

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

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BPAC)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 16, 2017 AT THE
CULTURAL CENTER OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY, PRESIDENTS ROOM, 2280 AARON STREET,
PORT CHARLOTTE, FLORIDA

MEMBERS ATTENDING

K. Stephen Carter (Chair) Historical/Cultural/
Environmental Representative
David L. Allen, Mid-County Representative
Court Nederveld, South County Representative
Robert Armstrong, South County Representative
Richard Stark, West County Representative
Karen Freeman, Bicycle Business
Representative
Peter Dowling, West County Representative

MEMBERS ABSENT

Robert Logan, Mid-County Representative

VACANT,

Bicycle Club Representative

ADVISORY AND OTHERS PRESENT

Debrah Forester, CC Economic Development
David Agacinski, FDOT
Mitchell Austin, City of Punta Gorda
Ravi Kamarajugadda, CC Public Works
Mike Koenig, CC Community Services
Gene Pawlowski, Team Punta Gorda
Gene Klara, CC-PG MPO
Gary Harrell, CC-PG MPO

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

K. Stephen Carter, BPAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Roll Call was taken using a sign-in sheet.

2. Election of 2017 Officers

Gary Harrell, MPO Staff, stated that the BPAC Bylaws require that a Chair and a Vice Chair, of the Committee shall be elected at the first regularly scheduled meeting of each calendar year. Chair K. Stephen Carter relinquished the Chair position to Gary Harrell for the purpose of conducting the election of the 2016 BPAC Officers. Gary Harrell asked for nominations for the position of BPAC Chair.

Robert Armstrong nominated K. Stephen Carter to serve as BPAC Chair. Richard Stark seconded the nomination. There being no further nominations, Robert Armstrong moved that nominations be closed, and the Motion was seconded by Richard Stark and approved unanimously. K. Stephen Carter was declared Chair by unanimous acclamation.

The floor was opened for nominations for BPAC Vice Chair.

Robert Armstrong nominated Court Nederveld to serve as BPAC Vice Chair. Robert Armstrong moved that nominations be closed, and the Motion was seconded by Richard Stark and approved unanimously. Court Nederveld was declared Vice Chair by unanimous acclamation.

3. Public Comments of Agenda Items

None.

4. Chair's Report

Mr. Carter, thanked the Committee for electing him as Chair.

5. Approval of Minutes:

Chair Carter asked the Committee to review and approve the Minutes of the previous October 20, 2016 Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC); and the November 22, 2016 Joint Meeting of the Charlotte County- Punta Gorda MPO BPAC and Lee County MPO Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinating Committee (BPCC).

A Motion was made by Robert Armstrong to approve the Minutes of both the meetings. David L. Allen seconded the Motion, and it was approved unanimously.

6. Project Priorities

Gary Harrell, MPO Staff, explained the MPO process of setting Project Priorities to be forwarded to FDOT. The priorities will be used by FDOT to program funds for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) scheduled to be adopted in 2018. He went over the status of the Highway Project priorities and the staff recommendations for the next series of priorities. Discussion centered on the City of Punta Gorda projects for "Complete Streets" especially for the recently programmed project: Complete Streets for US 41 from Airport Road to Carmalita Street. The Committee discussed what was really meant by the term "Complete Streets." Since FDOT is in the process of setting standards and direction the general description was provided that Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Certain amenities appropriate for individual projects will be considered as the project moves to design.

Robert Armstrong noted that the City Council passed a resolution to add Aqui Esta Drive to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to improve it by adding two lanes. He asked if the Committee needed to endorse the conceptual improvements that would put the project on the LRTP. After discussion the Committee agreed that there was not enough information about the project to make a recommendation regarding adding it to the LRTP. The discussion on improvements to Aqui Esta Dr. was tabled until the next BPAC meeting.

Gary Harrell briefed the Committee on the Transportation Alternative Project (TAP) priorities that had

been previously submitted and their status. He stated that at the MPO Board meeting the City of Punta Gorda Representative asked staff to review the US 41 sidewalk projects to be designated as multi-use trails rather than sidewalks for the US 41 segments that have not been programmed.

Court Nederveld commented on the US 41 multi-use trail, east side, from Tuckers Grade to Taylor Road. He stated that a trail added on Royal Road connecting the existing multi-use trail ending at Taylor Road to Tuckers Grade could be a less costly addition. It would connect the current Trail to Tuckers Grade, a route routinely used by bicyclists going to the Babcock Web.

*A motion was made by **Robert Armstrong** to recommend the MPO Board adopt the 2017 Project Priorities for the upcoming FDOT Draft Tentative Work Program cycle. **Stephen Carter** seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.*

7. Greenways and Trails Opportunity and Priority Map Update

Gary Harrell, MPO Staff, briefed the Committee on the Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) update to the Florida Greenways and Trails System (FGTS) Plan, and the Opportunity and Priority Maps. He stated OGT is seeking input on both the Opportunity and Priority land and paddling trail maps. The FGTS Plan ties together the local, regional and state plans and collaborative efforts for greenways and trails, bicycle and pedestrian master plans and other plans of communities, agencies and non-profits throughout Florida. He also pointed out the SUN Trail initiative that funded two projects in Charlotte County was part of this system.

Court Nederveld stated that the recent addition of a trail through the Babcock Web Trail was an excellent addition to the Plan. He viewed it as a tourist attraction connecting the SUN Trail and the center of the City of Punta Gorda to rural routes.

Peter Dowling asked if the SUN Trail funding could be used for maintenance for existing paths that are part of the SUN Trail system. Gary Harrell stated the SUN Trail funding was for capital expenditures and the local agencies had agreed to maintain the facilities once they were installed.

