

# Tucson Citizen

## County considers raising new-home impact fee

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Newcomers to the region would contribute more to new roadway capacity and safety needs under a proposed increase in development impact fees Pima County officials are considering.

The county charges developers part of the cost for roadway improvements necessitated by growth - averaging about \$4,600 per new residential unit.

County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry next month plans to recommend to the Board of Supervisors an increase in that average impact fee to about \$8,800 per new residential unit.

Those costs usually are passed along by developers to homebuyers.

The costs of roadway improvements continually rise, making upward adjustments to the impact fee schedule necessary, Huckelberry said last week, adding the increase would reflect "current" roadway construction costs.

But such an increase would place additional hardships on homebuilders already struggling to survive in a depressed housing market, Ed Taczanowsky, president of the Southern Arizona Home Builders Association, said Friday.

"If we remain on track, we'll have pulled about 3,200 building permits" for 2008, he said. "In 2005, we had close to 12,000."

Under state law, fees that the county collects from developers can be used only for roadway improvements in designated "benefit areas" in the unincorporated county.

But traffic generated by new development in one area frequently has a spillover effect into neighboring jurisdictions.

Huckelberry said the county report next month that will be provided to the Pima Association of Governments and the Regional Transportation Authority will include a recommendation for regional development impact fees - currently in use in California, Oregon, Washington, and Maryland, but not in Arizona.

"Traffic impacts from new development neither stop at jurisdictional boundaries, nor does the cost to construct roadway capacity improvements vary significantly between jurisdictions," he said.

Potential growth in the southwest area of the county could add another 160,000 residents to the county as the area builds out, Ben Goff, deputy director of the Pima County Transportation Department, said Thursday.

The county has drafted a Southwest Infrastructure Plan to gauge the effect such growth will have on demands for improvements to roads, sewer and other utilities and services.

The impacts of growth on roads and traffic are felt regionwide, Jim DeGrood, RTA director of transportation services, said Thursday.

Improved roadways in one jurisdiction often cross municipal boundaries to link with unimproved stretches of the same roadway, he noted.

"As soon as traffic crosses a boundary, it can grind to a halt," DeGrood said.

Regional traffic has been affected by decades of rapid growth northwest, in Marana and Oro Valley. DeGrood said anticipated growth to the north in Pinal County also will generate more traffic that will affect roadways in Pima County.

The Board of Supervisors approved the development impact fee ordinance 3-2 in 1996 over the objections of the homebuilding industry.

The fee started at \$1,550 per new home and has increased several times since.

## additional information

### On the Web

Read the Impact Fee Ordinance at [municipalcodes.lexisnexis.com/codes/pima](http://municipalcodes.lexisnexis.com/codes/pima)