



February 27, 2012

Mayor John Sullivan
Cape Coral City Council

Dear Mayor Sullivan:

BikeWalkLee is a community coalition working 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.

Improving safety for bicyclists and pedestrians is a key goal of BikeWalkLee’s efforts, and FHWA research shows that complete streets improve safety for all users. This is important because Florida has some of the highest bicycle and pedestrian fatality per capita rates in the country. Over the past three years we have supported efforts by the Cape Coral City Council to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and laud your commitment to reducing speeds and calming traffic, especially near schools.

Since the tragic death of 13-year old Ryan Santos on April 27, 2010, BikeWalkLee has been urging LeeDOT and the Board of County Commissioners to take action to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety at Del Prado Blvd. and NE 3rd Terrace. We wrote a letter to the BoCC on May 24, 2010 (http://www.bikewalklee.org/BWL_PDFs/BWL_PR/052410BoCCletterCapeFatality.pdf), urging the County Commissioners to direct LeeDOT to make safety improvements at this intersection and gave several possible solutions that have been used successfully in other communities. We appeared before the Cape Coral Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on January 19, 2011 and argued for specific additional improvements.

We support the City Council’s efforts to request the county to take further action to make this intersection safer for pedestrians and cyclists. While Del Prado is a major arterial road managed by LeeDOT, it is also a major corridor in Cape Coral through commercial and residential areas. For the good of its citizens, it is important that both government entities work together to find solutions. We believe that LeeDOT should take the Cape Coral City Council’s wishes into account in this matter, as LeeDOT did recently in its decision on the Veterans/Santa Barbara interchange options.

As we said to the Cape TAC on Jan. 19’ 2011, we agree with LeeDOT’s recommendation to modify the existing median openings at this intersection. It will provide a refuge for crossing and limit the amount of conflicting movements. However, by itself it isn’t sufficient. Research shows that the key to improving pedestrian safety is a combination of treatments.

Though RaceTrack has generously offered to fund the installation of a traffic light at this intersection, LeeDOT determined that there was insufficient traffic to warrant a traffic light. There is recent precedent for not making the judgment solely on the basis of traffic counts. For example, a signal at the intersection of Veterans and Surfside was installed by LeeDOT even though the traffic counts did not pass the “warrant” test. Just last week FDOT reversed its decision and has decided to install traffic lights at two busy intersections on US 41 in Collier County. Although the traffic counts did not pass the “warrant” test, two recent pedestrian fatalities convinced them to reconsider their approach.

If LeeDOT continues to reject a traffic light, they should consider one of the following types of flasher devices:

- The Enhancer is 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.
- A lower-cost flasher, activated by the pedestrian, was installed by LeeDOT in 2010 at various mid-block pedestrian crossings along Gladiolus Road to make it safer for pedestrians in the Harlem Heights neighborhood.
- Bonita Springs recently installed another type of flasher at three downtown crosswalks. The success of those flashers was recently highlighted in an NBC-2 News story (<http://bikewalklee.blogspot.com/2012/02/nbc-2-news-deputies-enforce-bonita.html>). The article stated, “Three solar powered crosswalks were installed in Bonita 7 months ago, complete with bells and LED flashing lights when walkers or bikers are present.... Before the new crosswalks, downtown off of Old 41 saw 10 pedestrians hit by cars in just 2 years. Since their installation there haven't been any.”

It has been almost 2 years since Ryan Santos’ tragic death and no improvements have yet been made to this dangerous intersection. It is past time for action. We will continue to urge Lee County to make improvements to this intersection 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 automobile.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the safety, mobility, and quality of life for residents of Cape Coral and all of Lee County.

Sincerely,

/s/

Darla Letourneau
& Steve Chupack (BikeWalkLee’s Cape Coral Representative)
On behalf of
BikeWalkLee

Cc: Cape Coral City Council Members
David Loveland, LeeDOT Director
Board of County Commissioners