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Transportation Futures – Road Pricing Forum

Amsterdam considers financing roads with mileage charges

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With more commuters headed to its city core and transit bursting at the seams, Amsterdam will roll out a trial project to generate reliable funding for infrastructure improvements.

Germa Bakker, policy advisor for the City of Amsterdam, explained at a recent Transportation Futures road pricing forum in Toronto that the city has committed itself to start a 1,000-person trial of charging for every kilometre driven within the city.

Economic competitiveness, quality of life, congestion reduction and generating new funding for roads and public transit are the primary drivers for the new plan, Bakker said.

An increase in two-car families and people driving greater distances to work in Amsterdam have stressed the city's infrastructure as never before.

"What is most important is accessibility and mobility within Amsterdam," added Baker.

All the funds generated under the plan, if eventually adopted, would be allocated strictly to Amsterdam's infrastructure or transit and not to general city revenues, said Bakker. A panel at the road pricing forum in Toronto commended the political commitment shown by the city in at least attempting the trial.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has stressed that the municipal infrastructure deficit in Canada is at least \$123 billion. Consistent and predictable improvement in transit and infrastructure will help reduce gridlock and result in better productivity, said Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario.

"Also, with continued intensification, the linkages between transportation and land use have to be there," added Manahan.

The Amsterdam trial is not just a money-making scheme, added Bakker — it also aims to modify travel habits to improve air quality and reduce emissions in line with new European Union air quality standards for building new roads and buildings.

Amsterdam's 15 largest companies have agreed to help each other reach a 10 per cent reduction in the commuting done by their workers.

The companies will look at establishing "smart centres" outside of the city core where workers can head to in the morning to work from for a few hours.

After the morning rush hour is done, the workers will head into the city core through car-sharing, a private bus link or modified city transit links, Bakker said.

Reducing environmental and infrastructure damage caused by transport trucks on German highways is the key motivator for that country's satellite-based freight-tolling system, attendees at the road pricing forum learned.

Only trucks weighing more than 12,600 tonnes are tolled and the toll is calculated on the emission class and number of axles the truck has.

"Germany was looking for environmentally friendly operation of freight transport on its roads," explained Martin Rickmann, head of communications at Germany's Toll Collect GmbH.

Only trucks weighing more than 12,600 tonnes are tolled and the toll is calculated on the emission class and number of axles the truck has.

The toll revenue collected is flexibly used, whether it is for further environmental protection measures or to expand the road tolling network, but not necessarily roadside infrastructure.