**MEDIA OPPORTUNITY**

 **from**

**BONITA SPRINGS FIRE-RESCUE**

**June 17, 2013 Contact: Nicole Hornberger**

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**What lengths is Lee County willing to go to in order to avoid granting Bonita Springs Fire District’s COPCN? And why?**

***Lee County is willing to lose $2.2 million a year by handing their inter-facility COPCN transfers over to Ambitrans, a private ambulance service. $2.2 million is the transfer fee revenue the County will lose by granting Ambitrans’ request. By granting Ambitrans’ COPCN request, Lee County will be able to free up the 2.5 County EMS ambulances currently performing inter-facility transfers so the County can reallocate the ambulances for other 911 emergency calls. Additionally, in conjunction with granting Ambitrans’ request, , the County will raise their transport fees to recoup the deficit caused by the loss of the $2.2 million in fees , in essence, passing this cost along to the tax payer. By comparison, granting Bonita Springs’s COPCN transport request would accomplish the same increase in deployed ambulance services within the County at a fraction of the expense to the County. If Bonita Springs’ COPCN transport is granted, the County could to reassign the 2.5 ambulances currently stationed at Bonita Springs fire stations to other underserved areas in the County, and the cost the County in lost transport fees would be approximately $250,000 - $350,000, according to Lee County Emergency Management.***

***The actions of the County are entirely inconsistent with the public’s interest and appear to be contrived as a method to keep Bonita Springs from obtaining their COPCN, coupled with a movement to privatize county-wide EMS.***

In May 2010, the Bonita Springs Fire District applied for a transport COPCN to operate 3 transport ambulances within the Bonita Springs region. The fire district’s COPCN application provided that if the request was granted by the County, the County could reassign the existing 2.5 ambulances operated by Lee County EMS to other underserved areas of the County to assist with the increased call volume. Now, Ambitrans’ Medical Support is asking to renew and expand their transport COPCN so Ambitrans can perform inter-facility transfers in-county and out-of-county. Coincidentally, Ambitrans’ proposal will accomplish exactly what the Bonita Spring Fire District proposed in its application and has advocated for the past 3 years.

*Ambitrans’* *Proposal:*

* Will free up 2.5 of Lee County’s EMS Ambulances to be used for the underserved areas of the County
* Fees lost by the County are estimated at approximately $2.2 Million per year in transport fees.
* 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 EMS Ambulances to be used for the underserved areas of the County
* According to Lee County EMS, they would only lose $250,000-$350,000 in transport fees.
* BSFD is supervised by a different Medical Director than Lee County EMS
* BSFD will follow the 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 staff at the March 2013 meeting raised concerns that it was not acceptable for the BSFD transport service to have a different Medical Director than Lee County EMS’s. Why is this an acceptable practice 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 be forced to vote to raise their transport fees to $650 for a BLS transport and $875 for an ALS transport to make up the deficit caused by Ambitrans’ services.
* If Ambitrans conducts all inter-facility transfers, Lee County EMS will lose approximately $2.2 million in transport fees. 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.”
* 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 the same argument advanced by the Bonita Springs Fire District to Lee County for the past three years.
* At the meeting on Tuesday, the Lee County Commissioners will also consider the issuance of 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 as compared to the current $ 8500 per flight cost, and additional transport costs of $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

Why is Bonita Springs Fire District being treated differently than Ambitrans?

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

If the Lee County Commission, is really concerned about the payer mix, double taxation, difference in Medical Directors, and potential loss of ridership fees as stated to Bonita Springs Fire District at its public hearing in March 2013, then why are these same considerations ignored for other COPCN transport applicants, including privately owned companies?

These are questions that the Bonita Springs Fire Control and Rescue District intends to ask at the **Lee County Commission Meeting on Tuesday, June 25 at 9AM.**

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