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San Joaquin County inches toward traffic-impact fee

Developers would pay according to what kind of housing they build

By Les Mahler, CORRESPONDENT,

STOCKTON - After years of discussion, San Joaquin County is one step closer to a traffic impact mitigation fee.

County supervisors on Tuesday passed their part of the fee, 3-2. Supervisors Steve Gutierrez and Dario Marenco were the dissenting votes.

Under the proposal, which must still be approved by the cities of Stockton and Ripon, fees for building in the county's seven cities and in rural areas would be levied depending on the type of development.

The cities of Tracy, Manteca, Lathrop, Escalon and Lodi already have approved the fee.

In the unincorporated areas of the county, fees would be \$2,500 for a single-family unit, \$1,500 for a multi-family unit, \$1 per square foot for retail commercial development, \$1.25 per square foot for commercial office and 75 cents per square foot for industrial/warehouse uses.

Stockton and Ripon are expected to vote on the fee later this month.

The fees would "help mitigate future transportation capacity improvements," according to a Public Works department report.

Projects would include widening Jack Tone, Liberty, Peltier and Elliott Roads from two lanes to four, said Tom Flinn, director of the county's Public Works department.

Under the proposal, cities and the San Joaquin Council of Governments would share the revenue pie, with cities getting 75percent and COG 15 percent. Ten percent would go from the cities to the county for eligible regional traffic impact fee projects.

COG's share will go for highway widening projects and

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eligible transit projects in the county.

Gutierrez voted against the fees because he didn't think they were high enough. In fact, when COG had a committee look into the traffic impact mitigation fee, suggestions were floated that the fee should be \$3,500. Instead, through what Flinn called compromise, the fees were downsized to \$2,500.

Gutierrez said the fees were lowered because "someone rolled over."

"I'd like to see higher numbers," Gutierrez said. "Not \$5,000 but I'd like to see it like some other counties."

Supervisor Victor Mow noted, "We reached those numbers through compromise." Mow sits on the COG board along with Supervisor Jack Sieglöck.

"They might not be the numbers some would like to see, but you can always vote no," Mow said.

Marenco voted no because he said voters were promised in 1990, when Measure K was first introduced, that an impact fee would be instituted by the end of the year.

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Measure K is the half-cent sales tax approved by voters in November 1990.

Marenco, reading from a 1993 Community Development report and Measure Ks ballot language, said voters were promised in 1990 that if Measure K passed, a regional impact fee would be enacted.

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