

Boulder County roads tax approved

By Kim Glasscock Editorial@lhvc.com Updated 21 hrs ago

Boulder County residents will have the chance to vote in November on a proposal to increase property taxes to fund road projects in both municipal and unincorporated areas of the county.

At their August 4 meeting, Boulder County Commissioners unanimously agreed to put the proposal on the November ballot. The measure was proposed by a citizens group with members from Pine Brook Hills Homeowners Association, the Niwot Community Association, and Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District.

The proposal calls for increasing property taxes on all county property owners by 0.785 mills for 15 years, which equates to about a \$25 yearly increase in property taxes on a house valued at \$400,000 and \$65 per year on a \$1 million home.

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If approved by voters, the proposal is expected to generate about \$5.5 million each year for the county's road and bridge fund. Under state law, Boulder County must share the road and bridge funds with incorporated municipalities in the county. Those municipalities would receive about \$2.3 million yearly, and about \$3.2 million of the yearly tax funds would be used by the county to rehabilitate unincorporated subdivision roads.

Currently commissioners allocate about \$1 million each year to rehabilitate "community use" roads such as those leading to trailheads, churches and schools, school bus routes, emergency services routes and subdivision roads used by a high number of people. The commissioners have committed to continue allocating those funds to road repairs.

Peter King-Smith of Pine Brook Hills, chair of Pine Brook's roads committee, told commissioners that the group regards the "modest" tax increase proposal as a compromise. "We really think this solution is fair and equitable to everyone," King-Smith told commissioners. "Property owners in municipalities and the unincorporated areas will all share the costs and benefits."

However, Vince Hirsch, co-chair of Boulder County Fairness in Road Maintenance, disagreed. "Boulder County's cash-on-hand should be used, not new tax monies," Hirsch said. BoCo FIRM is fighting in court to force Boulder County to fix unincorporated subdivision roads using current county revenues.

But King-Smith told commissioners that his group chose to push ahead with a ballot measure because "repairing our crumbling roads without new taxes isn't realistic. It would be nice, but we feel that route just isn't feasible," he said. "This proposal is a fair compromise."