

Editorial: Road planners should push bike, bus paths

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• Lee County's long-range transportation planners should insist that state and local governments provide more thoroughly for bicyclists, pedestrians and public transit in designs for future roads.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization, made up of representatives of the state transportation department and local governments in Lee County, meets Friday to include two resolutions on the issue.

The better one was recommended by the MPO's citizens advisory panel and is supported by the activist group BikeWalkLee. The other is a more diluted, less aggressive version of the proposal, which would subtly reinforce the status quo.

We agree with BikeWalkLee's call for a more balanced transportation system for Lee County. We are an auto-based nation, so it is easier said than done - but it must be done.

Promoting alternatives to the private motor vehicle is the wave of the future for several reasons, and it is much cheaper for the taxpayer to accommodate alternatives in the design of roads than to retrofit for them later.

Not only is it environmentally more sustainable to use bikes, walk or take transit, it's also easier on the pocketbook - fewer trips to that once-again pricier gas pump - and beneficial to the health of a society beset by obesity.

The MPO should adopt both the citizen-backed recommendations for including car alternatives in road design, and a scope of work for the countywide bicycle and pedestrian master plan.

Both of these resolutions would enable bikers, pedestrians and transit users safer mobility as they travel county roads.

A revolution in transportation is underway across America, not just in Lee County, and it would behoove us to lead rather than follow in creating balanced road plans.