



June 19, 2012

Lee County Board of County Commissioners
2120 SW Main Street
Fort Myers, FL 33901

Dear Commissioners:

We understand that the Board will be considering the draft CIP at its budget workshop on June 25th. BikeWalkLee would like to share its comments and recommendations on the transportation component of the draft CIP. Last year, as called for in your approved Action Plan to implement the 2009 Complete Streets Resolution, the staff developed a revised transportation planning and budgeting process. This year is the first time that the new approach has been used to develop the 5-year transportation funding plan, reflected in the CIP. The staff is to be commended for its interdepartmental team effort in developing this plan.

The draft CIP is an improvement over previous years and reflects a first step in implementing the new approach. The staff has done an excellent job of ensuring that all planned road projects include bike/ped facilities in their designs. However, they have not yet taken the next step to analyze the merits of the road projects in terms of the broader complete streets and sustainability goals. It is our hope that as the collaborative county staff process evolves, road projects will be evaluated in terms of the goals and priorities the county has articulated.ⁱ

Attached you will find specific recommendations made by the Community Sustainability Advisory Committee (CSAC) and supported by BikeWalkLee for changes to the draft CIP. (See Attachment 1.)

This memo is intended to provide some background and rationale for these recommendations. Given the County's revenue shortfalls, declining gas tax collections, lower impact fees, and reductions in federal and state funding, funding for transportation projects will be tight for the foreseeable future. Each of the expanded road capacity projects must be closely scrutinized, weighing both the initial capital and life-cycle maintenance costs against the county's current funding realities and certainties of future sources. Simply because the county has already invested some funding in the early phases of a particular project does not necessarily mean that it must automatically move forward to the next funding phase.

Overall Analysis

In order to better understand the transportation CIP and what it says about the county's focus, Table 1 sorts the projects into thematic categories (see Attachment 2) with the percentage of funds going to each type in the 1st year and over the 5-year period.

Table 1: Percent Funding Allocation by Project Type

	<u>1st Year</u> <u>% CIP Funds</u>	<u>5 Year Total</u> <u>% CIP Funds</u>
Completing projects currently under construction	34%	7%
Improving existing infrastructure (roads & bridges & equip)	32%	39%
Exclusively complete streets-related projects	4%	14%
Expanding road capacity	30%	40%

**Note that almost all the road projects in the CIP have bike/ped facilities. The category labeled "complete streets-related projects" are those that are almost exclusively related to complete streets, both retrofits to existing facilities and road reconstruction.*

One of the goals articulated in the County's Complete Streets Action Plan and the MPO 2035 LRTP policy is that the use of existing transportation facilities should be maximized and opportunities for improved connectivity explored before adding new facilities.

According to our analysis, both the first year and 5-year totals show the county investing between 30-40% of its resources on improving existing infrastructure, and a similar share (30%-40%) being invested in expanded road capacity. The Board should consider whether this mix is consistent with its vision, especially considering that the County will experience revenue shortfalls for the foreseeable future. Road expansion projects represent major capital investment costs as well as increased future maintenance costs. In addition, expanded roads have an impact on the livability of our communities. As a result, it is critical that these projects be closely scrutinized despite any prior purchase of ROW or design work.

Several times during the past year the Board has expressed its concerns about doing design work that just ends up on a shelf. You have also raised concerns about not buying ROW unless we are absolutely sure that the road will be built. Both of these concerns need to be taken into consideration in the evaluation of CIP projects that expand road capacity. In March, the MPO Board approved funding for traffic model updates and sensitivity analysis, which is now underway. The results of this analysis should be taken into account before this CIP is approved by the Board.

