



May 24, 2010

Dear Commissioners,

Improving safety for bicyclists and pedestrians is a key goal of BikeWalkLee's efforts to complete Lee County's streets. Because Florida ranks the highest as the most dangerous state in the nation for both pedestrians and cyclists, and because Lee County ranks higher than the state average, it is imperative that safety is the #1 priority.

When pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities occur, it is critical the county look at the full range of available safety improvements, such as infrastructure, signage, education, and enforcement. The tragic death of 13-year-old Ryan Santos on April 27, who was struck while trying to cross Del Prado Blvd. at NE 3rd Terrace, should give us more than enough reason to improve.

In BikeWalkLee's November report that accompanied the national "Dangerous by Design" report, we identified Del Prado Blvd in Cape Coral as one of the "hot spots" in Lee County for pedestrians and bicyclists. As the News-Press May 20th editorial stated, "This was a disaster waiting to happen, and it did." When you look at [Goggle Earth Link: Del Prado Blvd N & NE 3rd Terrace, Cape Coral, FL 33909](#) and see the proximity of Burton Park to this intersection, it's hard to understand why no safe access for neighborhood children biking or walking to this destination was provided at the time the park was built.

To date, Lee DOT's "solutions" are non-solutions, which just promote the status quo. The department persists with the expectation that children trying to reach the playing fields at Burton Park are going to walk a couple of blocks north or south to an intersection with traffic lights. This is an impractical suggestion, and clearly not what the many children to visit that park have been doing or will be doing.

We urge you to instruct LCDOT, who has responsibility for this road, to make improvements to this crosswalk that take into account the needs of children trying to reach the park on the other side of the street. Streets should be designed to accommodate the needs of people, rather than simply the needs of fast-moving automobiles, and streets need to be designed for the way real people use them, not the way engineers and bureaucrats would like them used.

Several solutions have already been presented to LCDOT. An example is the Enhancer, a rapid-flashing rectangular beacon device that is being used successfully in St. Petersburg. The Enhancer has already contributed to a 50% reduction in pedestrian crashes there. St. Pete's success was highlighted in the "Dangerous by Design" report and featured in a News-Press article on Nov. 10, 2009, and BikeWalkLee brought it to your attention during our public comments at the Nov. 10 commission meeting.

As a result, LCDOT has been studying these devices and is planning to install one on the Gladiolus Road project near Harlem Heights Elementary School where there are mid-block pedestrian crossings without traffic signals. This busy spot on Del Prado frequented by many children seems like the ideal candidate for another one of these devices. In addition, this unmarked crosswalk should be marked. Finally, warning signs to alert motorists to the likely presence of children along Del Prado may be warranted.

For more ideas about how to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists in Lee County, below is a link to BikeWalkLee's January 2010 report, which includes suggestions from various studies of improvements that positively affect safety:

http://www.bikewalklee.org/BWL/BWL_PDFs/BWL_facts/012810safetyBWL.pdf

Children, our most vulnerable road users, need to be provided an extra measure of safety. It is critical for county agencies to use their discretionary authority in support of the county's goals of making our streets safe and accessible for all road users, and to encourage more people to walk and bike by demonstrating that the roadways belong to everyone. Sometimes, it's as simple and inexpensive as a sign or markings on the road.

Urge LCDOT to do what's needed -- not just what's in the book -- and make sure that Ryan Santo did not die in vain. Thanks for your consideration.

Darla Letourneau

On behalf of the Steering Group of BikeWalkLee

cc: Cape Coral City Council
Karen Hawes, Lee County Manager