

**Collier Metropolitan Planning Organization
Board of County Commission Chambers
Collier County Government Center
3299 Tamiami Trail East, 3rd Floor
Naples, FL 34112
March 14, 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

Mr. Kingston 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 William L. McDaniel, Jr.
Commissioner Burt L. Saunders
Commissioner Rick LoCastro
Council Member Bonita Schwan
Council Member Berne Barton
Council Member Linda Penniman

Members Absent

Commissioner Chris Hall

MPO Staff

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

FDOT

Wayne Gaither, Director, District 1 Southwest Area Office
Erica McCaughey, Community Planner – Complete Streets Coordinator

Others Present

Scott Teach, Esq., Deputy County Attorney

Trinity Scott, Department Head, Collier County Transportation Mgmt. Services
Lorraine Lantz, Collier County Transportation Planning, TAC Chair
Sonal Dodia, Jacobs Engineering Group
Julianne Thomas, Conservancy of Southwest Florida

Others Present via Zoom

Teresa Parker, FHWA
Michelle Avola-Brown, Naples Pathways Coalition
Bill Gramer, Jacobs Engineering Group
Colleen Ross, Jacobs Engineering Group

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 February 14, 2025 Meeting Minutes

4.B. Approve Change Order 1 for Capital Consulting Solutions for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

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

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Ms. Avola-Brown reported she attended the legislative session for the bill for the Hands-Free Florida initiative. Representative Linda Chaney from St. Petersburg is the chair of the Florida House Government Operations Subcommittee. She supported the same bill for the initiative from last year but won't now. **Ms. Avola-Brown** would like to support hands-free legislation to prevent the bill from dying.

Commissioner McDaniel asked Ms. Avola-Brown to email and forward materials for him to contact legislators. This Board can write a letter of support. **Ms. Avola Brown** agreed to send the contact information. **Council Members Barton and Schwan** indicated that they are delving into the matter from their respective city's perspectives.

Commissioner McDaniel motioned to write a letter of support for Hands-Free legislation. Council Member Schwan seconded. Passed unanimously.

6. AGENCY UPDATES

6.A. FDOT

Mr. Gaither said he was standing in for the MPO's FDOT liaison, Marcellus Evans, and L. K. Nandam, District 1 Secretary. FDOT is still moving through the legislative period. With all the activity going on, FDOT is taking this opportunity to discuss things such as earmarks, an option that local governments have used to get additional funding. Transportation projects are limited in funding, unless it comes out of the general fund. FDOT has a history of not using the general fund over the past couple of years. It looks like that is a trend that will be continuing. There is about \$90 million in earmarks in District 1. Funding them could affect MPO priority projects.

Mr. Gaither addressed the questions from last meeting:

- For US 41, he has been in touch with FDOT's asset management team for six locations. During this process, FDOT is looking to see if there are infrastructure impacts with the drainage system. FDOT has completed an analysis underground looking for washaways under the infrastructure, addressing those issues if needed, and working on surface repairs. Two sites are outside the existing drainage project, which runs from Golden Gate Parkway south to 5th Avenue, also known as the Four Corners intersection. He will have those for the next MPO meeting.
- For the interchange at I-75 and 951, FDOT is in the process of working on Beck Blvd. From March 23rd through April 4 there will be closings with a detour using the existing road and pathways. There was a crane incident on site with no injuries or impacts to motorists. The crane has been removed.
- Also on 951, there was a sign interfering with people making right turns, which FDOT was able to have addressed.
- It's been a busy month for February in Collier County regarding litter removal. 31 tons were picked up on state roads and 30 tons on I-75. This has been a light month compared to January. FDOT will continue to work with Highway Patrol and will work on public outreach.

Commissioner LoCastro asked if FDOT has a regular schedule for litter removal as it seems inconsistent. **Mr. Gaither** answered that there is a schedule. There are more cleanup crews under contract this year than there were in 2022.

