2025 to provide feedback on the existing network.

1. [2050 LRTP Needs Assessment](#)
2. [Power Point Presentation](#)

Ravi Kamarajugadda asked why Zemel Rd was put back on the project list, as it had been removed previously. Marc Ispass stated that it was brought up during the Consensus Building Workshop. There was a brief discussion on whether this road would warrant making it four lanes within this LRTP period. It was agreed to leave Zemel Rd on the needs plan because this is not the same thing as the cost feasible plan.

A question related to the lane repurposing of Olympia ave and Marion ave, Mr. Ispass stated that the project is not a lane widening, which it appears to be on the map and will be updated

James Wernicke asked how the proposed Buc-ee's would affect traffic in the area. Mr. Kamarajugadda stated that the expectation is that traffic to the Buc-ee's will be visitors and the traffic will stay close to the interstate.

A brief discussion came up regarding the interchange at Yorkshire/Raintree in North Port/Sarasota County which is in preliminary stages.

James Wernicke made a motion to recommend the MPO Board review and approve the 2050 LRTP Needs Assessment. Brian Blankinship seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

110. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

121. Staff Comments

Betty-Ann Sherer stated that transit have started the discussion on the possibility of adding bike racks to the current and future fleet of buses at Charlotte County Transit. There was some discussion on the future of fixed route in Charlotte County.

Ms. Sherer also mentioned the launch of the new beach circulator bus that travels from Tringali Park Community Center (3460 N Access Road, Englewood) to Englewood Beach every hour from 10 am to 4 pm Monday-Saturday. James Wernicke asked if the hours for the beach cruiser were too late in the day given how hot it gets by midday. Ms. Sherer said they would take that into consideration. There is currently a pilot program in mind for smaller vehicles to put into circulators in three major trip hubs, Port Charlotte, Murdock, and Punta Gorda. There was a brief discussion on how trip data is gathered, per person rather than by the number of times the bus itself moved on the road. Following that, Ms. Sherer stated that they have expanded the service area all the way to the Lee County line on Burnt Store Rd, as well as north to Sarasota County line. This puts the bus one step closer to inter-county travel.

Laks Gurram also brought up advisory shoulders and how they are used. Carl Bengé stated that these were brought up for the city on Retta Esplanade. Laura Rossi suggested that there should be a solid public outreach to ensure that drivers understand how to use them.

Bekie Leslie reminded the committee that the next meeting would take place as a joint meeting at a different location. She also described the meeting times and locations for the next round of LRTP public workshops.

132. Member Comments

There were no member comments.

143. Adjournment - (Next Joint TAC/CAC/BPAC Meeting – June 18, 2025 @ Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, 75 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda FL)

James Wernicke made a motion to adjourn the BPAC meeting. Brian Blankinship seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:19 pm. The next regularly scheduled BPAC meeting will be held as a Joint TAC/CAC/BPAC Meeting at Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, 75 Taylor St. Punta Gorda, FL on June 18, 2025 at 2 p.m.