

LOCAL NEWS

City considers new road impact fee

Developers could pay more, less depending on traffic from project

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By Lowell Brown / Staff Writer

Denton city leaders are considering charging developers a new fee to help pay for street improvements.

Under a plan presented Monday, the city would impose a road impact fee on developers whose projects are expected to create additional traffic.

The fees would help fund new streets and recoup the city's investment in existing streets, said P.S. Arora, assistant wastewater director, during a presentation to the City Council.

Under city code, developers already pay for their projects' traffic impact through a process known as exaction. Staff members are proposing an impact fee to make the process fairer and more efficient, Arora said.

Currently, the charges depend largely on whether a project is built on a street that meets current city standards. Developers could pay more or less under the impact fee system, depending on the project, Arora said.

"What it does is make it more fair, because you are paying for the actual traffic generated from your property," he said.

The city is still working on details of the plan, including the fee amount.

Council members questioned Arora repeatedly during the nearly two-hour presentation and asked him to return with additional information. No vote was scheduled.

"It's a complex issue," said Mayor Mark Burroughs, who pushed for a possible fee exemption for infill or small development projects. "Get us some feedback and we'll inch our way towards it."

The audience included Lee Allison of Allison Engineering Group Inc., a company that helps guide projects through the city approval process. Allison said road impact fees are reasonable for cities with populations of more than 50,000, but many details remain unknown.

"Until those details are worked through it's hard to say" whether he would support the fee, Allison said. "The bigger issue is going to be in the continuation of the exaction process, because exactions and road impact fees are very different animals."

The Texas Legislature authorized impact fees in 1987, letting cities collect fees from new developments to pay for water, sewer and transportation projects.

Denton has charged water and sewer impact fees since 1998.

The proposal comes as the city continues looking for ways to boost spending on streets after years of underfunding.

The council created a stand-alone street fund in the current budget and dedicated two income streams — bond debt savings and increases in franchise fee revenue.

"We've made significant progress ... but we've still got a ways to go," City Manager George Campbell said.

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Mayor Burro and the council of cronies will move past exaction for developers and into extortion as with taxpayers.

Shouldn't these geniuses have thought about this before creating the apartment Mecca of the world.