Commissioner Kowal noted that a lot of the litter looks to be from trash trucks, things blowing off trucks, not having the manpower to keep an eye on things. It seems more of an enforcement thing. **Mr. Gaither** said FDOT has a video of trash blowing off of trucks on the Interstate, indicating this is a known problem. **Commissioner LoCastro** said he spoke with Waste Management regarding items blowing off of their trucks.

Chair Kowal asked who is responsible to handle a drainage issue near S.R. 84 and Kings Lake Blvd. Water runs off the road through the shopping center into a retention pond in the Kings Lake neighborhood and is often backed up. He would like to schedule a meeting with FDOT and Collier County Transportation Head, Trinity Scott, to discuss what the protocol would be for managing water drainage coming from state roads. There is also a question of responsibility for a drainage issue off Sandpiper Rd., which runs between the City of Naples and Collier County.

Mr. Gaither said FDOT had been in discussions with County staff regarding these issues, and he will schedule a meeting with Chair Kowal for further discussion.

Council Member Barton would welcome a discussion with Chair Kowal regarding the drainage issue on Sandpiper Rd, as it is also a priority for the City of Naples.

6.B. MPO

Ms. McLaughlin had nothing additional to report other than what is on the agenda.

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

Report presented in writing.

7.D. LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD (LCB)

7.C.1. Local Coordinating Board Chair Report

Report presented in writing.

8. REGULAR BOARD ACTION (ROLL CALL REQUIRED)

None.

9. REGULAR BOARD ACTION (NO ROLL CALL)

9.A. Approve Fourth Amendment to MPO Lease Agreement and the Amended and Restated Staff Services Agreement

Ms. McLaughlin said this is an item that goes to the MPO Board every three years. The last time the agreements were updated was June of 2022. These two agreements are typically updated together. Regarding the MPO's current lease, the market rate of \$23 per square foot was charged with an annual rental amount of just over \$15,000 in 2022. This year, the market rate is \$25 per square foot but the MPO has moved to a smaller area in the same building, resulting in a slightly reduced annual amount.

The Staff Services Agreement is mostly a cleanup amendment brought up to date by staff and the County Attorney's Office. Once approved by the MPO Board, the agreements are required to be approved by the Board of County Commissioners. This was not taken to committees because it is administrative in nature.

***Commissioner Saunders** moved to approve the Fourth Amendment to MPO Lease Agreement, and the Amended and Restated Staff Services Agreement and **Council Member Penniman** seconded. Passed unanimously.*

9.B. Approve a New Appointment to the Citizens Advisory Committee to Represent BCC District 1

Ms. Miceli reported that Becky Irwin has been a South Florida resident since 1980, currently residing in Marco Island where she served on their City Council from 2020-2024, is an active member of Leadership Collier and Leadership Marco, holds certifications as a Master Naturalist, Stormwater and Erosion Control Inspector, and is a licensed Real Estate Broker Associate. Commissioner LoCastro has expressed his recommendation of Ms. Irwin to serve on the CAC and MPO staff believes her vast knowledge and experience will be a great asset to the committee. Staff recommends her appointment for a three-year term.

Commissioner LoCastro added that his district has an empty seat on the CAC, Ms. Irwin volunteered and is well qualified and excited to contribute to the community.

***Commissioner LoCastro** moved to approve the appointment of Becky Irwin to the Citizens Advisory Committee and **Commissioner McDaniel** seconded. Passed unanimously.*

9.C. Approve a New Appointment to the Citizens Advisory Committee to Represent City of Marco Island

Ms. Miceli said that transportation safety has been Mr. Kevin Dohm's life work. He is a retired United Airlines Pilot, former aeronautical advisory board member for the State of Illinois, and he worked as a firefighter and paramedic prior to his career in aviation. He currently serves on the Marco Island Ad Hoc Bike Lanes and Shared Paths Committee, as well as the Collier MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. The MPO Director believes his participation on the CAC will be a benefit to both committees.

