

April 25, 2022

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Orange County BCC

Dear Mayor Demings and Commissioners:

Bike/Walk Central Florida and its board of directors are asking you to allow the voters to decide whether to support the Orange County Transportation Sales Tax Initiative. Your vote to place the initiative on the November ballot will allow for the possibility of a safer and more convenient transportation system. Voter choice is the essence of democracy and we will greatly appreciate your positive vote.

A mono-dimensional transportation system—or one nearly so—is poor public policy for a large metropolitan area. Staggering gas prices, which may be a long-term trend, increased SunRail's ridership 40% in the first quarter of 2022. Yet thousands more would ride SunRail with the increased convenience promised by the sales tax initiative. Modal shift would increase available capacity on our roads and highways for those who do not ride SunRail.

SunRail and Lynx are seriously underfunded, which negatively impacts ridership. Passage of the sales tax will increase headways for trains and buses significantly, making both more reliable for those who depend on them. Proper funding would increase SunRail's headways from 30 minutes to the 15 minutes recommended for commuter rail.

We envision a robust SunRail system, extending to Apopka, Disney, International Drive, and the Airport, and perhaps one-day to Pine Hills, Downtown Winter Garden, Lake Nona, and UCF. We see a SunRail system running on weekends and late evenings (for those attending professional sports games, concerts, and special events including the 4th of July fireworks on Lake Eola). We envision our region fully utilizing its investment in this billion dollar asset. Several years ago, when SunRail ran during the Winter Park Arts Festival, about 13,000 people rode the train each day, setting daily records. We see a future setting new ridership records.

(cont.)

As a principal coalition member of the Best Foot Forward pedestrian safety initiative we manage, Orange County is well-aware of the grim data we monitor. Florida is the nation's most dangerous state for riding a bicycle, according to the United States Department of Transportation, and Metro Orlando remains the nation's most dangerous for people walking, according to Smart Growth America. The sales tax initiative promises increased funding for critical engineering safety improvements

Now is the time to invest in the infrastructure that supports all modes of transportation, including transit, first and last mile connections from transit, and bicycling trails and networks that allow for safe and comfortable access for those of all ages and abilities. Now is the time to make local funding available for Federal matching infrastructure grants and to ensure that tourists pay a significant share for these improvements.

We will continue supporting Orange County staff to ensure those safety projects and infrastructure are designed and installed for all to enjoy. Your positive vote on Tuesday will keep alive the possibility that we can accelerate and increase this vital work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Hanna". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emily Hanna, AICP, CPM  
Executive Director, Bike/Walk Central Florida