

July 22, 2020

Seminole County Mayors and Managers

RE: Proposed Seminole County Mobility Fee

Dear Colleagues:

I hope this correspondence finds you well, and trust that you are all navigating the COVID-19 crisis and other recent challenges with the professionalism and dedication that is the hallmark of our group. It has been several months since we last met, and I wanted to take the opportunity to update you on the status of the proposed Seminole County Mobility Fee. As we have discussed collectively, and in some cases individually, Seminole County is endeavoring to replace its Transportation Impact Fee with a Mobility Fee. This effort began in October of 2018, and since that time, multiple meetings and workshops have been held concerning this matter, both internal and external to the County organization. In addition to meeting with industry representatives, the County team conferred with a municipal working group comprised of representatives from each of your cities (as designated by each City Manager); these meetings began in April of 2019, with the most recent one occurring just last Monday.

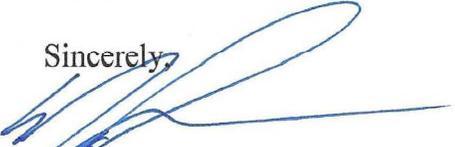
Most of you know that mobility fees are a concept that is not foreign or new to this County. The Cities of Altamonte Springs and Casselberry have already enacted mobility fees in their jurisdictions, and we learned last Monday that the City of Longwood is now considering pursuit of its own mobility fee. A mobility fee, for all intents and purposes, is simply another name for an impact fee. Impact fees have been widely used in Seminole County and throughout Florida to mitigate the impacts of development on municipal and county infrastructure systems. The County's current Transportation Impact Fee has been in place for decades and is long overdue for an update, both legally and practically. As we learned from the recent school impact fee update effort, it is important that development exactions accurately and fairly capture the actual cost of the new demands that growth places on our critical facilities. Seminole County's proposed Mobility Fee is intended to do just that, and nothing more. We are now heading into the home stretch. The proposed Mobility Fee is currently scheduled for consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission on August 5th and the Board of County Commissioners on August 25th. If adopted by the Board, the new fee structure would become effective January 1, 2021. As this proposal has advanced closer to the finish line, it has been assailed with misinformation and mischaracterizations. Whether intentional or not, these misrepresentations are a disservice to our community, and mar the County's effort to protect our current residents and ensure that growth occurs in a responsible and equitable manner.

Perhaps the most egregious falsehood associated with the proposed Mobility Fee is its characterization as a "train and bus tax." Some of you may have already heard, or even uttered, this reference. To be blunt, the use of this term in describing the proposed Mobility Fee is a lie on every level. First of all, as noted above, a mobility fee is a development exaction - alternative nomenclature for an impact fee. It is not a "tax" of general application, but rather a charge on new development to help pay for the construction or expansion of capital facilities necessary to serve the added demand. These fees are intended to reduce the economic burden on existing citizens and businesses. Attempts to frighten the citizenry with the specter of a new "tax" in order to dissuade public support of the proposed Mobility Fee at best demonstrates an utter lack of understanding of how these fees operate, and at worst is a blatant attempt to shift the cost of new growth onto the backs of existing residents and businesses.

Secondly, the proposed Mobility Fee has zero, I repeat zero, connection to the funding of train or bus services. Seminole County's proposal is structured to fund the needs identified in the County's 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. There is not one transit project included in this calculation or anticipated to be funded through the proposed Mobility Fee. Period. There is no basis in fact for these claims, and they too appear to be nothing more than a scare tactic intended to mislead the public and disingenuously upend this initiative.

Whether you agree or not with the concept of mobility/impact fees, you now at least have the facts regarding Seminole County's proposal. Reasonable minds can disagree. Honest debate on the merits of an issue is healthy and constructive. But, lying to win is unacceptable, and not how we do business here in Seminole County. We, as elected and appointed leaders, must demand and model integrity in our public discourse. I trust that you will join me in making sure that all of our citizens are afforded an honest view of this important proposition. Please feel free to reach out to me directly should you have any questions or desire additional information. Be safe.

Sincerely,



Jay Zembower, Chairman
Seminole County Board of County Commissioners

cc: Honorable Mayor Patricia Bates, City of Altamonte Springs
Honorable Mayor Charlene Glancy, City of Casselberry
Honorable Mayor David J. Mealor, City of Lake Mary
Honorable Mayor Matt Morgan, City of Longwood
Honorable Mayor Megan Sladek, City of Oviedo
Honorable Mayor Art Woodruff, City of Sanford
Honorable Mayor Charles Lacey, City of Winter Springs
Franklin W. Martz, II, City Manager, City of Altamonte Springs
Randy Newlon, City Manager, City of Casselberry
Kevin Smith, City Manager, City of Lake Mary
Clint Gioielli, Interim City Manager, City of Longwood
Bryan Cobb, City Manager, City of Oviedo
Norton Bonaparte Jr., City Manager, City of Sanford
Shawn Boyle, City Manager, City of Winter Springs
Nicole Guillet, Seminole County Manager