

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA
GORDA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION AND THE
SARASOTA/MANATEE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

Held on January 28, 2013

The following members were present for the joint meeting of the Charlotte County – Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization on January 28, 2013, at the Morgan Family Center, 6207 W. Price Blvd., North Port, Florida.

Members Present

Charlotte – Punta Gorda MPO Board

Commissioner Christopher Constance	Charlotte County Commission
Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch	Charlotte County Commission
Commissioner Ken Doherty	Charlotte County Commission
Council Member Carolyn Freeland	City of Punta Gorda
Commissioner James Herston	Charlotte County Airport Authority

Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board

Commissioner Larry Bustle	Manatee County Commission
Commissioner Betsy Benac	Manatee County Commission
Commissioner John Chappie	Manatee County Commission
Councilman Patrick Roff	City of Bradenton
Commissioner Joseph Barbetta	Sarasota County Commission
Commissioner Nora Patterson	Sarasota County Commission
Commissioner Christine Robinson	Sarasota County Commission
Commissioner Paul Caragiulo	City of Sarasota
Commissioner Shannon Snyder	City of Sarasota
Mayor Linda Yates	City of North Port
Mayor Shirley Groover Bryant	City of Palmetto
Councilman Jim Bennett	City of Venice
Commissioner Phill Younger	Town of Longboat Key
Commissioner Jack Rynerson	Sarasota-Manatee Airport Authority

Member Absent

Mayor SueLynn	Island Transportation Planning Organization (ITPO) Anna Maria, Bradenton Beach & Holmes Beach
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Non-Voting Advisors

Secretary Billy Hattaway	FDOT District One
Commissioner DiFranco	City of North Port (Advisory)

Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO Staff

Robert Herrington, Director
Bekie Murrill-Bood, Administrative Services Coordinator
Gary Harrell, Principal Planner
Lakshmi N. Gurram, Planner II
Wendy Scott, Planner II
Daniel Gallagher, MPO Legal

Sarasota/Manatee MPO Staff

Michael Howe, Executive Director
David Hutchinson, Planning Manager
Sue Clapsaddle, Human Resources/Fiscal Manager
Nanette Eubanks, Office Manager
Keith Drake, Principal Planner
Mike Maholtz, Transportation Planner
Jim Van Pelt, Public Transportation Planner

Others Attending

Bill Truex, Charlotte County Commissioner
Danny Bilyeu, Office of Congressman Buchanan
Roxann Lake, FDOT
Phil Catalano, FDOT
Jennifer Stults, FDOT
Chris Smith, FDOT
Debbie Tower, FDOT
Richard Shine, FDOT
Bob Hamm, CDM Smith
Amy Davies, CDM Smith
Jennifer Palmer, CDM Smith
Jared Schneider, Tindale-Oliver
Ernest R. Gerlach, GECl
Ned Baier, Jacobs Engineering
Ravi Devaguptapu, FTE
Scott Farash, FTE
Don Hammack, Bowyer Singleton
Nick Lepp, Renaissance Planning Group
Richard Hartman, Transitopia
Charles Ray, PPM Consultants, Inc.
Paula Wiggins, Sarasota County
Glama Carter, Sarasota County Area Transit
Sarah Blanchard, Sarasota County Area Transit
Mark Cunningham, Sarasota County

Brett Harrington, Sarasota County Planning

Others Attending

James Harriott, Sarasota County
Sage Kamiya, Manatee County
Michelle Norton, City of North Port
Ben Newman, City of North Port
Ken Maturo, City of North Port
Julie Bellia, City of North Port Public Works
Jim Bennett, City of Venice
Alex Davis Shaw, City of Sarasota
Claude Tankersley, City of Bradenton
Kelly Shoemaker, Charlotte County
Vikki Carpenter, Charlotte County Human Services
Fred McKenna, Charlotte County Transit
Hector Flores, Charlotte County
Rich Weingarten, Charlotte County Budget/Admin
Kelly Hunter, Charlotte County Homeless Coalition
David Justiniano, Charlotte County Homeless Coalition
Tess Canja, AARP
Dorian Popescu, S/M MPO/CAC
Naomi Manning, CC-PG MPO/CAC & LCB
Steve Schoff, CC-PG MPO/CAC
Joe Blais, CC-PG MPO/CAC
Clarke Davis, Citizen
Steve Reilly, Englewood Sun Herald
Scott Lockwood, North Port Sun

Call To Order

Commissioner Patterson called the Joint MPO Board Meeting to order, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. She noted that Commissioner Constance would be chairing the meeting unless there was a need for a vote solely of the Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board, at which time she would chair that portion. Commissioner Patterson thanked North Port Mayor Yates and the City of North Port for providing the meeting site. Former North Port Commissioner Fred Tower and Charlotte County Commissioner Bill Truex were also recognized.

