



JOINT MEETING OF THE CHARLOTTE COUNTY-PUNTA GORDA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION BOARD AND LEE COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION BOARD

**Burnt Store Presbyterian Church
11330 Burnt Store Rd, Punta Gorda, Florida 33955
November 18, 2016**

CHARLOTTE-PUNTA GORDA MPO and LEE MPO MEETING MINUTES – 10:30AM

Charlotte-Punta Gorda MPO Members Present:

Commissioner Christopher Constance, Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Board Chair
Commissioner Ken Doherty, Charlotte County Commissioner
Commissioner James Herston, Charlotte County Airport Authority
Councilmember Nancy Prafke, City of Punta Gorda Council

Lee County Members Present:

Commissioner Brian Hamman, Lee County Commissioner, MPO Board Chair
Councilmember Johnny Streets, Jr, City of Fort Myers Council
Councilmember Mike Flanders, City of Fort Myers Council
Councilmember John Carioscia, City of Cape Coral Council
Councilmember Rick Williams, City of Cape Coral Council
Councilmember Jessica Cosden, City of Cape Coral Council
Councilmember Jim Burch, City of Cape Coral Council
Councilmember Tracey Gore, Town of Fort Myers Beach Council
Vice-Mayor Mick Denham, City of Sanibel
Vice-Mayor Peter O'Flinn, City of Bonita Springs
Council Member Fred Forbes, City of Bonita Springs Council
Mayor Nick Batos, Village of Estero

Others Present:

Bob Herrington, Gary Harrell, Lakshmi N. Gurram and Bekie Leslie with Charlotte-Punta Gorda MPO; Don Scott, Ron Gogoi, Johnny Limbaugh, and Calandra Barraco with Lee County MPO; D'Juan Harris and Bessie Reina with FDOT; Derek Rooney with Gray Robinson; Steve Fabian and John Burrage with Charlotte County

CAC; Vince Zaliauskas with Highspans Engineering Inc.; Tina Matte with Gravina, Smith, Matte, and Arnold; Phil Flood and Steve Sentes with South Florida Water Management District; Venkat Vattikuti with Charlotte County Public Works; Gary Nelson with Kitson and Partners; Emily Lewis and Cody Vaughan-Birch with Charlotte County; Cason Pope and John LaCoste with Florida Fish and Wildlife.

Joint Agenda Item #1 - Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 10:45 p.m. by Lee County Commissioner Hamman, Chair of the Lee County MPO Board. He introduced Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Board Chair, Commissioner Constance. Lee County roll call was taken. A quorum was present. Charlotte County roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

Joint Agenda Item #2 - Chairs' Comments

Lee County Commissioner Hamman noted that some Board members had prior commitments and needed to leave by 11:15 a.m.

Both Chairs agreed that cooperation and collaboration between the Counties was great.

Joint Agenda Item #3 - Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments, at this time, on items on the agenda. Public comment was closed.

Joint Agenda Item #4 - Approval of Agenda

The motion to approve the agenda was made by Charlotte County Commissioner Doherty and seconded by Cape Coral Councilmember Burch. There was no discussion. There were no objections. The motion carried unanimously.

Joint Agenda Item #5 - Approval of the Joint Regional Network and TRIP Priority Resolutions

Mr. Don Scott presented the regional roadway network map, Attachment A to the agenda packet, for the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO and the Lee County MPO. It has been developed to allow the local agencies that receive TRIP funding to enter into a TRIP funding agreement for projects on this network. The recently updated TRIP agreement now requires a resolution designating the regional network be attached to the TRIP agreements between the local agency and the FDOT. The regional roadway network map for Lee and Charlotte is consistent with the regional network that the Lee MPO shares with the Collier MPO and that the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO shares with the Sarasota/Manatee MPO. The purpose of this agenda item was to approve a joint resolution, Attachment B in the agenda packet, designating the roadway network to be used with the Burnt Store Road Tropicana Parkway to Diplomat Parkway TRIP funding agreement that needs to be finalized this year. In addition, as part of this process the Joint Lee County and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Board was asked to approve the attached resolution, Attachment C in the agenda packet, for the previously adopted TRIP priorities, Attachment D in the agenda packet, that included this Burnt Store Road segment that is receiving TRIP funds.

Commissioner Hamman opened the floor for questions.

Councilmember Burch stated that this was a reaffirmation of the priority for Burnt Store Road from Charlotte County into Cape Coral.

