

# BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN COORDINATING COMMITTEE



10:00 a.m., Tuesday, December 20, 2016  
Fort Myers Regional Library, Room A  
1651 Lee Street, Fort Myers, FL 33901  
239-244-2220

## Meeting Summary

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The meeting of the Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinating Committee (BPCC) was held on Tuesday, December 20, 2016 beginning at 10:00 a.m. in Room A of the Fort Myers Regional Library, 1651 Lee Street, Fort Myers.

Those in attendance included:

### From the BPCC

Andy Getch	Lee County Department of Community Development
Carl Karakos	City of Fort Myers
Dan Moser	Injury Prevention Coalition
Dave Wheaton	Member-At-Large
David Wagley	Lee County Department of Community Development
Dawn Huff	Lee County School District
Diane Holm	Injury Prevention Coalition
Doug Saxton	Village of Estero
Isobel Hitchcock	Member-At-Large
Jennifer Hagen	Member-At-Large
John Karcher	CAC Member
Lee Waller	Lee County Parks and Recreation
Levi McCollum	LeeTran
Lt. Petracca	Lee County Sheriff's Office
Mark Tesoro	Lee Health Trauma Unit
Megan Will	Town of Fort Myers Beach
Randy Krise	CAC Member
Roger Lloyd	Lee County School District
Sean Gibbons	City of Bonita Springs
Simone Behr	Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau
Syndi Bultman	Lee Health Trauma Unit
Tina Sujana	Member-At-Large

Others in attendance included Ron Gogoi, Brian Raimondo, and Johnny Limbaugh with the Lee County MPO; D'Juan Harris with FDOT; Nicole Monahan with the City of Fort Myers; Chelsea O'Riley from the Town of Fort Myers Beach; Sarah Larsen with Lee County Community Development; Ned Baier with Jacobs Engineering; Ann Pierce; Bill Garrison; Sammy Akkoush; Oscar Rattenborg; Diana Giraldo; Steve Fredricksen; Rick Ritz; Ron Schuyler; Tanya Sheffield; Patrick Kroll; Patricia Russell; Mary-Lisa Graham; Kathy Lavalla; Terri Day; Rose Garcia; Mike Meeks; Jim Keohane; Soloane Jackson; and Laura Ruane with the News Press.

### **Call to Order and Roll Call of BPCC Meeting**

Chairperson Moser called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Quorum was met. The members and others in attendance introduced themselves.

## **Agenda Item #1 - Approval of the November 22, 2016 BPCC/BPAC Joint Meeting Minutes**

**The motion to approve the minutes was made by Randy Krise and seconded by Isobel Hitchcock. There were no objections. Motion approved unanimously.**

Chairperson Moser called out that the 2017 meeting schedule did not include Joint meeting dates with Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO. Mr. Gogoi stated they will be added.

### **New Business**

Chairperson Moser announced the proposed trail along the Winkler Canal will be discussed after the new business items.

## **Agenda Item #2 - Discussion of a potential SRTS project on Moreno Avenue**

Ms. Huff with the Lee County School District reported on a proposed Safe Routes to School (SRTS) project for discussion and input by the Committee. The sidewalk proposed on the north side of Moreno Avenue from Broadway to Fowler Avenue will benefit Fort Myers Middle Academy.

A question was asked if the sidewalk gap on Hanson Street between US 41 and just east of Broadway will be addressed. Mr. Gogoi stated there was already a project there that he believes goes from US 41 to Fowler Avenue.

Another question was raised as to whether they had spoken with the City and County about the Moreno project. Ms. Huff stated they had.

## **Agenda Item #3 - Discussion of a Proposed Southwest Coast Connector Loop in Lee County**

Mr. Gogoi reported on the upcoming Gulf Coast Regional Trails Summit on January 23, 2016. The meeting will include discussion on name branding of the Southwest Coastal Connector and is sponsored in part by Lee Health and the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation. The effort is being led by TBARTA with its six member MPOs including Hernando, Pasco, Hillsborough, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota-Manatee. With respect to the Connector, the TBARTA coalition also includes Lee, Charlotte, and Collier county MPOs. Each of these MPOs will make a presentation. The Lee County MPO presentation at the Summit will include a couple of ideas discussed between staff and the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation (FGTF). At the end of the Summit, the coalition is expected to back up the ideas with a resolution.

