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## Road impact fees starting to take shape

By JOHN STANG/*The Daily Inter Lake*

Some places — such as shopping centers and bars — don't show up in traffic engineering handbooks.

That means that Kalispell's proposed road impact fees have some blank spots for those stores plus convenience stores that close at night.

Someone will have to pay for the extra work to fill in those blanks.

The Kalispell City Council probably will be briefed on these proposed road impact fees at a yet-to-be-scheduled workshop session in March.

An impact fee is a one-time charge against a new home or building that Kalispell absorbs through construction or annexation. The idea is that the fee will pay for the city's extra costs to serve that home or business.

Kalispell already has impact fees to pay for extra police and fire protection, utilities and drainage. In the future, the city government expects to add new impact fees for parks.

For the past several months, the City Council and an impact fee committee have wrestled with road impact fees, which will be the most expensive to be levied on new homes and commercial buildings.

A fundamental premise is that the new structures that attract or create the most traffic will pay the higher fees. Consequently high-traffic-volume businesses will pay the most.

A few months ago, the council balked for that reason at the committee's proposed set of road impact fees. So it told the impact fee committee to revisit the matter.

This set up a time crunch for the city government.

The council has green-lighted construction and annexation of the huge Glacier Town Center and several thousand houses. Several projects, including the shopping center, are expected to request building permits later this year.

If a building permit is granted prior to road impact fees being set, then that construction won't have to pay the fee.

The potential huge road impact fees may be needed to deal with the extra traffic expected to come from these projects, especially in fast-growing northern Kalispell.

Without road impact fees, the city would have to find other sources for road money, which could mean additional taxes.

At a meeting last week, impact-fee committee member Steve Allen voiced concern about the steepness of some proposed fees. He said Kalispell's growth boom is slowing and the fees could be too high a price to pay for builders and business owners.

Some committee members suggested that a levied road impact fee could be spread across several years to ease the burden on a business or person paying it.

Charles Lapp, a member of the Flathead Building Association, attended the meeting and contended that several revised fees are higher than the ones rejected months ago.

The committee plans to meet again on March 5 to nail down what it will propose to the city council.

Randy Goff, an engineer with the Portland-based firm of HDR/EES, has consulted handbooks with dollar-figure tables to come up with recommended road impacts, which are set according to the types of homes and businesses.

These universal traffic-and-impact-fee formulas are based on square footages for industrial and commercial buildings, numbers of rooms for hotels and motels, and acreages for parks.

But these same traffic handbooks don't have impact-fee figures for shopping centers, bars and convenience stores that are open 16 hours or less a day.

That means when a shopping center such as Glacier Town Center, a bar or a non-24/7 convenience store is added to the city, engineers will have to do traffic studies from scratch, and then plug those numbers into some formulas to come up with road impact fees for those new business ventures.

Here is a broad look at some proposed road impact fees:

- Single-family houses — \$997.
- Apartments — \$700 each.
- Condominiums or townhouses — \$661.
- Industrial — \$398 to \$726 per 1,000 square feet.
- Warehouses — \$260 to \$517 per 1,000 square feet.
- Motels and hotels — \$58 to \$64 per room.
- Athletic clubs — \$3,724 per 1,000 square feet.
- Recreational community centers — \$9,417 per 1,000 square feet.
- Schools — \$1,343 to \$1,510 per 1,000 square feet.
- Community colleges — \$2,864 per 1,000 square feet.
- Churches — \$248 per 1,000 square feet.
- Day-care centers — \$826 per 1,000 square feet.
- Libraries — 5,626 per 1,000 square feet.
- Lodges — \$30 per member.
- Nursing homes — \$247 per bed.

- Office and medical buildings — \$845 to \$3,764 per 1,000 square feet.
- Retail businesses — \$2,779 to \$4,786 per 1,000 square feet.
- Car dealerships — \$2,848 per 1,000 square feet.
- Supermarkets — \$6,818 per 1,000 square feet.
- 24-hour convenience store — \$29,988 per 1,000 square feet.
- Discount clubs — \$2,265 per 1,000 square feet.
- Pharmacies — \$4,410 to \$4,578 per 1,000 square feet.

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