



STEERING THROUGH CHANGE

WINNING THE DEBATE ON ROAD PRICING

JENNY BIRD AND JAMES MORRIS

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Executive summary

A combination of rising levels of car ownership and increasing travel by car has led to two major problems associated with road transport for the UK: growing levels of congestion and increasing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, which already form a significant proportion of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. Road pricing – the variable charging of road space by time and location – could be useful in successfully combating these problems. But, despite a broad 'elite'-level consensus on the principle of road pricing in the UK, public attitude arguably remains the key barrier to its introduction.

This report aims to investigate public concerns about road pricing, and to identify ways in which opposition to the idea can be minimised. To do this, we draw on a programme of public-attitude research carried out by ippr (Morris and Bird 2006) as well as a literature review of work in this area (Bird and Vigor 2006). Our series of public-attitude work was carried out between March and June 2006. This consisted of three day-long deliberative workshops, a nationwide poll of 1,150 people and six follow-up focus groups. A detailed description of the methodology is presented in the Annex.

It is important to note, however, that while the focus of this report is to present key concerns held by members of the public and to suggest ways in which they may be tackled, we do not necessarily recommend that the most popular option is the one that should be pursued. There is an important role here for political leadership. Indeed, examples of existing schemes show that road pricing schemes can change behaviour despite negative attitudes, and that attitudes can subsequently become more positive.

Policy measures to date have either failed to address the problems of congestion and climate change (for example, through road building) or do not have a sufficiently large impact to be a complete solution in themselves. One example of this last point is technological innovations, such as hybrid cars or alternative fuels. Another is so-called 'soft' measures, such as information and marketing, car sharing and travel plans. (Soft measures aim to change travel behaviour through addressing psychological motivations, rather than through 'hard' interventions, which are often economic, such as road pricing, or may involve reallocating road space away from private vehicles, such as bus priority measures.)

Attitudes do not remain fixed over time, and we draw on Goodwin's (2006) cycle of public acceptability, along with evidence of attitudinal trends for existing road pricing schemes, to produce a stylised model of the cycle of the road pricing debate. This model shows that support for the idea

of road pricing as a tool to tackle congestion tends to decrease as its introduction draws closer. After its successful introduction, however, support rises again. Through this analysis we identify five conditions that are linked to the successful introduction of a road pricing scheme:

Condition 1: The public sees congestion as a problem.

Condition 2: The public sees the need for a radical solution.

Condition 3: The public sees that road pricing is a viable solution.

Condition 4: Opposition is minimised as scheme details emerge and are adapted to meet public concern wherever possible.

Condition 5: There is sufficient political support for road pricing to ride out opposition and reap the benefits of increased support after its successful introduction.

Our research has shown that the first two of these conditions have already been met. There is widespread acceptance that congestion is a problem for the country and that a radical solution is needed to address this. However, while there is support for the idea of distance-based charging (that is, relating the charge to the distance driven), our work showed that the public were not yet ready to accept that road pricing could be a solution to tackling congestion.

Our opinion poll found that in general, people did not support road pricing. When asked to rate the idea on a scale of one (cold/unfavourable) to ten (warm/favourable), the average score was four, and the mode just one. Likewise, over 60 per cent of respondents said there was no chance, or only a slight chance, of supporting road pricing.

This shows that for proponents of road pricing, the centre of gravity of public opinion is clearly in the wrong place. Our work identified three key concerns behind this hostility – ineffectiveness, stealth taxation and loss of freedom, as explained below:

- **Ineffectiveness:** Members of the public do not see road pricing as an intuitively effective way of tackling congestion. They feel they already do everything they can to avoid congestion. Other measures, such as improving public transport, are more readily suggested as effective solutions to addressing congestion. Examples of successful existing schemes are often dismissed as being special cases, particularly because public transport is perceived as being better in the areas in question.
- **Stealth taxation:** The ‘stealth tax’ narrative is a common frame through which road pricing is viewed. There are three reasons for this viewpoint. First, because road pricing is not viewed as an effective way of cutting congestion it is not seen as a plausible motive for bringing in a charge. Second, people feel that motorists already pay more than they should in road taxes and are an ‘easy target’ for government fundraising initiatives.

Third, motorists do not feel they are able to avoid the trips they make by car, so therefore the Government is simply charging them more to drive.

- **Loss of freedom:** There is a – largely emotive – concern that road pricing will lead to restrictions on people’s ability to choose how they get around. People do not like the idea of the Government ‘telling them what to do’, and road pricing is understood as doing this. A related, but lesser, concern is that of privacy. Some members of the public are wary that road pricing might represent ‘Big Brother’ monitoring their movements. Significantly, those elements of the media opposed to road pricing have already used the privacy and ‘stealth tax’ arguments extensively.

