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## University Park protests county impact fee plan

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**By David Schwab, staff writer**

University Park became the latest town to lambaste Will County's proposal for an impact fee on new development as a way to pay for future road projects.

"This is not the time (to impose such a fee)," Mayor Al McCowan said at a village board meeting last week, given the current economic climate and the village's struggle to attract new development.

"We'll lose untold business (if the proposal comes through)" village manager David Litton said.

Officials in Crete also have expressed disapproval over the proposed fees.

Under the plan, developers would pay a fee based on how much new road construction their development would create for the county.

These fees would pay for the widening of lanes, new signals, new roads and turn lanes, county officials said, but wouldn't pay for pre-existing road problems or for road maintenance.

A public hearing on the proposal is set for 6 p.m. March 11 at the county office, 302 N. Chicago St., Joliet.

University Park officials spoke about organizing a busload of people to go to that hearing in protest.

"We will take every bit of information that comes to us," at that hearing, Will County Executive Larry Walsh said, including the objections of local towns, and take it into consideration when making a final decision.

Other villages officials, such as Frankfort for example, haven't formed an official opinion on the matter, but appear to at least favor it in concept.

"In the past, (Frankfort) has been an advocate for development (paying for future improvements)," village manager Jerry Ducay said.

John Greuling, president of the Will County Center for Economic Development, said his non-profit organization doesn't have an official opinion, either.

But he expressed reservations about the proposal, though he supported the theory behind the move - that development should pay for itself.

"I'm not surprised the local communities are concerned about this," Greuling said, noting that "the nature and use of the fee creates some challenges."

He said the proposal is "limited," in that it only applies to new road construction, that it's an unpredictable revenue stream and that it could have a disproportionate effect on some areas as opposed to others.

While aware of these objections, Walsh said the county desperately needs a regular source of funding for roads, and said that without road improvement funds, towns won't get development anyway. They'll be "landlocked" by faulty transportation lines that themselves will deter development.

"We can't rely on the county (to pay for the infrastructure needed to support new development)" Walsh said. He said this is particularly important if the economy rebounds and development in Will County speeds up and adds more cars and trucks to the roads.

Walsh said the current fee proposal would generate \$7 million per year in revenue, an estimate based on projected growth in the county.

Overall, the county has much bigger fish to fry, so to speak, Walsh said, stating that in the next 10 years, the county needs \$300 million worth of new road construction.

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