



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY - PUNTA GORDA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES OF THE JULY 15, 2026
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING (IN PERSON)

Dianne Quilty (Chair), Mid County
Sam Besase, West County
Steve Schoff, West County
Pauline Klein, At-Large
Priya Ahluwalia, South County
Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss, South County
James Kunard, South County
Richard Russell, At-Large
Stephen Rabinowitz, Mid County
Steve Hurt, Mid County

MEMBERS ABSENT

Jill Hartman (Vice Chair), West County

OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Director
Mark Yaxis, MPO Multimodal Planner
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Assistant Supervisor
David Scarpelli, FDOT, Community Liaison
DFC Michael Davidson, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
DFC Lucas Tomlinson, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
Betty-Ann Sherer, Charlotte County Transit and Human Services
Ravi Kamarjugadda, Charlotte County Public Works
Mohit Pohani, Citizen

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Dianne Quilty called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. Those in attendance introduced themselves. A quorum was present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. **Public Comments on Agenda Items**

No public comments were received.

4. **Reports**

a. **Chair's Report:** Diane Quilty had nothing to report.

b. **City of Punta Gorda Report:** No representative from the city was present to report.

c. **Charlotte County Report:**

Ravi Kamarajugadda, Charlotte County Public Works, provided an update on several transportation projects currently underway in Charlotte County. Members and County staff discussed the following:

- **Edgewater Drive:** The project is approximately 90% complete.
- **Flamingo Boulevard at SR 776:** The project will move forward once adjacent property owners submit development plans and receive the necessary approvals.
- **Tuckers Grade Extension (US 41 to Burnt Store Road):** The project is awaiting acquisition of the required right-of-way (ROW).
- **Harbor View Road:** The project continues to be delayed due to right-of-way acquisition. Staff explained that Buc-ee's is only required to fund roadway improvements reasonably expected to be impacted by its development, with improvements focused on the I-75 interchange areas.

d. **Charlotte County Sheriff's Report:**

DFC Michael Davidson and DFC Lucas Tomlinson, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, answered questions from the members regarding the following:

- **E-bikes:** There are currently no county or state laws specifically regulating e-bikes. A state bill passed by the Legislature was vetoed by the Governor, and Charlotte County has not adopted its own ordinance.
- **Golf carts:** Members expressed ongoing concerns about golf carts being operated on roadways where they are not permitted. The Sheriff's Office stated that these situations are generally handled as unregistered motor vehicle violations, with an emphasis on education and voluntary compliance before enforcement actions are taken.
- **Homeowners' associations (HOAs):** HOAs may establish their own rules governing e-bike use within their communities. If those rules are more restrictive than applicable county law, enforcement remains an HOA matter, and the County only intervenes for County laws.

e. **Charlotte County Transit Report:**

Betty-Ann Sherer presented Charlotte County Transit's [June 2026 Data report](#).

Sam Besase asked whether there would be any disruptions for veterans as the VA clinic moves to North Port, given that Transit does not operate outside the county. Ms. Sherer responded that there would not be any disruptions, as Transit will be providing transportation for veterans in North Port to access the VA clinic.

Priya Ahluwalia requested that Transit conduct community outreach in the Babcock community. Ms. Sherer stated that she will coordinate with Shirley Ciampi, Mobility Manager, to arrange outreach in that area. She also noted that, at this time, the numbers do not indicate a need for Transit service in the Babcock community.

5. FDOT Report

FDOT Liaison, David Scarpelli reminded members that they can sign up for notifications from FDOT District 1 through the FDOT Road Watch email listserv. Mr. Gurram noted that the FDOT Road Watch updates are forwarded to the committee members.

6. Consent Agenda

A. Approval of Minutes: Joint TAC/CAC/BPAC April 23, 2026, Meeting Minutes

Steve Hurt made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. **Priya Ahluwalia** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously with both Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss and James Kunard abstaining due to their absence from the April 23, 2026, meeting.

7. 2026-2031 General Planning Consultant Services/Selection Committee Recommendation

Mr. Gurram introduced the agenda item and reviewed the consultant contracting process. He explained that the Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued on March 27, 2026, and four proposals were received from prequalified consulting firms. The selection committee, consisting of the TAC, CAC, and BPAC Chairs and two MPO staff members, met on June 3, 2026, determined that all four firms were equally qualified, and recommended that the MPO Board award contracts to all four firms.

Steve Schoff asked how work orders would be assigned. Mr. Gurram explained that the MPO would solicit proposals from the contracted firms for each project, after which the selection committee would evaluate the responses and select the firm best qualified to perform the work. James Kunard asked how consultant compensation is determined, and Mr. Gurram explained that consultant rates are established and approved annually by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). Steve Hurt commented that placing too much emphasis on a firm's prior work for the MPO during evaluations could disadvantage firms without previous MPO experience and unintentionally limit competition for future work orders.

Sam Besase made a motion to recommend that the MPO Board approve the four professional consulting firms, allow staff to enter contract negotiations with the four firms, and authorize

*the MPO Chair to execute GPC contracts with the four firms. **Stephen Rabinowitz** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.*

8. Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) Bylaws Amendment

Mr. Gurram introduced the agenda item to the committee and explained that the amendment is the same as it was brought to the committee at the March 12 CAC Meeting. Mr. Gurram explained that at the previous CAC meeting the committee indicated that removing the citizenship requirement for members from the bylaws caused a division in opinion between the members and would need to be tabled until this July 15, 2026, meeting where MPO Staff could return the item with further guidance. Mr. Gurram indicated that staff had worked with Charlotte County Attorney's Office for legal guidance on how to proceed. This guidance may be found [here](#), providing the following wording as a recommendation:

"CAC members must be residents of Charlotte County and maintain their primary residence within the County during their term of service."

