



June 18, 2009

Editorial: Road planners should push bike, bus paths

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Lee County's long-range transportation planners should insist that state and local governments provide more thoroughly for bicyclists, pedestrians and public transit in designs for future roads.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization, made up of representatives of the state transportation department and local governments in Lee County, meets Friday to include two resolutions on the issue.

The better one was recommended by the MPO's citizens advisory panel and is supported by the activist group BikeWalkLee. The other is a more diluted, less aggressive version of the proposal, which would subtly reinforce the status quo.

We agree with BikeWalkLee's call for a more balanced transportation system for Lee County. We are an auto-based nation, so it is easier said than done - but it must be done.

Promoting alternatives to the private motor vehicle is the wave of the future for several reasons, and it is much cheaper for the taxpayer to accommodate alternatives in the design of roads than to retrofit for them later.

Not only is it environmentally more sustainable to use bikes, walk or take transit, it's also easier on the pocketbook - fewer trips to that once-again pricier gas pump - and beneficial to the health of a society beset by obesity.

The MPO should adopt both the citizen-backed recommendations for including car alternatives in road design, and a scope of work for the countywide bicycle and pedestrian master plan.

Both of these resolutions would enable bikers, pedestrians and transit users safer mobility as they travel county roads.

A revolution in transportation is underway across America, not just in Lee County, and it would behoove us to lead rather than follow in creating balanced road plans.

Additional Facts

IF YOU GO

- What: MPO meeting
- When: 9 a.m., Friday, June 19

• Where: Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council 1926 Victoria Ave., Fort Myers

• Call: 239-338-2550

• E-mail: mpo@swfRPC.org

To view the contents on www.news-press.com, go to:

<http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/200906180110/OPINION/906180321>

Doug MacGregor's Cartoon... Watch Out For Cyclists




Fort Myers, Florida :: Southwest Florida

June 17, 2009

Darla Letourneau and Dan Moser: MPO actions could make Lee streets a little more complete

Darla Letourneau and Dan Moser - Guest Opinion

You have a chance to help make Lee County a better place for bicyclists, walkers and people using the bus (or for those who would if it were more convenient).

At its meeting Friday, the Metropolitan Planning Organization - the intergovernmental planning agency that sets the direction of the county's transportation infrastructure-will be considering two items:

One sets the scope of work for the countywide bike/pedestrian master plan, to ensure a more integrated network throughout the county. Congratulations to the MPO for recognizing the need for this plan.

The other item is a policy statement that local and state road projects must include bike/pedestrian/ transit accommodation in design plans, rather than asking the public to pay for expensive retrofits later.

Actually, the MPO will ponder two versions of this resolution: One that supports a new and clear design-first policy; another that argues for the status quo (meaning doing the minimum required).

We urge the MPO to listen to its citizen advisors and support the resolution that makes it clear we expect new road projects to be built to include every user - not just the ones in cars.

Here's why:

- It completes our streets. By including walkers, bikers and bus riders up front in the design of road projects, it ensures there is room for everyone on Lee County roads. The design phase is the time to get this done, when simple changes and routine accommodations can make a huge difference for users - but very little difference in the final budget.

- It saves taxpayers money. When these elements are designed in, they cost very little. When they have to be added later, they cost a lot - and we have to foot the bill.

- It's sustainable. We need more transportation alternatives, not less. We need ways to get around that don't rely on cars alone. We need to encourage the healthy lifestyles choices that include biking and walking. We need to recognize that we live in an area whose growth rate makes better mass transit essential, not just a luxury.

- It's the law. State and federal rules require ways to accommodate cyclists, walkers and transit users, but it's easy to leave that out of road designs, and once elected officials and residents find out, it's too late to do anything. That's why a clear policy will send an equally clear message: Follow the law, no excuses.

- It just makes sense. Who wouldn't want all users to be included up front, so their needs can be integrated from the start? Who wouldn't want a countywide plan for a better network of sidewalks, bike lanes, bike paths, bus stops and more? That's smart planning that benefits everyone - including drivers.

BikeWalkLee is a coalition of local groups and individuals working to complete the streets in Lee County. On behalf anyone who walks, bikes or rides the bus, we urge you to tell the MPO to support complete streets by supporting the citizens' committee resolution and the countywide bike/pedestrian plan.

You can find out how to contact MPO members (to tell them you support complete streets), how to attend the June 19 meeting (to show your support in person), and about the MPO online at mpo-swfl.org.

Help Lee County take a big step to make its streets more complete. Share your support with the MPO today.