

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE of the
COLLIER METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MEETING MINUTES
January 23, 2023, 2:00 p.m.**

1. Call to Order

Ms. Middelstaedt called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Siegler called the roll and confirmed a quorum was present.

CAC Members Present

Elaine Middelstaedt, Chair
Dennis DiDonna
Fred Sasser
Karen Homiak
Neal Gelfand, Vice-Chair

CAC Members Absent

Dennis Stalzer
Josh Rincon
Rick Hart
Stephen Spahr

MPO Staff

Anne McLaughlin, Executive Director
Dusty Siegler, Administrative Assistant

Others Present

Alex Showalter, Collier Area Transit
Bill Howell, HW Lochner
Jacob Stauffer, Collier Area Transit
Lorraine Lantz, Collier County Transportation Planning
Michelle Arnold, Collier County Public Transit Neighborhood Enhancement
Nicole Harris, Stantec, FDOT Interstate Program Office

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

Ms. Middelstaedt indicated that MPO Staff requested the order of the agenda be changed to have Reports and Presentations (Item 8) occur after Public Comments (Item 5).

Ms. Homiak moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Sasser seconded. Carried unanimously.

4. **Approval of the November 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Homiak moved to approve the November 28, 2022 meeting minutes. Mr. Sasser seconded. Carried unanimously.

5. **Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda**

None.

6. **Agency Updates**

A. FDOT

Ms. McLaughlin indicated that Ms. Victoria Peters was unable to make it to the meeting. Ms. Peters wanted to inform everyone about the public outreach for the Interstate 75 South Corridor Master Plan. There will be a Live Q&A Webinar on February 15, beginning at 6 p.m., and an in-person public meeting on February 16, from 5 to 7 p.m., at the North Collier Regional Park, Exhibit Hall.

B. MPO Executive Director

Ms. McLaughlin explained that there were a few handouts provided at the meeting: a 2020 census map provided by Don Scott (Lee MPO) for Item 7.D., and a revised Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan Update Scope of Work for Item 7.C.

This year, per MPO policy, SU funding (approximately \$5 to \$6 million) is slated for prioritization of projects related to planning, safety and new bridges. Planning is essentially spoken for; a list was provided to the MPO Board in June, 2022. Ms. McLaughlin has provided forms to key staff for the County, the City of Naples and Marco Island. Tim Brock from Everglades City also expressed interest at the TAC meeting earlier in the morning.

7. **Committee Action**

A. Elect Chair and Vice-Chair

Ms. Homiak moved elect Ms. Middelstaedt as Chair and Mr. Gelfand as Vice-Chair. Mr. Sasser seconded. Carried unanimously.

Ms. Middelstaedt stated that she will miss next month's CAC meeting, as she will be out-of-state. Mr. Gelfand will chair next month's CAC meeting.

B. Endorse Automated Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Scope

Ms. McLaughlin explained that the MPO desires to automate the transfer of data for the TIP, which is provided by FDOT in an Excel spreadsheet, to a more user-friendly format and to include familiar, pertinent information. The MPO would also like to have a searchable GIS map. The intention is that the vendor provide training and standard operating procedures to MPO Staff so that the work can be done in-house in the future. FDOT used to provide the features, but only does so for its own projects now. MPO Staff would like to provide the Scope and a work order to the MPO Board at its February meeting. TAC endorsed the Scope at its meeting earlier in the morning.

Ms. Homiak moved to endorse the Automated Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Scope. Mr. Gelfand seconded. Carried unanimously.

C. Endorse Scope of Services for Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update

Ms. McLaughlin indicated that the handout provided at the beginning of the meeting is a revised Scope of Services for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (BPMP) Update, which includes the revisions suggested by BPAC at their January 17 meeting.

The BPMP Update is relevant to the forthcoming 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update. The Scope is intended to provide the consultant with an idea of what resources to use and the focus in developing the Update. One of the purposes is to update the methodology for when a call for bicycle/pedestrian projects is issued for SU and Transportation Alternative (TA) funding (projects would also be eligible for carbon reduction formula funds). BPAC also wanted to identify regional priorities to support potential applications by member governments or the MPO for recreational trail programs and SUN Trail. BPAC wants to ensure that regional connections between Collier and Lee MPOs remain maintained. There is also a focus by the County and the Cities on neighborhood scale improvements. The importance of safety has also been emphasized in the Scope. After the BPAC Chair gave his report to the MPO Board at its last meeting, the MPO Board expressed a great deal of interest regarding safety, especially from an education standpoint. Some of the key components of the Scope are robust public involvement to target specific stakeholders, including potentially partnering with local community groups/nonprofits, participating in community events, and multi-lingual and translation services. BPAC also discussed the benefits of print, radio and television for the traditional media outreach component. Much work has been done since the last BPMP Update in terms of local bicycle/pedestrian plans and regional connections (*e.g.*,

U.S. Bike Route 15, SUN Trail updates, recent FDOT data gathered for its target zero initiative). Between old funding and new funding, there is a potential increase of \$1.4 to \$1.5 million.

