

Road Pricing Communication Practices

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

Communicating with various affected parties and stakeholders in planning for road pricing (RP) is vital to acceptable, effective and lasting programs. Certainly, decision makers authorizing proposals need to understand the objectives, the efficacy of pricing, equity considerations, overall costs and benefits, operations, revenue distribution, and other particulars to effectively provide their support. Likewise, affected parties such as travelers, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders likely to influence decision makers also must understand pricing strategies and their expected impacts for acceptable projects to develop.

However, communication should not be viewed simply as a matter of conveying pricing concepts to maximize understanding or counter misconceptions. For maximizing chances of successful road pricing proposals and projects, communication needs to be seen as only one part of a broader engagement process between planners, public officials, decision makers, affected parties and stakeholders active in the development of RP proposals. Rather than simply putting out information, communication seen as part of engagement aims to uncover most resonant problems pricing can address, assess concerns and objections, and modify pricing proposals accordingly. Communications in this context is hardly short term. It becomes part of an ongoing and open, responsive and committed process and posture through planning, clearances, adoption and on to implementation and operations. In short, communications involves much more than understandable messages and the specific content of typical communication and information vehicles such as websites, newsletters, press releases or talking points.

The important role of the communication process at all stages of engagement and development of pricing proposals and projects has been the subject of considerable study under the general heading of acceptability research. Relevant research can be divided into the *content* and *context* of road pricing communications and engagement. Whether communication *vehicles* are press releases, public forums, newsletters, websites, charrettes, community forums, or other means, acceptability of pricing proposals and successful implementation hinges on how the numerous *content* and *context* issues are addressed:

Content

- § The pricing concept put forth (e.g., HOT lanes, area-wide pricing, VMT pricing, or other solutions).
- § Program design particulars selected and presented including travel options for various traveler groups and revenue distribution.
- § The framing of fairness and plans for revenue distribution as part of the program design.
- § The severity of congestion addressed and potential effects of pricing on congestion, traffic, and air quality.

Context

- § Mix of affected parties and interest groups, how their positions are assessed and addressed in planning and communications.
- § Familiarity with proven programs; if and how such programs are referenced in planning
- § Image of planning agencies regarding responsibility for congestion and ability to carry out plans

Report Purpose and Structure

The purpose of the following report is threefold:

- § Review and synthesize a substantial literature on the acceptability of road pricing, drawing out implications for communications and engagement strategies most likely to bring acceptance, adoption, and successful implementation
- § Summarize findings from interviews at various sites around the U.S. with planners engaged in proposing, developing and managing road pricing proposals and projects, again drawing out lessons for maximizing acceptability and prospects for successful implementation
- § Based on the above two sources, provide specific guidance to planners interested in developing road pricing proposals and projects, including communication and engagement examples illustrating guideposts and lessons; also, provide resource links for further information and follow up

The report is divided into three sections. Section 1 provides the acceptability literature review. Here the reader will find a summary of numerous U.S. and international pricing acceptability studies detailing reactions of affected parties, decision maker and stakeholder roles, and communication and engagement processes, both for successful and unsuccessful pricing plans and projects. Section 2 summarizes the interview results by site organized by the above listed content and context elements of communications and engagement. Section 3 begins with a discussion of the nature of the communication and engagement process and reasonable expectations and cautions to carry forth, then provides steps and guideposts for formulating, putting forth, and modifying pricing proposals throughout the engagement and communication process from the beginning through implementation. An Appendix details the interview sites and associated resource links.

SECTION I: LITERATURE REVIEW

Content of Road Pricing Communications

1. Type of Pricing

The importance of content is addressed in probably the most comprehensive and current research on road pricing acceptability: *Compilation of Public Opinion Data on Tolls and Road Pricing, A Synthesis of Highway Practice* (Zmud and Arce, 2008 – hereafter referred to as the Synthesis report). Focusing primarily on the United States, the study is based on public polls and surveys conducted since 2000. Additionally, the study references focus group information and literature. The poll sampling was arrived at from literature searches as well as a survey of 42 agencies (17 responding) in the U.S. A key finding is that the specific pricing concept can make or break support. Aggregate public support was 73% for HOT lanes (variable-priced HOV lanes), 71% for traditional toll roads (usually flat or distance based fee) and 62% for express toll lanes (lanes separated from main lanes and variably priced). For cordon pricing, support was only 32% and there was no support for the private sector to construct or rehabilitate a public toll facility in exchange for rights to the future toll revenues (pricing usually variable). Some of the newest pricing concepts also did not fare well, such as a per-household highway access fee and a mileage fee. Focus group participants in Washington State were apprehensive about a mileage-based system using global positioning systems and cell phone technology. Clearly, much depends on the specific pricing concept communicated.

The importance of the kind of pricing planned and communicated is buttressed in a review of road pricing public polls prior to those assessed in the Synthesis report. A 1997 research article reviewing 13 years of U.S. and London public opinion polls (Higgins, 1997) found majority support for HOT lanes and priced new lanes, but less than majority support for pricing existing lanes. Naming specific facilities versus a generalized approach (e.g. “charging drivers to enter busy city centers”) also increased acceptability, just as found in the Synthesis report where “general issue polls” rendered mixed support or majority opposition, versus majority support for specific projects (e.g. SR 91, I-15 and I-394).

2. Program Design and Revenues

Both the Synthesis report and 1997 review not only underscore the importance of the pricing concept but also how it dovetails with a total program including revenue expenditures. The 1997 review of polls shows adding preferential treatment for carpoolers and removing an unpopular policy (ramp meters in one instance) contributed to increased acceptability, as did revenues devoted to transit expansion, maintenance of the priced facility, discounts for low-income drivers or offsets to tax cuts. The Synthesis report also indicates higher support when revenues support highways, speed construction or improve public transit. Focus groups in Washington State favored revenues devoted to transportation as opposed to general government purposes. A proposal for New York City received higher support when revenues helped dampen increased transit fares and tunnel tolls.

An important program design element is not only alternatives to driving but non-priced driving alternatives. A review contrasting successful pricing programs in California to an ill-fated San Francisco Bay Bridge proposal concludes no “comparable alternative free routes” for drivers was crucial to the demise of the proposal (Evans, et. al., 2007). More generally, research shows the acceptability of various “green” initiatives such as cap-and-trade emissions schemes or variable pricing in home energy meters depends on giving companies and consumers a choice between the pricing system and other options (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009).

Overseas research confirms the importance of specific program design elements in RP proposals. A study by Ittner et. al. (2003) of 369 respondents in Trier, Germany and another of 313 respondents nationwide finds strong sensitivity to compliance and fear of “free riders” with implications for emphasis on enforcement strategies. Ison (1993) in interviews with decision makers around a proposed scheme in Cambridge, U.K., finds simplicity in technology preferred to the more complex. Burriss et al. (2007) hit upon simplicity too in reviewing early California HOT lane projects. They find, for SR 91, “... a fixed toll schedule was more acceptable because people tend to ‘fear the unknown.’” Likewise, Jaensirisak et. al. (2005) did assessments in London and Leeds and found acceptability hinges on limited rather than expansive area-wide schemes; fixed rather than dynamic pricing; and fees under certain limits. In a survey of German residents, Holzer (2003) finds the importance of pricing designed as a means to investment is not an end in itself. Jones (2002) emphasizes selective exceptions; targeted pricing to groups and trips least likely to raise hardship concerns; up front improvements in alternative modes; and attention to boundary effects (traffic and parking diversion).

The pivotal role of revenues in RP programs is affirmed in much overseas research. Tretvik et. al. (2003) examined city resident reactions after implementation of pricing in Oslo through an annual telephone survey. They find the most important reason for support was revenues devoted to road construction and observe the same support in Trondheim is largely due to funds for transportation improvements. Jones (2002) shows support for road pricing in early London surveys hinges on support for better public transport. He echoes the findings by Tretvik et al. in concluding that the emphasis on revenue for improved transportation versus traffic reduction was vital in Norway. Not all research points to the use of revenues for transit or road improvements. Vrtic et. al. (2007) find a return of revenues to all Swiss residents competes with transit investment for high preference. Link’s work (2003a, b) across European countries shows policy makers preferring revenues for general tax reductions, and car users preferring revenues for roads and transit, but closely followed by reductions in income taxes. Confirming the importance of revenue distribution, Link finds acceptability to be “largely determined” by use of revenues in the two countries among his sample.

Clearly, developing elements of an RP plan around acceptability concerns is important for eventual adoption and implementation. But equally important is insuring that the key elements are underscored and understood. Researchers (Ungemah and Tighe, 2005) assessing opinions about a proposed HOT lane on I-25 in Denver found that simply reminding respondents about transit and carpool services as toll alternatives boosted support by 12 percent. Even where programs are up and running, the public may need repeated information to insure understanding of program elements. For example, in a survey about Houston’s I-10 HOT lanes, researchers found half of all non-users were not aware of pricing program elements (“QuickRide”) or were misinformed about how they worked (Burriss et al., 2007).

3. Fairness and Equity

While income equity is the focus in much road pricing literature, the literature treats income equity as one of many fairness issues bearing on the acceptability of road pricing. The literature suggests just as road pricing may be perceived as unfair to lower income travelers, it also may be perceived as unfair in other ways to other groups of affected parties. Thus, from the standpoint of the literature and the importance of how RP is communicated and received, income equity is a subset of many important fairness perceptions.

The broad set of fairness issues important to acceptability includes how RP is perceived to affect travelers, taxpayers, urban versus rural residents, as well as how the planning and execution of road pricing takes place. The Synthesis report referenced above indicates focus groups in the New York and New Jersey area and in Miami believed peak pricing is unfair to commuters versus other travelers. In the 1997 review of polls mentioned above, fairness issues arose around workers requiring day use of vehicles, those working fixed work schedules, and those making long versus short trips. With respect to taxpayers, the Synthesis report referenced San Diego focus groups concerned with having to “pay twice” for using a facility constructed using traditional taxes. The authors surmise that the double pay issue is why public polls generally find more support for tolling new facilities rather than existing ones. Vrtic et al. (2007) find variation in the acceptability of pricing options by rural versus city residence and by city size. Such “spatial” equity issues arose in development of the London area wide program, and in plans or a similar scheme in New York. In New York, concerns were raised about how some commuters in the region would pay little or nothing in congestion fees due to a toll offset provision while others would pay the full fee (Schaller, 2010). About the fairness of planning and execution, Schade (2004) discusses the importance of whether or not people feel full opportunity to participate in developing pricing plans, what might be termed “procedural” fairness. Already mentioned is the finding by Ittner et al. (2003) on the importance of perceptions about the degree of potential or actual evasion of tolls, seen as unfair to honest payers.

Where the literature addresses income equity, it is found to be secondary to other fairness concerns. The Synthesis report review of polls in San Diego, Los Angeles and Minneapolis shows support for pricing proposals either was higher among low income respondents or unrelated to income; nor did tax credits or toll discounts for low income people meet with much support. Schade (2004) for OECD reviews several European studies to find income is not strongly related to acceptance of road pricing proposals. With Schlag in his four city review, Schade (2002) finds the acceptance of potential pricing schemes varied, but not by income. Vrtic et al. (2007) come to the same conclusion. Reviewing findings from the Netherlands, Jaensirisak, et. al. (2005) find no relation between acceptance and income.

While the preponderance of acceptability literature indicates income equity generally is secondary in importance to other equity issues, income equity issues often do arise around pricing plans. Pricing plans have encountered criticism as potential “Lexus lanes” catering to the rich and unfair burdens on the poor who may not have credit card accounts needed for transponder purchase (FHWA, 2008). Still, to the extent acceptability of pricing on income equity grounds is informed by research, analysis indicates income equity impacts depend entirely on how pricing programs are structured. For example, a recent comprehensive Rand report (Ecola, Light, 2009) on pricing equity finds progressive schemes can be constructed depending

on how revenues are distributed and the presence of non-toll options (as with HOT lanes). The authors also point out road pricing compares favorably to traditional transportation taxation such as regressive gasoline and sales taxes.

The literature also addresses how various fairness concerns may be moderated. The Synthesis Report finds concerns about fairness to commuters are moderated by available alternative highway and transit facilities, echoing Downs (2004) who suggests providing “tolling and non-tolling options” in the same corridor to moderate equity concerns (Downs, 2004). Jones (2002) suggests several ways to enhance perceptions of fairness in road pricing plans and projects. He suggests exempting the handicapped or emergency workers. He also urges attention to “use inequity” where occasional payers reap the same benefit from new roads and transit as frequent users; and “spatial inequity” depending on travel within or to/from a cordon pricing scheme. He points to Norway policies defining a period in which only one charge is made irrespective of the crossings; limits on the number of charged crossings per month; season tickets and allowances for unlimited use in certain periods.

4. Nature, Severity of Congestion and Pricing Effectiveness

Another issue integral to the content of RP proposals is how the proposal addresses and communicates the nature and severity of the problems underlying the proposal. Some research suggests travelers may not understand causes of congestion which may disadvantage pricing as a solution option. Survey and focus group research across Texas (Kockelman et al., 2006) found, “Several fundamental sources of traffic congestion (such as population growth and inadequacy of gas tax revenues) do not appear to be common knowledge.” Jones (2002) in a review of “typical UK findings” finds the problem (traffic, air quality, etc.) must be seen as clear and severe before the pricing solution can be entertained. He puts the point well saying the “pain” must be worth the gain.

A corollary finding is congestion may or may not be the most critical candidate problem for pricing. In some settings, the more resonant problem for pricing to address may be pollution. As Schade (2004) for OECD finds in a review of several European studies, as well as Bamberg et al. (2003) and Ison (1993), groups sensitive to environmental problems may be more accepting of pricing than groups more sensitive to congestion. In a review of both overseas and recent polling in several U.S. cities (Atlanta, Washington DC, and New York City), authors (Odioso and Smith, 2008) also conclude acceptance may be boosted by ties to environmental concerns: “The research results suggest that officials should focus on the environmental benefits of congestion charging because of increased advocacy for environmental protection measures.”

Just as the problem communicated must resonate, so must the promise of pricing to address it. In a review of acceptability studies for OECD, Schade (2004) finds acceptance is dependent on perceptions about how effective pricing may be, and such perceptions vary considerably. Vrtic et al. (2007) in their study of Swiss residents find acceptance strongly correlated with increasing effectiveness of proposed plans, in this case increased speeds. Bamberg and Rolle (2003) in mail back surveys of 5,000 people in two medium sized German towns and two villages concluded perceived effectiveness “central” to acceptability. Jaensirisak et. al. (2003) find the same result from reviewing experience in the Netherlands as does Link (2003a) in a broad sample. His study included 104 stakeholder interviews among planners, including interest groups and decision

makers in nine European countries, focus groups with the general public in three European countries, a Delphi survey in five European countries, as well as an extensive quantitative survey of public attitudes in six European countries (1,300 individuals).

