



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

**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 5, 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
James Kunard, South County Representative
Robert Logan, Mid County Representative
Richard Russell, At-Large Representative
Steve Schoff, West County Representative

MEMBERS ABSENT

Priya Ahluwalia, South County Representative
Steve Hurt, Mid County Representative

VACANT POSITION

West County Representative

OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON

Laks Gurram, Interim MPO Director
Wendy Scott, MPO Planner
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Services Coordinator
Sierra Ray Scott, Administrative Support - STARR
Pam Barr, FDOT
John Kubicki, FDOT
William Roll, Kimley-Horn and Associates
Carl Benge, City of Punta Gorda
William Weisspfennig, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works Traffic Engineering
Richard Lisenbee, Charlotte County Public Works
Betty-Ann Sherer, Charlotte County Transit
Tony Conte, Jr, Charlotte County Public Schools

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 gave an overview of the recent annual joint MPO Board Meeting with the Lee County MPO on February 14, 2025 where TRIP projects and Project Priorities were discussed. Laks Gurram was appointed interim MPO Director in a Special MPO Board Meeting that immediately followed the joint meeting. Laks Gurram stated that he was relying on all the CAC Members who always provided great input to the MPO Staff. He pledged to do his best in his new role. He stated that the MPO had met jointly with the Sarasota/Manatee MPO on January 27, 2025 (with similar agenda items as discussed at the joint board meeting with the Lee County MPO plus with River Road also as an agenda discussion item).

B. City of Punta Gorda Report

Carl Benge introduced himself. He stated that many City of Punta Gorda Urban Design staff members are new and still familiarizing themselves with the area projects. City staff had recently met with MPO Staff. Information discussed between staff will be presented to the City Council for direction. He discussed the LAP project on Cooper Street which is a Complete Streets project that complies with Vision Zero.

B. Charlotte County Report

Ravi Kamarajugadda discussed work being done by Kimley Horn & Associates in the Rotonda area (Gasparilla Road). There was an inquiry about left turns onto Gasparilla Road at South Gulf Cove. He responded to a question regarding left turns onto Gasparilla Road at South Gulf Cove. He also explained the process for making improvements and discussed proposed new developments (where crashes are plentiful). Ingraham Blvd improvements are also being addressed. Robert Logan requested an update on congestion issues on Quesada Avenue at Forrest Nelson Blvd. Ravi Kamarajugadda stated that providing a crosswalk for school children is being analyzed.

D. Sheriff's Report

Charlotte County Sheriff's representative William Weisspfennig described crashes on I-75 tying up traffic earlier in the day. He stated that he was new to attending these meetings and still learning the MPO process.

Pauline Klein mentioned a recent "hit and run" accident on Shreve Street in which the offending driver (an 83-year old woman) had been caught. William Weispfenning described the criminal citation, arrest and prosecution procedures. He stated that it is not on the Sheriff Deputy to deal with the prosecution, only the criminal citation. He stated that the Clerk's page contains all public records, and reports may be requested. It is up to the State Attorney's Office (locally headed by Amira Fox) whether to prosecute.

5. Consent Agenda:

A. Approval of Minutes: November 20, 2024

Mary Ellen Kiss requested a correction to the minutes regarding a discussion of sufficient population to apply for funding under the Bipartisan Infrastructure legislation.

Bob Logan made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Mary Ellen Kiss seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

At this point in the meeting, CAC Members agreed that Agenda Item #11 regarding the Long Range Transportation Plan could be moved to this point in the discussion.

11. 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan Update

William Roll gave CAC Members an update on the 2050 LRTP.

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 of these items are available on the MPO's

website; www.ccpgmpo.gov. MPO Staff and the Consultant met with the Steering Committee on February 26th, 2025 to provide feedback on the existing network.

2050 LRTP Multimodal Needs

Power Point Presentation

William Roll noted that the LRTP project was entering its second of three phases. The Needs Plan phase was concluding, and development of the Cost Feasible Plan was commencing. Three workshops would be described later in the meeting under staff comments.

After the recent Steering Committee meeting, changes were made including the extension of Harbor View Road improvements to the Rio de Janeiro Avenue intersection and a correction to an error at Flamingo Blvd and Edgewater Drive (changing six to four lanes).