Regarding the evaluation criteria/scoring matrix, BPAC felt it previously had too little to consider when ranking and prioritizing projects. Expanded criteria was included in the current, draft Scope. TAC, at its meeting earlier in the morning, suggested simplifying and consolidating the criteria. TAC endorsed the revised Scope with TAC's suggested revisions.

Ms. McLaughlin asked if CAC had any questions, revisions or additions to the Scope. **Mr. Gelfand** asked whether electric bikes are fast or slow. **Ms. McLaughlin** responded that many go very fast. Two MPO Board members had expressed concern regarding electric bikes. Commissioner Kowal wanted to work directly with the County Attorney to develop a draft ordinance regarding riding bikes against traffic. The MPO Board approved a motion for an ordinance to be drafted. Commissioner Hall wanted the ordinance to include where it is appropriate to ride electric bikes. The MPO Board wants BPAC to review and comment on the draft ordinance. MPO Staff intends to provide the draft ordinance to TAC and CAC for review and comment as well. The draft ordinance may be provided to BPAC at its February meeting. Electric bikes are heavier and faster and have caused consternation all over the country because of the safety issues and hazards they present to pedestrians and drivers.

***Mr. Gelfand** moved to endorse the Scope of Services for Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update as revised by BPAC and TAC. **Mr. Sasser** seconded. Passed 4:1 with **Mr. DiDonna** dissenting.*

Mr. DiDonna stated that he does not support any bike paths until there are bike paths in North Naples. Further, a new high school is being built in North Naples and there is currently no way to get there by bicycle. **Ms. McLaughlin** pointed out that the County is including shared use paths for both cyclists/pedestrians on new roads, but sometimes on only one side of the road. **Mr. DiDonna** commented that there is no connection from the new high school to the west side of Collier County.

D. Clear and Block Date for Tentative Joint Meeting with Lee County CAC

Ms. McLaughlin explained that the 2020 census map handout provided at the beginning of the meeting impacts when a joint meeting with Lee County CAC would be. Don Scott, Director of Lee MPO and TAC member, provided the newly released map that morning. MPO Staff has been trying to schedule joint meetings between TAC, CAC and the MPO Boards for the fall. Urban area decennial census releases reanalyze urban areas. The recent release (2020) also redefined how urban areas would be designated and calculated. A portion of Collier County's designated urban area had crept into Lee County in 2010. Therefore, as part of the formula funds, Collier County was getting a small portion of Lee County's planning/project money. At that time, the lost funding was not enough to generate a great deal of concern on Lee MPO's part. It is a difficult issue to address because when it has happened in the past, there has been a push from FHWA to consolidate the MPOs. Collier MPO Board, understandably, did not want to lose their control over their own region. With the recent census release, the portion of Lee County designated for Collier County urban funding has increased dramatically. SU and TA funding will be impacted. FHWA may push for consolidation again. Another potential solution is some sort of agreement where funding is allocated by County lines. The MPO Advisory Council, as is typical after a census release,

has advised that planning allocation formulas need to be revisited, which has to be decided by early October. Therefore, joint meetings would need to take place before the fall and likely in the summer. **Ms. Middelstaedt** commented that Collier BCC and Everglades City Council are no longer taking a summer break from meetings. **Mr. Gelfand** asked how urbanization is defined. **Ms. McLaughlin** responded that it has much to do with population density, but she would need to look up the other criteria. It is established at the Federal level.

Mr. DiDonna asked whether there would be a virtual attendance option at a joint CAC meeting. **Ms. McLaughlin** responded that there would need to be an in-person quorum. **Mr. DiDonna** indicated that he would like the ability to participate in a joint meeting virtually. **Ms. McLaughlin** responded that it would depend upon the meeting location and meeting room capabilities, as well as what the two MPOs are willing to do. If the joint meeting occurred in May, Mr. DiDonna would be able to attend in-person. Otherwise, staff would need to follow up to determine whether virtual attendance would be an option.

