

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION BOARD

9:00 a.m., Friday, March 17, 2023
Lee County Administration East Building
2201 Second Street, Room 118
Fort Myers, FL 33901
239-244-2220



Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m. by MPO Board Vice-Chair/City of Cape Coral Mayor John Gunter. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The roll was called by MPO staff. A quorum was present. Lee County MPO Board Members in attendance included Lee County Commissioners Raymond Sandelli and Brian Hamman; City of Fort Myers Councilmembers Johnny Streets Jr., Teresa Watkins Brown, and Fred Burson (left 10:53 a.m.); City of Cape Coral Mayor John Gunter; City of Cape Coral Councilmembers Dan Sheppard, Tom Hayden (left at 10:13 a.m.), and Keith Long (left at 10:22 a.m.); Town of Fort Myers Beach Councilmember John R. King; City of Sanibel Councilmember Michael Miller; City of Bonita Springs Councilmember Chris Corrie; City of Bonita Springs Deputy Mayor Fred Forbes; Village of Estero Mayor Katy Errington; and Village of Estero Vice-Mayor Jon McLain.

Others in attendance included the following – John Kubler, Wayne Gaither, and Victoria Peters with FDOT; Lee County MPO staff Don Scott, Ron Gogoi, and Calandra Barraco; Robert Codie with LeeTran; Lee County IT staff; LCSO deputy; Laura Dodd with the City of Cape Coral; Ned Baier with Volkert; and members of the public Marsha Ellis, Patty Whitehead, Deb Orton, Emily Porter, Harvey Kulkin, Michael McCullough, Don Greenglass, Pat Taliafera, Allison Gouge, Lou Hebble, Art Bavem, Tom Rubbelke, Joe Yard, Cyndy Yard, Marion Malone, JoAnn Schoellkopf, Gail Kroeger, Ray Youmans, Henry Burden, Barry Freedman, Bert Warden, Sandy Towey, Jodi Walborn, Wendi Bazemore, Del and Shelly Lowe, Duane Beckett, Charles Thomas, Bruce and Diana Ackerman, Steve and Sue Novosad, Charles Hines, and Jennifer Bowan.

Agenda Item #1 - Public Comments on Consent Agenda Items

Vice-Chair Gunter asked if there were public comments on consent agenda items. Mr. Scott mentioned one public comment that had been emailed to staff prior to the meeting from John Majka regarding Agenda Item #2a and can be viewed at the following link: [Majka Public Comment](#) There were no additional public comments on Consent Agenda Items.

Agenda Item #2 - *Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of the January 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of the February 17, 2023 Joint Meeting Minutes
- C. Approval of the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Certification
- D. Approval of the 2022 FDOT and MPO Joint Certification Statement

Councilmember John R. King made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda Items. Commissioner Brian Hamman seconded the motion. There were no objections, and the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #3 - Public Comments will be taken on Each New Business Item

Vice-Chair Gunter noted public comments would be taken at each new business item.

New Business

Agenda Item #4 - *Presentation and Acceptance of the Bonita-Estero Rail Trail Feasibility Study

