



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING  
MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2026  
CHARLOTTE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER  
18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE, ROOM #119  
PORT CHARLOTTE, FL 33948

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Commissioner Christopher Constance**, MD, Charlotte County Commissioner, *MPO Chair*  
**Commissioner Joseph Tiseo**, Charlotte County Commissioner, *MPO Vice Chair*  
**Commissioner Ken Doherty**, Charlotte County Commissioner  
**Commissioner Robert Hancik, Alternate to Commissioner Thornberry**, Charlotte County  
Airport Authority  
**Councilmember Jeannine Polk**, Vice Mayor, Punta Gorda City Council

**ADVISORY MEMBERS**

**Jamie Driggers**, PE, FDOT, Interim District One Secretary

**STAFF PRESENT**

**Lakshmi N. Gurram**, MPO Director  
**Bekie Leslie**, MPO Administrative Services Coordinator  
**Mark Yaxis**, MPO Multimodal Planner  
**Kimlyn Walker**, County Attorney (MPO Legal Services)

**OTHERS PRESENT IN-PERSON**

**Hector Flores**, Charlotte County Administration  
**Wayne Gaither**, FDOT  
**Kristi Smith**, FDOT  
**Jason Heironimus**, FDOT  
**Tom Arsenault**, FDOT TIM Team  
**Robert Fakhri**, Charlotte County Public Works  
**John Elias**, Charlotte County Public Works

**Shaun Cullinan**, Charlotte County Community Development  
**Diane Quilty**, Chair, Citizens' Advisory Committee  
**Sam Besase**, Citizens' Advisory Committee Member  
**Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss**, Citizens' Advisory Committee Member  
**Laura Rossi**, Chair, Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee

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

MPO Chair Constance called the meeting to order at **2:01 pm**. All MPO Board members were present with Charlotte County Airport Authority Commissioner Robert Hancik as an alternate for Commissioner Thornberry.

### **2. Invocation – Bill Frank – First Baptist Church of Punta Gorda**

Pastor Bill Frank from First Baptist Church of Punta Gorda gave the invocation.

### **3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **4. Addition and/or Deletion to the Agenda**

Mr. Gurram asked the board to move Agenda Item 13, Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Team Presentation, and follow Consent Agenda Item 6.

**Commissioner Tiseo** made a motion to approve the modifications to the agenda packet. **Commissioner Doherty** seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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

No public comments on agenda items

### **6. Consent Agenda**

- A. Approval of Minutes: December 15, 2025, MPO Board Regular Meeting
- B. Approval of Minutes: January 26, 2026, Joint Regional Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO and Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board Meeting
- C. Approval of Minutes: Joint Regional Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO and Lee County MPO Board Meeting
- D. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Bylaws Amendment
- E. Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Bylaws Amendment
- F. Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Appointment

**Commissioner Doherty** made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. **Commissioner Tiseo** seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

### **13. Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Team Presentation**

Tom Arsenault (FDOT) presented on the Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Team, which coordinates multiple agencies to improve responder safety, reduce clearance times, and restore traffic flow. FDOT supports these efforts through regular TIM meetings, Road Ranger operations, Traffic Management Center monitoring, and real-time traveler information systems.

Commissioner Hancik asked about the boundaries of District One, where the TIM Team and Road Rangers operate. Mr. Arsenault explained that District One includes Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota, Manatee, Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Highlands, Okeechobee, Glades, and Hendry Counties.

### **7. Chair's Reports**

#### **A. MPO Board Chair's Report**

Chair Constance asked for clarification on the US-41 and Retta Esplanade intersection in Punta Gorda. Wayne Gaither (FDOT) explained that the footprint will remain the same, with one existing lane repurposed. Two lanes will remain through lanes, and one will become a dedicated left-turn lane onto Retta Esplanade. He noted that a diagram of the proposed design has been provided.

#### **B. Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) Chair's Report**

Ms. Quilty reported on March 4, 2026, Citizens' Advisory Committee meeting, including agenda items, motions, and key discussions. She highlighted three primary concerns: improvements needed to Harborview Road to accommodate proposed commercial development and increased traffic; Charlotte County Transit's ability to expand service countywide, including to Babcock Ranch; and the need for wider sidewalks to safely accommodate multiple users, particularly higher-speed e-bikes. She also noted the committee's position on HB 543/SB 1080.

