



Jan. 29, 2015

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

Dear Commissioners:

BikeWalkLee, a coalition working to complete Lee County's streets, works for a more balanced transportation system. At the Feb. 3rd Board meeting you will be considering whether to reestablish the 100% impact fee program, as modified by the recommendations of the Duncan Report. BikeWalkLee urges you to take no action to extend reduced impact fees, so that the previous impact rates automatically are reinstated effective March 13, 2015, as called for in your March 2013 ordinance. We further urge you to adopt the recommendations in the just released Duncan Associates Road Impact Fee Study and School Impact Fee Study, updating the 100% rates reflecting current costs.

We commend the Board for its wisdom in ordering verification of actual current costs via the Duncan Report updates. And, now armed with this information, there are no policy reasons to not follow the report's recommendations and fully fund the necessary infrastructure.

BikeWalkLee has steadfastly opposed the suspension or reduction in impact fees over the past four years, opposed the Board's 80% reduction in impact fees in March 2013, urged the Board to end the reduction in Feb. 2014, and now urges the Board to reestablish the 100% impact fee program, as modified by the required updated fee schedules recommended in the "Duncan Reports".

As Commissioner Mann has often stated, "there is no free lunch." The decision before you is about equity-- who pays for the infrastructure and services. The County's policy framework is that it is shared responsibility--developers (impact fees), taxpayers (property taxes), sales taxes (residents and visitors), and bed taxes (visitors). New developments create infrastructure and service costs for governments. The question is who should pay these costs: Those who created the costs and will benefit from the services; or the existing taxpayers through increased property taxes? Fairness dictates that the costs be borne by those benefitting. And, good economic sense dictates that development-driven expansion of our public infrastructure --roads, schools, parks--be fully funded. Otherwise, we will usher in long-term consequences of a declining reputation and the inability to attract and retain residents and businesses, who, in an increasingly competitive world, are looking at quality of life features.

Road impact fees are a significant source of revenues for transportation infrastructure projects, including bike/ped improvements, both as part of roadway projects and as stand-alone retrofit projects. Any reduction in road impact fees has an adverse effect on funds available for these improvements. According to LeeDOT's 1/16/15 report to Commissioner Mann detailing the list of completed transportation projects funded with road impact fees from 2000 to present, **38% of bike/ped facilities during this period were funded with impact fees.**

There are currently \$58 million worth of bike/ped stand-alone projects that have been approved and prioritized by the County's Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), waiting to be funded. Since historically at least 35% of all of Lee County's transportation infrastructure dollars have come from road impact fee revenues, any reduction in that vital revenue source means funding for bike/ped projects will be further jeopardized.

BikeWalkLee is pleased that in the new draft ordinance staff has included language broadening the definition of what road impact fee funds can be used for. This language provides the county with more flexibility to use road impact fees for bike/ped improvements and bus pull out lane improvements that accommodate vehicle trips by providing alternative travel modes. This language change begins to move the road impact fee into a more multi-modal transportation approach, as BikeWalkLee has long advocated.

Economic prosperity comes from quality investments in community infrastructure. We urge you to vote to return impact fees to the full 100% rate, as modified by the Duncan Report updates.

Sincerely,

/s/

Darla Letourneau
On behalf of
BikeWalkLee

cc: Roger Desjarlais, County Manager