



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD MEETING, AUGUST 7, 2017  
MURDOCK ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING  
18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE, ROOM #119  
PORT CHARLOTTE FL 33948

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Commissioner Christopher Constance**, Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Vice Chair  
**Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch**, Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Chair  
**Commissioner Ken Doherty**, Charlotte County Commissioner  
**Commissioner James Herston**, Charlotte County Airport Authority  
**Councilmember Nancy Prafke**, Punta Gorda City Council

**ADVISORY**

**L.K. Nandam**, FDOT District One Secretary

**STAFF PRESENT**

Bob Herrington, MPO Director  
Gary Harrell, MPO Principal Planner  
Lakshmi N. Gurram, MPO Planner III  
Wendy Scott, MPO Planner II  
Bekie Leslie, Administrative Services Coordinator

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Steve Walls, FDOT  
Zac Burch, FDOT  
Bessie Reina, FDOT  
D’Juan Harris, FDOT  
John Burrage, CAC Chair  
Mitchell Austin, TAC Chair/City of Punta Gorda  
Venkat Vattikuti, TAC Vice Chair/Charlotte County Public Works  
K. Stephen Carter, BPAC Chair and Peggy Walters Award recipient  
Joshua Moye, Assistant Charlotte County Attorney (MPO Legal Services)  
Bob Logan, CAC Member  
Dianne Quilty, CAC Member

Court Nederveld, BPAC Member  
Nicholas Cantor, BPAC Member  
Robert Armstrong, BPAC Member  
Ned Baier, Jacobs Engineering  
Joan LeBeau, City of Punta Gorda  
Peter Gerhardt, CC BZA, PAZ, BSAC  
Tracy Herman, Port Charlotte Library  
Darryl Keys, Cultural Center  
P.J. Fisher, Cultural Center  
Velma Plummer, Cultural Center  
Gwen Booher, Cultural Center  
Lucienne Pears, CC EDO  
Pat Garriton, CC-Parkside  
Thomas A. Benoit, Citizen

**1. Call to Order & Roll Call**

MPO Chair Stephen R. Deutsch called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The roll call was taken and the Chair noted that all members were present.

**2. Invocation**

Pastor Bill Frank (First Baptist Church of Punta Gorda) gave the invocation.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

*Members agreed to take up Agenda Item #5 next.*

**5. Presentation of the “Peggy Walters” Citizen Mobility Award (out of order)**

Bob Herrington stated that the “Peggy Walters” Citizen Mobility Award has been given by the MPO since 2010 and recognizes achievement by an individual or group who, through their efforts and accomplishments, has made significant and noteworthy contributions to transportation planning in Charlotte County.

This year, the MPO received a nomination for K. Stephen Carter to be the recipient of the 2017 “Peggy Walters” Citizens Mobility Award. His list of contributions and leadership roles on behalf of citizen mobility are impressive and extensive. Mr. Carter has been a member of the MPO’s Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) since 1996 and he has served as its Chair since 2001. He is the longest serving member of any MPO Advisory Committee to date. Mr. Carter has worked through his Committee to plan for miles of new sidewalks and multi-use trails throughout the county. Examples of his efforts include the Cape Haze Pioneer Trail, the US 41 Multi-Use Recreation Trail (MURT) and the Punta Gorda Harbor Walk.

Mr. Carter also serves as President of Team Parkside, a volunteer organization that advocates for community needs on behalf of citizens and businesses located in this area. In September 2014 Mr. Carter was named Executive Director of the Cultural Center of Charlotte County.

For over 20 years, Mr. Carter has shown by example that one person through his/her efforts and vision, can greatly improve mobility and community enhancement in Charlotte County, as Ms. Peggy Walters so epitomized.

Chair Deutsch thanked Mr. Carter for all his efforts and presented the Award.

#### **4. Addition and/or Deletions to the Agenda**

Bob Herrington noted that Agenda Item #14 (an FDOT Complete Streets presentation) was deleted at the request of FDOT staff.

There were two Additions to the Agenda that had been made earlier in the week:

##### **A. Mr. Herrington's Retirement/Resignation**

Chair Deutsch quoted a letter received the prior week from Mr. Herrington indicating that he would be retiring effective October 2, 2017. Chair Deutsch stated that it had been a privilege and a pleasure to work with Mr. Herrington. He noted that Mr. Herrington would be missed and commended him for his work at the MPO which was characterized as a team effort. Commissioner Constance stated that it had been his great pleasure to work with Mr. Herrington while serving as the MPO Chair for several years. He noted that Mr. Herrington was responsible and effective, answering all requests within 24 hours. He noted that Mr. Herrington was knowledgeable and experienced, and he wished him the best in retirement. Commissioner Doherty thanked Mr. Herrington for his service and wished him wonderful travel and good health. Commissioner Herston, who had attended many Florida MPOAC events with Mr. Herrington, noted that the Airport Authority would miss him and called him a true friend. Councilmember Prafke stated that it was a pleasure working with Mr. Herrington long ago even before his tenure at the MPO when he presented information to Team Punta Gorda on the Scenic Highway program.

