

**LEE COUNTY
BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
January 18, 2012**

MEMBERS PRESENT

**Diana Durante, At Large
Keith Kibbey, At Large, Chairman
Joe Beck, At Large, Vice-Chairman
Steve Rodgers, District 2
Ileana Sisson, District 1, Secretary
Peter Ahlgren, At Large
Don Mayne, District 4**

MEMBER ABSENT:

Damon Shelor, District 5

STAFF

**Mike Tisch, LCDOT
Denise Bayliss, LCDOT
Andy Getch, LCDOT
Steve Jansen, LCDOT**

OTHERS PRESENT

**Dawn Huff, Lee County School District
Ron Gogoi, LC MPO
Ernest K. Brownell, Lee Tran**

RESIDENTS OF YACHT CLUB COLONY:

Rosie Gaylord	Bonnie Dixon
Judy Gohde	Betty J. Dilley
Cathie Dozier Karoz	Richard Arnold
Mary Carpenter	Diane Agurkis
Al & Marita Garza	Kathleen & Randy Rickard
Dianne K. Barry	

Agenda Item #1, Call to Order/Introductions/Review of Agenda & Motion to Approve Agenda:

Chairman Keith Kibbey called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m., and asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda. **Joe Beck moved to approve the order of the agenda as written; Steve Rodgers seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

Agenda Item #2, Approval of November 16, 2011 Minutes: Joe Beck moved to approve the November 16, 2011 minutes as written; Don Mayne seconded the motion. Ileana Sisson asked that the motion be amended to change a sentence in *Agenda Item #5.a., Follow-up on Bike/Ped Statistics on page 2* from “Steve analyzed the available data...” to “Ileana analyzed the available data...” Joe Beck amended his motion to include Ileana’s change in the minutes; Don Mayne seconded the amendment. The motion carried unanimously.

Keith then asked for introductions around the room.

Agenda Item #3, Public Comment: Residents of the Yacht Club Colony, North Fort Myers, commented on their request for a bike path on Donald Road and Bonita Blvd.

Marita Garza read a letter from Jack Howerton, a resident of Yacht Club Colony and a member of the North Fort Myers Civic Association. The letter states that the North Fort Myers Civic Association is in full support and approval of the bicycle path initiative for Donald Road to Bonita Blvd. in North Fort Myers. Mrs. Garza added that the Donald Road/Bonita Blvd. area is too dangerous to bike at this time, so the residents are requesting a bike path. It’s only a mile from Winston Road out to where Publix is putting in a sidewalk to Donald Road. The residents and a lot of people from outside the community like to walk and bicycle to Yacht Club Colony because the area back there is near the river and is so pretty.

Another resident said that there are two amputees back in that area that use the hand bicycles, so they are real low, and they have flags on them.

Diane Barry, a resident in Yacht Club Colony for almost two years, likes to bike and hike, but the roads are so dangerous. This morning she measured one lane of the road, which has no shoulders, and it is nine feet. Most cars and trucks are eight feet wide and wider, so there is no room. She believes those roadways are narrower than other roads in the area. There is currently a great amount of bike and foot traffic in that area from Yacht Club Colony and other communities. The residents walk and bike to the shops at the intersection of Bayshore and Slater Roads. Publix is building a supermarket, so there will be even more traffic and more people wanting to walk and cycle up to the stores. At the intersection of Donald Road and Bonita Blvd. there is a 90 degree, totally blind corner, where vehicles sometimes run off the road onto the grass. It's very scary to ride a bike or walk around that corner. The residents would like to encourage Lee County to give them a safe environment. Fort Myers and North Fort Myers need bike paths as a way for people to get to work and travel around our cities. It is such a tremendous draw for people and they will come just to use those paths.

Rosie Gaylord said that the road gets very flooded during storms, and after the rain stops, the water stays on the roadway.

