



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY - PUNTA GORDA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES OF APRIL 23, 2026
JOINT MEETING OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)
BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BPAC)**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING (IN PERSON)

TAC

Robert Fakhri, TAC Chair, Charlotte County Public Works
Carl Benge, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design
Heidi Maddox, Charlotte County Transit
Louis Long III, Charlotte County Public Schools (Alternate)
Glenn DiSabatino, Punta Gorda Airport Authority
Sgt. Dustin Paille, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development
Don Scott, Lee County MPO

CAC

Diane Quilty, CAC Chair, Mid County
Jill Hartman, CAC Vice-Chair, West County
Pauline Klein, At-Large
Priya Ahluwalia, South County
Richard Russell, At-Large
Stephen Rabinowitz, Mid County

BPAC

James Stein, West County
Pauline Klein, At-Large
Jan Dick, South County

MEMBERS ABSENT

TAC

Kay Tracy, Charlotte County Economic Development Office
Bryon Clemens, City of Punta Gorda Public Works
Anthony Friedman, City of North Port Planning and Zoning

Patrick Fuller, Charlotte County Emergency Management
Misty Servia, DeSoto County

CAC

Sam Besase, West County (Excused)
Steve Schoff, West County (Excused)
Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss, South County
James Kunard, South County (Excused)
Steve Hurt, Mid County (Excused)

BPAC

Laura Rossi, BPAC Chair, Mid County (Excused)
Brian Blankinship, BPAC Vice-Chair, South County (Excused)
David Cormier, West County
Phillip Pfaeffli, Bicycle Business (Excused)

OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON**

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Director
Mark Yaxis, MPO Multimodal Planner
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Assistant Supervisor
Donnie Werden, Charlotte County School Transportation
Norma Garcia, Charlotte County School Transportation
Tanya Merkle, FDOT, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator
David Scarpelli, FDOT, Community Liaison

**This meeting took place on “Bring Your Child to Work Day”. A child accompanied one attendee as part of this event; they were not included as a participant in this meeting.

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

MPO Director, Lakshmi N. Gurram, called the Joint Committee Meeting to order at **10:02 am**. Members introduced themselves. A quorum was present for each of the three committees. Mr. Gurram indicated that the BPAC Chair and Vice Chair were both excused from this joint meeting, and as stated in the BPAC bylaws MPO Director or Staff Designee would preside over the meeting as the BPAC Chair.

2. Election of Chair for Joint TAC/CAC/BPAC Meeting

Mr. Gurram noted that the BPAC Chair and Vice Chair were excused, and with TAC Chair Robert Fakhri would need to leave at noon due to prior commitment. He informed the committees that CAC Chair Diane Quilty was the preferred choice to chair the joint meeting and opened the floor for nominations.

Don Scott made a motion to nominate Diane Quilty to chair the Joint Meeting. Shaun Cullinan seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Jill Hartman made a motion to nominate Diane Quilty to chair the Joint Meeting. **Stephen Rabinowitz** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Pauline Klein made a motion to nominate Diane Quilty to chair the Joint Meeting. **Jan Dick** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

4. Public Comments on Agenda Items

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

5. Consent Agenda

A. Approval of Minutes: Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – March 4, 2026 Meeting

Shaun Cullinan made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. **Carl Benge** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Technical Advisory Committee.

B. Approval of Minutes: Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) – March 4, 2026 Meeting

Mr. Russell indicated that further discussion of the bylaws of the Citizens' Advisory Committee is needed, noting an issue with one section of the bylaws update from the previous meeting. Mr. Gurram clarified the latest guidance received from MPO legal counsel indicating that citizenship is not required to serve on the committee. He also noted that during the March 4, 2026 CAC meeting, members made a motion to table this item for further discussion at the July 15, 2026 meeting to incorporate the changes outlined at the March 4th meeting.

Stephen Rabinowitz made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. **Priya Ahluwalia** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

C. Approval of Minutes: Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) – March 12, 2026 Meeting

Pauline Klein made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. **Jan Dick** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

6. Chair's Reports

A. CAC Chair's Report

Ms. Quilty reported for the CAC, reflecting on what was discussed at the MPO Board meeting on March 30, 2026. Mentioned by Ms. Quilty was updates on various projects throughout Charlotte County and the City of Punta Gorda as well as discussion that occurred on agenda items that the CAC had recommended the MPO Board approve.

B. TAC Chair's Report

Mr. Fakhri had nothing new to report for the TAC

C. BPAC Chair's Report

Mr. Gurram, presiding as BPAC Chair for this meeting, had nothing to report.

