

*"Trondheim congratulates London for the new congestion charging scheme. Trondheim has proved that this is possible on a small scale; we now hope London will succeed with the same on a very big scale. Good luck!"*

Tore Hoven, Assistant Director General, Norwegian Public Roads Administration, Trondheim

*"We see the success of the London charging scheme as a confirmation of the synergism between technology and brave demand management policies"*

Maurizio Tomassini, Director at STA (Mobility Agency), Rome

*"It is always nice when you can go from theory to practice. We are impressed with this comprehensive scheme and the relatively short planning time from decision to implementation. As we are planning a full-scale trial for a road pricing scheme in Stockholm, we are very interested to learn from the London congestion charge and from the experiences gained during the coming weeks"*

Christer Lundin, Technical Director, Traffic Management, City of Stockholm

*"Leeds' is looking at the events and experience in London with interest but our view has always been that we would want alternatives to be in place before pursuing any form of road pricing. Once completed, we plan to assess the impact on congestion of our Supertram project, before reaching any more fundamental decisions about charging for road space"*

Peter Dickinson, Senior Assistant Director, Highways and Transportation, Leeds City Council

*"From Edinburgh's point of view the instant reduction in traffic and the broad acceptance that it is working is encouraging. While our proposed scheme is at least three years' away we will still be watching the London situation closely to learn from the experience",*

Councillor Andrew Burns, executive member for transport, City of Edinburgh Council

*"Although the London scheme is quite different from what we are looking at in Bristol, there will without doubt be much we can learn about the impact of congestion charging and the practicalities of implementing a charging scheme. This will complement the results and information we have already had from our own demonstrator trials."*

*"Along with other cities in this country and across Europe, we will continue to research the implications of road user charging and the technology available."*

Councillor Helen Holland, Deputy Leader of Bristol City Council

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**POLIS - European Cities and Regions Networking for New Transport Solutions**

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Underground, London Buses and mainline rail operators, experienced a significant rise in passenger numbers during the first day of the scheme.

London's congestion charging scheme, which cost £200 million (€3 million) to set up and around £80 million (€120 million) per year to operate, is expected to reduce traffic in central London by 10-15% and to improve journey times by 25%. Congestion costs London businesses an estimated £4 million (€6 million) per week. The scheme is predicted to raise £130 million (€190 million) per year to invest in improving London's public transport network.

### The international perspective

As the largest congestion charging scheme in the world, the events and experiences of London are being avidly followed by many other cities within the UK and beyond. Numerous cities are considering the introduction of a similar type of road pricing scheme but are awaiting the outcome in London before taking any further steps. The stakes are high, as confirmed by former Polis President, Maurizio Tomassini, Director at the Mobility Agency of Rome, who stated that the failure of the London scheme could set road pricing back 10 years. Then there is the huge political gamble. If London's charging scheme is a success, then it will be taken for granted and cities across the world will emulate it. If it fails, it could lose Ken Livingstone his next Mayoral election.

Road charging is not new to Europe. Motorway tolls are commonplace in many countries, including France, Spain and Italy and certain cities have also introduced road user charges. The most well-know examples are the Norwegian cities of Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim, which set up charging schemes to finance transport infrastructure. In Trondheim public opposition was strong to begin with but five years later, this has halved and now the charge, which was to be in place for a fixed period of 15 years, is likely to become permanent<sup>4</sup>.

While there may be many cities in favour of road pricing, there are also reservations. Polis President, Béla Dören, believes that there are viable alternative solutions to reduce traffic levels, including higher parking charges, good public transport and good travel connections. This position was also expressed by Denis Baupin, deputy mayor of Paris on the French radio station France-Inter last Monday. Another popular argument against road user charging relates to the financial burden that it places on lower income groups. In the case of London, figures estimate that close to 90% of drivers who would pay the charge come from the richest half of householders.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it is widely perceived that public acceptability of a road pricing scheme will be higher if the revenue raised is used to subsidise services predominantly used by lower-income groups, such as public transport.

Many Polis cities have expressed their interest and support for London:

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<sup>4</sup> The Economist, 15 February 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Leader, The Guardian, 17 February 2003

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# First days show positive results for Congestion Charging in London<sup>1</sup>



## The view point of Polis members

The days following the launch of London's ambitious congestion charging scheme were not characterised by traffic chaos and overflowing underground trains as had been predicted by many. To the delight of the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, who had anticipated a 'bloody day' on the day of the launch of the scheme, 17 February, rush hour road traffic in and around the charging zone resembled that of a Sunday morning. Transport for London's modest claim of an estimated 25% drop in traffic levels, part of which (10-15%) should be attributed to the school holidays, was countered by a British automobile club's estimate of a 60% fall<sup>2</sup>. Overall, the number of vehicles recorded circulating in the charging zone on Monday dropped from 250 000 on a typical day to 190 000. The following day painted a similar picture. Despite these encouraging figures, the real impact of the scheme will not be known for some time as confirmed by Derek Turner, TfL Managing Director of Street Management:

*"No sweeping judgements can yet be made about the scheme especially after just one day but whatever these early signs tell us about people paying and engaging with the scheme, I find the initial indications on traffic reduction and the public's understanding of the scheme encouraging"*

By 18.00hr on Monday, some 80 000 charges had been paid, rising to 100 000 by 22.00 hr, the cut-off point for paying, after which a surcharge and/or a penalty charge rising in extreme cases to £120 (€178) is applied. Approximately 10 000 drivers failed to pay the £5 (€7.5) charge on Monday; Penalty Charging Notices should reach the registered keepers of the vehicles by the end of this week. The charge can be paid in a number of ways: through the call centre, which is manned by an 800-strong staff, the congestion charging website ([www.cclondon.com](http://www.cclondon.com)), at more than 150 PayPoints at retail locations, 100 Metric machines in car parks and 112 BT internet kiosks in the eight square mile charging zone, as well as at more than 1500 retail outlets within the M25 (orbital motorway) and 9000 retail outlets nationwide.

Transport for London expects the bus network to accommodate the bulk of drivers choosing to leave their car at home and an additional 300 buses offering 11 000 places have been introduced over the last year. However, a recent independent survey<sup>3</sup> indicated that more than a third planned to take the already overcrowded underground. Paradoxically, none of the public transport operators questioned, including the London

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<sup>1</sup> This note was produced on the basis of press releases issued by Transport for London and press cuttings.

It in no way reflects the views of Transport for London.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Clark, Guardian newspaper, 18 February 2003

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Clark, Guardian newspaper, 14 February 2003

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