Al Garza said he was formerly the president of Yacht Club Colony when they met with Lee County DOT to request that the road be raised because of flooding during storms and high tides. DOT installed a "Texas Slough," where they just dipped the road down and let the water flow over it. Later on, culverts were put in. The road is six feet below grade. The residents were hoping that the County would put a bike path around that curve because that's the most dangerous part of the road. They are also concerned about being able to evacuate and having a safe place for the school children to walk.

A couple of residents commented that the speed limit in the area is 25 mph in one direction, 35 mph in the other direction, and 20 mph in the curve, but nobody adheres to the speed limits. There are about 200 residents in Yacht Club Colony, and there are a couple of other subdivisions nearby. Keith Kibbey noted that the residents are contributing to their own problems by not following the speed limits.

Randy Rickart, a resident from Yacht Club Colony, stated that the asphalt is failing along the shoulder of the roadway, which forces cyclists to ride out into the roadway creating a hazard when cars try to pass there. He likes to roller blade, but the road conditions make that very unsafe.

Dick Arnold, a resident of Yacht Club Colony, said he enjoys riding his bicycle every night through the Colony neighborhood. He does not ride on Donald Road because it is too dangerous, but he would if there were a safe bike path or sidewalk. He had been told that people are not allowed to ride bikes on sidewalks in Florida and wanted to know if that was true. He was concerned that if a sidewalk were put in, but not a bike path, that cyclists could not ride on it. Keith Kibbey explained that was not true; however, a cyclist on a sidewalk is supposed to behave as a pedestrian, a cyclist on the road is supposed to behave as a vehicle.

Agenda Item #4, Chairman's Report: Keith Kibbey explained that the BPAC committee was created in 1989 and received funding from gas taxes and impact fees that they could allocate to bicycle/pedestrian facilities. BPAC kept a long list of projects to work on; projects that had been requested by the public, the County Commissioners, and members of BPAC. And the list kept getting longer. Some projects had been on the list for 15 to 20 years or more and didn't look like they would ever get done. With the economy of the past several years, BPAC's funds have decreased. So, a few months ago, the committee decided to get rid of the list and endorse the MPO's Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan of connecting several large bike/ped projects together. The available BPAC funds have been allocated for the next five to seven years to go

towards mostly signage and pavement markings for the MPO bike loop projects. Since BPAC no longer keeps a list, but will continue to receive citizen requests for projects, the committee members need to think about how we will deal with those requests.

Agenda Item #5, New Business:

Agenda Item #5.a., Bike path request for Yacht Club Colony:

A resident of the Yacht Club Colony asked where they should go to get help with their bike path request, if BPAC is not able to do it.

Betty Dilley asked about the sidewalks being built from Bayshore Road, around Coons Road, to Donald Road - the sidewalk to nowhere. Steven Jansen said those sidewalks are a part of the development where Publix is being built and the Walgreen's that was built. They are required to build sidewalks adjacent to their property as part of their projects.

Al Garza observed that Yacht Club Colony is an old community and they have been paying taxes to Lee County since 1958. When Daniels Road was built, a bike path was put in even though not many people lived near there at the time. Their tax money has been used elsewhere in the county and now they are asking that it be used for their own community.

Keith explained that the bicycle/pedestrian facilities that the County has been installing have been paid with gasoline tax money and impact fees. The impact fees created in your impact fee district stay in your impact fee district. Property taxes are not used to pay for roadway improvements. Lee County has been very proactive in the past few years about putting in paved shoulders and other bicycle/pedestrian facilities when roadways are widened. BPAC has been involved in trying to get bike/ped facilities put in when roads are resurfaced as well; but it is very expensive.

Mike Tisch said the County is going to resurface Coon Road, Donald Road, Bonita Blvd., and Winston Road. The resurfacing is scheduled to be done this year. However, that is just to resurface the roadways, not put in paved shoulders or bike paths. Mike further explained that, due to the condition of the roadways, the cost of putting in paved shoulders on Donald Road and Bonita Blvd. would be roughly \$250,000 to \$400,000 per mile, depending on how much fill has to be added; and the roadway would also need a lot of drainage work done, there are permitting issues and right-of-way issues. Putting in a bike path would be much more expensive than paved shoulders.