Laks Gurram noted that the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan had been approved and would transfer information over to the 2050 LRTP.

Steve Schoff asked a question regarding State and Federal Revenues, wondering how they compare on a year by year basis over the past decade. William Roll noted that they were close to being straight-lined, but expensive major projects tend to occur on Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) roadways that may cause a spike. Laks Gurram observed that the MPO is still classified as small (under 200,000 population due to the 2020 US Census), which limits some funding availability.

William Weisspfennig inquired about the Taylor Road project. William Roll stated that it was a four-lane roadway. Laks Gurram noted that it was located on Taylor Road between the south and north sections of US 41. It is on the list but not yet funded.

Discussion followed on the reasons for the removal of the potential Zemel Road connector. These included environmental and funding issues, as well as failure to meet FDOT warrants for volume in the models.

Richard Russell noted that impact fees in 2026 should consider cost increases. William Roll noted the importance of citizens advocating regarding sales tax projects and impact fees. Pauline Klein asked about the rationale for extending the Harbor View Road project in the Deep Creek area. Ravi Kamarajugadda described the project envisioned by the Benderson Company, LLC which includes 3,854 residences plus commercial buildings. The Development Regional Impact (DRI) resolution will be taken to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) soon. The developer may have to help fund some improvements. There are also issues with the Deep Creek Elementary School location nearby. The expansion includes approximately 1100 feet of road.

Steve Schoff asked about plans to widen SR 776 to six lanes. Laks Gurram stated that in 2014, East Englewood citizens were given the opportunity to comment on the portion of SR 776 from Pine Street to the bridge. Citizens objected, preferring the no build scenario, so the opportunity to six lane was lost.

William Roll commented that a virtual public workshop to further discuss the LRTP was available later that afternoon from 5-6 pm. He thanked the CAC Members for their input.

6. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

Pam Barr stated that this was the season when FDOT receives earmarks from the State Legislature. When localities request these, it usurps projects that were already in cue. The budget then must be adjusted to move or bump other projects. Some TIP amendments may come through in this manner. FDOT prefers that funding flows through the normal MPO procedure without earmarks disrupting the process.

7. 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 2024/25 through FY 2028/29 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at the March 31, 2025 MPO Board Meeting:

- 1. 452491-1 Charlotte County Transit FTA 5310 Operating Assistance. This is a new project for Transit and requires a formal amendment to add it to the TIP in FY 25.**
- 2. 456205-1 Regent Road crossing 623232 L – This is a rail safety project, and this amendment adds as a new project for railroad safety in Charlotte County.**

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.

The proposed TIP amendment:

- 1. [FDOT TIP Amendment letter dated 02/5/2025](#)
[Re: Request to Modify Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024/25-2028/29 Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#)**

Laks Gurram discussed the two amendments: (1) A transit grant with a 50% match and (2) a railway safety project for a railroad crossing on Regent Road at US 17. It was noted by Laks Gurram in response to a CAC member question that it is difficult to get the railroad company to pay for crossing projects.

Pauline Klein made a motion to recommend MPO Board approval of the amendment to the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2024/25 through FY 2028/29

*Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). **Bob Logan** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.*

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

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 Draft Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO TIP for 2025/2026 – FY 2029/2030.

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 the TIP, in accordance with the interlocal agreement.

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

Laks Gurram gave a presentation on the required documents. He noted that a resolution would go forward at the May 19, 2025 MPO Board Meeting and the final draft document would be reviewed by the CAC in April. Snapshots will be updated and received April 9, 2025 from FDOT. Steve Schoff requested that charts be rotated in landscape form in the final document.

9. 2025 Draft Project Priorities

Laks Gurram gave the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Draft Project Priorities presentation. Florida Statute 339.175(8) requires every MPO in the state to develop an annual List of Project Priorities (LOPP) consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the MPO's adopted 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan. The LOPP is used in developing the next draft FDOT Five-Year Work Program and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

A preliminary list of project priorities along with project applications will be submitted to FDOT District One by March 31, 2025. The project priorities must be approved by the MPO Board and submitted to FDOT by June 30, 2025.

