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# Pay for growth? It's out of pocket

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**Laurie Roberts**

Republic columnist

Apr 11, 2007 12:00 AM

Hang onto your wallets, people. The power set is preparing yet another foray into your pocket and this one appears to be a deep-impact expedition.

I knew it as soon as I read these words in Friday's paper: "Discussions have begun among key players in the business community, Legislature and Governor's Office." Already, they have a name: the TIME Coalition, short for Transportation & Infrastructure Moving AZ's Economy.

By this time next year, they'll be extolling the benefits of their latest plan to ease traffic congestion. Just as they did in 2004, when they asked Maricopa County voters to tax themselves a half-cent on the dollar for the next 20 years to ease traffic congestion.



LAURIE ROBERTS  
The Arizona Republic

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### TOP HOMES

POWERED BY



**Sun City West** - \$795,000  
MLS 2750893  
3 bed / 4 bath  
2501-2750 Sq Ft / 2005  
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Only it wasn't enough.

"We're at the point now where we're really straining to keep up with the growth," Todd Sanders, lobbyist for the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, told *The Republic's* Matt Benson.

Straining to keep up with growth? How could this be?

If you've lived here for 15 minutes, you've heard the mantra of the developers who run this state and by extension its politicians:

Growth pays for itself.

So they told us in the 1980s and 1990s, when residents began questioning why we have to pay to extend city services to new developments. So they told us more recently, when cities have increased impact fees on every new home built.

"It's so misleading to say, 'Oh, yeah, all the new growth, it's costing everyone money,' " John Cochran of Forte Homes said just seven months ago, in objecting to new fees in Ahwatukee. "But new growth more than pays for itself."

Sure it does. Which is why I'm guessing the coming statewide plan will ask us to double what we pay in transportation taxes in order to extend roads into the far reaches of the desert.

Martin Shultz, an Arizona Public Service lobbyist and point man for the TIME Coalition, says it's not a matter of subsidizing growth. Arizona, he says, has always been 15 years behind in roads and, besides, we all benefit from all those new houses being built in the hinterlands.

"It's unfair to blame the home builders, it's unfair to blame the electric companies, it's unfair to blame," he said. "The point is that the infrastructure facilitates the economy. It's a simultaneous equation, which means we are benefiting economically and I think culturally from the growth but we are paying for it simultaneously. If you ask, is growth paying for itself, I would say yes."

Shultz can't yet say how much his coalition will be asking us to shell out. So far, the numbers are reaching up to \$40 billion or more over 20 years which, loosely translated, means YEOW.

The early talk is centered on some combination of new sales taxes, gas taxes, toll roads and fees that will let lone drivers have at it in the HOV lanes. Not on the list: a fee on every new house to offset at least some of the costs of all those cars headed our way. Shockingly, home builders are against that idea.

GRI, Assist-2-Sell Homebuyers



**Peoria** - \$219,000  
MLS 2762478  
2 bed / 2 bath  
1201-1400 Sq Ft / 1989  
Madeline A Keller, John Hall & Associates



**Surprise** - \$349,500  
MLS 2717692  
3 bed / 3 bath  
2501-2750 Sq Ft / 2004  
Leolinda Bowers, Ken Meade Realty

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"Could we get behind this? No," said Spencer Kamps of the Home Builders Association of Central Arizona. "We don't believe that Number 1, it passes the legal test, and Number 2, you can't get over the fairness issue of making somebody in Page just because they bought a home . . . pay for a freeway in Florence or Maricopa or Payson."

Kamps says he doesn't believe the state can impose an impact fee for transportation. The law, he says, requires a reasonable relationship between the burden a development creates and fee charged to offset the cost of that burden.

"I get concerned," he said, "about the political ramifications of asking people who may never use a freeway that they may build to pay for it."

My point exactly.

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