CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 18, 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 Thornberry, Charlotte County Airport Authority
Councilmember Jeannine Polk, Vice Mayor**,** Punta Gorda City Council

ADVISORY MEMBERS
Wayne Gaither, FDOT Southwest Area Office Director

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
Robert Fakhri, Charlotte County Public Works
John Elias, Charlotte County Public Works
Shaun Cullinan, Charlotte County Community Development
Diane Quilty, Chair, Citizens' Advisory Committee
Eve Sweeting, Charlotte County Legislative Manager
Richard Russell, Citizens' Advisory Committee
Heidi Maddox, Charlotte County Transit
Carl Benge, City of Punta Gorda
Mary Ellen Kiss, Citizens' Advisory Committee
Will Weisspfennig, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
David Scarpelli, FDOT District One Community Liaison

Richard Lehmkuhl, City of Punta Gorda
Ayisha Ferrera, Citizen

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

MPO Chair Constance called the meeting to order at **2:00 pm**. All MPO Board members were present.

2. Invocation – Jaco Bester – Burnt Store Presbyterian Church

Pastor Jaco Bester from Burnt Store Presbyterian Church gave the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. Addition and/or Deletion to the Agenda

Mr. Gurram mentioned the following changes to the agenda.

1. Addition to the Consent Agenda as Item 6-B, which includes the Joint MPO Board meeting minutes.
2. Discussion item for the US 41 at Carmalita Street roundabout, which has been added under Item #12, the FDOT Report, at the direction of the MPO Board Chair.
3. The modification is under Agenda Item #13 regarding the recommendation and motion to appoint or reappoint one of the two candidates to serve.

Commissioner Tiseo made a motion to approve the changes, and the Commissioner Ken Doherty seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

5. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Richard Russell commented on Agenda Item 13 and his willingness to continue to serve on the Citizens' Advisory Committee for another three year term.

6. Consent Agenda

A. Approval of Minutes: March 30, 2026 MPO Board Meeting
B. Approval of Minutes: May 6, 2026 Joint Regional Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO and Heartland Regional TPO Meeting
C. MPO Board Resolution Authorizing FY 2026/2027 Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Planning Grant Agreement
D. Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Appointment/Reappointment
E. Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (LCB) Reappointment

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

7. <u>PUBLIC MEETING: FY 2025/2026 – FY 2029/2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment</u>

Mr. Gurram explained that a TIP amendment is required for major project changes, including project additions or deletions, significant cost changes, phase initiation date modifications, or major design or scope revisions. He stated that this amendment involves the allocation of Section 5310 formula funds to Hope Hospice and Community Services. Section 5310 funds, administered by Florida Department of Transportation, support mobility improvements for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Mr. Gurram also explained that TIP amendments require public comment and review, demonstration of financial constraint, and conformity determination when applicable.
Chair Constance opened the meeting for public comment on the TIP amendment. No public comments were received.

***Commissioner Tiseo** made a motion to close the public meeting.* ***Commissioner Doherty** seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.*

***Commissioner Doherty** made a motion to adopt the amendment to Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO's FY 2025/2026 through FY 2029/2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).* ***Commissioner Tiseo** seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.*

8. <u>PUBLIC MEETING: Final Draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2030/2031 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)</u>

Mr. Gurram introduced the final draft of the FY 2027 – FY 2031 TIP. The final TIP outlines the region's transportation needs and investment priorities, supports economic development and safety, and meets all federal and state planning requirements.

The following changes were explained since the previous draft was brought to the board on March 30, 2026.

- Section 2 – Revisions to cost tables based on Work Program April Snapshot.
- Section 3 – Updated performance measures template based on updated guidance.
- Section 4 – Updated based on Work Program April Snapshot.
- Section 7 – Inclusion of FTA federal obligations as required.
- Public Comment Phase – Review period from March 4, 2026 through May 18, 2026 and advertised twice on April 1, 2026 and May 11, 2026.

Chair Constance opened the meeting for public comment on the Final Draft TIP. No public comments were received.