Agenda Item #I – Opening Comments

A. Welcome by Chairs and Board Member Introductions

Commissioner Constance thanked Mayor Yates for hosting the meeting. He welcomed the members of both MPO Boards and asked them to introduce themselves and state the member governments that they represented.

B. FDOT District Secretary Billy Hattaway

Secretary Hattaway stated that he enjoyed seeing all the MPO Board members together. He commented on FDOT's statewide initiative to improve Bicycle/Pedestrian Safety. He referred to the Dangerous By Design study, in which Florida was named as one of the four most dangerous states for bicycle/pedestrian safety. Under FDOT Secretary Prasad's directive, a statewide plan is being rolled out with emphasis on the top ten counties in need of safety improvement. In FDOT District One, Lee and Polk Counties are in the top ten group and will receive increased media and law enforcement. However, he noted that the other Florida counties weren't being neglected and will benefit from these efforts.

Commissioner Constance stated that Secretary Hattaway might be interested in the excellent job that the City of Punta Gorda was doing with the Ring Around the City project, especially as it relates to bicycle/pedestrian safety.

Agenda Item #II – Open to the Public

Commissioner Constance asked if any member of the public wished to comment. No one wished to speak.

Agenda Item #III – Regional Discussion Items

1. US 41 Transit Latent Demand Study for Possible Transit Service Between Sarasota County and Charlotte County (Renaissance Planning Group)

Bob Herrington introduced Nick Lepp from Renaissance Planning Group who gave an update on the joint US 41 Latent Demand Study. Mr. Lepp referred Board Members to a PowerPoint handout, stating that the study was currently in the data and analysis phase. The study examines the areas of land use density, land use diversity and demographics, combining the three to obtain data termed "transit supportive areas." Current ridership was analyzed and revealed heavy concentrations in the Town Center, Murdock Circle, and Port Charlotte Hospital District (Parkside) areas. Mr. Lepp described the study's analysis of where people in the area lived and worked. He discussed a layered analysis of transit supportive areas, existing Dial-a-Ride destinations and where people live and work which yielded a map of zones of major destinations. With this information, an assessment will be made of possible corridors/connections and potential routing areas.

Mr. Lepp stated that upcoming presentations would be conducted at a meeting of the Latent Demand Focus Group in February and the March 8, 2013 Joint Meeting of the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners and the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners.

Commissioner Deutsch asked for an estimate of the average cost per rider of the current Charlotte Dial-a-Ride system. Fred McKenna, Charlotte County Transit Operations Supervisor, indicated that it was approximately \$20-21 per ride. Nora Patterson asked for Sarasota County staff to comment on their fixed route transit system cost per ride. Glama Carter, Sarasota County Area Transit Manager, noted that the cost was \$4.86 per rider with 13% of the cost being recovered from the farebox receipts (rider fees).

Councilman Bennett noted that it could be beneficial longterm to establish service that includes Punta Gorda and its Airport, since many of his constituents in Venice might be interested in flying out of that location. Mr. Lepp indicated that the service could possibly be expanded in the future for that location as well as Englewood.

Commissioner Doherty asked how data was collected for the Dial-a-Ride trips. Mr. Lepp noted that transit reports on destination were summarized based upon address.

Councilmember Freeland asked when funding would be investigated. Mr. Lepp stated that potential funding had not been addressed yet but would be later.

Commissioner Robinson expressed an interest in service to the Englewood area. Commissioner Constance stated that he assumed the Venice to Englewood ridership might not be adequate. Mr. Lepp noted that the strongest concentration of transit demand seemed to be in the North Port/Port Charlotte area, so it was a likely first step for a route.