*The MPO Board unanimously accepted Mr. Herrington's resignation.*

*Members agreed to take up Agenda Item #6 next before returning to Agenda Item #4B.*

#### **6. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments on Agenda Items.

#### **4. Addition and/or Deletions to the Agenda (continued)**

##### **B. Consideration of the Appointment of an Interim Director**

Chair Deutsch noted that Bob Herrington had suggested that serious consideration be given to making Gary Harrell Interim MPO Director. Copies of Mr. Harrell's resume had been distributed to MPO Board Members. He noted that Mr. Harrell had worked at the MPO for a long time period, serving in the past as Interim Director. He stated that the MPO staff worked closely as a team. Chair Deutsch stated that he would entertain a motion to appoint Gary D. Harrell as Interim Director with a 5% salary increase. Bob Herrington noted that this was a wise decision and Commissioner Constance fully supported this suggestion. Commissioner Doherty inquired if it was the intent of the MPO Board to discuss the appointment of a permanent MPO Director in October, and the MPO Board Members agreed to this approach.

*Commissioner Constance made a motion to appointment Gary D. Harrell as Interim MPO Director effective October 3, 2017 with a 5% salary increase. Commissioner Herston seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.*

## **7. Chairs' Reports:**

### **A. MPO Board Chair's Report**

Commissioner Deutsch stressed the need to make improvements to SR 31 and CR 74, especially due to increased vehicular activity in the area. He stated that a serious accident had occurred on SR 31 recently.

### **B. Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) Chair's Report**

John Burrage reported on the July 12, 2017 CAC Meeting. He praised FDOT staff for the follow-up on many CAC Members' concerns. He also stated that CAC Members enjoyed being copied with the FDOT Weekly Road Watch Report. Chair Deutsch thanked Mr. Burrage and CAC members for their volunteer service.

### **C. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Chair's Reports**

Mitchell Austin, TAC Chair, reported on the July 12, 2017 TAC Meeting. He stated that TAC Members had received a FDOT Complete Streets presentation that also would be provided to the MPO Board Members at a future meeting. Mr. Austin praised the efforts of the Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan Selection Committee, on which he had served. He noted that three excellent approaches had been submitted, and an outstanding one had been selected.

### **D. Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Chair's Report**

K. Stephen Carter, BPAC Chair reported on the July 12, 2017 BPAC Meeting. He stated that the BPAC recently had sent two letters:

- Per discussion at the June 15, 2017 BPAC meeting, a letter was sent to County Administrator Ray Sandrock regarding the need to include bicycle and pedestrian amenities in the upcoming Harbor View Road PD&E study.

- A letter was sent to the Board of County Commissioners regarding the Cape Haze Pioneer Trail crossing at Rotonda Blvd. East where some hazardous issues had been identified for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Some improvements that had been made included installing flashing signage.

Mr. Carter thanked Bob Armstrong for his BPAC service and Bob Herrington for his years of MPO service including support of the BPAC.

## **8. Local Government Reports:**

### **Charlotte County Airport Authority**

Commissioner Herston provided a packet of materials regarding the following Airport Authority activities:

- Punta Gorda Airport Executive Director James Parrish named FDOT's 2017 Aviation Professional of the Year
- Punta Gorda Airport and Walmart: Models Alike, *Charlotte Sun*, 1 August 2017
- Punta Gorda Airport welcomes five new, nonstop routes from Allegiant
- Punta Gorda Airport Master Plan Update, June 6, 2017
- Total Passengers FY 2012 through 2017, Operations Reported by the Tower, and Fuel Sales Report
- News of an Historical Marker to be installed in front of the restaurant and a Punta Gorda Army Airfield historical display to be placed in the terminal hallway

Commissioner Doherty recalled that a plaque had been located outside of the old airport terminal building which might be considered for inclusion in the historical display. Commissioner Herston stated that he would investigate it further.