Mr. Scott stated it has been a number one priority at the Joint meetings but as we move forward we keep all the old projects on until they get funded and the agreements are done.

Councilmember Prafke asked if the spreadsheet was current and Mr. Herrington stated that is the description recognized by FDOT from Scham Road.

Commissioner Doherty asked if it is the intention to take Burnt Store Road from US 41 up to US 17 as a proposed regional road. Mr. Herrington responded that it is proposed for the future and should be on the map.

Commissioner Herston proposed a slight error in the 05 Resolution document since it refers to the Joint Regional Network map dated November 18, 2016 and the map is actually dated November 8, 2016. Commissioner Hamman stated that when a motion is made to approve it will be with the amendment as suggested by Commissioner Herston.

A motion to approve the Joint Regional Network and Trip Priority Resolutions was made by Commissioner Herston and seconded by Councilmember Forbes. There was no further discussion. There were no objections. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Constance wanted to clarify a point of order, for the record, that we are meeting and voting jointly but the signatures from the Chairs are separate. Mr. Herrington agreed.

Joint Agenda Item #6 - Burnt Store Road Corridor Improvements Status Report

Mr. Scott introduced this item. He explained it was to provide an update on Burnt Store Road segments and discussed the Lee County segments.

Background

Burnt Store Road is a north/south two-lane undivided rural roadway that runs from Pine Island Road in Lee County to US 41 in Charlotte County. Capacity improvements to the roadway were recommended in the Burnt Store Road-Veterans Parkway-Colonial Boulevard Bi-County Corridor Study that was completed in 2005. The study called for widening Burnt Store Road Corridor from two to four lanes from Pine Island Road (SR78) to I-75 in Charlotte County. The corridor is identified as a critical evacuation route for both Charlotte County and the City of Cape Coral.

Recommendation

At the April 12, 2012 Joint Lee/Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO meeting it was agreed that the Burnt Store Road corridor is a regional road that is critical to evacuation efforts for Lee and Charlotte Counties. Both Counties have identified funds to complete significant segments of the roadway expansion in the corridor but more remains to be done. The MPO Boards agreed to make completion of the needed improvements the annual Joint TRIP project priority submitted to FDOT until completion of all segments of the roadway. FDOT should continue to work with the respective County, City, and MPO staffs to complete all segments.

Project Development - Lee County

Mr. Scott explained Lee County DOT has segmented the Burnt Store Road project into three different segments from Pine Island Road (SR 78) to Van Buren Parkway using local and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) Funding. The Lee County South segment Burnt Store Road project is from Pine Island Road (SR 78) to Tropicana Parkway. Construction is programmed in the Lee County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for FY 2019/2020. The Central Burnt Store Road project is from Tropicana Parkway to Diplomat Parkway. Construction is programmed in the Lee County TIP for FY 2017/2018. The North Burnt Store Road project from Diplomat Parkway to Van Buren Parkway is under construction that started in FY 2014/2015. The remainder of the Burnt Store Road project from Van Buren Parkway to the Charlotte County line is programmed for a Project Development & Environmental Study (PD&E) for FY 2019/2020.

Commissioner Hamman asked if there were any questions for staff.

Councilmember Burch asked if all of this was in the resolution. Mr. Scott explained they are covering the center portion that already has funding and when we do the next list we will cover everything else we need.

There was no action necessary as this was an information only item.

Mr. Scott then handed the presentation over to Mr. Herrington to discuss the Charlotte County segments.

Project Development - Charlotte County

Mr. Herrington introduced Mr. Vattikuti with Charlotte County Public Works. In Charlotte County, capacity improvements on Burnt Store Road include the widening from 2 to 4 lanes from the Lee County line to US 41 and are divided into three phases. Phases I and III, the four-laning segments of Burnt Store Road are existing from the Lee County Line to a point just north of Zemel Road (Phase III) and from just south of Notre Dame Blvd. to US 41 (Phase I). The Charlotte County Punta Gorda MPO's Cost Feasible Plan has the remaining segment from just north of Zemel Road to just south of Notre Dame Blvd. (Phase II) listed for construction in Year of Expenditure (YOE) 2021-2025. Charlotte County has programmed funding for design and Right-of-Way (ROW) purchase for this segment in the MPO's TIP and the Charlotte County Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Funding for construction is not programmed in the adopted five year CIP. They expect Phase II to begin in October 2017. Once completed, the Burnt Store section in Charlotte County will be finished. The project is expected to last 18 months.

