

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED**  
**LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD (LCB)**  
**MEETING**  
**September 4, 2025**

Minutes of a regular meeting held in a hybrid format on September 4, 2025 utilizing TEAMS remotely and in-person at the Transit Facility, 545 Theresa Boulevard in Port Charlotte, FL 33954.

**MEMBERS PRESENT IN-PERSON**

**Commissioner Ken Doherty**, *Charlotte County Commissioner (LCB Chair)*  
**M. Suzanne Roberts**, *Virginia B. Andes Volunteer Community Clinic - Medical Community Representative (LCB Vice Chair)*  
**Lynda Faieta**, *Public Education-School Transportation (alternate)*  
**Donna Fain**, *Agency for Persons with Disabilities*  
**Maricela Morado**, *Area Agency on Aging-Florida Department of Elder Affairs*  
**Joseph Sabatino**, *Citizen Advocate*  
**Michael Stahler**, *Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)*  
**Shery Stahnke**, *Goodwill, Economically Disadvantaged Representative (alternate)*  
**Cheryl Sytsma**, *Disabled Interests Representative*  
**Pamela Jordan**, *Representative for Elderly Interests*

**MEMBERS PRESENT REMOTELY**

**Stacy Booth**, *FDOT, District One Modal Development Office*  
**Carmen Henry**, *Regional Workforce Development*  
**Tabitha Larrauri**, *Department of Children & Families*

**ABSENT MEMBERS**

**Leigh Ann Bellamy**, *Division of Blind Services*  
**Matthew McGee**, *Veteran Services Manager - excused*  
**Dottie Fulton**, *Citizen Advocate-User - excused*  
**Lynn Dohler**, *Children-at-Risk Representative - excused*  
**Vacant**, *Local Private-for-Profit Transportation Industry Representative*

**STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT**

**Lakshmi N. Gurrām**, *MPO Director*  
**Mark Yaxis**, *MPO Multimodal Planner*  
**Sierra “Ray” Scott**, *MPO Senior Administrative Assistant*  
**Betty-Ann Sherer**, *Charlotte County Transit*  
**Shirley Ciampi**, *Charlotte County Transit*  
**Eva Tomszak**, *Charlotte County Fiscal*

## **OTHERS PRESENT REMOTELY**

**Bekie Leslie**, *MPO Administrative Services Coordinator*

### **1. Call to Order & Roll Call**

LCB Chair Ken Doherty called the regular LCB Meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. An in-person quorum was present.

### **2. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **3. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments on agenda items.

### **4. Consent Agenda**

#### **A. Approval of Minutes: May 1, 2025, LCB Public Meeting**

#### **B. LCB 2026 Calendar of Quarterly Meetings**

*Joe Sabatino* made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. *Suzanne Roberts* seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

### **5. Approval of Local Coordinating Board (LCB) Bylaws**

The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) requires that the LCB Bylaws be reviewed annually. Staff recommends the following non-substantive revisions to the LCB Bylaws:

- Cover page and document headers: Date change
- Page 8: Amend signature page with date change

The LCB Bylaws have been reviewed by the MPO's legal advisor.

Lakshmi N. Gurram briefly explained the changes above which are minor in nature.

*Suzanne Roberts* made a motion to approve the 2025 LCB Bylaws. *Michael Stahler* seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **6. Annual Operating Report**

Pursuant to Florida Statutes, Chapter 427, and Rule 41-2 of the Florida Administrative Code, the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) provides the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) an Annual Operating Report (AOR) by September 15<sup>th</sup> of

each year. This report identifies the coordinated services that were arranged or provided by the CTC during the past year. It contains an accounting of revenues and expenses, in addition to other disadvantaged transportation program information. The draft AOR is typically forwarded in advance to CTD staff for review and comment prior to final submission.

Mr. Gurram introduced Charlotte County Staff to provide the update for the AOR. Betty-Ann Sherer explained that there was a decrease in trips since last year, which has been attributed to issues with staffing and maintenance of buses; Ms. Sherer explained this also increases the number of unmet trips. Unmet trips are now able to be counted and categorized by time of day or purpose of trip, making it easier for Transit to address these issues moving forward. Ms. Sherer also stated that there had been nearly a 50% decrease in no-show trips.

When looking at compliments and concerns, Mrs. Sherer stated that there is always someone available to take these calls and ensure any reports are moved forward and addressed as quickly as possible.

Para transit miles have gone up significantly, but it should be noted that the service area has been expanded 3 to 4 times just in the past year. A new vendor for drivers is to be established in October as well as the addition of two new buses. These changes will shift numbers in a positive manner.

Commissioner Ken Doherty pointed out that the data is a blend of total transit and transportation disadvantaged. He also wanted to know if there was a way to report exclusively one or the other. He focused briefly on Cost-Per-Trip both for Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) and for the county. Ms. Sherer stated that when compared to neighboring counties, Charlotte County is an anomaly as is it still fare-free for both regular trips and TD. Commissioner Doherty mentioned this as important for next year's reporting to ensure that there is clarity surrounding TD data. Commissioner Doherty also mentioned that the next commission meeting would include a marketing plan for transit that he stated looked good and he expected it to help with ridership.

