Do Standard Trip Generation Rates Overstate the Impact of Commercial Development?

Joe Colgan, AICP
Colgan Consulting
Sacramento, CA
Speakers and Topics

Joe Colgan, AICP, Colgan Consulting
- Issues and Overview

Bob Wallace, P. E., AICP, Tindale-Oliver Associates
- Empirical Evidence from Traffic Studies

Clancy Mullen, AICP, Duncan Associates
- Thoughts on Methodology
Background

- Regardless of Specific Methodology, Trip Rates Are A Major Factor in Cost Allocation

- Commercial Development Generates Far More Trips Than Residential Development
  - Traffic Impact Fees for Commercial Development Are High Relative to Residential Fees

- Certain Commercial Uses Have Extremely High Trip Generation Rates
  - Fees for Those Uses May Appear Exorbitant, Even Compared with Other Commercial Fees
Commercial vs. Residential

- Range of Rates for Retail Uses:
  - Shopping Center: 35-80 ADT per KSF
  - Supermarket: 100-150 ADT per KSF
  - Fast Food w/ Drive-thru: 500 ADT per KSF
  - Convenience Store w/ Gas: 850 ADT per KSF
- One SFDU Generates 10 Trips per Day, Which Is Equivalent to:
  - 67 – 100 SF of Supermarket Floor Area
  - 20 SF of Fast Food w/ Drive-thru Floor Area
  - 12 SF of Convenience Store w/ Gas Floor Area
Practical Issues

- High Traffic Impact Fees for Commercial Development:
  - May Interfere with Economic Development
  - May Appear Unreasonable to Elected Officials and Developers
  - Disproportionately Burden Small Projects
  - Create Administrative Headaches

- Do Trip Rates Reflect True Impacts?

- Are There Defensible Methodologies That Minimize Those Problems?
Info Content of Trip Rates

- **Standard Trip Generation Rates:**
  - Are Based on Driveway Counts (Trip Ends)
  - Reflect 24-Hour Weekday Traffic
  - May Be Stated in Terms of Acres, Building Area, Employees, Dwelling Units, Etc.
  - Peak Hour Rates Are Usually Available

- **Trip Generation Rates Don’t Account for:**
  - Characteristics of Trips (Purpose, Trip Length, Primary vs. Pass-by, Etc.)
  - Land Use Patterns (Density, Mix of Uses)
  - Evolving Uses Over Life of Structure
Refining Impact Measurement

- Basic Rate Adjustments
  - Correct for Pass-by/Diverted Link Trips
  - Include Trip Length Factor (e.g. in VMT)
  - Use of Peak Hour Trips vs. ADT
  - All of the Above

- More Controversial Measures:
  - Waive A Portion of Commercial Impact Fees
  - Use of Broader Land Use Categories
  - Use of Tiered Urban/Rural Impact Fees
  - Allocating Most Retail Traffic to Residential Development ("Retail Follows Rooftops")
Summing Up

- Trip Generation Rates, Alone, Don’t Perfectly Reflect Impacts of Development
- High Commercial Impact Fees Create Practical Issues That Must Be Addressed
- A Variety of Methods Are Available to Refine the Effect of Trip Rates on Fees
- To Some Extent, The Choice of Methodology Is A Philosophical Exercise