### **Charlotte County**

Commissioner Doherty provided a Roadway Update handout covering:

- Burnt Store Road Phase 2 (Notre Dame to North of Zemel Road)
- Edgewater Drive (Harbor to Midway)
- Midway Blvd (Sharpe Street to Kings Highway)
- Olean Blvd (US 41 to Easy Street)
- Piper Road (Henry Street to US 17)
- Placida Road Multi-Use Path and Utilities Improvement (Rotonda Blvd. W. to Boca Grande Causeway)

Discussion followed on the need to explore improvements to Harbor Blvd (US 41 to the Beach Complex area), as well as the Charlotte Harbor CRA area of Bayshore Road and Parmely Street given potential new development in the area recently described in the press.

### **City of Punta Gorda**

Councilmember Nancy Prafke reported on the following:

- Gilchrist Park renovations are proceeding despite some delays. She noted that the City has been providing oversight of the construction firm, so the effort is going more smoothly.
- Retta Esplanade will reopen around the end of September 2017.
- Work on the design of the bicycle/pedestrian bridge at the north fork of Alligator Creek on US 41 (a SunTrail project).
- City is working to get permission from FDOT to designate a bicycle corral at 201 W. Marion Avenue where US 17 ends near Leroy's Restaurant.
- FDOT approval is sought for an historic mural at the foot of the Southbound US 41 bridge. The mural would be a three-dimensional painting that looks through portholes into Charlotte Harbor.
- The City Manager will host a bicycle tour to assist in raising \$36,000 in project funding. There is also a request for a Northbound US 41 bridge mural.

### **9. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Report**

D'Juan Harris addressed highway concerns listed under the FDOT Report:

#### **A. I-75 Possible New Interchange North of Kings Hwy Interchange**

Mr. Harris noted that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently issued a new policy regarding FDOT's Interchange Justification Report (IJR) process, which FDOT is now addressing.

Commissioner Constance stated that all items on the list of highway concerns will serve as placeholders on the MPO Board agendas and will be revisited each meeting until addressed. He noted that this area has significant longstanding highway alignment problems of economic impact which necessitate immediate planning for another interchange at either Veterans Blvd or Raintree Blvd.

Commissioner Deutsch concurred with this assessment, especially since a substantial residential development is planned for the Peachtree Blvd and Loveland Blvd area.

Commissioner Ken Doherty recalled a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) planned long ago in the Raintree Blvd area and suggested that FDOT District One staff might wish to review it. He noted that pressure relief is badly needed in the Kings Hwy area.

Secretary Nandam stated that FDOT is not averse to exploring the interchange idea, however, FHWA has changed the criteria for interstate interchanges, so proposed new ones must reflect these changes to be consistent with FHWA procedures. He stated that he remembered the DRI at Raintree Blvd referenced by Commissioner Doherty and would have staff review the information. He noted that FHWA requires proof that existing interchanges are not functioning.

### **B. I-75 Southbound Exit at Kings Hwy-Update**

D’Juan Harris stated that the FDOT project will be completed in late Fall 2017. The proposed extension is outside of FDOT’s project limits. Secretary Nandam noted that the contract is forthcoming and incentives could be added for this small stretch of roadway. There is a question about whether this portion can be added to the contract, as well as whether the work will improve conditions or make them worse. Venkat Vattikuti stated that analysis must be done, and County staff is willing to meet with FDOT District staff on this matter.

Commissioner Constance observed that a weaving condition already exists there. He questioned if the County could hire another contractor to perform the work.

Secretary Nandam stated that the matter involves bureaucracy and following the process, including the addition of a new line item to FDOT’s Work Program. He noted that modifying the current contract could be a feasible option over a new contract. It was agreed that FDOT and County staffs would further explore the issue for discussion at the October 23, 2017 MPO Board Meeting. Additionally, Commissioner Doherty requested that Mr. Vattikuti contact County Administration to add the topic to the September 12, 2017 Board of County Commissioners agenda.

### **C. US 41 Northbound at Murdock Circle Left Turn Lanes Extension-Update**

Discussion centered upon the County extending the US 41/Murdock Circle left turn lanes vs. waiting for FDOT to complete the task. Although the County could accelerate the work, there was no guarantee that FDOT would reimburse the project. Construction is due to begin in February 2018 and take 90-100 days to complete.

