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Board Matter

September 14, 2009

Madam Chairman—a year ago, I presented a board matter about school districts that are updating an old method of getting children to school—walking. One school district in Columbia, Missouri has redrawn its school bus route and instituted a ‘walking school bus’ where children are supervised by adults as they walk to school. The walking school bus concept is expanding into a number of communities across the country.

When I presented this board matter a year ago, I felt that in light of the planned joint Board of Supervisors/Schools budget review and the impact of increasing fuel costs on already constrained budgets, replacing bus routes with walking routes where practical and safe seemed worth a try. The benefits were—*and still are*—worth pursuing. In addition to helping with our increasingly difficult school and county budgets, anything that helps our children to be more active puts a dent in the obesity epidemic, further cutting health costs down the road and sustaining the quality of life of our children. Additionally, fewer buses on the road will lead to air quality improvements, important as we are still a non-attainment area.

Furthermore, throughout Lee District—and I suspect, the entire county—now that school is back in session, it is increasingly obvious that the number of parents driving children to school is growing. Few, if any, of our schools were designed or are equipped to handle such large volumes of traffic. This causes complaints in our neighborhoods, pollution, and still costs the County money to run half-empty school buses.

Without objection, Madam Chairman, I move that the County Executive again share this suggestion with the School Board for consideration and action during our upcoming joint budget reviews or refer this to the Smart Savings Task Force as an agenda item.