



Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

NVTC

Thinking Outside the Car Since 1964



WILL FREEWAYS STAY FREE?

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*See www.thinkoutsidethecar.org. The views expressed in this presentation are not necessarily those of NVTC's Board.

Proposed Regional Variably Priced Lanes Scenario, 2030





EXAMINING ROAD PRICING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WASHINGTON D.C. REGION



Index to Figure 3: Proposed Variably Priced Lane Scenario, 2030

1. The entire Capital Beltway (I-495/I-95)
2. I-270 from I-70 to the Capital Beltway (I-495)
3. I-95 from the Capital Beltway (I-495) to the Baltimore Beltway
4. US Route 50 from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge to I-395
5. MD Route 5 from US 301 at MD Route 5 to I-495
6. The Intercounty Connector, Entire Length
7. I-295 from Capital Beltway to Anacostia Freeway
8. Anacostia Freeway/Kenilworth Avenue from I-295 to US Route 50
9. I-95 from Caroline / Spotsylvania County Line to Capital Beltway (I-495/I-95)
10. I-395 from the Capital Beltway (I-495/I-95) to I-295 and US Route 50
11. MD Route 4 from US 301 to I-495
12. MD Route 210 from MD 228 to I-495
13. US 301 from the Nice Bridge to US 50 (includes the proposed Waldorf Bypass)
14. I-66 from Warren / Fauquier County Line, over the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge, to Rock Creek Parkway to Independence Avenue, to Maine Avenue, SW to SE/SW Freeway
15. Dulles Toll Road (VA 267) from VA 28 to I-66
16. VA 28 from I-66 to VA 7
17. VA 7 from US Route 15 to the Dulles Toll Road
18. Fairfax County Parkway from I-66 to VA 7
19. Franconia-Springfield Parkway from Sydenstricker Road to Frontier Drive
20. Braddock Road from Burke Lake Road to I-95

Note: DDOT has requested that all D.C. river crossings be included in the scenario. In addition to the bridges part of the segments listed above, the following bridges are included:

- Chain Bridge
- Key Bridge
- Memorial Bridge
- South Capitol Street Bridge (Frederick Douglass Bridge)
- Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge (John Phillip Sousa Bridge)
- East Capitol Street Bridge (Whitney Young Memorial Bridge)
- Benning Road Bridge



FREEWAYS WERE NEVER FREE BUT PRICING IS MAKING THEM MORE EFFICIENT



1. The costs of externalities of freeway construction and use are increasingly recognized, especially in urban areas.
 - Air Pollution
 - Energy
 - Land Use
 - Congestion
 - Quality of Life
 - Economic Vitality
2. Worldwide examples of cordon and corridor congestion pricing, auto insurance and road user fees based on where and when people drive, all suggest a positive trend.
3. In the future, we are likely to change accepted behavior and begin paying directly for road use, just as we now willingly do for bottled water.



WHY IS IT TAKING SO LONG?



Public attitudes are only a part of the challenge. Devising a project that is theoretically sound and can be supported by a broad coalition of elected officials and regional agencies is a prerequisite to gaining public support.

- Theory versus practice
- Politics
- Public attitudes
- Interagency issues
- Federal grants



THEORY VERSUS PRACTICE



- Economists generally accept congestion pricing solutions (e.g. William Vickrey won a 1996 Nobel Prize) but there are differing views of causes of and cures for traffic congestion (e.g. more transit?).
- Equity can be challenged and redistribution through side payments may be impractical.
- Accuracy of cost and revenue forecasts for public projects needs improvement.
- Externalities: Will congestion be shifted and neighborhood streets clogged?
 - Air pollution
 - Emergency
 - Land use
 - Congestion
 - Quality of life
 - Economic vitality
- Will the technology work as promised?
- Second best: A network of priced roads may be more efficient than one isolated corridor but the network may be too difficult to implement.