Commissioner Patterson stated that cross county transit service had been the subject of 14 years of conversation, but dollars have always been a concern. Since the federal government requires ADA compatible service along a route, Charlotte's Dial-a-Ride system could be sufficiently situated to do the trip. She observed that it would be nice to get this finally started with at least one route.

Commissioner Constance indicated that there was demand from medical employees who live in North Port and work in the Parkside area. He stated that parking at those hospitals is an issue. He was hopeful that the transit service would come to fruition.

Mayor Yates inquired about how the data reflected where the potential passenger trips would originate. Mr. Lepp indicated that this was contained in the layers of analysis. Mayor Yates questioned whether this proposed route could integrate with a potential trolley system along the US 41 corridor. Mr. Lepp indicated that this issue could be examined in March when routing

options were considered. He stated that there were not a lot of trips originating on US 41, and there would be a need to get into the neighborhoods to pick up passengers.

Commissioner Deutsch commented on the expense of public transportation. He noted that systems always require a subsidy. He described Atlantic City's independent jitney service where vehicles are hailed, and wondered if such a system could work in this area.

He was interested to learn of Sarasota's relatively inexpensive cost of fixed route service provision, especially as it compared to the cost of taxi cab rides.

2. MPO Regional Cooperation (MPO Staff Directors)

Michael Howe related that following the 2000 Census, each of the two MPOs had received a 2003 letter from the FDOT Secretary on behalf of Governor Bush requesting that the two MPOs consider merging. Because of the size and complexity of the area, both MPOs wanted to remain separate entities. FDOT accepted this response with the understanding that joint planning efforts would occur. Mr. Howe reviewed regional cooperative transportation planning efforts, including prioritizing TRIP and Trails projects. He stated that the MPOs were doing a good job with regional cooperation.

Bob Herrington described how each MPO recently had received a letter very similar to the one from 2003. In it, FDOT Secretary Prasad on behalf of Governor Scott requested that the two MPOs consider merging in light of the 2010 Census data. Mr. Herrington noted that both MPOs are engaged in constant regional discussions and had just updated their interlocal agreement. He stated that Charlotte County has a similar agreement with the Lee County MPO. He also noted that all the District One MPOs meet quarterly in the Coordinated Urban Transportation Study (CUTS) group. The two MPO staffs noted that the response to the letter from the prior Census still remains true and there is no apparent need to consolidate. It was requested that District One Secretary Hattaway pass this information on to FDOT Central Office staff. Mr. Herrington noted that some additional adjustments toward regional coordination could be considered, such as having cross county members as voting members on the Technical Advisory Committees (TACs), as is now done with the Lee County MPO) or joint meetings for both Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs). Both MPO Directors looked to the two MPO Boards for direction regarding interest in the potential consolidation of the MPOs. He stated that 75% of the urban area population area would need to agree to consolidation. A followup response letter to the FDOT Secretary regarding consolidation was requested.

Councilman Bennett noted that it was a political and economic fact that not much has changed in the local transportation scene since the last time the consolidation question was asked. He acknowledged that he hasn't seen any changes that would warrant doing something different at this time. He noted that geography plays a significant part in Charlotte County with its Peace River basin, unlike in Sarasota and Manatee Counties.

Nora Patterson indicated that she preferred that the two MPOs not merge. Commissioner Roff noted that Manatee County was becoming an urban center in the Greater Tampa Bay area, as Bradenton was becoming more urban. He observed that looking at Charlotte County, southern Sarasota County and eastern Manatee County, one should assess what was the greater good of the greater number of people, and this would argue for keeping the present arrangement.

Commissioner Patterson commented on the how closely the region's elected officials work together on various authorities and commissions. She stated that this long record of working cooperatively across county lines showed that not merging MPOs was no rebuff to regional coordination at all, but merely a reflection of the complex and different issues that each individual MPO encounters.

*In a vote of the Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board: **Mayor Linda Yates** made a motion to not consolidate the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO and the Sarasota/Manatee County MPO but to continue to work together to regionally coordinate. **Mayor Shirley Groover Bryant** seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Commissioner Deutsch stated that he was excited about regional cooperation with both the Lee MPO to the south and the Sarasota/Manatee MPO to the north. Commissioner Doherty noted that the cooperation between the two MPOs has been good. He described how the status quo makes sense and the framework already is in place. Commissioner Constance reiterated that it was important that Board Members from both MPOs did not feel the need to join as a single body, even though at times they almost work as one. He used the example of Charlotte County funds that had been used on Winchester Blvd, which showed the MPOs were willing to put up political capital. He also pointed to cooperation with the Lee County MPO on Burnt Store Road improvements. He stated that it was important that Secretary Hattaway carry the message to FDOT that the system for regional cooperation was already in place.

