



January 9, 2011

Lee County Commissioners
2120 SW Main Street
Fort Myers, FL 33901

Dear Commissioners:

BikeWalkLee, a coalition to complete the streets in Lee County, works for a more balanced transportation system. Consistent with these efforts, our coalition 1) supports the development of a public transit system that is more efficient and effective; and 2) considers the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) as an essential planning tool to facilitate the important land use and transportation changes that need to be made. We want to comment on these items as they relate to the conversation you will have at the Jan. 10 Management & Planning meeting.

One of the main challenges with public transit is attracting a wide variety of riders to use the system. One of the most effective ways to enhance ridership is to fund and design a system that is convenient to use, which requires transit to have a stable source of funding and support throughout the community. BikeWalkLee fully supports the process as outlined in the LeeTran 2011 Work Plan for the Transit Special Advisory Group. This proposed group would develop a plan that will move public transit forward in the county. Other models of this kind throughout the country suggest that, if able to work collaboratively with county administration in a consensus-oriented approach, this process has a significant chance of success.

The Board's decision on the EAR and subsequent amendments is perhaps the most important action you'll take to determine the county's direction over the next decades. The current Lee Plan has encouraged unsustainable development and the resulting negative consequences for energy consumption, health, housing, and quality of life. As you have supported various resolutions and policy statements in the Board of County Commissioners and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), in order to have a more balanced transportation system, the Lee Plan must lead the way.

It is critical that this EAR be visionary and bold. It must provide the blueprint for changes in land use that promote transit-oriented development, transit, livable communities, walkable/bikeable neighborhoods, and complete streets. The current economic recession provides us with a unique opportunity to move our county in a new direction—one that is sustainable, livable, and economically viable. The upcoming EAR will either point us in a new direction or continue business as usual.

We urge you to make it clear to staff on Monday that you understand and support an EAR that is consistent with what your citizens have asked for and is a bold step toward the future success of the county.

Please feel free to contact either Dr. Margaret Banyan (mbanyan@comcast.net) or myself (dletourneau@bikewalklee.org) should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

/s/

Darla Letourneau
On behalf of
BikeWalkLee

Cc: Karen Hawes, County Manager
Steve Myers, LeeTran
Mary Gibbs, Department of Community Development
Tessa LeSage, Office of Sustainability