



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY - PUNTA GORDA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES OF MARCH 4, 2026
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) MEETING**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING (IN PERSON)

Robert Fakhri, Charlotte County Public Works, Chair
Tony Conte, Charlotte County Public Schools, Vice-Chair
Jordan Ray, Charlotte County Economic Development Office (Alternate)
Carl Benge, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design
Bryan Clemons, City of Punta Gorda Public Works
Betty-Ann Sherer, Charlotte County Transit (Alternate)
Anthony Friedman, City of North Port Developmental Services
Glenn DiSabatino, Punta Gorda Airport Authority (Alternate)
Don Scott, Lee County MPO

MEMBERS ABSENT

Patrick Fuller, Charlotte County Emergency Management
Sgt. Dustin Paille, Charlotte County Sheriff Office
Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development
Misty Servia, DeSoto County

OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Director
Mark Yaxis, MPO Multimodal Planner
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Assistant Supervisor
Kristi Smith, FDOT
Tom Arsenault, FDOT Traffic Incident Management Team
Tommy Macy, Punta Gorda Public Works
Kathryn Peto, Charlotte County Public Works
Marybeth Soderstrom, Heartland Regional TPO

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

TAC Chair, Robert Fakhri, called the TAC Meeting to order at **9:30** am. A roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

2. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

3. Chair's Report:

Chair Robert Fakhri reported. Work has been completed at the intersection Cochran and Veterans Blvd. The County has also received all permits for the Cranberry Blvd and Hillsborough Blvd intersection. Ms. Sherer commented that the improvements at Cochran Blvd. and Veterans Blvd. intersections are much needed and that the improvements are working well.

4. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

Krisit Smith, FDOT, reported that the state legislative session ends on March 13, 2026. FDOT is currently reviewing all member projects and, after the budget is finalized, will submit them to the governor for approval to be funded in 2027. She noted that the application cycle ends on March 31, 2026, and all applications must be uploaded to GAP by that date.

5. Consent Agenda:

A. Approval of Minutes: Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – November 19, 2025 Minutes

Betty-Ann Sherer made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Tony Conte seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

6. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Bylaws Amendment

Mr. Gurram indicated that staff have completed a review of the existing TAC Bylaws to ensure consistency with current MPO policies, federal and state requirements, and the committee's needs. The proposed revisions include updates to membership structure, committee composition and appointment procedures, member qualifications and terms, quorum and voting requirements, Chair and Vice Chair roles and responsibilities, meeting procedures and protocols, and compliance with Sunshine Law and Public Records requirements. Mr. Gurram stated the changes are intended to improve clarity, strengthen the TAC's core functions, and support more efficient coordination between the MPO and Committee members.

Mr. Friedman indicated that the City of North Port no longer has a Department of Planning, Zoning and Engineering and that these services now fall under Development Services Department. Mr. Gurram indicated that this will be addressed in the Bylaws for final Board approval.

Tony Conte made a motion to recommend that the MPO Board approve the revised TAC Bylaws with the amended language recommended by the City of North Port. **Betty-Ann Sherer** seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

7. 2025 Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)/Charlotte County-Punta MPO Joint Certification

Mr. Gurram stated that each year, FDOT and Charlotte County – Punta Gorda 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, as District One 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 February 10, 2026. Based on the review and evaluation, FDOT reported no recommendation and/or corrective actions.

He indicated that during FDOT’s annual Joint Certification review, the Charlotte County–Punta Gorda MPO was rated **Low Risk**, indicating that the MPO is operating efficiently, following all required procedures, and managing federal and state funds responsibly.

Ms. Sherer praised the MPO for their work over the past year, noting that she saw MPO staff at nearly every community outreach event she attended.

Tony Conte asked for clarification on whether the MPO Board Chair is required to sign the document. It was noted that the MPO Chair will sign it at the March 30, 2026 MPO Board meeting.

Tony Conte made a motion to recommend the MPO Board approve the 2025 FDOT/MPO Joint Certification, authorizing the MPO Board Chair to sign the Joint Certification Statement. **Betty-Ann Sherer** seconded the motion which was carried unanimously.

8. FY 2025 – FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) De-obligation of Planning Funds (PL)/FDOT MPO Amendment to Agreement

Mr. Gurram stated the MPO Board approved the current two-year UPWP on May 20, 2024. MPO staff recommends amending the FY 2026 UPWP by de-obligating \$40,000 from Task 1 Administration and \$20,000 from Task 8 Transit/TD Planning by rolling these funds into the new draft FY 2026/2027–FY 2027/2028 UPWP that will be effective July 1, 2026. The new draft UPWP also includes the updated Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement.

Bekie Leslie clarified that the de-obligation of Federal Planning (PL) funds releases federal funds previously authorized but not expended by the MPO in FY 2025/2026,

allowing those funds to be “carried forward” into the upcoming FY 2026/2027 - FY 2027/2028 UPWP. These funds are then available for use by the MPO by October 2026.