***Commissioner Tiseo** made a motion to close the public meeting. **Commissioner Doherty** seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.*

***Commissioner Doherty** made a motion to adopt the Final Draft FY 2026/2027 through FY 2030/2031 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) allowing staff to make minor changes as needed. **Commissioner Tiseo** seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.*

9. <u>PUBLIC Meeting: Public Participation Plan (PPP) Update</u>

Mr. Yaxis introduced the update to the Public Participation Plan (PPP). The PPP is designed to comply with federal statutes which dictate that the transportation planning process must provide meaningful opportunities for public involvement. The PPP serves as a proactive and inclusive framework for engaging the public throughout the stages of the planning process. The following updates to the existing PPP were explained to the board.

- Updated the contact information including staff, phone number, and office location
- Updated the MPO organizational chart.
- Including HRTPO as a regional partner
- Compliance with changes to federal executive orders
- Minor spelling and grammatical changes throughout the document
- Updated graphics throughout

Chair Constance opened the meeting for public comment on the Public Participation Plan update. No public comments were received.

***Commissioner Tiseo** made a motion to close the public meeting. **Commissioner Doherty** seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.*

***Commissioner Doherty** made a motion to approve the Public Participation Plan Update. **Commissioner Tiseo** seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.*

10. <u>Chairs' Report</u>

MPO Board Chair's Report

Commissioner Constance reported ongoing stacking issues on Toledo Blade Boulevard for southbound traffic turning left onto U.S. 41. He recommended evaluating whether the identified deficiency warrants an additional left-turn lane to increase turning capacity per signal cycle and improve overall traffic flow. Commissioner Tiseo agreed with the assessment and noted that further coordination with FDOT will be necessary.

Additional discussion addressed U.S. 41 southbound at Veterans Boulevard, focusing on deficiencies related to left-turn signal timing and the number of available turn lanes for movements onto Veterans Boulevard.

Joint TAC/CAC.BPAC Chair's Report

Ms. Quilty reported on the joint subcommittee meeting that was held on April 23, 2026. She noted that the meeting provided substantial insight for committee members into the workings of other committees. She also noted that all three committees had motioned to recommend the approval of all agenda items to the Board and that there was discussion at the joint meeting surrounding the proposed Buc-ee's as well as the three committee chairs agreeing to serve on the selection committee for the selection of consultants for General Planning Consultant Services. She noted that the meeting for the selection committee would take place on June 3 at 2:00 pm.

11. Local Government Reports

Charlotte County Airport Authority

Commissioner Thornberry read the Charlotte County Airport Authority report which can be found here. He noted that their next meeting will be on Thursday, May 21 and they will be determining the engineering firm to complete the Airport's master plan. He also noted that the terminal expansion is expected to be complete by July 2027 and is currently moving ahead of schedule. Finally, Commissioner Thornberry reflected on his experience attending MPOAC in Orlando and was grateful for the opportunity.

City of Punta Gorda

Vice-Mayor Polk provided the City of Punta Gorda Report, which is available here. Also noted was the "Click it or Ticket" program that City of Punta Gorda Police are currently implementing with the aim of ensuring proper usage of seatbelts within the City.

Commissioner Doherty asked about storm surge events and what the City is looking into for modeling through their consultant as well as proposals following the planning. Vice-Mayor Polk noted that flooding is a continuing issue in the City and they are looking for ways to mitigate damage from these storm events. She agreed to share the information with the Board after work is completed.

Charlotte County

Commissioner Tiseo provided the Charlotte County Report, which is available here. He noted the continuing work that the County is putting toward improving access as well as safety throughout the county.

12. Florida Department of Transportation FDOT Report

FDOT Led Discussion

Mr. Gaither introduced David Scarpelli to the Board who will serve as the FDOT District One Community Liaison moving forward. Mr. Scarpelli mentioned a meeting discussing the SR 776 from Merchants Crossing to Sarasota County Line project taking place on May 20 at 5:00 pm at the Elsie Quirk Library in Englewood. He noted there is also a virtual option available beginning at 6:00 pm.

