



CURACAO

Promoting progressive pricing

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CURACAO NEWS

CURACAO Amsterdam events: urban road user charging community grows

Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, was an excellent location for the third Curacao User Group meeting and the second Curacao seminar. Participants heard the announcement of the timeframe for nation wide pay-as-you-drive road charging scheme. It will apply first to heavy goods vehicles (2012) and then, from 2016, to all vehicles. The events took place on February 25-26, 2008, at Amsterdam City Hall. Seventy-five professionals concerned with road user charging gathered to discuss the Dutch approach and implementation of road pricing.

Particular interest was given to the Dutch "Spitsmijden" (rush hour avoidance), a large-scale transport demand measure that (financially) rewards very specific target groups who avoid traveling by car on congested routes during peak hour traffic.

At this stage of the project, the user group is discussing implementation-related issues such as business

models and back office matters and choice of technology. Cities running road user charging schemes are currently rationalising the back office of the system in order to reduce costs and ensure better customer care. One session of the seminar was dedicated to technological perspectives and issues in the field of satellite-based pricing schemes.

One conclusion of the CURACAO Amsterdam events: the urban road user charging community is growing, not only in size, but also in scope. More cities are actively investigating urban charging and more expertise is available for the establishment of multi-disciplinary project teams.

More information about both meetings, including the presentations, can be found at the project website <www.curacaoproject.eu>. You can also contact Ivo Cré at <icre@polis-online.org>.

CURACAO's response to the EC's recent Green Paper

A response to the European Commission's recent Green Paper, *Towards a New Culture for Urban Mobility*, was submitted by the CURACAO project consortium to the EC in March 2008. The response addressed questions posed about urban charging, including whether the EC should encourage towns and cities to use urban charging. In summary, the main points made in the CURACAO response were:

- Cities that have pursued or are considering the introduction of road user charging have, as their dominant objectives, to improve the efficiency of the transport system, to improve the urban environment, and to generate revenue to pay for infrastructure improvements. The evidence from cities with implemented schemes is that all of these objectives can successfully be achieved by road user charging.
- Acceptability remains the principal concern of cities considering road pricing. Acceptability is mainly based upon personal outcome expectations, which are typically negative and decline further as a scheme proposal becomes more concrete. The roles of complementary policy instruments and the intended use of road pricing revenue, for instance, for investments in public transport and reallocating road space to non-car modes, are critical to increasing acceptability.
- The EC could help to remove barriers to urban charging by publishing guidance based on the work done by the CURACAO project, giving financial support to cities for feasibility studies and supporting research into the interoperability of road user charging systems and technologies.

Second year of the CURACAO accomplished

The CURACAO project kicked-off in April 2006 and the second year of the CURACAO project has now wrapped up. During that time three CURACAO user group meetings and two CURACAO seminars were held. The first group meeting and seminar was held March 21-22, 2007 in London; the second user group meeting took place September 24-25, 2007 in Stockholm; and the third user group meeting took place February 25-26 in Amsterdam. The last meeting was held together with the second seminar. These meetings have shown the importance of discussing and exchanging experiences between the cities already implementing such systems and cities considering such policies in the future. The next meeting will be organised in late September 2008 and more information will be available soon on the project website.

The project team finalised the second interim version of the State-of-the-Art Report, which is already available on the project website via the user-friendly navigation option. The partners will continue to work on this report and the final version will be available in early 2009.

The preparations for the searchable online database of road pricing case studies are nearly finished, and this database will be launched in the autumn of 2008.

NEWS FROM CITIES IMPLEMENTING ROAD USE CHARGE (RUC)

Milan implements the EcoPass¹

Italy's fashion capital inaugurated the world's first environmental road user charging scheme, with a one-year experimental phase beginning on January 2 of this year.

The system is called "Ecopass" and it is an attempt by the mayor of Milan to cope with the city's environmental crisis.

According to the polluter-pays principle, vehicles are divided into five "polluting classes," from the cleanest (classes 1 and 2) to the most polluting (class 5).

Vehicles belonging to classes 1 and 2 (CNG, GPL, hybrid, electric, petrol EURO3 and EURO4 and Diesel EURO4 with particulate filter) do not pay the charge, while all other vehicles (classes 3 to 5), pay a fee that varies from €2-10 per day according to their EURO standards. A system of 43 cameras around the Ecopass area detects the vehicles' plate number and checks it against the data base of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to determine if the correct fee has been paid. In case of a mismatch, a fine is levied.