Mr. Ned Baier with Volkert provided a Power Point presentation on the Bonita-Estero Rail Trail Feasibility Study that can be accessed here: [Bonita-Estero Rail Trail](#). Vice-Chair Gunter noted he would take MPO Board comments and then public comments, adding the public speaking time limit was three minutes each. He then asked the MPO Board members if they had questions on this agenda item. Commissioner Hamman asked about a no-build alternative. Mr. Baier responded it is always an option. Commissioner Hamman then asked about considering future rail needs as the area grows. Mr. Baier responded yes, provided examples of other areas, and added the right-of-way was 130 feet that could be preserved for public use. Mr. Scott noted that Brightline proposed to make connections to other cities using toll roads, I-4, and I-75 transit envelopes in the center median. Mr. Scott also mentioned the rail with trail alternative. Commissioner Hamman asked who would fund the PD&E and design. Mr. Baier responded that funding could come through the SUN Trail program and DOT. Vice-Chair Gunter asked if there were other comments from MPO Board members. Deputy Mayor Forbes asked if Charles Hines would speak. Mr. Scott responded that Mr. Hines had submitted a public comment card. Vice-Mayor Gunter then took public comment. The public comments received via email prior to the meeting were posted to the MPO website, printed and distributed at the meeting, and can be viewed here: [Synopsis of Friends of Bonita-Estero Rail Trail \(BERT\) Public Comments](#) ; [Orton Public Comment](#) ; [Rail Only Public Comment to FDOT](#) ; [Vines and San Carlos Park Public Comments](#) ; [Novosad Public Comment](#); [Ackerman Public Comment, Planning Report, and Petitions](#). The following members of the public provided in-person public comment on the Bonita-Estero Rail Trail Feasibility Study: Kate Miller, Alexander Grant, Patty Whitehead, Deb Orton, Terry Koch, Harvey Kulkin, Michael McCullough, Joe Yard, Marsha Ellis, Steve Gunther, [Emily Porter](#), Marion Malone, Peter O'Flinn, Bruce Ackerman, [Charles Thomas](#), Tom Rubbelke, Barry Freedman, Steve Novosad, Diane Ackerman, Allison Gouge, Charles Hines, and Jennifer Bowan. **Deputy Mayor Fred Forbes made a motion to endorse and support Bonita-Estero Rail Trail (BERT), urge that BERT be funded by appropriate organizations, and accept the feasibility report. Councilmember Mike Miller seconded the motion.** Councilmember Chris Corrie made a request to move the study forward to a PD&E and mentioned the possible impacts, benefits, environmental, tourism, and cyclist safety components. Commissioner Hamman asked for clarification on the construction and amenity costs. Mr. Baier provided additional information. Commissioner Hamman asked how trails were funded in other areas. Mr. Baier provided the example of Pinellas County. Commissioner Hamman commented on traffic increases in Lee County, Capital Improvement Program, and supporting other needs in Lee County. Mr. Gogoi mentioned funding for amenities could come from a recreational trail program and right-of-way cost can be funded with Federal discretionary funding. Commissioner Hamman expressed concerns with moving forward related to Sun Trail and funding. Councilmember McLain commented on Estero funding constraints and asked Mr. Charles Hines to speak to this topic. Mr. Hines noted that negotiations could include a time frame for funding once a price has been agreed on. He provided several ways that the purchase could be funded including various taxes, impact fees, and private assistance. Councilmember McLain suggested the process should be continued to provide additional information on which to base a final decision. Commissioner Sandelli commented on the challenges of dealing with current issues as well as planning for the future, alignment, financial component, importance of rail infrastructure, and the importance of health and well-being. Mayor Errington asked about the wording of the motion made by Councilmember Forbes. MPO staff repeated the motion and asked Deputy Mayor Forbes for additional clarification. Deputy Mayor Forbes restated and further explained his motion. Commissioner Sandelli commented on providing answers to the feasibility questions before advancing. Mayor Errington asked about just voting on the study. Councilmember Corrie restated the motion explaining it would be to accept the report and move forward with the PD&E. Councilmember King commented on a clarification on support of BERT. Councilmember Corrie said it was to support the trail and amended the motion to move the study to PD&E. Vice-Chair Gunter asked if the motion

maker agrees to amend his motion. Deputy Mayor Forbes responded yes. Councilmember Miller agreed to amend his second. Mayor Errington asked for the amended motion to be restated.

Deputy Mayor Fred Forbes made the motion to accept the Bonita-Estero Rail Trail Feasibility Study and move forward with the PD&E. Councilmember Mike Miller seconded the motion.

Deputy Mayor Forbes asked if this impacts other processes. Mr. Scott replied that this cannot move forward until the cost of the property is agreed on. Vice-Chair Gunter commented on the steps in the process and referred to a roll call vote. MPO staff noted a majority of two thirds was required for the motion to pass. Vice-Chair Gunter called the vote.

There were no objections, and the motion passed unanimously.

Vice-Chair Gunter called a short recess at 11:09 a.m. The meeting was reconvened at 11:18 a.m. with Vice-Mayor Gunter, Councilmember King, Commissioner Hamman, Commissioner Sandelli, Mayor Errington, Councilmember Sheppard, Councilmember McLain, and Councilmember Miller in attendance. Mr. Scott said that Agenda Items #5 and #6 could be emailed to the MPO Board members.

Agenda Item #5 - Information on the US 41 Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons

The staff report for this agenda item was included in the agenda packet and [posted to the MPO website](#). Mr. Don Scott's Power Point presentation on the US 41 Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons that was emailed to the MPO Board members can be accessed at the following link: [US 41 Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons](#)

Agenda Item #6 - Review of the Proposed Transportation Legislation and Member Projects

The staff report for this agenda item was included in the agenda packet and [posted to the MPO website](#). Mr. Scott's Power Point presentation on the proposed transportation legislation and member projects that was emailed to the MPO Board members can be found here: [Proposed Legislation and Member Projects](#)

Other Business

Agenda Item #7 - Public Comments on Items not on the Agenda

Marsha Ellis, a member of the public, provided a public comment on items not on the agenda.

Agenda Item #8 - LeeTran/TD Report

Mr. Robert Codie with LeeTran said that LeeTran/TD had nothing to report.

Agenda Item #9 - FDOT Report

Ms. Peters with FDOT provided the FDOT report that included information on the MPO Joint Certification, the US 41/Bonita Beach Road public meeting, and the SR 865 Linda Loma public workshop.

Agenda Item #10 - Announcements

Mr. Scott announced the next MPO Board meeting would be held in May.

Agenda Item #11 - Information and Distribution Items

Mr. Scott mentioned the MPOAC Weekend Institute training, the SR 865 public meeting, and the US 41 at Bonita Beach Road public meeting and referred to the notices that were included in the Information and Distribution section of the agenda packet and [posted to the MPO website](#).

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

An audio recording of the meeting can be accessed here: [MPO Board March 17, 2023](#)

^Roll Call Vote *Action Items †May Require Action

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