

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED
LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD (LCB)
MEETING
November 6, 2025**

Minutes of the regular meeting held in a hybrid format on November 6, 2025, utilizing TEAMS remotely and in-person at the Transit Facility, 545 Theresa Boulevard in Port Charlotte, FL 33954.

MEMBERS PRESENT IN-PERSON

M. Suzanne Roberts, *Virginia B. Andes Volunteer Community Clinic - Medical Community Representative (LCB Vice-Chair)*
Donna Fain, *Agency for Persons with Disabilities*
Maricela Morado, *Area Agency on Aging-Florida Department of Elder Affairs*
Lynn Dorler, *Children-at-Risk Representative*
Victoria Uptegrove, *FDOT, District One Modal Development Office*
Carmen Henry, *Regional Workforce Development*
Lynda Faieta, *Public Education-School Transportation (alternate)*

MEMBERS PRESENT REMOTELY

Dottie Fulton, *Citizen Advocate-User*
Michael Stahler, *Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)*

ABSENT MEMBERS

Commissioner Ken Doherty, *Charlotte County Commissioner (LCB Chair) - excused*
Matthew McGee, *Veteran Services Manager - excused*
Tabitha Larrauri, *Department of Children & Families - excused*
Leigh Ann Bellamy, *Division of Blind Services*
Joseph Sabatino, *Citizen Advocate*
Shery Stahnke, *Goodwill, Economically Disadvantaged Representative (alternate)*
Cheryl Sytsma, *Disabled Interests Representative*
Pamela Jordan, *Representative for Elderly Interests*
Vacant, *Local Private-for-Profit Transportation Industry Representative*

STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT

Lakshmi N. Gurram, *MPO Director*
Bekie Leslie, *MPO Administrative Services Coordinator*
Mark Yaxis, *MPO Multimodal Planner*
Sierra "Ray" Scott, *MPO Senior Administrative Assistant*
Heidi Maddox, *Charlotte County Transit*

Betty-Ann Sherer, *Charlotte County Transit*
Shirley Ciampi, *Charlotte County Transit*
Jill Turner, *Charlotte County Transit*
Jason Colon, *Charlotte County Transit*
Zinnia Vargas, *Charlotte County Fiscal*
Aimee Shafran, *Charlotte County Fiscal*
Kayla Huetten, *Benesch – Remote Via Teams*

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

LCB Vice-Chair Suzanne Roberts called the regular LCB Meeting to order at 10:01 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: September 4, 2025

Lynn Dorler made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Maricela Morado seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

5. Approval of LCB Grievance Procedures

Laks Gurram reviewed the updates to the LCB Grievance Procedures and explained to the LCB Board members that the primary purpose of the grievance process is to establish a formal policy for determining when a complaint becomes a formal grievance. This policy is designed to supplement the Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (LCB) Bylaws related to grievance procedures and help individuals and agencies understand their rights and responsibilities.

In accordance with the Planning Grant Agreement, the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) requires that the LCB update and approve the Local Coordinating Board Grievance Procedures annually. These grievance procedures apply to service provided through Charlotte County's Transportation Disadvantaged system, formerly known as Sunshine Ride. Historically, no grievances have ever gone forward to the LCB

Grievance Board but rather have been settled at the service provider or mediator levels. The LCB's role under these procedures is advisory only.

Transit and MPO staff have completed a major review and revision of the Charlotte County LCB grievance procedures in accordance with the Local Grievance Guidelines for Transportation Disadvantaged Services. Recently, Charlotte County Transit has been tasked by a 2024 state law to report Adverse Incidents for Paratransit Riders, which is a separate, but sometimes related issue. The CTD held a workshop on August 27, 2024 regarding this requirement, and the PowerPoint is found here:

[20240827_adverse_incident_public_workshop_presentation.pptx \(live.com\)](#)

In developing the new draft LCB Grievance Procedures, Charlotte County Transit staff expressed the desire to address all formal grievances within the Transit Division through its Mobility Manager (rather than relying upon a County Human Services Department mediator). The attached draft LCB Grievance Procedures will only apply to Charlotte County Transit's Transportation Disadvantaged program. Separate procedures for service funded through the general public paratransit (FTA Section 5307) service will be developed by Charlotte County Transit for in-house use and will not involve the LCB in hearing any grievances that might arise within that program. The Community Transportation Coordinator's Grievance Procedures should ultimately end with the Board of County Commissioners which retains legal responsibility for Transit's actions.

