BikeWalkLee is a volunteer community coalition raising public awareness and advocating for complete streets in Lee County — streets that are designed, built, operated and maintained for safe and convenient travel for all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

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 was formed in 2009 and hit the ground running, with many successful efforts in its first four years. The organization has had considerable success since 2009, including facilitating the Lee County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) Complete Streets Resolution, the MPO Complete Streets Resolution, and the MPO Bike/Ped Master plan. The 2012 year culminated with BikeWalkLee being named APA Florida’s Outstanding Public Interest Group of the Year. The following are highlights from 2012:

- Coalition building and consensus seeking.
- A strong coalition has been the strength of the organization and the reason behind its numerous accomplishments.
- Partnered with a growing number of community stakeholder organizations (increased from 40 to 50 this year) that want to improve the quality of life and mobility in Lee County. Partners include Florida Gulf Coast University, health care organizations, safety prevention groups, AARP of Florida, citizen and community groups, environmental organizations, safety groups, planners and sustainable communities groups, and bike clubs and shops. In 2012, the coalition was broadened to include two local community planning panels—Lehigh Acres and Palm Beach Boulevard.
- Worked collaboratively with the Lehigh Community Planning Panel in support of their successful efforts to gain county commission approval of $2 million for Lehigh Acres’ complete streets projects.
- Worked collaboratively with the Palm Beach Boulevard Community Planning Panel on their recommended “road diet/complete streets” approach to a section of Ortiz Ave., including participation in a research and site visit to Gladiolous Drive.
- We continued our public education/outreach campaign by partnering with News-Press and Florida Weekly, resulting in a series of articles, editorials and commentaries on topics from new bike/ped facilities in the county, the economic benefits from bicycle tourism, safety concerns for bicyclists and pedestrians, the dangers of texting while driving, and the lack of adequate enforcement, highlighted by the cyclist fatality on the Sanibel Causeway.
• BikeWalkLee launched a biweekly column in the *News-Press*’ new “Go Coastal” section focused on some of the groups, events and opportunities to make our area a better place to walk, run, bike and try transit; and to educate the community about the benefits of complete streets.

• Partnered with two Cape Coral charter elementary schools to launch a successful Bicycle Safety Rodeo for students, which is being continued in 2013.

• Partnered with Lee County to promote riding bikes to the February 2012 grand opening event for JetBlue Park, the home of Boston Red Sox spring training. By promoting the event, designing maps for bike rides to the event, organizing several different rides, and providing safe bike parking services, the BikeWalkLee campaign was successful in getting 300 people to attend the event by bike (saving approximately 3 acres of parking).

• Partnered with other Southwest Florida organizations, including the Naples Pathways Coalition in Collier County, to support efforts to proceed with a planned shared use path on Vanderbilt Drive and support for funding the River of Grass Greenway project in the regional MPO funding proposals.

• Continued participation on the Lee County Transit Task Force to advise the Lee County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) on funding options and transit issues. This task force, composed of 18 members of the community representing larger employers, health care, local universities, transportation and planning professionals and other organizations, including BikeWalkLee, has developed a series of consensus proposal to the BoCC for their action in 2012 and 2013.

• Continued service on executive steering committee for Healthy Lee (formerly Fit Friendly Southwest Florida) Coalition whose goals include expanding support for complete streets to promote healthy lifestyles and fight obesity.
• Collaborated with Stay Alive, Just Drive!, AARP of Florida, Florida Bicycling Association and many other organizations in support of state legislation to ban texting and other distractions while driving. Wrote a commentary in News-Press, wrote a letter to Florida Legislative Delegation and testified before Lee County commissioners.

• Collaborated with the Estero Council of Community Leaders and others in a successful effort to defeat the 2012 suspension of impact fees for fire & EMS services, schools and parks.

• Partnered with several national coalitions and associations that provide BikeWalkLee with valuable national information and strategic advice and a network of national advocates.

Government policies and funding

BikeWalkLee is active in the various planning arenas in Lee County, including the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Lee County BoCC and local jurisdictions that influence transportation policy. The goal is to ensure that gains in one arena (transportation planning) are reflected in other arenas (land use planning), and that they reinforce each other in a way that moves the whole county forward in the same direction. In 2012 BikeWalkLee worked with a broad set of agencies and stakeholders to support the following initiatives:

• Implementation of complete streets.