The purpose of this agenda item was to vet ideas and proposals discussed by Lee County MPO staff and FGTF before they are presented at the Summit. One of the proposals is to add a coastal loop to the Southwest Coast Connector in Lee County that would run along Gladiolus Drive, Summerlin Road, San Carlos Boulevard, Estero Boulevard, and Hickory Boulevard. While the original alignment along the Seminole Gulf Railroad (SGL) will continue to remain the primary spine for the Southwest Coast Connector, the loop will provide an alternate route that is a scenic alternative while the project development issues are addressed along the SGL right of way. The loop will expand the SUN Trail network in Lee County providing us with additional opportunities for SUN Trail funds, and will also facilitate the promotion of tourism along the scenic coastal bicycle route. This proposal is supported by both the Town of Fort Myers Beach and the City of Bonita Springs. A second proposal includes a Fort Myers downtown connection to the Southwest Coast Connector. A third proposal including the SR 31/SR 78/Babcock/Webb connection was already vetted at the joint BPCC/BPAC meeting in November.

There was a discussion on the proposed pedestrian access on the Caloosahatchee Bridge as part of the Downtown Fort Myers Connection.

There was a question if there was money set aside for doing a feasibility study for Proposal Two. Mr. Gogoi said there is not but they would be looking only into availability of any discretionary grant for undertaking the study. Ms. Pierce stated that Fowler Street complete street improvements needed to be addressed since it seemed to be the weak link in any downtown connection.

A comment was made about the City wanting to bring people downtown and how this connection would provide a way to get there. Currently the downtown is more of a pedestrian friendly area and is less suited for bicyclists. This proposal would be a way to get cyclists into downtown without using the main streets. This proposal would also connect North Fort Myers with downtown.

A concern was raised by Mr. Saxton that the Village of Estero and the City of Bonita Springs was being left out from the two proposals. Mr. Gogoi reiterated that the proposed trail on the Seminole Gulf Railroad south of Alico Road will continue to remain the primary spine and the top priority. He stated there is a money factor with regard to purchasing the right of way. Buying the right of way is supported by FDOT but they are not willing to purchase it using only state funds. They would also like to see local and private funds. He called out the recent coordination meetings involving MPO staff, Village and County officials regarding the railroad as examples of ongoing efforts for plans going forward on a trail in the right of way.

It is likely that only the first and second proposal will be presented at the Summit. Mr. Gogoi asked the committee if the first two proposals seemed reasonable and if the BPCC would support them.

**There was a motion made by Isobel Hitchcock to support all three proposals for presentation at the Summit. It was seconded by Tina Sujana. There were no objections and the motion was approved unanimously.**

Mr. Gogoi also asked the committee to choose their top three from among the seven suggested trail names so that staff can bring them for branding discussion at the Summit. The committee picked the Pirate Pathway Trail and the Calusa Coast Corridor, and coined a new one called Calusa Coastal Greenway.

**The motion to approve the suggested names was made by Randy Krise and seconded by Megan Will. The motion was approved unanimously.**

#### **Agenda Item #4 - Medical Cost of Traffic Crashes**

Syndi Bultman with the Lee County Health System's Lee Memorial Hospital Trauma Center presented the results of an analysis done on traffic crashes in Collier, Lee and Charlotte Counties with assistance from Brian Raimondo with the Lee County MPO staff.

Ms. Bultman reported that there were over 1 million people that died in crashes over the last 25 years. There is a need to reduce the occurrence of crashes. The medical related dollar costs associated with crashes is very high. In 2013 it was \$44 billion. Florida was the number one state in 2015 with respect to pedestrian fatalities. In 2015, Lee County recorded 627 trauma alerts. As of Saturday, December 17, 2016, Lee County had 106 confirmed deaths on the roadways. Ms. Bultman presented numerous other statistics related to crashes. She stated the best way to save money related to crashes is prevention. Some of the preventative strategies used are law enforcement, legislative measures, education, and complete streets policies.