In addition, in February, the MPO adopted amendments to the 2035 LRTP that included changing five LeeDOT road projects in the LRTP from 4 lanes to 2 lanes divided with turn lanes and improved bicycle amenities. These changes were proposed by LeeDOT using complete streets principles. This approach was a win/win--addressing congestion concerns in a way that takes into account the needs of all users, making the streets safer for everyone and making our communities more livable. In addition, the

change resulted in savings of \$58.5 million--an average 43% reduction from planned costs. As the MPO considered these changes, there was discussion about applying this approach to other roads in the cost-feasible and needs plan. BikeWalkLee is working with MPO staff on developing criteria and a methodology for considering this "road diet" approach for other road projects and making it a standard option in model analysis.

Specific Recommendations

Ortiz Avenue

In terms of the road projects listed on the CIP (although it has no projected costs in this 5-year window), we are recommending that the above "road diet" approach be used for the Ortiz 4L-Luckett to SR 80 4L road project. See map in Figure 1 below (please note that the plans to expand the more industrial section south of Luckett is not an issue). This one-mile section of Ortiz is part of a long-standing community on both sides of the street. This section could comfortably be converted to a 2-lane divided with road improvements, making this section a complete street. At the March 27, 2012, meeting of the Palm Beach Community Planning Panel, the panel voted to ask the MPO to re-evaluate the 4-lane design in favor of a 2-lane street (with a turn lane) for the section from State Road 80 to Luckett and take into account trips taken by transit, biking, and walking. The panel and community members have subsequently reiterated their vigorous support to re-plan this as a 2-lane section.

This community currently has one of the highest transit riderships in Lee County, as well as some of the highest numbers of trips made by biking and walking. The recommended change in road design will result in short and long term cost savings for the county, increased safety and usability of obviously needed multi-modal transportation choices and avoidance of one of the more egregious harms of 'old model' transportation planning – the decimation of a community's integrity and viability with arbitrary roadway bisections and 'improvements'. This is a scenario we are all too familiar with, particularly in minority neighborhoods. Fortunately, we now know better and have other options available.

It is wasteful and unnecessary to build any road to an LOS of "B", (proposed for this section of Ortiz). Maybe in the past the county could afford to build unneeded capacity, but those days are gone. Given higher priority funding needs and tight budget resources, the savings that can be realized by converting this project could be applied to other priority projects, such as the Fort Myers Beach Estero Improvements or Lehigh's Homestead Rd. There is a significant amount of money that can be saved. We know that for the five road projects that were converted to road diets in the recent LRTP amendments, the savings ranged from 22% to 62% of the total cost of the project, reflecting the differences on drainage and right of way needs. Based on these estimates, converting this 1.33 mile section of Ortiz could save between \$2.1 million and \$6.1 million (22%-62% range). Note that this does not include the savings in long-term maintenance costs for the county, nor does it include the potential savings that could be realized by selling back unneeded right of way that has already been purchased.

