



## **Pasco County Adopts Innovative Mobility Fees Program to Fund Roads, Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

*Florida's Pasco County is the first county to replace transit fees to help provide mobility options for the community.*

Traffic flow and parking management, roadway development and improvement needs, pedestrian safety and bicycle friendliness are all natural, common issues that exist within any city's flourishing development and urban ecosystem that directly impacts accessibility to local businesses, customer willingness to travel, and the quality of life for city residents. Meanwhile, county and municipal governments throughout the nation face the important challenge of providing a more equitable and efficient revenue source to fund the necessary and responsive multimodal transportation projects to include transit, bike lanes, sidewalks, trails, and roadways for the community and its citizens.

### **Transit-oriented Development**

The implementation of high-quality public transit can provide a city district with important economic, social, and environmental benefits to the area as well as the greater community. Local governments and businesses can save on parking facilities and roadway improvement costs, while residents are likely to own fewer motor vehicles, thereby driving less and spending less money on transportation. Additionally, by adopting a comprehensive approach to public transit, the city itself can support economic development within the district, providing savings and benefits that offset costs and incentivize merchants and residents to invest into the maintenance of the public infrastructure.

When deciding transportation facility funding and programming, the goals of the municipality include providing substantial improvements to provide clean, sound economic development; protect the natural beauty and vitality of the area in a manner that the public can enjoy opportunities of recreation; offer effective and sufficient transportation and traffic accessibility for potential residents, the workforce, and visitors; and establish safe and efficient evacuation routes by minimizing traffic backups and reduce emergency response delays.

Over the last several years, the State of Florida has owned a unique vantage point as a trailblazer in creating transportation systems designed to navigate the varied coastal and metropolitan geography and urban, rural, and suburban environment throughout its boundaries. It has long been considered a leader in growth management efforts to mitigate the transportation impacts occurring from development activities. Through its innovation, the State has paved the way for further programming within the State as well as national best practices.



## **Burgeoning Pasco County**

Pasco County (the County) is located on the west central coast of Florida, abutting the Gulf of Mexico. It is part of the greater Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater-Tampa Bay area, and its largest city is New Port Richey. The County is home to CSX Transportation railways; the Pasco County Public Transportation system; as well as the Suncoast Parkway, U.S. 19, U.S. 41, U.S. 98, U.S. 301, and Interstate 75.

With an estimated population of over 583,000, the County has grown over 25 percent since 2010 and is currently the 12th-largest county in Florida. With this incredible expansion and continued population growth, the County has responded with an unprecedented increase in housing, urban development, and construction over recent years.

The Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the lead transportation planning agency in the County, whose primary functions are transportation planning and programming. This includes establishing a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process for the city to follow. MPO's vision is to optimize an ecosystem that encourages economic development, transit-oriented and traditional neighborhood center development, and development within the County's designated urban market areas along the U.S. 19 and Florida State Road 54/56 corridors.

## **Pasco County's Innovative Mobility Fee Program**

Throughout Florida, several municipalities have established unique and creative approaches to optimizing and funding public transit, tailored to serving the specific needs of their civic stakeholders. The County envisioned a program that would leverage strategies to help fund multiple modes of travel and encourage urban, economic, transit-oriented, and traditional neighborhood development.

The County outlined a progressive mobility fee program to supplant the previous transit fee model. The advantages of mobility fees include:

- More flexibility in the use of collected funds
- Application to compact, mixed-use, and energy-efficient development
- Shared by range of stakeholders and constituencies
- Lowers rates for office, industrial, hotel, transit-oriented, and traditional neighborhood development
- Ensures greater reliance on alternative modes of transportation
- Supports job creation and new housing development
- Allows for cooperative contributions from various stakeholders
- Does not depend on tax increases



Through a one-time capital charge, the program would recover a proportionate cost of transportation improvements needed to serve the demand generated by new construction projects. It also aimed to pay for the impacts and promotion of new transportation infrastructure and improve the overall economic development within the district. An additional latent function of the mobility fee program is the successful creation of new jobs throughout the County, which at the time of inception had one of the highest unemployment rates in the region.

### **History of Mobility Fees**

In July of 2011, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) approved and passed Ordinance no. 11-08, the Mobility Fee Ordinance—the program replaced the County’s 2007 transportation impact fee and was used for the costs of roads, mass transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The BCC determined and recognized through adoption of the County’s Comprehensive Plan that the growth rate experienced by the County would necessitate extensive, major transportation network improvements and make it necessary to regulate development activity generating new travel demands to maintain an acceptable level of transportation system capacity and quality of life in the County. To finance the necessary new capital improvements and regulate travel generation levels, several combined methods of financing would be necessary; one of which would require development activity generating new transportation demands to pay a mobility fee which does not exceed a pro rata share of the reasonably anticipated expansion costs of transportation facilities.

The mobility and administration fees were assessed upon the issuance of a building permit for any development and were collected and to be paid prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) for the development. When a CO was not required, the fees were to be collected and paid prior to the final site inspection of the development. For example, a permit for a security alarm would not have a CO or have been assessed mobility fees.

### **Newly Revised Mobility Fee Schedule**

Since its inception in 2012, the mobility fee has been updated at least every three years to ensure its compliance with the local MPO’s Long-Range Transportation Plan. It is also designed to reflect the community’s evolving needs, aligning with the County’s population growth that requires a more sustainable transportation network with different mobility options.

In the most recent update, in October 2021, the County adopted a refreshed mobility fee rate schedule that modified the fees in certain categories and created fees in others. Overall, the updated rate schedule will:

- Continue to advocate for office, industrial and lodging, and redevelopment and infill development in the West Market Area by not charging mobility impact fees in those categories



- Increase most retail fees by 50 percent over four years, divided equally by year, due to cost increases and partial or full subsidy removal
- Increase rates for apartments by six percent annually, for a total of 24 percent over four years due to cost increases and full subsidy removal
- Create a new category for locally owned small businesses, with a 50 percent discount on standard fees
- Continue to charge full rates for mini-warehousing and mining
- Increase other fees by approximately three percent annually—or nearly 13 percent over four years—to address cost increases
- Create a reduced rate for accessory dwellings or in-law units

The approved fee increases are meant to keep pace with the overall costs of improvements to the County's mobility system. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has estimated that improvement costs will increase three percent a year over the next five years.

The new rate schedule was devised through a study completed by an outside consultant. It was proposed by the County's staff and ultimately approved by the Pasco County Commission and will be re-examined when its current three-year lifespan expires.

With its holistic yet progressive framework, the County's mobility fee program was recognized as a model for other communities that struggle with transportation infrastructure needs and growth management, and it received the 2012 Future of the Region award by the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council. The Future of the Region Awards Program recognizes and honors those significant achievements in the public and private sectors for resource planning management, encouraging future vision and cooperation throughout the greater Tampa Bay community.

### **The Future of Mobility Fees Is Now**

In recent years, Florida has built the foundation for and implementing mobility fee programming. In fact, FDOT issued a comprehensive guidebook on how to use mobility fees to fund transit improvements. Several Florida counties and cities have since introduced mobility fee programs, while several communities across the country have initiated similar programs that adopt mobility fee characteristics.

However, just as no two cities or municipalities are alike, no two mobility fee programs are the same, either: it must reflect the needs, the capabilities, even the charm of the individual locality and its population. Moreover, the program must equally be able to adapt and evolve toward the direction the locality is headed in the future.



U.S. Department of Transportation  
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Sources:

[Florida Department of Transportation](#)

[Pasco County, Florida](#)

[Pasco County, Florida: Future of the Region Awards](#)

[Nossaman's Infrastructure Group](#)