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Article published Nov 9, 2005

Study calls for lesser impact fee increase But firm warns numbers likely to rise as additional expenses are calculated.

OCALA - The county's transportation impact fee on new homes would go up \$1,000 - not double as anticipated - based on a recently released study, but the engineering firm that put together the study said the fees are likely to rise again once additional information is gathered.

"I suspect the numbers will change," said Bob Wallace, vice president of Tindale-Oliver & Associates, the Tampa firm that performed the study. "My guess is these numbers will go up. I don't know how much they will go up by."

Based on the study, impact fees for single-family homes would go from \$2,200 to \$3,200, a 45 percent increase. The fee for new apartments would rise from \$1,400 to \$2,200 and the charge for new mobile homes would increase from \$1,099 to \$1,400.

Impact fees are charges levied against developers, usually passed down to homeowners, to offset the cost of building or expanding nearby roads.

The study also recommends raising transportation fees for the construction or expansion of new businesses, including drive-thru restaurants and banks, which face the largest increase under the study.

Results of the study initially surprised some county and transportation officials, who have been expecting the per-home fee to at least double.

But Wallace said the study, a preliminary report submitted to county planning officials, does not include additional information regarding right-of-way costs, recent state and county road project pricing and other data. He said a statewide spike in right-of-way costs warranted additional research. Wallace said he expects to provide the county with an updated report within the next week.

News that the study's figures were not final pleased Greg Slay, director of the Ocala/ Marion County Transportation Planning Organization, which based its 20-

year road improvement plan on the assumption that the fees would double. If the fees come in considerably less than \$4,400 per home, Slay said, it would mean the loss of millions of dollars for road projects.

County commissioners have not declared when the new fees would take effect, though the first of the year has been mentioned. The commission is scheduled to discuss the issue - including the study's findings - during a Nov. 17 workshop.

Tindale-Oliver arrived at the proposed fees using a complex process that involves determining the cost per mile for new roads, how much capacity a new subdivision, commercial development or other land use will eat up and the gas tax revenue generated by that new development.

Under the study, anything with a drive-thru would face the largest increase. Fees for restaurants with drive-thrus would jump 174 percent, from \$16,600 to \$45,600 per 1,000 square feet. Banks with drive-thrus would pay \$24,500 per 1,000 square feet, up from the current \$11,500 fee.

In 2002, county commissioners reduced a proposed rate hike for restaurants after opposition from industry lawyers, which caused this year's proposed increase to appear even greater, said County Planning Director Dwight Gano.

Fast-food chain Whataburger was not aware of the proposal but planned to get familiar with it, said Jan Bishop, director of operations for Galco Restaurant Group 1, LLC, the chain's Ocala franchisee.

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