Council Member Schwan added that she would like to give Mr. Dohm her highest recommendation.

Council Member Schwan moved to approve the appointment of Kevin Dohm to the Citizens Advisory Committee to Represent City of Marco Island and Commissioner LoCastro seconded. Passed unanimously.

9.D. Approve Annual FDOT-MPO Joint Certification Statement for Calendar Year 2024

Ms. McLaughlin said this is another routine item. It is fortunately so, because the MPO received another positive report from FDOT. The Joint Certification process occurs every year about this time. Highlights of this year's joint certification review include that Collier MPO's risk assessment is 100%, meaning that the level of risk is low, and there are no recommendations or corrective actions to be addressed. These results are a continuation from prior years. FDOT mentioned that the MPO has had outstanding collaboration and has submitted all required documents timely throughout the year. Ms. McLaughlin noted her appreciation for MPO staff and for the County Grants Office who play a large role in ensuring compliance. FDOT and the MPO Chair are to sign the Statement to recommend certification of the MPO planning process for another year.

Commissioner McDaniel moved to Approve Annual FDOT-MPO Joint Certification Statement for Calendar Year 2024 and Council Member Pernas seconded. Passed unanimously.

9.E. Update on Lee County and Collier MPO Consolidation Feasibility Study – Continued from February Meeting

Ms. McLaughlin reported she had spoken with her counterpart in Lee County as directed by the Board, to inquire whether their Board had taken action on the proposed consolidation feasibility study. At the time, the Board had not taken action, but their executive committee did and recommended completing Phase 1 to evaluate if there is a point to continuing past that phase. Both MPO Directors support FDOT funding the study and having a third party prepare it.

Commissioner McDaniel said the MPO decided there was no reason to continue with the study because there could be no rationale that would provide an equitable combination of the MPOs. In retrospect, the MPO does not yet have the data necessary to support this original concern.

Council Member Penniman asked if the Board could have a special committee look at the proposed consolidation.

Ms. McLaughlin responded that Commissioner McDaniel proposed having a high-level committee look at regional planning issues a few years ago, but the idea did not gain traction (with the other MPOs.) Lee MPO has an executive committee because their Board is so large.

Commissioner Kowal asked who hired the University of South Florida (USF) and Jeff Kramer to run the study?

Mr. Gaither responded that a commitment was made to put aside some funding through FDOT

and FDOT has worked to find something the directors of both MPOs are looking for, primarily a third party, nonbiased entity and had an opportunity to find the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) which was acceptable for them. CUTR has experience in working with MPOs. CUTR is a third-party entity affiliated with the University of South Florida that conducts planning studies and research. CUTR can procure an academic talent pool, well versed in transportation and MPOs.

Commissioner Kowal asked whether CUTR is used by other FDOT Districts, and **Mr. Gaither** answered that he does not think it is uniformly used. District 7 did not use this party. **Commissioner Kowal** said there should be consistency across the board if the state is paying for it. A third party by definition should be neutral and uniform to avoid bias.

Commissioner Saunders said his opinion hasn't changed to support the merger and asked if Mr. Gaither knew of any MPOs that have merged. **Mr. Gaither** responded that in 2021 there was a legislative action to merge MPOs in District 7 (Tampa, Hillsborough, Pinellas). It did not get enacted for the same reason as Lee and Collier MPOs. This year has a similar bill that's coming forward. It does not include Lee and Collier. The full reason to have the study done is because the bill was in place, to take a preemptive step to have the MPOs have a look. This is the second location in Florida through legislative action. **Commissioner Saunders** asked if the first location's study had been completed and **Mr. Gaither** responded that District 7 is in the second phase of the study. Lee and Collier MPOs would get the benefit of them going through the process. Ms. McLaughlin and Mr. Scott have been following their efforts, what they've learned and gathered, which this scope is based on. **Commissioner Saunders** asked to wait to see what the results of the District 7 study is before a study for Collier/Lee MPOs is launched. **Mr. Gaither** answered that the money is in place this fiscal year. If unused, FDOT would find another use for it. **Commissioner Saunders** said he doesn't see the logic in moving forward with this now but if it's the will of the MPO, he will support it.

