



June 5, 2025

Deb Orton, President
Friends of BERT
P.O. Box 3666578
Bonita Springs, FL 34136

Re: Letter of Support for the Advancement of the Bonita Estero Rail Trail (BERT)

Dear Ms. Orton:

Lee Health is a community-focused nonprofit healthcare system serving Lee County and the southwest Florida region. Today, our health system includes acute care and a children's hospital, urgent care centers, pediatric facilities, outpatient centers and more. Our injury prevention staff routinely educates our community on safe cycling and walking practices, as do our child advocates. We support expanded infrastructure improvements which promote an active and healthy, family-friendly lifestyle. With more than 17,000 employees, Lee Health proudly serves as the region's top employer.

Over the years through a variety of initiatives, Lee Health has affirmed its steadfast support and commitment to efforts that promote environmentally conscious initiatives which enhance the safety, health and overall wellness of our communities, such as the Bonita Estero Rail Trail. BERT, by connecting people to neighborhoods, schools, jobs, parks and more, will improve communities within Lee and Collier counties, and its outcomes align well with the Lee Health mission.

In May 2024, the Lee County MPO Board added BERT to the county's list of FDOT priority projects to expand funding sources and opportunities. Additionally, with the endorsements of The Village of Estero, Bonita Springs, and Collier County, we are optimistic that people living in the residential neighborhoods along the railroad corridor will use the facility for recreational/social activities, exercise/health, and commuting to work and school.

Lee Health strongly supports the acquisition and development of the rail corridor to become a multi-use rail trail and looks forward to this vision becoming reality.

Sincerely,

Dennis Golden
System Director, Community Affairs

Lee Health
Community Affairs
4211 Metro Pkwy. Ste. 300
Fort Myers, FL 33916