Chair Constance asked Mr. Gurram for an update on the bill. Mr. Gurram reported that the House and Senate did not concur, and the bill died in returning messages. Brief discussion followed regarding potential reintroduction.

#### **C. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Chair's Report**

Mr. Fakhri briefly presented on March 4, 2026, Technical Advisory Committee Meeting. Mr. Fakhri emphasized the review of the TIP, UPWP, and Project

Priorities draft documents at the meeting.

#### **D. Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Chair's Report**

Ms. Rossi reported on the March 12, 2026, Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) meeting, including agenda items and key discussions. Members discussed developing trails as placemaking assets, similar to the Legacy Trail in Sarasota County, and the role of local funding and support. She also noted interest in increasing BPAC membership participation, with a recommendation to be brought to the MPO Board.

Commissioner Hancik asked about the distinction between scooters and e-bikes; Ms. Rossi was unsure of current legislation. Chair Constance asked how bicyclists navigate roundabouts. Ms. Rossi explained that usage depends on design, with some roundabouts providing separate paths and others requiring cyclists to share lanes with vehicles. Discussion followed on current laws, noting that bicycles are generally permitted to share lanes, though separated facilities are safer overall.

### **8. Local Government Reports**

#### **A. Charlotte County Airport Authority**

Commissioner Hancik provided the Charlotte County Airport Authority's report. The airport is currently updating their master plan, and a Request for Proposals was recently sent out to procure a consultant to complete this plan. Public input will be a driving factor in the development of this master plan. It was stated that the Punta Gorda Airport is one of roughly 200 airports in the country to contract TSA Security separately from the United States Department of Homeland Security therefore due to recent events at the federal level of government, Punta Gorda Airport has not seen any delays in travel.

#### **B. City of Punta Gorda**

Vice Mayor Polk provided the following [report](#) prior to the meeting.

Additionally, she stressed the need for and importance of a crosswalk to be implemented at US-41 and Retta Esplanade intersection during the intersection improvements. She also raised concerns about Harborview Road and the need for a speed limit reduction or other measures to ensure safety for residents and users of the roadway.

**C. Charlotte County**

Commissioner Tiseo updated on the following projects:

- Veterans Boulevard at Cochran Boulevard – Construction Complete February 2026
- Veterans Boulevard Intersection Improvements – Construction forecast complete December 2026
- Flamingo/Edgewater Boulevard Widening – Construction scheduled to begin March 2028
- Kings Highway Widening – Construction scheduled to begin April 2026
- Sandhill Boulevard Widening – Construction forecast to complete August 2028
- Peachland Boulevard at Harbor Boulevard Intersection Improvements - Design completion forecast July 2026
- Kings Highway at Harborview Road Intersection Improvements – Construction completion forecast June 2026

Commissioner Tiseo noted, following Vice Mayor Polk’s comments, that speed limits are based on roadway design, a road designed for 45 mph must be posted accordingly. Commissioner Doherty and Chair Constance briefly discussed the history of Harborview Road, including its transition from a state to a county roadway. There was discussion regarding the historic posted speed limit on the corridor and clarification on how the current speed was established.

**9. Florida Department of Transportation FDOT Report**

**FDOT Led Discussion**

Wayne Gaither presented on behalf of FDOT. He provided updates on SR 31, including the planned replacement of the grid deck on the bridge in Lee County scheduled for April. He noted that a detour will be in place during this work and that it will temporarily impact traffic in the adjacent area of Charlotte County

	<b>FPID #</b>	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>A.</b>	N/A	<b><u>US 41 at Olean Boulevard</u> (FDOT/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)</b> Gathering materials, no change since last meeting.
<b>B.</b>	446340-1&2	<b><u>SR 776 at Flamingo Boulevard</u> (FDOT/ John Elias- Charlotte County)</b> Work is ongoing and final coordination with FDOT underway.
<b>C.</b>	N/A	<b><u>I-75 Possible New Interchange North of Kings Hwy Interchange</u> (FDOT/Laks Gurram-CCPGMPO)</b> No updates, conversations continue with Sarasota Manatee MPO.