He also indicated that overall, the desire is to meet the needs of all Charlotte County Transit passengers (both TD sponsored and general public paratransit system riders) and other participants in these systems.

1. [Draft Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Grievance Procedures](#)

Maricela Morado made a motion to approve the draft Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Grievance Procedures. **Carmen Henry** seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

6. Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) Designation/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Laks Gurram reported on the current Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) designation for Charlotte County, which has been in place since 2020 and is set to expire in June 2026. He also reviewed the renewal process, including the requirements outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Chapter 427.0157, Florida Statutes, requires that the LCB review and approve the MOA that will be signed by the newly designated Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) and the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) for the next five-year period. The draft document is attached. Currently, the Charlotte County Board of

County Commissioners (BCC) through its Transit Division serves as the CTC for Charlotte County. On May 13, 2025, by resolution, the BCC expressed a willingness to serve in this role for the next five-year period commencing July 1, 2026. The most recent CTC Evaluation reflects Charlotte County Transit's ability to perform as CTC.

At the December 15, 2025 meeting, the MPO Board will consider recommending to the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) the designation of the Charlotte County area CTC for the next five-year period commencing July 1, 2026. As part of this recommendation process, the MPO Board will consider approving MPO Board Resolution #2025-03 for forwarding to the CTD.

The final step in this CTC designation process will require a presentation by the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO staff at a CTD business meeting in early 2026. Once the CTD approves the new Charlotte CTC designation, the new MOA will be finalized and a new Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) developed by Charlotte County Transit and MPO staff will be reviewed and approved at the September 3, 2026 LCB Meeting.

1. [Letter and BCC Resolution #2025-161 received June 9, 2025 from Charlotte County Transit Operations Manager Heidi Maddox regarding the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioner's willingness to serve as CTC for the next 5 year period beginning July 1, 2026](#)
2. [Draft Memorandum of Agreement between the CTD and the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners for LCB approval at the November 6, 2025 LCB Meeting](#)
3. [Draft MPO Resolution #2025-03 to be considered at the December 15, 2025 MPO Board Meeting](#)

Lynn Dorler made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement and recommend MPO Board approval of MPO Resolution #2025-03 for submittal to the CTD. **Maricela Morado** seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

7. Quarterly Report

Laks Gurram introduced Charlotte County Transit staff, Betty-Ann Sherer, who presented on the recent activities of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC). She reported that there was an increase of nearly 2,000 trips compared to last year and same day trips for the year were up to nearly 3,900. The Charlotte Rides app reported 8,100 trips booked, a 22% increase in new riders, and 999 new accounts created on the Charlotte Rides app. Ms. Sherer also said that following a survey on how riders heard about Charlotte County Transit, they are working with a news outlet to help reach a broader audience.

For the revenue reports, Zinnia Vargas presented. She took a moment to explain that FDOT changed the applicability of local match. She also introduced Aimee Shafran, who is new

to Charlotte County Fiscal Services. Lynn Dorler asked about a decline in revenue from the Senior Friendship Center, which is due to their funding being exhausted in June.

Ms. Sherer resumed the presentation and explained that unmet trips are down and expected to continue progressively decrease, which she cites their new driver contract for much of this improvement. She also reminded the Board that all customer compliments and concerns are taken seriously, and each one is investigated carefully. **Maricela** Morado complimented Transit on the improvement in compliments and concerns.

1. [Presentation](#)

8. FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendment – Transit Efficiency Study

Laks Gurram introduced the UPWP amendment.

In accordance with federal requirements, the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) must be amended when revisions occur to the approved Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) budget as reflected in the adopted UPWP.

The Charlotte County–Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is requesting an amendment to the FY 2026 UPWP to incorporate additional funding received by Charlotte County Transit.

The study is funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 Operating and Capital Assistance in the amount of \$50,000 to procure consulting services for the completion of a Transit Efficiency Study.

The study will evaluate transit operations, identify opportunities for new or improved services, and analyze the use of high-capacity vehicles to enhance long-term efficiency and sustainability.

