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BikeWalkLee applauds commission vote to support complete streets in Lee County

"Lee County commissioners made an historic first step today to make Lee County's streets safer for all the people who use them, thanks to its unanimous passage of the county's first Complete Streets resolution," said Darla Letourneau, a local community advocate and BikeWalkLee leader.

While the Complete Streets resolution was recommended by the county's Smart Growth Committee earlier this summer, the national report "Dangerous by Design" added new urgency to commissioners' action today. According to this report, Florida is the most dangerous state for pedestrians; Lee County exceeds the statewide danger rate, and ranked 23rd worst in the nation out of all 360 metro areas.

"While the end result will take time to be implemented, this resolution sets in motion the planning and regulatory changes to ensure that all users of Lee's roadways are included in transportation planning at the front end of the process," said Letourneau. "Almost as gratifying as the unanimous support from county commissioners was the broad range of support shown for the resolution this morning.

"During the public comment period, commissioners heard from senior citizens who want to maintain mobility after they no longer drive; parents who want a place for their children to safely walk and bike; high school and college students who want a more livable community as they make their careers here; public health officials concerned about the obesity epidemic, and emergency room doctors who see the tragic results every day of Lee's dangerous roads," Letourneau continued.

"The public involvement today was a true sign that this approach benefits many people on many different levels, from safety to access to health to environment to economy. Dr. Dean Goldberg, trauma director for Lee Memorial Hospital System, said it well: 'I think we give the manatees better access in the water than we give our own citizens on the roads.'"

The commissioners' decision creates a positive legacy for Lee County and its citizens today."

The commissioners' adoption of a complete streets policy is exactly the kind of action called for in "Dangerous by Design," a report released Monday by Transportation for America (T4America.org) and the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership (STPP), which recommends adoption of complete streets policies as a way to make our streets safer and save lives of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, as well as to help promote healthy lifestyles.



Why will Lee County benefit from a complete streets policy?

- **Complete streets improve safety.** The Federal Highways Administration safety review found that streets designed with complete street features improve safety for all users. Lee County has some of the highest bike and pedestrian fatality per capita rates in the country.
- **Complete streets are sustainable.** The potential to reduce carbon emissions by shifting trips to lower carbon modes is undeniable. We need ways to get around that don't rely on cars alone. We need to encourage 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.
- **Complete streets foster strong communities.** A safe walking and bicycling environment is an essential part of improving public transportation and creating friendly, walkable communities. Lee County's pattern of urban sprawl is exacerbated by the lack of a non-motorized transportation network. Complete streets improve livability, enhance property values, and encourage economic revitalization by improving mobility for all.
- **It saves taxpayers money.** When complete streets are incorporated into the initial design of transportation networks, they cost very little. When they have to be added later, they cost a lot -- and taxpayers have to foot the bill. Without a complete streets policy, bicycle, pedestrian and public transportation accommodations are often an afterthought in the design process, creating expensive design revisions. The careful planning encouraged by complete streets policies requires minimal to zero additional funding. Implementing complete streets allows for an efficient and optimal use of limited resources: time, fuel, land, public health, the environment and money.

BikeWalkLee is a coalition of individuals and organizations working to create a network of complete streets in Lee County. Its vision is for Lee County to become a complete streets model community whose integrated and safe cycling and walking network inspires people of all ages, income groups and fitness levels to cycle and walk for transportation and recreation, and where public transportation is available and accessible to citizens and visitors alike.

BikeWalkLee representatives are available to provide background and quotes for any media outlet. Contact Darla Letourneau at 239-850-3219 or dletourneau@bikewalklee.org to arrange interviews. Visit the organization's Web site at www.BikeWalkLee.org for more information, statistics and background.