

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT LEE COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION AND THE
CHARLOTTE COUNTY - PUNTA GORDA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

Held on February 21, 2020

The following members were present for the joint meeting of the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Charlotte County - Punta Gorda MPO on February 21, 2020 at the Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, 11330 Burnt Store Road, Punta Gorda, Florida.

Lee County MPO Board

Commissioner Frank Mann	Lee County Commission, District 5
Commissioner Brian Hamman	Lee County Commission, District 4
Commissioner John E. Manning	Lee County Commission, District 1
Councilmember Teresa Watkins Brown	City of Fort Myers
Councilmember Johnny Streets, Jr.	City of Fort Myers
Vice-Mayor Mick Denham	City of Sanibel
Mayor Joe Coviello	City of Cape Coral
Councilmember John Carioscia	City of Cape Coral
Councilmember Lois Welsh	City of Cape Coral
MPO Chair/Councilmember Fred Forbes	City of Bonita Springs
Councilmember Laura Carr	City of Bonita Springs
MPO Vice-Chair/Mayor William Ribble	Village of Estero

Charlotte - Punta Gorda MPO Board

MPO Chair/Commissioner Joseph Tiseo	Charlotte County Commission
MPO Vice-Chair/Commissioner Christopher Constance, M.D.	Charlotte County Commission
Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch	Charlotte County Commission
Commissioner Paul Andrews	Charlotte County Airport Authority
Vice-Mayor Lynne Matthews	City of Punta Gorda

The following members of the Lee County MPO Board were absent:

Commissioner Raymond Sandelli	Lee County Commission, District 3
Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass	Lee County Commission, District 2
Councilmember Gaile Anthony	City of Fort Myers
Councilman Bruce Butcher	Town of Fort Myers Beach
Councilmember Jessica Cosden	City of Cape Coral
Councilmember John Gunter	City of Cape Coral

Others in attendance included: Donald Scott, Calandra Barraco and Ranjit Gogoi with the Lee County MPO; Gary Harrell, Lakshmi N. Gurram, Wendy Scott, and Sammy Edara with the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO; Stacy Bjordahl, Attorney for the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO, Derek Rooney, Attorney for the Lee County MPO, Michael Tisch, Joshua Jester and Victoria Peters (FDOT); Nicole Harris (FDOT/Stantec); Wally Blain (Tindale Oliver); Steve

Ludwinski (The Corradino Group); Katie Habgood (Jacobs Engineering); Peyton McLeod (Patel, Greene & Associates); Nancy Crocker (Lee County School District); J. Levi McCollum and Robert Codie (LeeTran); Joan LeBeau (City of Punta Gorda); Matt Trepal (Charlotte County); Persides Zambrano (Cape Coral); Randy Cerchie (Lee County); Dave Urich (Responsible Growth Management Coalition); Salvatore Castronovo (resident/Punta Gorda); and John Potts.

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

The Joint Meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Chair Joseph Tiseo.

Ms. Barraco called the roll for the Lee County MPO, and a quorum was present.

Ms. Scott called the roll for the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO. All were present.

Commissioner Deutsch gave an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Agenda Item #2 - Chairs Comments

MPO Chair Tiseo opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Agenda Item #3 - Public Comments on Agenda Items

Former Lee Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Member Dave Urich provided comments on Agenda Items 6 and 7:

- (1) Babcock Ranch needs a direct connection with regional major highways and suggested connecting Cook Brown Road to Oil Well Road in the near future, given the development of a potential I-75 interchange 20 years from now.
- (2) Mr. Urich opposed using Notre Dame Blvd, a very residential street, as a connector between Burnt Store Road and US 41. He stressed a better alternative would be to utilize an existing nearby easement. He recommended checking for easement availability and associated costs. He thanked the MPO Boards for receiving his comments.

Agenda Item #4 - Approval of the Agenda

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER MANNING TO APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR THE FEBRUARY 21, 2020 JOINT LEE/CHARLOTTE MPO MEETING. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MANN. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Agenda Item #5 - Review and Input of Joint Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) Project Priority List

Mr. Harrell reviewed a handout with the proposed TRIP Project Priority List which had been developed by the MPO staff directors. He noted that funds needed to be obligated in the current year. He described how Charlotte County, through fortunate timing, had received an extra \$3 Million in funding for the Burnt Store Road project. Staff recommends keeping Burnt Store Road as a project priority for current year funding until completed.