	FPID #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION
A.	N/A	**US 41 at Olean Boulevard (David Scarpelli-FDOT/John Elias-Charlotte County)** Mr. Scarpelli noted that the project is waiting on the delivery of mounting brackets for “right turn only” signs and will be completed once received.
B.	446340-1	**SR 776 at Flamingo Boulevard** **(David Scarpelli-FDOT/ John Elias- Charlotte County)** Mr. Scarpelli noted that FDOT will be advertising for construction bids and bidding will open on July 15, 2026 after the construction checklist was completed in April, 2026.
C.	N/A	**I-75 Possible New Interchange North of Kings Hwy Interchange (David Scarpelli-FDOT)** FDOT is still assessing the feasibility of this project.
D.	441524-1	**US-41 at Carmalita St. Roundabout** **(Wayne Gaither-FDOT)** Commissioner Constance noted that northbound traffic on US 41 is being held up by the roundabout with vehicles traveling onto Carmalita Street from US 41 southbound. Discussion followed on possible solutions. Mr. Gaither noted that FDOT would look into this issue. Vice-Mayor Polk noted that it may be an issue with the traffic signal timing at US 41 and Taylor Road.

Joint Local and FDOT Discussion

	FPID #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION
A.	434965-1 434965-2 434965-3 434965-4 434965-5	**Harbor View Road Combined Funding Strategies** **(Wayne Gaither-FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)** Mr. Elias noted that work continues. Moving ahead with real estate acquisition, and construction may be pushed back.
B.	446391-1	**US 41 from Kings Hwy to Peace River Bridge Planning/Operational Improvements Study** **(Wayne Gaither-FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)** Mr. Elias noted that work is progressing.
C.	N/A	**Bermont Road (CR 74) Safety Discussion / US 17 @ CR 74** **(FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)**

		Mr. Elias noted that this project had no longer become necessary to be included in this report moving forward. Commissioner Constance agreed and instructed staff to remove this from future reports as well as instructing County staff to explore safety performance data, how it has changed over time and particularly how it has changed since projects in the area began.
D.	436928-3	**Burnt Store Road – From Lee/Charlotte C/L to Wallaby Lane (FDOT/John Elias/Robert Fakhri-Charlotte County)** Mr. Elias noted that this project is moving forward as planned, waiting on Lee County to move forward as much of the work is scheduled in Lee County.
E.	N/A	**Burnt Store Road @ Home Depot Signal/Access Management** Mr. Elias noted that the project began as a City priority and will move forward as a County and City joint project. It was noted that the City will need to allocate funding before work may proceed, which Mr. Elias noted may have already happened. Discussion followed on the need for the intersection and surrounding area.
F.	N/A	**SR 776 @ Toledo Blade Intersection Discussion** Mr. Fakhri stated that coordination is underway with FDOT.
G.	N/A	**SUN Trails Map Discussion** Mr. Gurram noted that the map shown includes all additions and changes to the Sun Trail system within Charlotte County. Staff will continually update this map as needed.
H.	N/A	**US 41 @ Centennial Blvd/Flamingo Blvd** Mr. Elias noted the increased activity in the area and referenced ongoing coordination with FDOT regarding signalization of an intersection, with Flamingo Blvd identified as the preferred location. See recording for additional discussion.

City of Punta Gorda Led Discussion

	FPID #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION
A.	N/A	**Crosswalks and ADA Projects** Vice Mayor Polk noted that City staff would work to update the attached maps for the next meeting to better show the progress of work within the City.

13. Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) Appointment/Reappointment

The Citizens’ Advisory Committee has one opening for an “at-large” representative to serve on a three year term. Mr. Russell is the current representative and has chosen to reapply for this position. Mr. Robinette has also applied for the same role, prompting MPO Board Members to vote on which applicant will serve in this volunteer position.

Ms. Leslie distributed ballots and collected the cast ballots of the board members. Richard Russell received a majority of votes.

