

[Click to Print](#)

Nov, 10, 2008

Bellingham considers lower traffic fee for developers

JARED PABEN / THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

BELLINGHAM — Developers would pay less in fees to support construction of city streets next year, under a new recommendation from city staff.

Each year the city sets the amount of its transportation impact fee, which is charged to builders to offset the impacts of people traveling to and from new developments. Bellingham Public Works staff recommends charging a base fee of \$1,695 next year, a 9.6 percent decrease from this year's fee. That amount would be charged for each evening rush-hour vehicle trip the project generates.

The amount is based on a complex formula that takes into account how much the city has spent and plans to spend on transportation improvements and how much new developments will affect city streets.

The proposed amount is less than the 2008 fees because the city, facing a tight budget, reduced the amount it plans to spend on transportation projects in the next six years. A smaller share of money from the impact fees was needed to help pay for projects.

"The goal is to have new growth pay for its proportionate share of the infrastructure," Public Works Development Manager Brent Baldwin said.

Citywide, a study showed about half of any street-capacity increase is needed because of new growth, Baldwin said. For example, the city is adding two driving lanes to Sunset Drive between Woburn Street and East McLeod Road. Of those two lanes, one would theoretically be needed to serve new growth, and the other is needed today to serve existing residents.

The lower fee would reduce the underlying costs of a home, but the 2009 rate is only about \$180 less than this year's rate.

If the City Council passes a resolution approving the suggested rate on Monday, Nov. 10, then it would take effect Jan. 1.

Reach Jared Paben at 715-2289 or jared.paben@bellinghamherald.com. Read his Traffic Talk blog at TheBellinghamHerald.com/blogs.