8. FDOT Bicycle-Pedestrian Coordinator Report

David Agacinski, FDOT, updated the Committee on several FDOT initiatives including: grant funding from the Department of Environmental Protection; extending the SUN Trail funding through FY 2021/2022 which the Florida State Legislature was currently working on; he provided a list of projects throughout the State funded by the SUN Trails; mandatory training for the Safe Routes to Schools Program for those agencies that intend to submit project requests.

Court Nederveld asked if FDOT used Strava in its planning to determine the number of bicyclists in an area. David replied that FDOT does use Strava but he would look into how is currently used.

9. City of Punta Gorda Report

Mitchell Austin stated the City will be conducting a bicycle/pedestrian count on April 6, 2017 as part of its data collection efforts. He reported that the SUN Trails funded bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Alligator Creek has been let for Design. The Harborwalk at Gilchrist project is under construction. He stated that Retta Esplanade will be closed for construction for 6-8 weeks as part of the Harborwalk project. The time frame for the closure will be determined based on the progress of on-going construction. Funding for a bike corral in the City will be brought before the City Council in April. The City is reviewing their sidewalk system and intends to use Transportation Impact fee funds to fill in existing gaps. He stated that the Harborwalk project under the US 41 south bound bridge is complete. It widened the path from five foot width to the current ten foot width.

10. Charlotte County Report

Ravi Kamarajugadda, CC Public Works Traffic Engineer, introduced himself as the County representative to the BPAC. He stated the County does not have any major projects currently underway. The Murdock Village DRI is the next major County project, but is currently being worked by the developer. Once they present their plans the County can brief the Committee on the conceptual plan.

Debrah Forrester, Charlotte County Economic Development, stated the Charlotte Harbor Gateway Project 1B is out for bid. She expects a contractor will be selected for construction by April 5, 2017, and present the contract to the Board of County Commissioners to hire the contractor in May. She estimates construction would start in the summer and it is a 270 day construction period. She then briefed the Committee on projects in the Charlotte Harbor CRA, Parkside CRA and Murdock Village CRA. Sidewalks and multi-use trails (MURTS) are part of each CRA conceptual design.

Court Nederveld stated that FDOT crash data show that the most dangerous place for bicyclists was riding on sidewalks that crossed multiple driveways and intersections. Too often the term MURT is used but is merely a large sidewalk if it is not separated from driveways so they should be considered as wide pedestrian facilities. It is better for bicyclists to ride on the roadway where they are more visible to drivers, preferably on a dedicated bike lane or at least a 14 foot lane that provides room for vehicles and bicycles.

Robert Armstrong asked how many sharrows were on County roadways. It was determined there are none on County roads, but there are many in the City.

Mike Koenig, Charlotte County Community Services reported the Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Greenways Master Plan was again moving forward through the procurement process. He stated the Master Plan would prioritize where the trails would need to go throughout the County to connect County facilities and systems. A primary goal besides connectivity was to provide safe ways for people to get to work and shop by bicycle. The emphasis will be on healthy living by removing barriers to safe walking and biking. Part of the funding for the plan will address maintenance of the existing and future trails.

Court Nederveld reiterated that a study has shown young people are losing interest in driving. The new generation may be an indicator that bicycle facilities may become even more prevalent in transportation

planning as this generation becomes involved in society.

11. Member Comments

Peter Dowling brought up several safety issues including some that were discussed at previous meetings. He asked the status of the flashing warning lights at Rotonda East at the Pioneer Trail crossing that had been discussed at a previous meeting. Ravi Kamarajugadda stated he would follow up on the status of installing the flashing light. Peter asked about the brush on the Cape Haze Pioneer Trail as well as the trailhead parking lot that is blocking sight distance for the intersection of Rotonda East at the Pioneer Trail crossing. Mike Koenig stated that there had been some staffing changes and that he would follow up on the maintenance of the trail which is a Community Services responsibility. Peter then noted that the signage on the roadways leading to the Rotonda East and Cape Haze Pioneer Trail crossings should provide better warning to motorists that a bicycle trail crossing existed, much like there are caution signs for golf cart crossings on the roadway near golf courses. This is especially critical since there is a 90 degree turn on Rotonda Blvd East as it approaches the Trail intersection. He provided examples of signs to Ravi. Peter then noted that the recently completed improvement of Gasparilla Road provides bicycle/pedestrian facilities on the roadway but for users entering the roadway to get on the facilities from side streets there are no crossings even at busy intersections. Ravi stated he had visited the Gasparilla Road completed project and was aware of the issues for the vulnerable users. Ravi then explained that County Public Works had been making a speed study for several roads in the County to determine changing limits on certain roads.

Court Nederveld commented that Washington Loop Road has a blind corner for bicyclists traveling from the north side to the south side near Hathaway Park. He stated that for a roadway such as Washington Loop the County could take down the "Share the Road" signs and put signs that state "Bicyclists may use the full lane."

11. Staff Comments

Gary Harrell introduced Gene Klara, MPO Planner, who will be taking a more active role in the BPAC. Gene introduced several articles he had been researching on the future of bicycling transportation. He then reminded the Committee that team Punta Gorda is holding a "Pedal and Play" bicycle event in Punta Gorda the Weekend of March 25, 2017.

13. Public Comments

Gene Pawlowski stated that solar lighting on signage used in Punta Gorda has been considered a success and that Rotonda should consider using the same system for the signs it is considering installing. He then briefed the Committee on Team Punta Gorda's bicycle loaner program.

14. Adjournment

There was no further business, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.