

CONGESTION PRICING: EQUITY



Studies have shown that lower income individuals face the greatest financial harm when they are denied adequate choices. For example, lack of choice can result in lost wages or late fees for day care that could have been avoided had they been provided a viable choice. Surveys conducted on priced lanes have concluded a broad spectrum of income groups express approval of the priced projects because they are given a choice of choosing a tolled route, an alternative route, or a different transportation mode. Furthermore, transit riders, many of whom are low-income users, actually experience faster and more reliable transit trips when lanes are managed with pricing.

- Data collected along facilities currently operating on major transportation corridors in California, Minneapolis and Texas show a wide range of income groups use the value priced lanes at different levels of frequency.
- Impacts of congestion pricing are not necessarily related to income and can also be based on flexibility of time and routes available to users according to research from San Jose State University and the University of California, Berkeley.
- In San Diego, support for the “FasTrak” congestion pricing program on I-15 was 60% among those with incomes less than \$40,000.
- Studies on SR-91 in southern California have shown that at any given time about three-quarters of the vehicles in the toll lanes belong to low and middle income individuals with only one-quarter of the vehicles belong to high-income individuals. According to data collected on “express lanes” in California, low-income drivers are as likely to approve of the lanes as drivers with higher incomes. In fact, over half of the commuters (51%) with household incomes under \$25,000 a year approved of providing toll lanes.
- A 2006 survey on the I-394 MnPass revealed MnPass usage was reported across all income levels, including 79% of higher income respondents, 70% of middle income respondents and 55% of lower-income respondents. The survey also revealed support for the lanes to be high across all income levels including 64% of lower-income respondents.
- Lower income residents are more likely to be transit riders who would benefit from both reduced congestion and increased transit investments from pricing revenues. A 2007 King County Washington survey revealed support for tolling grew substantially if a portion of revenues is dedicated to transit, even if tolls had to be significantly higher to allow such a diversion to occur.