Alongside these three major concerns, we identified a number of lesser worries, including:

- Waste and bureaucracy involved in setting up and administering a scheme
- Fairness
- Potential for evasion
- The question of who should run the scheme.

Regression analysis of our poll results found that there are two major determinants of people’s attitudes: frequency of car use, and public transport satisfaction. That is, the more often people use their cars and the less satisfied with public transport they are, the more likely they are to oppose road pricing. Interestingly, people’s level of concern about congestion was not a good predictor of attitudes towards road pricing. This may be because road pricing is not seen as a credible solution to the problem.

The fifth condition in our model of the road pricing debate (sufficient political support to ride out opposition) suggests that politicians cannot expect to win popular support for the argument before road pricing is introduced. Instead, they should ride out hostility in the hope that support will increase again once a scheme has been successfully introduced – as our stylised model of the debate suggests it will. However, political will alone is not sufficient, which is why the fourth condition proposes that opposition in the run up to a scheme needs to be minimised by engaging with people’s concerns. There are a number of ways in which the three main concerns about road pricing might be addressed, both through the design of the scheme and through communications.

In terms of scheme design, the replacement of existing motoring taxes, use of revenue and upfront provision of alternative transport options may all have an impact. However, the wider impacts of these options must also be borne in mind. Research by ippr has shown that a revenue-neutral scheme would result in an increase in CO₂ emissions (Grayling *et al* 2004). Hypothecating revenues – that is, ringfencing revenues raised by road pricing

ing for investment in transport – at the national level could make transport spending unstable and unpredictable.

Minimising opposition through scheme design also raises questions for any local interim schemes. It is difficult to imagine how cuts could be made in motoring taxes for those affected by one of these schemes. Rebates through council tax cuts would be equally difficult to administer. However, the congestion Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) does offer some upfront funding for local authorities and areas introducing demand management schemes, allowing them to improve public transport options. In addition, under the Transport Act 2000, 100 per cent of revenue must be hypothecated to improving local public transport.

Communications also have an important role to play in minimising opposition to road pricing. We argue that in order to prevent it being perceived as a ‘stealth tax’ or as a ‘Big Brother’ initiative to spy on members of the public, the road pricing debate should be framed in terms of tackling congestion rather than road pricing itself. In order to do this, road pricing should be presented as part of a package of measures aimed at tackling congestion, and not as one isolated measure.

Our research showed that presenting road pricing as a means of tackling climate change may not yet be an effective way of minimising opposition. This is because our public-attitudes work showed a degree of uncertainty about climate change among participants, and a tendency to look to technological solutions, or to other sectors, to achieve emissions reductions. Changing driving behaviours is not currently seen as the right place to start reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, the relationship between road pricing and tackling CO₂ emissions may become a more important part of the public debate as public awareness and concern about climate change increase.

The interim TIF schemes will also play an important role in communicating that road pricing is an effective tool in tackling congestion. Currently, effective schemes, such as the central London congestion charge, are perceived as being special cases, usually because public transport services in these areas are thought to be superior to those elsewhere. Successful TIF schemes in other places will help to convince the public that road pricing can effectively cut congestion.

Finally, we explore the issue of leadership. While the Secretary of State for Transport should clearly provide leadership on the issue of road pricing, there may be a need for a ‘congestion busting’ champion, or champions, who is known to be independent and not directly associated with road pricing.

We suggest that the Government could build on its Road Pricing Liaison Group to create a new stakeholder group of experts, special interest groups and critical friends, with a nationally recognisable, independent chair. This

group would help inform the development of a road pricing scheme, and could also play an important role in communicating lessons from interim schemes and 'efficiency' arguments with the public.

Finally, we address the issue of fairness. It is important to ensure that any road pricing scheme is not regressive and does not disproportionately disadvantage those on lower incomes. More research will be necessary in this area as the debate moves forward, and as more concrete scheme designs are proposed.

1. Introduction

Road transport contributes to two significant problems for the UK: climate change and congestion. What is more, owing to increasing levels of car ownership and increasing travel by car, both of these problems are set to get worse. Road transport accounted for around 21 per cent of the UK's carbon dioxide emissions in 2004 (Defra 2004) and emissions are predicted to rise by six per cent between 2000 and 2010 (DfT 2005a). Traffic is forecast to rise by about a quarter between 2000 and 2010 (DfT 2004) and congestion will also increase as a result. It is difficult to put an exact figure on the cost of congestion, but the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has estimated that it costs the UK economy up to £20 billion per year (House of Commons 2004). Road pricing – the variable charging of road space by time and location – could be useful in successfully combating these problems.