Commissioner Doherty *made a motion to appoint Richard Russell to serve a three-year term as an At-Large representative on the Citizens’ Advisory Committee and* ***Commissioner Tiseo*** *seconded the motion, which carried out unanimously.*

14. Final Draft FY 2026/2027 – FY 2027/2028 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)/MPO-FDOT Agreement

Mr. Gurram introduced the item. He explained that the UPWP serves as an outline for the work to be completed by MPO staff and ensures that the MPO planning process remains fiscally constrained. Mr. Gurram explained the following changes since the previous meeting.

- Change in FDOT community Liaison to David Scarpelli
- Updated TD funding from $27,291 to $27,875 from the CTD
- Updated FTA 5307 funds to show 80/20 federal to local match
- Included FDOT/MPO agreement received on May 1, 2026

Commissioner Doherty *made motion to adopt the Final Draft of the FY 2027 – FY 2028 UPWP/MPO-FDOT Agreement and authorize the MPO Board Chairman to sign all required documents. The motion should allow for transmittal of the document to DOT and required agencies, including the ability for staff to make minor changes and adjustments based on comments and input received.* ***Commissioner Tiseo*** *seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.*

15. Final Draft 2026 Project Priorities

Mr. Gurram introduced the item and outlined updates made to the draft project priorities since their presentation at the March 30, 2026 MPO Board Meeting. He explained that revisions included reordering projects, removing items that have been programmed or are no longer a priority, and adding new projects. He noted that project priorities are reviewed annually and submitted to FDOT to inform funding decisions in the Work Program.

A brief discussion followed regarding the removal of the ADA project (11 TA). Mr. Gaither and Vice Mayor Polk agreed that the anticipated outcomes did not justify the cost, and Vice Mayor Polk added that the city requested its removal while alternative options are explored.

***Commissioner Doherty** made a motion to adopt the Final Draft 2026 Project Priorities for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program Cycle, FY 2028 – FY 2032. **Commissioner Tiseo** seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.*

16. <u>2026 – 2031 General Planning Consultant Services / Selection Committee</u>

Mr. Gurram introduced the item and explained that the MPO received four proposals from qualified firms. He noted that the selection committee would meet on June 3, 2026 to review and rank the firms and determine next steps. Because only four firms submitted proposals, he stated that it may be reasonable after evaluation and ranking to enter contract negotiations with all four rather than limiting the selection to three.

Commissioner Doherty asked for clarification that the purpose of the RFP is to establish a pre-qualified pool of consultants from which the MPO can issue future work orders. Mr. Gurram confirmed this, reiterating that consultants will not receive payment until they are assigned a specific work order and the MPO Board approves that work.

This item was informational. It will return to the MPO Board on August 3, 2026 for approval.

17. <u>Public Comments</u>

No public comments were received.

18. <u>Staff Comments</u>

Eve Sweeting provided an update on the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Act and how this may affect funding opportunities for the County and MPO. She stated that because the legislation was introduced the night before this meeting, she would need more time to provide am in depth report. However, she noted that the proposed legislation includes changes to funding structures as well as an electric vehicle annual fee to make up for the loss in gas tax revenue from these vehicles.

Mr. Gurram presented the staff report, highlighting various tasks MPO staff has completed since the March 30, 2026 MPO Board meeting. Ms. Sweeting presented a state legislation update as well.

19. <u>Member Comments</u>

Commissioner Doherty commented on the need for looking into the intersection of US 41 and Midway Blvd. He noted that there are conflicts between cars turning right onto US 41 from Midway Blvd and cars making U-turns from US 41 southbound to US 41 northbound. Other members of the board agreed with the comments of the conflict and agreed it is something that must be looked into for means to address.

Commissioner Thornberry provided thanks to other board members and those in attendance.

Commissioner Tiseo noted the productivity that came out of the joint regional meeting with Heartland Regional TPO (HRTPO) and expressed his interest in continuing discussions.

Vice Mayor Polk commented on the growth at the Airport, noting that she can see the growth occurring from her office and noted that the growth at the airport is correlated to the growth in the area as a whole.

Commissioner Constance thanked everyone for attending and also noted the importance of continuing conversations with HRTPO as a regional partner.

20. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **3:57 p.m.**
The next MPO Board Meeting will be a Regular Meeting on **Monday, August 3, 2026, at 2:00 p.m**.