• Development of amendments to Lee Plan as part of Horizon 2035 process, consistent with the vision adopted in the 2011 Evaluation and Appraisal Report.

• Lee County sustainability planning and strategies.

• Implementation of the Lee County MPO’s bike/ped master plan, including development of a Bike/Ped Safety Action Plan.

• Launching complete streets/bike-ped initiatives in local jurisdictions.

• Incorporating complete streets principles and projects in Lee County community plans.

• Transit planning.

• Implementation of the Lee County MPO’s 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), including immediate transportation projects and funding priorities, and preparations for 2040 LRTP.
Complete Streets
policies & implementation

- BikeWalkLee representatives serve on the Complete Streets Working Group (CSWG) of the county’s Community Sustainability Advisory Committee (CSAC) to collaborate with county staff on complete streets implementation.

- In January 2012, the county’s Complete Streets Implementation Report (with input from BWL and the CSAC) was presented to county commissioners, who voiced support for the accomplishments to date.

- 2012 was the first year that the Capital Infrastructure Program (CIP) was reviewed by the complete streets team and the CSAC. This resulted in extensive analysis and recommendations to the county commissioners, with a focus on making the CIP more consistent with the county’s sustainability and complete streets goals.

- The CSWG continued to review resurfacing contract projects and identified dozens of opportunities to address the needs of all users when the roads are resurfaced (such are road diets, share the road signs, improved crosswalks, reduced speed limits), and identified dozens of other connectivity and bike/ped projects to be addressed through CIP funding. These projects are now being prioritized for consideration in upcoming CIPs.

- Provided feedback on the Lee County GIS tool designed to evaluate resurfacing contracts. This tool will be valuable to other Lee County jurisdictions and agencies.

- Continued to monitor road projects under development to ensure bike/ped/transit accommodations are planned and built at the front-end of the process.

- Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations were upgraded on several road projects as a result of BikeWalkLee advocacy, including bike/ped improvements at the Three Oaks/Corkscrew intersection; improvements in the bike lanes at the intersection of the new Michael Rippe Parkway and Alico; improved bike lane connections at Treeline Drive north of Daniels Parkway; improvements in bike/ped treatments on the newly open Six-Mile Cypress, MLKing Blvd./SR 82, and Colonial Blvd.expanded and improved shared use paths; and improvements on the path on the north side of Summerlin.
Lee County sustainability planning & strategies

- BWL participated in the county’s development of its Sustainability Assessment, an important road map for Lee County in achieving balance in the economy environment, and social equity. The BoCC endorsed the document, which was strongly supported by many organizations, including BWL.

- Lee County was one of 10 communities across the country selected to participate in the prestigious Sustainable Communities Leadership Academy, and BikeWalkLee was honored to be part of the county’s team. Lee County’s team presented a workshop on its complete streets implementation process, which was well received by participants. The national workshop was an opportunity to learn from national experts and other communities about how to create and sustain multi-modal transportation that contributes to economic prosperity, sustainability, and social equity.

Lee County Horizon 2035 plan and Lee Plan amendments

- A key focus in 2012 was working to ensure that the principles of complete streets and a balanced multi-modal transportation system that supports livable and sustainable communities in Lee County are incorporated into the amendments to the Lee Plan (the county’s comprehensive land use plan).

- Participated in County committee deliberations (both the Local Planning Agency and CSAC) on various Lee Plan elements, providing comments and specific recommendations on the transportation and related CIP elements. BWL undertook independent research on experiences in other Florida communities with transportation concurrency and related transportation planning issues, and provided extensive written and public comments on the draft transportation element that were widely disseminated. BWL wrote several papers on transitioning from road Level of Service (LOS) measures to a multi-modal performance measure tool; and from road impact fees to a mobility plan and mobility fees structure. Encouraged the county to encourage broader public participation in the development of the Lee Plan amendments through online tools, such as MindMixer. As a result, Lee County launched its “Town Hall 2035” online tool, allowing the public to provide input to the draft Lee Plan amendments, and has expanded use of the tool to other projects. BWL promoted participation through its communication network.
MPO Bike/Ped master plan

- 2012 was the first year of implementation for the new MPO countywide bike/pedestrian master plan with the goal of effectively connecting and integrating bicycle and pedestrian travel on the county’s transportation system.