Despite support from a wide range of stakeholders, public attitudes are perhaps the key barrier to the introduction of a national road pricing scheme in the UK. This report aims to outline current public attitudes towards road pricing and to investigate ways in which opposition can be minimised. It draws on a literature review of work in this area (Bird and Vigor 2006) and a programme of public engagement work conducted by ippr (Morris and Bird 2006). Through three day-long deliberative workshops, a nationwide poll of 1,150 people and six focus groups, a detailed picture of public opinion towards road pricing has emerged. In light of these findings, we aim to highlight key concerns and suggest ways in which they might be addressed.

However, it is important to note that public attitudes must be viewed in the wider context. We do not necessarily recommend that the most popular option is the one that should be pursued, particularly if this might jeopardise progressive outcomes. This, of course, can present challenges for policymakers, and the theme of political leadership is addressed in the final section of this report. As we shall see, road pricing can change behaviour despite negative attitudes, with attitudes changing consequently. Ultimately, a balance must be struck between ensuring road pricing achieves policy objectives while acknowledging and addressing the public's concerns.

This report uses the term 'road pricing' to refer to the variable charging of road space by time and location. This approach has also been referred to as 'road user charging'. Congestion charging is also often used in these debates, although the central London congestion charge refers to a specific form of road pricing that charges people to drive within a cordon area. This

is different to variable road pricing, as it does not differentiate charging by time and location within this cordon area.

The history of road pricing

Road pricing has recently risen up the political agenda. It is an idea that has a long heritage: the Smeed Report first recommended its introduction in 1964 (Ministry of Transport 1964). However, despite significant growth in road traffic and congestion during the intervening years, no government has actively sought to introduce a system of road pricing. Road building was the more favoured option, culminating in the Conservative government's massive road-building programme – famously presented as the largest since the Romans' – in the 1980s.

When this was met with concerted resistance – from middle England rebelling against the damage to the countryside, in particular – the Government was forced to backtrack. The 1996 Green Paper *Transport: The way forward* (Department of Transport 1996) proposed the introduction of motorway tolling, distance-based charging for lorries and new powers for local authorities to restrain traffic through local licensing measures or electronic charging schemes.

The subsequent Labour government's White Paper (Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions 1998) took many of these ideas forward. The Greater London Authority Act 1999 and Transport Act 2000 provided local authorities with the opportunity to introduce congestion charging and workplace parking charges. Outside of London, no authority has yet taken up the powers provided in the Act, although Durham has technically also introduced a congestion charge, in the form of a toll road to enter a small part of the city centre, and the Secretary of State also took forward the Dartford crossing charge under the Act.

The successful introduction of the central London congestion charging scheme in 2003 has, however, created the political space for road pricing to be actively considered as the central plank of transport policy. The 2005 Labour General Election Manifesto committed to seeking a 'political consensus in tackling congestion, including examining the potential of moving away from the current system of motoring taxation towards a national system of road-pricing' (Labour Party 2005: 25).

This manifesto commitment has subsequently been built upon by the Government. Shortly after the 2005 general election, the then Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling, identified building a national consensus for road pricing as the key challenge for the Department for Transport (DfT). Darling outlined the need for road pricing, arguing that the free movement of people and goods was threatened by increased prosperity alongside increases in population, the household formation rate and the number of households with two cars (Darling 2005). Additionally, he

argued, without exploring long-term solutions to this complex issue, the Government would not be able to meet other objectives, such as on the environment. Darling identified a system of road charging 'on the basis of distance travelled varied according to how congested the road is' as currently the most effective solution, and reiterated that a number of local authorities would be invited to bid for funding to trial pilot schemes (Darling 2005).

Seven local authorities and areas received 'pump priming' funding from the first funding round to support initial scheme development as a precursor to the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF): Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire; Cambridgeshire; Durham; Tyne and Wear; Greater Manchester; Shropshire County Council; and West Midlands. In the second round, Nottingham, Derby and Leicester and the surrounding counties, Reading and Norfolk also placed successful bids. The pump priming funding is to be used so that local authorities can investigate the possibility and scope of any demand-management policies in their area, with an implicit assumption that a form of road pricing would be explored. The results of the first projects are not expected until 2007.