Ms. Sherer took a moment to explain that there are now employees with transit who contact each new client to ensure that all who qualify will have access to TD rides. Transit believes this more personalized approach is an improvement from their previous system of sending a "Welcome Aboard" packet, which did include a TD application. However, they believe it was being overlooked due to the cumbersome nature of the packet.

*Maricela Morado made a motion to approve the Annual Operating Report (including allowing staff to make minor technical adjustments per guidance from CTD staff). Joe Sabatino seconded the motion which passed unanimously.*

## **7. Quarterly Report**

The quarterly report for April-June 2025 was presented as an informational item. The item described recent activities of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC.)

Mr. Gurram introduced county staff, Ms. Sherer, who presented. Ms. Sherer explained that numbers are looking good for the quarter with consistent improvements over the last several

months. Some numbers did go down after the peak of season, including cessation of Beach Cruiser rides, which Transit plans to monitor demand for future implementation.

Ms. Eva Tomszak, from the Fiscal department, took over the presentation to talk about revenues in more detail. Ms. Tomszak stated that there is some missing revenue on the FY 25 report due to some back and forth about the local match rules. There is a meeting on September 9<sup>th</sup> with FDOT to clarify and hopefully clear concerns and get the missing revenue properly distributed.

Ms. Sherer resumed to discuss trips by purpose for the quarter, stating that the top three have remained; employment, medical, and life enhancing. In regard to unmet trips, Ms. Sherer explained that the language for “Modified Trips” has been changed to “Renegotiated Trips.” This and other alterations have made it possible to see a snapshot of where needs are not being met. This also includes trips that have been altered to meet needs, such as shifting pick-up windows to suit the needs of the rider with Transit’s available resources. With this new data, Ms. Sherer believes Transit will be able to utilize the new driver contract to address some unmet needs.

Ms. Shirley Ciampi stepped in to go over the compliments and concerns section of the presentation. Ms. Ciampi explained that all concerns are taken seriously and investigated fully. Stating that she personally is the main contact for people wanting to report concerns.

As far as safety concerns go, each bus is outfitted with eight cameras, with four outside and four inside. This has allowed Transit to determine that four of the seven total safety concerns that were reported for the quarter were unfounded. The other three concerns were found and due to the availability of the cameras, corrective action was able to take place within days of the incidents. When referring to the “Rude Employee or Operator” section these numbers did go down by half since the previous quarter.

Commissioner Doherty asked if each of the concerns were different between quarters or if there was any overlap. Ms. Ciampi answered that they are unique due to each one being fully investigated in a timely fashion each quarter, leaving none to overflow into the next quarter. Ms. Ciampi explained that the investigation process has been streamlined and made easy for them to understand and act, if necessary.

Ms. Lynda Faieta had a question regarding whether the cameras on the buses are live. Ms. Ciampi explained that the cameras are live and used to ensure safety of the drivers and riders alike. Transit partnered with EcoLane and has utilized their many valuable features. One program, called “EcoVision”, uses AI to track movements of the drivers and rate their safety.

Moving on to the data for the Charlotte Rides mobile app, there have been 767 new accounts created since October of 2024. There was some slowdown on account creation during May and June due to staffing concerns that caused the outreach team to slow down, but there has been an uptick in July and August. Almost 6,000 trips have been booked through the Charlotte Rides app since October 1, 2024.

Ms. Ciampi took a moment to go over data regarding ridership and the ages of app users, stating the oldest user is 93 years and using the app themselves (rather than a family member booking

rides for them) and the youngest is 14 years. Transit has also pulled data on the age groups over several weeks and reported on where people were going. There was a suggestion from Ms. Roberts that some trips being taken by app users could be for volunteering, as several of her volunteers at the Virginia B. Andes Clinic are in their 70s and 80s. Ms. Ciampi agreed this was a question that could be posed by dispatchers when booking trips and that could help in categorizing trips further.

When going over the trips by age group, Ms. Sherer showed the trends shifting from 14–19-year-old riders as a majority going for employment and education, to the oldest rider group, 81 and older, having mostly medical, nutrition, and life enhancing trips. An interesting point Ms. Sherer noted about riders over the age of 81 was that 4% of them utilized the bus to go to employment. Transit investigated this number and discovered that this 4% was limited to only 5 riders and 22 trips out of 644 trips for that category. Commissioner Doherty thanked them for the information.

## **8. Public Comments**

No public comments were received.

## **9. Staff Comments**

Mr. Gurram provided staff comments for the MPO. He stated that all member vacancies on committees have been filled except for the Private-For-Profit industry on LCB. He thanked the members of the LCB for their continued engagement and support in helping to maintain a strong and active board.