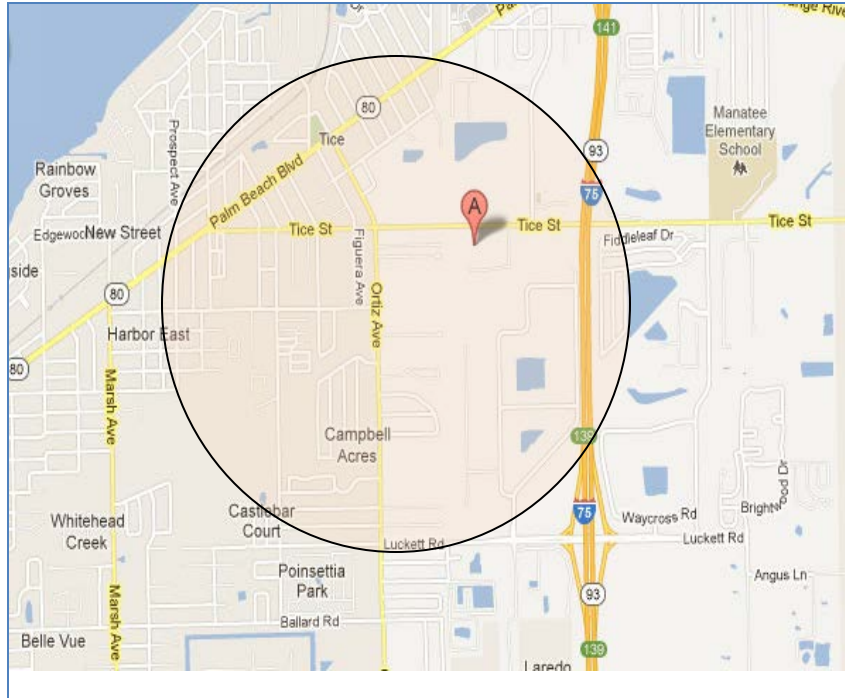


Figure 1: Ortiz Lockett to SR 80

Alico/Ben Hill Widening

Consistent with CSAC recommendations on both December 14th and April 18th, 2011 and as stated in our 5/2/12 memo to the Board, we are recommending that the \$1.6 million proposed for the 2012-13 design phase of the Alico Rd./Ben Hill widening project be delayed to allow for the development of a comprehensive master plan for the Research Diamond area. This will ensure that the roadway conforms to the envisioned land use, long-term economic potentials and the requisite overall transportation network rather than dictating or limiting those choices now. We also strongly support the LPA's recommendation that the Board pursue a joint funding mechanism (such as an MSTU/MSBU), as stated in the existing Comp Plan (Policy 38.1.8), to pay for widening of Alico Road.

Estero Boulevard and Homestead Road

Further, we have stated on previous occasions that Estero Blvd. on Fort Myers Beach should be a top priority for the county. With the limited ROW on this narrow barrier island, it is essential that the redesign of this area rely heavily on making it pedestrian/bicycle/transit-friendly. We strongly support funds proposed in this CIP for the Estero Blvd. Improvement Project and hope that it will proceed on this schedule, if not faster.

Another priority road project on the CIP is the Homestead project (Sunrise to Ala.). It's important that this project design be consistent with the community plan's pilot projects and designed as a complete street.

Other Recommendations

With respect to the exclusively complete streets projects, the CIP does not yet include many of the projects that were recommended by the staff complete streets team, CSAC and BPAC over the past 2 years . There are many excellent projects on this list that need to be costed out, prioritized and added to the 5-year CIP.

Consistent with the recommendations outlined in Attachment 1, making \$1.6 million available in 2012-13 (from our recommended delay of Alico Rd. project) would allow several bike/ped/complete streets projects scheduled for later years to be moved up to next year--specifically, the Fiddlesticks Blvd. shared use path project (\$850 K) and the Heritage Palms shared use path gap on the new 6 Mile Cypress widening project (\$150 k); and several more small bike/ped gap projects recommended by the CSAC over the past 2 years as part of the complete streets review of the resurfacing contract projects. (See Attachment 2 for detailed table.)

We agree with the recommendations from both the CSAC and BPAC that the Daniels south side path planned for 2016-17 (added for the first time in this draft CIP) be removed from the CIP and replaced with both committees' first priority--the College Parkway (Summerlin to Winkler) complete streets project, which is an excellent example of complete streets corridor planning.

In sum, we urge the Board to direct staff to modify the draft CIP to address the recommendations outlined above and in Attachment 1, and bring a revised version of the CIP to the Board in September. We believe that this approach is consistent with the Board's vision and will save considerable resources in the future.

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

Attachments:

1. CSAC Recommendations to BoCC on draft CIP, April 18,2012
- 2, Table: CSAC complete streets team analysis of LeeDOT 5-year CIP, April 13, 2012

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

¹ For example, the Nov. 2011 Action Plan includes the following goals that are driving the internal complete streets process and it would be helpful to analyze how the CIPs help achieve these goals.