Mike said there is a way that other communities have used to get the facilities they want built. He suggested the residents set up an MSTBU (Municipal Services Taxing Benefits Unit), which is basically setting up a taxing unit that would tax the residents who receive the benefit for the improvements that they want made. To set up the MSTBU, the community can contact Lee County Public Resources by calling them at (239) 533-2120 or going online to www.lee-county.com.

Andy Getch said that Donald Road is like dozens of other roads in the county that were built way back when, with narrow lanes, shoulders that just dropped off to a ditch, no sidewalks, no street lights, no other infrastructure. This problem is countywide in older residential areas and subdivisions. The challenge is to look at where the greatest needs are countywide and prioritize them. Priority goes to the busiest roads with the heaviest connections, trying to connect communities, recognizing that we've got deficiencies and gaps all over the place, and looking at the biggest needs first. There are so many higher priority roads waiting for roadway improvements when funding is available. Right now, Donald Road is on the schedule to be resurfaced this year and possibly get "bikes sharing the road" signs placed along the roadway. There is no money in the resurfacing budget for additional roadway improvements, like paved shoulders or bike paths.

Mike said the staff understands the challenge that the residents have living near that road and people driving so fast, especially through that curve. He offered to look into getting some of the brush trimmed back to increase the visibility around the curve, so that people could see greater distances through the curve.

Joe Beck said that he is a member of North Fort Myers Community Planning and Design Panel. The goal of the Panel is to make North Fort Myers more attractive to development in creating more mixed-use type of communities where people live, work, and play all within their community. They are trying to raise the value of North Fort Myers in order to raise the tax base to allow for improvements. He invited everyone to get involved in the North Fort Myers Community Planning Panel.

Agenda Item #5.b., Safe Routes to School Projects: Dawn Huff explained that each year FDOT offers grants for Safe Routes to School Projects. Lee County School District (LCSD) can submit up to five projects for the entire county. These projects cannot be taken off from the 5-year plan, they must be projects where funding is not available for more than five years. Typically the municipality does the project; then submits the documents to FDOT to get reimbursed. LCSD is submitting two projects for unincorporated Lee County, two for the City of Fort Myers, and one for the City of Cape Coral. The projects have to be within two miles, preferably within one mile of a school.

Dawn said the first of the two projects for unincorporated Lee County is a sidewalk project on Leeland Heights Blvd., from Homestead Road to Richmond Avenue, and it serves four schools. There are 2582 students that live within a two-mile area, and 254 students within a quarter mile, that would utilize the sidewalks. So there is a substantial number of students that could use this sidewalk and that's what FDOT likes to see. Out of that figure, there are 1151 students that live and attend a school within a two mile area, 123 within a quarter mile. Those are pretty good numbers. This project is estimated to cost around \$502,260 for the concrete sidewalk and drainage. Leeland Heights is a major corridor for Lehigh. Dawn added that the school district does not typically provide bus service to students who live within two miles of the school they attend.

Dawn said the next project connects to Orange River Elementary, just off of Palm Beach Blvd., in East Fort Myers. This school has 1144 students within a two-mile walking distance, of which: 309 students that attend this school are within a two-mile distance and 26 students are within a quarter mile. Steve Jansen said that there are a lot of children who walk to this school. Some of them have to cross SR 80, and there is a crossing guard posted there. Mike added that the students are not allowed to walk on Tiger Road behind the school because that is the entrance for buses only. The kids have to go all the way up to Richmond and then around to Queens. So this project will provide a connection from the sidewalk that was built on Lexington Ave. a few years ago, to Richmond Ave. and Queens Drive and directly to Orange River Elementary. Dawn said the sidewalk will be built on the south side of Richmond, from Palm Beach Blvd. to connect to the sidewalk on Lexington Ave. Mike said the sidewalk on Queens Drive, from Richmond Ave. to the school, will be constructed on only one side of the street, which side depends on where the utilities are located. The Orange River Elementary sidewalk project is estimated to cost \$155,000 for the whole thing.