### **D. SR 31 at CR 74 Intersection-Safety Project Regarding Recent Fatalities**

D’Juan Harris referenced a feasibility study done some years ago. After review of this study, construction of a roundabout is now being considered. Since completion of a roundabout could take 5-7 years, FDOT will use interim safety solutions for now. Rumble strips have been delivered for installation by the County. Venkat Vattikuti stated that these rumble strips will be installed on Bermont Road to assist vehicles in stopping. FDOT is also working on installing flashing signs. Commissioner Deutsch asked if consideration was being given to widening the road. Mr. Vattikuti indicated that widening the roadway is part of the Babcock DRI (now in the PD&E process). As traffic volume increases, the PD&E study will extend to the north. These developer-related improvements will depend upon the number of units built and could take up to 10 years. Mr. Harris noted that a speed limit study on SR 31 may occur soon. There is also discussion of the signalization of the intersection as an interim improvement. A maintenance project to replace the damaged flashing signal starts in mid-August 2017, and the rumble strips will alert drivers approaching the intersection that a stop is imminent. A roundabout study is underway. Consideration must be given to a gas line at that location. Secretary Nandam stated that FDOT staff will continue to coordinate with local staff and provide an update at every MPO Board Meeting. FDOT staff indicated that it could be 3 ½ years before construction could commence depending on whether the location was shifted or the gas line was moved.

Commissioner Deutsch inquired about the project timeline. Mr. Vattikuti stated that the study has been started, and County staff is working with FDOT to see if the existing signal can be activated to work as a traffic signal. FDOT and County staff will provide MPO Board Members with an accurate timeline at the next MPO Board Meeting.

#### **E. US 17 at Nesbit St. Intersection Re-design**

This intersection was previously assessed by FDOT staff. Now the Traffic Operations staff is re-examining the intersection regarding making a “right on red” (Nesbit St to W. Marion Ave) which may require removal of the outside left turn lane from oncoming traffic. Once school commences, traffic counts will be analyzed.

D’Juan Harris noted that FDOT will be holding its annual e-public hearing on the Draft Tentative Work Program on October 16-20, 2017.

Secretary Nandam apologized for missing several MPO Board meetings, citing conflicts with two executive board meetings in Tallahassee. He believes in positive and collaborative working relationships. He also focuses on how FDOT is part of the community and must help make the community successful. He noted that FDOT District One has filled two positions recently: (1) Director of Transportation Development (John Kubler) and (2) Director of Transportation Operations (Rick Lilyquist). He thanked Mr. Herrington for his service, stating that the staff had enjoyed working with him.

#### **10. Consent Agenda:**

##### **A. Approval of Minutes: May 1, 2017 MPO Board Meeting**

*Commissioner Constance made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Doherty seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

#### **11. PUBLIC MEETING:**

##### **A. FY 2017/2018 – FY 2021/2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Roll-Forward Amendment**

Bob Herrington reported that the MPO has received a request from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) (Attachment 1) to amend the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO’s FY 2017/2018 – FY 2021/2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to “roll-forward” certain project phases into the first year of the new FY 2017/2018 – FY 2021/2022 TIP.

He stated a Public Meeting is required to solicit public input. Following the Public Meeting, a roll call vote of the MPO Board is required to adopt the TIP amendments.

*Chair Deutsch opened the Public Meeting. No one wished to speak.*

*Commissioner Constance made a Motion to close the Public Hearing. Commissioner Doherty seconded the Motion, and the Motion carried unanimously.*

*Commissioner Constance made a Motion to amend the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO's TIP for FY 2017/2018 – FY 2021/2022 adding: Roll-forward projects from FY 2016/2017 which could not be obligated during the State's Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2017. Commissioner Doherty seconded the Motion followed by a roll call vote. The Motion was carried unanimously.*

## **12. Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (LCB) Appointment**

Mr. Herrington indicated that a vacancy exists on the LCB for the Elderly Interests Representative. The MPO Staff advertised the vacancy seeking individuals willing to serve on the LCB as the Elderly Interests Representative. The MPO received Applications from two individuals interested in serving on the LCB.

Board members were asked to vote for one of the two individuals. Ballots were provided for Board members to appoint the Elderly Interests Representative on the LCB. Bob Herrington announced that Gwen Aubrey was selected to fill the position.

*Councilmember Doherty made a motion to appoint Gwen Aubrey as the Elderly Interests Representative on the LCB. Commissioner Constance seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

## **13. Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan Consultant Selection**

Mr. Herrington stated at the May 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 Meeting, the MPO Board approved the Interlocal Agreement between Charlotte County and the Charlotte County–Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization for development of the Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan. The MPO Staff has worked with Charlotte County and the City of Punta Gorda on the provision of contractual professional services by a consultant to assist in the Plan development. A request was sent to the MPO's General Planning Consultants asking for their approaches to develop the MPO's Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan based on the Scope of Services (Attachment 1). The MPO Staff received task approaches from the three consultants that were reviewed by the MPO's Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan Subcommittee consisting of the MPO staff Project Manager, and representatives of the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County. Scoring results from that meeting are Agenda Attachment 2.

