



February 1, 2012

Connie Deane
Community Liaison
Growth Management Division
Collier County
2885 S. Horseshoe Dr.,
Naples, FL 34104

Dear Connie:

BikeWalkLee is a community coalition working for complete streets in Lee County—streets that are designed, built, operated and maintained for safe and convenient travel for all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. We have partnered with 42 stakeholder organizations in the community that want to improve the quality of life and mobility in Lee County—including the university, health care organizations, safety prevention groups, AARP of Florida, the realtors association, citizen and community groups (including two Collier County groups--the Naples Pathways Coalition and the River of Grass Greenway), environmental organizations, planners and sustainability groups, and bike clubs and shops.

We are proud of our Lee County elected officials, both at the Lee MPO and the Board of Lee County Commissioners, who adopted complete streets policies in 2009 and have made great progress since then in implementing a complete streets approach to all road projects, making Lee County a more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly community.

We are active participants in the Lee MPO process and attend the bi-annual joint Lee/Collier MPO Board and Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinating Committee meetings. We have supported regional efforts to enhance the connectivity between our counties, both by transit and by bicycle. At last year's joint meetings, we spoke in support of a greenway connecting Lee and Collier counties from Bonita Beach Road.

We are writing today in support of the proposed 12-foot multi-use pathway along Vanderbilt Drive, which would connect with Bonita Beach Rd. in Lee County. Having connected and safe bicycling and walking facilities is one of our key goals. The industry standard for multi-use pathways is 12 feet. Given the various types of path users—pedestrians, cyclists, moms with strollers, people in wheelchairs, people walking their dogs, etc.—a wide path is key to ensuring the safety of all pathway users. Eight feet is simply not wide enough to have two-way traffic for the mix of users that will be using the path. One of the key principles of complete streets is to “do it right the first time”. There is nothing more costly on transportation projects than not providing for anticipated use and having to come back later and pay ten times more to retrofit the project.

Collier County is in an enviable position—you have the funds on hand now from the developer to pay for the needed 12-foot standard multi-use pathway. Not moving forward with the pathway as planned will cost future taxpayers of Collier County more money in inevitable retrofits, and will deny current residents and visitors an adequate and safe multi-use path system.

Our experience in Lee County has been that there are often residents who don't want change in their neighborhood and they oppose the bike lanes or widening of the shared use path. Then, once the facility is built, they love it and forget they ever opposed it. This happened in Captiva in 2007-9 and again on Hickory Blvd. in Bonita Springs in 2011. In Sanibel, they overcame some residents' opposition to widening the paths when it became clear that wider paths were needed for the safety of all users.

We urge Collier County officials to think of all the residents of the county, both current and future generations, and move forward with the 12-foot pathway along Vanderbilt Drive as originally planned. This decision will be a positive investment in your community's future.

Sincerely,

/s/

Darla Letourneau
On behalf of
BikeWalkLee

cc: Alison Bradford, Collier County
Collier County Commissioner, Georgia Hiller