Of course, while effectiveness of pricing is important to acceptability, convincingly conveying traffic impact information may not be easy. A review of successful and failed pricing projects in California (Evans, et. al., 2007) shows various affected parties consider travel time savings from reduced traffic to be a believable potential benefit of pricing. However, few believe pricing also may offer better throughput compared to free parallel alternatives. The researchers do not assess how beliefs about throughput bear on acceptability, but given the above findings about the importance to acceptability of beliefs about effects of pricing on traffic, clear and credible explanations about such effects must be important. While conveying information about traffic and pricing effectiveness may not be easy, there is some evidence that detailed and concise information about both can move opinion. Focus groups in Texas found detailed messages about pricing impacts on traffic and comparisons to gas taxes on grounds of equity and revenue to be persuasive (Kockelman, 2006).

Context of Road Pricing Communications

1. Affected Parties, Decision Makers and Interest Groups

Perhaps the most important context for RP plans is the mix of potentially affected parties associated with a proposed plan. Because decision makers, travelers, voters, residents and the public at large are likely to perceive road pricing plans differently, assessing their positions, fashioning plans accordingly and reaching out to these parties with tailored communications are important to successful plans.

Relevant affected parties may be a broad or narrow set. Where a plan requires an initiative or legislation and affects an entire city, region or state, the voting public within a jurisdiction are relevant affected parties. Where a plan is more narrow and requires no public vote, the most relevant parties for clearance may be a smaller set of residents and businesses within the planned priced zone, travelers to, from and within it, and decision makers for the jurisdiction. To date, research on engaging and assessing positions of affected parties has focused mostly on public and travelers. Less attention has been paid to decision makers or specific interest groups such as businesses and truckers.

While research on decision maker positions is thin, results show they can be important to the fate of RP proposals and plans. Ison (1993) in a study of a proposed scheme for Cambridge, England interviewed 21 officials in city, county and district councils and found the retirement of a single political champion was a major - or perhaps even *the* major - detriment to a planned program. A review of road pricing developments in England convincingly details how strong or weak advocates among politicians and agency officials can speed or retard pricing plans (Richards, 2007). For the I-394 HOT lane program in Minnesota, researchers concluded, "It is difficult to maximize public outreach efforts without the support of higher-level officials who share their advocacy with the public. Minnesota's governor participated in conversations with value pricing advocates." Researchers go on to advocate for a "grasstops" approach emphasizing communication with community leaders and decision makers (Burris et al., 2007). However,

decision maker champions and opponents are not always so paramount in the development of road pricing projects. A review of successful and failed pricing projects in California concludes decision makers played strong and visible roles in two of the four cases reviewed. In I-15, a policy maker was the key champion; in the demise of the Bay Bridge project, a few powerful legislators were instrumental. However, in two other cases (SR 91 and I-680), policy makers did not play such crucial roles in support or opposition (Evans, 2007). Successful proposals emerged mostly from agency actors working with stakeholder groups, with decision makers in much less visible or active roles.

To the extent decision makers are important, their perspectives on pricing need to be understood. The above research on California programs concludes, “Most of those who were interviewed believed the advantage elected officials see in road pricing is its revenue raising potential.” The researchers conclude decision makers may “find returning revenues to nearby transportation most palatable.” Likewise, an important point for the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and legislators supporting and eventually passing enabling legislation for the I-394 HOT lane project in Minnesota was a revenue stream sufficient to match the development and operating costs of converting an HOV lane to HOT. The favorable cost-revenue picture apparently was especially important to decision makers due to tight revenues for any highway modifications or expansions combined with the government promise of no new taxes (Buckeye and Munnich, 2007).

Of course travelers are a paramount affected party, and each segment of this group is likely to hold different perspectives bearing on development and communication of plans. For example, statewide surveys and focus groups across Texas (Kockelman et al., 2006) drew this conclusion about traveler market segments: “Logit models indicated that those who commute more than 25 miles (one-way) to work, and/or live in Austin were less likely to support conversion (tolling existing free roads). In contrast, frequent toll road users tended to be more supportive. Therefore, it may be beneficial to direct informational campaigns to those who commute long-distances, and toward Austinites, in order to increase support, since these two groups appear to be the least supportive.”

Because truckers are influential parties in road and port transport policy and often concerned about toll changes (Urban Transportation Monitor, 2006), research on this segment of travelers has mounted. One notable assessment carried out telephone interviews with 1200 California-based and national carriers (Golob and Regan, 1999). It found opposition to pricing, with about 60% judging the concept “ineffective,” though no reasons were stated. The research did find either neutral reactions or some support from carriers who provide just-in-time pickups and deliveries, those with short hauls and average loads, and household goods movers. However, private fleets (typically under control of large companies and accounting for a large share of the industry) did not favor road pricing (Regan, 2000). Again, segmenting trucker groups is important -- reactions to pricing hinge in good part on type of carrier.

Given the variation in perceptions and positions of affected parties, plans and communications need to be tailored accordingly to enhance acceptability and feasibility. However, negative positions do not necessarily translate to doomed or ineffective programs. Taking truckers again as an example, an assessment after implementation of road pricing suggests truckers sometimes can and do adapt to pricing aimed at shifting travel to the off peak hours, in spite of the oft-

expressed opinion that peak pricing is ineffective for truckers. For example, in the 2005 assessment by the Illinois State Highway Authority of trucker reactions to increased tolls combined with off-peak discounts, respondents indicated the inflexibility of delivery times and ability to pass on toll costs to customers as a limiting factor in making travel time shifts (K.T. Analytics, Inc. and Cambridge Systematics, Inc., 2008). The same opinion about ineffectiveness was found by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey assessing truck dispatcher reactions to a time of day pricing program implemented in 2001. Truck dispatchers claimed toll increases could be passed on to customers (Zmud and Arce, 2008) with no impact on time of travel. Yet, a program at Long Beach and Los Angeles marine terminals imposing a charge of \$50 per loaded container moved during peak hours resulted in a considerable shift to night deliveries (Herr, 2008). While no documented interview reactions are reported, presumably truckers have accepted the program judging by its continuance since 2005.

2. Success and Familiarity with Proven Programs

Successful RP programs gain in acceptance and approval with time. While public polling after implementation of road pricing programs is not as common as before, evidence shows acceptability grows and concerns diminish as successful implementation proceeds. As perception research shows (Odioso and Smith, 2008), while only 40% of Londoners supported congestion charging when it was announced, “support rose to 57% just one month after charging started. In Stockholm, only 43% were initially in favor of congestion charging, but after a six-month trial period, voters passed a referendum to continue the charging scheme.” In reviewing surveys around three HOT lane projects (SR 91, I-15, and I-394), the above referenced Synthesis report finds, “support remained high and even increased slightly” with time. Another recent review of FHWA Value Pricing programs by K.T. Analytics, Inc. and Cambridge Systematics, Inc. (2008) echoes the finding for HOT lanes, indicating, “HOT Lane conversions have encountered concerns in planning about catering to the rich, but usually these have not been sufficient to halt projects. Such concerns tend to diminish among users and the public as operations get underway.” The report draws the same conclusion about tests of VMT fees, saying, “Results from variable cost experiments, as with HOT lane conversions, suggest initial concern about security and technology can change to a favorable response after sufficient time and experience.”

The exact reasons for growing acceptance as road pricing programs mature are not well explored. Surveys from London (Streetsblog, 2007) suggest proven effectiveness may be central and, in the case of business support, researchers surmise businesses perceived no harm to commerce. Other research (Transport for London, 2008a; 2008b) suggests some businesses did perceive harm in the western extension of the congestion charging zone, perhaps sufficient to cause withdrawal of the program there, though the original core program remains. Tretvik et. al. (2003) speculate that not only is effectiveness at work in the growing acceptance of Norway’s programs, but also the absence of queues at tollgates and the visible, proven link between revenues and transportation improvements.

Once successful programs take place, then familiarity with them in and beyond the program area can aid planners in bringing forth similar pricing proposals and generating support for them. Schade (2004) finds acceptance and preference for well known versus new pricing measures, and Ison (1993) notes that the “snowball effect” of growing program experience is important to decision makers. Reviewing a broad array of road pricing programs, Burris et al. (2007)

conclude, “familiarity with congestion pricing or managed lanes increases the likelihood that the user will support congestion pricing” (Burriss, 2007). A survey of California residents found more support for HOT conversions in southern California outside of the Los Angeles region than elsewhere, concluding “This likely reflects that region’s experience with HOT lanes” (Weinstein and Dill, 2007). Planners in Minnesota concluded that familiarity is important to acceptance and produced and distributed a videotape of successful HOT lanes to TV reporters and stakeholders (Munnich and Loveland, 2005). They also concluded that study task force members visiting “other HOT lane and express lane projects played a critical role in increasing the task force understanding of how value pricing works” (Buckeye, Munnich, 2007a). The researchers therefore conclude, “People will strongly support value pricing if they see it work” (Buckeye, Munnich, 2004). Thus, growing familiarity with programs living up to promises may be key to increased acceptance over time; and, presumably, familiarity with such programs may be helpful in the planning stages of new programs, assuming planners reference them.

3. Perception of Government

How government and the planning process are perceived are other important contextual issues bearing on the chances of acceptance and formulation of communications. Researchers in Texas (Kockelman et al., 2006) found “clear distrust of government officials” in statewide focus groups, as well as “reservations about the planning competency of TxDOT, distrust with politicians or tax usage, and distrust with the quality of construction materials or maintenance procedures.” The researchers suggest “messengers/spokespeople should come from the community at large” as opposed to politicians. Researchers analyzing the long and rocky development of I-394 HOT lanes in Minnesota suggest perhaps shifting away from government lead in planning may have helped move forward the project. They say, “Recognizing that there is more public trust for an initiative led by an academic institution rather than a governmental agency, the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota organized a Value Pricing Advisory Task Force of community stakeholders” (Ross et al., 2009). Schade (2004) finds when government is perceived as the main reason for the congestion problem versus individuals, acceptability suffers. Thus, presumably, if government has and can communicate a favorable image in coping with bottlenecks, improving transit, and traffic management, acceptability of pricing proposals is enhanced – and vice versa.

Suspicion about government motives in raising revenues is another image issue. A review of politics around the London area-wide pricing scheme observes, “...the popular press saw charging as another of Brown’s stealth taxes,” a reference to the familiar complaint of government as money hungry and money grabbing (Richards, 2007). Jaensirisak et. al. (2005) point out that suspicion of government motives in pricing for revenue raising purposes can block proposals and suggest a Swiss referendum process as a way to counteract suspicions. Tretvik et. al. (2003) echo findings about government revenue raising. They find the main objection among opponents of the Oslo scheme was “already pay enough tax/duty,” pointing to the importance of governmental image as a taxing entity with already sufficient resources to deal with congestion. Link (2003a) also found suspicion of government motives in public surveys across nine European countries, in particular the belief that money raising may be the unstated and fundamental motive.

Link (2003a) and Ison (1993) find government transparency in planning is important. Link (2003a) cites as important the clarity of program objectives; the degree to which non-pricing options have been examined; and the extent of reference to pricing experience elsewhere (as above). Another transparency issue is how quickly and well government reveals its rationales and findings when asked hard questions. Researchers of HOT lane development in Minnesota concluded, “An unanswered question (or accusation) can become an accusation believed. Minnesota formed a public outreach team to quickly answer any questions from the public. Common public concerns included technical feasibility, equity, impact on HOV use, and public acceptance” (Burriss et al., 2007). Minnesota also relied upon a task force of elected officials, citizens and transportation leaders to ensure that questions and concerns were aired and to keep planning “in tune with community concerns,” avoid an unresponsive image, and help “MnDOT make sound decisions at key points in the process” (Buckeye and Munnich, 2007b). An observer of the rocky history behind the eventual adoption of the London scheme comes to a similar conclusion. He suggests not mounting a constant response to criticism can create “a vacuum within which those opposed to the principle can disseminate their own interpretations,” and that the chief political champion (Mayor Livingstone) was right to “keep the media and the public well-informed,” and be “subject to regular and public scrutiny by the London Assembly” (Richards, 2007).

Finally, governments acting “fairly” in planning and ensuring participation in the proposed program is important to acceptability. For example, governments at various levels acting to put in their “fair share” may be important. Harsman’s (2003) review of Norway’s experience describes how local, state and national governmental agreements and matching funds were an important step. Jones (2003) agrees in his review of programs in Norway. Another fairness issue for government is how procedurally “fair” the planning process appears to affected parties, as referenced above (Schade, 2004).

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SECTION II: INTERVIEW FINDINGS

New York City: Variable Parking Charges

In New York, through the PARK Smart program, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) aims to increase parking space availability and reduce pedestrian and vehicle accidents associated with double parking and to reduce pollution, and congestion through new peak and off-peak meter rates. A six-month trial of PARK Smart began in 2008 in Greenwich Village. Thereafter, 71 Muni Meters in the West Village were permanently programmed to the Park Smart rate structure. The rates are \$3.75 per hour from 12:00pm thru 4:00pm, \$2.50 per hour for all other hours. In 2009, a second six-month pilot began in Park Slope, Brooklyn. Meter rates are \$1.50/hr. from Noon to 4PM and \$.75/hr. at all other times that meters are in effect. All other regulations remain the same.

Agency and Project	NYCDOT Office of Planning and Sustainability: PARK Smart On-Street Pricing Program
Content	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i> Frame peak pricing of parking as –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § way to reduce cruising and associated traffic, improve safety, reduce violations, and reduce cost of violations to delivery trucks passed through to businesses and customers; not as way to drive commuters to off-street parking as there are few commuters on-street, surveys find § as voluntary program where neighborhoods can opt in or stay out of parking pricing; also frame as pilot with 6 month evaluation followed by possibility of termination after that
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i> Used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § business and neighborhood association allies (“advanced troops”) used to “drum up interest” among various affected parties in the area § several one to one meetings with community boards and businesses districts
	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § one listed goal in the Sustainable Streets plan is reduced pollution, and is fitting with many efforts to reduce “miles driven” in DOT strategic plan, Sustainable Streets § an advantage to parking pricing program is it did not require the same level of environmental scrutiny as compared to congestion pricing studied for NY, so no need to communicate NEPA requirements and processes
	<p><i>Equity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § fairness across businesses more important than income equity

	<p>§ “sidewalk surveys” important to demonstrate how and when shoppers arrive, to counter concern about inequitable adverse impacts on some retail businesses and those highly dependent on timely deliveries</p>
Context	<p><i>Government image:</i> Bolstered by –</p> <p>§ City Council and planners pitched as facilitators of a voluntary program, not as those imposing program decided upon outside the community; “big bad DOT” image countered by fashioning programs for each area according to preferences</p> <p>§ fostered responsiveness and “transparency” by holding transportation “seminars” for all 59 city community boards</p> <p>§ listed specific transportation and parking project accomplishments on agency website and in Sustainable Streets, 2009 Progress Report</p>
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i></p> <p>§ No reference to programs elsewhere in communications, though planners have been watching and talking to San Francisco program for latest developments</p>
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <p>§ special attention to delivery business stakeholders to ensure that the program does not impact their delivery, and retailers to ensure that customer traffic would not be impacted</p> <p>§ Also addressed residential stakeholders’ concerns by monitoring spillover from commercial corridor into residential streets</p>
Vehicles	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <p>§ Park Smart website lists range of goals from increasing parking availability to improved safety, reduced cruising congestion and less associated pollution</p> <p>§ also lists trial sites and prices and highlights “merchant involvement” and support via sale of parking cards and displaying Park Smart logo</p> <p>§ 311 info website also lists similar information; “user feedback” encouraged via public forums and websites</p> <p>§ Sustainable Streets offers a Q and A section on parking programs, rates, use instructions, operation hrs., etc.</p>

City of San Francisco: Area-wide Pricing Proposal and Variable Parking Pricing

In San Francisco, planners at the San Francisco County Transportation Authority are studying area-wide road pricing involving a \$3 fee to enter, leave or pass through certain parts of the city during peak hours, generating revenues in support of transit, cycling and possibly more regional transit parking. Additionally, a proposal for pricing Doyle Drive leading to the Golden Gate Bridge was studied but rejected. Variable pricing of on and off-street parking in certain downtown areas termed SFPark is planned for implementation in the summer of 2010. It will vary pricing for parking by demand and encourage drivers to park in underused areas and garages. It also will provide real time information to parkers on availability. The planned test is at 6,000 metered spaces and 12,250 spaces in City-owned parking garages.

