

# Canyon County mulls highway fee proposal

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CANYON COUNTY — With rapid growth and aging roads, Canyon County commissioners are considering a new approach to keep traffic flowing smoothly.

Friday, Commissioners Matt Beebe, David Ferdinand and Steve Rule learned about a process that could allow the county to collect up-front fees from developers based on projected traffic increases in a given area.

Erv Olen, of the Parametrix engineering, planning and environmental sciences firm, outlined how his company helped Valley and Gem counties successfully implement the process.

"I think it's a good deal for Canyon County," Olen told commissioners.

The process would enable the county to help highway districts improve deteriorating roads accessed by motorists driving to and from new subdivisions.

Since implementing the program in 2005, Olen said Valley County has collected between \$5 million and \$6 million from developers.

Olen said unlike an "onerous" impact fee process meant to deal with the creation of new infrastructure, a capital improvement program using development agreements would provide for proportional fees based on a simplified "cost per trip" formula that takes into account traffic increases on existing roadways.

The county could collect money as provided for under the state's land-use planning act, which enables local governments to enter into agreements with developers.

"It's really a development fee," Ferdinand observed, contrasting its collection with that of impact fees.

Commissioners seemed receptive to Olen's presentation, saying they would like to meet with highway district officials and discuss the process further.

"I like this idea," Beebe said, noting it would give the officials "another tool" to meet the challenges of growth.

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