The TIF will run from 2008/09 to 2014/15, with £290m available in the first year, increasing to £2.5bn by 2014/15. The fund is split into two parts: 'Congestion TIF' of up to £200m per annum each year between 2008/09 and 2014/15 and the rest allocated to 'Productivity TIF'. This fund was established to support new local transport schemes that manage demand, raise new funding for transport schemes and 'are beneficial to national productivity' (DfT 2006a: 2). The 'Congestion TIF' funding is to be used for 'effective demand management proposals as part of wider packages of interventions to tackle congestion at a local level' (DfT 2006a: 4).

Douglas Alexander succeeded Alistair Darling as Secretary of State for Transport in May 2006. In his first speech in the post, Alexander reaffirmed the commitment made by Darling to 'explore the scope for developing a national system of road pricing' and intended to move the debate from the "why" to the "how" (Alexander 2006a). Alexander also trailed an intention to fund a number of 'demonstration projects', which were subsequently announced on 18 July 2006. These projects will look at the 'potential for users to be charged on the basis of distance travelled differentiated by time and place (referred to as Time Distance Place (TDP) charging) with further potential differentiation by vehicle type' and 'whether it is feasible to apply TDP to all vehicles on all roads' (DfT 2006b: 1).

The objectives (ibid: 2) are:

- to investigate and prove the options for practical and cost-effective TDP charging systems
- to gain improved knowledge and understanding of critical elements in

the systems and business processes that would be required to apply TDP charging on a national scale in an affordable way

- to inform our thinking on the best way to protect the privacy of road users and to ensure a system that works reliably and fairly.

The Government's approach is, therefore, to have demonstration projects that are more focused on 'technology and policy' (Alexander 2006b), as well as local schemes, up and running as soon as possible as it tries to build the national consensus.

The other political parties have, at the moment, signalled their 'in principle' agreement with road pricing. During his leadership election campaign, Conservative leader David Cameron stated that 'we must welcome measures that share the burden of funding improvements in universities and transport between the taxpayer and those who directly benefit – for example, through tuition fees and mechanisms for road pricing' (Cameron 2005).

The Conservatives have pledged to 'engage responsibly' (Duncan 2005) with Alistair Darling's instigation of a national debate on road pricing. In recent months, however, their spokesman, Chris Grayling, has struck a more cautious tone. Although the Conservative Party has not adopted a formal position on road pricing, a number of concerns have been raised. First, that congestion requires immediate responses and a national road pricing scheme is too far away. Second, this would be a 'gargantuan task ... bigger than identity cards' and this government has already failed to deliver smaller IT projects (Peace 2006). And, finally, that a nationwide scheme would not meet local circumstances and could be a 'spy in the sky', monitoring journeys used as a stealth tax on the motorist (eGov monitor 2006).

The Liberal Democrats have been much more candid in expressing their support for road pricing than the Conservatives – their 2005 general election manifesto included a commitment to introduce road pricing (Liberal Democrats 2005). However, their support is conditional upon the following points (Liberal Democrats 2006):

- Civil liberties must be safeguarded.
- Foreign lorries must be included in any scheme.
- The scheme must be revenue neutral.
- Any charge must vary according to location, congestion and emissions.

The recent appointment of Alistair Carmichael as Liberal Democrat transport spokesman may have signalled a shift in emphasis, with the party's focus now on primarily a congestion-focused scheme, with emission reduction measures introduced subsequently (politics.co.uk 2006).

Conservative opposition to the congestion charge in past London mayoral elections, and the Liberal Democrat opposition to the proposed

Edinburgh scheme in February 2005, indicate that any ‘in principle’ consensus may still be fragile at this stage. Indeed, it is worth noting that congestion charging is the kind of emotive issue that lends itself well to exploitation – by parties of whatever stripe – for political opportunism, regardless of the underlying arguments for and against.

Beyond the political parties, there appears to be a broad consensus on the need for road pricing among the relevant stakeholder groups involved in road transport debates. Table 1 provides an outline of the main stakeholders’ positions. Although there is a broad agreement that a form of road pricing could be a useful – or even necessary – innovation in public policy, there is no such consensus over the precise objectives and design of any scheme. Indeed, many have already set out their – sometimes irreconcilable – ‘demands’ for any scheme.