## Old Business

### Walk on Agenda Item – Winkler Canal Pathway Proposal

Dan Moser gave a brief history of the proposed project. He stated the project was first examined when the TIGER grant was awarded as a potential way to link McGregor with US 41. The property is owned by the City of Fort Myers and comes straight across from Winkler Avenue. As a side note, Mr. Moser mentioned the golf course is one of the barriers from getting from the north neighborhoods to the south neighborhoods. There is a fairly large piece of property along the Golf Course that is a buffer area and could be used as a north/south trail. It already has a mulch path that is currently used by golfers and employees. Mr. Moser suggested that the buffer path be used for cyclists so they don't have to bike on the sidewalk on the side of US 41.

Mr. Gogoi then presented a few quick slides on the proposed project.

- *The idea about a pathway along the Winkler Canal from west of 41 to McGregor first took shape around the 2008 – 2009 time frame. A scenic pathway running alongside the canal connecting McGregor to 41 and that offered safe and comfortable walking and cycling environment appealed to everyone.*
- *It was seen as providing a much needed connection between Winkler Avenue and Jefferson Avenue bike lanes by way of Kelly Street, and enhancing bicycle pedestrian accessibility to the neighborhoods along the Canal and along McGregor where it terminates.*
- *There were discussions at various Lee MPO BPCC meetings, as well as separate discussions between MPO and Fort Myers Engineering staff before it was decided that a feasibility study application for federal funds should be submitted by the City of Fort Myers. A feasibility study would determine who owns the rights of way along the canal, and whether it would be viable to pursue building a pathway. We knew parts of the right of way were owned by the City, and parts by the state.*
- *The project is identified in the 'Pathway Component' of the Collier-Lee Bi-County Regional Transportation Network. It is also included in the Lee MPO's 2040 Bike Ped Element.*
- *The project was first submitted for regional transportation enhancement funds in 2011, but it was only in 2013 that it was funded and included in FDOT's Work Program. \$150,000 in MPO allocated TA funds are programmed in FY 2015/16.*

Mr. Moser then asked if any of the staff of the City of Fort Myers would like to comment on the project. Ms. Monahan stated she had given a prior presentation at a meeting in Council Chambers that was basically the same as the presentation Mr. Gogoi just gave to the BPCC. The Council meeting included invited residents at the far west ends of the corridor study of the identified area including but not limited to the developments of McGregor Reserve and Mission Monterrey. The City of Fort Myers Manager, Saeed Kazemi, attended the aforementioned meeting as well and committed to looking at alternative alignments between US 41 and McGregor. Ms. Monahan did mention that there is one sentence in the scope of services through FDOT agreement that talks about looking at alternative alignments taking into account security and backyard privacy. The City has spoken with a consultant, High Spans Engineering, to develop scope and fees and get them under contract. High Spans is a local firm in Fort Myers. Ms. Monahan stated that after the first of the year she expects to be getting underway with public meetings and moving through the process of the feasibility study.

A request was made by Ann Pierce to show the study area map again. Ms. Pierce then made a comment that the area did not go up to the golf course. She then asked how far the feasibility study would be extended to examine alternative routes. Ms. Monahan responded that she had spoken with the consultant that morning and US 41 to McGregor from Colonial up to the golf course will be the area included in the scope of work to determine feasible pathways. Ms. Pierce then offered some information about formal bicycle and walking audits that had been conducted by various groups that she and others in attendance at the meeting belong to. The groups then produced reports from those audits. Ms. Pierce then stated she would like to be part of this study and would like as many public participants as possible also engaged in this study. Ms. Pierce suggested she could organize some bicycle and walking audits from McGregor across to US 41 to make the connections that need to be made and then those reports

can be entered into public record as part of the study. Ms. Pierce then asked anyone at the meeting that would be interested in participating to let her know.