D. City of Punta Gorda Report

Mr. Bengé had nothing to report from the City of Punta Gorda that was not outlined in Ms. Quilty's report. Mr. Bengé confirmed that the Splash Pad project is complete at Laishley Park, the pickle ball court resurfacing would be complete soon, and the new structure on the bay front would be moving ahead as planned.

In response to a question from Pauline Klein regarding the purpose of the new building, Mr. Bengé clarified that the structure will be a pavilion.

E. Charlotte County Report

Mr. Fakhri had nothing to report on from Charlotte County.

F. Charlotte County Sheriff's Office Report

Sgt. Paille had nothing to report on from the Sheriff's Office.

7. FDOT Report

David Scarpelli took the moment to introduce himself to the committees as the new FDOT District One Community Liaison.

Tanya Merkle reported that Charlotte County has received funding for three SUN Trails projects and are in the review and approval process. The LAP agreement for each is currently being reviewed. The three projects are Cape Haze Pioneer Trail, Myakka State Forest to US 41, and South Fork Alligator Creek Bridge.

She also reported that the Florida Green Book is undergoing an update. Several chapters are being revised to incorporate new information, updated standards, and enhanced guidance for roadway design and related practices.

8. 2026 Final Draft Project Priorities

Mr. Gurram introduced the item. It was explained that this final draft varies slightly from the original draft brought to the March 4, 2026 TAC and CAC meetings as well as the March 12, 2026 BPAC meetings. Minor revisions are outlined below:

- A. FDOT/MPO staff recommend segmenting the Sun Trail project on SR 776 from Gillot Blvd to US 41 to provide a more feasible financial path.
- B. Staff updated Highway Project Priorities to reflect the current status as shown in Charlotte County's project updates.
- C. Projects have been reorganized based on applications received and uploaded into FDOT's GAP System.
- D. TSMO project comment section has been updated to identify improvements recommended in previous studies.

Mr. Gurram outlined the project lists as well as introduced the new draft TRIP project priority list with Heartland Regional TPO. He explained that the Draft list will be presented at the Joint Regional meeting between Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO and Heartland Regional TPO on May 6, 2026 for approval and then to the MPO Board meeting on May 18, 2026 for final approval.

Ms. Quilty asked for clarification on the dark blue color for some projects. Mr. Gurram indicated that these projects have been programmed. Ms. Quilty also asked for a list of all projects which Mr. Gurram indicated he would send to her and any other members interested.

Mr. Stein asked whether the proposed Buc-ee's would fund improvements through impact fees, particularly along Harborview Road. Mr. Fakhri stated that only improvements necessary for the development would be required, including widened interstate ramps, added turn lanes, and a roundabout at the entrance. Ms. Klein expressed concerns about potential impacts on water quality, the watershed, and quality of life in Deep Creek and Harbor Heights.

Mr. Russell asked whether one or two roundabouts were planned for the project. Mr. Fakhri confirmed only one roundabout is proposed at the main entrance. Mr. Russell also asked about the project timeline. Mr. Cullinan said an estimate is not required at this stage, but he noted similar projects are typically completed within a year of permit approval and construction start. He added that state law requires developers to mitigate only direct impacts and limits the County's ability to impose additional requirements.

Shaun Cullinan made a motion to recommend the MPO Board to approve the 2026 Project Priorities for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program cycle, FY 2028-FY 2032. **Carl Benge** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Priya Ahluwalia made a motion to recommend the MPO Board to approve the 2026 Project Priorities for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program cycle, FY 2028-FY 2032.

Jill Hartman seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Pauline Klein made a motion to recommend the MPO Board to approve the 2026 Project Priorities for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program cycle, FY 2028-FY 2032. **Jan Dick** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

9. Final Draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2027/2028 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Gurram introduced the item, noting that the document is the final draft of the FY 2027–2028 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which establishes the MPO budget for July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2028. He explained that funding is organized by task, with each task allocated a set amount for completion. UPWP funds are used exclusively for MPO staff salaries and fringe benefits and outline the work to be completed within the timeframe.

Mr. Gurram explained the following changes since the previous Draft UPWP that was presented to the committees in March, 2026.

1. Task 8 A – Updated TD funding for supporting Transit in planning activities
2. Task 1 and Task 6 - De-obligated funds from current UPWP are included in this future UPWP.
3. Cost Analysis Certificate (Attachment 2)

The following tasks were updated after the meeting materials were printed and are not included in the distributed copy. They will be included in the MPO Board materials for the May 18, 2026 meeting or provided upon request.