Commissioner Hamman asked if this will be four lanes all the way to I 75. Commissioner Constance, Charlotte-Punta Gorda MPO Board Chair, responded that it is and in the future from US41 to I 75 it is programmed to be six lanes. Mr. Vattikuti stated currently Phase III is designed for six lanes. He also stated Phase II is designed for six lanes but there isn't room in Phase I due to right of way constraints. In the future they may be looking at different east/west connector routes.

Commissioner Hamman asked when the road in front of the Lee/Charlotte Burnt Store Marina community could be expected to be widened. Mr. Scott responded that we are going through the PD&E phase to make it eligible for Federal money and that takes a while. Commissioner Hamman questioned how long "a while" would be. Mr. Scott stated the PD&E average in District 1 is five years. The PD&E phase will begin in FY 2019. Commissioner Hamman asked if Mr. Scott had a recommendation for a pathway to faster construction. Mr. Scott responded that we should keep up the phases as priorities. Commissioner Constance asked if there was any way to carve out a couple hundred yards at the top to make the lives of the residents easier and safer when they are coming out heading North. He also suggested to speak with the residents to see what they want. Mr. Vattikuti responded that it could probably happen if the project was broken down into smaller phases.

Commissioner Herston asked the number of units in Burnt Store Marina. Neither Mr. Herrington nor Mr. Vattikuti had that information.

Mr. Burch commended Charlotte County for their efforts in widening Burnt Store Road. He also commended Commissioner Hamman for his efforts to make this happen quickly. Commissioner Constance responded that the reason it happened so quickly was because all of the Commissioners in Charlotte County got together and made it a priority. He also said Charlotte would help Lee however they could. Commissioner Doherty stated Charlotte was doing something similar for Sarasota County with River Road since both counties benefit. Commissioner Hamman echoed the sentiment of coordination and cooperation. Commissioner Constance stated when it's a regional push, things begin to happen.

There were no further comments and no objections.

Joint Agenda Item #7 - Babcock Webb Trail Corridor Extension

Mr. Scott introduced the item and passed out an updated version of the map. He then handed the presentation over to Mr. Gary Nelson with Kitson and Partners.

Background

Babcock Ranch is a New Town proposed on 18,000 acres being developed in Charlotte and Lee Counties. Babcock will have tremendous opportunities for trails in the greenways and along the internal transportation corridors. In preparing their Master Plans, they are in process with regards to developing a Master Trails program

for the internal pieces of Babcock. With approximately 50 miles of proposed trails, Babcock is seeking to tie these public trail systems into the larger regional trail networks in the long-range plans for both Lee and Charlotte Counties as well as to future trail networks in the State's Babcock Ranch Preserve. They have started construction and are looking at a grand opening in early 2017.

This was not an action item and did not require a motion. Commissioner Hamman opened the floor to comments and questions.

Councilmember Prafke appreciated the map that was handed out but asked for a map to show all current Bike/Ped trailways in Charlotte and Lee County. Mr. Herrington stated all of the jurisdictions would work together and if it isn't on a map currently then they will put one together. Mr. Scott stated the Lee and Charlotte Bike/Ped groups are meeting soon to discuss some of these items. Mr. Herrington added this is another effort of regional coordination.

Councilmember Burch echoed what Councilmember Prafke said and asked that these plans be consolidated. He added that cost and time estimates should be considered and these items rated accordingly. Mr. Herrington restated that both staffs would work together.

Commissioner Constance commented that there are plans for a Tucker's Grade interchange at I 75 to connect people with Babcock Ranch. He stated this would be an excellent pipeline for getting a water supply interconnect from Charlotte to also connect with Southwest Florida WMD and South Florida WMD. This would create a redundancy of water supply to surrounding areas. He concluded that we should plan ahead.

Joint Agenda Item #8 - Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods

Mr. Steve Sentes with the Everglades Policy and Coordination Division of the South Florida Water Management, SFWMD, presented this item on the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative.

The Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative is a joint effort of numerous stakeholders, including the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, SFWMD, Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Lee County, Charlotte County, and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One. The Charlotte Flatwoods area has two large conservation areas, including the Cecil Webb Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and the Yucca Pens Unit. The 65,800-acre Cecil Webb WMA is the headwaters of the Charlotte Flatwoods area, which historically drained southwest towards Matlacha Pass via the 20,000-acre Yucca Pens Unit. Surface water flow pathways from Cecil Webb WMA to the Yucca Pens Unit have been altered by farms, mining, highways, and residential lands on both sides of I-75. Many areas have berms along their perimeters that have blocked historic flow-ways to Yucca Pens. As a result, flows from Cecil Webb WMA have been impounded and diverted, and wet season stages and hydroperiods in the southwest portions of the Cecil Webb WMA are now greater than are typical for pine flatwoods, mesic oak hammocks, and shallow marshes. Due to upstream flow constrictions and downstream drainage over decades, the Yucca Pens Unit west of I-75 experiences lower water depths and shorter hydroperiods

A key component of this overall effort, that started eleven years ago, is to restore more natural flow patterns in the southwestern portion of Cecil Webb WMA. The Bond farm is located in the historical flow-way for this portion of Cecil Webb, and the configuration of perimeter berms has blocked the flow-way. FDEP and FDOT have purchased this farm that will become part of the Cecil Webb WMA. The farm will be modified to restore a more natural flow-way, and it will also be converted to a water storage facility that can be used as a source of water to restore more natural hydroperiods of wetlands in the Yucca Pens Unit.

Staff from SWFWMD and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One will update the MPOs on the current status of the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative. Specifically, the ongoing planning activities and the possibility of incorporating future road improvements associated with Burnt Store, Zemel, and Oil Well roads into the activities under development.

Commissioner Constance commended Mr. Sentes for his hard work. Mr. Sentes thanked Commissioner Constance and also thanked the Counties for working together towards this initiative.

Commissioner Doherty asked about the other impediments, like the railroad or US 41, that may cause sheet flow issues. Mr. Sentes responded that the model developed over the last eleven years helps them because they can plug in scenarios and plan accordingly.

Councilmember Burch commended the FDEP.

Mr. Sentes stated that most of the lands needed are in acquisition.

Councilmember Burch urged Mr. Sentes to make sure the lands south of this project, specifically Cape Coral, are considered and not flooded as an unintended consequence.

Commissioner Herston asked what storm was simulated. Mr. Sentes replied it was a hundred-year storm. Commissioner Herston also asked about Lake Okeechobee and Mr. Sentes responded that is a different program.

Joint Agenda Item #9 - SUN Trail

Mr. Herrington introduced the item. He then handed the presentation over to Mr. Scott. Commissioner Constance made a correction to the Harborwalk Phase which should read 1B instead of 18.

Background:

Two proposed trail segments in Charlotte County and one in Lee County received Shared Use Non-Motorized (SUN) Trail Program funds during the 2016 funding cycle. To qualify for SUN Trail funds, projects must be along trails identified in FDOT's SUN Trail Network. There is \$25 million available annually under this program with two-thirds of the funds available for projects on the Coast to Coast Trail and the St. Johns River-To-Sea Loop (the top two regional trail corridors in the state), and one-third of the funds available for individual trail projects. Attachment A to the agenda packet included the map of SUN Trail Network and individual trail projects.

The two (2) trail projects in Charlotte County that were awarded SUN Trail funds are as follows:

- A \$1,114,000 construction phase for the Harborwalk Phase 1B Southern Boardwalk (#35 on the Sun Trail Network Map)
- A \$215,000 design phase for the North Alligator Creek Pedestrian Bridge (#36 on the Sun Trail Network Map)

The one trail project in Lee County that was awarded SUN Trail funds is as follows:

- A \$1,778,000 design phase for a Multi-Use Trail on Van Buren Parkway from Burnt Store Road to El Dorado Parkway, El Dorado Parkway from Van Buren Parkway to Kismet Parkway and Kismet Parkway from El Dorado Parkway to Del Prado Boulevard (#37 on the Sun Trail Network Map).

Both Lee and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPOs are working to expand the SUN Trail Network in their respective counties so that more projects can qualify for SUN Trail funds in the future. The process requires the addition of new individual trails to the Office of Greenways and Trails's (OGT) Priority Trails Map which would then automatically put them on the SUN Trail network. The Office of Greenways and Trails is currently soliciting input from MPOs for updating its Priority Trails System Map and the schedule calls for approval of all changes in 2018.

Two regional trails that are being pursued for inclusion on the SUN Trail network by both our MPOs are the SR 31 Multi-Use Trail in Lee County, and the Babcock Webb Extension Trail in Charlotte County because of their common link to the Town of Babcock Ranch. Both trails will connect to the proposed multi-use trail within Babcock Ranch.