Mr. Moser added that he usually conducts the bicycle audits and Ann Pierce is generally involved with the walking audits. They did the entire corridor along the length of US 41 from the Edison Mall to downtown over a multi-day period with a consultant and formulated some good recommendations. Mr. Moser then suggested Hill as an alternative to consider and tie in that north/south with an east/west.

Mike Meeks asked if he could put a slide up and talk for a few minutes. He stated that he would like to participate in this study as well. There were several other comments made while Mr. Meeks prepared his slide. One comment was made that the image map was not accurate and so much has changed. Another comment was made that the pathway would be about three feet from some resident's pool cages and would be a privacy and security issue for those twenty-four residents. The commenter went further to say that those residents are talking litigation and going before the City of Fort Myers. She continued that it is not scenic back there and the easement cleanout ditch is not pretty and it is a safety factor. She went on to state that those residents will get very vocal, very soon because they are all for a bike path just not in their back yard.

Mr. Meeks continued with his presentation stating that he is a resident of the Hamlet which is a community in close proximity to the study area. He then said he is pleased with the project but would like to have an active role in the project. He recognizes the importance of a connection from US 41 to McGregor and a north/south connection as well. Mr. Meeks is hoping that the alternatives looked at will be economically feasible and ones that some prior work has already been completed on. He showed a slide of the golf course, east/west corridor, that stretches from Carrell to McGregor. The property is owned by the City and includes recreational assets that are underserved like the tennis/volleyball/swimming areas and restroom facilities. This area would make a great path for bicyclists and pedestrians and would enhance utilization of these assets. In addition, the north/south connection would connect neighborhoods and provide additional room to pass the golf course. He stated this path would provide ease of access to EMS and police. It is also close to public transit. He added that there would be no private property to purchase and no potential reduction in property value. It could also have future connection to Edison Mall through Carrell and other connectivity to existing pathways. Mr. Meeks referred to this as the Country Club Cross Path. Mr. Meeks went on to discuss what he felt were the disadvantages of the Winkler Canal Path. He felt it wouldn't provide ease of access for EMS or police for up to 2900 feet along the canal. He added that it crosses 83 private properties, with 79 of those being residential and this could add up to costly land and attorney fees. These objections could also slow down the project. The Winkler Canal path does not address the issue of crossing the golf course. It does not have existing lighting or amenities and no access to public transit via a LeeTran bus stop on either end. He concluded by saying he would like the Country Club Cross Path to be considered because he feels it is the most cost effective.

A comment from a member of the attending public followed that building a pathway enhances the community by becoming a common meeting ground. A resident of McGregor Reserve asked if the person who made the comment would be willing to give up sixty feet of their yard. They responded that it isn't their sixty feet as it is an easement and the City has the right to it. The resident of McGregor Reserve responded that it is privately owned property with an easement. He further commented that he paid \$700,000 for his house and he wouldn't have purchased it if he was told that the property behind his house was anything but a maintenance easement. Mr. Moser asked him how long ago he purchased the house. The resident said it was a year ago. Mr. Moser stated that the realtor should be investigated because that information should have been disclosed since this project has been on the books for quite some time. Mr. Moser then stated it probably isn't worth fighting for the canal path due in part to the maintenance. He said there seem to be some better options like the golf course path Mr. Meeks discussed that seemed to have more advantages. He recommended that the McGregor Reserve resident not hire an attorney at this point and work through the process. Mr. Moser also recommended that anyone who purchased there should take their realtor to task. A comment was made that this also affects Carlton Estates and those lots can't be sold due to this. Mr. Moser stated that someone didn't

due their due diligence on this before they purchased and it is the realtor's responsibility. Mr. Moser stated that if the bulk of the data is examined on this it is the opposite of what the NIMBY groups say, it actually increases the value of the homes and the crime is not an issue.

