

Chapter 1:

Introduction



Introduction

This report documents the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP sets forth a vision to address the transportation system needs and cost feasible improvements in Charlotte County through the year 2035. The multi-modal plan documented in this report addresses highways, public transportation (transit), bicycle facilities, pedestrian facilities, and multi-use trails.

BACKGROUND

The 2035 LRTP updates the previous 2030 LRTP adopted in December 2004. This 2035 LRTP represents a significant effort to address the long term transportation needs of Charlotte County. Key highlights of this plan include:

- Extension of Burnt Store Rd. north of Jones Loop to US 17.
- Expansion of US 41 to 6 lanes between Flamingo Blvd. and the Sarasota County line, and between Burnt Store Rd. and Notre Dame Blvd.
- Expansion of Veterans Blvd. to 6 lanes from US 41 to Hillsborough Blvd.
- Expansion of SR 776 to 6 lanes from Crestview to Sunnybrook.
- Fixed route transit on US 41, serving Punta Gorda, the medical district, and Murdock.
- Boxed funds for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, multi-use trails, and congestion management.

Additional aspects of the LRTP are identified in later chapters of this report.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

Including this Introduction, the 2035 LRTP Update is organized into 13 chapters. The remaining chapters are summarized below.

Chapter 2 Goals, Objectives, & Policies presents the MPO's policy-related goals, objectives, and measures of effectiveness that were adopted by the

MPO to guide the plan development process. Measures of effectiveness are used to determine if the objectives are being achieved.

Chapter 3 Plan Development Process presents the 2035 LRTP development process. Included are a summary of the approach and planning assumptions used in developing the plan.

Chapter 4 Forecasting Growth and Land Use provides a summary of the forecasted growth and land use in Charlotte County. The population and employment projections used in the planning assumptions and modeling are presented along with the methodology used for allocating growth to areas throughout Charlotte County.

Chapter 5 Cost and Revenue Assumptions presents the cost and revenue assumptions used to determine the budget for the transportation improvement projects in the county to be included as part of the Cost Affordable Plan.

Chapter 6 Needs Plan presents the 2035 Needs Plan, which includes the transportation improvement projects needed in the county, as indicated by either the transportation model or during public workshops. This chapter also describes how projects were chosen from the Needs Plan to be included in the Cost Affordable Plan.

Chapter 7 Cost Feasible Plan presents the 2035 Cost Feasible Plan. The Cost Feasible Plan includes the highest priority projects that can be feasibly funded and how the plan complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Chapter 8 Performance Evaluation presents the performance evaluation of the 2035 LRTP. Performance measures are included for highway congestion and alternative modes. Environmental mitigation efforts also are described in this chapter.

Chapter 9 Congestion Management Process summarizes congestion management process activities in Charlotte County.

Chapter 10 Public Participation summarizes the public participation efforts that played a major role in shaping the 2035 LRTP. A summary of public comments is provided, along with an overview of how public input impacted the plan.

Chapter 11 Socio-Cultural Effects and Environmental Justice presents the assessment of the socio-cultural effects undertaken as part of the 2035 LRTP.

Chapter 12 Transportation Safety and Security makes recommendations on how the MPO can enhance safety and security measures throughout the transportation system.

Chapter 13 Hazard Mitigation summarizes the analysis and results of the hazard mitigation study undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team lead by Florida State University and identifies key hazard mitigation strategies for the county.

Chapter 14 Plan Implementation documents issues and activities the MPO may consider addressing in future planning efforts.

This LRTP was developed to comply with the MPO’s Public Participation Plan. The Public Participation Plan is a plan that is adopted by the MPO separately from the LRTP and is to be implemented in all transportation planning activities of the MPO, in addition to and including this LRTP.

MPO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP)

SAFETEA-LU has enhanced the public involvement and outreach requirements that once were a part of the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), the previous transportation act. SAFETEA-LU requires that the public have “full and open access” in the development of MPO plans and that the public involvement process be documented in a PPP.

The PPP for Charlotte County was created to reflect SAFETEA-LU requirements and enable the citizens affected by changes in the county’s transportation system to have their thoughts and ideas considered. Through the PPP, the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO strives for greater public understanding for the transportation planning process and more cohesive support for the ultimate decisions.

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO upholds the policy that all persons, regardless of race, sex, national origin, age, religion, or physical condition, will have full and complete access to the planning process. The PPP and the strategies included therein are designed with consideration of that goal. The PPP is designed to provide a proactive public involvement process that includes the dissemination of accurate and timely information to the public, full public access for addressing and commenting on all transportation issues,

and opportunities for the public to express its views, ensuring they are heard, noted, and encouraged. The PPP uses the following techniques to facilitate the public involvement process:

- Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings
- Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee meetings
- Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Committee meetings
- MPO Board meetings
- Mailing lists/contact database
- Public workshops
- Notices for public meetings, workshops, and hearings
- Meeting agendas
- County Website
- Media outreach
- Brochures
- Evaluation/comment forms

Table 1-1 summarizes the 11 public involvement requirements set forth in SAFETEA-LU and how each requirement was met in the development of this LRTP.

Table 1-1: SAFETEA-LU Requirements

	SAFETEA-LU Requirement	Where/How Requirement was Met
1	Require a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised.	The final public comment period was opened on 10/11/2010 and closed on 12/13/2010, for a total of 63 days.
2	Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, other interested parties, freight shippers, private providers of transportation, and the segment of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects including, but not limited to, central city and other local jurisdictions.	This LRTP was presented at various stages of development at the monthly TAC, CAC, and MPO meetings.
3	Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans, TIPs, and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered.	Technical and policy information can be found in documents that are accessible to the public on the MPO’s Website.
4	Require adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs.	Public notices were published before each workshop described in this chapter and are included in the Technical Appendix.
5	Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes.	All comments received during public workshops conducted for the purpose of developing this LRTP are documented in Chapter 10 and its corresponding appendices.
6	Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems including, but not limited to, low-income and minority households in an effort to ensure that the requirements of Title VI and Environmental Justice have been met during the planning and project process.	A workshop was held for the purpose of considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, and are documented in Chapter 11 of this report.
7	When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft LRTP or TIP (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s conformity regulations, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and TIP.	All comments received during public workshops conducted for the purpose of developing this LRTP are documented in Chapter 10 and its corresponding appendices.
8	If the final LRTP or TIP differs significantly from the one made available for public comment by MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or TIP shall be made available.	This LRTP does not differ significantly from the one made available for public comment.
9	Public involvement processes shall be periodically reviewed by the MPO in terms of their effectiveness in ensuring that the process provides full and open access to all.	The Public Involvement process is documented in Chapter 10 of this report.
10	These procedures will be reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) during certification reviews for Transportation Management Areas, and as otherwise necessary for all MPOs, to ensure that full and open access is provided to the MPO decision-making processes.	The MPO will assist the FHWA/FTA in the compliance review.
11	Metropolitan public involvement plan shall be coordinated with Statewide and regional public involvement plans wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.	This LRTP has been developed in coordination with the surrounding counties’ transportation planning efforts.



ADOPTION OF THE PLAN

The LRTP documented in this report was adopted by resolution on December 13, 2010, by the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Board.

MPO PROGRAM MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

The MPO Program Management Handbook is provided by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to guide the transportation planning processes of Florida MPO's, per the guidance offered by federal regulation.

Yellow boxes such as this are found throughout this LRTP document. The text within these yellow boxes indicates how the following section is compliant with the federal regulations regarding the LRTP set forth in the MPO Program Management Handbook. **The requirement is shown in orange text.** *The identification of where the compliance is found in the chapter is shown in italics.*