Mike, Dawn, Ron Gogoi, and Steve Jansen explained that these are projects to be submitted to FDOT for grant opportunities for reimbursement from the State. In most cases, Lee County has to front the money to build the facilities. The projects submitted this year are for construction in Fiscal Year 2017/2018. The State will rank them compared with all the other projects submitted by all counties in District 1 and choose what meets their criteria best. Dawn said that the Lee County School District submits applications to FDOT for five projects and they typically get funding for two projects a year. She is looking for BPAC's support for these projects in the form of a letter that she will submit with the grant applications to

FDOT in a couple of weeks. Keith Kibbey asked Joe Beck to make the motion and Keith would write the letter and sign it.

Joe Beck moved that BPAC has reviewed the Safe Routes to School projects on this date and we recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that these projects go forward. Don Mayne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ron Gogoi explained the two-phase process. First, the MPO transmits the applications to FDOT. In Phase I, FDOT reviews the pre-applications for construction viability. This is Phase II, which Dawn is handling for the Lee County School District. Mike Tisch will submit BPAC's recommendation to the BOCC.

Agenda Item, #5.c., Countywide Local Streets Resurfacing Contract for 2012: Andy Getch presented a spreadsheet showing the 2012 Countywide Resurfacing Contract for Local Streets. It also includes a few minor collectors, like Donald Road. The Complete Streets Team met several weeks ago and made some recommendations on this list. Most of these streets accommodate all users, have low traffic volumes, and are not very long.

The Complete Streets Team (CST) made the following recommendations:

Barbara Drive – add 200 feet of sidewalk as an entry to the neighborhood;

Linda Loma Drive - add a 200-foot sidewalk from San Carlos Blvd. to Carmen Avenue as an entry to the neighborhood;

Caloosa Yacht & Racquet Drive - stripe with paved shoulders from Cape Coral Bridge Road to Island Circle, with a crosswalk, and there is already adequate pavement width to do that in that stretch when we reduce the southbound exit to a single lane;

Keenan Avenue – currently has 18-foot wide lanes, wide enough for two lanes of traffic in and out, but no paved shoulders. The CST recommendation was to restripe that to one lane of traffic in and out, with a paved shoulder in each direction;

Sunrise Blvd., The Villas - add a sidewalk from Fordam to US 41;

Gorham Ave. - add a sidewalk from Austin Street to Beacon Blvd.;

Austin St. - add a sidewalk from Christiana Way to Woodland Blvd., add crosswalks at Sunrise Drive; and modify the crosswalks at the Woodland and Austin intersection;

Christiana Way - add a sidewalk from Bell Tower Drive to Austin Street;

Tropic Isles Subdivision in North Fort Myers – complete the sidewalk where there are pieces missing. This project will be done out of another fund, not out of resurfacing;

Piney Drive, North Fort Myers - put in a crosswalk;

Laurel Drive, Donald-Coon Road, and Donald Road, in North Fort Myers - add bike sharing roadway signs. It was also recommended that the 300-foot section of Donald Road which is currently striped as a one-way street, be restriped as a two-way street from Bayshore Road to Coon Road;

Joe Beck made a motion that BPAC has reviewed the countywide local street resurfacing contract for 2012 presented by Andy Getch and we recommend the BoCC then pursue it and go with the Complete Streets Team recommendations. Diana Durante seconded for discussion.

There was a long discussion about whether the resurfacing of Donald Road should be delayed until the residents set up an MSTBU for road improvements. Then the road improvements and resurfacing could be done at the same time, which would make for a better finished product. It was pointed out that delaying the road resurfacing would cause further deterioration of the roadway and increase costs and liability. The road has a lot of potholes that cannot wait. It may take years for the residents to set up an MSTBU, have the roadway and drainage designed, acquire the necessary permits (there are wetlands in the area), and obtain bonding. It is a significant process. Mike said that the traffic lanes on that roadway are 11 feet wide and the speed limit is 30 mph. It would be a great help if the community would work to obey the speed limit and share the road with the residents that want to bike and walk on a roadway that is basically just serving their community. It was agreed that county staff would keep in touch with the Yacht Club Colony residents and assist them in their efforts to set up an MSTBU.