The MPO received candidate projects from Charlotte County. These projects include Highway, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Congestion Mitigation/Transportation System Management (CM/TSM), and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) projects.

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 the Draft LOPP for which MPO Staff anticipates submittal of a project priority application in 2025:

- Harbor View Road from Date Street to I-75 – Road Widening (CST)
- Edgewater Drive from Midway Blvd. to SR 776 – Road Widening (ROW & CST)
- N. Jones Loop @ Piper Road – Roundabout – (CST)*
- SR 776 @ Charlotte Sports Park - Turn Lanes (CST)*
- SR 776 @ Flamingo Blvd – (CST)*
- SR 776 at Biscayne Drive – Design and Construction Turn lanes and Signal (PE&CST)
- SR 776 at Cornelius Blvd. – Design and Construction Turn Lanes (PE&CST) *
- SR 776 at Jacobs Street – Design and Construction Turn Lanes (PE&CST) *
- SUN Trail – on SR 776 from Gulf Cove to US 41 (CST)
- SUN Trail – on SR 776 from Gulf Cove to Myakka Forest (CST)
- US 41 Bridge Approach Decorative Finish Street Lights
- US 41 MURT Bridge at S. Alligator Creek – (CST) *
- US 41 SB Harborwalk Phase II – ADA ramp improvements – Differed

* Projects programmed through construction will be removed from the 2025 LOPP.

[2024 Project Priorities – Approved by MPO Board May 2024](#)

[2025 DRAFT Project Priorities](#)

[2025 TRIP Regional Project Priorities](#)

Laks Gurram described the status of several key projects, including Harbor View Road, SR 776 and Flamingo Blvd and funding for the 2055 LRTP. He also reviewed the Congestion Management projects and Transportation Alternative Projects. The Taylor Road sidewalk project was deleted due to deep swales on the east side. Charlotte County also has Taylor Road improvements in the long range Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). SUN Trail projects were also reviewed. It was noted that the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan identified thirteen corridors. It might be possible to piggyback them onto other State programs.

Dianne Quilty inquired about certain charts being displayed on larger paper (11 x 17) for readability.

10. 2024 Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)/Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Joint Certification

Pam Barr described how each year the FDOT and the MPO must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process as described in **23 U.S.C. 134(k) (15)** and **23 C.F.R. 450.334 (a)**. The joint certification begins in January. The District and the MPO create

a joint certification package that includes a summary of noteworthy achievements by the MPO and if applicable, a list of any recommendations and/or corrective actions. The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Joint Certification Package has been reviewed and accurately reflects the results of the joint certification review meeting held on January 24, 2025 in Fort Myers. Based on the review and evaluation, the Florida Department of Transportation had no recommendations and/or corrective actions.

[2024 FDOT/MPO Joint Certification/Noteworthy Achievements](#)

[2024 FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Statement](#)

Laks Gurram praised the great working relationship between FDOT and the MPO.

Steve Schoff made a motion to recommend MPO Board approval of the 2024 FDOT/MPO Joint Certification, authorizing the MPO Board Chair to sign the FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Statement. Bob Logan seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

12. SR 776 Safety Improvements – Presentation

Laks Gurram noted that approximately 400 citizens attended the SR 776 workshop. He introduced John Kubicki, FDOT, who presented information on planned SR 776 safety improvements. The Safe System Approach was discussed. Much public outreach was underway. A workshop on the Charlotte County side of Englewood would be coming soon. It would be similar to a workshop done in Sarasota County. A safety workshop will be held on Monday afternoon, March 17, 2025 in Fort Myers.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, is proposing improvements at multiple intersections along State Road (SR) 776 in Charlotte County. The purpose of the improvements is to promote safety, enhance traffic flow, and reduce crashes. The proposed improvements include converting existing full median openings to two-way directional median openings at seven (7) intersections along the corridor:

- Oceanspray Boulevard,
- Sea Mist Drive/Shalimar Street,
- David Boulevard,
- Hollis Avenue,
- Cornelius Boulevard,
- Biscayne Drive,
- Collingswood Boulevard.

