

[back to article](#)



Printed on page A1

## County Commission to consider impact fee reductions

By [Donna Kelly](#)  
News Chief staff

Published: Saturday, March 14, 2009 at 4:01 a.m.

BARTOW - County commissioners are expected to decide on Wednesday exactly how much transportation impact fees will be reduced in an effort to stimulate construction and boost the local economy.

The commission will meet at 9 a.m. Wednesday in the Neil Combee Administration Building, at 330 W. Church St., Bartow.

During the meeting, the commission will examine two options for cutting transportation impact fees put forth by consultants Tindale-Oliver and Associates Inc. and either choose one or opt to cut fees a specific percentage across the board. The options are based upon a recently completed study of impact fees.

"Option 1 assumes that roads built in the future will be more urban with a greater number of traffic signals," explained Tom Deardorff, the county's growth management director, after Friday's agenda briefing. "Option 2 assumes there will be roads built in more rural areas with few traffic signals."

The current impact fee on a single-family home is \$6,247. Under Option 1, the fee is \$5,948, a 5 percent decrease. Option 2 drops it to \$4,663, a 25 percent decrease.

Commercial impact fees vary by land use. For example, office space less than 100,000 square feet currently requires an impact fee of \$10,090. Option 1 reduces

the fee 36 percent, bringing it to \$6,486. Option 2 decreases it 50 percent to \$5,051. General industrial construction of 1,000 square feet now pays \$1,455 in impact fees. Option 1 requires \$578 in fees, a reduction of 60 percent, and Option 2 calls for \$149, a decrease of 90 percent.

"Both of these on the whole would significantly reduce transportation impact fees," Deardorff said.

According to Deardorff, transportation impact fees are among the numerous fees collected to pay for a number of types of services and infrastructure. The different categories are being studied to determine updated fee amounts. To date, the transportation impact fee study is the only one that is completed.

"Transportation is the big-ticket item," Deardorff said.

Commissioner Sam Johnson said if the commission accepts the transportation impact fee study, then those fees will be reduced. These fees could also be further reduced if the commission votes to further reduce impact by a percentage across the board, he said.

A reduction of 50 percent across the board was originally proposed by Commissioner Ed Smith last month.

"My intent when I made the motion was not to open a can of worms. My intention was that we reduce all existing impact fees by 50 percent to provide immediate relief. I think 50 percent would be appropriate, then let's do the (other impact fee) studies and we can tweak it a little bit," Smith said. "We need to provide relief. I'm trying to bring businesses and jobs to Polk County."

Commissioner Bob English also suggested reducing existing impact fees now and then readdressing the issue when the all of the fee studies are completed.

But Johnson said he will not vote to reduce education impact fees.

"Education has lost funding the last couple of years. I just don't want to see it impacted any more. Education has to be our primary focus," he said.

Commissioner Randy Wilkinson said that instituting the fees incrementally will delay economic stimulation.

"If they (developers) think (the fees) will go down, then they're going to wait," Wilkinson said. "Impact fees are not a science, there's a lot of art to them."

But a reduction of some sort seems imminent.

"I don't think the board is going to have any impact fees that will go up," Commissioner Randy Wilkinson said.

"I'd like to make some sort of decision (Wednesday). I want to make a decision for road impact fees," he said.

Johnson is also ready to move forward with the reduction.

"Hopefully, it will keep some people employed who are on the verge of losing their jobs, We need to remove roadblocks so people in our back yards are able to keep their jobs," Johnson said.

The commission is also expected to decide what, if any, time limits to put on the impact fee reduction.

donna.kelly@newschief.com

This story appeared in print on page A1

---

