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Maple Valley makes changes to traffic impact fees

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Developers in Maple Valley will have an easier time calculating their [transportation impact fee](#) (TIF) when applying for permits.

The [Maple Valley City Council](#) voted at its Nov. 28 meeting to repeal the ordinance pertaining to TIFs and replaced it with a new ordinance.

Under the previous ordinance, the TIF was based on the city's six-year transportation improvement plan, which is adopted annually. The calculation of the traffic impact fee was based on the capacity projects included in the six year transportation plan. TIFs help finance the city's public facilities, including transportation facilities, which are impacted by increased development.

According to Community Development Director Ty Peterson, basing the TIF on the six-year transportation program caused it to fluctuate too much because of the erratic activity from year to year. This has made it difficult for developers to determine how much the TIF will be in any given year.

The new ordinance bases the TIF on the city's 20-year comprehensive plan transportation element and capital facilities plan, a move which was recommended by the state auditor in 2007.

"The building industry prefers it because you have a consistent fee from year to year," Peterson said. "It's fair because if you happen to develop in any given year that there was an expensive year (for the city) you're going to be stuck paying a much higher fee than another guy building next year, so this way it's more fair. They both contributed to the same system."

In 1999, the TIF was \$808 per evening peak hour trip. In 2008, it was \$6,272 per evening peak hour trip.

The current TIF is \$3,013 per evening peak hour trip.

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Under the previous methodology, the TIF would have dropped down to \$1,391 in 2012.

According to Peterson, the switch was made possible due to the state legislature, which extended the amount of time the city has to spend TIF funds from six years to 10 years.

“In theory, if we don’t spend that money we’ve collected in 10 years we’re supposed to refund it with interest,” he said. “In transportation, projects are expensive, so the trend has been from a planning perspective.”

Additionally, under the 20-year comprehensive plan the TIF will not include every project as it did under the transportation improvement plan. According to Peterson, only projects that add capacity and only the portion that add capacity will be included in determining the fee.

Whether or not this will lead to a cheaper TIF, however, Peterson said is uncertain.

“It’s hard to say,” he stated. “It all boils down to which year were you going to apply. It certainly makes it more predictable. Some people will end up paying a little bit more or less, but at least now it’s predictable.”

The city first adopted the TIF in November 2002.

Contact Covington Reporter Reporter TJ Martinell at tmartinell@maplevalleyreporter.com.

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