Table 1: Stakeholder debate so far

STAKEHOLDER	SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS
Businesses	
Confederation of British Industry	Supports road pricing provided its aim is to tackle congestion, not raise revenue (Confederation of British Industry 2006)
British Chambers of Commerce	Supports road pricing but believe additional road capacity is also needed (British Chambers of Commerce 2005)
Federation of Small Businesses	Do not support road congestion charging without ‘effective affordable transport options being available’ (Federation of Small Business 2006)
Forum of Private Businesses	Majority of members are opposed to charging for road use (<i>Guardian</i> 2006)
Corporate Leaders’ Group on Climate Change	Called on government to look at road pricing as a method of tackling CO ₂ emissions from transport (Management Issues 2006)
NGOs and non-departmental public bodies	
Friends of the Earth	Supports the principle of road pricing to tackle congestion but argues it should also address CO ₂ emissions (FOE 2005)
Transport Activists Roundtable ¹	Supports road pricing based upon the following conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Road pricing must be designed not simply to cut congestion, but to cut carbon dioxide emissions from transport and to meet other transport objectives - Road pricing must be used to increase the overall cost of motoring - Road pricing will not work on its own, but must be part of a package of measures - Road pricing charges must maintain incentives for using greener cars - Road pricing should not be introduced only for new capacity - Further private toll roads and motorways should be ruled out - Road pricing should not have adverse effects on rural areas, or increase urban sprawl - Local and regional schemes are useful stepping stones to a national scheme

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STAKEHOLDER	SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS
Motoring organisations	
RAC Foundation	Supports road pricing as part of a package of measures to tackle congestion. Argues that road pricing must substitute fuel duty and vehicle excise duty (VED). Claims that public support will only be gained if the following conditions are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The charges are fair, balanced by reductions in other motoring taxes, and be overseen by an independent body - At least part of the proceeds must be re-invested in road transport, and be additional to current spending commitments - There must be a clear timetable for implementation, and time to allow people time to adjust their travel routines - There must be protection of privacy - There must be protection for the least well off – road pricing must not be used to drive those on low incomes off the roads (RAC Foundation 2006a)
AA Motoring Foundation	Supports road pricing as part of a package of measures to tackle congestion. Has identified public acceptability as a key issue (BBC 2005)
Association of British Drivers	Opposes road pricing for two reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It will not work because driver behaviour is inelastic - A satellite-based scheme will infringe civil liberties (Association of British Drivers 2006)
Freight organisations	
Freight Transport Association	Supports road pricing but believes its introduction must be accompanied by a road building programme (Freight Transport Association 2006)
Road Haulage Association	Position on a national road pricing scheme is unclear, however did give cautious support to the lorry road user charging scheme when it was proposed by the Government, subject to the following conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The charge must be revenue neutral for UK hauliers - It should be significant enough to allow a rebate that brings (effective) UK fuel duty rates down to the level of the European average - There should be no variable charges (for example, for time of day or type of day, etc) - There must be no new taxes or ‘costs’ - The scheme must be simple and inexpensive to use and to administer - The systems applying to UK operators and ‘occasional users’ must be equally enforceable - On-board units must be capable of use with tolling systems in other member states. (Road Haulage Association 2006)
National media	
<i>Guardian</i>	Supports road pricing but argues that the charge should also tackle climate change and should not penalise the less well off (<i>Guardian</i> 2005)
<i>Times</i>	Supports road pricing, arguing that it would help congestion, benefit rural poor and be fairer than VED, but fears lack of leadership among politicians to introduce scheme (<i>Times</i> 2005)

STAKEHOLDER	SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS
<i>Financial Times</i>	Supports road pricing, arguing that it would reduce marginal journeys and be progressive, but has concerns, including the lack of public acceptability, the fact that cutting fuel taxes would eliminate incentives for fuel-efficient cars and therefore be negative in terms of CO ₂ emissions, and the need for political leadership (<i>Financial Times</i> 2006)
<i>Mirror</i>	Position unclear. Argues that benefits of revenue from road pricing include improved public transport, reduced congestion and new road building but concerned about increased charges for motorists (<i>Mirror</i> 2006)
<i>Daily Mail</i>	Opposes road pricing. Has many concerns, including increased costs to motorists, civil liberty issues from satellite-based scheme, government's ability to run the scheme and argues that the technology will be used to enforce other laws, such as parking and speeding (<i>Daily Mail</i> 2005, 2006)
<i>Sun</i>	Position unclear. Reporting has been fairly neutral, although there have been some negative headlines, such as 'Spy box toll plan' (<i>Sun</i> 2006)
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	Supports the principle of charging but has a number of concerns, including that the scheme is not really about cutting congestion but actually is intended to raise revenue from motorists. Argues that motoring taxes should be reduced or abolished and decisions should be made at a local level (<i>Daily Telegraph</i> 2006)
<i>Star</i>	Position unknown, but negative headlines in 2006 include 'We'll tax you off the road' and 'Toll will make driving a luxury' (<i>Star</i> 2006)
<i>Independent</i>	Supports road pricing (<i>Independent</i> 2005)
<i>Daily Express</i>	Opposes road pricing. Editorial column argues that it will not work and will just raise more money for the Treasury, it will invade privacy, and 'law abiding' motorists will be penalised. Articles also claim a scheme would be very expensive to run and that it would be unfair (<i>Daily Express</i> 2006, Ingham 2006, Evans 2006)
<i>Observer</i>	Mixed. Historically has been against the idea of a satellite-based scheme, arguing that raising petrol duty would be simpler and that public acceptability would be low (<i>Observer</i> 2002). More recently, however, reporting seems to have become more supportive (<i>Observer</i> 2006)
Note 1. Members include: Countryside Agency, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Energy Savings Trust, English Heritage, English Nature, Environment Agency, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, ippr, Local government Association, Living Streets, The National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection, Roadblock, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Slower Speeds, Sustrans, Transport 2000 and the Woodland Trust.	