Agency and Project	San Francisco County Transportation Authority: Mobility, Access and Pricing Study (MAPS) & SFPark
Content	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Doyle Drive pricing plan framed as congestion relief and financing for major improvements § MAPS framed as congestion relief, finance for transportation improvements including BRT, support of “economic vitality” and environmental benefit § SFPark framed as improving parking availability, reducing cruising, pricing changing with demand
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Doyle Drive showed importance of targeting Marin County decision makers who objected to and halted pricing plan as unfair to Marin County commuters (see “equity”) § MAPS and SFPark show importance of targeting business community; e.g. a special economic impact study of MAPS aimed at business concerns is underway
	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § MAPS references climate change, potential alternative finance to potentially “bankrupt” federal Trust Fund § SFPark emphasizes revenues to support transit
	<p><i>Equity: Handle equity concerns by –</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § potential discounts to special needs groups is under consideration for MAPS § dropping Doyle Drive pricing plan because of strong objection of an influential Marin county supervisor believing county commuters would bear large bulk of pricing charges; supervisor believed downtown area-wide pricing was not

	objectionable because commuters from all counties would pay
Context	<p><i>Government image:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § image of government as slow to deliver on projects is hard to counter even with plans for transit expansion in concert with pricing
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § pricing in London and Singapore referenced in study and outreach materials, but downtown businesses see London as very “different” § SFPark references Manhattan parking pricing program as a success
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § single Task Force for Doyle Drive less beneficial than several working groups (technical, business, policy, citizen and agencies), so issues and expertise match up § important not to be seen as “talking down” to people or confusing them, a risk of the Task Force model
Vehicles	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § website, meeting materials, newsletters, press releases -- all were employed § language important to conveying content, especially avoiding jargon and off-putting terms such as “marginal cost” pricing and even “congestion pricing”

San Francisco Bay Area: Regional High Occupancy Toll Lane Network

In the San Francisco Bay Area region, several road pricing projects are planned and nearing implementation. High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes are authorized by state law in 4 corridors: 580 Tri Valley, 680 Sunol, 85 & 101 in Santa Clara. Other potential HOT lanes are receiving attention, e.g. I-80 in Solano County. Bay Bridge peak pricing was recently adopted by the Bridge Tolling Authority. In light of growing development and acceptance of HOT lanes, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) recently adopted a network of HOT lanes in its regional plan to manage traffic and bring on line new priced capacity 20-30 years faster than traditional state and local tax funding would allow.

Agency and Project	San Francisco Bay Area MTC: Regional HOT Network
Content	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § framed as expediting development of HOV network over and above what regular funding would allow, with HOT element as key to financing system and returning revenue to the same corridors where it is generated
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § key actors included CMA Directors, BATA (Bay Area Toll Authority -- toll authority for bridge tolls), Caltrans and CHP, all part of HOT Executive Committee concerned with finance, operations and enforcement § no specific targeting to environmental or auto interests (they do have input via standing Planning Committee and SPUR -- SF Planning and Urban Research -- SF group concerned with HOT air quality impacts), but will be targeted more as individual corridor studies start
	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § CO₂ emissions an explicit element, as well as NO_x, all touted as improved over regular HOV network § “return to source” finance important for CMA, city, County acceptance (legislation now specifies this) – more relevant where emerging HOT lanes are coming on line, versus general pot for region
	<p><i>Equity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § some concern about HOT benefiting the rich, especially in 680 planning so far, but directing new revenue to transit blunts the issue § analysis by professor at SJ State was referenced as finding that no one is “forced” to pay – it is “all about choice”

Context	<p><i>Government image:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § MTC and CMA image not an obstacle, with planning process generally seen as fair
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § helpful to reference HOT programs elsewhere, and helpful that some Commission decision makers have had tours of S. California programs § makes concept less foreign; website references FHWA Value Pricing Pilot program and Reason Foundation paper on HOT networks
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § HOT Executive Committee views (see framing above) vital to acceptance in regional plan, with some operational issues still to be resolved with Caltrans (safety, weaving)
Vehicles	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Plan itself stresses “collaborative effort,” quotes from MTC Commission chair and Alameda County Supervisor, indicating “... worked closely over many months with “thousands of” ... mentions agencies, business groups, ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments; also points to benefits for economy (via congestion management), health and safety, equitable mobility options; pitches HOT as “expansion” of HOV concept, not a negation of it; promises “sooner funding” for “express lanes” and transit § Plan pitches biggest revenue share is for transit, less for highways; HOT “principles” indicate more “throughput” and reduced “delays,” benefits “commensurate” with revenues collected in specific corridor, use of “existing” highway right of way, design tailoring to each corridor, but “consistent” overall geometrics and signage § FAQ explains HOT concept, rationale, timeline, emphasizes “tried and true” concept, operations, cost, revenue use, attraction to HOV and transit, says “Lexus lane” is flawed criticism, and gives links to other HOT lanes in the U.S.

Portland, Oregon: Mileage Fee Test Program

Portland, Oregon assessed the feasibility of replacing the state gas tax with mileage fees in order to fund transportation and improve traffic in congested areas at peak travel times through variable distance-based pricing. The Oregon Department of Transportation operated a one year test of the mileage fee in the Portland area in March 2006 with the use of volunteers. The pilot program charged a per mile fee at participating gas station pumps in lieu of paying the state gas tax. The charge was \$0.012 per mile, discounted to \$0.0043 during non-peak hours in certain zones and adjusted upwards to \$0.10 for peak travel in congested zones and times.

Agency and Project	Oregon Department of Transportation: Mileage Fee Program
<p>Content</p>	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § VMT better than gas tax with decline in revenues for future finance of highway infrastructure and operations; can be tuned to relieve congestion and to address greenhouse gas reduction strategies § Application to plug-in electric vehicles or voluntary pilot as starters, and perhaps voluntary switch over from gas tax to VMT fee for the future § privacy concerns addressed by offering motorists choice of their mileage counting mechanism with various privacy protection options, but not wise to indicate “yes, people should be concerned” about privacy, as was done; some effort required to explain how much people now pay for gas tax
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Twelve-member task force involved legislators, localities, agency interests and academics; auto makers not involved or electric vehicle manufactures and interests (a mistake in hindsight, they say), but AAA involved; also attempted to reach out to petroleum companies but they resisted “controversial” concept § public targeted via 3 public hearings to begin pilot, continuously involved via website and community meetings as go for “permanent pilot;” since “public” still not “on board,” (key legislators are supportive, including important Senator as champion); in hindsight perhaps should have used focus groups to develop most effective messages rather than just instructional materials for pilot § should have been less in “reactive” and “trial and error” mode § also should have started with more fixed variables in concept – emphasis on “flexibility” scared some members of the public

	<p>due to uncertainty about what future pricing would bring</p> <p>§ media not targeted at first, only after their negative response; they eventually “came around” but no “media plan” to target them was a mistake</p>
	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i></p> <p>§ environmental groups wanted variations in pricing more attuned to emissions, although this viewpoint was not specified or accommodated in the program</p>
	<p><i>Equity:</i></p> <p>§ urban versus rural important as equity issue since rural travelers generate more VMT; it is also difficult for rural public to estimate whether better off under gas tax or VMT fees; try to counter by making fee system simple</p> <p>§ double paying another perceived fairness issue, as public perceives gas tax and mileage fee system in combination – voluntary switch over may counter this concern</p>
Context	<p><i>Government image:</i></p> <p>§ general suspicion of government always an issue – government seen as inefficient and money grabbing</p> <p>§ DOT image is “pretty good” in terms of getting things done, maybe in top 10 nationwide, so not a big point of contention</p>
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i> No references indicated</p>
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <p>§ task force designed to pitch concept to key decision makers and stakeholders, and at the outset tailored program design via focus group for designing instructional materials for pilot</p> <p>§ changed from central to fuel station billing to reduce public (driver) concern for double billing, and changed from transmitting coordinates to counting only mileage via on-vehicle devices to address privacy issue</p> <p>§ should have heeded public concern for more specific pricing plan as public dislikes uncertainty</p>
Vehicles	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <p>§ relied quite heavily initially on individual explanations of rationales via e-mails in response to comments and criticisms</p> <p>§ used newsletters and press communications stressing themes of sustainable support for transportation, flexibility by location and congestion</p>

	<p>§ used website for FAQ, radio, TV and print media (national and local)</p> <p>§ ODOT communications people did not want involvement during concept development stage but assisted enthusiastically once pilot began</p>
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Puget Sound Region: HOT Lanes, Variable Bridge Tolls, and Pricing in Regional Plan

In the Puget Sound area, the SR 167 HOT lane project is operating and is slated for extension and possible merging with a planned I-405 HOT lane. Variable pricing of a bridge replacement is planned on SR520 to fund the bridge reconstruction. Other candidates for pricing projects include the SR509 extension and Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement. Road pricing options appear in the long range plan but will require state legislation that has not yet been passed.

Agency and Project	Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle: Regional Transportation Plan and Various Projects
Content	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Unifying theme behind implementation of SR 167, SR 520 current plan and recent authorization by WA State Commission for 7 potential toll corridors is the need for revenues for development and traffic management - “Tolls are considered due to intractable funding gap for a must-do project” (from webinar slide) § “Moving Washington” (State 10 year Plan) stresses revenues for “strategic capacity” and traffic management § also pivoted off of past experience and success of Tacoma Narrows and SR 167 HOT; PSRC RTP on pricing (see Transportation 2040) includes broad environmental, prosperity, mobility, and quality of life goals
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § RTP scoping process goes to public at large and interest groups § key targets are Transportation Policy Board, Pricing Task Force and several working groups § doing targeted meetings with special needs groups, low income and minority groups § SR 520 planning involves city councils, businesses, public at large, stakeholder groups
	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i> RTP discussion –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § emphasizes vehicle emissions reduction, open space retainment, less runoff from impervious surfaces, “quality of life” benefits including reduced accidents § notes statewide GHG reduction goals (1990 levels by 2020) as “legislative direction” § references lack of sustainable funding under current gas tax system, indicating that no tolling means “traditional” sources will need rate adjustment, indexing, more reliance on general

	<p>fund, taxes on sales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § indicates federal revenues in 2009 will be inadequate to meet SAFETEA-LU “spending guarantees” § big unresolved finance issue now is whether to dedicate toll revenue to toll facilities or broader uses § regional plan discussion also indicates must-have “financially constrained” component, with balanced costs and revenues, supportive of pricing
	<p><i>Equity:</i> RTP discussion framed and discussed around –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § income differences § how toll revenues may link with fairness issue of “paying twice” if supporting transit via tolls and sales tax (may roll back or “rebase” if toll revenues grow)
Context	<p><i>Government image:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § no particular negative image presently for PSRC in plan development; agency generally respected § effort to get lots of public and decision maker input which may keep image as “responsive” § used “model peer review” group for SR 520 work to bolster credibility of planning model
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Tacoma Narrows referenced in toll discussions, including SR 520 FAQ documents, especially focusing on operations with “non-stop” toll collection § emphasized that “experiences in other cities in the U.S. and around the world have shown that these fees can help reduce congestion” § also referenced SR 167 as “pay for quicker trip” to counter image of tolls as necessitating toll booths
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Regular interaction with key stakeholder decision maker groups, including WA State Commission for overall tolling in State, Transportation Policy Board, Pricing Task Force at regional level, and specific groups associated with project planning, for example SR 520 § SR 520 project committee (MPO head, secretary of Transportation, Chair of Transportation Commission) received technical and outreach results (from city mayors, city councils, chambers, public meetings) to help fashion acceptable project

	(see vehicles used, below)
Vehicles	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § regional plan references “reliability,” time savings and emissions control; also pitches gas tax as “toll” like road pricing in town halls, - i.e. another user fee drivers may not calculate on per mile basis § SR 520 public information stresses “variable tolls can help relieve congestion” giving people “incentive to change travel times, reduce optional trips, take an alternate route, or choose transit as an alternative to driving alone,” also emphasizes transit expansion and electronic signs for real-time traffic information § SR 520 examples of vehicles for soliciting wide range of input include meetings with cities, town halls, open houses, decision maker and press interactions § SR 520 information presented “to more than 40 elected officials, jurisdictions, and stakeholder groups during the spring and summer of 2008 ...these included meetings with community and civic groups such as the Bellevue Downtown Association and Transportation Choices Coalition, along with many local city councils and elected representatives” § SR 520 also has special project web site that summarizes media and public reactions in a report (input from 2770 people, many from letter writing campaigns sponsored by Sierra Club and Mercer island residents)

City of Los Angeles: HOT Lanes and Parking Pricing Program

In Los Angeles, LACMTA and the California Department of Transportation, Caltrans, are planning for the conversion of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes on the I-10 and I-110 corridors. (Conversion of the I-210 corridor is subject to funding availability and requires state legislation). The pilot pricing program is to be combined with improved transit service and an intelligent parking management system in downtown Los Angeles with variable pricing based on parking demand.