- Initiated successful request to MPO board to resubmit its $10 million federal TIGER grant application for a complete streets initiative tied to the new countywide bike/ped master plan, and assisted staff in preparing TIGER application. Although the county did not win the highly competitive national competition, the process of developing the grant application provided the blueprint and momentum for securing other funds.

- Continued to assist the MPO’s Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinating Committee (BPCC) in expanding the focus of committee and keeping it focused on oversight of implementation of the master plan, and engaging the new players, including representatives from tourism, health, law enforcement, and citizen advocates. BWL provided assistance in the development of the BPCC’s first report to the board on implementation of the master plan.

- As part of the master plan, the MPO is developing a Bicycle Pedestrian Safety Action Plan to reduce bicycle and pedestrian injury and fatality crashes through a wide range of recommended activities. BWL strongly advocated for this project, participated in the safety training workshops, and is serving on the working group that is developing this plan over the next year.

- Continued to participate in MPO committee meetings, both as committee members and as citizen attendees, and speak at MPO Board meetings, both on agenda topics, as well as bringing new trends, research, and lessons from other communities to the Board, including demographic trends, new fiscal realities, safety strategies, new techniques, such as roundabouts, etc.

Laying groundwork for the MPO 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

- Followed through on two resolutions initiated by BWL and adopted by the MPO Board as part of their 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), that provided concrete action steps to promote a more balanced multi-modal system, including focusing on a “fix it first” approach; and the use of improving modeling techniques, such as scenario planning, performance measures, and improved public outreach tools. BWL spoke in support of the land use scenarios analysis initiated by the staff in 2012.

Increased investments in bike/ped/transit facilities and operations

- Successfully advocated for increased MPO requests to Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for investment in bike/ped facilities, although the FDOT’s preliminary workplan only funded 62% of the MPO’s request for these projects. Consistent with the priority placed on safety, FDOT increased funding for bike/ped safety projects by over 50%.

- As a result of the combined (county and BWL) complete streets implementation efforts, the county’s transportation budget for the coming year includes significant funds for complete streets projects and bike/ped facilities. Over the 5-year workplan,
efforts in Congress to eliminate federal programs that are the primary source of funding for bike/ped projects. BWL also wrote numerous letters and successfully encouraged local elected officials to communicate to our Congressional delegation about various provisions in the transportation reauthorization. BWL also wrote a guest opinion about the bipartisan Senate committee support for a complete streets provision, and assisted with a commissioner op-ed about community support for Senate bill.

- Once Congress enacted the new transportation bill, MAP-21, BWL wrote an analysis of the impact of the new federal MAP-21 transportation reauthorization at the local level and opportunities and challenges for the MPO, and collaborated with the MPO staff on strategies to address the MAP-21 changes.

- Played leadership role as part of state coalition of bike/ ped groups that wrote FDOT with recommendations for implementing MAP-21 in a way that continued funding for bike/ped programs and supported a complete streets approach.

Successful completion of construction of many bike/ped projects throughout Lee County

- Issued a major report about the new and improved bike/ped facilities throughout Lee County over the past three years, with individual reports on improvements in each municipality. Since the adoption of the MPO Master Plan, the county has added 147 miles of new bike/ped facilities, plus converted 52 miles of paved shoulders to bike lanes, added way-finding signs connecting over 88 miles of biking; along with other related improvements.

- The report was widely disseminated and well received, with several news stories about the progress the county has made to fill gaps in its bike/ped facilities network, while promoting the 24-mile Tour de Parks route, connecting eight parks with new way-finding signs.

- Two of our national partner organizations (Alliance for Biking and Walking; and the National Complete Streets Coalition) featured this report and the progress made in Lee County, in their national newsletters.

Advocacy for improved transit services

- Continued to advocate for improved and expanded transit services throughout the county. BWL strongly supported the LinC connection between Collier County and Bonita Springs, which has been extremely successful; and supported the new trolley service in downtown Fort Myers. BWL is also working as part of the county’s Transit Task Force to develop a longer range plan for sustainable funding for transit services and expanded services as envisioned in the 2035 LRTP.

