



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY - PUNTA GORDA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES OF THE JULY 16, 2026
BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BPAC) MEETING**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING (IN PERSON)

Laura Rossi, Chair, Mid County Representative
Pauline Klein, Bicycle Club Representative
Philipp Pfäeffli, Bicycle Business Representative

MEMBERS ABSENT

Brian Blankinship, South County - Excused
Jan Dick, South County Representative Excused
James Stein - West County Representative - Excused
David Cormier, West County Representative - Excused
Dana Ericksen – At Large - Excused
Vacant – Mid County Representative

OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON

Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Director
Mark Yaxis, MPO Multimodal Planner
Bekie Leslie, MPO Administrative Assistant Supervisor
Tanya Merkle, FDOT District 1 Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator
Ravi Kamarajugadda, Public Works – Via Teams

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

BPAC Chair Laura Rossi called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. Members and staff introduced themselves. A quorum was not present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public present at the meeting.

4. Reports

A. Chair's Report

BPAC Chair, Laura Rossi had nothing to report but expressed she will be addressing quorum issues under member comments.

B. 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).

C. City of Punta Gorda Report

No representative from the city was present to report

D. Sheriff's Office Report – Public Safety

No representative from the Sheriff's Office was present to report

E. Charlotte County Transit Report

No representative from Transit was present to report

5. FDOT Report

Tanya Merkle did not have a formal report to present; however, she provided an update on two upcoming projects currently entering the Design phase. She asked members to share any additional comments or concerns before these projects advance further in design. The projects are:

- **457945-1 – US 41 from South of Peace River to South of Cochran Blvd**
- **457944-1 – US 41 from Lee County Line to South of Punta Gorda FS**

6. Consent Agenda

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

Due to lack of quorum, all members present unanimously agreed to move this item to the MPO Board for approval.

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

Lakshmi N. Gurram directed committee members to follow the power point slides while providing an update on 2026-2031 General Planning Consultant Services/Selection.

Mr. Gurram indicated that the contracts will be established with a maximum term of 3 years, with the option of two additional one-year extensions if needed. All work performed under these agreements will directly align with and support the tasks identified in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), ensuring consistency with the MPO's adopted planning priorities. Each assignment will be developed as an individual task scope, and depending on its complexity or technical needs, may be carried out under one or more of the General Planning Consultant (GPC) contracts.

He further clarified that to manage work efficiently; support will be issued through a task-order process. For each task order, firms will be evaluated and ranked based on their qualifications, experience, capacity, and ability to successfully perform the specific assignment. This approach provides flexibility, ensures the best-qualified consultant is selected for each task, and maintains accountability throughout the life of the contracts.

Mr. Gurram provided the timeline and indicated the next steps of the GPC process. Below shows the timeline for next steps.

- MPO Board approval of the recommended firm(s) is scheduled for August 3, 2026.
- A dispute period will run from August 3 through August 7, after which
- contract negotiations will occur between August 10 and September 1, 2026.
- The final contract is set to begin on October 5, 2026.

Due to lack of quorum, all members present unanimously agreed to move this item to the MPO Board for approval.

8. Charlotte-Collier-Lee Consolidation Study – Status Update

Lakshmi N. Gurram informed the committee that HB 5001E directs the three Southwest Florida MPOs to study how regional transportation planning can be better coordinated across the contiguous urbanized area. The purpose of the requirement is to strengthen collaboration on regionally significant projects, improve how major land-use decisions are evaluated at a regional scale, and ensure consistency across each MPO's Transportation Improvement Program. Under the bill, the MPOs must submit a consolidation feasibility report to the Governor and Legislature by December 31, 2026.

He informed the committee that the study is being led by FDOT's Central Office, with Kimley-Horn supporting its development, and will examine two alternatives: keeping the three MPOs separate or consolidating them into a single regional MPO.

The study will assess feasibility, opportunities, challenges, costs, benefits, risks, and whether a compelling business case for consolidation exists, and it will identify considerations decisionmakers would need to address if consolidation were ever pursued. However, the study will not merge the MPOs, make governance or staffing recommendations, require consolidation, identify a preferred alternative, or make decisions on behalf of any MPO Board.

A discussion was held regarding the MPO consolidation study, during which members asked whether they could send a letter to the local legislative delegation. Staff clarified that individual members may contact or speak with elected officials who represent Charlotte County; however, MPO staff cannot participate in or facilitate such outreach because it is considered lobbying, and MPOs are prohibited from using federal funds for lobbying activities.

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

Mark 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.

Mr. Gurram noted that this is the first time the TDSP has been presented to this committee to ensure all modes of transportation are fully addressed. He explained that the next steps are to bring the TDSP to the MPO Board on August 3, 2026, followed by the Local Coordinating Board meeting on September 3 for approval.

10. Public Comments

There were no public present at the meeting.

11. Staff Comments

Mr. Gurram distributed a copy of recently passed transportation legislation that may impact the local transportation system. He also reported that he contacted the BPAC

Chair regarding ongoing quorum challenges and the possibility of adjusting committee membership. These matters will be discussed further under member comments.

12. Member Comments

Mr. Phillip Pfäeffli provided comments regarding SB 682, noting that the lack of an active, enforceable law makes implementation extremely difficult for local governments. He emphasized that without proper statutory authority in place, enforcement challenges will continue.

BPAC Chair Laura Rossi initiated a discussion on ongoing membership challenges and requested information on member attendance over recent meetings. Mr. Gurram explained that several absences were excused and that the current bylaws do not specify how many excused absences should trigger action by the Chair.

The BPAC Chair recommended that staff further explore several potential solutions, including establishing limits on the number of excused absences, expanding membership to include multiple representatives from geographic areas or local walking and running groups while maintaining the existing quorum of five members.

Members also discussed considering structural changes such as eliminating the BPAC entirely or combining the CAC and BPAC into a single committee with all members grandfathered into a consolidated group. Based on the guidance provided, staff indicated that these potential options will be brought forward for discussion at the next BPAC meeting.

13. Adjournment – Next Meeting: September 24, 2026 at 2:00 pm

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:26 pm.