

**Collier Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Board of County Commission Chambers  
Collier County Government Center  
3299 Tamiami Trail East, 3rd Floor  
Naples, FL 34112  
April 11, 2025 | 9:30 a.m.**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**\*\*HYBRID REMOTE – IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

**Chair Kowal** called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

**Ms. Hansen** called roll and confirmed a quorum was present in the room.

**Members Present (in BCC Chambers)**

Commissioner Dan Kowal, *Chair*  
Council Member Tony Pernas, *Vice-Chair*  
Commissioner Burt L. Saunders  
Commissioner Chris Hall  
Commissioner Rick LoCastro  
Council Member Bonita Schwan  
Council Member Berne Barton  
Council Member Linda Penniman

**Members Absent**

Commissioner William L. McDaniel, Jr.

**MPO Staff**

Anne McLaughlin, Executive Director  
Sean Kingston, Principal Planner  
Dusty Hansen, Senior Planner  
Suzanne Miceli, Operations Support Specialist II

**FDOT**

Wayne Gaither, Director, District 1 Southwest Area Office  
Marcellus Evans, District 1 Community Liaison  
Jason Heironimus, Public Information Officer

### **Others Present**

Scott Teach, Esq., Deputy County Attorney

Trinity Scott, Department Head, Collier County Transportation Mgmt. Services

Lorraine Lantz, Manager, Collier County Transportation Planning

Wally Blaine, Alfred Benesch & Co.

Brian Wells, Director, Collier County Public Transit & Neighborhood Enhancement Division

Omar De Leon, Transit Manager, Collier Area Transit

Alex Showalter, Senior Planner, Collier Area Transit

Matthew Yarosewick, Quest Corporation USA

### **Others Present via Zoom**

Michelle Avola-Brown, Naples Pathways Coalition

Sunil Jakhadi, HNTB

Mike Harris, Kimley-Horn

## **3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Chair Kowal** led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, PREVIOUS MINUTES AND CONSENT ITEMS**

### **4.A. Approval of the Agenda and March 14, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

**Council Member Penniman** asked **Mr. Gaither**, in regard to his FDOT report on US 41 recorded in the March 14, 2025 meeting minutes, if FDOT completes traffic counts to measure changes in traffic in on US 41 and if he could provide her with the historical completed counts. **Mr. Gaither** confirmed he would send **Council Member Penniman** the requested information.

***Commissioner Saunders** moved to approve the agenda, previous minutes, and consent items and **Vice-Chair Pernas** seconded. Passed unanimously.*

## **5. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

**Ms. Avola-Brown** thanked the Board for their concerted effort to agenda HB 501: Hands-free Driving (which would prohibit the use of a wireless communications device in a handheld manner while operating a motor vehicle) to the Florida legislature and reported that although it successfully passed through SB 1318, it had not been brought to the Florida House floor. There might be a chance for the bill if Speaker Perez would be willing to bring it directly to the floor, and mentioned on average, there are approximately 10 fatalities per day on Florida roads and Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles estimates that approximately 1 out of 7 crashes are due to distracted driving. She encouraged Board members to reach out to Speaker Perez with their comments about the bill and mentioned that if the bill passed, it would go into effect in October 2025. Otherwise, the bill process would start over, prolonging the high number of fatalities due to distracted driving on Florida roads.

A group discussion followed regarding steps that could be taken to impress upon Florida Legislature the urgency of the bill, including Board members reaching out to State representatives and encouraging the public to reach out to representatives whenever there is a fatal accident due to drivers suspected of using wireless communications device in a handheld manner.

## **6. AGENCY UPDATES**

### **6.A. FDOT**

**Mr. Gaither** said FDOT was working on their program planning workshop in preparation for the upcoming fiscal year, primarily looking at programs and determining action items to establish the budget and look for funding sources.

Governor DeSantis removed Carbon Reduction funds from FDOT's current Work Program budget, which has impacted current and past projects funded by carbon reduction funding and created a \$320 million gap in project funding. FDOT was working with the MPOs and counties across the state to make project adjustments.

FDOT was in legislative session reviewing earmarks of approximately \$100 million statewide.

**Ms. McLaughlin** added that the removal of carbon reduction funds affects 10 projects in the draft FY2026-2030 Work Program. She said FDOT was trying to salvage whatever projects they could, and she would add the projects that couldn't be salvaged back onto the List of Project Priorities for the Board to vote on in June.

**Mr. Evans** provided an update to Commissioner McDaniel's inquiry regarding the Collier Blvd. (SR/CR 951) Interchange, saying the contractor had finished setting the beams for the northbound elevated lanes and that during the nighttime/overnight hours of 8:30 p.m. to 6 a.m. from April 21, 2025 through May 2, 2025 (excluding Friday and Saturday nights), Beck Boulevard would be temporarily closed at Collier Boulevard so crews could begin bridge work on the east side of the intersection.

**Commissioner LoCastro** thanked Mr. Gaither for FDOT's work on the stop light on Sandpiper and U.S. 41 and I-75 wall repair efforts.

**Mr. Gaither** said he would provide regular updates on litter clean-up along I-75 regularly going forward.

### **6.B. MPO**

**Ms. McLaughlin** announced the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC) Weekend Institute taking place in Tampa on May 17, 2025 (with an optional Meet & Greet on May 16, 2025) and encouraged Board members to attend.

Having attended in previous years, **Commissioner LoCastro** and **Chair Kowal** both recommended the event to the other Board members, saying it was informative and offered valuable networking opportunities.

