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County waives transportation impact fees

BY RICK NEALE
FLORIDA TODAY

VIERA — Citing “a deep economic recession” gripping the Space Coast, Brevard County leaders have suspended transportation impact fees to try to encourage commercial development.

The Brevard County Commission today unanimously enacted a two-year moratorium on these fees for both commercial and residential construction projects.

The retroactive moratorium takes effect Sunday and lasts until March 1, 2011.

Assistant County Manager Mel Scott said the program is designed to spark short-term construction projects that might not otherwise occur.

Bill Ellis, a Health First vice president, told commissioners that the waivers might trigger construction of the Viera Health Park hospital. This long-proposed, 275,000-square-foot-plus facility would spawn 350 construction jobs and 800 permanent jobs, he said.

“We need some kind of impetus for us to move forward with the bonding of that hospital,” Ellis said. “Something like this would be a great stimulus to make us move forward.”

On the flip side, this lost revenue could hamstring an array of road projects, such as the widening of Barnes Boulevard in Rockledge; intersection improvements on Grissom Parkway in Titusville; and the realignment of NASA Boulevard and Ellis Road at Wickham Road in Melbourne.

The county generated \$5.8 million in transportation impact fees during the 2008-09 fiscal year, and officials projected the fees could generate \$6.5 million this year, said John Denninghoff, transportation engineering director.

“We’re sitting on a half-billion-dollar road-deficiency list,” Brevard County Commissioner Chuck Nelson said.

County impact fees for correctional facilities, fire-rescue operations or emergency services remain unaffected.

More moratorium details:

- Builders must pull building permits within the next 12 months.
- Builder must obtain temporary certificates of occupancy within the next 24 months.
- Developers of major structures measuring at least 25,000 square feet — such as Health First — can qualify for a third year of fee waivers to gain extra construction time.

Merritt Island resident Doug Sphar doubted the moratorium will work.

“It’s called magical thinking — the same type of thinking that led Gov. (Charlie) Crist to declare that Amendment 1 would cause a sonic boom in construction. No boom then. And probably no boom now,” Sphar said.

Amendment 1 was a package of property-tax cuts that Florida voters approved.

In January, Santa Rosa County officials enacted a transportation impact fee moratorium for 2009. Other Florida counties suspending impact fees during recent months include Desoto, Nassau and Wakulla.

Today's moratorium in Brevard was an emergency ordinance, which required four out of five commission "yes" votes.

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Additional Facts

If you go

The Brevard County Commission next meets at 9 a.m. Tuesday in Building C of the Government Center, 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera.