Agency and Project	Los Angeles Metro: I-10, I-110, I-210 HOT lanes and downtown parking pricing plan
Content	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § It all started as a grant application. § increase capacity through proven concept of HOTs as opposed to more controversial area-wide pricing, with encouragement for more transit use, while staying within limits and directions of state enabling legislation governing HOTs § downtown parking pricing plan framed as building toward a comprehensive approach to congestion reduction and providing connectivity to the E-W I-10 corridor and the N-S I-110 corridor. § pricing presented as adding choice, as opposed to coercion
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § involved major facilities along the corridors (e.g. Dodger Stadium, music center, medical facilities, LA Trade Tech educational facility) and grassroots groups in corridors (“corridor advisory groups”) and media § did not have “different messages for different groups” § tried to make HOT real and tangible by showing how it works for different commuter groups. LACMTA project management envisioned the need for the use of visual aids to explain a difficult concept in a very simple way. LACMTA project management worked with the Communications Department to develop a DVD that was presented at meetings and distributed. The HOT lanes project also resulted in improved communications and coordination internally among LACMTA’s different departments. § outreach plan says “identify target audiences (commuters, transit providers, residents, businesses, employers, employees, labor, environmental, policy leaders, government agencies, etc.) and develop corollary key messages”

	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § political and public acceptability improved by ensuring return of revenues to the corridor for improvements and transit support, consistent with state and federal legislation. Support was also gained because existing carpool users would not be charged tolls if they continued to meet the minimum passenger occupancy requirements. Thus, the project was presented as improving the travel choices available to them, as well as to solo drivers
	<p><i>Equity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § “double taxation” is fairness issue among public § legislators initially concerned about environmental justice, but parallel study conducted by LACMTA and project experience has amassed to “debunk” the idea that road pricing is unfair to lower income people § plans give strong attention to “multi-modal” aspect to advantage lower income groups
Context	<p><i>Government image:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § people do distrust government to some extent; tried to counter by being “forthright” and responsive in all matters
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § early Fed-supported symposium showcasing successful projects in Stockholm, Seattle, Texas, etc. (Gunnar Söderholm from Stockholm particularly effective for local stakeholders to hear) § Metro website FAQ references projects elsewhere, including live chat with LACMTA Board Chair
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § attentive to stakeholder views and positions in application to Feds, mustered necessary support locally and at state level (needed legislative support for HOTs in early 2008), including AAA which held neutral position § fashioned proposed state legislation in simple, short terms and referenced existing legislation (AB1467, 2006 allowed implementation of 2 HOT lane projects in S. Cal, with approval of California Transportation Commission (CTC) so RP was cast as falling within current law and policy directions § attentive to CTCs task charged by state legislature and LACMTA’s project management staff’s interpretation of state legislation that was accepted by CTC staff, all these helped

	<p>merging four HOT corridors into one HOT project for federal approval, with support and encouragement of federal VP actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § worked with regional planning agency to amend 2001 plan to include 10 and 110 projects, and 210 if funding became available, though there was little challenge or concern by regional planning agency actors § Outreach by LACMTA staff to several Council of Government (COG) agencies, including the South Bay Council of Governments and the San Gabriel Valley COG, which lobbied elected officials and public attendees at meetings
<p>Vehicles</p>	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § stressed congestion as high if not highest public quality of life concern in LA, choice not coercion in HOT concept, gas tax as declining revenue source for supporting even highway operations. Message provided was that project’s objective was congestion relief, not revenue generation. § stressed RP was not a “double tax” issue as public was getting something new and more than before, including support for more transit § vehicles include “Express Lane Experience” materials with different “profiles” for different commuters via animated PowerPoint presentations § did media briefings to inform and persuade media of merit of the project, which was successful judging by positive editorials § used press releases § website has FAQ, “discovery workshop” with links to projects elsewhere and live chat allowing direct communication on project topics

Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul: I-394, I-35W, and Future HOT Lane Projects

In the Twin Cities area, the I-394 express lanes started in May 2005 via conversion of an existing HOV lane from Highway 101 to I-94 in the Minneapolis area. The express lanes are dynamically priced and remain free to buses, HOVs and motorcyclists during peak hours. They also remain free to all users during off-peak periods (and in off peak direction during peak hours). In September 2009, the I-35W express lane opened, with 2+ carpools free and dynamic pricing during peak periods. A portion of the 16-mile long facility uses a converted shoulder lane available at most congested times. Potential express lanes are being investigated on other corridors.

Agency and Project	Minnesota Department of Transportation, Minnesota: I-394 and I-35W HOT Lanes
Content	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § HOT lanes framed overall as getting better use from underutilized HOV lanes while preserving and enhancing transit use on the HOT facilities § Emphasized as “congestion free choice” with no one worse off, and a fixable or reversible project if conditions worsened in unexpected ways § de-emphasized revenue generation and emphasized congestion management and improved travel options § did not explore pricing of existing lanes for future, but now exploring the use of shoulders (e.g. 94); area-wide not proffered as downtown congestion is not severe
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § marketing focused on individual components with different interest groups, e.g. Metro Transit conveyed the transit benefits in workshops for transit riders and stressed reliability and free flow for drivers on Highway 35W § tailored to purpose, e.g., certain communications just tell people that the 35W project is opening and remind people to buy a transponder, others promote the telecommute initiative or transit benefits
	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § environmental issues tended to center on noise and possible spillover around the proposed corridor, handled by monitoring and evaluation § emissions reduction from the project now being evaluated § revenues tied to operating costs and if there are excess

	<p>revenues, law requires 50% go to transit, 50% to other transportation improvements (current revenues do not render surplus)</p>
	<p><i>Equity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § some concern that transit and HOV users may lose out in HOT lane, so project managers showed transit impacts elsewhere and shaped plan to support transit and HOV § other possible losers were workers on fixed schedules unable to modify time of travel very much, and this concern was met in 35W planning by emphasizing telework as an option § income equity has not been paramount issue, but reference to I-15 used to show that all income groups use HOTs
Context	<p><i>Government image:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § better to have University of Minnesota present project ideas at the outset versus DOT, since sometimes “there is suspicion of government” and “complex systems” § University of Minnesota is considered neutral -- adds credibility and objective tone
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § the Community Task Force (see below) met monthly and visited California’s SR91 and I-15 projects for information and application to MN; data from both often referenced
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § under “grasstops” approach, strategy was to get decision maker support first; Community Task Force operated over 2004 and 2005 with representatives from 6 city councils, citizen representatives, AAA, trucking association, transit-oriented groups, and state legislators § task force targeted by Humphrey Institute (Univ. of Minnesota) and DOT to receive continuous information on HOT concept, all leading to implementation of I-394 HOT § for newest HOT plan 35W, local mayors were targeted and are now engaged; planner responsiveness to Task Force shown by initial proposal for \$8 max and \$.50 min, but Task Force thought the minimum value was too high and proposed \$.25, which was accepted as “politically palatable” even though it results in reduced revenues; media targeted to make sue they had “all information”

Vehicles	<i>Content:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">§ “no question unanswered” approach in content of meetings and workshops important element§ vehicles include The University of Minnesota and MNDOT use of public roundtables on “Rethinking Transportation Finance” for key leaders§ legislative seminars on transportation issues§ hired consultant to help develop vehicles and content of presentation materials, feed media; also used publicity video
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Dallas Region: Various Tolling and Managed Lane Projects

In the Dallas metropolitan region, there are several toll roads which will include variable pricing, following adopted regional policy. Currently, committed HOT lanes (termed “managed lanes”) include I-30, I-635, I-35E, the North Tarrant Expressway, and the Dallas-Fort Worth Connector. North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG; MPO for the Dallas region) and Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) have planned several other priced expressways with variable pricing and traditional toll roads slated for the near or long term. The North Texas Tollway Authority is the toll provider and is constructing S.H. 121, S.H. 161 and the Southwest Parkway.

Agency and Project	NCTCOG, NTTA and TXDOT: SH 121 (in operation), SH 161, I-635, DFW Connector, and North Tarrant Expressway (planned), I-30, I-35E, Southwest Parkway
Content	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § supporting MPO policy from 15 years ago provides key framework: region does not have sufficient gas tax to meet “capacity needs;” any freeway reconstruction will test for “express lane” feasibility; but existing free lanes will not be tolled § also pitched that there is plenty of capacity but not at all times of day, so pricing can shift and reduce peak demand and speeds can be “guaranteed” because of dynamic pricing, where applied to tolled managed facilities. § framed in terms of how much we really “pay” for transportation and how old and inadequate infrastructure will be burden on “children and grandchildren,” so if we won’t tax selves via legislature or congress, we need to pay the right amount now to get at sustainability, especially if external costs of safety, congestion, air quality, climate change and energy are accounted for
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Forty elected officials at NCTOG gave unanimous support for tolls; support is continually nurtured by “monthly communications” from staff on rationale and purposes of tolls to “keep in the fold” § generally used same messages across groups § tried to maintain support with locals in part by alluding to congress and state legislature as either not up to the job or diverting funds, compared to user fees where “we” more local powers can ensure that funds are spent on local roads and transit

	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § as non-attainment area, very important to tie road pricing to emissions inventories for mobile sources, whole concept of managed lanes would not have “its wings” if not tied to the ozone problem § relied on reality of diminished federal funding for roads in urban areas as central to tolling rationale; toll revenues also enable transit support not otherwise possible (see next); for PPP projects, revenues pay back operating costs and up front construction costs
	<p><i>Equity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § environmental justice analysis shows equity is not a problem in terms of accessibility to jobs, i.e. geographic/spatial equity for road pricing projects is acceptable § stressed toll revenues as enabling transit support, e.g. (121 project) a passenger rail project supported exclusively by tolls § rural versus urban equity is an issue, not so much because of tolls per se, but new toll roads cutting up large tracts of privately owned rural land (especially inner-city) § also some concern about private sector involvement in several projects (I-635, DFW Connector and N. Tarrant Express), so concern is profit motive and preference in private land acquisition and development § another effort is to show that value of time (e.g. getting to daycare pick up on time) is not a function of wage rate, so then blue versus white collar doesn’t matter – “opportunity cost” of time does, and express lanes allow choice “when you are in a hurry;” compelling argument to say that all people will pay to not be late, sometimes
<p>Context</p>	<p><i>Government image:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § TXDOT has a somewhat negative image in rural but not urban areas, where residents seem to buy the idea of “no roads, slow roads or toll roads” in the face of growth and declining gas tax § NCTCOG has extensive meeting and communication agenda shows that they are not “hiding anything and always out there taking the message, fostered also by inviting any meeting participants to subsequent meetings § believes image and acceptability trouble can be avoided by common trap of “preaching to friends and avoiding critics”
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i></p>

	<p>§ some familiarity in the region with toll roads didn't require reference to programs elsewhere for operational explanations</p>
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <p>§ important to pay attention to all groups and at all times</p> <p>§ need “constant communication” to keep support of all groups including neighborhoods, conservative tax people, libertarians, state legislators, local officials, chambers of commerce; have stayed course for “15 years”</p> <p>§ key group to “keep” is the state legislators, to whom it was pitched that gas taxes are not sufficient to meet region's needs, so tolls are the only or forced option; doing “nothing” is unacceptable in the face of growth</p> <p>§ many decision makers at MPO are anti-tax and generally conservative, but were “won over” by stressing not behavior change or social engineering, but sustaining a system of roads and transit for growth in a fiscally responsible way – given that the region is adding a “million people every seven years”</p>
Vehicles	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <p>§ strong internet presence was used as a vehicle, also held “40 public meetings a year” with presentations to city councils, editorial boards, talk shows, town hall meetings, one to one meetings with congressional and legislative delegations, speeches at events (250/year), use of newsletter</p> <p>§ entirely open process so all can “give their 2 cents worth;” sent out 8,000 notices every time they did public meetings, so no complaints about lack of information about meetings</p> <p>§ did public surveys including a panel over time on toll road attitudes</p> <p>§ key actor (former chair of TXDOT) coined vital supporting phrase, “slow roads, no roads or toll roads” in support of PPP legislation</p> <p>§ cleared misconceptions and clarified communications content on managed lanes about all lanes versus just express lanes being tolled</p> <p>§ stressed new capacity with pricing (e.g. LBJ freeway adds capacity via frontage roads) and payment coming from managed lane's users (see framing for content emphasis above)</p> <p>§ also used the message of inadequacy of gas tax, and ensuring that revenues go to specific improvements, preventing “children and grandchildren” from the burden</p>

	§ stressed “guarantee” of free flow on managed lanes; also tried to counter concerns about private sector involvement discussing the roles of risk taking and distribution of revenues
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Downtown New York City: Area-wide Pricing Proposal

Area-wide pricing was proposed in New York City in 2008. The plan proposed a daily charge of \$8 for cars entering lower Manhattan south of 60th street to improve travel times and reliability in the city. Trucks would pay \$21. Autos traveling only within the priced zone would pay half the price. The charge would apply to all vehicles, except emergency vehicles, those with handicapped license plates, taxis, and for-hire vehicles (radio cars). Fees would be assessed through an existing EZ Pass transponder system used for collecting bridge tolls. For drivers without EZ Pass, the charge would be assessed through cameras mounted on traffic light poles, with payment options available through the Internet, telephone, and participating retail outlets. The revenues from the congestion charge were proposed to be used for transit improvements and investment in the city's subway system. This plan was not approved by the state assembly and was not initiated.

Agency and Project	New York City Department of Transportation and NYC Mayor's Office: Proposed Area-wide Pricing Plan
Content	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § framed in terms of transportation needs in light of growing population, need for managing congestion and shifting more to transit, not air quality or climate change § emphasized that transit service would be increased before the start of charging or at the same time as revenue stream starts flowing § frame impact has been weakened by current economic recession where major capital funding for MTA looms larger, and congestion has diminished in case of traffic and transit ridership; therefore impetus for PlaNYC diminished
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § NYCDOT and Mayor's office tailored communication for specific stakeholders § separate meetings were organized with transit and traffic communities, with general public, constant community meetings with community boards, small and large businesses, and outreach to environmental organizations and environmental justice constituencies § there were different messages to different groups": <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Drivers – Reduced travel time ○ Transit riders – Transit funding ○ Big Business – Street efficiency ○ Small Business – Ease of compliance, since most small businesses rely heavily on driving ○ Labor – Jobs created because of construction of new

	subway lines
	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § environmental issues were not a big driver, although always referenced as one of three prime goals (congestion reduction, transit support, air quality improvement) § climate change is not an obvious plus for RP, e.g. if the problem was idling, the competing solution is encouraging hybrids ownership and transit fleet conversion, not clearly linked to RP § RP revenues were proposed to fund a special Transit Capital Improvements account for transit enhancements
	<p><i>Equity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § the “thorniest groups” were the organizations advocating for lower income communities believing that tolls are a regressive tax, so transit improvement was a key part of the project as low-income groups are heavily dependent on transit, do not typically drive into Manhattan, and some low-income neighborhoods need better transit access and options § another equity issue was directing revenues back to source, some not wanting to pay so that neighborhoods other than their own get more transit service
Context	<p><i>Government image:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § There is some distrust among the public for MTA delivering on program promises § “didn’t help” that two weeks before the city council voted (one week before the failed state assembly vote), the MTA had to roll back many of the promises made for an earlier project because of funding shortfalls
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § London area-wide pricing example and quantitative results were referenced a great deal; especially used to show air quality improvements and neutral impacts on business § London also showed the wisdom of adding more buses before road pricing took place to boost acceptability; problem with London was people believed it was a good model but then rumors of some bad experiences clouded the results § PSRC plans and model analysis were also referenced, but the lack of a credible model for NY city with solid survey data and elasticities proved a stumbling block to projecting impacts (such as who pays, change in traffic levels, air quality, etc.) to

	<p>counter opposition</p>
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § a large coalition of environmental advocacy organizations (including campaign for New York’s Future) supported the project; large businesses were generally supportive, but could not win over small businesses because project team could not quantify impacts on delivery/wholesale businesses § focused on residents of Queens, one of the most “auto-dependent boroughs,” who were opposed to the project, but could not convince § speaker of State Assembly was influential opponent due to installation of cameras as privacy issue, potential traffic and pollution impacts on neighborhoods surrounding congestion zone, and congestion reduction only in Manhattan and not other neighborhoods § the State eventually rejected the proposal due to insufficient convincing or compromises
Vehicles	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § used “every vehicle in the book” for outreach; used response content in answer to questions as they arose through Mayor’s office, e.g. on the point of who benefits, “the majority of New Yorkers don’t own a car so the majority would benefit,” “the average transit user makes \$22,000/year and the average driver \$34,000/year;” § stressed pilot nature of program, “best way to predict whether it will work is to try it” in Plan2020; also mentioned that most would pay less than the “cost of commuting by bus” § stressed benefit not just downtown but in “other boroughs” as well since much traffic bound downtown passes through them § emphasized potential economy benefit, saying “Manhattan would be more productive” for businesses there; stressed transit improvements “prior to implementation of congestion pricing” § a clear website table outlines “features” of the pilot; possible problem of parking spillover outside the zone addressed by “possible solutions including parking permits for residents”

Washington D.C. Region, Maryland and Virginia: High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is planning two new HOT lanes in each direction on the I-495 Capital Beltway from the Springfield Interchange to just north of the Dulles Toll Road (14 miles) and introduction of HOV and new transit service on the Beltway and Tysons Corner. The HOT lanes will allow the Beltway to offer HOV-3 connections with I-95/395, I-66 and the Dulles Toll Road. When completed, buses, carpools and vanpools with three or more people, and motorcycles will travel for free, with vehicles carrying one or two people paying a toll or using free lanes. Also planned are HOT lanes on I-395. The 56-mile project would add a third lane to the existing 28 miles of HOV lanes between Arlington and Dumfries, and would include building two new HOV lanes for an additional 28 miles south to Spotsylvania County. Lastly, the Maryland Intercounty Connector (ICC) planned by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) will link existing and proposed development areas between the I-270/I-370 and I-95/US 1 corridors within central and eastern Montgomery County and northwestern Prince George's County. It will be operated as a new toll facility by the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA). The connector will be Maryland's eighth toll facility.