**Council Member Schwan** said she would like to attend the institute.

## **7. CHAIR REPORTS**

### **7.A. CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)**

#### **7.A.1. Citizens Advisory Committee Chair Report**

*Report presented in writing.*

### **7.B. TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)**

#### **7.B.1. Technical Advisory Committee Chair Report**

*Report presented in writing.*

### **7.C. BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BPAC)**

#### **7.C.1. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Chair Report**

**Ms. McLaughlin** reported that the BPAC was interested in pursuing safety education initiatives with area public schools and voted to ask the MPO Board to write a letter to the school district to initiate the process, but **Ms. McLaughlin** mentioned she would like to first discuss the possibilities with Collier MPO Technical Advisory Committee member and Collier County Public Schools Transportation Director, John Lambcke.

**Chair Kowal** mentioned that The Board of County Commissioners (BCC) voted unanimously on March 25, 2025 to direct County staff to advertise an Ordinance to be presented at the April 22, 2025 BCC meeting to amend the County Pedestrian Safety Ordinance, to include a new section on operating bicycles on sidewalks, crosswalks and intersections within the county's unincorporated areas. He said part of the proposed Ordinance amendment includes safety education and advised Ms. McLaughlin to await the results of the proposed Ordinance for guidance prior to coordinating with Collier County Public Schools.

*The full chair report was presented in writing.*

## **8. REGULAR BOARD ACTION (ROLL CALL REQUIRED)**

*None.*

## **9. REGULAR BOARD ACTION (NO ROLL CALL)**

### **9.A. Adopt FDOT's Revised Pavement and Bridge (PM2) and System (PM3) Performance Targets for the National Highway System**

**Ms. McLaughlin** said that in July 2024, FDOT presented new Pavement and Bridge (PM2) and System (PM3) Performance Targets for the National Highway System, which includes stricter standards. She mistakenly missed the March 30<sup>th</sup> deadline and wanted to rectify the error. The National Highway System (NHS) in Collier County includes US. 41, I-75, and a section of CR 951 (from I-75 to US 41).

***Commissioner Hall** moved to adopt FDOT's Revised Pavement and Bridge (PM2), and System (PM3) Performance Targets for the National Highway System and **Commissioner Saunders** seconded. Passed unanimously.*

### **9.B. Approve a New Appointment to the Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged as a Citizens' Advocate**

**Ms. Miceli** said Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged (LCB) member candidate, Idela Hernandez, is disability professional and the Executive Director of the Employment Network of Southwest Florida, holds a Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Kentucky, and has been working to advance workforce inclusion and empowering individuals with disabilities to secure sustainable employment and achieve financial independence, for over two decades.

Specializing in benefits advisement and vocational rehabilitation, she works with several organizations, including the State Agency of Vocational Rehabilitation, STARability, Collier County Public Schools, and The Light House. **Ms. Miceli** mentioned staff believed Ms. Hernandez would bring a wealth of knowledge and understanding to the LCB.

***Council Member Penniman** moved to approve the appointment of Idela Hernandez to the Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged and **Council Member Barton** seconded. Passed unanimously.*

## **10. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

### **10.A. Draft Transit Zero Emission Fleet Transition Plan by Benesch**

**Ms. Hansen** explained that the MPO and Collier Area Transit (CAT) collaborated on a study to evaluate potential options to incorporate alternative fuel technology in CAT's fleet. The study looked at feasibility, the current state of alternative fuel technology and reliability, infrastructure needs, high-level cost estimates, and funding source opportunities. Benesch conducted the study.

**Mr. Blaine** provided a presentation on the draft Plan (which can be viewed in the April 11, 2025 agenda packet).

**Chair Kowal** asked if the study included research to measure the success of electric busses already in use in other jurisdictions, if bus charging stations would need to be built or if support vehicles would have access to public charging stations along routes, and raised concerns about battery life and the added weight battery-operated vehicles would add to road infrastructure.

**Mr. Blaine** said Benesch conducted peer reviews of electric bus utilization in other jurisdictions including, Pinellas County, Lee County, and Jacksonville. Benesch also looked at national case studies since alternative fuel technology is so new in Florida. Battery-operated vehicles do weigh more than fuel operated vehicles and product warranties support battery life for some time, but he wasn't aware of any battery life issues cited in the peer reviews. There would be chargers available within CAT facilities and that support vehicles would also have access to public charging stations.

#### **10.B. Report on Return of Federal Carbon Reduction Grant Program Funds**

*This item was discussed during item 6. A.*

### **11. DISTRIBUTION ITEMS**

#### **11.A. MPO Advisory Council Weekend Institute**

*This item was discussed during item 6. B. Item distributed.*

### **12. MEMBER COMMENTS**

**Commissioner Hall** congratulated **Ms. McLaughlin** on the birth of her grandchild.

**Council Member Schwan** said the City of Marco Island was working on a draft Ordinance in regard to pedestrian and bicycle safety as it relates to e-bikes on sidewalks and shared-use paths, which was anticipated to be presented to the Marco Island City Council in May 2025.

**Council Member Barton** thanked **Mr. Gaither** for the recent work FDOT did on US 41.

**Chair Kowal** asked **Mr. Gaither** to keep the Board posted on FDOT's work on US 41 at 6th St. South.

### **13. NEXT MEETING DATE**

**13.A.** May 9, 2025- 9:30 a.m. Board of County Commissioners Chambers, 3299 Tamiami Trail East, Naples, FL 34112.

### **14. ADJOURN**

There being no further business, **Chair Kowal** adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:25 a.m.