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The key to tolling acceptance: “Make the system known!”

Earmarking revenues to transit ups Montreal support to 72%

Almost 100 delegates – including six Ontario politicians – were given valuable leadership lessons at the third Transport Futures Road Pricing Summit which took place on Friday.

Oregon Senator Bruce Starr, New York City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito, Langley Mayor Peter Fassbender and Projet Montréal Leader Richard Bergeron agreed that a bi-partisan communications strategy that lays out road pricing facts and benefits can ultimately change mindsets.

Oregon’s Mileage Fee pilot project was initiated in 2002 when the government realized that an increasing number of electric vehicles would erode the gas tax – which is earmarked for the state’s road infrastructure. Paraphrasing renowned American psychologist Abraham Maslow, Senator Starr stated, “Job number one is to make the system known. When system administration, efficiency, fairness, privacy, technology, rate structures and compliance choices are explained, public concerns are alleviated.”

According to NYC Council Member Mark-Viverito, a 3-year congestion charge pilot project, proposed in the city’s 2007 PlanNYC master plan, never saw the light of day. Despite “an aggressive campaign” mounted by the city council in conjunction with a diverse range of business, environmental and social justice partners, the “unaccountable government” in Albany never voted to give NYC the required tolling legislation. Just the same, Mark-Viverito believes that “the issue will surface again” as the city’s pollution, congestion and underfunded transit service continue to get worse.

Mayor Fassbender, speaking in his role as TransLink Chair, believes that good working relationships are required if the use of the automobile is to be changed. “It is time to stop pointing fingers at other municipal politicians and levels of government. But we must also tell the province of the realities on the ground -- even if they don’t like it.” He spoke of the need for

a 40-year infrastructure plan that is self-financing, which would include tolling existing infrastructure.

Public support for bridge tolls in Montreal is now at 72 percent. Projet Montréal Leader Richard Bergeron stated that this level of support is possible when revenues are clearly dedicated to transportation infrastructure. He stated that the best way to support transit investment over road infrastructure was to use real cost comparisons.

Transport Futures Founder Martin Collier was pleased with the event outcome. “We found out that leaders from outside Ontario have the road pricing answers that our leaders at home must learn. We don’t have to re-invent the wheel but we do have to educate politicians and citizens alike in a respectful manner. We’ll continue to do just that with our fall conference, webinars and community consultations. Stay tuned!”

The Transport Futures Road Pricing and Leadership Summit was presented by Healthy Transport Consulting (HTC) in association with the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance (RCCAO), 407 ETR, LIUNA Local 183, Halcrow Consulting and several other key sponsors and supporters.

For further information, visit <http://www.transportfutures.ca/summit-2010> or contact:

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