Advocacy at the federal and state levels

- Collaborated with a national advocacy campaign that successfully fought
Collaboration with local jurisdictions

BikeWalkLee has forged strong working relationships with elected officials and staff in all five independent municipalities in the county, with assistance from local BWL reps in each jurisdiction, which has strengthened the countywide efforts to make progress on complete streets.

**Fort Myers:** Supported the city’s next step efforts to begin to implement its 2011 Complete Streets resolution through a task force. BWL is participating in the task force and assisting in the development of a complete streets design manual, modeled after the Broward County Living Streets Manual.

**Cape Coral:** Successfully worked with the city on approval of two bike lane projects greatly enhancing connectivity — 2.2 miles of new bike lanes resulted in a new 17-mile connected biking loop. BWL and other community citizens collaborated with the city council in advocating for safety improvements near Burton Park. (The Burton Park location was where a teen cyclist was killed in 2010.) BWL assisted in gaining Lee County BoCC approval to install a traffic signal that would provide safer access for children frequently this ballpark. BWL also supported the council’s adoption of a bike/ped resolution to establish a fundraising tool and a dedicated account for pedestrian and bicycle paths within the City. This effort was in collaboration with Cape Coral Bike Ped, a new bike/ped advocacy group in the Cape. BikeWalkLee supported the launch of Cape Coral Bike/Ped (now a BWL supporter organization), which is focused on improving bike/ped facilities in Cape Coral. This group is starting by creating good biking routes with signage, and is raising funds for the signs throughout the community.

In April 2012, the Sanibel Welcome Center on the island’s path system was opened, a model of public/private partnership.

**Bonita Springs:** The city council took action to create a bike/ped advisory committee to help promote safe biking and walking in Bonita, and asked that their committee of volunteers establish a connection with BikeWalkLee.

**Sanibel:** The city continued to aggressively implement the Shared Use Path Master Plan it adopted in 2009, serving as a model for other jurisdictions about the value of developing and implementing a master plan. The path user survey, comparing the baseline of 2006 with 2012, allowed city officials to quantitatively demonstrate the major increases in path usage over the past six years (56% increase in cyclists and 77% increase in pedestrians). The survey provided a model for how to gather this data and the value of doing so. The completion of the Sanibel Welcome Center, totally funded from private sources, was a model of public/private partnerships. The Sanibel Bicycle Club, a BWL supporter organization, is an integral part of all of these successful efforts.
Analysis and action

One of the strengths of BikeWalkLee is that our analysis highlights actions at the federal, state and local level.

Summary of BWL reports

- As mentioned in earlier sections of this accomplishments report, BikeWalkLee wrote and distributed reports and analysis on various topics: transportation concurrency, mobility plans and mobility fees structure, new bike/ped facilities constructed, comments on various policies, and legislative proposals at local, state, and national level.
- In addition, BWL issued a position paper on use of motorized vehicles on bike/ped pathways; evaluation of bicyclists participating in JetBlue opening event, and presented comments to the BoCC on various topics.

Action on safety

- In 2012, the Tracey Kleinpell case (a cyclist killed on the Sanibel Causeway) was the focus on BWL’s safety efforts to shine a spotlight on the lack of fair treatment of bike/ped fatalities by investigators and prosecutors, and bring the driver to justice. BikeWalkLee mounted a campaign to demand action on many fronts — from the Florida Highway Patrol, the State Attorney’s Office, to Governor Scott — and raise public awareness about the need for change. Although the judge sentenced the driver to the most severe penalties she was able to, because the State’s Attorney Office declined to prosecute beyond a simple moving violation, real justice wasn’t served. However, a follow-up investigation resulted in the driver being arrested for prescription fraud (for the medications she was using at time of the fatal accident).

Expansion of advocacy & outreach

- Maintained network of approximately 1,000 advocates and supporters through BikeWalkLee’s frequent postings on its blog (http://bikewalklee.blogspot.com), its website (www.BikeWalkLee.org), its bi-monthly newsletter, and Facebook and Twitter pages. BWL continues to improve and expand its connection with its supporters, with an increasing number of followers.
- The BWL Coalition is kept up-to-date on local bike/ped/transit developments and news, upcoming government meetings,
and action alerts and opportunities for input. Continued to receive positive feedback from both advocates and government officials about its quality and usefulness.