8. Reports and Presentation (May Require Committee Action)

A. South Corridor Master Plan - FDOT Interstate Program Office

Ms. Harris provided a presentation regarding FDOT's South Corridor Master Plan. The conditions of I-75, origin and destination data, and how people use I-75 were analyzed. The preliminary list of proposed projects includes interchange improvements and configurations and mainline segment improvements from Collier Boulevard in Naples to Bayshore Road in North Fort Myers, and the timeframes for which the improvements are needed (even with funding, it is not likely that the target year would be met). On the southern part of the south corridor (from Collier Boulevard to Corkscrew Road), there is a need for general use lane(s) and an auxiliary lane. On the northern part of the south corridor (from Corkscrew Road to Bayshore Road), there is a need for managed lanes - use lanes, auxiliary lanes, and lanes that are separated from the other traffic. The local lanes should ease congestion for those who use the Interstate to travel locally. Some interchanges only need minor improvements. The Plan does not contemplate tolling for the local lanes; a separate study is being conducted regarding tolling. The width between the northbound and southbound lanes would be a least 40 feet. There has not yet been a decision regarding whether there would be a barrier or a buffer between the local lanes and the thru lanes. The Plan includes the ability to access the thru lanes from the local lanes at interchanges. The auxiliary lanes typically go from interchange to interchange and can be exited at each exit, but the traveler may not be able to get into the thru lanes at each of the interchanges.

Mr. DiDonna expressed concern regarding the number of lanes planned for construction in the North Fort Myers area, as well as the impact on bridges. **Ms. Harris** responded that the issues will be evaluated as the Plan moves into the PD&E phase. **Mr. DiDonna** commented that a recent study provided to CAC indicated that approximately 44% of the traffic that comes off of Alligator Alley is headed to Tampa. Mr. DiDonna suggested that instead of widening I-75, there should be a bypass for traffic coming from the Miami area (similar to the Sawgrass Expressway in Fort Lauderdale.) **Ms. Harris** responded that the South Corridor Plan is based off of the existing traffic and anticipated traffic, based on approved land use and development. The planned thru lanes are the lanes the traffic would be in, which would reduce congestion in both the local lanes and the thru lanes. **Mr. DiDonna** emphasized that it would be better to

have a bypass. **Ms. Homiak** commented that additional right-of-way would need to be purchased for a bypass, and there would also be environmental impact issues. A bypass would be much more expensive. **Ms. Middelstaedt** added that there was previously an attempt to include a corridor up the center of Florida, and it was rejected. **Mr. DiDonna** responded that he is concerned about safety; in the case of an emergency, such as a hurricane, there is not an additional route.

Ms. Harris continued that public meetings have been scheduled by FDOT: a live online session and Q&A will take place on February 15 and an in-person meeting will take place on February 16 at North Collier Regional Park. FDOT hopes to finalize the Master Plan by summer. From there, an implementation plan will prioritize the projects along all of I-75 and I-4 in District 1. The approach is to complete an interchange and mainline segment piece by piece based on year of need and available funding.

B. Collier County Public Transportation & Neighborhood Enhancement Division Report on Collier Area Transit (CAT)

Ms. Arnold provided a presentation regarding Public Transit & Neighborhood Enhancement (PTNE), and explained what PTNE is and what it does. In addition to transit, PTNE has a Municipal Service Taxing/Benefit Units that provides communities with various improvements. **Ms. Arnold** discussed Collier Area Transit (CAT) information and current operations statistics related to its fixed route system and paratransit system, as well as performance measures, planning functions, assets, and asset management.

PTNE has been coordinating with FDOT regarding a van pool it has implemented with several community businesses, which appears to be successful. There are many travelers between the two counties. **Mr. Gelfand** commented that he heard 48,000 people commute into Collier County daily and asked if **Ms. Arnold** knew how many of them use public transit. **Ms. Arnold** responded that she was unsure of the percentage, but CAT does coordinate with LeeTran and has a connector service on Immokalee Road for which ridership is high.

Mr. Gelfand stated that at a previous BCC meeting a few years ago, in comparing benchmarks of CAT and LeeTran, one of the issues was wait times for CAT buses (the routes in Collier County are longer than the ones in Lee County), and asked **Ms. Arnold** if she had an update on the issue. **Ms. Arnold** responded that the ability for CAT to provide bus service in shorter increments of time hinges upon the ability to add more buses/drivers per run, which would require greater financial commitment. During peak times, there are shorter wait times. **Mr. DiDonna** asked what the load factor for the buses is; the available seats compared to the actual number of passengers. **Mr. DiDonna** wondered whether CAT could use smaller, more efficient (such as electric) buses. **Ms. Arnold** responded that CAT does have a few hybrid buses. With respect to load factor, it fluctuates hourly. **Mr. DiDonna** indicated he would like to know how many seats are available versus how many are seats are filled. **Ms. Arnold** indicated that CAT's passenger per hour calculations might be helpful to answer **Mr. DiDonna's** question, and that she could get the information for him.