1. *incorporate interdepartmental review in the planning process for road maintenance & CIP priorities*
2. *reduce crashes & severity of crashes*
3. *improve mobility & accessibility of all individuals*
4. *encourage mode shift to non-motorized transportation & transit*
5. *reduce air & water pollution & reduce noise impacts*
6. *increase transportation connectivity*
7. *maximize the efficient use of existing facilities*
8. *safely integrate intermodal connections across the network*
9. *promote safe and convenient access and travel for all users and people of all abilities*

Attachment 1: CSAC Recommendations to BoCC on draft CIP, April 18,2012

At the April 18th CSAC meeting, committee unanimously agreed on a motion to adopt the Complete Streets Working Group Recommendations, as presented below, and ask staff to forward to the Board of County Commissioners:

1. A 5-year resurfacing list for arterials & collectors

- *Endorse the 5-year resurfacing evaluation complete street projects & priorities as proposed by the County staff's Interdepartmental Project Team (IPT) and amended by BPAC.*
- *Request the IPT to prioritize the entire list of compiled resurfacing complete streets projects.*
- *Request LeeDOT to complete cost estimates for all projects on list.*
- *Complete within next 2 months so that results can begin to be used in finalizing this year's CIP.*
- *At a minimum, this list should be used to identify higher priority projects to replace Daniels south side path project.*

2. 5-Year CIPs from LeeDOT, Transit, Parks & Rec, & Utilities

- *Endorse LeeTran's CIP.*
- *In next year's CIP collaborative process, incorporate an analysis of the county's complete streets and sustainability goals and how all these CIPs move the county forward in meeting those goals.*

3. An in-depth review of the transportation CIP

c. Exclusively complete streets-related projects:

- *Before next year's CIP, develop a policy and criteria for roundabouts.*
- *Remove the Daniels south side path from CIP and replace it with College Parkway (Summerlin to Winkler) complete streets top priority project & others (up to \$2.2 M).*
- *Move up funding year for Heritage Palms SUP gap in 2013/14.*
- *Move up funding year for design of Fiddlesticks SUP in 2013/14 and construct in 2014/15.*

d. Expand road capacity:

- *LeeDOT should work in conjunction with the Lehigh Community Planning process to ensure that the Homestead (Sunrise to Ala.) road project design is consistent with the community plan's pilot projects and is designed as a complete streets.*
- *Re-evaluate whether the Ortiz 4L--Lockett to SR 80 4L road project can be converted to 2 lane divided with road improvements, using updated MPO data and LRTP amendments approach. The County should wait until the Palm Beach Community Plan has submitted its plan before taking any further action on this project. In addition, staff should consider suspending any further ROW purchases this year until after the re-evaluation has occurred and the analysis is reviewed by the Board.*

- *The Alico Rd./Ben Hill design and ROW acquisition should not proceed to the until after the County completes the CSAC's recommended land use study. The Board should be presented with both issues together, asking whether they want to fund a master plan study concurrent with or before proceeding to the alignment and conceptual design study phase.*
- *Coordinate the design of the North Airport Road extension projects with Parks & Rec to ensure a safe and convenient crossing of the road by John Yarbrough Linear Park path users.*