Commissioner Hamman opened the floor to questions for staff.

Mr. Herrington stated that Lee and Charlotte did very well with regards to SUN Trail funding. Mr. Scott added that phases are up front with design this fiscal year and construction is two years out. Mr. Herrington said they are trying to work with FDOT to do this with all programs.

Councilmember Prafke asked if it was part of the money toward the pedestrian bridge. Mr. Herrington stated it was part of the money but he wasn't sure if it was all of it. He was then informed that it is all of it. Councilmember Prafke was glad to hear the bridge was fully funded. She stated the residents have been asking as this is a dangerous Bike/Ped situation.

There were no objections and no further comments.

Joint Agenda Item #10 - Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

Ms. Bessie Reina, FDOT, announced that the new District 1 Secretary is L. K. Nandam.

Commissioner Hamman requested that Ms. Reina extend a welcome to Mr. Nandam from the MPO.

There were no further comments.

Joint Agenda Item #11 - Next Meeting Date

Mr. Herrington stated we need to show a strong force for regional planning. He requested an annual Lee/Charlotte MPO regular meeting in November. Commissioner Hamman asked Mr. Scott if that proposal would work. Mr. Scott said that there isn't usually a work program in November so sometimes the meeting has been cancelled. He also brought up the Collier meeting is in October. Mr. Herrington said they are meeting with Sarasota/Manatee in January. Commissioner Constance felt this was not a negative since all regional priorities could be aligned at one time. Councilmember Flanders stated he has been on the MPO Board for a long time and he feels meeting in November would work. Commissioner Hamman asked if a motion was in order. Mr. Herrington stated the direction would be for staff to look at which dates work best in November and finalize.

Commissioner Doherty made the motion. It was seconded by Mayor Batos. There was no further discussion and the motion carried without objections.

Joint Agenda Item #12 - Staff Comments

Mr. Herrington appreciated everyone working together and it is feather in our cap with regards to regional coordination.

Joint Agenda Item #13 - Member Comments

On that point, Commissioner Doherty asked where we sit with USDOT on that particular problem.

Mr. Herrington stated the comment period did finally close and he hasn't heard anything. He read in the paper that Senate/Congress asked that no new regulations be enacted for the next two months. He continued that none of the 27 MPOs in the state of Florida are in support of consolidation.

Commissioner Constance said annual regional meetings are important and we must show a strong front against the constant effort from those above to take authority and local control. He will continue the effort to make sure all voices are heard.

Mayor Batos suggested sending letters to new administration. Commissioner Hamman asked staff for guidance on that question. Mr. Scott said he is fine with that. Commissioner Constance suggested sending those letters, individually and jointly, in January when there is a new Secretary of the USDOT.

Councilmember Burch stated the joint meeting demonstrates regional coordination to those who would like to realign the MPOs.

Councilmember Forbes suggested Congress should be info-copied on the letters.

Commissioner Herston commented that the new MPOAC director is on top of the subject of consolidation. He also complimented Lee MPO on their progress on Burnt Store Road.

Councilmember Forbes brought up an earlier point regarding moving up the scheduled widening of a smaller section of Burnt Store Road on the north end of the Burnt Store Marina community and stated it should be a no-brainer for FDOT.

Commissioner Hamman asked staff and FDOT on the best way to give feedback on adding the smaller project. Ms. Reina sated she would bring the comments to the appropriate offices and she asked for time to explore options. She also stated a letter would be helpful to summarize the requests formally.

Commissioner Constance suggested finding out what the residents of Burnt Store Marina are interested in. He also said it might be possible for Lee County to handle internally and the result would be happy, safe people. Commissioner Hamman clarified that before writing any letters, the residents of the community should be consulted.

Joint Agenda Item #14 - Public Comments

There was one public comment card turned in for this agenda item. Mr. Cason Pope, FWC, spoke on Agenda Item #8 and went on record thanking Mr. Sentes and stating FWC supports SFWMD efforts to restore the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods.

There were no further public comments and public comments were closed.

Joint Agenda Item #15 - Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned with no objections at 11:43 p.m. by Commissioner Brian Hamman.

All interested parties are invited to appear and be heard on each of the above items. Written comments filed with the MPO will be considered. Copies of all of the above proposed documents are available by calling the Lee MPO Office at 239-244-2220 or the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Office at 941-883-3535.

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