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Pasco Commissioners Disagree on Mobility Fees

Some commissioners want a different fee for rural areas.

By [Neil Johnson](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 22, 2011 [Print](#)

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Pasco County's road to reducing and drastically revamping its transportation impact fees hit a bump Tuesday when commissioners differed on higher levies for construction in rural areas.

Though the changes, mainly aimed at helping spur construction and the economy, will generally reduce the amount charged on new construction to pay for better roads caused by growth, homes in sections designated as rural would pay more.

Commissioner Ted Schrader wanted that changed during Tuesday's first review of the impact fee ordinance, but Commissioner Jack Mariano disagreed.

Commissioners will have a chance to smooth the differences when the law gets its final review July 12 in Dade City after county staff members develop new fee suggestions.

Despite the disagreement, the proposed change does reduce what builders in most of the county would pay to defray the cost of new roads brought on by growth.

In New Port Richey and other parts of western and southern Pasco designated as urban areas, the new ordinance would cut the old transportation impact fee nearly in half for a single-family home, to \$5,700.

In most of Central Pasco, including much of the Land O' Lakes area, the fee for a new house would drop from the former countywide assessment of \$10,302 to \$8,515.

That charge is for sections of the county labeled as suburban.

But in places tagged as rural, mainly northern and eastern Pasco, the fee would go up to \$11,525.

That was too much for Schrader who thinks rural construction would be paying too high a price compared to what residents in other parts of Pasco would be charged for an identical house.

"Why all of a sudden is it going to cost \$11,525 for the same house," he said. "It creates an uneven playing field in parts of Pasco County."

But Mariano said that was a goal of changing the fee structure to three tiers. The lower fee for development in already urban areas is intended to entice growth there and prevent sprawl.

"It helps direct growth where we want it to go," he said.

Schrader was displeased that the final figure for rural areas was higher than roughly \$7,800 proposed in early discussions about the change.

The new rules would create an even larger discount for places designated as town centers where development is compact and the need for automobiles is reduced.

Many cities in Pasco have areas with that type of zoning, said David Goldstein, chief assistant county attorney.

The lowest fee for a single-family home in a town center would be \$1,425 and the highest \$2,881.

Cities would have the option of embracing the new fee structure or staying with the existing framework.

Another change from the old transportation impact fee would be to allocate some of the money raised by the new levy for bicycle and pedestrian paths and a small amount for capital costs of mass transit such as park-and-ride lots, buses and shelters.

A total of 4 percent of the fee would go to pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and .25 of 1 percent would be funneled to public transportation.

The change, which includes calling the levy a mobility fee rather than an impact fee, also would chop what multifamily, retail, office and industrial construction pay in some cases in urban and suburban areas to nothing.

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