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Experts discuss parking infrastructure at Transport Futures Mobility Pricing Stakeholder Forum

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Parking infrastructure, a rarely talked about subject, got a day in the spotlight at a recent stakeholder conference.

The [Transport Futures Mobility Pricing Stakeholder Forum](#) was the sixth discussion since 2008 about the role of mobility pricing in solving Ontario's ongoing transport challenges.

Parking professional [Dennis Burns of Phoenix-based Kimley-Horn and Associates](#) pointed to a UCLA study which found that drivers searching for curbside parking in just one fifteen-block district in Los Angeles over a period of one year drove an extra 950,000 miles and produced 730 tons of carbon dioxide.



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Burns looked at how technology can be used to make parking better and eliminate people spending time looking for parking. In San Francisco, SFpark collects and distributes real-time information about parking availability which is available online or through an app for smartphones. Parking prices are incrementally raised or lowered in SFpark pilot areas based on demand and parking meters accept credit and debit cards.

“People plan for seeing their family or going to the hockey game, but they don't ever plan for where they're going to park until the moment they get there. If you can get people information before and they're willing to take that information, then that would make their trip much shorter and then you could reduce congestion and also raise revenue and you never get a citation, you never get a parking ticket,” said Martin Collier, founder and organizer of Transport Futures.

■ [Harris Decima poll finds Canadians divided on use of tolls for infrastructure funding](#)

■ [GO Transit finishes construction on parking garage in](#)

An ongoing discussion at the conference has looked at the congestion charge system in cities like London or Stockholm which if drivers stay outside the city it's free, but drivers pay if they go inside a special zone. Singapore is going the next step where every road is going to be priced with a GPS-based system.

[Jens Schade](#), of [Dresden University of Technology](#), Traffic and Transportation Psychology, said people like things to stay relatively the same and favour the status quo. But experience suggests that there is a switch in that attitude once measures are in place.

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“People are, say, against toll roads and that sort of thing, but when the structure is built and people get used to it, there seems to be a little bit of a shift in attitude and people go ‘this isn’t so bad, I’m in favour of this now’,” explained [Residential and Civil Construction Association of Ontario](#) Executive Director Andy Manahan.

Schade presented a study by [Jonas Eliasson and Lina Jonsson](#), ‘[The unexpected “yes”: Explanatory factors behind the positive attitudes to congestion charges in Stockholm](#)’. Support for the charges increased from less than 30 per cent before the trial to just over 50 per cent towards the end of the trial. After the reintroduction in 2007, support increased even more to nearly 70 per cent at the end of 2007.

Schade said perception about the Stockholm charge includes: high level of environmental concern, which is strongly associated with more positive attitudes to the charges together with substantial objective effects, was instrumental for the

support for the Stockholm charges; the more positive a respondent is, the stronger is the belief in the beneficial effects of the charges; and many believed that the charges have decreased noise levels in the Stockholm inner city. In fact, there is no evidence at all of any such effects.

For 2012, Collier is planning Transport Futures community workshops that replicate the hotel proceedings. There will also be two mobility pricing conferences, one taking place outside Toronto. Webinars are also being explored as a way to keep the discussion on track between major events.