A question was posed as to if the east/west trail is just another trail that goes nowhere and how would a rider get from Winkler to there. A response was made that the path would go through Broadway and open up economic activity in that area. Mr. Moser said it definitely isn't the most direct route and stated Kelly could also be used. Mr. Moser stated that is what wayfinding is for and the City could expand upon and add more signs for that since there aren't very many left. He went on to say that the wayfinding plan in the south could be extended to the City. Ann Pierce suggested they do an audit. She also indicated to Ms. Monahan that the scope of work needed to include addressing the alternative routes and how one would get from US 41 to the eastern connectors. Ms. Pierce said she liked the idea of the golf course pathway, especially since there is a bike shop right at the end of it that would serve people well. She felt this was asking a lot of the City of Fort Myers and didn't know if they would be willing or able to come through with this project. Ms. Pierce reminded everyone of the lobbying done for the sidewalk along McGregor on the golf course and how they asked the City to grade another five feet so the path could be ten feet wide. She said they didn't ask the City to pave it and told the City they would get the grant money to pave it. She went on to say the City did not grade the additional five feet instead they put turns, drop offs, palm trees, and other impediments in that area and wouldn't give up that small portion of land right on the edge of the golf course. She thinks that because of the reluctance of the City to give up this land along McGregor, the City might not be favorable to the project along the golf course at Hill. Ms. Pierce said that if the City is willing to be a full, active partner in this then we should go for the golf course path.

Mr. Gogoi stated that this is a feasibility study and there is only \$150,000 for it. There is a lot of work involved especially if the study area is expanded. He expressed his doubts that all of that could be accomplished with the allotted funds. He also voiced concern that if the scope of the project is changed, FDOT will need to be convinced to invest. When a particular project is being planned the hope is not to put it on a shelf. The hope is to move forward and actually build the project. Mr. Gogoi is not sure the study can be completed with \$150,000 and whether City staff is confident they could do this project within that budget. Ms. Monahan stated the City would need to consult FDOT and didn't want to commit to anything that would jeopardize the funding. D'Juan Harris with the FDOT said that this is a LAP project and the funding has already been agreed upon. Mr. Gogoi said the MPO would be okay with expanding the scope but it would be up to the City to come up with additional funding. Ms. Monahan said the City is committed to looking at routes down to the golf course but what was presented across the golf course and to the north side will need to be discussed and see if it is something that can be accommodated in the study.

#### **Agenda Item #5 - TIGER and Other MPO Project Updates/Developments**

Mr. Limbaugh provided an update on the ongoing TIGER Grant project. Phase I of the project is substantially complete. The project came in under the grant amount so they were able to do a Phase II which is adding in the Wayfinding signage. FDOT is willing to accept the two-inch lettering that is on the signs. The counts are being finalized based on the last meeting with the Wayfinding group and they are working on getting the prices from the contractor. The next step is going to each of the jurisdictions to get a resolution of support and maintenance for the signs as required by FDOT. They are doing a change order to add the Wayfinding and gain extra time. Mr. Limbaugh said It was a great success working with the partners in the local jurisdictions. Mr. Moser said he appreciated the involvement of all the stakeholders on this effort.

#### **Agenda Item #6 - Local Government Reports on Bicycle Pedestrian Related Projects**

There were no local government reports.

### **Agenda Item #7 - LeeTran Report**

LeeTran reported they had 261,000 passenger trips in November. That is a 3% decrease from last year. They started new Routes 500 and 505.

### **Agenda Item #8 - FDOT Report**

FDOT had nothing to report.

### **Agenda Item #9 - Public and Member Comments on Items not on the Agenda**

There was a question about the JYLP Trail to downtown and if it was in the plan. Mr. Moser said it was with Fowler at least to Hanson.

### **Agenda Item # 10 – Announcements**

Mr. Gogoi said there is currently a PD & E study under way for the Abel Canal pathway. The kick off meeting was last Thursday in Lehigh Acres. The proposed trail will connect Harns Marsh to Lehigh Admiral Trailhead by Joel Boulevard.

### **Agenda Item # 11 - Information and Distribution Items**

All information and distribution items were attached to the meeting packet.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:47 a.m.