



October 29, 2012

Billy Hattaway, District Secretary
Florida Department of Transportation
District One
P.O. Box 1249, Bartow, FL 33831
801 North Broadway Avenue, Bartow, FL 33830

Secretary Hattaway:

BikeWalkLee, a community coalition working for complete streets in Lee County, would like to add its voice in support of calls throughout our community for the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Briarcliff Rd. and the new Michael G. Rippe Parkway (Metro Parkway Extension) in South Lee County. All indications are that this intersection will meet the warrant requirements and a traffic light will be installed. There should be a way to install it now rather than later, for the safety of the Briarcliff residents and all road users on the Metro Extension.

Improving safety for bicyclists and pedestrians is a key goal of BikeWalkLee's efforts, and we have been primarily focused on this aspect of the Briarcliff and Metro intersection. We know that improvements in safety require a multi-pronged approach--roads designed to accommodate the safety and accessibility needs of all road users, rather than simply the needs of fast-moving automobiles; education of all road users--motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians--about their responsibilities to drive, walk, or bike safely; and enforcement of traffic laws, esp. speed limits and obeying traffic signals. We know that many crashes are caused by human error factors. However, we believe that improved signalization, along with law enforcement and education, can raise user awareness and help reduce the sometimes deadly influence of human error factors.

The new bike lanes and shared use path on the Metro Extension are not yet completed so the dangers to pedestrians and cyclists at this intersection cannot yet be observed. However, it is clear from observing the dangers to motorists at this intersection, that this will be an even more deadly intersection for cyclists and pedestrians.

BikeWalkLee has been concerned about potential safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists on the new Metro Parkway Extension since the roadway was approved for funding in 2009. Through the MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinating Committee (BPCC) and the County's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), BikeWalkLee's advocates worked closely with FDOT and LeeDOT staff on the design of this 6-lane roadway to ensure that there were adequate and safe facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. As a result of these efforts, the road was designed to have on-road bike lanes and a shared use path, and the intersection of Briarcliff Rd. and the Metro extension was designed to have a traffic light.

It was clear to BPCC, BPAC, and BikeWalkLee in 2009 that a traffic light would be needed at this intersection to provide safe access from the Briarcliff community to the biking and walking facilities that were to be located on the west side of this new road, across from the neighborhood on the east side. It didn't make sense to build these biking and walking facilities if users couldn't safely access them.

As part of the deliberations on the design of these facilities, FDOT agreed to install the underground infrastructure for this light, which has been done, and LeeDOT agreed to pay for the maintenance of the traffic light after installation, and has recently reaffirmed this commitment.

We understand that FDOT engineers are following the federal MUTCD criteria that requires traffic studies prior to "warranting" a signal installation. However, we know that exceptions also can and have been made to this policy. We believe that the immediate dangers to all road users--drivers, as well as pedestrians and cyclists--resulting from the lack of a traffic light at this busy intersection, where a large established community with no other exit in and out except via this new 6-lane high speed highway, merits just such an exception to established procedures.

FDOT's quick action could avoid the devastation of more human lives damaged by crashes on this roadway. We know that by itself, a traffic signal will not make this roadway safe, and share your commitment to educating the public about safer driving habits. We also encourage law enforcement to continue their campaign to enforce the speed limit on this new roadway.

We are heartened by your leadership within FDOT to improve the safety for pedestrians and cyclists across Florida, and appreciate your efforts to make Lee County's roadways safer for all users. Thank you for considering our request, and requests from many others in our community, to install a traffic light quickly at this dangerous intersection.

/s/

Darla Letourneau
on behalf of BikeWalkLee

cc: Lora Hollingsworth, FDOT Chief Safety Officer