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County to pave way for new fee

San Joaquin Council of Governments wants traffic-impact charge

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Inside Bay Area

New development in San Joaquin County soon could come with a regional traffic-impact fee.

San Joaquin Countys Council of Governments committee on regional traffic fees reached a consensus last week on what those fees should be, Supervisor Victor Mow said.

A member of COG, Mow said those fees could be \$2,500 per single-family house and \$1,400 per multifamily unit.

Committee members must now decide how fees are to be collected and administered, and which projects the money will fund, he said.

Weve been working on this for two years, Mow said. Weve been trying to reach a consensus.

Part of that consensus involves getting a breakdown on how much goes to the county and how much goes to transportation. Those discussions are still ongoing, Mow said.

Most cities in the county already have their own traffic-impact fees, said Manual Lopez, county administrator. But very few of those fees, if any, help pay for traffic impacts within the unincorporated areas of the county.

Theyre all geared toward city roads, he said.

And thats part of the problem, Supervisor Leroy Ornellas said. Our county roads are getting beat up, he said.

In fact, a regional study showed that most of the traffic on county roads comes from city dwellers using the back roads, he said. Only 15 percent of those using county roads live in the unincorporated areas.

The push to get a regional traffic-impact fee in place is driven by the need to get a 30-year extension on Measure K, said Bob Adams, Mantecas city manager.

In 1999, voters approved Measure K, the half-cent sales that funded local transportation projects.

With Measure K expiring in 2011, the drive is on to take it to voters in 2006. But the problem is that somewhere in Measure K was a promise of a regional traffic-impact fee, Adams said.

It was never adopted, he said.

Some people in the community want that regional impact fee in place before any vote on extending Measure K is taken, Lopez said.

But Supervisor Dario Ma-rengo questioned why the impact fee wasnt established earlier, as promised when Measure K was passed.

Marengo, who does not speak to the press, voted against the regional traffic-impact fee on Tuesday.

He questioned why COG took so long, and why are they now pushing it so quickly, Supervisor Steve Gutierrez said.

The issue is (soon) coming up on the ballot, Gutierrez said. But it wasn't followed through.

While the county and COG contemplate a regional traffic-impact fee, developers in Lathrop pay for almost every traffic impact that comes with development, said Bruce Coleman, community development director.

The fees, which were established in 1997 and reintroduced in 2003, has developers paying \$2,500 for development west of Interstate 5, Coleman said.

But there are other fees, he said, depending on where a project is built in Lathrop.

The fees are in place so that development pays its own way, Coleman said. We're ensuring that development pays for the infrastructure.

Even with the city fees, Coleman said the Lathrop City Council probably will adopt COG's regional traffic impact fee.

The city has been very aggressive toward developers paying their fair share of improvements, he said.

In Manteca, which also has its share of impact fees, Adams said the City Council has discussed the regional traffic impact fee for the past few weeks.

They understand the need, he said. We understand that we need to do something about regional transportation.