



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

February 22, 2019

9:30 a.m.

Lee County Administration East Building
2201 Second Street, Room 118
Fort Myers, FL 33901
239-244-2220

LEE COUNTY MPO/CHARLOTTE COUNTY-PUNTA GORDA MPO JOINT MEETING MINUTES

Agenda Item #1 – Call to Order/Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance

The Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization Joint Meeting with the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization was called to order by Chair Mick Denham at 9:30 a.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Don Scott called the roll for the Lee County MPO Board. A quorum was present. The Lee County MPO Board Members in attendance included Lee County Commissioners Frank Mann, Brian Hamman, John Manning, and Cecil Pendergrass; City of Fort Myers Councilmember Fred Burson; Town of Fort Myers Beach Mayor Tracey Gore; City of Sanibel Vice-Mayor/MPO Board Chair Mick Denham; City of Bonita Springs Deputy Mayor Peter O’Flinn and Councilmember Fred Forbes; and Village of Estero Mayor Jim Boesch.

Others in attendance included L. K. Nandam, Lawrence Massey, and Michael Tisch with FDOT; Dave Murphy with Lee County; Brian Barnes with Charlotte County; Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO staff Gary Harrell, Bekie Leslie, and Lakshmi Gurram; Charlotte County Legal Counsel Janette Knowlton; Joan LeBeau with the City of Punta Gorda; Lee County MPO staff Don Scott and Ron Gogoi; Robert Codie with LeeTran; Lee County IT Services; Persides Zambrano with Cape Coral; Derek Rooney and Matt Roepstorff with Gray Robinson; Karen Brunelle with Federal Highways; Gary Nelson with Kitson and Partners; Anne Hosford with Raise the Arches Inc.; Dave Urich with the Responsible Growth Management Coalition; and John Majka with Superior Sheds.

Agenda Item #2 - Chairs’ Comments/Previous Meeting Summary

Lee County MPO Chair Mick Denham asked if there were any comments on the Previous Meeting Summary. Charlotte County Commissioner/Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO Chair Chris Constance thanked the Lee County MPO Board for meeting and agreeing to hold the Joint Meeting first. Mr. Scott noted that the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO also need to call their roll.

Ms. Bekie Leslie called the roll for the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO. A quorum was present. The Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO Board Members in attendance included Charlotte County Commissioners Chris Constance, and Stephen Deutsch; Commissioner Joseph Tiseo was not present Charlotte County Airport Authority Commissioner Paul Andrews; and City of Punta Gorda Vice-Mayor Lynne Matthews.

Agenda Item #3 - Public Comments on the Agenda Items

There were no public comments on the agenda items.

Agenda Item #4 - Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Brain Hamman made the motion to approve the agenda. Mayor James Boesch seconded the motion. There were no objections, and the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #5 - Status Report on the Burnt Store Road Corridor Improvements