*In a vote of the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Board: **Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch** made a motion to not consolidate the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO and the Sarasota/Manatee County MPO but to continue to work together to regionally coordinate. **Commissioner Ken Doherty** seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Commissioner Patterson referred to the 2003 letter in the agenda packet, stating that a similar response letter is required.

*In a vote of the two MPOs: **Commissioner Nora Patterson** made a motion that the Staff Directors from both MPOs format a mutual letter to FDOT regarding both MPO Boards' action not to consolidate (with authorization for the Chairs of both MPO Boards to sign the letter). **Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch** seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

3. I-75 Transportation Alternatives Study and Projects Update (FDOT Staff and Consultant)

Michael Howe introduced Jennifer Stults, FDOT District One, who began the presentation. She described a Sketch Level Plan for the southern portion of the I-75 Corridor that had been completed two years ago. Ms. Stultz introduced Mr. Bob Hamm, CDM Smith, who briefed MPO Board Members on the statewide I-75 Transportation Alternatives Study. Mr. Smith characterized the I-75 corridor as crucial, since it serves 4.5 million Floridians in 15 counties, constituting 24% of the total state population. It also contains key SIS components, including ports and airports. The study analyzes existing and future conditions, documents capacity deficiencies and identifies proposed improvements.

Mr. Hamm outlined several options which included adding capacity to parallel corridors, developing new parallel corridors, instituting managed lanes, as well as utilizing modal alternatives and pricing strategies. Additional information is available at www.I-75Alternatives.com

Commissioner Deutsch stated that much attention should be paid to waterways in light of Panama Canal improvements. He also noted his desire that the State take greater responsibility for the maintenance of key intercounty evacuation roadways such as Burnt Store and River Road.

Councilman Bennett noted that it would be hard to improve upon the results of the commendable interstate improvements done along I-75 in the area of exit 193.

Mayor Yates inquired how intermodal transportation such as shipping and freight is coordinated into the I-75 Transportation Alternatives Study. In response to further questioning, Bob Hamm stated there was a lack of air cargo currently in the I-75 corridor, since 90% of activity was centered on the southeast coast of Florida. He indicated that a statewide air cargo study was being completed.

Commissioner Barbetta commented on how I-75 has become a local road in places, and stated that FDOT needs to improve parallel alternative road networks to I-75 since interchanges can't support such local use of the interstate. Following up on Commissioner Barbetta's remarks, Commissioner Doherty asked Jennifer Stults how rural counties, which do not have MPOs, get their needs addressed. She stated that the rural counties are coordinated through their Board of County Commissioners. She gave examples of work along US17 and US27 as future corridors. Commissioner Doherty noted that it is often difficult to get to the Florida east coast, which forces drivers to utilize the back routes. Commissioner Constance commented on how very dangerous some cross-state two lane roads can be.

Mayor Yates stressed the importance of the air freight industry to Florida's west coast. She stated that it will need to be considered as ports develop. She noted that ease of access to I-75 will provide an edge for economic development.

Commissioner Patterson referred to agenda package attachment 5 in order to discuss the long leadtimes on improvements to the I-75 interchange at University Parkway. With the development of an international rowing facility and major shopping mall in that location she noted that the interchange is already close to capacity. Jennifer Stults stated that some work is now happening, but it is an ongoing challenge. She described how even when the interchange is fully expanded, the problem relates to the inability of the local roads to handle the traffic volume. Commissioner Joe Barbetta also commented on this Lakewood Ranch area issue. Commissioner

Patterson stressed that in evaluating Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) needs, FDOT should study this situation which will turn into a major problem.

Commissioner Constance inquired about where the choke points were located along I-75 (with the exception of overpasses and bridges). Bob Hamm indicated that with right of way there was the potential to extend the interstate to eight lanes. Commissioner Constance also noted that the state was currently a donor in regards to gasoline tax equity and stated that dollars generated in the area need to be spent on transportation improvements in this area. He also noted that he'd recently become aware of the West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee. He said the need existed in the southwest Florida area for a similar coordinating body.