Commissioner Deutsch observed that the Lee County MPO had great foresight over the past 8-9 years in working together with the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO to make the Burnt Store Road project happen. He thanked the Lee County MPO for the level of cooperation and support. He stated that this mutual Burnt Store Road project had paved the way for the River Road project in Sarasota County for Charlotte County residents' evacuation needs, noting that when governments work together, good things happen.

Mr. Scott stated that both MPOs have done well with the Burnt Store Road effort. He described how the Joint TRIP Project Priority List will be taken to the individual MPO Boards prior to submission to FDOT.

Agenda Item #6 - Burnt Store Road Corridor Improvements - Status Update

Mr. Harrell and Mr. Scott reviewed all Burnt Store Road project segments while referring to a regional roadway map.

In commenting on the Lee County section from Van Buren to the Charlotte County Line, Commissioner Hamman inquired if there could be a matching configuration similar to Charlotte County's design. He noted that there was a need for transitioning, and it may cost less. He observed that Burnt Store Road is a major Cape Coral evacuation route and wondered if designing a less expensive road might accomplish the project faster. Mayor Coviello stated that the look was not as important as getting people out, and such a grand highway is not required. Commissioner Hamman asked Mr. Scott for a project timeframe. Mr. Scott stated that there was hope for design in the fourth or fifth year. Commissioner Tiseo observed that the matter of street design might be a question for staff, and perhaps public workshops would be a proper venue to take input which could then be presented to the Lee County Board of County Commissioners.

Commissioner Constance noted that in Charlotte County it was the policy that all infrastructure be addressed during roadway projects to prevent the subsequent need to tear up the roadwork. He characterized this as a good strategy. Commissioner Tiseo mentioned that environmental concerns such as the bonneted bat habitat were also a factor.

Agenda Item #7 - Babcock Ranch Development and SR 31 Improvement - Status Update

Mr. Scott and Mr. Harrell referred to the map of the area projects. The following projects were discussed: (1) SR 31 from SR 80 (Palm Beach Blvd.) to SR 78 (Bayshore Road), (2) SR 31 from SR 78 in Lee County to the Northern Babcock Entrance in Charlotte County, (3) SR 31 at

CR 74, and (4) SR 78 from I-75 to SR 31. Commissioner Tiseo asked if the Southwest portion of the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) program is a factor in this area. Mr. Scott stated that the answer was still unknown. Commissioner Deutsch emphasized that with construction beginning on apartments in the Babcock Ranch area, roadway work needs to move as quickly as possible. He also commented on the need for shoulders in the area of SR 31 at CR 74.

Agenda Item #8 - Autonomous Connected Vehicle (AV/CV) - Status Update

Mr. Scott briefed the MPO Board Members using a PowerPoint presentation on Autonomous and Connected Vehicles. The presentation topics were: (1) Overview, (2) Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Legislation, (3) Sample of Connected and Autonomous Projects, and (4) MPO Plans. Among the many statewide test projects is the Florida's Regional Advanced Mobility Elements (FRAME) project stretching the full length of US 41 in Lee County. Its goal is to improve safety and mobility in the corridor.

Mr. Scott discussed the new MPO Planning Factor which requires planning for the development and implementation of automated, connected, electric and shared use vehicles. The Regional and Districtwide Models overseen by FDOT will also address this issue. There is the potential to have connected/autonomous vehicle dedicated lanes in the future.

Agenda Item #9 - I-75 Purple Heart Highway Initiative

Mr. Harrell reviewed past efforts on the Purple Heart Highway initiative. Previously, the initiative was highly supported by all members. The State Legislature was asked to approve it with local input received via resolution last year. The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO added the initiative to its 2020 legislative position statement. Commissioner Deutsch requested as much Lee County MPO support as possible.

Agenda Item #10 - 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Regional Model Coordination

Mr. Harrell and Mr. Scott used a graphic to provide information on the FDOT District One 2045 Cost Feasible LRTP Model Development Process and Schedule. They were looking forward to the first data run which had been slightly delayed. Mr. Scott described how FDOT has requested that the Lee and Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPOs coordinate on modeling I-75 interchange alternatives between SR 78 and Tuckers Grade. This information will be used in the ongoing I-75 PD&E study in Lee County that looks at needed improvements to the mainline and the existing interchanges. Additionally, the study will include analyzing the need for a new interchange in the area. The Lee MPO 2040 LRTP included a project phase for the Interchange Justification Report for the Del Prado Blvd. extension location (roughly 3.7 miles north of SR 78). Following model testing and needs assessment, the MPO staffs would commence with modeling and inform the MPO Boards of the results.