Lee County MPO Board Chair Mick Denham introduced this agenda item for the Status Report on the Burnt Store Road Corridor Improvements. Mr. Scott said he would begin the status report from the south end of Burnt Store Road in Lee County. He said from Pine Island to Tropicana construction is programmed for Fiscal Year 2019/2020 with scheduled completion in fall of 2023. He continued that the second section from Tropicana to Diplomat is currently under construction with completion planned for spring of 2020. He added construction of the north section from Diplomat to Van Buren was completed last year. He continued that the final section, from Van Buren to the Charlotte County line, has a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Phase scheduled to begin next fiscal year with the construction in the Cost Feasible Plan in the 2031 to 2040 time frame. He said this will be further addressed in the update of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Commissioner Hamman asked the length of the section from Van Buren to the Charlotte County line. Mr. Scott replied it is approximately six miles. Commissioner Hamman asked the project cost. Mr. Scott replied \$70 million, from the Long Range Plan. Commissioner Hamman asked how long the PD&E scheduled for next year would take. Mr. Scott replied FDOT guidelines indicate at minimum two to three years and up to four years depending on the type of PD&E that is required. Commissioner Hamman asked for options to be explored to advance the construction phase to immediately follow the PD&E. Mr. Scott said he could coordinate with the county and possibly go after TRIP for funding. Commissioner Hamman mentioned the Super Street concept along Veterans and Burnt Store and asked if it would be more cost effective to transition to a more traditional four lane in this stretch of Lee County. Charlotte County Commissioner Chris Constance said that Phases I and III that are completed follow this concept and Phase II will line up as well. Commissioner Hamman asked if there are long range plans to six lane the roadway. Mr. Gary Harrell said there is room to accommodate six lanes, but it is not in the current LRTP. Commissioner Stephen Deutsch gave a brief history of the regional model for MPO coordination that was created by the Lee County and Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPOs. Lee County MPO Board Chair Mick Denham asked if Charlotte County – Punta Gorda MPO would like to present on the Charlotte section of Burnt Store Road. Mr. Gary Harrell said that Charlotte County has divided their portion of Burnt Store Road into three phases with Phases I and III completed. He added Phase II is currently being worked on. Mr. Harrell then introduced Charlotte County Traffic Engineer Mr. Brian Barnes to further discuss Phase II. Mr. Barnes said that Phase III was completed with a large median to accommodate any future expansion to six lanes. He said that Phase II will follow that same design with the bidding process to begin soon. Commissioner Hamman suggested determining where the super street design could transition into the traditional four lane design possibly saving money and enabling the construction to be advanced. Commissioner Constance questioned the time frame for Phase II in Charlotte County. Mr. Barnes said they expect to be out to bid in spring, contract awarded in summer, and construction beginning in fall. Commissioner Constance asked if the project would take eighteen months. Mr. Barnes said it would be closer to two years. Lee County MPO Board Chair Denham asked if there were any other Board comments. There were none. He asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

Agenda Item #6 - Status Report on the Babcock Ranch Development and the SR 31 Improvements

Lee County MPO Board Chair Denham introduced this agenda item on the Status Report on the Babcock Ranch Development and the SR 31 Improvements. Mr. Scott said they would start south and work north with the report. He added that Mr. Gary Nelson with Babcock was present to discuss the middle portion they will widen from the Babcock development to SR 78. Mr. Scott then discussed the segment of SR 31 from SR 80 to SR 78 noting the PD&E is programmed for this year with bridge repairs and rehab scheduled for FY 2019/2020. Mr. Harrell then discussed the Charlotte County portion north of Babcock Ranch noting the high crash intersection at SR 31 and CR 74 will soon have a fully functional signal to replace the current flashing only signal. Mr. Harrell said the Long Range Plan for this intersection involves a roundabout with the Design beginning this summer and possible construction funding in the next FDOT Work Program update.

Commissioner Mann expressed concern for the deadliness of this intersection and advocated advancing the roundabout project. Mr. L. K. Nandam noted a concrete pavement project had been changed into the roundabout design. He added opportunities for construction funding will be looked at in the next work program cycle. He said the Design would take at least two years and any funding for construction will be beyond that. He noted that is why the interim improvement of the full functional signal is being implemented currently. Commissioner Deutsch commented on the single lane configuration with lack of shoulders and the commercial traffic along the roadway that combine to make a dangerous situation. Commissioner Constance noted the roundabout has been brought up continuously at the meetings and thanked FDOT for converting the concrete project to design for the roundabout. Commissioner Mann again noted his support for the project. Mr. Gary Nelson then reviewed the phases of the roughly five-mile section of SR 31 widening. He said the first phase is from SR 78 to CR 78 and approximately 1.53 miles. He said the next phase is from CR 78 to Cook Brown in Charlotte County. He added they are hoping to begin engineering this year with permitting in 2020 and construction in 2021 or 2022. He discussed the funding for the phases. There were no additional questions or comments.

Agenda Item #7 - Update on the SUN Trail Projects in Lee and Charlotte Counties

Mr. Ron Gogoi presented this agenda item as an update on the SUN Trail projects in Lee County. He showed a slide of the current SUN Trail map mentioning the two Lee County projects of John Yarbrough Linear Park Extension and the Kismet Parkway Trail.

