



Tuesday, Apr 29, 2008

Posted on Tue, Apr. 29, 2008

Makeover time

Star-Telegram

A proposed Fort Worth ordinance that would levy transportation impact fees on developers to help pay for new arterial roads in outlying areas raises serious concerns.

City Council members tentatively are scheduled to vote on the ordinance at their 10 a.m. meeting today. But legitimate questions are being raised.

Are the fees sufficiently high? Should there be more variation in the structure? Should developments that require greater extensions of city services and expansions of road systems pay more?

The council either should vote against the proposed ordinance or delay action unless those concerns can be allayed.

An intelligently crafted transportation impact fee ordinance would be beneficial to Fort Worth, but this proposal appears to have substantial room for improvement.

Councilman Carter Burdette raised strong concerns last week about the ordinance, which he said is "not a solution" to the city's need to generate more revenues for road improvements and to regulate growth more effectively.

A primary goal of impact fees should be to help manage growth by encouraging more residential and commercial development in established areas where city services and arterial roads are in place. They shouldn't encourage "leapfrog" development in far-flung outlying areas that requires costly extensions of municipal services and construction of arterial roads, while also increasing traffic congestion and air pollution.

Under a well-formulated fee system, the greater the negative impact that a new development has in terms of requiring added city services and road expansion, the higher the fee should be. The fees should rise proportionately in relation to the degree of impact.

But the proposed ordinance would impose the same general impact fee structure in 19 of 27 proposed development zones, in contrast to considerably varying fees initially recommended by city staffers.

The proposed ordinance isn't ready for prime time. It needs a serious makeover.