Agency and Project	VDOT, MD SHA: Maryland ICC and in Virginia, I-495 HOT Lanes and I-395/95 HOT Lanes (proposed)
Content	<p><i>Framing of Pricing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § framed in terms of “rapidly worsening congestion and funding shortfalls,” beginning in mid 2000s; metropolitan transportation plan updates and long range vision plans documenting “a system in crises” § underscored that D.C. region ranked high on congestion (TTI rank #2) and also pointed out significant number of commuters are from “out of state” so some appeal for outsiders paying their fair share § HOT lanes were framed as allowing choice to pay (no forcing) and avoid congestion, producing some congestion relief on mixed traffic lanes, and making more congestion free lanes available to transit § priced new ICC lanes were presented as providing a fast by-pass short cut between two heavily congested freeways; managed lanes promise of “largely self-financing” new highway capacity was part of the frame
	<p><i>Audience targeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § although three consultations with MD Secretary of Transportation garnered support for HOV conversion along US-50, the previous Governor was swayed by opposition to Lexus Lanes § still interacting with opponents of I-395/95 HOT lanes to be

	<p>operated as a PPP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § for northern VA HOT lanes, VDOT and private sector partner “have done careful nurturing through well crafted outreach activities to generate and sustain the supporting constituency,” and thus far the two projects received “close scrutiny” by the entire Transportation Planning Board and were adopted in the region’s long range plan § audience targeting is ongoing and tied to objections about added capacity and growth inducements
	<p><i>Environmental/Funding issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Maryland’s Statewide Express Toll Lanes Network Initiative and Washington Metropolitan region’s brochures on “sustainability” and “green future” all make indirect references to “tolling” and “pricing” as options § MD/ICC pitches pricing as reducing VMT by resulting in shorter trips and associated air quality benefits § however, environmental community sees new HOTs as a surreptitious way of adding highway capacity § revenues planned to be returned to corridors that generate them § some uncertainty arising about I-395/95 HOT revenues falling below projections, possibly due to effect of overall economic and traffic downturn, so construction postponed until further analysis
	<p><i>Equity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § on income equity issue, referred to evidence based on surveys of user perceptions and actual travel patterns by different population segments from other RP projects like San Diego I-15 and Orange County SR-91 to dispel public concerns regarding “equity”
Context	<p><i>Government image:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § importantly for D.C. region, good travel and air quality modeling tools are respected by stakeholders and governing board
	<p><i>Reference to programs elsewhere:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § referenced I-15 and SR-91 on equity issue
	<p><i>Attention to stakeholder views:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § new 2009 Revised Transportation Policy Plan resulted from policy maker workshops and debates on future of transportation and has pricing and managed lanes as important

	<p>components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § key stakeholder group to target and attend to views is the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) comprised of the three DOTs and several local jurisdictions § states come to the TPB for project proposal approval based on whether project meets federal, state and other requirements (funding, AQ, CMP, etc.) and how the project fits in with shared regional goals and priorities § MD DOT as one key actor involves other state agencies like the MD Toll Authority and relevant MPOs in planning and outreach § in 2000s, FHWA VPPP grant funded workshop to inform key stakeholders and “opened the door” for further exploratory studies and discussions by VDOT, eventually leading to the PPP agreement for Beltway/I-495 HOT lane project § Maryland ICC project has been supported by businesses (Chambers of Commerce, etc.), trucking interests and a majority of the region’s planners; it has been opposed by many, but not all, of the environmental community and corridor residents
<p>Vehicles</p>	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § three involved states conducted multiple public information meetings and public hearings § established a website and means of responding to individual queries, held stakeholder meetings § TPB held public hearings and workshops, consulted with TPB Transit Advisory Committee, conducted citizens meetings during environmental review process, held marketing campaigns, disseminated information at retail kiosks, and engaged the press § each State and jurisdiction relied upon established community outreach and consultation strategies: community meetings, web sites, newspaper ads, public hearings, focus groups and surveys

SECTION III: GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES

As important as the communication vehicles and the messages they contain are in communicating RP proposals, much else in the communications and engagement process bears on the reactions, perceptions and eventual acceptability of RP proposals and plans. As the literature review demonstrates, both the *content* of RP proposals and the *context* in which they are presented are pivotal to the reactions of various affected parties. Therefore, the exact messaging and specific communication means or vehicles, such as web sites, press releases and media releases, need to be considered as only one element among many in communicating and engaging all the players and affected parties in developing an RP plan.

The acceptability literature also indicates no single element in the communication and engagement process will be decisive in bringing about an acceptable and effective program – all require attention and varying emphasis depending on how developments unfold. Building an acceptable road pricing program is very unlike building a bridge where certain well known prescribed steps, materials, and procedures are almost certain to put the bridge in place. Planning for road pricing is more akin to setting sail in risky waters where unforeseen changes in weather, uncharted obstacles and other hard to anticipate problems can doom the venture. The task at hand, then, is to set numerous systems onboard to maximize chances of completing the trip, then constantly monitor and change the course plan, how it is presented and to whom, as continuing results dictate.

Engagement, as the term implies, is a multi-way process in which planners must pay attention to the ebb and flow of key actors and interests, their perceptions and actions, while making plan changes and initiating new engagements and communications. In the process, planners should be fully aware that uncontrollable changes in economic, political and policy variables still may sink even well conceived, responsive and iterated plans. Thus, the guidance offered here is not a course guaranteed to gain acceptance or adoption of any road pricing proposal. Instead, it is a series of steps, cautions and checkpoints on engagement and communications for local, regional and state planners to take advantage of lessons to date, avoid pitfalls, and create the best prospects possible for bringing forth acceptable road pricing proposals.

The specific guidance offered below is based on effective engagement and communication strategies derived from two sources:

- § Findings from the literature reviewed as well as interview findings from road pricing sites supporting and exemplifying the literature findings
- § Particular case findings which in and of themselves appear important to acceptability and success. While the number of study cases is small, comparing and contrasting them is instructive in certain instances where communications content, context and vehicles appear strongly associated with successful or unsuccessful outcomes

(1) Frame Resonant Problems Strategically

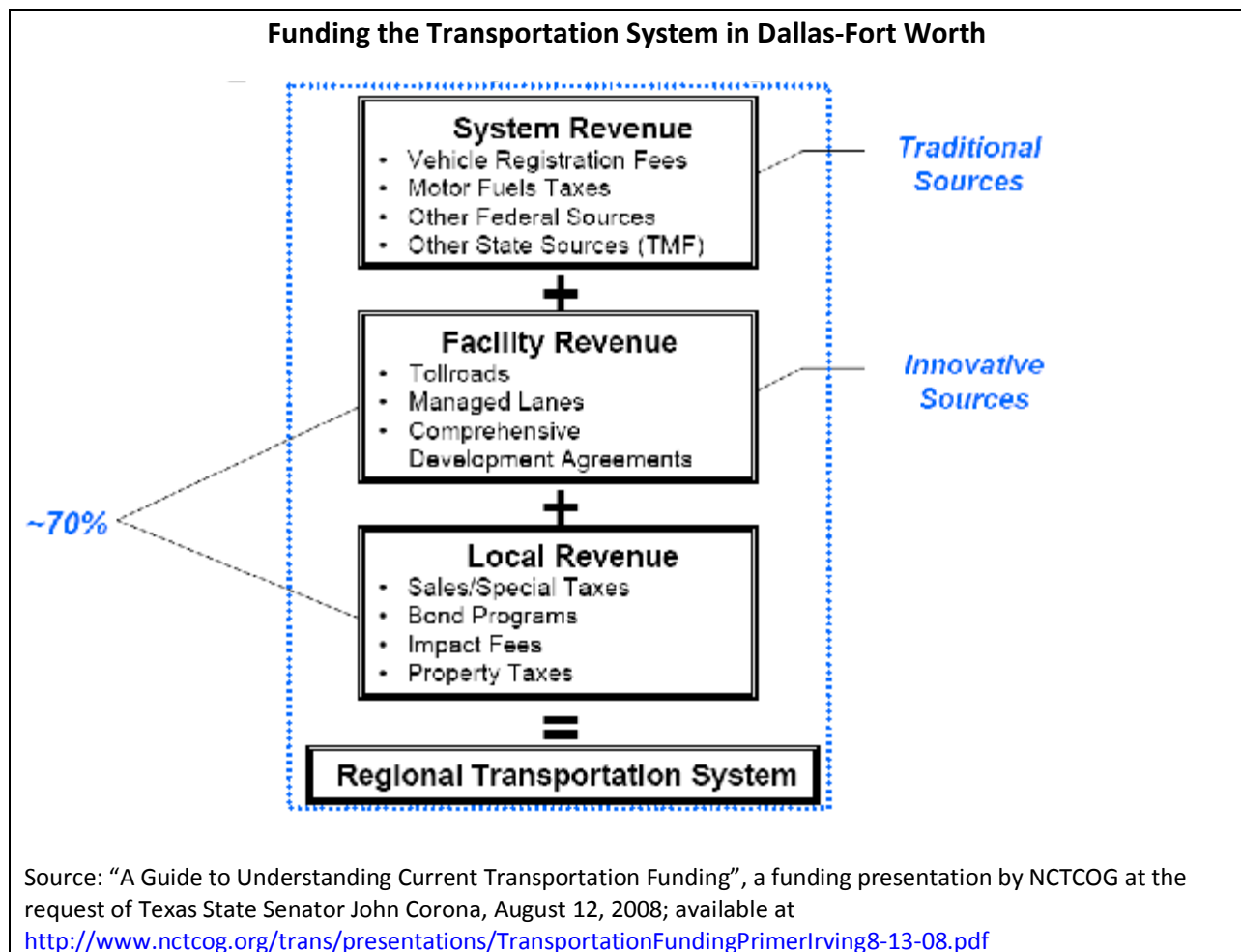
Road pricing aims primarily at the problem of congestion. It is often called “congestion pricing” for just this reason. However, road pricing can and often does address multiple problems, including congestion, pollution, underutilized HOV facilities and lack of revenues for road and other desired transportation improvements. Choosing which problem to underscore in planning and communications and prominently tie to pricing proposals is vital *content* of any proposal. Acceptability is enhanced where the problem is both clear and severe to affected parties. Again, congestion may or may not be the most resonant candidate problem for pricing. In some settings, it may be pollution or the need for revenues in a time of shrinking traditional revenue sources. An assessment of potential affected parties will help determine which problems most resonate, and will help fashion the kind of pricing proposed, how it is cast and how its benefits are framed in communications and engagement.

Lessons from Interview Sites

In the Washington D.C. region, planners pivoted off known widespread congestion concerns, national congestion rankings, framing of outsiders as culprits for part of the congestion problem, and funding constraints in their painting of the problem to be addressed and how pricing could address it. Plan and communication materials portrayed a “system in crises,” highlighting the twin problems of “rapidly worsening congestion and funding shortfalls.” Planners also stressed independent evidence about the ranking of the region on a congestion index as “number two” in the nation with the reminder of a significant number of commuters from “out of state.” The approach has resonated with decision makers and local motorists sufficiently to aid the acceptability of several road pricing plans. While planners also made indirect reference to “sustainability” and a “green future” associated with “tolling” and “pricing” as options, such reference may not resonate as favorably as intended. Some in the environmental community view HOT lane development as a surreptitious way of adding highway capacity and therefore contrary to a green future.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments likewise emphasized funding issues and part of the problem as revolving around outside influences. Planners underscored inadequate roads and finance resources for improvements and expansion, and highlighted a congress and state legislature either not able to raise funds or diverting transportation funds to other uses. In this light, locally controlled toll roads and managed priced lanes become a solution to the perceived problem of lost local control. The agency also has stressed that gas taxes simply have not kept up with highway needs and that tolling and pricing are “the only” way forward since doing nothing is unacceptable. Thus, the problem addressed is not only an inadequate finance source but an unfixable one. See figure for a sample of outreach slides prepared by NCTCOG staff illustrating the need for innovative finance sources to meet the region’s transportation funding needs.

NCTCOG Slide Showing Managed Lanes as Innovative Finance Sources



The Metropolitan Transportation Council (MTC) in the San Francisco Bay Area gained acceptance of its HOT lane network in the regional plan in part by framing *content* around a pressing problem with strong public recognition (congestion and inadequate transportation facilities) and top priority of key member agency actors and interests. MTC stressed not just managing traffic or reducing congestion or pollution via pricing, but financing planned highway improvements with HOT components faster and more credibly than under current lacking finance resources. That combination of issues resonated sufficiently with a sufficient number of key agency and stakeholder actors for passage of the plan, in spite of some opposition from an influential community group (San Francisco Planning + Urban Research Association, SPUR) in San Francisco. Other goals around CO₂ and NO_x emissions were also highlighted, but were not so pivotal and controversial with SPUR. Most pressing interactions around the plan centered on the highway development needs and finance, including revenue allocation "back to source." No doubt adoption of the plan was aided by some *contextual* elements of the proposal. These include a neutral or somewhat positive MTC agency image and its referencing of experience of HOT lanes elsewhere ("tried and true") showing income equity either not to be an issue or a manageable one. However, building upon a strong resonant problem for the traveling public and key stakeholders, then involving them in a special committee all the way through project

development appears to be the main combination behind successful adoption. Examples of policy and communication *vehicles* on these points are shown in the figures on the next page.

