



September 17, 2010

To: Lee County Commissioners

Re: Budget cuts to Lee County transit programs

BikeWalkLee is a coalition working to complete Lee County streets, whose purpose is to create a balanced transportation system that includes pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. BikeWalkLee is strongly opposed to the proposed \$1.64 million cut in the transit budget for the following reasons:

1. **Economic and business development.** Cutting transit routes and services has serious implications for riders who depend on the system to get to work. According to LeeTran data, a majority of its riders use it as their means of transportation to work. The proposed transit cuts will result in an unacceptable ridership loss. Without a way to get to work, this cut could translate into job losses for these individuals, which has an exponential impact on Lee County's economy. In addition to the individual job loss, there are also enormous implications for businesses that may be attracted to Lee County. Research shows that businesses relocate to areas with healthy public transit systems. Given the current economic environment, wouldn't Lee County want to expand (not shrink) its opportunities to grow by holding the budget line on public transportation?
2. **Environmental sustainability.** In addition to the serious economic implications for cutting transit, Lee County's efforts to maintain or improve its carbon footprint will continue to be at risk. As we continue to force more automobiles on the road, we do nothing to improve the already negative environmental impacts from automobile transportation.
3. **Livability.** Finally, public transit is one of the most important aspects of building communities, restoring community life, providing accessibility to businesses, improving entrepreneurial opportunities, spurring community identity, building cohesion, increasing safety, and enhancing growth. Lee County's earlier efforts to pass the Complete Streets Resolution were a clear message that alternatives to sprawl are a priority. By reducing transit services and funding, you will be reversing this important accomplishment and jeopardizing the livability for all residents.

We understand that the county is faced with a very difficult budget situation and hard choices. We believe that in tight economic times, it makes more sense to invest in transportation activities that keep people employed (or employable) and defer spending on projects that can wait until budgetary times are better. By doing so, you ensure that Lee County will position itself to invest in its future and move out of the current recession in a position of strength.

Sincerely,

Darla Letourneau

On behalf of BikeWalkLee