Commissioner Doherty and Mayor Yates noted that the rural counties should also be included in such a regional approach.

4. Englewood Interstate Connector (River Road and Winchester Boulevard)

Bob Herrington introduced the topic by providing a brief history of the projects over the years.

Commissioner Deutsch stated that it was imperative that River Road be improved and widened. He indicated that Charlotte County MPO Board members would support the Sarasota/Manatee MPO's efforts in this regard.

Commissioner Robinson noted that the southern portion of River Road would be repaved later this year. She asked Michael Howe about the placement of the project on the priority list. He indicated that it was added to the major project priority list around 2000 at Sarasota County's request. Although past efforts had centered on trying to get the project on the list to receive federal earmarked funding, such monies are no longer available. The project is currently in the Sarasota/Manatee Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and is shown as impact fee developer funded. Mr. Howe described how it becomes a funding challenge as a policy decision for Sarasota County. It is currently broken into two sections (north and south of US 41). He referred Board Members to attachment 3 in their packets. Mr. Howe characterized the issue as a policy debate which he deferred to the local jurisdictions. He described River Road as a critical regional roadway to Englewood as well as a regional connector to Venice and the North Port area.

Commissioner Patterson stated that the issue was all about money and priorities. River Road had been second to the top on the Sarasota/Manatee MPO priority list for federal grants. \$20 Million was needed for right-of-way and design plus a complex analysis was needed, making the project controversial. At this time, very little federal funding was available. She stressed that the project should be worked into the program, but the problem was determining what projects ahead of it should be bumped, naming a number of important efforts currently underway. She pointed out that being a two county MPO, Board Members from the Manatee County area will seek equity in the funding of their projects. She stated that Charlotte County also needs River Road.

Noting that River Road has always been a priority, Commissioner Barbetta said that a desired TIGER grant did not materialize, and the estimated cost to raise the road was \$75-90 Million. Commissioner Doherty requested that staff provide him with the project prioritization criteria for inclusion in the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Staff agreed to followup with the information.

Commissioner Robinson asked about the upcoming Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) schedule. The next plan is due in 2015, so the process will be started in 2014. She noted that tough policy decisions will need to be made at that time.

Mayor Yates commented that from the City of North Port's perspective, River Road impacts the entire region, and it needs to be a federal and state legislative priority.

Commissioner Patterson questioned Michael Howe about the status of the ATMS program. He stated that \$6.4 Million is needed to complete ATMS to the currently-planned phases.

Bob Herrington stated that Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) funding negotiations occur annually. Regarding funding for River Road improvements, he said that the two MPO Boards may wish to consider duplicating the action taken by the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO and the Lee County MPO with TRIP funding for Burnt Store Road, should TRIP funding become available. Michael Howe stated that a TRIP project doesn't have to be on an MPO's regular prioritization list, just the regional TRIP list developed with a partner MPO. Commissioner Patterson pointed out that TRIP funding has been very meager.

Commissioner Constance thanked everyone for a healthy discussion of River Road, saying the conversation was a stepping off point.

Agenda Item #4 – Board Member Comments

Many MPO Board Members commented on the success of the two Boards in working cooperatively together and thanked the two Chairs for a well-run meeting.

Commissioner Patterson thanked Commissioner Constance for chairing the meeting and the Board Members for their positive comments. She noted that it had been a long time since the two MPOs had met jointly and expressed a desire to meet more frequently. She noted that funding is always part of the discussion when the MPOs meet. She observed that the State has been balancing the budget with the Transportation Trust Fund and hopefully, as the economy brightens, more transportation funding will become available again.

Bob Herrington recommended that a regular annual meeting be scheduled. Commissioner Constance indicated that there was consensus among the MPO Board Members for this, calling it a healthy exercise.

Commissioner Constance asked that whenever MPO Board Members were talking to their local and state representatives, they note that this region was a gasoline tax donor. He agreed with Commissioner Patterson that funding was always an issue and that jointly the Board Members were committed to be a regional voice, which through unity, could drive the funding debate forward.

Commissioner Patterson noted that the Sarasota/Manatee Board would meet immediately following a ten minute break.

Agenda Item #5 – Adjournment of Joint Regional Meeting

Meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.