

powered by feet first



feet first policy

taking a stance to advance walkability

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Impact Fees for Pedestrian Infrastructure

Policy

where we stand

Advocacy is a major component of the work Feet First does. These policy papers, prepared by our Policy Committee, convey Feet First's position on key issues of interest to increase safe and easy ways for people to choose to go by foot.



background

Impacts of real estate development and construction can extend beyond property lines and into surrounding neighborhoods. Impact fee programs are one option available to local governments to reduce the strain of development on public systems including schools, parks, utilities, and transportation. Development impact fees are paid by property developers to municipalities or counties to mitigate the impact and cost of construction and development on local infrastructure.

Originating in the 1950's, development impact fees are collected across the United States as a way to finance infrastructure and support municipal facilities. More recently, Transportation Impact Fees (TIFs) have emerged as specialized impact fees that developers pay to mitigate the impact of development on nearby transportation infrastructure.

Mission

who we are - what we do

Feet First promotes walkable communities and envisions people walking every day for their health, transportation, environment, community, and pleasure.



feet first
promoting walkable communities



Impact Fees for Pedestrian Infrastructure

why it matters to walking

Municipalities throughout Washington may use impact fees to fund safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure in all neighborhoods. While the Growth Management Act allows TIFs to be used only for roads, the Metropolitan Research and Services Center suggests that this definition can be interpreted to include pedestrian improvements such as sidewalks, especially if they are within the street right-of-way or if they support transportation needs, rather than recreation. In addition, Transportation Benefit Districts statewide may collect transportation impact fees on commercial or industrial buildings without voter approval.

Many TIF programs in Washington take a multi-modal approach by allowing fees to be used for pedestrian improvements. For example, in 2008, Spokane established TIFs to fund public facilities including sidewalks and curbs. In Bellingham, TIFs are explicitly allocated to “projects that add multi-modal capacity to the overall transportation network,” including sidewalks and bicycle lanes. The City of Seattle has also explored impact fees for multi-modal transportation improvements, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, under the auspices of the State Environmental Policy Act.

In 2013, sixty cities in Western Washington, with populations ranging from 825 to 162,400 residents, collected TIFs. However, there may be opportunities to develop new TIF programs in municipalities that are not yet collecting impact fees to fund transportation. There may also be a need to refocus existing TIFs on multi-modal and pedestrian infrastructure.

Some Washington communities including Kirkland, Bellevue, and Seattle’s downtown area mitigate development impacts through incentive zoning programs that allow developers to add density in exchange for building affordable housing. While providing low-income housing is a vital goal, incentive zoning typically neglects multi-modal transportation infrastructure, and housing built through this system can be in neighborhoods with poor infrastructure for people to walk. As recommended by the Seattle Planning Commission’s 2007 report, it is important to examine the extent to which impact fees can complement incentive zoning programs.

feet first position

Impact fees are a viable revenue source for projects that create more walkable neighborhoods, support equitable transportation, and give people a choice of safe, accessible opportunities to go by foot. Feet First supports impact fees as an important component of financing pedestrian infrastructure, and advocates the expansion of multi-modal transportation impact fees to support the development of walkable communities throughout Washington.



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Impact Fees for Pedestrian Infrastructure

resources

City of Bellingham: FAQs About Transportation Impact Fees:
<http://www.cob.org/documents/pw/transportation/2013-tif-faq.pdf>

City of Spokane Engineering Services: Transportation Impact Fees:
<http://www.spokaneengineering.org/transportation-impact-fees-2>

Multi-Modal Impact Fees:
<http://www.westernite.org/Sections/washington/newsletters/Samdahl%20multimodal%20impact%20fees.pdf>

Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington: A Comparison of 2013 TIF Base Rates:
<http://www.mrsc.org/govdocs/b45tif2013.pdf>

Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington: Featured Inquiry (09/28/09):
<http://www.mrsc.org/askmrsc/featuredinq.aspx?inq=614>

Seattle Planning Commission: Incentive Zoning in Seattle:
http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SeattlePlanningCommission/IncentiveZoning/SPC_Incentive%20Zoning.pdf

Seattle Transportation Benefit District:
<http://www.seattle.gov/stbd/faq.htm>

Cover photo courtesy of :

Incentive Zoning in Seattle: Enhancing Livability and Housing Affordability
White Paper • February 2007 | Seattle Planning Commission



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