



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Issued Aug. 17, 2010

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Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah honored as bike/walk champion by Lee group

BikeWalkLee, a local community coalition advocating for better bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Lee county, has selected Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah to receive its first award. Judah will be recognized as a "Champion for Complete Streets" as part of Wednesday's ceremony (Aug. 18) to spotlight improvements to the Sanibel Causeway tollbooth and approach to facilitate bicycle access to the causeway and Sanibel Island.

Judah, the District 3 commissioner since 1988, was singled out for being a tireless champion for bicycle and pedestrian issues in Lee County. According to Dan Moser, a member of the BikeWalkLee steering committee, "Ray has fought to ensure that biking, walking and mass transit has had a place at the transportation table -- and that has helped ensure that bikers, walkers and those who rely on public transportation have had a place to enjoy on our roadways."

BWL cited three highlights among Judah's many accomplishments as the basis for this award:

- As commission chair, Judah shepherded a Complete Streets policy for Lee County, making it one of the first in Florida to require that any new streets are complete streets -- where all road users are being considered right from the first day of design rather than only after years of accidents and excuses. Not only does this make Lee County's streets safer for all, but it will save the county money because making streets complete costs a lot less when you design these features in rather than add them after the fact.
- Judah supported the development of a countywide bike/ped master plan by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (the county's partnership responsible for transportation planning in Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel, and unincorporated Lee County), and has worked to move the project through each step of the process. This plan, which will be completed this year and be ready for implementation in 2011, will create a network of connected bike/ped facilities that don't stop at a jurisdiction's boundary line, but are connected

and integrated throughout the county. Judah's leadership also helped the Metropolitan Planning Organization embrace the U.S. Department of Transportation's new policy statement on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation, making it one of the first counties in the country to endorse the new policy.

- Finally, Judah championed the Sanibel Causeway tollbooth project being celebrated today, which completes the bicycling connection between the mainland and Sanibel. First, he made sure the project to improve bicycle access through the tollbooth was funded with federal stimulus funds, rather than county funds. Then, when he realized that this project didn't complete the connection back to the bike path on Summerlin Road and McGregor Boulevard, Judah worked with the county Department of Transportation to ensure that funds from the county's annual repaving contract were used to repave and improve the road and shoulders back to McGregor Boulevard.

"Those who bicycle and walk in Lee County know there's still a lot of work to be done to make our streets safer and more accessible to all," said Moser. "But you also know that the county has made great strides -- progress that would not have been possible without the leadership, vision and tenacity of Commissioner Judah."

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BikeWalkLee is a community coalition raising public awareness and advocating 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. Other information, statistics and background is available online at www.BikeWalkLee.org