



CLIMATE SOLUTIONS PORTFOLIO

#5: Congestion Pricing

Proposed Measure

The Lower Mainland and the Capital Region both face an increasing problem of road congestion. In the Lower Mainland, the Gateway Program has been initiated as a response, with a \$4 billion program of road and bridge building designed to ease congestion and make traffic flow more smoothly.

The history of attempts to solve congestion by building new roads, however, shows that the objective is rarely attained. In Victoria, the Island Highway expansion of the early 1990s, designed to end the Colwood Crawl, made it easier for people to commute longer distances, causing the problem to return in greater degree in less than ten years. The Gateway Program is almost guaranteed to have similar results, leading to more vehicle use, more sprawl, more congestion, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. As such, it is a contradictory impulse within the province's larger plan to reduce BC's GHGs.

Congestion charges have been used with considerable success to relieve congestion in London, Singapore, and Stockholm. London's charge of £8 per entry has caused a 20% reduction in traffic and greenhouse gas emissions. Stockholm's trial program, with a charge of \$1.25 to \$2.50 per trip, also led to a 20% reduction in traffic, and around \$1 million a day in daily revenues. The scheme is being made permanent in August 2007. Fees are gathered by ANPR – Automated Number Plate Recognition.

The BCSEA's proposal is that the Gateway Program be modified to replace road and bridge building with road pricing on the major entry points to Vancouver. Road pricing could also be used on the Malahat for entry into Victoria.

Benefits

- Congestion would be relieved.
- Vehicle traffic would fall by up to 20%, bringing a parallel fall in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Most of the planned \$4 billion planned investment could be saved.
- The income from road pricing could be used to finance a major expansion of transit, bus-rapid transit, luxury long-distance coaches and safe cycling lanes.
- Air quality would improve, and the stress to residents from noise and traffic would diminish.

Execution Plan

- Ministry of Transport – commission an independent report into the costs and benefits of congestion pricing for the Lower Mainland, including the impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

Areas for Cabinet approval:

- Apply a freeze to all Gateway Program projects until the congestion pricing report has been completed and considered as a serious alternative.

Resources

Road Pricing, Congestion Pricing, Value Pricing, Toll Roads and HOT Lanes by Todd Litman, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 2007.