



City of Bonita Springs

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October 11, 2005

David Y. Burr, Executive Director
Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
1926 Victoria Avenue
Fort Myers, Florida 33901-3414

RE: September 23, 2005 Metropolitan Planning Organization
Federal Grant to Study Potential I-75 and Coconut
Intersection Funding for 2030 Plan

Dear Mr. Burr:

On October 5, 2005, Bonita Springs City Council requested that I send a letter to the Metropolitan Planning Organization members, respectfully requesting that they reconsider the item (Agenda IV) from the September 23, 2005 MPO Agenda, holding the Public Hearing to amend the 20/20 Transportation Plan to add an interchange connecting I-75 with Coconut Road. The reasons for reconsideration are as follows:

1. The record does not reflect the viability of how an interchange connecting I-75 with Coconut Road will serve for hurricane evacuation. Florida Statutes §163.3177 (7) (h) suggests that comprehensive plans should have a safety element for the protection of residents and property of the area from fire, hurricane, or manmade or natural catastrophe, including such necessary features for protection as evacuation routes and their control in an emergency, water supply requirements, minimum road widths, clearances around and elevations of structures, and similar matters. The I-75 / Coconut Interchange would clearly serve a purpose in an area where the roads are severely constrained, imposing a dangerous situation in the need for evacuation which can be mitigated.
2. The agenda item acknowledges that the Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) decision was not based on substantive information available at the time of their decision. Indeed, the backup did not explain why the CAC made its recommendation not to amend the plan, and the CAC could have done so based on not having sufficient information.

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3. Staff's conclusion, which was relayed perhaps erroneously to CAC and TAC members, that the Carter & Burgess Study was inappropriate. Staff concluding that the interchange was more impactful on I-75 is a conclusion with no basis, in that staff failed to submit a study of its own but made conclusions which are not substantiated by the Carter & Burgess Study or any other study.
4. The I-75 / Coconut Interchange would reduce traffic congestion at both the Corkscrew and Bonita Beach Road Interchanges, making the use of those roads efficient for the public.
5. Coconut Road is not a private road, but a public road and is already on the MPO's plan to extend over I-75 to County Road 951. Since there will already be some planning necessary to make the extension, it makes sense from a planning perspective to determine whether an interchange is appropriate.
6. The purpose of the federal grant is for the study, not for construction of the I-75 / Coconut Interchange. Discussion of the pros and cons for the I-75 / Coconut Interchange at the September 23, 2005 MPO meeting was premature at best, and poor planning at worst where dismissal of the concept was out of hand without adequate planning.
7. If the federal grant goes away, it is clearly foreseeable that the I-75 / Coconut Interchange will still need to be done sometime in the future, but without the federal grant it will be paid for by the local taxpayers.
8. Florida Statutes §339.175 (5), which establishes the Metropolitan Planning Organization, states that "each MPO shall perform all acts required by state or federal laws or rules, now and subsequently applicable, which are necessary to qualify for federal aid." Refusing to change the MPO's 2020 Transportation Plan to add the I-75 / Coconut Interchange appears to conflict with the MPO's statutory duties.

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- 9. The federal grant money appropriation was not of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's, but is intended for the Florida Department of Transportation and cannot be appropriated for other uses. To do so is inappropriate and would literally take an act of Congress, with no guarantee that the money would be used elsewhere.

Consideration of placing this matter on the agenda for reconsideration is appreciated. So as not to create an issue with the Florida Sunshine Law, by copy to all of the Metropolitan Planning Organization members, I am asking each member to individually consider this matter for when they meet as the Metropolitan Planning Organization on October 20, 2005.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Mayor Jay Arend
City of Bonita Springs

- cc: Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization -
Voting and Non-Voting Members
- Bonita Springs City Council
- Gary A. Price, City Manager
- Barbara Barnes Buchanan, Assistant City Manager
- Daryl C. Walk, P.E., Public Works Manager
- Audrey E. Vance, City Attorney
- Dianne J. Lynn, City Clerk
- Glen Ahlert, MPO Coordinator