4. Task 8 – FTA comment to identify 80/20 match.
5. Appendix H – Amendment to MPO Agreement from FDOT

Shaun Cullinan made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Final Draft FY 2027 – FY 2028 UPWP/FDOT MPO Agreement and authorize MPO Board Chairman to sign all required documents. The motion should allow 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. **Heidi Maddox** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Technical Advisory Committee

Stephen Rabinowitz made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Final Draft FY 2027 – FY 2028 UPWP/FDOT MPO Agreement and authorize MPO Board Chairman to sign all required documents. The motion should allow 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. **Priya Ahluwalia** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Citizens' Committee*

***Jan Dick** made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Final Draft FY 2027 – FY 2028 UPWP/FDOT MPO Agreement and authorize MPO Board Chairman to sign all required documents. The motion should allow 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, and it was approved unanimously by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee*

10. FY 2025/2026 – FY 2029/2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment

Mr. Gurram introduced the item, noting that FDOT requested MPO approval of a TIP amendment to the FY 2025/2026–FY 2029/2030 TIP at the May 18, 2026 Board meeting. Amendments are required for major project changes, including additions, deletions, significant cost changes, schedule shifts, or changes in design concept or scope.

The amendment adds a \$63,467 Section 5310 grant for Hope Hospice to support transportation services for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Mr. Gurram noted that TIP amendments require a public review period, financial constraint verification, and, if applicable, a conformity determination.

***Shaun Cullinan** made a motion to recommend the MPO Board approve the amendment to the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2025/2026 – FY 2029/2030 Transportation Improvement Program. **Carl Benge** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Technical Advisory Committee.*

***Stephen Rabinowitz** made a motion to recommend the MPO Board approve the amendment to the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2025/2026 – FY 2029/2030 Transportation Improvement Program. **Jill Hartman** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Citizens' Advisory Committee.*

***Pauline Klein** made a motion to recommend the MPO Board approve the amendment to the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2025/2026 – FY 2029/2030 Transportation Improvement Program. **Jan Dick** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee.*

11. Final Draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2030/2031 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Gurram introduced the item. It was explained that the Transportation Improvement Program identifies all federally funded, state funded, and regionally significant local projects scheduled for implementation over the next five fiscal years. The TIP is developed in coordination with the Florida Department of Transportation, local governments, transit

providers, and the public and must be consistent with the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Mr. Gurram explained the following changes since the previous draft TIP was presented at the March, 2026 committee meetings:

1. Table of Contents – Update page numbering
2. Section 2 – Financial Plan – Revisions to cost tables based on April 7, 2026 snapshot (Tables 4.1 through 4.6.3).
3. Section 3 – Federal Obligations – Inclusion of FTA federal obligations as required.
4. Public Comments – The review period for this TIP is from March 4, 2026 through May 18, 2026 when the MPO will adopt the TIP.

Ms. Quilty asked where the document is available for the public to review and provide comments. Mr. Gurram indicated that the document is available online and the public may also submit comments online. Ms. Leslie stated that the link on the website is working and that the document is quite large, so viewers should be patient while the document is loaded.

Heidi Maddox made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Final Draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2030/2031 Transportation Improvement Program. **Shaun Cullinan** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Jill Hartman made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Final Draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2030/2031 Transportation Improvement Program. **Stephen Rabinowitz** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Pauline Klein made a motion to recommend the MPO Board adopt the Final Draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2030/2031 Transportation Improvement Program. **James Stein** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

12. Public Participation Plan (PPP) Update

Mr. Yaxis introduced the item. It was explained that federal law governs the MPO planning process and establishes the requirement of public participation. The Public Participation Plan is designed to provide a proactive and inclusive framework for engaging the public throughout all stages of the transportation planning process. Though federal law does not offer insight into or require a timeline of Public Participation Plan updates, periodic review and revision are necessary to maintain an effective, transparent, and responsive public involvement process. It was stated that the last revision took place in 2025.

Mark Yaxis described the changes as being minor in nature and not a complete overhaul of the document, with much of the original content remaining intact. Changes included updating MPO contact information to the new MPO office, updating the MPO organizational chart after a minor restructuring of positions, including Heartland Regional TPO as a regional partner, and

minor spelling and grammatical changes and fixes as well as updating graphics for clarity and consistency.

