

## Transportation Planning in Charlotte County

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Charlotte County is taking a fresh look at its transportation system, focusing initially on the hiring of a transportation planner and the purchase of new road capacity-tracking software. In June Charlotte County hired its first Transportation Planner under the Growth Management Department. This new position is tasked with developing a strategic, multi-modal approach to transportation to ensure that Charlotte County's residents, businesses and visitors are offered the best transportation choices possible.

Thus far we have hit the ground running, addressing a number of immediate challenges. First, the rewrite of comprehensive plan (SmartCharlotte 2050) was the perfect opportunity to begin the transformation of the County from a strictly auto-oriented transportation community to an integrated, multimodal system which encourages the creation of more transportation options such as the use of bikes, golf carts and buses, as well as emphasizing walkability and a safer pedestrian environment. We are also working on the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and a 15-year list of future transportation needs that will give the Board of County Commissioners the information they need to help them prioritize future transportation funding priorities.

Transportation Planning is also vital in performing development reviews. Numerous projects are currently under review, including the Babcock Ranch development, which is now moving forward with its first phase of development.

Working in conjunction with the Charlotte County/Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Charlotte County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources department we are in the beginning stages of developing the County's first Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan. This plan will help Charlotte County compete with neighboring jurisdictions for federal and state transportation funding. The plan will also be used to enhance the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Parks Master Plan that is anticipated to be completed in 2012. Once these projects are complete the County will have a strategy to address reducing green house gas emissions and creating a safer, more livable, healthy, and active community.

New software is also in place which will help the County track existing roadway capacity more accurately and in real time. Tracking roadway capacity will help the county estimate the impacts of development proposals on roadways. This will ensure that roadway concurrency is met by providing the Commission with the information it needs to properly review development proposals and to prioritize future capacity building projects in a fiscally responsible and proactive manner.