San Francisco MTC HOT Network Implementation Principles and Objectives

High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) Network Implementation Principles

OBJECTIVES

Development and implementation of a Bay Area Express/High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) Network has five primary objectives:

- § More effectively manage the region's freeways in order to provide higher vehicle and passenger throughput and reduce delays for those traveling within each travel corridor;
- § Provide an efficient, effective, consistent, and seamless system for users of the network;
- § Provide benefits to travelers within each corridor commensurate with the revenues collected in that corridor, including expanded travel options and funding to support non-highway options that enhance effectiveness and throughput;
- § Implement the Express/HOT Lane Network in the Bay Area, as shown in Exhibit 1 and as amended from time to time, using a rapid delivery approach that takes advantage of the existing highway right of way to deliver the network in an expedited time frame; and
- § Toll revenue collected from the HOT network will be used to operate the HOT network; to maintain HOT system equipment and software; to provide transit services and improvements in the corridors; to finance and construct the HOT network; and to provide other corridor improvements.

Source: MTC's HOT Network Principles

http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/hov/Res3868_Att_B-HOT_Network_Principles.pdf

Excerpt from MTC Website FAQs on Need for Express Lanes, Objectives, and Use of Revenues

Express (HOT) Lanes and Carpool Lanes



Frequently Asked Questions

Why consider express lanes?

The appeal of this concept is three-fold:

- It expands mobility options in congested urban areas by providing an opportunity for reliable travel times for express lane users;
- It generates a new source of revenue which can be used to pay for transportation improvements, including enhanced transit service; and
- It improves the efficiency of carpool facilities.

Why the need for an express lane network in the Bay Area?

There are several gaps in the region's current carpool lane system. Filling these gaps would create a seamless network of unobstructed lanes to provide a faster commute for travelers who use them. MTC's 25-year Regional Transportation Plan indicates that these gaps cannot be filled with traditional existing revenues.

What is the express lane revenue used for?

Express lane revenue can be used to help pay off bonds issued to finance construction, provide for maintenance, operations and enforcement of the lanes, and to fund new or enhanced transit service.

Source: FAQs on MTC Express Lane website:

<http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/hov/faq.htm>

(2) Identify Relevant Decision Makers and Affected Parties; Understand their Perceptions, Fashion Program Options and Messages Accordingly

The literature on acceptability shows travelers, voters, residents and the public at large may well perceive congestion problems and pricing options differently. Consequently, planners first should identify which parties are most important to assess and engage given congestion related problems and the pricing options of potential interest, and the relationship and influence of the parties with respect to specific decision makers who must pass program proposals. In this light, it is likely that general public or traveler surveys will be less important than assessments of active and influential interest groups such as businesses, truckers, residents or environmental organizations who have the ear of key decision makers with the power and responsibility to clear or reject proposals.

While assessing perceptions about the nature and severity of congestion related problems to decision makers and stakeholders, planners should keep in mind relevant parties may believe congestion is only one or even a lesser problem than others pricing can address. Planners should not ignore decision makers, especially their views on best ways to allocate revenues, as their support or opposition often turns on this point. It is best to do such interviews early on before a specific proposal is fleshed out, and to do so before any open and publicized outreach campaign as early adverse reactions can slow or reverse progress toward acceptability.

Only after gaining a sense of perceptions about potential problems pricing can address and reactions to optional pricing concepts should planners begin fleshing out and analyzing more specific proposals around the most acceptable problems and pricing concepts. Reactions should be assessed in an open ended fashion but also via prompting on all the likely issue areas suggested in the literature:

- § the perceived nature and severity of congestion;
- § probable effectiveness of pricing compared to non-pricing options;
- § equity broadly defined and ways to mitigate potential fairness issues;
- § revenue allocation;
- § transportation options and improvements; and
- § broader issues such as the credibility of potential implementing agencies and the conduct of the planning and engagement process to come.


Lessons from Interview Sites

Development of a successful parking pricing program in New York City demonstrates the important assessment and engagement methods, as well as sensitivity to areas of concern. New York as part of assessing acceptability of its PARK Smart proposal, assessed business opinions about the resonant traffic and parking violation problems and shaped the proposal *content* accordingly. There were numerous meetings with community boards and business districts to take the pulse and insure PARK Smart goals and design fit the perceived problem. Equity was addressed by sidewalk surveys to insure shoppers and specific retailers were not unfairly burdened. The program also allowed for voluntary buy in so that those with concerns related to

equity issues, potential program effectiveness, or problem severity did not have to participate. The credibility *context* of “big bad DOT” was countered by transparent planning seminars for all 59 community boards and reminders about progress to date on many parking and transportation projects, including the successful parking pilot program. Communication *vehicles* highlighted the accepted goal of increasing parking availability, reducing double parking, the voluntary program, merchant involvement and DOT credibility in delivering on transportation. The figures below show examples of NYCDOT’s communication content, highlighting progress and accomplishments to build credibility and underscore the resonant goals of the PARK Smart program.

NYCDOT Communications, Highlighting Progress and Accomplishments to Build Credibility

Sustainable Streets



Sustainable Streets 2009 Progress Report

In the Spring of 2008, NYCDOT released Sustainable Streets, its new strategic plan. The plan laid out, for the first time ever, a clear and detailed transportation policy for New York City — one that promised a new direction. DOT is delivering on the promises of its plan, and is moving forward on every one of the 164 actions committed to Sustainable Streets. This annual update of the plan reports on that progress, and serves as a focal point for meeting targets and sustaining momentum across all of our Agency’s programs. It also sets forth new goals that have emerged during the past year, ranging from development of an internal DOT car-sharing system to further reduce DOT’s fleet, parking needs and miles driven, to issuing a request for proposals to establish a large scale public bicycle system in New York, similar to those in Paris and other cities.

Major Accomplishments in 2008-2009

The New York City Department of Transportation launched numerous new projects and initiatives over the past year, and saw positive transportation results in many areas. These are some of the highlights.

- Launched and expanded large-scale targeted safety programs — [Safe Streets for Seniors](#) and [Safe Routes to Schools](#).
- Implemented [complete-street](#) roadway designs in many locations, including an award winning design for 9th Avenue. Safety benefits have been demonstrable within months in many cases.
- Developed and launched the [Green Light for Midtown](#) plan to reduce traffic congestion in the heart of Midtown Manhattan and improve safety and public space in Herald and Times Squares.
- Launched the [Select Bus Service](#) program with NYC Transit, implementing routes on Fordham Road in the Bronx and 34th Street in Manhattan.
- In 2008, implemented a record 90 miles of [new bicycle lanes](#), contributing to an unprecedented 35% single-year increase in bicycle commuting.

Source: Website of the Sustainable Streets Strategic Plan, 2009, for NYC:
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/stratplan.shtml>

In contrast, plans for pricing on Doyle Drive in San Francisco city stumbled on identifying or evaluating the importance of likely opposition and the crucial nature of geographic equity. Marin County Supervisors generally and one in particular, blocked the proposal because of the high proportion of county commuters who would face Doyle Drive pricing. In the same city, an area-wide pricing plan for the downtown has run into strong opposition from businesses on grounds of potential adverse business impacts in hard economic times, raising the question of how complete was the assessment of their position before the pricing options were made public and studied in detail.

Of course, even anticipating, identifying, engaging, and assessing

key actors and interests does not guarantee a critical mass for acceptability. As stated at the outset to this section, none of the recommended steps are sufficient for success, only necessary for best prospects of success. Planners in New York City fielding an area-wide pricing proposal for Manhattan identified supporters and opponents early on in businesses (large businesses generally supportive, small not), environmental groups (supportive), neighborhoods (concerns for spillover impacts in areas around the priced zone), and key decision makers (speaker of the assembly opposed on privacy, impacts in surrounding neighborhoods and inequitable distribution of benefits for Manhattan residents and businesses). In this case, substantial engagement and assessment and fashioning the area-wide plan as much as possible toward concerns still did not bring about the necessary threshold of support for passage needed at the State level. Conceivably, more benefits for residents outside Manhattan and strong communications focused on those benefits may have reduced opposition from those residents and commuters, and thereby modified effective opposition of the assembly speaker. However, the overall point still pertains: there is no certainty of outcome in mounting even extensive engagement and communications strategies, only increased chances of gaining the necessary threshold for success.

(3) Develop Convincing Specific Plans; Iterate Toward Acceptance

Presuming sufficient support exists to proceed with more detailed analysis and planning of a pricing concept, to flesh out particular *content* items, planners must understand and communicate the details of their workings and effects and iterate them toward acceptability. The acceptability research suggests one obstacle to specific pricing proposals at this stage may be skepticism on

Motorists
PARK Smart NYC

What is PARK Smart NYC?
 PARK Smart is a program to make parking easier while reducing congestion and improving safety. NYCDOT is conducting six month pilots in neighborhoods across the City to evaluate how the program works in different settings. The agency works closely with community boards, merchants, BIDs and other local stakeholders when developing the pilots.

PARK Smart aims to increase the number of available metered parking spaces by encouraging motorists to park no longer than necessary. The meter rate is higher when demand for parking is greatest and decreases when demand is lower.

Goals of PARK Smart NYC

- Increase the availability of parking spaces
- Increase safety
- Reduce double-parking
- Reduce pollution
- Reduce congestion from circling vehicles



Source: NYC PARK Smart program website, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/parksmart.shtml>

the part of the public or decision makers about the effectiveness of pricing in reducing congestion or pollution, or its potential for generating net revenues supporting operations and/or facility improvements. This is the time for the planner to clearly reference experience elsewhere in communications and presentations, and likewise reference their own and independent studies for the proposed pricing area to convincingly demonstrate effectiveness.

Along the way, it is likely planners will have to demonstrate how pricing affects traveler groups and eases congestion; how roads currently are financed; the nature of declining revenues from traditional sources; user pay equity considerations; and revenue figures from existing programs. Equally important is attention to specific program design elements including those the literature shows are key to acceptability:

- § gearing revenue allocations in line with stakeholder preferences, usually toward improvements of interest in the priced zone, though other options also may be preferred including potential tax reductions
- § providing not only enhanced alternatives to driving, but an acceptable free driving alternative
- § good enforcement strategies to avoid “free riders”
- § simple rather than complex toll schedules
- § handling possible traffic and parking diversion in sensitive areas
- § explaining how data and traveler information will be handled to maintain user privacy

Lessons from Interview Sites

The interview sites provide examples of acceptable revenue allocation policies arrived at through long negotiation, and referencing of road pricing experience elsewhere to bolster familiarity. For example, the above referenced MTC network plan for the San Francisco Bay Area shows the revenue allocation principles agreed to by decision makers with revenues going to corridor operations and transit. The principles provide a model for consideration elsewhere, at least as a starting point. Examples of referencing projects elsewhere appear in the regional and state transportation plans in Washington and the Puget Sound area. In the latter case, probably wisely, planners cited backyard examples first with the SR167 HOT lane and Tacoma Narrows bridge pricing as support for continuation and expansion of road pricing generally and HOT lanes in particular. Other examples of referencing include links on the MTC’s FAQ website to six proven “express lane” projects, and a symposium in Los Angeles for decision makers featuring successful national and international pricing programs, even bringing a politician from Stockholm to add credibility and an interaction opportunity. Planners there credit the symposium as an important step in winning decision maker support for two new HOT lane plans.

As with any recommended actions here aimed at successful adoption, there are no guarantees. The San Francisco County Transportation Authority summarizes national and international experience and impacts briefly and readably in presentation material for its area-wide proposal (see figure below). However, opposition thus far especially from the business community concerned with economic impacts in hard economic times has stalled implementation plans.

Reference to International Experience with Road Pricing in SFCTA’s Outreach Presentation

WHAT is CONGESTION PRICING?

Key Benefits

- Faster, more reliable trips for all travelers
- Improved traffic flow and road safety
- Lower vehicle emissions
- New transportation services and amenities

London

- 14,000 new bus seats
- \$200M net revenue annually
- 30% less congestion

Stockholm

- 2,800 new park & ride spaces
- \$50M net revenue annually
- 22% less congestion

Rome

- 14 new regional/express bus lines
- \$65M net revenue annually
- 20% less congestion

www.sfmobility.org

Source:
http://www.sfcta.org/images/stories/Planning/CongestionPricingFeasibilityStudy/MAPS_Wksp3_Preso_WEB.pdf

Examples of accepted and adopted plans with transit and other travel options emphasized and communicated are numerous. The above referenced plan for HOT lanes in Los Angeles incorporates and underscores a strong “multi-modal” approach (see text box) in part to serve low income groups, as do information websites for Minnesota, San Francisco Bay Area

Project Benefits

Increased Transit Service and Expanded Vanpool Program

- > Purchase 59 alternative fuel buses for increased feeder service and Silver Line service
- > Provide an operating subsidy for the one-year demonstration period
- > Promote vanpool program and create a minimum of 100 new vanpools that travel on the I-10 and I-110 ExpressLanes

From LA Metro ExpressLanes Fact sheet:
http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/expresslanes/images/10-1683_ntc_ExpressLanes_condensed_web.pdf

and others where revenues go toward supporting project operations and transit. At the same time, numerous HOT lane projects in all these locations stress that the free driving option is always available. North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), MPO for the Dallas region, goes a bit further by stating in policy that no current free lanes ever will be tolled.

Again, while transit expansion is a common and much touted element of pricing plans, easily communicated and generally well received, it is no guarantee of success for a pricing proposal. Both the area-wide pricing plans in New York City and San Francisco stressed transit expansion and devotion of some pricing revenues to transit, but neither project has come to fruition.


Explanations of the workings of road pricing aimed at portraying its effectiveness and impacts are less common. One example of apparently effective communications is found in Texas. NCTCOG frames dynamic pricing as “guaranteeing” acceptable speeds. It also stresses traveler’s value of time is a function of the opportunity cost of trips, as when one is hurrying to get to day care for a pick up where a late penalty might apply. The message attempts to counter the usual criticism that willingness to pay is a function of wage rate, and that low income people will suffer due to that. The workings and benefits of parking pricing probably are more easily explained and accepted. SFPark provides an example of very straightforward and easily digested information (see figure below) on how new variable rates following the peaks and valleys of parking demand will make it easier to find parking, improve movement of transit and emergency vehicles, and attract more shoppers.

Excerpt from Website of SFPark Program Highlighting Project Effects and Benefits

The screenshot shows the SFPark website with a blue navigation bar containing links for 'About the Project', 'How it Works', 'FAQ', 'Media', 'News', and 'Contact Us'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a 'Project Benefits' section with an icon of a document and a checkmark. Below this, there are four sub-sections: 'Helping Drivers', 'Speeding Public Transit', 'Protecting Bicyclists & Pedestrians', and 'Welcome to the Neighborhood'. The right column has an 'About the Project' section with a list of links: 'Project Benefits', 'Timeline', and 'Pilot Areas'. Below that is a 'Featured News' section with an RSS icon and two news items: 'SFMTA Completes Innovative Citywide Census of San Francisco Parking' and 'SF Parking Census featured on KQED Radio'.