The scheme in Milan is new to Italy. Until this year, Rome was the leading example with its Limited Traffic Zone, where vehicle access is restricted to residents and essential users, many of whom must pay a yearly charge. The system also involves paid-parking schemes in surrounding areas.

The impetus for the Italian cases comes mayors, who in turn are responding from EC pressure to comply with the European environmental limits.



Source: ATAC, Rome

¹ Prepared by ATAC, Rome

Copenhagen investigates toll ring

The capital of Denmark, Copenhagen, together with 16 neighbouring municipalities, is preparing a decision base for introducing a toll ring including a transport investment package for the next 10-20 years. The political decision would be negotiated in mid-2008. An agreement on the congestion charge system would be finalised 2008-09 together with a plan for upgrading public transport services with 100,000 new seats in busses, trains and metro. It is foreseen that 600,000 cars

per day will have to pay for crossing the cordon, resulting in a 30 percent reduction in traffic in Copenhagen. The decision could be a Danish contribution toward climate change initiatives besides fostering a greener urban environment for one of North Europe's fastest growing cities.

An English summary of the plan can be found behind the "Green Urban Mobility" link at <www.kk.dk/traengsel>.



Oslo toll ring becomes fully automated

From February 2, 2008, the Oslo toll ring has been fully automated. All manual lanes are now closed and no vehicles are to stop at the toll plaza.

The Oslo toll ring began operating on February 1, 1990 with 18 toll plazas. With a few minor changes there are now 19 toll plazas in operation. Until February 2, all plazas were open for both manual payment to a cashier or coin machine or automated payment with the use of an AutoPass tag. AutoPass is the national toll collection system in Norway and compatible with other Scandinavian systems.

Drivers with no AutoPass tag have several new options for paying. Cameras at the toll plazas photograph the number plate on each vehicle as it passes. Using a number plate recognition system, a postal giro is sent to the owner of the car. It is also possible to pay by cash at several petrol stations near the toll plazas. Sending an SMS is also an option for motorists with Norwegian plates. Cash payments and SMS payments must be made within three working days. Motorists who don't stop and pay within three working days receive an invoice by post – with no extra charge.

There has been a debate on privacy issues related to fully automated toll systems. The new system in place at the

Oslo toll ring has been granted a two-year concession by the Norwegian Data Inspectorate. The concession includes strict requirements on the use and storage of information on passages. One of the main requirements is anonymity. Users have the option of signing an agreement stating that they want their passage details to be deleted from the system within 72 hours after the trip has been registered. The same applies when paying cash at a petrol station or when using the SMS services.



Toll ring in Oslo, Norway

Netherlands: cabinet agrees to price per kilometre

The Dutch Cabinet has agreed to a proposal by Minister Eurlings of Transport, Public Works and Water Management to introduce a price per kilometre on all Dutch roads, differentiated according to time, place and environmental factors and a collection system using the latest satellite technology.

The Cabinet aims to start with freight transport in 2011, which entails an acceleration of the legislation and tendering processes in terms of the critical time path ending in 2012. This will require intensive technical and policy-related cooperation with Belgium, France and Germany. Passenger cars will follow a year after the launch of freight transport. The complete system roll-out will be scheduled for 2016 and beyond. As part of the introduction of the price per kilometre, there will be extensive trials to test the technology and assess behavioural and accessibility issues, especially in the northern wing of the Randstad (Noordvleugel).

The Cabinet has opted for this approach in line with its honesty principle (different, not additional payment) and because it enjoys wide public support. In addition, the costs will not exceed five percent of the proceeds. The Cabinet's decision links in with the proposals developed by the Platform Nouwen, as laid down in the Mobility Policy Document. This decision puts the Netherlands at the forefront in terms of kilometre pricing. Although other nearby countries do have different forms

of mobility payments in place, none of them has opted for a system with national coverage. The introduction of the honesty principle by phasing out taxes is also a new development.