**Joint Local and FDOT Discussion**

	<b>FPID #</b>	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>A.</b>	434965-1 434965-2 434965-3 434965-4 434965-5	<b><u>Harbor View Road Combined Funding Strategies</u></b> <b>(FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)</b> Everything is on track for phase one to be complete March 2027.
<b>B.</b>	446391-1	<b><u>US 41 from Kings Hwy to Peace River Bridge Planning/Operational Improvements Study</u></b> <b>(FDOT/John Elias-Charlotte County)</b> Elias – Study is ongoing.
<b>C.</b>	N/A	<b><u>Bermont Road (CR 74) / US-17 @ Bermont Road (CR 74) Safety Discussion</u></b> <b>(FDOT/John Elias-Charlotte County)</b> Looking to take it on as a state road after improvements are complete. Roundabout is complete and operational. US-17 at Bermont, FDOT is working on addressing fright issues and easing turn radius onto Bermont Road. Chair Constance mentioned the noise as well as the original design of the intersection.
<b>D.</b>	436928-3	<b><u>Burnt Store Road – From Lee/Charlotte C/L to Wallaby Lane</u></b> <b>(FDOT/John Elias-Charlotte County)</b> Ongoing, working with Lee County.
<b>E.</b>	N/A	<b><u>Burnt Store Road @ Home Depot Signal/Access Management.</u></b> <b>(FDOT/John Elias-Charlotte County)</b> No updates and not a priority for the County at this time. There was a brief discussion on spacing for crosswalks and spacing for traffic signals between Commissioner Tiseo and John Elias as well as the requirements for crosswalks installation and spacing.
<b>F.</b>	N/A	<b><u>SR 776 @ Toledo Blade Intersection Discussion.</u></b> <b>(FDOT/John Elias-Charlotte County)</b> Continuing to work with developer.
<b>G.</b>	N/A	<b><u>SUN Trails Map Discussion.</u></b> <b>(Laks Gurram-CCPGMPO)</b> Staff will continue to update board on any changes to sun trails.
<b>H.</b>	N/A	<b><u>US 41 @ Centennial BLVD/Flamingo Blvd Discussion.</u></b> <b>(FDOT/John Elias-Charlotte County)</b> A traffic light will be likely to be implemented due to spacing constraints. County continues to determine which location would be the most appropriate Improvements will be needed at both, particularly to regulate median movements.

**City of Punta Gorda Led Discussion**

	<b>FPID #</b>	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>A.</b>	N/A	<a href="#"><u>Crosswalks and ADA Projects</u></a> There are ongoing discussions with FDOT staff on these projects

**10. Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) Appointment/Reappointment**

Mr. Gurram introduced the agenda item, noting one vacancy for a South County Representative on the Citizens’ Advisory Committee. Two applicants were considered, requiring a vote by the MPO Board.

Each Board member cast one ballot, and Ms. Leslie tabulated the results: four (4) votes for James Kunard and one (1) for Steve Plate.

**Commissioner Doherty** moved with the approval of James Kunard and **Commissioner Tiseo** seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**11. 2025 Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)/Charlotte County - Punta Gorda MPO Joint Certification**

Mr. Gurram presented the agenda item and outlined the joint certification process. He reported that during FDOT’s annual review, the Charlotte County–Punta Gorda MPO received a “Low-Risk” rating, indicating efficient operations, adherence to required procedures, and responsible management of federal and state funds. No corrective actions or recommendations were identified. Mr. Gurram also praised the strong working relationship between FDOT and the MPO.

**Commissioner Doherty** made motion to approve the 2025 FDOT/MPO Joint Certification and authorize the MPO Board Chair to sign the FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Statement. **Commissioner Tiseo** seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**12. FY 2025 – FY2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) De-Obligation of Planning Funds (PL)/FDOT MPO Amendment to Agreement**

Mr. Gurram reported that the MPO Board approved the current two-year UPWP on May 20, 2024. He explained that this amendment would de-obligate and transfer \$60,000 to the FY 2027–2028 UPWP, effective July 1, 2026, primarily for staff salaries under Task 1 (Administration). He also noted that the MPO will soon seek to hire a Senior Planner to fill the vacancy created by his promotion to director.

**Commissioner Doherty** made a motion to approve the amendment to the FY 2025/2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)/FDOT/MPO Agreement through the de-obligation of

*\$60,000 in PL funds, authorizing the MPO Board Chair to sign the amended agreement and authorizing staff to make any minor revisions as recommended by FDOT and FHWA.*

*Commissioner Tiseo seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **14. Draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2027/2028 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

Mr. Gurram presented the Draft FY 2026/2027–FY 2027/2028 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), outlining planned activities and associated costs for the two fiscal years beginning July 1, 2026. He noted that federal and state regulations determine eligible planning activities and provided an overview of the UPWP tasks. He also commended Ms. Leslie for work in preparing the UPWP.