He also described changes made in response to updates in federal law and adjustments to the MPO planning process. To ensure compliance with these federal requirements, several elements were removed from the Public Participation Plan, including references to Limited English Proficiency requirements, Environmental Justice, air quality standards, and language related to equity and diversity within the planning process.

Mr. Russell asked whether these changes would affect Transit's ability to provide rides for veterans to medical appointments within and outside the County. Ms. Maddox confirmed that Charlotte County Transit will continue providing services to veterans and all residents and is coordinating with Sarasota and Lee counties to maintain connections to centralized locations.

Shaun Cullinan made a motion to recommend the MPO board adopt the revised Public Participation Plan Update. **Heidi Maddox** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Richard Russell made a motion to recommend the MPO board adopt the revised Public Participation Plan Update. **Stephen Rabinowitz** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Jan Dick made a motion to recommend the MPO board adopt the revised Public Participation Plan Update. **Pauline Klein** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

13. 2026-2031 General Planning Consultant Services/Selection Committee

Mr. Yaxis introduced the item, noting that the Charlotte County–Punta Gorda MPO issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) on March 27, 2026, with responses due May 8, 2026. The RFP is for General Planning Consulting Services over a five-year period, including support for key plans such as the LRTP, UPWP, Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan, and other MPO planning activities. Contracts with selected firms are expected to be presented for approval at the October 5, 2026 MPO Board meeting with at least one selection committee meeting scheduled for the beginning of June, 2026 to shortlist proposers should more than three be submitted.

Each committee was asked to nominate one member to serve on the selection committee, which will be responsible for reviewing proposals and attending at least one presentation meeting. Ms. Quilty, serving as CAC Chair, and Mr. Fakhri, serving as TAC Chair, both expressed their willingness to participate. Mr. Gurram also noted that Ms. Rossi, the BPAC Chair, had confirmed her ability to serve as well.

Shaun Cullinan made a motion to appoint TAC Chair, Robert Fakhri, to serve on the General Planning Consultant Services Selection Committee. **Don Scott** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Shaun Cullinan made a motion to review and provide comments on the Draft General Planning Consultant (GPC) Package. **Don Scott** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Technical Advisory Committee

Priya Ahluwalia made a motion to appoint CAC Chair, Diane Quilty, to serve on the General Planning Consultant Services Selection Committee. **Stephen Rabinowitz** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Stephen Rabinowitz made a motion to review and provide comments on the Draft General Planning Consultant (GPC) Package. **Jill Hartman** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Citizens' Advisory Committee

Pauline Klein made a motion to appoint BPAC Chair, Laura Rossi, to serve on the General Planning Consultant Services Selection Committee. **Jan Dick** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

Pauline Klein made a motion to review and provide comments on the Draft General Planning Consultant (GPC) Package. **James Stein** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee

14. Public Comments

No members of the public were present to provide comments.

15. Staff Comments

Mr. Gurram provided the following staff comments.

- **Peggy Walters Citizen Award:** Staff are seeking nominations for the Peggy Walters Citizen Award, which recognizes individuals or groups who have made meaningful contributions to improving mobility in Charlotte County. Award guidelines and nomination information are available on the MPO website.
- **Updated Bike–Pedestrian Map:** The updated Bike–Pedestrian Map is in its final QA/QC phase. It will be published online once complete, with a limited number of printed copies available before transitioning away from hard-copy distribution. The final draft expected for printing was shared with committee members.
- **Public Outreach Video:** Staff partnered with Charlotte County TV (CCTV) to produce a public outreach video explaining the role of the MPO and outlining its responsibilities within the transportation planning process. The video was presented to the committees.
- **Upcoming Joint MPO Board Meeting:** A joint MPO Board Meeting with the Heartland Regional TPO is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on May 6, 2026, at 2150 NE Roan Street, Arcadia, Florida 34266.

16. Member Comments

Priya Ahluwalia asked Mr. Long from Charlotte County Public Schools about a recent article she saw that explained that free school lunches would no longer be funded. She requested more information on this. Mr. Long stated that during the pandemic schools had received funding to provide free school lunches for all students. Recently, this funding has changed to only provide free lunches for students who qualify through low income or other means. Mr. Long explained that students that qualify will still be provided the free lunches, and they may apply to receive these.

Don Scott took the opportunity to thank Mr. Gurram for attending the Lee County MPO Joint Certification Meeting with FDOT.

17. Adjournment (Next TAC/CAC Meeting – July 15, 2026 Next BPAC Meeting – July 16, 2026)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **11:18** a.m.