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Santa Monica City Council to Consider New Transportation Fee for Developers

By Jason Islas

Staff Writer

August 28, 2012 -- At its meeting Tuesday night, the Santa Monica City Council will explore whether to require developers to pay a Transportation Impact Fee to help fund improvements to roads and bike lanes.

The proposed fee -- which was supported by the Planning Commission in March -- would target developments that generate additional traffic, with the funds earmarked to improve the city's traffic ways, bike lanes and pedestrian infrastructure.

"The proposed transportation impact fee is intended to capture projects that result in changes from one type of land use category to a land use category with a greater trip generation rate, such as from office to medical office or office to retail," City staff wrote.

Development agreements (DAs) would not be subject to the ordinance.

Staff has proposed that developers wishing to build retail space in Area I -- Downtown and the area around Olympic and Cloverfield boulevards -- pay \$21 a square foot, while in Area II, which covers the rest of the city, they would pay \$30.10 per square foot.

Multi-family units would cost developers \$2,600 per unit in Area I and \$3,300 per unit in Area II.

General office developments would cost developers \$9.70 per square foot in Area I and \$10.80 per square foot everywhere else in the city.

Staff estimates that in the next 20 years, the proposed pricing scheme could generate as much as \$60 million for improvements to Santa Monica's traffic infrastructure.

Improvements could include "creating a path for bicycles from the Expo Light Rail Station at 17th Street to Santa Monica College, enhancing crosswalks along major boulevards, and (providing) real time information for travelers," staff said.

But staff estimates that the cost of transportation infrastructure improvements will outstrip the revenue generated by the Transportation Impact Fee.

In the course of the next 20 years, staff has identified \$134 million worth of improvements.

"The remaining 55 percent of the total project cost is expected to be covered by regional, state and federal grants, City General Fund, and other sources, for which the Fee may provide a local match," staff wrote.

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The council is not expected to decide Tuesday night whether the Transportation Impact Fee should become an ordinance.

Staff will ask for the council's input on various questions, such as whether there should be exemptions for affordable housing units and whether the list of capital projects reflects the goals of the City's Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE), which guides development in the beachside city.



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