SFpark About the Project How it Works FAQ Media News Contact Us

Project Benefits

 SFpark optimizes the use of existing parking resources in a way that benefits both drivers as well as everyone who spends time in San Francisco. Public transit riders, bicyclists, pedestrians, business owners, residents, and visitors can all expect this innovative new parking management project to improve their quality of life in tangible ways.

Helping Drivers
SFpark makes finding and paying for parking easier. Access to real-time parking availability information, longer time limits, and new meters that make it easy to pay will make parking more convenient and result in fewer parking tickets and less traffic.

Speeding Public Transit
Decreasing the number of drivers circling and double-parking will help keep roads clear so Muni can run faster and more reliably.

Protecting Bicyclists & Pedestrians
Drivers looking for parking are frequently drivers unaware of bicyclists and pedestrians, and that can equal accidents. Reducing double parking and circling should result in fewer collisions and safer roads.

Welcome to the Neighborhood
Because it will be easier to find and pay for parking, accessing the City's commercial areas will become easier. Less congested, safer, and more pleasant neighborhoods mean better business. Plus, with less smog and greenhouse gas, we'll all breathe easier.

About the Project

- Project Benefits
- Timeline
- Pilot Areas

Featured News

SFMTA Completes Innovative Citywide Census of San Francisco Parking
Posted on 04/05/10 in Announcements
The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), which oversees the Municipal Railway (Muni) and all surface transportation in San Francisco, has...

SF Parking Census featured on KQED Radio
Posted on 04/02/10 in Press Clippings
KQED Radio's Cy Musiker interviews SF Streetsblogs Matthew Roth about San Francisco completing a first in the world census – not of people, but of parking spaces on the street, in garages, metered or free. According

Source: Website of SFPark program, <http://www.sfpark.org>

(4) Address Fairness Broadly in Program Design, Planning and Engagement

Equity across income groups subject to pricing often leads equity discussions among analysts of road pricing. However, research shows acceptability does not vary greatly across income groups and equity defined more broadly may dominate and deserve more attention. Fairness concerns can revolve around concerns about “paying twice” necessitating clear demarcations between improvements and services supported by traditional taxes versus those supported by new pricing. Other fairness concerns to address in planning and communications may center on possible evasion of pricing; the ease of participation in developing pricing plans (“procedural” fairness); and pricing effects perceived as a hardship on certain population segments. Finally, use and spatial equity are important, calling attention to program design issues related to providing transit as an alternative in underserved locations, setting upper limits on charges, the number of crossings priced in a period, and setting seasonal rates.

Lessons from Interview Sites

The importance of income and other equity issues is illustrated by the interview sites. The crucial role of geographic equity in plans for Doyle Drive plans in San Francisco is referenced above, probably the main reason for a stymied plan. MTC addressed income equity along the way to successful adoption of its HOT lane network with the common approach of emphasizing transit improvements, but also the work of an independent expert suggesting no one is “forced” to pay as the free alternative always exists. Oregon DOT suggested a voluntary switch from gas tax to mileage fee to counter perceptions that the mileage fee is unfair to rural versus urban drivers and the contentious issue of double payment. Planners with the I-520 project in Seattle propose expanded transit, telework programs and revised signal timing to address potential inequities based on income, work schedules and traffic diversion into certain communities but not others. Thus far, the project is on schedule for implementation. North Central Texas COG carried out a special study on environmental justice showing no detriment to job access across areas affected by successfully adopted projects slated for implementation. See text boxes below for how fairness concerns were targeted in communication content by LA metro for its Express Lanes.

Discounts for Low-Income Commuters

(proposed)

- > Residents of LA County with an annual income at or below \$35,000 will qualify for a discount
- > A one-time \$25 discount will be received when a new account is set-up. It can then be applied towards the prepaid toll balance or transponder deposit.
- > Monthly account non-user fee will be waived

From LA Metro ExpressLanes Fact sheet: http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/expresslanes/images/10-1683_ntc_ExpressLanes_condensed_web.pdf

12. We all paid for the HOV lanes with our gas taxes, and now you want us to pay again for the right to use them? Shouldn't freeways remain free?

These are optional tolls, and the choice is yours. While it's true that the converted HOV lanes would become toll lanes, you only pay if you choose to use them – and in most cases, they will continue to be toll-free for many commuters. Either way, all general purpose lanes will remain free.

What's different under the ExpressLanes program is that commuters will have more options. For example, whereas HOV lanes are currently restricted to cars with two or more passengers, ExpressLanes will be open to solo drivers willing to pay a fee. And those drivers who choose to use the ExpressLanes provide a benefit to drivers who do not choose to pay a toll by creating more capacity in the other lanes. As tolling experiments in other cities have shown, this extra capacity produces speedier trips for non-toll paying drivers as well.

13. Aren't low-income drivers being punished by being priced out of certain lanes?

No. The toll policy includes toll credits for low income commuters. Carpools, vanpools, transit and motorcycles will not be charged a toll. The ExpressLanes project provides increased transit service and net toll revenues will be reinvested in transit and HOT lane improvements. The current proposal is to credit the accounts of qualifying LA County low-income households \$25 for account set-up/establishment fees that can be applied to the transponder deposit or pre-paid toll balance.

From LA Metro ExpressLanes FAQs: http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/expresslanes/images/10-1680_ntc_ExpressLanes_FAQ_web.pdf

(5) Keep Planning Open and Responsive; Make Government a Problem Solving Partner, not Culprit

Numerous literature findings suggest how planners, their governmental units and communications are perceived is an important *context* issue, perhaps as important to acceptance as the nature of their pricing proposal(s). Government itself may be perceived as a culprit for congestion problems, an issue which may be addressed by actions adjunct to pricing such as improving transit and traffic management. Suspicion of government motives in pricing for revenues underscores setting and communicating a clear cut and committed revenue plan as important to acceptance. It is worth cautioning that while presenting revenue options, planners also need to be sensitive to the possibility that some decision makers, their constituents, and influential stakeholders will be suspicious of revenue plans if the motive appears to be growing government agencies.

Also important may be matching funds from central governments and well publicized agreements across levels of government demonstrating broad commitment. In terms of planning

procedures, the degree to which pricing proposals appear “sprung” on people is key to acceptance, suggesting the importance of clear and continuous communication and solicitations for input. Meaningful and sincere attempts at involving affected parties and answering questions are important to acceptance prospects, as well as clearly communicated program objectives, comparison to non-pricing options and referencing experience elsewhere.

Lessons from Interview Sites

Evolution of pricing proposals in the interview sites shows the role of a responsive planning process and capable, trustworthy agency image. Planners in New York City believe opposition from weighty and influential stakeholders to the concept of road pricing as presented was the main detriment to adoption. However, as one interview respondent put it, “it did not help” that the city’s Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) had to roll back some promised projects two weeks before the city council voted on the pricing plan and one week before the failed state assembly vote. Perhaps some wondered if the main agencies slated to deliver the pricing program could even do so.

Texas illustrates the effort necessary to build and maintain a credible planning and execution image. The agency has engaged state legislators, neighborhoods, chambers of commerce, and local officials over 15 years to build and maintain consensus and credibility around implemented and planned tolling and priced managed lanes. As a result, the 40 elected officials at NCTCOG have given unanimous support for tolling and pricing policies. Still, they are nurtured by monthly communications from staff on pricing rationales and program progress. The agency has adopted a policy of never ignoring opposition at community or agency meetings. All parties including opponents at relevant meetings always are invited to subsequent meetings. MnDOT takes a similar tack by “leaving no question unanswered” in its outreach and engagement processes. The final example is planning around the I-520 bridge replacement project in Seattle. Here, planners

at the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) run an open, responsive, long term process of meetings with cities, counties, interest groups (over 40 meetings in 2008 alone) and maintain a media and a Q&A web site (input from over 2,700 people thus far). They also have engaged a panel of independent experts (“peer review group”) to give credibility to PSRC’s modeling process (see figure).

Recommendations from Peer Review

- **Conduct a more detailed review of results, including focus on target corridor**
- **Run the model under different assumptions, including:**
 - fixed trip table
 - sensitivity analysis
- **Improve model consistency, including:**
 - values of time
 - operating costs in trip distribution
- **Include strategic recommendations for future work**
 - stated preference survey
 - corridor specific analysis
- **State results in ranges to account for uncertainty**

Source: Washington State DOT website,
http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Partners/Build520/documents/PeerReview_NextSteps_081208.pdf

(6) Use Respectful, Clear, Non-Jargon Messages in Engagement and Communication Vehicles Throughout; Tailor to Audience Segments

Communication *vehicles* should be fashioned for various purposes in line with literature findings. These may include:

- § developing communication around the nature of the problem(s) to be addressed
- § underscoring key elements of proposed or implemented programs (as the literature finds important for support and understanding in Denver and Houston)
- § convincing affected parties about pricing effectiveness (as literature reveals on misconceptions about throughput in California or traffic impacts in Texas)
- § conveying experience to date with pricing to build familiarity
- § reiterating achievements of relevant agencies to boost credibility

For effective communication, the form, content and tone of communication vehicles around these purposes should be as respectful, pithy, clear, and free of economic, planning or engineering jargon as much as possible. Ensuring that the communication vehicles are available in multiple languages represented in the region and to minority communities, English speaking and otherwise, also helps insure all potentially affected parties are reached and have the information they need to participate in the planning process.

Illustrative Actions at Interview Sites

While the area-wide pricing plan in San Francisco has been put on hold, planners there have learned jargon in road pricing discussions and communications can be off putting. Planners believe terms such as “marginal cost” pricing and even “congestion pricing” connote an overly technical slant. In fact, “congestion pricing” seems to imply a double burden: first, congestion itself, then pricing added on top. San Francisco planners found organizing several working groups as part of planning (technical, business, policy, citizen, and agencies) and matching language accordingly reduced the risk of offending audience members. Other interview sites also have chosen not to use the term “congestion pricing.” For example, Texas uses “managed lanes” and Minnesota uses “express lanes” or simply “MnPass lanes” after the well received and widely recognized transponder used on the express lanes.



Texas provides another illustration of pithy, easily remembered and catchy phrasing in its communications about the rationales for tolling and pricing. A phrase coined by the former Chair of the Texas DOT and adopted by planners and decision maker advocates is “no roads, slow roads, or toll roads” to underscore the need for pricing in the face of growth and declining gas taxes. Such digestible messages coupled with an open, continuous communications program referenced above for legislators and communities helps maintain a supportive constituency behind the ongoing program in Texas.

(7) Learn from Glitches and Setbacks; Move on

Because road pricing has its roots in economic analysis and perceptions, it is not unusual for analysts and planners developing pricing options to focus on the most effective, efficient or optimal solutions, often centered on congestion. As the above guidepoints indicate, such an avenue may be a mistake as such options may not be the most acceptable, or are entirely unacceptable. The planner's task is to find the best of the feasible in the mix of pricing options addressing the most resonant problems. For example, to attack downtown congestion, area-wide pricing may be more effective than parking pricing, but far more perilous to plan, gain acceptance around, and move toward implementation. Planners should be aware the acceptability research shows that HOT lanes, traditional tollways and express lanes generally garner the most support, with less support likely for cordon pricing, mileage based fees and private sector partnerships involving rights to revenues. General or hypothetical pricing concepts are less likely to meet with support than those applying to specific facilities.

However, all is not lost if a pricing plan runs into resistance, misunderstanding or even rejection. As the literature suggests, some successful plans had very long gestation periods and early rejections, as in the Twin Cities area and London. The planner's task is to learn from stumbling points and regroup, whether by altering the concept, engagement strategies, timing of the program, or a combination of all these. For example, planners with MnDOT turned to a "grasstops" approach of contacting, educating and seeking support from elected officials and community leaders after setbacks with an earlier "grassroots" approach aimed more toward travelers and the public at large. The "grasstops" approach eventually helped in gaining acceptance around the successful I-394 HOT lane project. London too eventually implemented an area-wide scheme after many years of study and rejection by decision makers, most likely due in large measure to the rise of a high level advocate and forceful public official as Mayor of the city, supported by strong analysis, worsening congestion, and a transit expansion plan appealing to a large segment of residents and commuters.

Lessons from Interview Sites

The Oregon DOT mileage fee test program illustrates the importance of recovering from a problematic public and media communication process to go forward with a proposed program, address concerns, and set the stage for potential further expansion of the pricing concept. To begin the mileage fee program, planners engaged key stakeholders and decision makers in the state on the issue of replacing gas tax revenues to address the twin problems of insufficient revenues for current and foreseeable roadway needs and congestion varying by location. A 12 member taskforce of legislators, local decision makers, auto interests and others supported a mileage fee pilot program with price variation for congested areas and possible replacement of the state gas tax with a fee based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on the state's roads.

However, the broad driving public never came "on board" with VMT fees as a possible replacement to the gas tax. While the pilot program went ahead with willing volunteers, the driving (and potentially voting) public was skeptical about the VMT fees because of uncertainty about possible double paying for road use, fairness to high versus low mileage drivers, and potential privacy breeches. These concerns about double billing and privacy were addressed in the pilot (e.g. operations changed from central to fuel station billing and changed from storing

traveler coordinates to only counting mileage in tracking devices). In hindsight, planners believe a better job could have been done in developing the specifics of the VMT concept early on in light of broad public concerns. Instead, ODOT program administrators were forced to react with information on program specifics after the public and media made assumptions about how a general VMT system might work. Good explanation as in the referenced FAQ (see text box below) eventually quelled adverse press reaction and calmed some public fears, and keeps alive the potential of a future VMT fee system for the state.

ODOT's Correction of Inaccuracies in Media News Reports about the Road User Fee Pilot Program

Road User Fee Pilot Program

Corrections to news reports

*The Wall Street Journal, Editorial Page by Brendan Minter
May 10, 2005*

Inaccuracy: "...it's clear the state is looking to influence behavior in addition to raising revenue by implementing a "vehicle mileage tax."

Fact: The Road User Fee Pilot Program is designed to measure behavior among motorists not influence driver behavior. With this pilot program, Oregon is not looking to raise revenue but looking at options for the inevitable future road revenue decline. While it is true that ODOT is obliged to test congestion pricing in the pilot program, this is a requirement of ODOT's FHWA Value Pricing Pilot Program grant and not an indication of a specific policy directive adopted by the Oregon DOT or the state legislature. Any future policy decision Oregon may make on the mileage fee does not necessarily translate into application of congestion pricing, as these two policy decisions are separate. The pilot program will simply test whether or not an electronically collected mileage fee could technologically include congestion pricing should policymakers ever decide to go in that direction.

Inaccuracy: "To administer this tax, a global positioning system would be mounted in each car."

Fact: The Oregon Road User Fee concept recommends that only new vehicles be equipped with the on-board technology. All of the technologies being used in the pilot program are already being manufactured in cars today. Some automobile manufacturers have already announced that key components will be standard equipment on all models within the next few years. The Federal Highway Administration and transportation standards organizations are working to adopt universal standards for the same technologies being used in the pilot. In the near future, therefore, it is very likely that a state adopting a GPS-based mileage fee would not need to require additional hardware be installed in vehicles. Some sort of software upgrade seems more likely.

Clarification: "As a driver fuels up, the device would relay mileage information to the gas pump, which would calculate the VMT."

