

Congestion Pricing in NYC: Getting it right

Congestion pricing is based on the principle that vehicles should be charged for the public costs that they impose.

These costs include the maintenance of highways, bridges, and tunnels, the economic costs of congestion, and the health and environmental costs of air pollution and traffic crashes.

On April 1, 2019, the New York State Legislature and Governor Andrew Cuomo agreed to charge motor vehicles entering Manhattan south of 61st Street. While the legislation provides a framework, many details need to be finalized, with the program launching as soon as January 1, 2021.

RPA's report, *Congestion Pricing: Getting it right*, includes 10 recommendations to develop an effective, equitable, and rational congestion pricing program that can serve as a model for cities across the country.



Recommendations for System Design and Implementation



Implement transit and bicycle improvements before congestion pricing begins.



Set traffic, environmental, and health goals and ensure benefits are equitably shared.



Design a flexible system that can incorporate new technologies and allow for more dynamic pricing.



Create a simple method to identify vehicles bypassing the congestion zone.



Introduce two-way tolling in the congestion zone.

Recommendations for Pricing



Vary the fee by level of congestion at different times of day, and by vehicle size.



Set the fee high enough to meet revenue and congestion targets.



Apply a consistent rationale when determining toll credits.



Keep the current for-hire vehicle and taxi surcharge and exempt them from the new congestion fee.



Limit exemptions to those already specified by the Legislature.

Who Benefits from Congestion Pricing? Everyone.

Congestion pricing is intended to benefit car users by reducing congestion; transit riders by investing in subways, buses, and commuter rails; and communities by reducing air pollution and improving health outcomes. Just 2% of the working poor would potentially pay a congestion charge.* By investing revenue into our transportation system, congestion pricing will help commuters in NYC and across the region.

Potential Traffic Benefits

- ▶ 10% or greater increase in weekday peak period traffic speeds
- ▶ At least 58,000 fewer auto trips on weekdays
- ▶ Drivers will save at least 136,000 hours on weekdays
 - Emergency vehicles and vehicles transporting disabled persons will be exempt from the charge, and residents of the zone with incomes less than \$60,000 per year will receive a tax credit.
 - Passenger cars will only be charged once daily for entering or remaining in the congestion zone.

Benefits were estimated using Charles Komanoff's Balanced Transportation Analyzer for four different pricing scenarios ranging from a flat charge that equaled existing TBTA tolls at all times to one that was 50% higher when traffic is greatest and 50% lower at other times.

Environmental and Health Benefits

- ▶ By reducing the overall number of cars on the road, congestion pricing can help reduce traffic-related injuries and clean the air, reducing respiratory-related disease
- ▶ 750 fewer traffic-related injuries and 4 fewer deaths each year
- ▶ 7% reduction in CO₂ emissions and a 7% reduction in PM_{2.5} emissions on weekdays in the congestion zone
- ▶ Other pollutants, like carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, and sulfur dioxide, could be reduced by 4 - 5%.
- ▶ These emission reductions could result in over \$100 million in estimated health cost savings annually

*Source: Congestion Pricing, A CSS Analysis, October 24, 2017.



Congestion pricing has the potential to solve Manhattan's complex and inequitable toll shopping system. The revenue generated from this program will be an important piece in funding the largest transit system in the world. But we need to get it right.

