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Upcoming Transportation Futures forum considers alternative financing models

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The best ways to generate cash streams to help pay for new infrastructure, improve accessibility and reduce congestion will be explored at the upcoming Transportation Futures road pricing forum.

“There seems to be a mood that you cannot have alternative financing models, such as road tolls but we can learn from London, Holland and Germany’s experiences,” says Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

Sessions on road pricing in France, VMT (Vehicle Miles Travelled) fees in Oregon, USA, congestion charging in London, England, satellite-based freight tolling in Germany and payment plan innovations in Amsterdam, all presented by experts from those nations, will roll out during the day-long forum on Thursday, Nov. 13 at Yorkville’s InterContinental Hotel.

Sustained attention on Canada’s crumbling infrastructure, growing congestion in major cities and proposed transit expansion plans, such as Metrolinx’s 100-point plan, The Big Move: Transforming Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, were all catalysts to create the road pricing forum, says the RCCAO.

When Metrolinx announced its \$50 billion construction and expansion plan earlier this fall, its draft investment strategy for the plan did not include road tolls or special taxes to pay for the transit improvements. Metrolinx stated that enough money had already been committed for improvements to GO Transit, TTC, and regional services. The RCCAO counters that with only \$11.5 billion fully committed by the province, for strictly capital expansion, other revenue generators should be explored.

“There is no guarantee of funds that will flow beyond what has been committed,” says Manahan. “We think it is prudent to have other streams of funding funneled into the system to help.”

Ontario's MoveOntario2020 initiative will support the Metrolinx's plan for large scale projects. Metrolinx intends to report back to the province in 2013 with recommendations to address funding and fill the plan's 2016 to 2030 funding gap. If the plan is fully implemented over 25 years, 75 per cent of residents in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, compared to the current 42 per cent, will live within two kilometres of a dedicated transit line. All that work means a lot of construction jobs and demand on construction labour markets.

"Securing a predictable flow of funding can convert into a steady stream of projects to plan for," notes Manahan.

Visit www.rccao.com for more information on the road pricing forum or to register.