Members discussed the citizenship requirement in detail and debated the importance of requiring legal American citizenship or residency. Richard Russell provided the following [statement](#) in support of requiring members to have legal American citizenship in order to serve on the CAC in an advisory position. Mr. Russell's statement offers an alternative to change the wording to require members of the advisory committee be a registered voter within the Charlotte County or to simply require members be legal American citizens.

Steve Schoff requested minor grammatical and language changes to several parts of the bylaws for readability purposes. There was a brief discussion on the importance of involving more people in the planning process.

Richard Russell noted that Charlotte County has approximately 160,000 registered voters. He stated that if the MPO cannot identify at least eleven individuals willing to serve on the CAC, then "something is wrong," suggesting the pool of potential committee members should be more than sufficient.

Mr. Gurram emphasized that it is important to examine the county's demographics in detail rather than relying solely on the total number of registered voters. He indicated that a deeper understanding of the demographic makeup may clarify why recruitment has been challenging.

Pauline Klein stated that, in her understanding, the term "citizen" refers to a person representing an area such as a county, state, or country—and does not necessarily imply legal citizenship status.

Mr. Gurram indicated that the current CAC roster does not have any vacancies; however, he noted that staff has, at times, experienced difficulties identifying individuals to fill vacancies when they arise. He referred to the BPAC, where the lack of

quorum prevented the committee from taking action on several items such as approval of minutes which have been tabled in the past for at least three consecutive meetings.

He also referred to the attachment containing communication from legal counsel, pointing out that citizenship status is not required to serve on the committee unless it is an elected body.

Steve Hurt made a motion to approve the CAC Bylaws as revised including the grammatical changes of Steve Schoff as well as replacing the citizenship requirement for members to “legal resident”. **Pauline Klein** seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, five (5) members voted no, four (4) members voted yes, one (1) member was absent. **Priya Ahluwalia** left early after indicating her support against the motion to staff. Two-thirds of the members present did not vote in favor, the motion failed.

Since the previous motion did not pass, Diane Quilty entertained a different motion with different wording, and the committee members introduced a new motion.

Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss moved to approve the bylaws as originally specified under Section 4 (1) shall be the residents of Charlotte County, including the grammatical changes recommended by Steve Schoff. **Steve Hurt** seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: three (3) members voted no, six (6) members voted yes, one (1) member was absent, and one (1) member had left early after indicating her support for the motion to staff. With a two-thirds majority in favor, the motion passed.

9. Charlotte-Collier-Lee Consolidation Study

Mr. Gurram introduced the agenda item and explained that the State Budget Bill, HB 5001E (General Appropriations Act), requires the MPOs of Charlotte, Lee, and Collier counties to complete a Consolidation Feasibility Study for submission to the state legislature and Governor's Office by December 31, 2026. He noted that, due to the short timeline, the study is being led by the FDOT Central Office.

Mr. Gurram explained that the study is being presented as a business plan evaluating what consolidation would entail, including costs, impacts to each MPO, and the feasibility of two alternatives: maintaining the current structure of three separate MPOs or consolidating into a single MPO. He added that FDOT has stated it will not make decisions on behalf of the MPO Boards or eliminate local control.

Brief discussion occurred surrounding the possible consolidation and several members noted the lack of response they received after reaching out to state legislative representatives.

James Kunard made a motion for the CAC to formally express no confidence in the study and the idea of consolidation of the MPOs. **Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss** seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

10. Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan/Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (TDSP/CPT-HSTP)

Mr. Yaxis introduced the agenda item and explained that the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) is a five-year plan that receives minor annual updates between major revisions. He noted that MPO and Transit staff jointly prepare the plan, which is presented to the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) for approval before being submitted to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. Mr. Yaxis also provided an overview of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program and reviewed trends in Transportation Disadvantaged population estimates since the previous plan was adopted. He noted that the final plan will be presented to the LCB for approval. This item was presented for information only.

Betty-Ann Sherer added that the update modernizes the plan by updating content, improving the layout, and shortening sections to create a more accessible document.

Brief discussion occurred surrounding the decline in estimated TD populations while the general population of the County had increased. Mr. Yaxis explained that this could be any number of reasons ranging from the possible change to definitions of disabilities or poverty level, people moving to other areas for various reasons including receiving care or support, or any other external factor, noting that a decline in TD population does not necessarily mean one specific action occurred.

11. Public Comments

Betty-Ann Sherer, Charlotte County Transit offered praise to MPO Staff on the completion of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Map.

12. Staff Comments

Mr. Gurram provided staff comments, highlighting that the recipient of the 2026 Peggy Walters Citizen Transportation Award is CAC Chair Dianne Quilty. Mr. Gurram noted that the award will be presented at the August 3, 2026, MPO Board meeting. He also announced the completion of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities Map, which was distributed to committee members. In addition, Mr. Gurram provided a handout containing current state legislative updates.

13. Member Comments

Pauline Klein noted her concerns with the future planned location for Buc-ees on Harborview Road.

14. Adjournment – Next Meeting: September 16, 2026

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **4:03 pm**.