Is it necessary to act now?

Two principal reasons for acting now stand out: rising congestion and the growing contribution of road transport to carbon emissions.

First, in terms of rising congestion, it is very difficult to provide an accurate picture of congestion. Congestion varies considerably from one location to another, and does not have a linear relationship with traffic growth.

As the DfT (DfT 2004: 19) put it: ‘Traffic can continue to grow on a road with spare capacity with little impact on traffic speed until the volume of traffic approaches the road’s capacity. At that point traffic slows down, and from then on only a few extra vehicles will cause the traffic to slow significantly.’

It is, therefore, very difficult to measure congestion. Indeed, the Transport Select Committee has criticised the DfT for its measurement techniques (House of Commons 2004). In 2005, the DfT announced two new Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets to target congestion on the strategic road network and in England’s 10 largest urban areas (DfT 2006c).

Given the limited data on congestion itself, other sources must be used to paint a broad picture of increasing pressure on the UK’s road infrastructure, leading to increased congestion. Five factors are particularly important here:

- Growing prosperity (which, as a rule, increases the demand for travel)
- A growing population (this can also have localised impacts)
- A growth in distances travelled
- The increase in car ownership
- The associated growth in the car as the mode of choice.

The following figures demonstrate this increasing pressure on the road infrastructure as a result of a combination of increased journey length (Figure 1), the growth in car travel and ownership (Figures 2 and 3) and relative growth of the car as the mode of choice (Figure 4).

Figure 1 refers to trips by all modes, but as the following data will show,

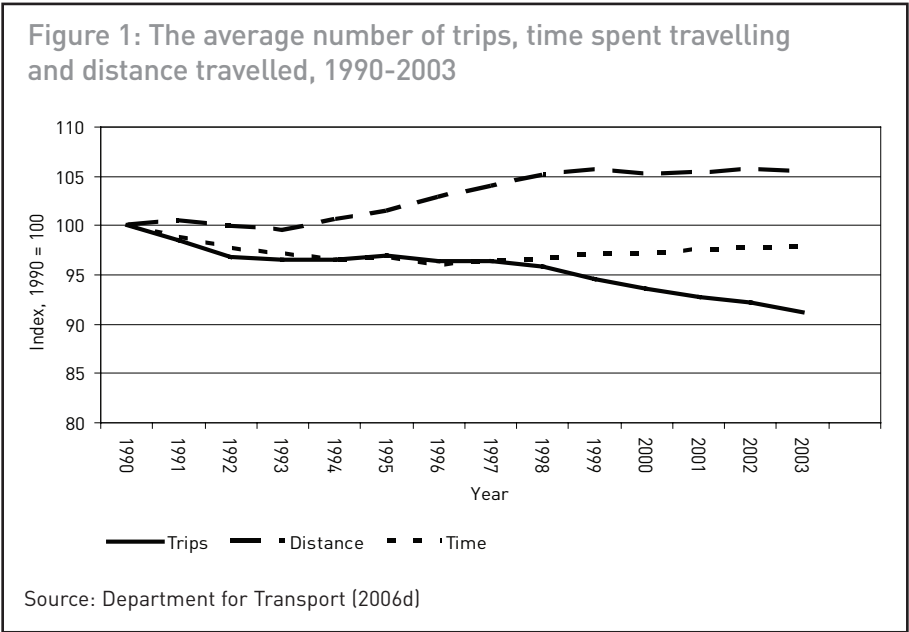
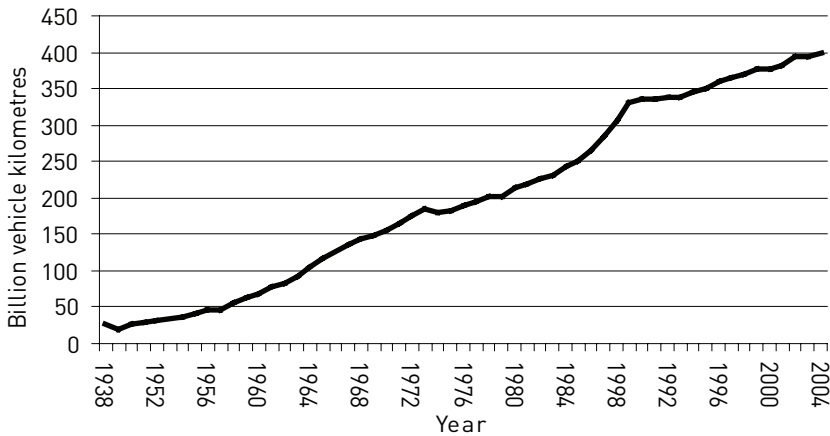