***Jordan Ray** made a motion to recommend the MPO Board approve the FY 2025/2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) amendment through the de-obligation of \$60,000 in PL funds, amend the Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement, and authorize staff to make any minor revisions as recommended by FDOT and FHWA. **Don Scott** seconded the motion which was carried unanimously.*

9. Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Team Presentation

Mr. Tom Arsenault, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) gave a presentation on the Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Team effort by coordinating multi-agency partners to improve responder safety, reduce incident clearance times, and restore normal traffic flow as quickly as possible. His presentation focused on Florida’s Open Roads Policy and what the TIM Team is, and the importance of such meetings facilitated by FDOT.

Mr. Fakhri asked Mr. Arsenault if there was any stretch of highway that is considerably worse than the rest regarding safety. Mr. Arsenault explained that the stretch of I-75 between Miami and Naples, Alligator Alley, is where they receive the most calls. There was a brief discussion on TIM Meetings and CTST Meetings and whether they are public meetings.

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

Mr. Gurram presented the draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2027/2028 UPWP. He stated that the final draft will be presented to the Committee for action at the Joint Meeting on April 23, 2026. This draft focuses on the next two fiscal years beginning on July 1, 2026. He stated the UPWP includes a narrative description of planned work activities and cost estimates for each task. Federal and state regulations govern the types of activities eligible for planning funding.

This item was informational, and committee members did not have any questions or comments at this time.

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

Mr. Gurram presented the draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2030/2031_TIP. He explained 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 TAC formally reviews the development of the TIP. The Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO Board will review the TIP at the March 30, 2026 Regular Meeting.

He also mentioned the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO entered into an interlocal agreement with Sarasota – Manatee MPO, Lee County MPO and also with Heartland Regional TPO, formalizing and specifying regional planning projects along with time frames 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.

Mr. Gurram stated that this draft is for informational purposes. A final draft will be presented to the Committee for action at the Joint Meeting on April 23, 2026. No questions or comments followed.

12. 2026 Draft Project Priorities

Mr. Gurram presented the annual List of Project Priorities (LOPP) consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the MPOs adopted Long Range Transportation Plan. The LOPP is used in developing the next draft FDOT Five-Year Work Program, and the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Mr. Gurram discussed that the MPO is expecting project priority applications for candidate projects from Charlotte County and the City of Punta Gorda. Below is the list of top five projects that both entities submitted on October 1, 2025

Charlotte County Projects:

1. SR 776 at Biscayne Blvd. – Signalization
2. Veterans Blvd. at Atwater St. – Turn Lanes / Intersection Improvements
3. SR 776 at Pine St. / Placida Rd. – Add Additional Westbound Left Turn Lane
4. SR 776 at San Casa Dr. – Add Northbound Left Turn Lane
5. SR 776 at Spinnaker Blvd. – Add Eastbound and Westbound Right Turn Lanes

City of Punta Gorda Projects:

1. Cooper St. from Airport Rd. to E. Marion Ave.
2. Traffic Light at Burnt Store Rd. and Home Depot
3. Retta Esplanade Traffic Calming
4. US 41 NB Harborwalk Phase IV from Retta Esplanade to Peace River Bridge
5. SUN Trail US 41 NB – South Alligator Bridge

Mr. Gurram noted that the final LOPP applications must be submitted in GAP to FDOT District One by March 31, 2026, and indicated that the list submitted by Charlotte County is expected to be revised. The Final LOPP will be approved by the MPO Board and submitted to FDOT by June 30, 2026, for consideration during the development of the FY 2028–FY 2032 Draft Tentative Work Program.

Chair Fakhri added to the discussion, providing information on projects currently in the draft LOPP to update figures for, including Flamingo Blvd which the 60% plan is complete for. Tony Conte inquired about the status of the SIS designation for Piper Road. Laks Gurram informed the Committee that MPO staff is following up again with FDOT staff regarding the matter and expects additional information soon. He added that staff will update the members as soon as an update is received.

13. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

14. Staff Comments

Mr. Gurram provided staff with comments and explained current legislative bills relating to transportation in the ongoing legislative session.

Tony Conte mentioned that the new legislation on school zones applies only to newly designated school zones, while existing school zones are grandfathered in.

15. Member Comments

Tony Conte commented that the County's school zone enforcement project involving automated ticketing during specified times will begin to be enforced on April 1, 2026. He noted that enforcement will only occur while the school zone beacons are flashing. This period begins thirty minutes before breakfast, is served until the start of the first period, and resumes thirty minutes before dismissal until thirty minutes after dismissal.

Betty-Ann Sherer commented that Charlotte County Transit has now moved under the Human Services Department, which she explained better fits their role in the community. She also stated that Transit has recently hired a new senior dispatcher and has a Transit Safety Coordinator position open. Transit recently acquired two new buses and have planned to acquire six more buses in August, three of which will feature increased capacity.

16. Adjournment (Next Joint TAC/CAC/BPAC Meeting – April 23, 2026)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **11:01** a.m. The next scheduled Joint TAC/CAC/BPAC meeting will be held on Thursday, April 23, 2026, in person at Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center, 75 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda FL 33950 at 10 a.m.