



May 28, 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 balanced multi-modal transportation system and sustainable community. We understand that there will be a discussion at the May 29th Board meeting related to a business owner's desire to remove about 20 trees from Daniels Parkway near the intersection of Apaloosa Lane. As we understand it, the removal of the trees is to create a 'clear view' of the building front that is over 250' from the road edge. Approval of such a request would be directly counter to multiple Lee County policies and guidelines. These policies specifically promote adding trees to rights-of-way as part of the county's Comprehensive Plan dealing with open space, roadway landscaping, and shade for walkers and cyclists. All of these policy directions were recently re-affirmed in the EAR which strengthened the county's commitment to livability, complete streets, community character and sustainability.

We believe that the Board should follow the existing policies and not consider the request for tree removal. Such a decision would set an undesirable precedent with trees being removed as a quick 'first' option rather than working towards better solutions. This business is served by a connected series of access roads that when built out will be a small commercial corridor in its own right with four other entry points from Daniels Parkway. Were every business built there to be provided 'clear view' from Daniels the effect would be nothing more than another strip mall with a deep setback.

A number of other options should be pursued in meeting this business owner's needs, as well as those of the many other citizens of Lee County:

- On-property signage can be improved to increase visibility;
- The owner can work with staff regarding signage with adequate setbacks at other access road entry points;
- The trees in question have not reached a mature height. They could be 'limbed up' on annual or biennial basis to ensure a high canopy, allowing visibility of businesses from the road.
- Visibility and ease of access is highly dependent upon speed. The County could consider lowering the speed limit on this section of Daniels so that drivers would have more time to both notice businesses and decide to turn in.

Our interest in this issue is based on our concern for promoting alternative forms of transportation. Trees along pathways, bicycle lanes, and roadways increase pedestrian and bicycle safety and provide a shade respite in the Florida summers.

In sum, we urge the Board not to direct staff to pursue the tree removal option at tomorrow's meeting and to continue to support the county's policies that value good design for the long-term betterment of the community. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the safety, mobility, and quality of life for all residents of Lee County.

Sincerely,

/s/

Darla Letourneau

On behalf of

BikeWalkLee

Cc: Karen Hawes, County Manager
Holly Schwartz, Assistant County Manager
Doug Meurer, Assistant County Manager
David Loveland, LeeDOT Director
Tessa LeSage, Sustainability Director