Commissioner McDaniel said he agreed with Commissioner Saunders. The MPO discussed this last month. The money is already in place. This is a preemptive strike to acquire data and to decide to see if a merger is viable, which is likely to support the opinion of the MPO.

***Commissioner McDaniel** moved to approve through the Phase 1 process the Lee County and Collier MPO Consolidation Feasibility Study and **Council Member Penniman** seconded. Passed unanimously.*

9.F. MPO Board Direction on Suspending New Calls for Projects Pending Completion of the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Ms. McLaughlin made a recommendation to temporarily suspend new calls for projects, referring to a chart in the agenda packet that showed the rotation schedule for allocating SU Box funds. The 2045 LRTP modified the Board's previous allocation formula to add safety and planning projects to the congestion management, bike/ped and bridge projects. This required some adjustment to form a 5-year rotation cycle. Now there has been a steep increase in costs for construction projects, with bicycle and pedestrian projects taking a large hit. Projects are being deferred out to future years because the MPO can only afford to do so many projects per year, and the MPO's SU priorities were programmed very

aggressively up until this point. Two out of four of the congestion management projects prioritized in 2024 are funded in 2030 (in the draft FY26-30 Work Program) and two are waiting to be funded. A new bicycle/pedestrian priority project will come to the Board for approval this June. Collier County chose not to submit any new bike/ped projects for this rotation due to their backlog of partially funded projects and the cost increases, preferring to ensure that already submitted projects could be funded through construction. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee endorsed one viable project submittal for a \$2 million shared use path on Marco Island for programming in 2031.

If another call for projects were to add new congestion management projects according to the current rotation, it would compound the problem of having pre-committed the available funds to other projects. Costs are higher and State revenue projections are lower. Her recommendation is to wait for the Cost Feasible Plan to be developed for the 2050 LRTP to consider the highest and best use for SU funds before initiating the next call for projects. The Board could then decide whether to maintain the same allocation process or make adjustments.

Council Member Penniman expressed concern about the process, asking what it would look like.

Ms. McLaughlin responded that it depends on how the Cost Feasible Plan develops. MPO staff would typically issue the congestion management call for projects this March. The suggestion is that we instead pause calls for projects until the Cost Feasible Plan for the 2050 LRTP is completed.

Mr. Gaither commented that from FDOT's perspective, this discussion shows the importance of the annual List of Project Priorities and the strategic planning that takes place with the MPO. This has been ongoing for a long time. As costs rise, funding has dipped a small amount. This emphasizes the importance of partnering to support the projects we agree on. We need to coordinate and be strategic and support the right projects through a schedule with a 10-year window of study through completion of construction.

Commissioner McDaniel made a motion for approval of the recommended pause. The projects that have already been prioritized should be done first, whereas those projected for 15 years out are without accurate cost estimates or control over funding sources and expenses. He concurred with Ms. McLaughlin that the process needs to be adjusted.

***Commissioner McDaniel** moved to Suspend New Calls for Projects Pending Completion of the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan and **Council Member Penniman** seconded. Passed unanimously.*

10. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

10.A. Federal TMA Certification Review Report 2024

Ms. McLaughlin introduced Ms. Teresa Parker, Planning Team Leader of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), participating virtually to report on the outcome of the 2024 Federal Certification Review. Collier MPO is required to go through this federal review every four years as a designated Transportation Management Area (TMA), which is an urbanized area designated by the U.S. Census with

a population over 200,000. There is a letter in the agenda packet certifying the MPO's planning process through December of 2028.