1. [Proposed and adopted Task 8 pages and tables for Task Transit & Transportation Disadvantaged \(TD\)](#)
2. [FDOT UPWP Revision Form](#)

Victoria Uptegrove made a motion to endorse the amendment of the FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to include the attached updates . This motion allows for transmittal of the amendment pages and all supporting documentation to be transmitted to FDOT/FHWA. This motion allows staff to make any changes and adjustments based upon input received from FDOT. **Carmen Henry** seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

9. Review of Transit Development Plan (TDP) Annual Update

Charlotte County Transit and MPO staff presented the FY 2026 TDP annual update required by State TDP Rule 14-73.001. The update summarized progress on adopted TDP initiatives, recent performance metrics (ridership, revenue hours, cost per passenger), status of capital projects, proposed service adjustments, and priority actions for the coming year. Staff will request Board concurrence to transmit any required documentation to the Florida Department of Transportation and to authorize any minor administrative revisions necessary to maintain funding eligibility.

M. Suzanne Roberts thanked Charlotte County Transit and complimented their work on the TDP.

1. [TDP Annual Update](#)

10. Public Comments

No public comments were received.

11. Staff Comments

Laks Gurram provided staff comments, thanking the LCB for their participation and noting that all the member vacancies on LCB have been filled, except for the Private-For-Profit Industry representative. He also announced two openings on the MPO's Citizen's Advisory Committee, one in West County (residents must reside west of the Myakka River) and one in Mid County (applicant must reside in Charlotte County, between Myakka River and Peace River). Mr. Gurram expressed appreciation for the members' continued commitment and support in maintaining a strong and active board.

Mr. Gurram reminded the LCB members that there is still time to sign up to present information about their agencies to the Board and encouraged them to contact MPO staff to do so.

Heidi Maddox reported that, as of November 5, Charlotte County Transit is fully staffed. She welcomed three new employees: Tiffany Hummel, Business Services Supervisor, Jason Colon, Transit Safety Coordinator, and Cassie Chavez, Senior Transit Dispatcher. Ms. Maddox also noted ongoing collaboration with a marketing team for their rebranding and targeted marketing plan. She provided a brief update on the new driver contract that began in October, praising the quality and professionalism of the drivers and their positive presence at the Transit facility.

12. Member Comments

A. Member Presentations: Carmen Henry, CareerSource Southwest Florida

Carmen Henry provided the following abstract of her [presentation](#):

“The presentation will outline the full spectrum of no-cost workforce services provided by **CareerSource** for our community. We will detail the comprehensive support available to job seekers, including career counseling, skills assessments, tailored training programs, and direct job placement assistance. We will also cover the robust business services designed to help local employers with talent recruitment and employee development. Among these key offerings is our commitment to specialized programs, such as our role as an Employment Network for the Social Security Administration's **Tickets at Work** initiative, ensuring all job seekers, including those with disabilities, have access to the resources needed to achieve success and financial stability.”

There was brief discussion on the differences between SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance). Shirley Ciampi offered to assist with any transportation concerns in Charlotte County. Ms. Henry agreed that they will be needed next summer. Betty-Ann Sherer was impressed with the amount and scope of services that CareerSource offers the community. M. Suzanne Roberts asked Ms. Henry what percentage of their organization encompassed Charlotte County, to which she stated that she serves as the disability Navigator for all six counties.

Victoria Upthegrove updated the board on the status of 5311 funding, which has been approved, and she said would be available next week. There was brief discussion on whether an amendment would be necessary for these funds.

Donna Fain and Suzanne Roberts both took a moment to volunteer to present about their organizations and choose a date.

Maricela Morado reminded the board that open enrollment for Medicare is occurring now. There will be an event Friday, November 14 from 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. at the Family Services Center on Gibraltar Drive for free, unbiased Medicare counselling.

Suzanne Roberts spoke on the success of Transit and described a recent experience. This year Virginia B. Andes Clinic hosted the annual conference of the Florida Association of Free and Charitable Clinics at Sunseeker Resort in Charlotte Harbor. The host clinic always provides a tour, and they had 50 people from the conference that they needed to move from Sunseeker to the VBA Clinic. Ms. Roberts explained that Charlotte County Transit donated four large size buses to transport the participants, and they received many compliments about the partnership as well as the drivers.

Ms. Roberts also took a moment to wish the board Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Holidays as the next meeting will be after the new year.

13. Adjournment (Next Meeting – January 8, 2026) at the Charlotte County Transit Facility, 545 Theresa Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33954)

The next LCB meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 2026, at the Transit Facility located at 545 Theresa Blvd. in Port Charlotte, FL 33954. The meeting was adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

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