Fact: The Oregon concept is that as the driver fuels up, the VMT is calculated **AND the gas tax is deducted.**

Inaccuracy: "What Oregon is showing us is that taxes can provide a government with the rationale to amass and act on all sorts of personal information, including when and where you've driven."

Fact: The GPS receiver in cars simply tells the electronic odometer whether to count the miles as "in state" or "out of state." This is necessary to prevent Oregonians from being charged for miles driven outside the state. No location data is transmitted anywhere or stored in the device or elsewhere; since vehicle location data is not collected, it cannot be accessed. The only data collected and transmitted is the mileage, which is sent to the gas pump reader through a radio frequency that can only travel about eight to ten feet.

Source: http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OIPP/mileage_newsroom.shtml

(8) Stay Engaged and Responsive as Implementation Proceeds


A consistent finding from the literature is acceptance tends to grow the longer pricing programs are in existence, although the exact reasons for growing acceptance are not well explored. Some research suggests proven effectiveness may be important and, where applicable, minimize adverse consequences on influential parties such as local business. In other cases, it may be a proven link between revenues and promised transportation improvements. Whatever the case, research suggests that growing positive program experience is important for all parties including decision makers who must engage their constituents on program progress.

An important implication is concerns about acceptability should not end with program adoption. For best chances at avoiding termination, gaining continued acceptance and setting the stage for expansion of pricing in a region or state, it is important to keep promises about program design elements generally, and revenue distribution commitments in particular, as implementation proceeds. Continually highlighting successful program experience in newsletters, briefings and other communication *vehicles*, as well as detailing costs and revenues will enhance prospects for long term success.

Illustrative Actions at Interview Sites

MNDOT well illustrates how engagement and communications do not end with adoption and start up. After successful implementation of its first HOT or express lane project, I-394, MnDOT has operated not only an interactive web site for users and prospective users of the facility, but also done impact analyses, revenue/cost evaluations, and publicized results through press releases and information meetings with decision makers and stakeholder groups. MnDOT believes ongoing engagement and communication not only is important to the future of I-394 but plans for future express lanes such as those recently implemented on I-35W. In the same vein as outreach for I-394, a user satisfaction survey and its results are made available to I-394 users through the MnDOT website.

Interactive User Website for MnPass Lanes Providing Detailed Information


MnPASS
 The Expressway to Work

[MnPASS Studies & Reports](#)
[FAQ's/KB](#)
[Open a MnPASS Account](#)
[Logon to My MnPASS](#)

Support Center » Knowledgebase

» Knowledgebase Categories

The knowledgebase is organized into different categories; please select a category that you are interested in. You can also search the entire knowledgebase by entering keywords in the navigation bar beside this text.

<p>MnPASS General Information (49)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can I use the MnPASS Express Lanes without my transponder, if I have my child in the vehicle with me? What are the hours of toll operation of the MnPASS Express Lanes on I-394? Can I use the ramp meter bypass lanes as a MnPASS account holder? How do I install my MnPASS clip and transponder correctly? <p style="font-size: 0.8em; color: red;">» more topics</p>	<p>MnPASS Account Issues (19)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do I close my MnPASS account? Why is money being taken out of my account when I'm not using the lane? Can I buy the transponder? What's the address to return my transponder? <p style="font-size: 0.8em; color: red;">» more topics</p>
<p>MnPASS Law Enforcement (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can I use the MnPASS Express Lanes without my transponder, if I have my child in the vehicle with me? Can I use the ramp meter bypass lanes as a MnPASS account holder? Can I cross the double white lines? How do I install my MnPASS clip and transponder correctly? <p style="font-size: 0.8em; color: red;">» more topics</p>	<p>MnPASS Lane and Transponder Usage (27)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can I use the ramp meter bypass lanes as a MnPASS account holder? Can I cross the double white lines? How do I install my MnPASS clip and transponder correctly? When, and why, are higher tolls charged? <p style="font-size: 0.8em; color: red;">» more topics</p>
<p>MnPASS I-35W Information (25)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can I cross the double white lines? What are the tolling hours of the 35W MnPASS lanes? When, and why, are higher tolls charged? When will the 35W MnPASS lanes be completed? <p style="font-size: 0.8em; color: red;">» more topics</p>	<p>MnPASS I-394 Information (16)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the hours of toll operation of the MnPASS Express Lanes on I-394? Can I cross the double white lines? When, and why, are higher tolls charged? Do transit users and carpoolers have to pay to use the MnPASS Express Lanes? <p style="font-size: 0.8em; color: red;">» more topics</p>

Source: https://support.mnpass.net/kayako/index.php?_m=knowledgebase&_a=view

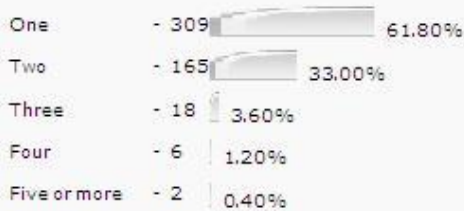
Results of User Satisfaction Survey for MnPass Lanes

1. [*] By completing this survey you are entitled to \$10 in free tolls. Please enter the MnPASS Survey ID that was provided to you in the email you received for this survey. The credit will be applied to your account by July 31st, 2009. Only one credit per account is allowed. If you do not correctly enter the Survey ID we will not be able to credit your account!

Total Answers - 500

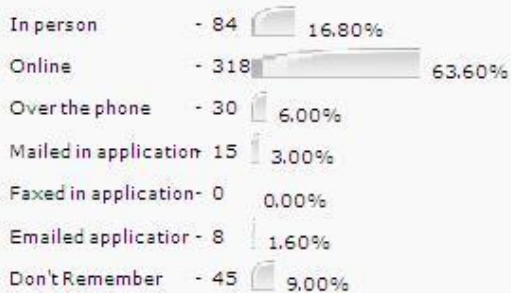
[[View Answers](#)]

2. [*] How many MnPASS transponders do you currently have in your household/business?



Total Answers - 500

3. [*] How did you open your MnPASS account?



Total Answers - 500

Source: MnPass Customer Satisfaction Survey, <https://support.mnpass.net/survey/results.php?sid=29>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Links to Additional Resources for RP Programs at Interview Sites

1) New York City: Variable Parking Charges

Free Parking, Congested Streets

http://transalt.org/files/newsroom/reports/freeparking_traffictrouble.pdf

Sustainable Streets Plan (Strategic Plan) <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/stratplan.shtml>

PARK Smart website <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/parksmart.shtml>

311 Online Park Smart Program Information

<http://www.nyc.gov/apps/311/allServices.htm?requestType=service&filterName=All+Services&levelOneId=06AA951E-06AB-11DE-AC9C-EF5AFBC474DE&levelTwoId=06AA951E-06AB-11DE-AC9C-EF5AFBC474DE-4&serviceName=Park+Smart+Program+Information&finalSubLevel=2>

2) City of San Francisco: Area-wide Pricing Proposal and Variable Parking Pricing

MAPS public information fact sheet:

http://www.sfcta.org/images/stories/Planning/CongestionPricingFeasibilityStudy/PDFs/mobility_factsheet_v3.pdf

MAPS detailed newsletter:

http://www.sfcta.org/images/stories/Planning/CongestionPricingFeasibilityStudy/PDFs/maps_newsletter1_final.pdf

Outreach section gives list of workshops and purposes:

<http://www.sfcta.org/content/view/470/286/>

Presentation slides referencing other area-wide programs and some impact projections from SF study:

http://www.sfcta.org/images/stories/Planning/CongestionPricingFeasibilityStudy/MAPS_Wksp3_Preso_WEB.pdf

SFPark Materials:

<http://www.sfmta.com/cms/psfpark/sfparkhist.htm>

<http://www.sfmta.com/cms/psfpark/sfparkindx.htm>

How pricing works explanation for public consumption:

<http://www.sfmta.com/cms/psfpark/sfparkpreng.htm>

3) San Francisco Bay Area: Regional High Occupancy Toll Lane Network

Plan: http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/2035_plan/index.htm

HOT Principles: http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/hov/Res3868_Att_B-HOT_Network_Principles.pdf

HOT Lane Analysis:

http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/hov/HOT_Phase_3_report/2_HOT_Lanes_Final_Report.pdf

FAQ: <http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/hov/faq.htm>

4) Oregon Department of Transportation: Mileage Fee Program

Road User Fee Pilot Program website <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OIPP/mileage.shtml>

Road User Fee Task Force – Report to the 72nd Oregon Legislative Assembly, March 2003
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OIPP/docs/FinalReport2003march.pdf>

5) Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle: Regional Transportation Plan and Various Projects

Moving Washington State Plan website <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/movingwashington/>

520 Project:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Partners/Build520/> or www.build520.org

520 media coverage:

www.build520.org/tolling_news.htm

520 FAQ reference to Tacoma Narrows:

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Partners/Build520/no_toll_booths.htm

Transportation 2040:

http://www.wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2009/April21/April21_BP4_Transp2040_Alternatives.pdf

<http://www.psrc.org/projects/trans2040/index.htm>

Model “peer review” committee:

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Partners/Build520/documents/PeerReview_NextSteps_081208.pdf

6) Los Angeles Metro: I-10, I-110, I-210 HOT lanes and downtown parking pricing plan

Overview

http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/expresslanes/

Fact sheet (who, what, where, when, why and new transit emphasis)

http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/expresslanes/

Outreach program

http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/expresslanes/

Discovery workshop

http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/expresslanes/

Live chat (excellent interactions)

http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/expresslanes/

7) Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul: I-394, I-35W, and Future HOT Lane Projects

Fact sheet

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/upa/documents/legfactsheet0309.pdf>

Overall information, reference to other cities

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/upa/>

Publicity video: http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/slp/vp/vp_org/about/videos.html

I-35 customer information, MNPass outreach events, survey results, operations

<http://www.mnpass.org/outreach.html>

FAQs

<https://support.mnpass.net/kayako/index.php? m=knowledgebase& a=view>

8) NCTCOG and TXDOT: SH 121, SH 161, I-635, Dallas-Fort Worth Connector, and North Tarrant Expressway

Presentations and public meetings:

<http://www.nctcog.org/trans/presentations/index.asp>

Dallas News blog discussion of issues around private toll roads:

<http://transportationblog.dallasnews.com/archives/2009/06/all-ready-for-teh-special-sess.html>

NCT COG Mobility Plan with reference to sustainable future, environmental and finance issues:

<http://www.nctcog.org/trans/mtp/2030/2009Amendment.asp>

Congestion Management Plan:

<http://www.nctcog.org/trans/cmp/>

9) Downtown New York City: Area-wide Pricing Proposal

Road pricing pitched as one of several elements in package of road repair, better transit, enforcement and operations, and pilot pricing:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/plan/transportation.shtml>

CP Pilot pitched in terms of test:

http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/downloads/pdf/report_transportation.pdf

Brief telling of State Legislature “failure” to pass road pricing pilot:

http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/downloads/pdf/progress_2008_transportation.pdf

Growth or Gridlock report by Partnership for NYC :

<http://www.nycp.org/publications/Growth%20or%20Gridlock.pdf>

10) Washington D.C. Region, Maryland and Virginia: High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes

Alternative Scenarios for a Network of Variably Priced Highway Lanes in the Metropolitan Washington Region”, Final Report, February 2008

<http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/aF5fWVIW20080314161420.pdf>

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, “A Citizen’s Guide to Transportation Decision Making in the Metropolitan Washington Region”, 2008, MWCOC, Washington DC.

HOT lanes:

I-495 HOT Lanes:

<http://www.virginiahotlanes.com/beltway/project-info/>

I-95/I-395 HOT Lanes: <http://vamegaprojects.com/projectssummary03.html>

Maryland Inter County Connector Express Lanes Project (ICC Priced Expressway):

<http://www.iccproject.com/>

Appendix B: List of Interview Sites and Interviewees

Interview sites (range of programs in parentheses) and list of interview respondents:

- § New York (areawide, variable pricing, new parking pricing)
- § San Francisco metro area (areawide, bridge toll proposals, emerging parking pricing)
- § Minnesota (HOT lane, recent and ongoing VMT fee studies)
- § Washington State (VMT fees, proposed reconstructed bridge pricing)
- § Oregon (VMT fees and gas tax replacement, HOT lane)
- § Los Angeles metro area (emerging HOT lanes and parking pricing)
- § Virginia (HOT lanes and network HOT plans)
- § Washington, DC metro area (HOT lanes and HOT networks)
- § Dallas (HOT lanes and HOT networks)

Region	Respondent(s) at each site	Agency
Dallas-Fort Worth	Director of Transportation	North Central Texas Council of Governments
Los Angeles	Transportation Planning Manager	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
	Project Manager and Executive Officer for the Congestion Reduction Demonstration Initiative	
	Deputy Executive Officer for Regional Communications	
Minneapolis-St. Paul	Principal Planner	Metropolitan Transportation Services, Metropolitan Council
	Senior Fellow and Director, State and Local Policy Program	Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota
San Francisco	Manager of Transportation Planning	Metropolitan Transportation Commission
	Director	San Francisco County Transportation Authority
Seattle	Transportation Manager	Puget Sound Regional Council
Washington, DC	Transportation Director	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Maryland	Director	Maryland State Highway Administration
Oregon	Manager	Office of Innovative Partnerships and Alternative

		Funding, ODOT
New York	Director	Congestion Mitigation, NYCDOT
	Director of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability	Mayor's Office of Operations City of New York
	Director of Planning Studies	NYCDOT Office of Planning and Sustainability

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Topic Areas related to Road Pricing Communications

Background and Emerging Directions

- § Latest developments in road pricing (including parking pricing) plans and projects
- § Emerging directions for road pricing (RP), including involved agencies and relevant stakeholders
- § Recent studies for impact projections, program design, cost/revenue estimates, and attitudinal survey and focus group results
- § Relationship of emerging directions in RP to current important economic and political trends

Communication Strategies

Content

- § Variations in communications content by: (1) type of pricing proposed and (2) stakeholder group targeted
- § How RP was framed, objectives communicated; if/how packaged with transit; contingencies for potential negative impacts; revenue distribution plan
- § Ties, if any, to environmental and funding issues for transportation and climate change action.
- § Treatment of equity, including broader than income terms, e.g. spatial (in/out zone), sector (business), “paying twice,” occupations requiring daytime use of vehicles, those on fixed work schedules.

Context

- § If/how government is pitched as a resource partner working on congestion.
- § If/how RP programs elsewhere were referenced and what specific cases were used.
- § If/how views of stakeholders, interest groups, key decision makers for and against were assessed and taken into account toward acceptable compromises; if/how nurturing of champions and allies was done.

Vehicles

- § Specific communication vehicles used to target voters, residents, businesses, other interest groups, and decision makers vital to the final passage of pricing proposals.
- § Samples of perceived successful or problematic vehicles (flyers, newsletters, press releases, public hearing materials, brochures, web information, opinion/attitudinal surveys).
- § For ongoing programs, customer information materials e.g. newsletters, mailings and web information). Pros/cons of each.
- § Reference to (1) active and likely responsive decision maker for follow up and (2) personnel in public relations or elsewhere directly responsible for relevant communications.