



Print this Page

[Return to story](#)

Stafford's impact fees are unfair to builders

September 7, 2012 12:10 am

In response to Stafford County's proposed and perhaps imminent transportation-impact fees, here are the reasons why this policy makes no economic or political sense:

The impact fee is a tax upon one segment of our economic community--developers and builders. It will likely be passed along to local residents and consumers, whether newcomers to the area or current residents buying new homes.

This is an unfair tax burden. It should be shared by all who benefit from new and improved county roads. This kind of "us against them" tax policy does not work at the national level or local level. Have we forgotten how popular the 2008 transportation bond referendum was? Most residents support new and improved roads and quality-of-life investments.

Residential development incentivizes greater growth for commercial uses, including retail and office. The county takes the position that it will pay for the commercial share of transportation impacts. This is false: Taxpayers pay for these costs, including the impact surcharge for new residential development.

This impact fee will increase the overall cost of development, and either drive new development out of Stafford or increase the impact of residential sprawl, which affects transportation costs and safety.

To suggest that development can best afford and absorb these costs is absurd, especially when the construction industry has been hardest hit during the recent downturn and is key to the internal economic growth of the county. Behind government, construction is the second-largest industry in the county.

Will the roads actually be built, and will the dollars raised for such impact fees be earmarked for new and improved roads? Recent history suggests not.

To suggest that those who already live in the county have had no negative impact on county roads to date and would not benefit from new roads is misguided.

If the impact fees are put in place, they should be applied on a progressive scale, low to higher as growth rates in the county increase; otherwise the county is creating a disincentive for investment.

I hope the county makes a smart and equitable decision, fairly applying the cost for new investment in county infrastructure.

Charlie Payne

Falmouth

Copyright 2012 The Free Lance-Star Publishing Company.