This item was presented for informational and review only. A final version will be brought forward for approval at the May 18, 2026, MPO Board Meeting.

#### **15. Draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2030/2031 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Mr. Gurram presented the Draft FY 2026/2027–FY 2030/2031 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), outlining federal and state transportation capital improvements as a staged, multi-year program consistent with the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). He noted that this TIP is a draft of the final document, and that board members, County, City and Airport staff, as well as the public, will have an opportunity to comment before the final TIP is presented to the MPO Board on May 18, 2026.

He further noted that the Charlotte County–Punta Gorda MPO coordinates regional planning through interlocal agreements with the Sarasota-Manatee MPO, Lee County MPO, and Heartland Regional TPO. Each agency identifies regional priorities, which are incorporated into the TIP. Previously adopted priorities are included in the current draft.

This item was presented for informational and review purposes only. A final version will be brought forward for approval at the May 18, 2026, MPO Board Meeting.

Commissioner Tiseo asked how the current state budget may impact the TIP. Mr. Gurram stated that FDOT will release an updated Work Program snapshot on April 3, 2026, and projects will be adjusted accordingly. Mr. Driggers added that the federal transportation bill is set to expire in September 2026 and Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development that, without reauthorization, transportation funding could be affected.

Commissioner Hancik asked about online availability for review with Airport Authority Board members. Mr. Gurram confirmed that the draft is available on the MPO website and will be distributed to Board members.

Commissioner Tiseo asked whether a letter of support for federal reauthorization would be needed. Mr. Gurram stated he would review the process and report back, with a future

agenda item anticipated.

Mr. Driggers explained the difference between formula funds and discretionary grants, noting the competitive nature of discretionary grants. Commissioner Doherty suggested members discuss the issue with their respective boards and consider bringing forward a letter of support as an agenda item at the May 18, 2026, MPO Board Meeting.

#### **16. Draft 2026 Project Priorities - Discussion**

Mr. Gurram presented the draft 2026 project priorities, noting that applications are due by March 31, 2026, for consideration. He explained that some listed projects are already programmed for funding in the current work program.

This item was presented for informational purposes only, with a final version to be brought for approval at the May 18, 2026, meeting. No comments were made.

#### **17. Public Comments**

West County citizen and Citizens' Advisory Council member Sam Besase spoke regarding the lack of traffic signals at Gasparilla Road and Rotonda Boulevard East/Ingraham Boulevard. He emphasized the need for a signal to improve safety, despite prior plans for installation. He also expressed concerns about proposed roundabouts at several West County intersections and the safety of pedestrians in relation to e-bikes on sidewalks, trails, and roadways, while acknowledging their importance as a primary mode of transportation for some users.

#### **18. Staff Comments**

MPO Director, Lakshmi N. Gurram provided staff comments. He presented recently passed legislative bills from the 2026 House and Senate sessions that pertain to transportation and the general function of local government and MPOs. Staff also provided Board members with a summary of tasks completed since the last MPO Board Meeting in December, 2025.

#### **19. Member Comments**

Vice Mayor Polk commented that US-17 construction appears to be much more organized since she last expressed her concerns.

Commissioner Hancik thanked the Board for allowing him to sit for Commissioner Thornberry and for the opportunity to participate in the discussions.

Commissioner Tiseo reminded the board members that MPOAC has a meeting in April, which Commissioner Thornberry agreed to attend. Mr. Gurram stated that he had reached out to Commissioner Thornberry to confirm his attendance, and it was confirmed.

Commissioner Doherty stated that he is looking forward to the opportunity to participate in a joint regional meeting with Heartland TPO and expressed appreciation for staff's work and initiative in ensuring the meeting takes place.

## **20. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **4:00 pm**.

The next MPO Board Meeting will be a Joint Regional Meeting between the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO and Heartland Regional TPO on **Wednesday May 6, 2026, at 10:00 am at the Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2260 NE Roan St, Arcadia, FL 34266**.

The next Regular meeting of the MPO Board will be on **Monday, May 18, 2026, at 2:00 pm**.