

Glenwood Springs

Post Independent

Commissioners look down the road

[Donna Gray](#)

[Post Independent Staff](#)

June 17, 2005

 [Comments \(0\)](#)  [Print](#)  [Email](#)

The Garfield County Commissioners got a look this week at a preliminary transportation plan for maintaining and improving roads over the next 20 years.

Driving the need for roadway improvements will be exponential population growth in the next 20 to 25 years. The county population grew from 29,974 in 1990 to 43,971 in 2000. It's projected to grow to 80,000 in the next 20 years, according to LSC Transportation Consultants, of Colorado Springs, which prepared the plan and presented it to the county commissioners Wednesday.

"The roadways that will be deficient over the next 25 years are located near the urban areas of Garfield County. The Rifle and Silt areas have the greatest increase in deficient roadways," said A.T. Stoddard of LSC Transportation, because they will see the greatest growth.

Projections in the plan are "pretty conservative" and the population numbers could be significantly higher, Stoddard added.

Residential development will be the driving force behind the need for road improvements. Stoddard recommended imposing countywide impact fees on new housing developments, which would finance roadway improvements.

A sliding scale of fees would be charged depending on where the development would occur. Areas of highest growth, projected to be between Parachute and Glenwood Springs over the next 20 years, would pay the highest fees. No fee would be imposed on developments from Parachute west, Stoddard said.

Developers building new homes from Parachute east to Glenwood Springs would pay \$8,485 for each single-family detached home and \$5,952 for each multifamily unit. From Glenwood Springs east to the county line they would pay \$6,149 for each single family detached home. Multifamily units would be assessed \$4,314 per unit.

Rifle initiated impact fees in 2003, charging \$3,762 for a single-family dwellings and \$2,309 for multifamily units. In Pitkin County, which began assessing fees in 2000, impact fees range from \$7,818 for large homes of 4,000 square feet or more, to \$3,505 for "small" homes of less than 2,000 square feet. Mesa County began imposing impact fees in 2004 and charges \$1,500 for a single-family detached home and \$754 for a multifamily

Traffic begins to back up on in the late afternoon Thursday as pedestrians cross at Grand Avenue at Eighth Street in Glenwood Springs.
Post Independent
Photo/Kara K. Pearson



[Click to Enlarge](#)

unit.

Stoddard admitted the Garfield County fees he recommends are higher than statewide averages.

"The developer is paying for the life of the pavement they're using up," he said.

The county could also opt not to collect the fees if the improvements associated with a development were too costly. In that case, it could require the developer to make them.

Fees are based on the cost of road improvements and the amount of growth triggered by the development, which determines the degree of impact on county roads. Currently, the county charges impact fees on specific roads.

After the meeting, County Commissioner Larry McCown said the \$8,485 would be too much to impose on a developer and would probably drive up housing costs.

Also proposed is a countywide drilling impact fee of \$2,077 per well "based on the proportion of pavement life used by heavy vehicle activity associated with each well," Stoddard said. "There is not much impact once the well is in ... The number of trips are not high but are made by heavy vehicles, so there is a lot of pavement damage."

He also suggested adjusting the fee amount annually based on the Colorado Construction Cost Index.

Commissioners McCown and Trési Houpt were not supportive of the idea. McCown suggested the county impose a fee on hunters. "They cause a lot of (road) damage," and with fees could be collected at toll booths.

Gas well fees could also negate voluntary road improvements by some gas producers, notably the lengthy roads EnCana built on Hunter Mesa.

"We have had a lot of roads put in by companies that it would take years at \$2,077 per well (for the county) to put in a road," Houpt said.

LSC also applied what are known as "level-of-service" standards to county roads, which rate road efficiency. Levels range from A to F, with A being the most efficient and F the least. Stoddard recommended the county adopt Level C for all county roads and Level D for intersections at peak hours.

Houpt said that based on a similar exercises on Glenwood Springs streets, people would not accept Level D.

"Is D the right message to send to our constituents? To me it looks pretty bad to have a level of service of D. Can we shoot higher than that?" she asked Stoddard.

Stoddard countered that people "typically accept D," but maintaining anything higher than level C "increases costs significantly." He also added that "most side streets in Glenwood Springs with stop signs are at F."

For example, three cars in a line at a four-way stop would be Level F, he said.

Both McCown and Commissioner John Martin disagreed with LSC recommendations for countywide road improvements. They agreed that many of the county's roads should retain their rural character.

"We don't assume every road needs to be paved," McCown said.

"There are a lot of roads we don't want improved," Martin added.

The commissioners will provide written comments on the plan by June 30, and the next step for LSC will be to prepare a detailed corridor improvement plan.

[BACK](#) 