



June 10, 2011

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 June 14th public hearing, you will consider various proposals to reduce or “suspend” entirely the road impact fees. We urge you not to decrease the impact fees below the 27% reduction recommended in the 2011 Road Impact Fee Update study (reflecting updated road cost and travel demand information).

Road impact fees are a major source of funds for bike-ped improvements, and any reduction will have an adverse impact on the county’s ability to implement its complete streets initiative and the recently adopted countywide bicycle pedestrian master plan. Road impact fees require new developments to pay a proportionate share of the infrastructure costs they will impose on the community. If developers don’t pay these fair and equitable costs, it means that the infrastructure costs of that development are borne by the all property owners in Lee County. Given the county’s serious budget crisis and the commissioners’ desire not to raise property taxes, it makes no sense to eliminate a revenue source that is helping cover the real costs of development which create demand for transportation infrastructure.

BikeWalkLee is particularly concerned about the proposal to suspend impact fees for two years. The stated purpose behind this proposal is to create jobs and spur development. However, the recent study by Duncan Associates which did a quantitative analysis of data from 20 Florida counties (half which had significantly reduced their impact fees and half that hadn’t) to determine the relationship between impact fee reductions and development activity, illustrates that this is wishful thinking. The conclusion of the study states, “This analysis has been unable to confirm any statistically significant relationship between impact fee reductions and higher rates of building permit issuance for single-family development.”

Developers are not building because the market cannot support new construction. Suspending impact fees will not accomplish the stated purpose, but it will send a message that developers don’t have to pay their share of infrastructure costs. To shift the cost of new development to current residents is not fair—the very thing impact fees were created to avoid.

In the development of the Evaluation Appraisal and Review (EAR) for Lee County, residents clearly expressed their desire to see significant changes in the way that they county develops-- that development should be compact, value connectivity, and livability. Suspending impact fees for any amount of time is not consistent with this new vision for the county and will delay progress towards implementation.

We urge you to adopt the consultant's recommended adjustment to the impact fees (a 27% reduction), and to reject all efforts to reduce the fees below that rate. Thank you.

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, Department of Transportation
Andy Getch, Department of Transportation
Tessa LeSage, Sustainability Director