He noted that the Subcommittee has developed a Scope of Services to be approved by the MPO Board and a Work Assignment Order (Attachment 3) to be signed by the MPO Chair. Once a Work Assignment is executed between the MPO and the Consultant, a Notice to Proceed will be issued to begin work on the project which will take approximately one year. The Consultant, Jacobs Engineering Staff was present in the audience.

*Commissioner Doherty made a motion to approve the Scope of Services and authorize the MPO Chair to sign the Work Assignment Order with Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. to complete the Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan. Commissioner Constance seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

#### **14. FDOT Complete Streets Initiative Presentation**

This item was postponed at FDOT staff's request and will be placed on a future MPO Board agenda.

#### **15. Continued Discussion on Aqui Esta Drive Widening Project**

Bob Herrington introduced Mitchell Austin, City of Punta Gorda Urban Design. Mr. Austin gave a brief overview of the Aqui Esta widening project.

Commissioner Constance noted that right-of-way acquisition for the project is cost prohibitive. Councilmember Prafke stated that recently an Assisted Living Facility (ALF) was proposed in the corridor at Socorro Drive. Another proposed development will be reviewed by the City Council in the next few weeks. She stated that the project may not be practical, but the roadway needs to be addressed. Chair Deutsch inquired about traffic counts for these projects. Councilmember Prafke noted that the ALF will have few residents with vehicles, but the other project is zoned for 500 residential homes currently. New traffic information will be available soon. Commissioner Constance stated that the developer should bear the cost of the new needed capacity. Councilmember Prafke noted that there are many vacant lots that are already owned. As long as new homes meet building and zoning requirements, they are allowed. Commissioner Constance pointed out that transportation and impact fees should be significant to cover costs. Commissioner Doherty expressed concern with Right of Way issues. Councilmember Prafke stated that the data speaks for itself, and the project should be contained in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for planning purposes. Bob Herrington observed that the project is in the Needs Plan portion of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Chair Deutsch appreciated the good suggestions from the MPO Board members.

#### **16. Draft 2018 MPO Legislative Position Statement**

Bob Herrington noted that the Legislative Position Statement was being considered now due to the early 2018 Florida legislative session. Staff was seeking approval of the draft. Most of the document was very similar to the prior year statement except for: (1) deletion of language on transportation legislation due to FAST Act passage, and (2) the addition of the use of hand-held electronics while driving.

*Commissioner Constance wanted to refine the latter issue and offered an amendment stating: "Regulates as a primary offense the manipulation in the use of hand-held electronic wireless communication devices such as cellular telephones, texting devices and other similar distracting devices while operating a moving motor vehicle." Commissioner Doherty seconded the motion.*

*Commissioner Constance made a motion to approve the draft 2018 Legislative Position Statement as amended, authorizing its distribution to the area's Legislative Delegation and others as well as the proposed changes suggested. Commissioner Doherty seconded the motion which carried unanimously.*

### **17. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

*Chair Deutsch next called for Member Comments.*

### **18. Member Comments**

Commissioner Doherty requested that Secretary Nandam consider holding a meeting in Bartow prior to adoption of the FDOT Work Program so that MPO Chairs and Executive Directors could address regional roadways District One-wide. Bob Herrington noted that the prior year, there was a CUTS meeting held in Manatee County and Commissioner Herston attended on behalf of this MPO, and the meeting was well received. However, it would be wonderful to have Secretary Nandam involved in these efforts, which will be done again in January 2018 at an undetermined location.

Commissioner Constance thanked FDOT for addressing the five issues under Agenda #9, stating that it helped to increase his understanding of the issues and how they are being addressed. He thanked FDOT staff for being responsive. He also expressed his appreciation to Bob Herrington and stated that he looked forward to working with Gary Harrell and appreciated him stepping up to serve the MPO.

Commissioner Herston noted that Bob Herrington would be missed. He congratulated Jacobs Engineering on their consultant selection.

### **19. Staff Comments**

Chair Deutsch invited Gary Harrell to speak. Mr. Harrell stressed that the MPO had a great team with roughly seventy years of MPO staff experience in addition to Bob's experience which put the group at over 100+ years. He characterized staff as one of the best groups with which he'd ever worked. He was focused on obtaining as much federal and state transportation funding as possible for the local area.

Bob Herrington provided a summary of recent staff activities.

Commissioner Deutsch noted that the day was Purple Heart Day. He expressed his interest in the possible placement of County funded road signs at the interstate noting Charlotte County's designation as a Purple Heart Community. Secretary Nandam stated that he will address the issue at the next MPO Board Meeting. Commissioner Deutsch remarked that he appreciated FDOT's attendance at the meeting.

### **20. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:43 P.M. The next scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, October 23, 2017.