



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, March 22, 2010

Contact: Darla Letourneau, 239-850-3219, dletourneau@bikewalklee.org

BikeWalkLee applauds Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization quick action in support of national complete streets policy

Fort Myers, FL –At the March 19 meeting of the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting the board, made up of elected officials from every municipality in Lee County, embraced the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) new policy statement on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation. The MPO board unanimously passed a motion in support of the policy statement and encouraged the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to support it as well.

"BikeWalkLee is gratified by the continued leadership and commitment demonstrated by the MPO led by Chairman Judah to complete Lee County's streets and to integrate the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists in road projects," said Darla Letourneau, a local community advocate and BikeWalkLee leader. "Not only is the MPO leading the county's efforts, its quick endorsement of this policy statement puts Lee County in the forefront of communities around the country who recognize the significance of this bold action by the Secretary of Transportation. In fact, Lee County may be the first in the country to have officially endorsed the new policy."

The new USDOT policy embraces a complete streets approach, calling for fully integrated active transportation networks, which are important components for livable communities. The policy states that transportation agencies should plan, fund, and implement improvements to their walking and bicycling networks, including linkages to transit. In addition USDOT encourages transportation agencies to go beyond the minimum requirements, and proactively provide convenient, safe, and context-sensitive facilities that foster increased use by bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. The entire policy is available online at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/policy_accom.htm.

The USDOT policy encourages state and local governments, among others, to adopt similar policy statements. "We are pleased that Lee County has already taken steps to move in this direction," Letourneau said. In 2009, Lee County — through adoption of complete streets resolutions by both the Metropolitan Planning Organization and by the Lee County Commission — embarked on a path to safer streets for everyone. In addition, the county has just launched the development of a countywide bicycle pedestrian master plan that will provide the blueprint for a safe, accessible, and connected bicycle/pedestrian system throughout the county.

"Having strong national leadership in support of complete streets as the county begins to implement its adopted policies provides a real boost to our local efforts. Now we need support and leadership from

Gov. Charlie Crist, the Legislature, and the Florida Department of Transportation for Lee County to be successful, since policies for building roadways are directed by the state and many roadways in our county are state roads,” Letourneau said.

“This USDOT policy should convince our state officials once and for all that a complete streets approach is the path Florida needs to embrace without any further delay,” Letourneau said. "As the 'Dangerous by Design' report release late last year made clear, complete streets are safer streets and save lives of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, as well as to help promote healthy lifestyles. Bold action is needed to make Florida, the most dangerous state in the nation for pedestrians and cyclists, a safer state for vulnerable users on our roadways. It makes good economic sense, as well as safety sense to become a state that fosters walkable, bikeable and livable communities."

BikeWalkLee has called upon state leaders -- the governor, the Legislature, and the Secretary of Transportation -- to adopt this new federal policy statement as Florida policy and integrate it into the state’s policies, planning processes and guidance documents, including the pending FDOT draft revisions to the “Green Book”--the manual used by local governments in designing their road projects. Florida should follow the lead of other states, such as California, in developing and implementing a statewide complete streets program and action plan, and aggressively promoting its adoption in communities throughout Florida.

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. For more information, visit www.BikeWalkLee.org.

###