Figure 2: Kilometres travelled by car and taxi in Great Britain, 1938-2004



Source: Department for Transport (2006c)

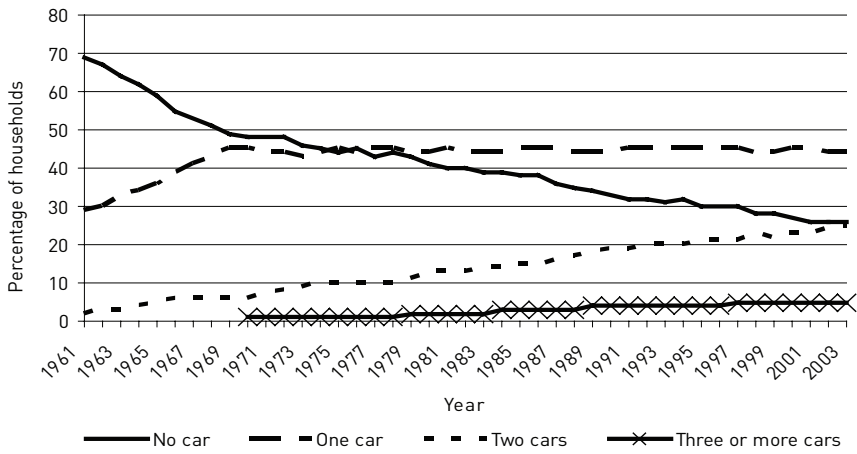
the private car is the predominant mode of choice. The DfT (2005a) projects that by 2025 the total distance travelled by all modes will be over 30 per cent higher than the 1990 level. As Figure 2 demonstrates, there has been a continual upward trend in kilometres travelled by private vehicle. The DfT (2005a) projects an even stronger growth in road transport vehicle kilometres travelled – 26 per cent between 2000 and 2010 and a near doubling between 1990 and 2025.

As Figures 3 and 4 show, there has been a continual upward trend in car ownership and usage. Figure 3 demonstrates that the number of two-car households has grown by around 20 percentage points over the past 40 years, while the number of households without a car has declined by around 40 percentage points. The number of private vehicles licensed in the UK (cars, 'other vehicles' and goods vehicles) has increased from 23,143,000 in 1995 to 29,088,000 in 2004 (DfT 2005b). The DfT (2005a) projects that by 2025, the number of private vehicles registered will be 70 per cent higher than in 1995 – some 39,343,000.

Figure 4 shows that as the distance travelled has increased through time, this has been largely accounted for through an increase in car traffic (81 per cent between 1980 and 2004), although there has been a 49 per cent increase in bus and coach traffic (DfT 2006d).

The second problem associated with road transport is climate change. In terms of emissions, Figure 5 presents the estimated emissions between 1970 and 2004 as well as the projected emissions in 2010, 2015 and 2020. The important point to note is the growing contribution of road transport, in both absolute and relative terms. The Government has targets for carbon

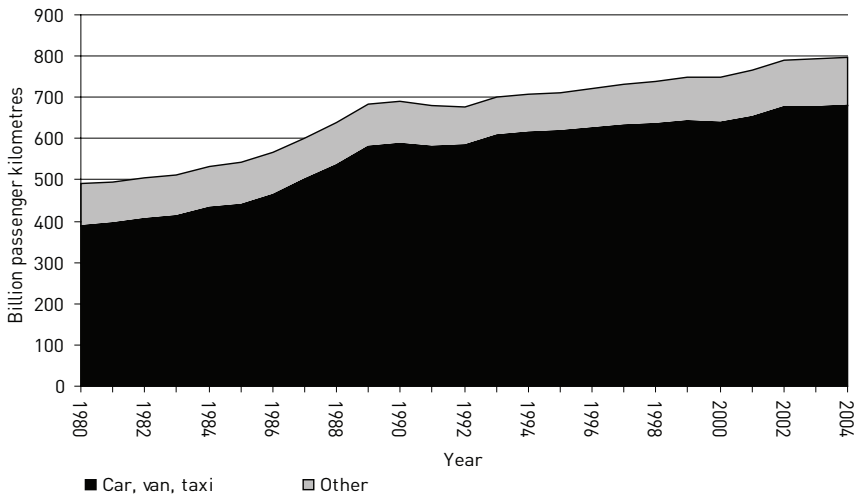
Figure 3: Households with regular use of car(s), 1961-2003



