greater WELLINGTON
THE REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Committee **Regional Land Transport**
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Community Attitudes to Road Pricing in the Wellington Region

1. Background

Gravitas Research and Strategy Ltd was engaged to conduct research on the community attitude to road pricing in the Wellington Region in late 2002. 1000 telephone interviews were conducted. One of two road pricing options was explained to respondents – either cordon tolls or charges for new roads. All respondents were likely to be affected by the road pricing option.

2. Current Travel Behaviours

The key findings of the current travel pattern from the interviews are as follows:

- Three-quarters (74%) of all respondents travelling into or through central Wellington during peak times make this trip at least three times a week
- 87% of respondents are drivers
- 73% of car journey time are less than 40 minutes
- The main reason for trip during peak time is for work purposes (82%)
- Almost all respondents (90%) have to park their vehicles when they reach their destination, while 54% have free parking
- 56% state that they have used public transport at lease once in the last 12 months
- 70% mention that they prefer car over PT for convenience and flexibility.

3. Attitude to Congestion

3.1 Congestion

The greatest share of respondents agree that central Wellington currently has a significant congestion problem (63%). Eighty-three percent of respondents agree that traffic congestion will become a serious problem for Wellington over the next few years. Therefore, while not all Wellington motorists feel the region has a congestion problem currently, 94% of all respondents support the investigation of possible initiatives, including road pricing, to mitigate the impact of congestion (48% agree to do it immediately and 46% in the near future).

3.2 Responsibility

When asked who or what organisations should have a responsibility to reduce traffic congestion, half of all respondents (50%) cite the Regional Council, with 50% citing the Wellington City Council. Just over a third of respondents (34%) feel central government has some responsibility for reducing traffic congestion, while 16% mention Transit New Zealand and 11% mention public transport companies. Only 18% state that individual motorists have some responsibility for reducing congestion.

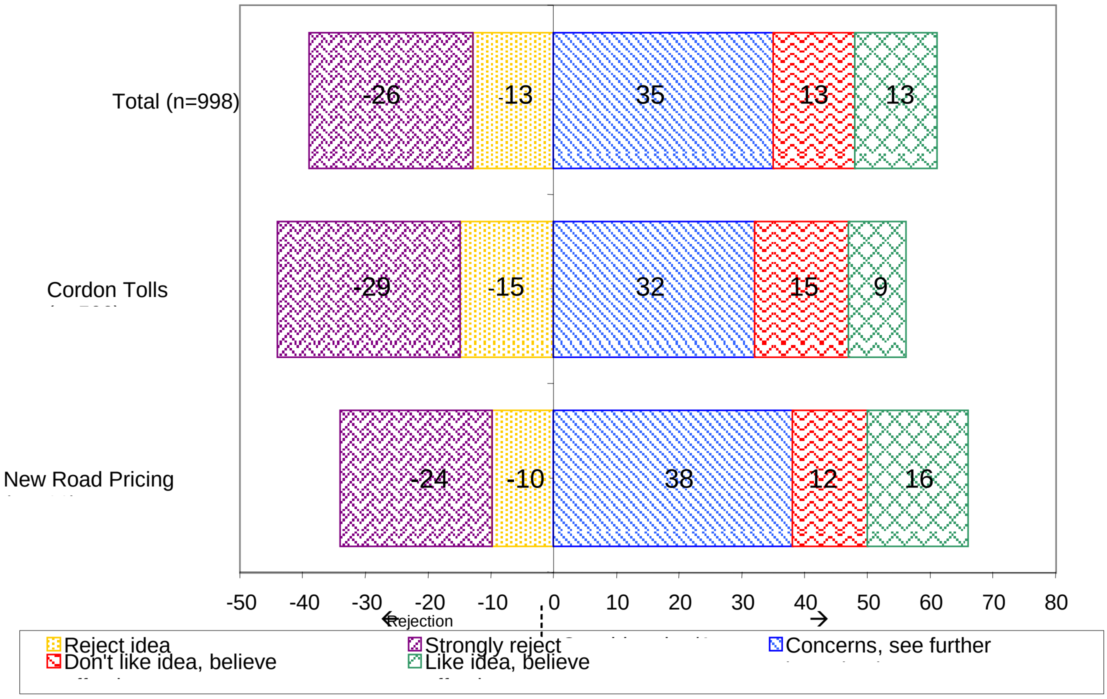
3.3 Affected by road pricing

Just over three in five respondents (61%) state that they would be affected if road pricing was put in place the next week.

4. Attitude to Road Pricing

More than a quarter (26%) consider road pricing to be an effective way of reducing congestion, while only 13% of respondents state that they actually like the idea of road pricing. The greatest single group of respondents (35%), which note that they have concerns about road pricing, would like to see the idea explored further as a potential solution for Wellington's congestion problem. Overall, just over three in five respondents (61%) are open to the idea of road pricing at some level. By contrast, 39% reject road pricing outright, just over a quarter (26%) strongly rejecting the idea, and only 6% being *very emotional*.

The figure below shows the overall reaction to road pricing options.



Perceived positive features of the road pricing options include:

- reduces congestion (34%)
- large pool of money collected to improve roads/safety etc (26%)
- provides incentive to use passenger transport/carpool (15%).

Perceived negative features of the road pricing options include:

- just another tax; just another way to raise money (25%)
- unfair on those who have to work in/travel to city (15%)
- less well off hardest hit/widen gap between rich and poor (15%).

5. Anticipated Medium Term Changes

Almost half of all respondents (43%) state that they will not change their travel patterns and consequently would have to pay the toll. The most frequently mentioned anticipated behavioural change is a shift to use of passenger transport (17%), and change of their travel time (14%).

When asked why motorists would be reluctant to shift to using passenger transport alternatives with the introduction of road pricing, 34% of reasons relate to dissatisfaction with the current service offered, while 25% relate to the services not being extensive enough. 48% of these respondents state that they would be likely to use passenger transport if the service was ideal for them.

6. Next Step

Based on the findings above, the further information should be provided to enhance the acceptance of road pricing. The following information are particularly concerned by motorists: the amount of the toll, how revenue collected will be used, where the cordon boundary will be / what roads/bridges/tunnels will be subject to tolls, what the likely benefits will be, overseas experience and other alternatives available to reduce congestion.

It is expected that such information will be developed as part of the next RLTS review. The application of road pricing depends upon Government's decisions as it determines the final form of the Land Transport Management Bill.

7. Communications

There is nothing to communicate

8. Recommendations

That this report be received for information.

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