POLITICS



- Party A at federal level and Party B at state level and Party A/B at local level (are you trying to set me up to fail?).
- Changing party strategies.
- Plays into the hands of “no new tax” advocates.
- Election year jitters.
- Elected officials:
 - Wish to go slow and minimize risk.
 - Responsive to clearly articulated wishes of constituents.
- Private sector:
 - Wish to go fast to meet deadlines and avoid escalating costs.
 - May have rivalries with firms who are also lobbying.



POLITICS



- Forming coalitions:

- Who gets the revenue?

- Will Smartgrowth environmentalists accept any expansion of road network?

- Geographic competition:

- Would revenues from a cordon at the D.C. boundary go to D.C. or Northern Virginia?

- Would businesses be helped or hurt on either side of a cordon line?

- NIMBY's vs. Me First

- Particular problems at borders, termini and access/egress points.

- Need champions.

- Responsive to sound survey data.

- Particularly sensitive to safety issues.



PUBLIC ATTITUDES



- Lexus lanes: Hurt the poor.
- Exclusion: I paid for it; I should be able to use it.
- Double taxation.
- Fear of unchecked increases in tolls.
- Distrust private sector involvement (CEO salaries; underpay to purchase public facilities).
- Spillover congestion.
- Aversion to change.
- Technology fears.
- Want to influence outcome.
- Travel delays due to toll collections.
- Administrative problems in getting transponders and managing account.



PUBLIC ATTITUDES



- Don't like driving with trucks--will pricing increase truck traffic or divert to parallel roads?
- Uneven enforcement.
- Privacy issues (especially for photo enforcement).
- Distrust markets and economists.
- Existing HOV lanes converted to pricing may suffer service deterioration.
- Will currently free HOV's have to pay in the future?
- Poor understanding of the full costs of driving.
- Lack of acceptance of "time is money."
- May fear for safety (taking highway shoulders for new HOT lanes).
- Transparency: Are processes open and predictable to generate public confidence?
- Growing survey evidence that the public "gets it."
- Can be shaped by influential media trying to "sell papers."



INTERAGENCY ISSUES



- Federal, state, regional, local agencies all have a role.
- Many modal agencies, each with different client bases, regulations and funding streams.
- This is a new and difficult challenge imposed on staff with heavy workloads for an uncertain pay off.
- Will transponders and other technology be interoperable?
- Will customer service quality be maintained?
- Transportation plans are underfunded.



INTERAGENCY ISSUES



- The process of agreeing on changes as a region, revising constrained Long Range Plans through Metropolitan Planning Organizations, obtaining federal grants and non-federal matching funds or negotiating long-term contracts with private consortia. Can take years even before implementing construction or conversion of the new facilities.
- Funds flowing through the state DOT for allocation risk diversion (or the perception thereof).
- Sequencing problems: The devil is in the details and traffic analyses and demand forecasts to demonstrate levels of service and amounts of revenues for other uses and engineering to demonstrate safety may not be available until commitments to the project must be made.
- May be influenced by other developments with other sets of agencies (e.g. BRAC with DOD; rail to Dulles with MWAA, 14th Street Bridge).



FEDERAL GRANTS



Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth:

- Inflexible.
- Cumbersome electronic filing.
- Red-tape.
- Burdensome local match.
- Earmarks.
- Diversion from other worthwhile programs.
- Modal differences (FHWA “easier” than FTA).
- Transit capital vs. operating restrictions.
- Future funds not guaranteed.
- Too little funds and too much competition.
- Not enough time to achieve local consensus before deadlines.
- Unclear award criteria.



REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF ANY SUCCESSFUL CONGESTION PRICING DEMONSTRATION



- Gather detailed information about public attitudes to guide public education/involvement strategies.
- Identify champions.
- Allow enough time to vet concerns.
- Use demonstrations followed by public evaluation.
- Offer credits for drivers not accustomed to priced facilities.
- Provide choices first (transit, telework).
- If possible eliminate regressive taxes using part of the new revenues.
- Guarantee uniform enforcement.
- Solve the boundary problems.
- Dedicate new revenues to specific projects within the region.
- Ensure appropriate institutional architecture and legal framework.