Agenda Item #11 - Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report

Mr. Tisch stated that FDOT Secretary L.K. Nandam had been unable to attend the meeting. He noted that the next M-CORES Task Force Meeting would be held on March 4, 2020 at 10 a.m. at the Bert Harris Agricultural Center Auditorium, 4509 George Blvd., Sebring, FL 33870.

Commissioner Constance gave a brief synopsis of recent Southwest-Central Florida M-CORES Corridor Task Force activities. He noted that while there was no specific route to date, a broad swath had been drawn and exclusion zones had been identified. He characterized the efforts as positive, with staff doing an impressive job of bringing forward information and working to find the best route with no preconceived notions. At the most recent meeting, many economic issues were discussed, especially the availability of a work force. Consideration was given to the corridor having no environmental impact and possibly utilizing preexisting roadways, while recognizing the need to move the area's population toward the interior of the state. He noted that this could prove beneficial during hurricanes such as Irma.

Nicole Harris (STANTEC on behalf of FDOT) reviewed the following components of the I-75 Southwest Connect FDOT District One Interstate Project: (1) PD&E Study I-75 from North River Rd to Moccasin Wallow Rd, (2) Planning & Feasibility Study I-75 from Moccasin Wallow Rd to Charlotte/Lee County Line, (3) PD&E Study I-75 from east of Collier Blvd (SR 951) to Bayshore Rd (SR 78). She referenced project maps and stated that workshops are scheduled. Commissioner Constance asked if high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and autonomous vehicle lanes might be under consideration for this project. Ms. Harris stated that all types of lanes are being evaluated, but the area might not meet thresholds yet.

Agenda Item #12 - Next Meeting Date

Mr. Harrell noted that the Joint Meeting is typically held annually in February. Commissioner Tiseo deferred to staff to finalize the next meeting date and location.

Agenda Item #13 - Staff Comments

Mr. Scott remarked about the prior day's closing of Good Wheels transit service in the region. Commissioner Hamman requested that Robert Cody, Lee County Transit Director, address the issue. Mr. Cody stated that a seamless service transition was occurring with LeeTran assuming the responsibility for chemotherapy/dialysis/other critical medical trips once handled by Good Wheels. Mayor Ribble inquired if there would be a press release on the matter, since LeeTran should receive credit from the public. Mr. Cody noted that there were lots of options for consideration moving forward, and staff would be assessing them. Mayor Coviello raised a question regarding trip provision. Mr. Cody described how Good Wheels has been providing subcontractor trips for MTM, a statewide Medicaid trip provider. LeeTran had let MTM know that they would take over these trips on an emergency basis. Additionally, LeeTran was doing emergency trips for the Florida Commission for the Transportation

Disadvantaged, which had previously contracted with Good Wheels. Commissioner Hamman thanked LeeTran staff for making this service transition happen, characterizing the situation as a compassionate way to handle an unforeseen emergency and a collaborative effort for all.

Mr. Harrell introduced Ms. Scott, MPO Planner/Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (LCB) staff, to address the impact of loss of Good Wheels service in Charlotte County for Medicaid trips. Ms. Scott assured those in attendance that Charlotte County Area Transit had also risen to the occasion and begun providing seamless service to meet the urgent medical needs of Medicaid riders. She observed that Charlotte County was already handling all Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) service for Charlotte County.

Mr. Harrell stressed how much he and his staff appreciated working with the Lee County MPO staff. He also noted that Don Scott is now the Vice Chair of the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC) Staff Directors' Advisory Committee.

Agenda Item #14 - Member Comments

Commissioner Deutsch reiterated the importance of the Purple Heart Highway Initiative.

Agenda Item #15 - Public Comments

Punta Gorda resident Salvatore Castronovo suggested that Taylor Road at US 41 be realigned. He noted that if this action was taken, it would provide relief from Burnt Store Road during an emergency. He also observed that an interchange at the Lee/Charlotte County line should be studied. Finally, Mr. Castronovo recommended that a signal be placed at the intersection of Acline Road at Burnt Store Road in Charlotte County.

Agenda Item #16 - Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.