Mr. Gary Harrell then presented information on the Charlotte County SUN Trail network. He said they have been successful in advancing two projects through SUN Trail. He said the first project was a pedestrian bridge on US 41, and the second project was a pedestrian underpass on US 41. He noted the next project is a feasibility study along SR 776 from Murdock Village in Charlotte County to Myakka State Forest in Sarasota County. He mentioned the recent completion of the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Regional Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan recommended a feasibility study from SUN Trail to examine possible configurations to work through the Murdock Village CRA. Mr. Harrell asked if there were any questions. Commissioner Mann noted that SUN stands for Shared Use Non-Motorized and asked what the typical segment of these trails look like. Mr. Harrell said the recommendation is twelve-foot asphalt where possible for shared use of pedestrians and cyclists. Commissioner Mann noted concern for placing cyclists on the sides of fast moving highways and advocated for separate paths off-road to minimize accidents with cyclists and cars. Commissioner Constance mentioned that design standards are requiring an additional \$800,000 to elevate the pedestrian bridge on US 41 due to possible flooding. Chair Denham asked if there were any further questions or comments. There were none.

Agenda Item #8 - Information on the I-75 Purple Heart Highway Designation Efforts

Commissioner Deutsch introduced this agenda item as he is a veteran and supports this designation. He added that he would like to see the surrounding counties of Sarasota and Lee support the designation on I-75 in their areas as well. He asked Mr. Harrell to further explain the history and process for designation. Mr. Harrell said this began in 1992 with the desire to have a Purple Heart designated trail in all 50 states, which has been accomplished. Mr. Harrell reviewed several roadways that have been designated. He said it is a legislative process to have the highways designated with one sign every hundred miles. He added it is not an MPO process but the MPOs can bring this to their counties and legislators. Mr. Harrell then showed a slide of the current designation along I-75. He said the Sarasota and Manatee County Commissioners are taking it to their Boards for action. He said the next step would be to move it along to the legislators. There was a brief discussion as to the timing of the proposal to the legislators and additional measures like recognition plaques at rest areas. Commissioner Mann suggested sending letters from the MPOs to support this. Chair Denham asked Mr. Scott if this was possible. Mr. Scott replied yes.

Councilmember Forbes made a motion to compose a resolution from the two MPO Boards in support of the effort to designate the Lee and Charlotte portions of I-75 a Purple Heart Highway, with the ultimate goal of the entire length of I-75 being designated. Commissioner Mann seconded the motion.

Commissioner Constance suggested the Lee County Commissioners bring it back to their Board to also pass a resolution as a county in addition to bringing to their legislators and delegates. Councilmember Forbes suggested each of the cities could adopt resolutions as well. Mayor Jim Boesch noted that the Village of Estero recently became a Purple Heart Village.

There were no objections, and the motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Item #9 - Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

Mr. L. K. Nandam announced that Mr. Kevin Thibault has been appointed FDOT's new Secretary by recently elected Governor Ron DeSantis.

Mr. Michael Tisch reported that the project priorities have been received from both Charlotte and Lee Counties, and FODT staff has started to evaluate those priorities.

Agenda Item #10 - Next Meeting Date

Mr. Gary Harrell said that late February works well for Charlotte County. Chair Denham asked where it would be held next year. Mr. Harrell said they will work on a location.

Agenda Item #11 - Staff Comments

There were no staff comments.

Agenda Item #12 - Member Comments

Commissioner Deutsch thanked the Lee County MPO for their hospitality.

Agenda Item #13 - Public Comments

Mr. Dave Urich with the Responsible Growth Management Coalition gave public comment on creating a way to move traffic from Tucker's Grade to Burnt Store.

Agenda Item #14 – Adjournment

Chair Denham asked Mr. Scott if there was any further business. Mr. Scott replied nothing except the Lee only meeting that will immediately follow the adjournment of the current joint meeting.

The joint meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:21 a.m.

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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