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Antrim Township close to making decision on impact fees

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GREENCASTLE, Pa. - After considering transportation impact fees for two years, the Antrim Township Board of Supervisors held a special work session Tuesday to further discuss the matter. A decision is expected to be made Jan. 22, according to Supervisor Samuel Miller.

Transportation impact fees would save taxpayers money because developers would pay for road improvements rather than the township, Miller said.

Washington Township has been using transportation impact fees since 2004, primarily for Washington Township Boulevard, Township Manager Mike Christopher said.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code allows transportation impact fee ordinances to fund off-site road improvements necessitated by new land development that builders would not otherwise pay for, according to a fact sheet put together by Ben Thomas, Antrim Township manager. The fees are based on the amount of traffic generated during peak commuter periods in a seven-mile area.

"Impact fees are primarily set up as a funding mechanism for roadway improvements (associated with development)," said Chad Dixon of Transportation Planning and Design of Harrisburg, Pa.

Antrim Township has three areas it is looking to have studied for transportation impact fees - the U.S. 11 corridor, including the Grindstone Hill connector road project; Pa. 16 west from Greencastle to the Peters Township line; and a townshipwide study, according to Thomas.

More than 60 municipalities in Pennsylvania have adopted the fees, which range from \$57 to \$3,846 per peak hour trip. Antrim Township's fee would be based on growth, needed roadway improvements and any resulting traffic increases, Dixon said.

Transportation impact fees can only be used for capital improvements necessitated by new developments, Dixon said.

They cannot be used for road maintenance that has nothing to do with new development.

"When does this make sense, not make sense for municipalities to get involved in this?" Thomas asked Dixon, Christopher and Mike Ross, president of Franklin County Area Development Corp.

Dixon said if a municipality has 150 to 200 residential building permits and 250,000 to 500,000 square feet of non-residential development per year, they should consider the fees.

"Most developments don't have much of an issue paying these fees," Dixon said. "After the fee is paid, most developers view it as a clearer process for them."

"Developers will pay it, but (are) not happy about it on commercial/industrial property," Ross said. Developers need to see where their money is going, he said.

In Washington Township, the fee is about \$2,700 per residential lot, Christopher said. However, the rate is expected to increase. Since 2004, Washington Township has collected \$450,000 in transportation impact fees, Christopher said.

"We don't want to scare commercial growth away," said Supervisor Curtis Myers.

"I don't think we're scaring anyone away and we'll get reimbursed for further improvements to a connector road," Miller said.

"It's not based on money, it's based on trips," Christopher said. "Commercial property will generate more traffic and they're going to generate this money to do your (road) improvements."

"I'm just really having a problem with this," said Supervisor James Byers. "I don't see how this could help small business."

A municipal ordinance would take 18 months before going into effect. However, while the ordinance is being drafted, an interim fee of \$1,000 per peak hour would be collected.

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