

## Tolls considered for Gardiner, Don Valley Parkway

More study is needed, say city staff who envision tolls as high as \$3.25 per car trip



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A Toronto staff report suggests that tolling the Gardiner Expressway would raise enough money to cover the repair and maintenance costs of the elevated highways.

**By:** David Rider City Hall Bureau Chief, Published on Mon Sep 14 2015

Forcing drivers to pay tolls to use the revamped Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway could fund all the freeways' costs with extra cash left over for transit projects, city staff say.

They envision flat-fee tolls, for a single trip on either or both roads, of between \$1.25 and \$3.25, with trucks paying double those amounts.

If council opted for tolls but preferred a distance-based system, like that of Highway 407, staff suggest between 10 cents and 35 cents for each kilometre travelled, again with trucks paying double.

Stephen Buckley, Toronto's transportation general manager, outlines the scenarios in a [report](#) going to Mayor John Tory's executive committee, but warns that more research is needed before city council should tackle the controversial electronic tolling system proposal.

In June, while narrowly approving the "[hybrid](#)" proposal for the east Gardiner, city council asked staff to report back this month on tolling as a possible revenue source.

Buckley says a full study was not possible in that time frame. He asks city council to authorize his department to report back next year with "in-depth impacts on the network and particularly on parallel adjacent roads and facilities, impacts on the environment, or how to address implementation issues."

The Gardiner now carries, on average, a total of 228,000 vehicles east of Highway 427. Some 110,000 drivers use the DVP north of the Bayview Ave./Bloor St. interchange each weekday.

Staff peg the 30-year cost of the Gardiner, including rebuilding the elevated link to the DVP, at \$3.8 billion. Costs for the at-grade DVP are \$200 million. The 30-year cost of the toll system is estimated at \$1.7 billion, for a grand total of \$5.7 billion.

That could be recouped with a flat-fee toll of \$1.25 for cars, and \$2.50 for trucks, or 10 cents per kilometre for cars and 20 cents for trucks.

To recoup the long-term costs in only 10 years, flat-fee tolls would be \$3.25 per car trip and \$6.50 for trucks, or 35 cents per kilometres for cars and 70 cents per kilometre for trucks.

"Revenue from toll rates higher than what is required to cover all (costs) ... could be directed to other transportation alternatives for the city, for example transit," the report states. "A reserve fund could be established by council to set aside the toll revenues."

Tolling would reduce gridlock on the highways, the report suggests, forecasting that a \$3 flat fee would reduce average trip times by three to five minutes.

Even if city council agrees next year to move ahead with tolling, Toronto would need the Ontario government to pass two enabling regulations.

Council also asked city staff to look at the possibility of replacing the Gardiner with a [tunnel](#), rather than the hybrid option of rebuilding the elevated link to the DVP and replacing the ramps down to Leslie St. with a boulevard.

In a report staff the cost of a tunnel was previously pegged at \$2.5 billion but could go as high as \$10 billion, with no connectivity to streets to the north and south.

"Notwithstanding the allure of Gardiner tunnelling proposals over the years, this report concludes that the opportunity to undertake a tunnel for all or portions of the Gardiner Expressway has passed."