**MEDIA OPPORTUNITY**

**from**

**BONITA SPRINGS FIRE-RESCUE**

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**How does Bonita Springs’ Fire-Based Ambulance Transport Request compare to Ambitrans’ Ambulance Transport Request?**

This is a question that the Bonita Springs Fire Control and Rescue District intends to find out at the **Lee County Commission Meeting on Tuesday, June 18 at 9AM.**

The need for answers is derived from the similar requests by the two entities. Without a Public Hearing or years of deliberation, The Lee County Commission is prepared to vote at Tuesday’s meeting on the approval of a COPCN for Ambitrans to provide a privately-based ambulance transport service within Lee County.

In May 2010, the Bonita Springs Fire District applied for their COPCN citing that the 2.5 ambulances could be reassigned to the core area of the County to assist with the increased call volume. Now, Ambitrans Medical Support is asking to renew and expand their COPCN so they can do inter-facility transfers in-county and out-of-county. Coincidentally, Ambitrans’ proposal states almost identically what the Bonita Spring Fire District has proposed. Let’s compare:

*Ambitrans’* *Proposal:*

* Will free up 2.5 of Lee County’s Ambulances to be used for the core of the County
* Fees lost by the County is at approximately $2.2 Million per year
* Ambitrans is supervised by a different Medical Director than Lee County EMS
* Ambitrans will follow their own Medical Treatment Protocol.

*Bonita Springs Fire District’s (BSFD) Proposal:*

* Will free up 2.5 of Lee County’s Ambulances to be used for the core of the County
* According to Lee County EMS, they would only loss $200,000-$300,000.
* BSFD is supervised by a different Medical Director than Lee County EMS
* BSFD will follow their Lee County EMS’s Medical Treatment Protocol.

*Let us explore some facts about Ambitrans* *and compare them to the reasons the Lee County Commissioners will not allow Bonita Springs Fire District (BSFD) to obtain their own COPCN:*

* Ambitrans will work under their own Medical Director. The County Commissioners concluded at the March 2013 meeting that it was not acceptable for the BSFD transport service to have a different Medical Director than Lee County EMS’s. Why is it acceptable for Ambitrans?
* Ambitrans’ ridership fees are lower than Lee County EMS’s fees. Ambitrans will charge $425 for a basic life support (BLS) transport and $725 for an advanced life support (ALS) transport. Lee County will vote to raise their fees to $650 for a BLS transport and $875 for an ALS transport.
* If Ambitrans transports inter-facility transfers, Lee County EMS will lose approximately $2.2 million. Is this why they are asking to raise transport fees? According to the Blue Sheet, “The increase in user fees will generate an additional $2 million in revenue per fiscal year.”
* Lee County’s residents who use Ambitrans will still be charged what the County Commissioners call a “Readiness Fee”. The County Commissioners were previously concerned about this very issue, claiming that if BSFD transports, the Bonita Springs residents will be charged the ridership fees, and the readiness fees. The County Commissioners even called this “dual-taxation”. Did they change their mind?
* Right now Ambitrans only conducts out-of-county transfers, excluding in-county transfers for Veterans and psychiatric patients. In Ambitrans’ application they state, “Approval of the COPCN will allow non-emergent, inter-facility transport within Lee County to allow Lee County EMS to reallocate those resources (approximately 2.5 ambulances) currently used for non-emergent, inter-facility transports to our core mission of pre-hospital, emergency 911 patient care.” This is EXACTLY what the Bonita Springs Fire District has asked to aid Lee County with for three years.
* As of now, Ambitrans and Air Methods Corporation will not have a public hearing scheduled, similar to the hearing that the Lee County Commissioners forced the Bonita Springs Fire District to have. Why not?
* At the meeting on Tuesday, the Lee County Commissioners will also issue a new COPCN for the Air Methods Corporation to address the need for helicopter transport. This includes an increased transport fee schedule of $13,500 per flight with an additional $135 per mile. With no way of recouping any ridership fees to offset the County’s $360,000 deficit, Lee County is still responsible for placing a paramedic on the helicopter.

So, why the discrimination against Bonita Springs?

What is the real reason the Bonita Springs Fire District is unable to obtain their COPCN?

Why is Ambitrans not required to prove their need at Public Hearings over the course of three years?

Moreover, if the Lee County Commission, is concerned about the payer mix, double taxation, difference in Medical Directors, and potential loss of ridership fees, why does this only apply to Bonita Springs and not to a privately owned company, Ambitrans?

Why is Lee County willing to lose $2.2 million a year by handing their inter-facility transfers to Ambitrans and not give a COPCN to Bonita Springs Fire District? This would essentially do the same as what Ambitrans is proposing. By giving this to Ambitrans the County will raise their own fees to try to recoup this deficit. This seems like a considerable amount of work to not issue Bonita Springs Fire District’s COPCN.

What is the rationale behind the County’s need for Ambitrans? How is this helping Lee County?

The Bonita Springs Fire District will attend the June 18th Board of County Commission meeting to ask these questions.

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