Mobility, Access, and Pricing Study

Congestion pricing involves charging drivers a user fee to drive in specific, congested areas, and using the revenue generated to fund transportation improvements, such as better transit service, road improvements, and bicycle and pedestrian projects. The Mobility, Access, and Pricing Study (MAPS) examines the feasibility of a congestion pricing program in San Francisco, finding that it could be a highly effective way to manage our transportation system more efficiently and support the city's future growth plans.

A solution for San Francisco's congestion problem

Peak-period traffic congestion in the city's core areas negatively impacts our transportation system. During rush hour, congestion makes travel by both automobile and transit slow, with average auto speeds at 10 mph and average transit speeds at 8 mph in much of the downtown areas (see map, right). Congestion is already a problem today, and the city has ambitious growth plans for the future. Unless bold measures are taken, our streets will be unable to accommodate this growth without traffic coming to a standstill. A mobility and pricing program would send a signal to drivers to consider alternatives to driving in the peak and generate significant new revenue that would greatly improve transit service and the road network in San Francisco. Benefits from a potential congestion pricing program would include:

- 12% fewer peak period vehicle trips
- 21% reduction in vehicle hours of delay
- 5% reduction in greenhouse gases citywide
- $60–80 million in annual net revenue for mobility improvements
- 20–25% transit speed improvement
- 12% reduction in pedestrian incidents

Given the high level of innovation associated with a congestion pricing program, a measured way to move forward is through a pilot project. A pilot would operate for 6–12 months and allow for real-time evaluation before the city considers anything permanent. Even then, several steps would be required before an implementation decision could be made.
Effective Scenarios

MAPS has identified three high-performing scenarios, each of which would be accompanied by substantial up-front transit improvements in corridors impacted by the fee. A future phase of the study will exclude additional analysis of the Southern Gateway scenario but will include designing an additional scenario that could achieve comparable benefits through a combination of downtown parking management policies and a modified cordon.

1. The AM/PM Northeast Cordon would collect $3/crossing from cars entering or leaving the zone in both AM and PM peak hours (capped at $6/day).
2. The PM-Outbound Northeast Cordon would collect $6/day from cars leaving the zone in the outbound direction during PM peak hours.
3. The Southern Gateway would collect $3/crossing from cars crossing the San Francisco-San Mateo county line in both directions in both AM and PM peak hours (capped at $6/day). It would also include increased parking rates downtown.

Congestion pricing and equity

For several reasons, we are confident that a congestion pricing program will not have an undue impact on low-income individuals:

- The Study recommends a 50% discount for low-income travelers;
- Only approximately 5% of peak-period travelers to downtown San Francisco are drivers with annual household incomes lower than $50,000;
- Support for studying a San Francisco congestion pricing program is highest among low-income Bay Area residents;
- Many of low-income travelers in the Bay Area are already on transit; congestion pricing will get transit moving faster, bringing all travelers faster, more reliable travel times.

Congestion pricing and the economy

The Study analyzed economic impacts of a program, finding that the program would have a neutral to positive impact for the following reasons:

- Congestion pricing would alleviate the severe economic costs caused by congestion in San Francisco today. More than half of the travel time for the average Bay Area auto trip can be attributed to congestion delay, translating to a cost of almost $7 per trip in travel time lost due to congestion, or over $2 billion for individuals and businesses in 2005. This is time and money that can be better used by Bay Area residents.
- More foot traffic is expected downtown, which could lead to more retail activity within the congestion pricing zone, as was the case when London and Stockholm implemented congestion pricing programs.

What does the public think?

We have conducted four rounds of outreach over the course of the Study, reaching over 1,000 Bay Area residents through workshops, webinars, polls, focus groups, and other means. Feedback from the most recent round of public meetings suggests support for continued evaluation of congestion pricing.

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