



**Darla Letourneau comments on Capital Improvement Element
On behalf of BikeWalkLee
May 31, 2012 LPA meeting**

Background

- Speaking on behalf of BikeWalkLee--community coalition working for complete streets in Lee County & balanced multi-modal transportation
- Margaret Banyan and I spoke at your Jan. 23rd meeting with comments on the Transportation White Paper
- At that meeting, we highlighted the three issues that must be addressed if we are to achieve a balanced transportation system that:
 - increases walkability,
 - multi-modal transportation choice, and
 - compact mixed use communities.
- Those issues are:
 - transportation LOS,
 - sustainable performance criteria and measures, and
 - funding.

Transportation Concurrency & LOS:

- The draft Capital Improvement element you have before you today touches on two of those issues--LOS and funding.
- While the bulk of these issues will be addressed in the Transportation Element that will be presented in July, the CI element is a glimpse at what is to come. We are encouraged by what we see.
- First, we are pleased to see the staff recommendation to end concurrency for transportation, schools and parks, as allowed under the 2011 state law changes.
- As we stated in January, it's important that Lee County use this opportunity to take back local control and support our local vision and our community plans.
- However, eliminating transportation concurrency is just a first step in the needed changes to realize the vision in the EAR.
- We're pleased to see proposals dealing with LOS that begin to move us towards the county's goal of a balanced transportation system.
- First, we applaud the statement in Policy 1.1.3: "The LOS for **transportation facilities** will be established through an assessment of **all transportation modes** including roadway, bike, pedestrian, and transit capacity and service volumes consistent with the standards established in the Transportation Element."

- Since the Comp Plan was last amended, the Florida guidelines for determining LOS have been updated. Beginning in 2009, the Florida LOS Quality Handbook provides LOS standards not just for vehicles, but also for transit, pedestrians, and bicycles.
- Using this updated guideline, staff is proposing to establish LOS standards for these other modes and to use them in determining whether a road meets LOS standards for further development to move forward.
- This means that the county can establish the LOS standard for a given road to be a transit standard, a bike/ped standard, or a vehicle standard or some combination of these.
- What this broader approach to LOS says is that the solution to the "problem" can be addressed by enhancing transit services, sidewalks, paths, and bike lanes.
- It could allow for solutions that foster complete streets rather than assuming that any increased traffic requires roads to be widened.
- With a multi-modal LOS approach, the logical next step is a change in the way solutions are financed from the vehicle-only impact fee approach to a multi-modal mobility fee approach.
- This shift to newer alternative funding mechanisms was envisioned in the December 2011 FDOT report on "Proportionate Share" and two Florida counties--Pasco and Alachua--have each modernized their funding mechanisms to reflect the transportation demand changes.
- We look forward to reviewing the Transportation element to see how the county plans to define and apply this new LOS approach in supporting a balanced multi-modal transportation system.
- While this new LOS approach is a step in the right direction, we encourage staff to go further.
- In addition to changes in the LOS, we would like to see the staff and the various committees take a step back and look at the intersection of transportation and land use and ask the big picture vision questions--where in the county do we want to invest in transportation infrastructure and where do we not want to invest? Then let's make sure that our LOS standards assist us in realizing this vision.

Other Provisions:

- We are also pleased to see that the county's revised planning and budgeting process is incorporated in Objective 1.2, Policy 1.2.2 and Policy 1.2.3. These policies are consistent with the Complete Streets Implementation Plan and emphasize coordination & collaborative.
- Further, we are pleased to see the inclusion of language in both Policy 1.2.3. and Policy 1.2.4 addressing "service expansion needs in urban communities and mixed-used areas," and factors to be used in evaluating mixed use, urban or otherwise developed areas. Both of these provisions reflect the EAR focus.

Recommended language changes in draft CI Element:

Finally, we suggest that some wording be amended as follows:

- Policy 1.1.1: While this section applies to all capital improvements, the term "impact fees" needs to be modified to be more inclusive: "impact fees and similar mechanisms".
- - This is the phrase used in Policy 1.4.4. and the same word construction should be used here to be consistent throughout. We are explicitly interested in ensuring that the

Comprehensive Plan allows for new funding mechanisms, such as the use of a future mobility fee.

- Policy 1.2.1. Policy 1.2.1 provides a list of criteria to be used to prioritize all capital improvement projects.
 - It is important that this prioritization scheme provide a framework that will allow transportation projects to be prioritized consistent with complete streets and sustainability goals.
 - Priority 6 has been added which states, "Consistency with county planning and development priorities regarding sustainability, economic development, livability, strong connections, and community character."
 - Rather than a separate priority category at the end, it should be the guiding principle for project prioritization overall.
 - We recommend that this sentence (#6) be at the beginning of the paragraph as an overarching standard within which each of the priority categories is assessed.