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March 18, 2007

Roads first, then development, Blueprint for Growth proposes

Ordinance now goes to Ada councils, commissions

Local leaders want to implement a growth-management tool that requires adequate roads in an area before development happens.

Under a proposed ordinance, new development could be delayed or denied if existing roads and transportation facilities are stretched to their limits.

The ordinance, called an adequate public facilities ordinance, would ensure that transportation infrastructure grows in lockstep with growth and that growth is directed toward areas where its required infrastructure already is in place.

"If you don't have adequate public facilities your answer is no. Your answer is always no," planning consultant Michael Lauer told local leaders last week at a Blueprint for Good Growth meeting.

The Blueprint is a long-range land use and transportation plan for Ada County.

Members of the group include Ada County Highway District, Ada County, Boise, Eagle, Garden City, Kuna, Meridian and Star.

Blueprint members voted Thursday to consider implementing the ordinance. Next, each jurisdiction will take the proposal to its respective council or commission for consideration.

Lauer said for the ordinance to work, each city and the county must adopt it and agree to let ACHD do the monitoring and tracking of road capacity.

"It will not work if we have seven different local governments with seven different tracking systems that do not mesh," Lauer said.

"We hang together or we hang separately."

ACHD commission president John Franden said the highway district is in favor of the ordinance.

"The bottom line is right now we are constantly in catch-up mode, and if we ever are going to get ahead of the curve, we have to have adequate transportation facilities that coincides with the development taking place," Franden said.

Franden said another ordinance benefit is that it would require the highway district, developers and local land-use agencies to work more closely.

Boise Mayor Dave Bieter was optimistic each jurisdiction would adopt the ordinance.

"I was very pleased with Thursday's Blueprint for Good Growth meeting," Bieter said. "The outcome of this meeting is another indication of how effective and results-oriented this regional planning effort is."

"In (Boise's) citizen survey, residents told us their top two concerns were controlling sprawl and addressing transportation concerns," Bieter said. "The resolution being drafted would require that adequate public facilities be in place before development happens. That makes sense."

If the ordinance is enacted, Franden said, the first task will be for ACHD to go road by road, community by community and determine "what is acceptable, what is not and when does the trigger get pulled."

"It can't be arbitrary and capricious. There must be clear guidelines so everyone knows the rules," Franden said.

To offer story ideas or comments, contact reporter Cynthia Sewell at cmsewell@idahostatesman.com or 377-6428.