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Kane County Board Transportation Committee rejects road impact fee reduction

GENEVA – Kane County will not make any further cuts in the fees it charges those seeking to build in the county.

Tuesday, the Kane County Board Transportation Committee rejected a proposal that would have reduced the county's road impact fees by about 80 percent.

For months, County Board members have debated the level of the fees it charges to anyone building commercial structures and houses in Kane County. The fees can add tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cost of building projects, whether they be shops, factories, office buildings or other businesses.

That impact prompted some on the County Board to push the board to consider sharply reducing the fees amid the current economic environment to ensure the county remains competitive with other surrounding counties that do not charge the fees, including Kendall and McHenry counties.

"This may be purely symbolic," said board member T.R. Smith, R-Maple Park. "But it will send a message that we care."

In a measure presented to the Transportation Committee Tuesday, County Board member Mike Donahue, R-Geneva, argued the fees are also unnecessary at this time. He noted that in 2007, the county forecast 194,000 new vehicle trips daily on its road system by 2015. As of 2011, the county had realized only 34,000 new trips.

"While we are still three years away from 2015, it is highly unlikely that 160,000 new trips will materialize in the mean time," Donahue said.

He said his proposed 80 percent decrease in road impact fees would be in line with such slack growth.

Others on the board, however, believed reducing fees may actually do more harm than good. They noted that the county has collected \$22 million in fees in the last seven years, using that money to pay for 14 different road improvement projects on county highways.

County Board member Jim Mitchell, R-North Aurora, said county transportation planners are also free to negotiate lower fees on certain projects, if those building the project can demonstrate their project will not generate as many vehicle trips on surrounding county roadways as county officials may believe.

"We've already reduced the fees," Mitchell said, noting that the county has agreed to collect fees at 50 percent of the rate allowed by law. "To reduce it further would take away our ability to compromise with developers."

The Transportation Committee voted 5-2 to reject Donahue's 80 percent reduction proposal, and prevent the matter from returning to the full County Board.

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