In its policy programme, the Cabinet has announced an "irreversible and significant step" towards a more honest system of payment for mobility. This decision includes several irreversible steps. During this Cabinet period, the legislation was completed, major progress was made on converting fixed vehicle taxation (motor vehicle tax, purchase tax and the Euro Vignette for freight vehicles), the implementation organisation was set in place, the technology tested and a start has been made with freight vehicles under the conditions stated. By taking these steps, the Cabinet has now passed the point of no return.

In the run up to 2011, there will be tests to gain experience, many focused on the Noordvleugel. This will be in cooperation with major Dutch companies — in their role as employers — and along with other government authorities. By means of these tests, the Cabinet aims to work with the utmost urgency towards improved accessibility for the major cities. The tests will be voluntary-based and focus on encouraging motorists to avoid peak periods. Covenants on this will be concluded shortly. Compulsory payment by road users cannot be enforced until the legislation is completed and the rechanneling of fixed taxation for road users guaranteed.

Central and Eastern Europe – is road use charging coming soon?²

The concept of urban road charging, now as ever, remains a political hot potato – one that can burn the fingers of any city mayor who dares touch it. Some would argue that road use charges would be an especially hard sell in Central and Eastern Europe, where people, for historical reasons, are loathe to give up democratic freedoms on collectivist grounds.

However, a few cities in the Central and Eastern Europe are pushing forward – albeit slowly and cautiously – with congestion charging schemes along the lines of those adopted in central London and Stockholm in the last few years.

In the Baltic countries of Lithuania and Latvia, where car ownership has grown more dramatically than anywhere else in Europe (167 and 142 percent, respectively, from 1990-2004, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit), congestion charging has won over the mayors of capital cities. Latvia's capital Riga already has a charge for entry into a small part of its historic centre as a means to protect buildings from pollution and enhance walkability for tourists. But City Mayor Janis Birks wants curtail car access to a wider area of the city to address the larger problem of congestion. A feasibility study is underway, although a trial run has been postponed from an originally scheduled starting date in April, according to Janis Lagzdons, an economist working for the Riga City Council. "Now I'm not sure when it will begin," he said.

In the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, two consecutive mayors have backed a congestion charge proposal for their historic city centre. They see it as one possible antidote to the routine deluge of commuters that doubles the city's population from 500,000 to 1 million each workday.

However, the city needs legislative support at the national level to enforce such a charge, according to Mindaugas Laucius, deputy director of the Vilnius Public Transport Agency. With elections coming up later this year, prospects could improve, but there's no certainty, he said.

Congestion charging has been under discussion for at least two years in Prague, which has a higher rate of car ownership – one for every two residents – than 80 percent of the cities in Europe. Last year, a significant step was taken to enable such a scheme. The statutory ceiling for road-use fees was raised from CZK 20 to 100 (EUR .80 to 4.00). According to officials in the Czech Environmental Ministry, the higher rate was needed in order to make congestion charging feasible in Prague.

During a recent conference in Amsterdam, city transport planners and other professionals came together for a perennial meeting of Curacao, an EC-sponsored project devoted to road user charging. During the project's two and a half years, the group has come up with a raft of advice that may help these cities bring their proposals to fruition. Things like keeping the scheme relatively simple, making sure good transport alternatives exist before road charging begins, and promoting the charge as a way to fund transport improvements. For more information, visit <www.curacaoproject.eu>.

The single biggest obstacle, it is agreed, is political acceptance. Road tolls are extremely difficult to sell to voters and very few city administrations in Europe, or even in the world, have managed to do it. However, in a few towns here in CEE, mayors have stuck their necks out on the issue, and they've still got their heads. This is good news for city dwellers.

² Prepared by Greg Spencer, REC

Project Partners

The CURACAO project partners are:

- **Transport & Travel Research Ltd**
- **ISIS (Rome)**
- **ITS, University of Leeds**
- **Technical University of Dresden**
- **SINTEF**
- **Goudappel Coffeng**
- **WSP**
- **POLIS**
- **Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe**
- **CERTU**
- **SESTRAN**
- **ATAC Rome**
- **City of Stockholm**
- **Public Roads Administration (Norway)**
- **Bristol City Council**

For further details of the CURACAO project please contact:

Chris Humphrey
Project Manager at TTR Ltd
Tel: +44 117 907 6520
e-mail: curacao@ttr-ltd.com
or visit the project website at:

www.curacaoproject.eu

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