

THE ROAD PRICING DEBATE

Clarity needed

Serious discussions about road pricing and other similar revenue streams need to be taking place now, regardless of the fact the topic is a political hot potato.

Beyond simply raising funds, these revenue tools can encourage more efficient development, but the goal of such measures needs to be made clear, the audience was told Friday afternoon at the Transport Futures Road Pricing and Leadership summit in Toronto.

“What is our goal in road pricing?” asked Toronto councillor **Peter Milczyn**, noting that road pricing is considered “the third rail of municipal politics” in the city. “Is it to divert or reduce traffic?

So we have congestion charges. Is it to adjust driving patterns? Then we can look at peak pricing. Or is it simply to raise money? We have to have a clear purpose.”

Milczyn added that “we have to change how people use their cars, why they use them, when they use them and make it clear to them that there is a cost to that.”

That sentiment was echoed by **Vaughan** councillor **Joyce Frustaglio**, who stressed the need for a shifting perspective on the part of the general public. Milczyn, Frustaglio and **Caledon** councillor **Alan Thompson** spoke as part of the summit’s municipal panel. “The biggest dilemma we’re having is trying to change the mindset,” Frustaglio told the audience. “People still feel they came to Vaughan to live in a 5,000-sq.ft. home or a 2,000-sq.ft. home with a nice, big backyard and they don’t want intensification. Well not everybody can live in a huge single-family dwelling.”

Milczyn also took the opportunity to call on regional transit planning agency **Metrolinx** to come up with an investment strategy soon. Metrolinx has been working on an investment strategy for several years, with a June 2013

deadline to submit it to the province for consideration.

“[Metrolinx] can’t wait another two years to issue a discussion paper,” Milczyn said. “Two years from now we should have whatever the new system is going to be, in place because that’s when we’re going to be supposedly going full-tilt on construction projects.”

Both Frustaglio and Thompson agreed that transit services should work co-operatively across the GTA’s borders.

“We need a Golden Horseshoe transit system,” Thompson said. “We’ve got to move people quickly and efficiently. We’ve got to break the barriers down. We’ve got to work co-operatively to make it happen.”

Milczyn asserted that development charges should depend on the infrastructure in the area of the development. Municipalities should charge less for a development on or near a subway or transit line.

“Incentivize that construction because we’re going to get those people as riders on the subway, we’re going to have more compact urban form, we’re not going to have to build new roads and highways,” Milczyn said, adding that charges for far flung suburban developments that require car use to get anywhere should be far higher.

The Toronto councillor also expressed support for parking surcharges, using as an example suburban malls that offer thousands of ostensibly free parking spaces.

“That land could be put to much better use, so if it’s only going to be used for parking somebody’s got to pay for it,” he told the crowd. “At the end of the day it’s going to be the consumers in that mall, whether they pay an hourly fee or whether it gets rolled into the cost of the products they buy there.”