Mr. DiDonna asked whether the CAT bus service on Bluebill Avenue was ever started again, as the beach access near Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park is still open. People currently have to walk across the bridge and in the street. **Ms. Arnold** responded that CAT is coordinating with Parks & Recreation to

determine what to do because Delnor-Wiggins is not open. A potential alternate route is being explored. Previously, CAT would enter the park, which enabled the bus to be turned around, but the turnaround without going into the park is very tight.

Mr. DiDonna asked if there were any plans for GPS locators and bus trackers at the bus stops so that passengers can tell where the buses are at. **Ms. Arnold** responded that CAT has an app that allows passengers to see where the buses are on their phones, but there are not trackers at the bus stops. There are trackers at the transfer stations. **Mr. DiDonna** asked when CAT anticipates switching to electric buses. **Ms. Arnold** responded that one electric bus is being ordered to be built to pilot the technology; CAT expects to have the bus within the next 24 months. Any routes would depend upon the range of the bus.

Mr. Gelfand asked, as the population density changes, what the criteria are to determine whether to start a new bus route. **Ms. Arnold** responded that PTNE works with the County's development department, so that when developments get planned, the potential for the anticipated population to utilize transit is evaluated. For example, the area along Oil Well Road is being built up. CAT does serve the area now and has made modifications to move some of the service that was along Immokalee Road to increase capacity along Oil Well Road. **Mr. DiDonna** asked if there are plans for a route along Old 41; there are not sidewalks or bike paths and there is high-speed traffic. **Ms. Arnold** responded that CAT does not currently have anything scheduled along Old 41. One reason is because for public transit, there needs to be sidewalks so that passengers have a way to walk safely to get to the bus. There are scheduled plans to construct pathways along Old 41. Once that is in place, CAT would evaluate the need for a route. **Ms. McLaughlin** added that Old 41 sidewalks/pathways are currently part of an FDOT initiative. The PD&E is completed and FDOT has asked both Collier and Lee MPOs for money for the design phase, which is included in one of the outer years of the 2024-2028 work program. It is being funded phase by phase. There is typically a two-year gap between design and construction.

9. Member Comments

Mr. DiDonna asked Ms. McLaughlin if she knew what was going on in North Naples at Kalea Bay; there is an attempt to add five stories to the building. Some action was taken during the summer and Mr. DiDonna did not get any notification. **Ms. McLaughlin** indicated that the County (BCC and Planning Commission) would be better able to answer such a question; the MPO is separate from the County. MPO Staff does not follow land use. **Ms. Lantz** indicated that zoning and comprehensive planning may be able to answer Mr. DiDonna's question. **Mr. Gelfand** asked if the potential addition of new stories at Kalea Bay would impact the Congestion Management (CM) Plan. If so, would CAC be informed, and would the CM Plan have to be adjusted? **Ms. McLaughlin** responded that the CM Plan is actually the CM Process and was recently updated in 2022. The CM Process sets forth the methodology by which SU funds for congestion management will be used to help solve congestions issues. Included are Federal categories that must be addressed, such as safety, schools, equity, *et cetera*. If there was a major shift in a land use decision at the County level that was significant enough to register on a regional transportation model, it would likely be brought to the attention of the MPO at the long-range transportation planning phase. **Ms. Lantz** added that adding traffic to roads and then moving into the LRTP are two aspects of transportation planning. The daily aspect is when a developer wants to build a project, they are required to go to zoning or comprehensive planning. Building compatibility with current land use, correct zoning, and the required

traffic impact statement, among other things, are evaluated. If there would be an impact to congestion, the developer contributes to the five-year work program or the LRTP to help ease congestion. This is addressed by Collier County's Planning Commission and the BCC. After a development is built, transportation planning monitors the trips and develops a report setting forth capacity for major roads. This is used to develop the five-year work program, which then impacts the LRTP. **Mr. Sasser** commented that the process seems to address congestion too late instead of before it has started, and gave the example of Immokalee Road. Developments seem to be built faster than the roads can be expanded. **Mr. DiDonna** commented that Wiggins Pass Road is outdated and over-loaded; the potential addition of more stories at Kalea Bay is a problem. Bike paths may be addressed on Wiggins Pass Road, but not until 2027. Old 41 is dangerous and is not going to be fixed until 2029. Developers have been paying impact fees and the improvements should have already been completed. Not having a way to get to the new high school from the west will also increase traffic.

10. Distribution Items

A. Veterans Memorial Boulevard Extension Update

Item distributed.

11. Next Meeting Date

February 27, 2023, 2:00 p.m. –Transportation Management Services Bldg. Main Conference Room, 2885 S. Horseshoe Dr., Naples, FL, 34104 – in person. Mr. Gelfand will chair the meeting.

12. Adjournment

Ms. Middelstaedt adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.