

Date: December 14, 2022

To: Growth Management Citizens Committee (and members of the public)

From: Steve Linke, Traffic & Mobility Commission

Subject: Circulation performance standard

Summary

- Staff's proposed update to the Traffic Impact Fee (TIF) Program appears reasonable, and our committee should support the approach and recommend it be reviewed by the Traffic & Mobility Commission as soon as possible.
- However, the impact fee is only one component of the General Plan and Growth Management Plan (GMP) circulation requirements; it is not a "performance standard"; and it only addresses general, indirect impacts of developments.
- The other major component is the multimodal (pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicle) level of service (LOS) framework, which works in parallel with the impact fee. The General Plan requires this approach, and our committee should recommend that it be fully implemented to address the direct, site-specific impacts of developments.
- To strengthen the LOS framework, our committee also should recommend that staff, in conjunction with the Traffic & Mobility Commission, completes the establishment of the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit LOS systems and requires the study of vehicle congestion mitigation at intersections.

Impact fee component of growth management

For the impact fee, a list is compiled of the larger improvement projects around the city that will complete the proposed mobility network in a general fashion. Then, the projected costs are divided up such that developers pay pre-determined fees based on the number and type residential units or commercial square footage they are adding.

The update, which is now finally in progress after promises back in 2015 when the General Plan was updated, will shift the focus from vehicle projects to pedestrian and bicycle projects. It also will shift the fee basis from the number of vehicle trips to person miles traveled (PMT), all of which is reasonable.

Looking at the Solana Beach program, on which our update is apparently based, the program is otherwise largely indistinguishable from Carlsbad's current TIF Program. For example, Solana Beach's PMT-based impact fee programs charges a one-time flat fee of \$1,288 for each predicted residential person trip. And the number of predicted person trips is virtually identical to the predicted vehicle trips that Carlsbad currently uses.

The key point here, though, is that this is not a growth management "performance standard"

and only addresses **indirect** cumulative citywide effects of development. It does not necessarily account for specific needs in and around individual project sites. Also, this is a general fee that goes into a pooled fund that finances citywide projects, and the fund likely will be insufficient to finance the projects without city (taxpayer) involvement.

LOS component of growth management

As I have detailed in previous communications, under growth management, developers also must pay their fair shares to fund projects that mitigate their **direct** impacts to the areas in and around the project site. Based on the General Plan and GMP, these direct impacts are determined by assessing pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and/or vehicle **LOS** as the **performance standard**, depending on which modes are prioritized on the streets surrounding the project.

Some developments may be in areas that are not congested and have ample multimodal facilities, in which case they would only pay the standard impact fee to mitigate their cumulative indirect effects. Other developments that add significant new users of the various modes to localized areas that are congested or lack sufficient multimodal facilities would be required to fund additional local improvements to mitigate their direct impacts.

For example, developments could be required to make improvements like high-visibility crosswalks, painted bike lanes, transit shelters, etc. Vehicle-wise, developments in the College Boulevard extension area would be required to fund part of that project, and developments that add traffic to congested intersections may be required to fund turn-lane enhancements, as has been the practice in Carlsbad for the last 30+ years.

Further, given the 2015 General Plan update, developments that add vehicle traffic to streets that have been exempted from growth management due to over-congestion should be required to implement measures to reduce vehicle usage—Transportation Demand Management (TDM)—although that still has not been fully implemented.

Conclusion

The Solana Beach municipal code and impact fee program call the program a means of mitigating overall cumulative impacts that would be difficult to mitigate on a project-by-project basis, and they go on to say that the impact fee is not meant to replace exactions or other measures required to mitigate site-specific impacts of developments.

Thus, these parallel “impact fee” and “direct mitigation” approaches continue to be the standard to account for all development impacts.