ATTACHMENT 2					
LeeDOT 5-YR CIP-3/2012	CSAC CS team analysis	Date: 4/13/12			
Project Type	2012-13 cost	5-yr. total	% of total funds		Comments
Complete proj. under construc.:			1 yr.	5 yr.	
<i>Bonita Beach Rd. phase II</i>	\$ 366K	\$ 366 K	Includes bike/ped		Landscaping--pd. w/ad valorem tax
<i>Colonial/Six Mile to SR 82</i>	\$ 829 K	\$ 829 K			" "
<i>Six Mile widening</i>	\$1,500 K	\$1,500 K			" "
<i>Summerlin/BoyScout</i>	\$ 880 K	\$ 880 K			" "
<i>Matlacha bridge replac.</i>	\$5,661 K	\$5,661 K	Includes bike/ped		
Subtotal:	\$9,236 K	\$9,236K	34.4%	7.3%	
Improving Existing Rds/bridges:					
<i>Big Carlos Pass bridge replac.</i>	0	\$8,675 K			
<i>Master bridge proj</i>	\$ 530 K	\$1,210 K			
<i>Daniels resurfacing</i>	\$1,700 K	\$1,700 K	Includes bike lanes		
<i>Road resurf.</i>	\$3,500 K	22,000K			
<i>Roadway beautific.</i>	\$ 100K	\$ 500 K			
<i>Kismet/Littleton realign</i>	0	\$ 850 K	Includes bike/ped		
<i>Fiber Ring (CC toll)</i>	0	\$ 350 K			
<i>Toll interop.</i>	0	\$ 850 K			
<i>Toll system replac.</i>	0	\$1,600 K			
<i>Signal system ATMS upgrade</i>	\$ 750 K	\$3,000 K			
<i>Signal mainten. upgrad</i>	\$ 100K	\$ 500 K			
<i>Master signal proj.</i>	\$1,500 K	\$7,500 K			
<i>Intersec. equip replac.</i>	\$ 250 K	\$ 250 K			
Subtotal:	\$8,430 K	\$49,285 K	31.5%	38.9%	
Exclusively Complete St.-related:					
<i>Bike/ped existing facil.</i>	\$472 K	\$3,917 K			
<i>Stringfellow/Oleander paved shoulder</i>	\$ 230K	\$ 230 K			
<i>Villas sidewalks</i>	\$ 190K	\$ 429 K			
<i>Summerlin/N. Brentwood ped con.</i>	\$ 17K	\$ 51 K			

<i>Three Oaks/Imperial bike lanes</i>	\$ 52 K	\$ 52 K			
<i>Fiddlesticks Blvd SUP</i>	0	\$ 850 K			
<i>Daniels SUP--S side</i>	0	\$2,200K			
<i>6 Mile SUP gap (Heritage Palms)</i>	0	150K	1st yr.	5 yr.	Comments
<i>Briarcliff/Rippe signaliz.</i>	0	\$ 255 K			
<i>Crystal/Plant. roundabout</i>	\$ 125K	\$ 575 K			
<i>Crystal Dr. reconstruct (2L divided)</i>	0	\$1,100 K			
<i>Estero Blvd. improv (FMB)</i>	0	\$7,000			
Subtotal:	\$1,086 K	\$17,895 K	4.1%	14.1%	
Expanding rd. capacity:					
<i>N. Airport Rd. Extens</i>	\$3,745 K	\$3,745 K	Includes bike/ped		Relieves Colonial traffic
<i>N. Airport Rd. reconstr</i>	500 K	\$2,300 K	Includes bike/ped		CS corridor w/above
<i>Alico Rd./Ben Hill</i>	\$1, 590 K	10,710K	Includes bike/ped		
<i>Bonita Beach Rd. Phase III</i>			Includes bike/ped		\$ only in 6-10 yr. window
<i>Burnt Store Rd. (SR 78 to Van Buren)</i>	\$ 500 K	\$15,140 K	Includes bike/ped		
<i>Three Oaks exten N</i>			Includes bike/ped		\$ only in 6-10 yr. window
<i>Homestead 4L (sunrise/Ala.)</i>	\$1,700 K	\$15,050 K	Includes bike/ped		Connected to Lehigh community plan
<i>Luckett Rd--Ortiz to I-75 (to 4 L)</i>			Includes bike/ped		Purchased ROW already \$ only in 6-10 yr. window
<i>Ortiz 4 L/Colonial to MLK</i>	0	0	Includes bike/ped		\$ only in 6-10 yr. window
<i>Ortiz 4L/Luckett to SR 80</i>	0	0	Includes bike/ped		Connected to Palm Beach community plan ROW purchases already
<i>Ortiz 4L/MLK-Luckett</i>	0	0	Includes bike/ped		Purchased ROW already
Subtotal:	\$8,035	\$50,435	30%	40%	
GRAND TOTAL:	\$26,787 K	\$126,851 K			