Joe Beck called the question. The motion carried unanimously.

Diana Durante said that North Fort Myers seems like the forgotten area of Lee County. Andy Getch said there have been a lot of projects done in North Fort Myers, such as: Piney Road, Slater Road, Laurel Drive, Hart Road; and a lot of money has been spent in North Fort Myers. The North Fort Myers Community Planning Panel is working on a community plan. Hopefully, at some point, the NFM Community Planning Panel will be identifying bicycle/pedestrian retrofits and determining the priorities of the community as a whole. That gives us something stronger to work from, especially if that's in our Lee Plan. Steve Jansen added that North Fort Myers has many private communities with private streets, and the main roads are all state roads, so there are coordination issues with other agencies.

Agenda Item #6, Old Business: None

Agenda Item #7: Public Comments: None

Agenda Item #8, Member Comments:

Joe Beck said that three months ago he was nearly run off the road by a Lee Tran bus in downtown Fort Myers. He talked to the bus driver and asked if the driver knew about "3 feet, please; it's the law." The driver told Joe that he was not supposed to ride a bicycle on the roadway. That conversation led to Joe sending a written complaint to Lee Tran and then meeting with Ernest Brownell, a manager at Lee Tran.

Ernest explained that Joe's complaint gave Lee Tran the opportunity to review their retraining and initial instruction of the drivers with regards to sharing the roadway. Lee Tran has yearly retraining of their drivers and they are working on a presentation to incorporate vehicle/bicycle safety education into their training program. Ernest invited Joe to work together with Lee Tran and provide his input on the presentation. As an immediate measure, Ernest and the other Lee Tran supervisors got together with each of the drivers and informed them of the law and that they must follow the law. Many of the drivers were not aware of that law, so Lee Tran immediately instituted retraining and briefings. As far as Ernest knows, there have not been any further close calls or "buzzing" recently. Lee Tran has placed three bike racks on the front of the newer buses and retrofitted the older buses to add a third bike rack to the two racks already there, to get as many bicycles as possible on each bus. Lee Tran has a lot of wheelchair passengers that are now onboard and the buses are constantly full of bicycles and wheelchairs and it's a

beautiful thing. That's what we are here for - to move people from Point A to Point B - and keep as many cars as possible off the road. We all have to share the roadway.

Ron Gogoi reported that Lee Tran opened their new Edison Bus Transfer Facility with a ribbon cutting ceremony last Saturday. The Edison Facility has enough bike racks to park 26 bicycles, so it is the biggest bicycle parking facility in Lee County. Ernest Brownwell added that the facility has a brand new video surveillance system with PGZ cameras. They can go back 30 days and look at any square inch of the facility. The cameras are mounted high on poles and are armored, so it would be very hard for anyone to tamper with them.

Joe said that Burt Hamilton brought to his attention that Lee County has a tourism marketing firm: the Lee County Visitors & Convention Bureau. With the adoption of Complete Streets, Lee County is becoming a bicycle friendly community. That should be communicated to the outside world, for people who like to cycle to come to Lee County and cycle. Joe requested that this topic be an item on next month's agenda. Keith commented that the Visitor and Convention Bureau has set their budget for the year; but, there is always the year after that, and we could start working on it now.

Steve Rodgers announced that BikeWalkLee is hosting a bike parking corral at the Grand Opening Celebration of the Red Sox/Jet Blue Stadium on February 25th. Joe Beck is helping to create some easily readable maps that show good safe routes to get the cyclists routed into the stadium. Bicycle parking for this event is free. For more information, please go to www.bikewalklee.org.

Agenda Item #9, Adjournment: Joe Beck moved to adjourn. Don Mayne and Diana Durante seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

BPAC Chairman

Date

BPAC Secretary

Date