

## [City offers 50% fee reduction for some new development](#)

Filed on 27. Jan, 2011 in [News](#)

**By Ryan Wynne**

The fees developers pay the city of Bellingham to fund citywide transportation infrastructure could be dramatically lower for some projects this year. The city just lowered 2011 transportation impact fee rates for everyone, and the amount certain developers pay will be reduced even further.

Impact fees are determined by the number of vehicle trips new developments and businesses that relocate are expected to generate — the more traffic generated, the higher the fee.

This year's base rate was just reduced by \$5 per trip. The city reduced the rate because less is being spent on transportation projects. And the city will offer lower rates for some new developments that help reduce vehicle trips.

As per the new rules, new developments could be eligible for as much as a 50 percent reduction in transportation impact fees.

“What they are getting is acknowledgement from the city that they are reducing the total number of trips coming on and off their site,” said Chris Comeau, Bellingham transportation planner.

The low rates are part of the city's Ten in '10 Initiative, which streamlines permitting and supports projects that conserve resources and minimize impacts to the environment.

For building in select urban villages, developers will automatically receive a fee reduction of 15 percent.

“What we are doing is placing value on new developments coming into these urban villages,” Comeau said.

Eligible urban villages, which are or will be well-served by Whatcom Transportation Authority, are: downtown, Barkley Village, Fairhaven, Old Town, North Samish Way

and the Fountain District. The Waterfront District will also be eligible when the planning process is completed.

Planners found one study that showed a 10 percent vehicle trip reduction can occur if development in a mixed-use urban environment is within a quarter mile of a bus transit corridor.

Developments located in urban villages and within a quarter mile of a bus route will be able to reduce their fees between 2 and 10 percent, depending on their proximity to WTA routes and the frequency of those routes.

The city is also offering a 10 percent reduction to employers with more than 100 employees located in urban villages who implement certain commute trip reduction programs.

“We are probably not going to see this taken advantage of very often,” Comeau said. “It’s not some magic bullet, it’s just one more thing we can do.”