- BikeWalkLee coalition members also sit on various committees in the county and local jurisdiction—the county’s Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), Community Sustainability Advisory Committee (CSAC), Local Planning Agency (LPA), community planning panels; the MPO’s Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinating Committee (BPCC), Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), along with working groups, task forces, and committees attached to the various county agencies, and local jurisdictions. Through hands-on participation, BikeWalkLee is committed to being part of making change happen.

**Questionnaire for BoCC candidates**

- In an effort to help gauge the level of knowledge and commitment of candidates for Lee County Commission to complete streets and a balanced multi-modal transportation system, BWL was successful in obtaining responses to our questionnaire from most BoCC candidates and widely distributed throughout website, blog and newsletter network.

**Local and national awards**

- **APA Florida Award:** In September, BWL was honored to receive APA Florida’s Outstanding Public Interest Group of the Year Award, a statewide honor. The award acknowledged BWL’s effort to help create a culture of planning that works to complete Lee County’s streets, and noted that BWL’s active transportation focus contributes to the economic health of the community.

- **Injury Prevention Coalition Award:** In December 2012, BWL was awarded Injury Prevention Program/Outreach Effort of the Year, for its efforts to change the way local governments design our roads and determine land use and development strategies.

- BikeWalkLee was a finalist for the News-Press “People of the Year” 2012 award (awarded in January 2013).

- One of BikeWalkLee’s founding members was a finalist for Lee County’s Paulette Burton 2011 Citizen of the Year award, presented by the BoCC in February 2012.

**Previous BikeWalkLee accomplishments reports**

- **2011 accomplishments:** [http://www.bikewalklee.org/BWL_PDFs/BWL_facts/BWL%202011%20AccomplishREVkg.pdf](http://www.bikewalklee.org/BWL_PDFs/BWL_facts/BWL%202011%20AccomplishREVkg.pdf)


Thanks to our BikeWalkLee supporter organizations!

- AARP of Florida
- Acme Bicycle Shop
- American Planning Association (APA) Florida Promised Lands Section*
- American Institute of Architects of Southwest Florida
- Audubon Society of Southwest Florida
- The Bike Route, Inc.
- Billy’s Bike Shop
- Bonita Bay Bicycle Club
- Brooks Concerned Citizens
- Caloosa Riders Bicycle Club
- Cape Coral Bike Ped*
- The Conservancy of Southwest Florida
- Engels Bicycles International
- Ensite Inc.
- Estero Council of Community Leaders
- Florida Bicycle Association*
- Florida Gulf Coast University
- Florida Wildlife Federation
- Fort Myers Schwinn Cyclery Inc.
- Geared Up! Coaching and Triathlon Training
- Gooderham & Associates Inc.
- Goodwill Industries
- Harvey Software Inc.
- Healthy Lee Coalition (formerly Fit Friendly Southwest Florida)
- Injury Prevention Coalition
- Lee Mental Health
- Lee Memorial Health System
- Lehigh Acres Bicycle Club
- Lehigh Acres Community Planning Panel*
- Missing in America Veterans Recovery Program
- Naples Pathways Coalition
- Palm Beach Boulevard Planning Panel*
- Paradise Bikes
- Realtor Association of Greater Fort Myers and the Beach, Inc.
- Reconnecting Lee
- Responsible Growth Management Council
- River of Grass Greenway (ROGG)
- Sanibel Bicycle Club
- Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
- Sierra Club of Southwest Florida
- Southwest Florida Addiction Services (SWFAS)
- Spikowski Planning Associates
- Start Walking! Campaign (AHA)
- Stay Alive...Just Drive!
- Streets Alive! Lee County*
- SustainabLEE
- Southwest Florida Bicycling
- Southwest Florida Events Inc.*
- Thump Fitness*
- Trek Bicycle Store of Estero
- YMCA of Fort Myers

National partners:

- Alliance for Biking and Walking
- America Bikes
- America Walks*
- League of American Bicyclists
- National Complete Streets Coalition
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy*
- Smart Growth America*
- Transportation for America

* Organizations added in 2012