



May 2, 2012

Lee County Board of 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. At the May 7th M & P meeting, you will be considering a request to develop a strategic master plan for the Research & Enterprise Diamond.

The Research and Enterprise Diamond is to be an innovative, livable, economically diverse hub of sustainable businesses in Lee County and Southwest Florida; a wholly new creation to diversify and move our economic base into a viable future. The realization of this endeavor deserves nothing less than the highest quality of integrative planning and implementation. And, authentic integrative planning can only begin with the thoughtful creation of an area-wide strategic master plan.

As have both the Urban Land Institute (ULI) of Southwest Florida and your Community Sustainability Advisory Committee (CSAC), BikeWalkLee recommends the development of this master plan prior to the commencement of any land development or transportation activities. To move forward piecemeal with any roadway extensions or widenings is counter to the basic concepts of integrated land use and transportation planning, a key principle of sustainability previously embraced by this board.

Action without comprehensive planning will perpetuate the outdated approach of building roads first and then forcing the land use to conform; an approach that very often results in long-term costly and detrimental community impacts.

BikeWalkLee urges the BoCC to consolidate the land use and transportation planning in order to achieve the most cost-effective and effective outcomes. Specifically, we ask that the decision in how best to continue with the Alico Road extension emanate from a fully informed and vetted strategic plan. Our concern is not with the number of lanes, rather the narrowness of the current view. Credible decision-making must weigh a multitude of variables such as, development densities, commercial and residential zones, interconnecting street and accessibility patterns, and concentrated points of origin and destination before such roadway details as, speed, width, points of access, and most effective accommodations for bike/pedestrian/transit facilities can be legitimately determined.

Only an area-wide approach can fully leverage the enormous cost savings benefits to be gained from an effective multimodal transportation system, a system designed to best serve the widest diversity of users. Moving forward on the Alico road plan now would mean that the roadway would once again determine land-use and ultimately the future for this area. Rather, the BoCC should lead in developing a working vision for this premiere Research and Enterprise Diamond that is worthy of its potential.

BikeWalkLee agrees with the two recommendations made by CSAC for this area:

December 14, 2011 CSAC recommendation to BoCC:

"The Lee County BoCC fund a plan for the Research Diamond area that outlines a future vision for land use and transportation prior to selecting a design option."

April 18, 2012 CSAC recommendation to BoCC (as part of recommendations on LeeDOT 5-year CIP):

"The Alico Rd./Ben Hill design and ROW acquisition should not proceed until after the County completes the CSAC's recommended land use study. The Board should be presented with both issues together, asking whether they want to fund a master plan study concurrent with or before proceeding to the alignment and conceptual design phase."

BikeWalkLee urges the Board to proceed with the development of a strategic master plan for the Research and Enterprise Diamond and delay advancement of the Alico extension road project at this time, allowing it to be incorporated within this master plan.

Sincerely,

/s/

Darla Letourneau

On behalf of

BikeWalkLee

cc: Karen Hawes, County Manager

Holly Schwartz, Assistant County Manager

Doug Meurer, Assistant County Manager

Mary Gibbs, Director, Department of Community Development

David Loveland, Director, Department of Transportation

Tessa LeSage, Sustainability Director

Gary Verwilt, Chair Community Sustainability Advisory Committee