Potential median modifications are also being considered at three (3) additional intersections:

- Mayport Street/Biggs Street,
- Regina Drive/Roberta Drive,
- Port Charlotte Town Center west entrance.

[SR 776 Safety Improvements](#)

Discussion occurred regarding the general public's dislike of the inconvenience caused by having to make a right turn and then make a U-turn in order to make a left turn. This traffic flow method is safer, and when injuries occur, they result in less severe injuries. Most turnaround areas are not at intersections but in the gap areas.

The project timeline is in six months (approximately August/September 2025).

13. Emergency Vehicle Preemption Devices Installation - Presentation

Information from County Consultants: In 2005, Miovision set out to create a Video Collection device and accompanying software that would revolutionize the way traffic data was collected. In 1968 Opticom was born from the need for traffic signal priority. In mid-2023, these two companies came together on a mission to make streets safer for all road users, while giving cities the ability to better serve and protect their citizens. Opticom has been the leading brand when it comes to priority at intersections, and we have over 180,000 connected vehicles and intersections, Opticom is installed in the 48 of the largest US cities, and we have over 5,000 cities worldwide who depend on this technology.

[Power Point Presentation](#)

Consulting Staff was unavailable to conduct the presentation, so it will be carried over to the next CAC Meeting.

14. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

15. Staff Comments

Ravi Kamarajugadda discussed a BCC workshop to be held at 2:30 p.m. on March 6, 2025 at the Murdock Administration Meeting. It would be presented by Joanne Vernon and cover County transportation. [BCC Workshop on Transportation](#)

Betty-Ann Sherer shared information regarding Charlotte County Transit. The service was averaging over 300 trips per day and closing in on 400 trips per day currently. 7,272 trips were conducted in February 2025 which was a shorter month. Of those trips, 386 were same day trips (meaning they were booked on the day the trip was taken). This was once a non-existent transit option. It was made possible by extending the service and adding drivers. The new transit cell phone app was working well. Many residents' family members (some out-of-area) are helping their loved ones manage their trips. The average user of the app is 41 years old. Transit service is currently free. Drivers are available to assist riders at the curb and onto

the lift if needed. Hours of operation are from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Public transportation functions similar to a shared taxi ride. Software allows efficient routing and soon some continuously circulating vehicles may be available within neighborhoods. Two bags per customer are allowed on the bus. Passengers may also bring smaller sized luggage on the bus if making an airport trip during business hours. A beach route is not currently available. Medical appointments allow for a “will call” return trip booking.

Laks Gurram discussed the three LRTP workshops held February 10-12, 2025 in all three sections of Charlotte County. Safety was the top priority in keeping with the Vision Zero concept. Staff used Chat GPT to document comments received at these LRTP workshops.

It was noted that Wendy Scott would be retiring at the end of August 2025. Laks Gurram thanked all the MPO Staff for assisting him in his new interim role.

16. Member Comments

Richard Russell commented regarding the significance of Harbor View Road as a hurricane evacuation route. He noted that the costs have greatly increased and recommended that having two lanes heading toward the interstate with one returning might be considered.

Steve Schoff noted that a new player in the area of River Road is the West Villages Improvement District, which has amassed \$44 Million. A contract with Kimley Horn & Associated was in place, and the US 41 to I-75 segment of River Road has been delayed a year. Steve Schoff also stated that the development of Wellin Park is associated with some improvements happening as schools and homes are constructed. Steve Schoff requested an explanation regarding impact fees. Carl Bengé who had recently transferred jobs and was familiar with efforts in the North Port area, discussed how the Manasota Beach Road will be extended to River Road.

Rick Kirchoff inquired about traffic lights being analyzed for timing. Ravi Kamarajugadda stated that every two years major highways get adjusted for signal timing. Major studies work within a range of time. Cameras are used to view the traffic (though not recording), and they are monitored by the County lighting department. It is also possible to request that timing in a particular instance be evaluated.

17. Adjournment (Next CAC Meeting – April 23, 2025)

Rick Kirchoff made a motion to adjourn the CAC meeting. Jill Hartman seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm. The next regularly scheduled CAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 23, 2025 in-person at 1050 Loveland Blvd, Port Charlotte, Florida 33980 at 1:30 p.m.