

# **Naples Daily News Editorial:**

## **Lee officials should refuse funds for unwanted study**

Sunday, June 10, 2007

[http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/jun/10/editorial\\_lee\\_officials\\_should\\_refuse\\_funds\\_unwant/](http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/jun/10/editorial_lee_officials_should_refuse_funds_unwant/)

For more than a year this newspaper has believed there is something wrong with the planning and funding for an Interstate 75 interchange at Coconut Road in Estero. A congressional earmark for \$10 million for a feasibility study coming in advance of a public constituency for the project was the first clue. The revelation that the earmark came as a result of political donations to a congressman from Alaska while he was visiting here in February 2005 was another clue.

Still, after initially resisting, Lee County elected officials and bureaucrats are on the verge of accepting the money and using the first part of it for a study on whether the interchange is warranted.

With a fresh set of eyes — The New York Times — shining new attention on the earmark and road that would facilitate development of land owned by some of the donors, in an area that Lee County law says should be developed only slightly if at all, there are more reasons for Lee decision-makers to just say “no.”

There is still time to declare long-range planning rather than pork-barrel politics decides transportation priorities in Southwest Florida. If the \$10 million can be used for other components of I-75 improvements to come, that would be great. If not, so be it.

With so much integrity already compromised by this episode, there is still time for Lee County to stand up for what’s right. Where the money comes from does matter. Or ought to.