Mr. Gurram reported that at the last MPO Board meeting held on August 4, 2025:

- Mr. Joe Sabatino was honored with the Peggy Walters Award for his outstanding contributions to citizen mobility, particularly within the transit system.
- Ms. Wendy Scott was recognized for her dedicated service as her last day was August 29th.
- The MPO Board approved the cost feasible portion of the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), marking a major milestone in selecting fundable projects for the region.

On the state level, Mr. Gurram attended the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) Annual Training for the TD Planners, held in conjunction with the Florida Public Transit Association’s Annual Conference at St. Petersburg Beach. During the sessions, several transit providers from across the state participated in discussions. One of the key questions posed to planners was: “How would you improve the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) experience?”

One recommendation that stood out was to offer each individual LCB member the opportunity to speak briefly about their agency and deliver a 5-minute PowerPoint presentation to the rest of the board. Mr. Gurram suggested that the Charlotte County LCB do this as well to foster greater understanding, collaboration, and appreciation for each member’s role in supporting transit services. Ms. Maricela Morado shared that the Sarasota County LCB does this already in the

form of 15-minute presentations, one per meeting. Commissioner Doherty readily approved of the idea with the stipulation that that portion of the meeting be limited to 30 minutes or less, to keep the overall meeting time manageable.

Mr. Gurram also welcomed Mr. Mark Yaxis to the MPO team as a new planner, explaining that Mr. Yaxis will be taking a lead role in multimodal planning activities including LCB and transit. Additionally, Mr. Gurram reported that STTAR employee, Ms. Ray Scott, has been permanently placed in an MPO position and her focus is on administrative services including managing the MPO website and other activities as assigned.

Ms. Sherer shared that they used surveys sent out to transit riders to create a collage of words. The biggest word, the one used most often in peoples' responses, was "independence" thus creating the so called "[Independence Bus](#)." This image will be used for a mural on the wall of the conference room at the transit facility. They also plan to use the mural wall to display employee/staff accomplishments.

Transit will also be welcoming their new transit services supervisor next week, their new senior dispatcher will start on September 24<sup>th</sup>, and a new job posting will be listed soon for the Transit Safety Coordinator. They also wanted to share that their program coordinator, Ms. Jennifer Gregoire, was named employee of the month for May 2025.

## **10. Member Comments**

Mr. Mike Stahler, Ms. Lynda Faeita, Ms. Shery Stahnke, and Ms. Suzanne Roberts all shared praise for the LCB and transit. Mr. Joe Sabatino stated that there is an increase in demand for workers and with that comes an increased demand for transportation.

Members who were attending virtually also shared their comments.

Ms. Stacy Booth shared the following:

### **Topics:**

Agenda topic *Federal Grants for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 25 / State Fiscal Year 2025/2026*

**FTA Section 5310, 5311, and 5339 applications** – The due date to submit grant applications was Friday, December 13, 2024. Approximately 37 applications were received. An update will be provided once Committee Meetings and recommendations have been made.

### **Within this area, applications have been received by:**

- 5311 – Charlotte County requested \$165,600. However, due to limited funding and multiple applications, we could only recommend \$134,536 to Central Office. We are still waiting their review and approval.

Agenda topic *Training Opportunities*

**2025 Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) Annual Conference** – Was just held this week in St. Petersburg.

**Grant Management & Funding Opportunities Webinar** – FDOT will be hosting the annual Grant Management Workshop on September 18, 2025. It is an opportunity to attend virtually, learn about how to apply for FFY26/SFY27 FTA grants, and have your questions answered. Invitations have been sent out.

Agenda topic *Triennial Reviews*

*Round 3 of the FDOT triennial reviews began in 2024. We began with agencies that receive only FTA Section 5310 funding with the larger agencies to follow. There are currently 29 agencies to review throughout the District.*

**Reviews in Progress:**

- Charlotte County received their final report on 7/31/25. We are working with them on any outstanding items to be completed.

Ms. Carmen Henry shared that her organization, CareerSource Southwest Florida, received their summer youth report. This year they had twenty participants in Charlotte County compared to thirteen last year.

Commissioner Ken Doherty encouraged those attending to watch the commission meeting next Tuesday. Every quarter a commissioner has the honor of selecting a Customer Service Award recipient. This quarter gave him the opportunity to choose Ms. Heidi Maddox, transit director, to receive it. Commissioner Doherty suggests that anyone who sees her congratulate her on this well-deserved award. Ms. Sherer pointed out that Ms. Maddox is also graduating from the Transit Leadership Program at the conference Ms. Maddox is currently attending. Commissioner Doherty mentioned the upcoming legislative session, future budgets, and the November ballot as well. Commissioner Doherty encourages everyone to keep knowledgeable and informed about upcoming ballot measures and to keep in mind what services are appropriate for our county and the city to provide.

**12. Adjournment (Next Meeting – November 6, 2025) at the Charlotte County Transit Facility, 545 Theresa Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33954)**

The next LCB meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 6, 2025 at the Transit Facility located at 545 Theresa Blvd. in Port Charlotte, FL 33954. The meeting was adjourned at 11:04 a.m.