

Cabarrus officials mull sales tax hike

By [Eric Deines](#) | Independent Tribune

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Concord - As the state prepares to hand over more road infrastructure responsibilities to its counties and municipalities, the Cabarrus County Board of Commissioners will seek legislation to raise the county's sales tax as a means to pay for road construction.

The proposed half-cent sales tax could raise up to \$10 million annually, and would be split between road improvements and public transportation.

At a meeting Thursday, commissioners said the legislation would be in preparation for other state legislation that would push road construction and road improvements onto North Carolina cities and counties.

"We'd be foolish not to see the writing on the wall," said County Chairman Jay White. "And we need to prepare. At best, (the state is) going to fund (road improvements) at half the anticipated cost."

In March, commissioners agreed to seek the new sales tax, but no action was taken in the N.C. General Assembly last session.

On Thursday, some commissioners expressed concern about raising any kind of tax in tough economic times.

"I'm with you on the long-term look," said Commissioner Grace Mynatt. "On the short-term look, I'm very concerned about adding (any tax or fee) on anybody."

Commissioners agreed that the legislation, if passed, might not need to be acted upon immediately.

Rather, it would give the county the option of raising the sales tax if needed for roads.

Four commissioners agreed to seek the legislation, with only Coy Privette opposing.

Privette said he opposed new taxes in any form.

The current sales tax in Cabarrus County is 6.75 centers. That tax is made up of a 4.25-cent state sales tax and a 2.5-cent county sales tax.

In fiscal year 2007, the county received about \$35 million in sales tax revenue, a large portion of which is used to fund school construction.

In December 2007, a strong season for sales tax revenue, the county received \$3.4 million in sales tax revenue, with the City of Concord receiving about \$1.2 million.

While commissioners considered pushing for a public vote to raise the sales tax, they opted to word the proposed legislation to give commissioners the vote for a sales tax hike.

"We're elected to make hard decisions," White said. "Instead of just giving the vote back to the public and not taking a leadership role."

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