Ms. Parker reported that the site visit was held on July 23-24, 2024, with a federal review team consisting of FHWA staff members Carlos Gonzalez, Curlene Thomas, and Carrie Shepherd and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) staff member, Brandon Oliver. The final Certification Report was signed on December 30, 2024. The certification review involves four steps: Risk Assessment, Site Visit, Issuance of Formal Report, and Presentation to the Board. There were six noteworthy practices, no corrective actions, and one recommendation to improve the planning process.

Ms. Parker read from the report (which is included in the attachment for this agenda item).

10.B. Update on 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan – Public Outreach, Socio-economic Data and Draft Needs List

Ms. McLaughlin introduced Ms. Dodia. *Ms. Dodia provided a presentation (which is included in the attachment for this agenda item).*

Commissioner Kowal said the 2019 population in the study showed 377,000 people for Collier County, whereas the 2020 census reported 405,000. Is it possible that this needs to be looked at? This is a statistical jump.

Ms. Dodia said 2019 was used because of the outlier effects on travel patterns for 2020 due to the pandemic. **Ms. McLaughlin** added that 2019 base year population was set by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) and allocated to Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) using the Collier Interactive Growth Model (CIGM) under a separate contract with another consultant. The point is well taken, but developing the LRTP is a 2-year process. The 2019 data represent a snapshot in time, a starting point to move on to the next stage in developing the LRTP. The LRTP is updated every five years, which allows for corrections to be made to previous projections.

Commissioner McDaniel said the CIGM is more accurate than the BEBR projections. It can model based on populations and land use. He asked at what stage MPO Board members should comment on the project priorities in the LRTP.

Ms. McLaughlin responded comments can be made during this meeting or in the following weeks. Board members can give comments to MPO staff or to their agency staff, such as County Transportation Planning staff. Comments are currently being sought for the Needs Plan and will be again during the development of the Cost Feasible Plan.

Commissioner Saunders asked whether the widening of Old 41 has addressed the Board's recent direction that the two intersections at either end need improvement but not the very costly widening. The traffic is running smoothly on this road, and it doesn't seem like the MPO needs to pursue it.

Ms. McLaughlin replied it's her understanding that FDOT needs to complete the Project Development and Environment (PDE) Study within the current budget and timeline but is preparing a cost estimate for the revisions the Board requested.

Council Member Schwan asked MPO staff to please continue to reach out to Marco Island, especially where there is high attendance at the weekly farmers market.

11. DISTRIBUTION ITEMS

None.

12. MEMBER COMMENTS

Commissioner LoCastro would like to put on the agenda a discussion about ebikes and scooters. The MPO Board is the audience to do something more visible and formal. A lot of citizens are asking about it. He would like to receive an email update to put in his newsletter. The MPO Board is a forum to invite people from the Sheriff's Office and BPAC to participate. This needs to be seen as a work in progress. It has a lot of complicated movements with some who disagree and some who agree.

Commissioner Kowal said the simplest answer to this is that citizens need to contact the Sheriff's Department. The County Attorney's Office wrote the ordinance, and the Chair of BPAC was part of it. It died at the Sheriff's Attorney's office. It's time for the citizens to let the Sheriff know this is a priority.

Commissioner LoCastro said the issue cannot be ignored. There have been fatalities throughout Florida. It can't just go unregulated. If this isn't the Board to support it, it would help to hold an open forum.

Commissioner Kowal encouraged Board members to express their concerns about ebikes and support for the ordinance to the Sheriff.

Commissioner LoCastro said the cities are waiting for the County to provide guidance.

Council Member Schwan said the City of Marco Island has been waiting for leadership from the County on how to address the issue. She plans to bring it back to the next city council meeting on March 17.

Commissioner Saunders said if there is willingness by the Commissioners to bring this forward, put it on the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) agenda and the public will have something to talk about. The BCC can then see if the ordinance should be advertised.

13. NEXT MEETING DATE

13.A. April 11, 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 11:09 a.m.