Source: Department for Transport (2005b)

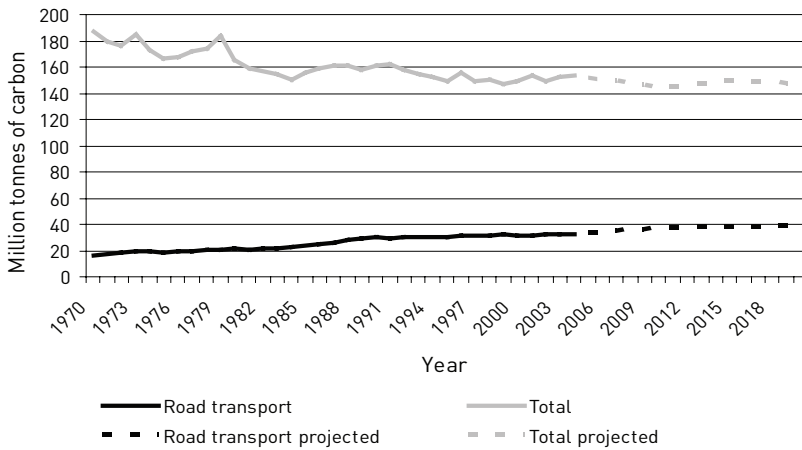
reduction that exceed the UK's Kyoto Agreement commitment to a 12.5 per cent reduction in six greenhouse gases below 1990 levels by 2010 (which we are on course to achieve). These are: first, a domestic target for a 20 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions on 1990 levels by 2010, and second, to set the UK on the path towards achieving a 60 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2050.

Figure 4: Travel by car and other modes 1980-2004



Source: Department for Transport (2006d)

Figure 5: Estimated emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂ expressed as carbon) by total emissions and road transport: 1970-2004 (historic) and 2004-2020 (projected)



Sources: Defra (2004), HM Government (2006)

This projected increase in carbon emissions from road transport therefore threatens to undermine the UK's efforts to meet its climate change objectives. A recent DfT-commissioned report argued that if the UK is to stand any chance of reaching these targets, then simply relying upon technological innovations (such as hybrid cars or alternative fuels) will not be sufficient. Hickman and Banister (2006) argue that changes in travelling behaviour are also required, with the introduction of national road pricing a particularly useful mechanism to achieving this.

So, it could be said that at an elite government and transport stakeholder level there is a broad agreement that a tipping point has been reached.

We suggest, therefore, that the background trends of rising congestion, private vehicle use and emissions from road transport require new policy approaches:

- **The current system of motoring taxation** – a fixed element unrelated to road use (vehicle excise duty) and a variable element related to amount of road use and vehicular fuel efficiency (fuel duty) – are not effective in addressing congestion.
- **New road building** – the default position of the past – has not delivered reductions in congestion, and has contributed to rising emissions through longer, more frequent journeys by private vehicle.
- **The proportion of overall journeys undertaken by public transport** – this has declined historically.

- **The most comprehensive review of soft transport measures** (Cairns *et al* 2004) argue that soft measures (such as information and marketing, car sharing and travel plans) could potentially play an important, but limited, role in the future. Moreover, Cairns *et al* (2004) argue that without accompanying hard measures, reductions in car use through soft measures may be offset by other drivers making more and/or longer journeys on the less busy roads.

Furthermore, there is increasing domestic (from central London) and international (for example, from Germany and Sweden) evidence of the success of road pricing schemes at reducing congestion and emissions from road transport.

ippr has long advocated the introduction of road pricing. Recently Grayling *et al* (2004: 06) outlined 'a fair and effective national congestion charging scheme', arguing that a revenue raising scheme that replaced vehicle excise duty (VED) would be necessary to deliver a reduction in overall traffic. A revenue neutral scheme, on the other hand, 'while cutting traffic on the most congested roads would result in an overall increase in traffic by about seven per cent [because driving in rural areas would become cheaper] and in carbon dioxide emissions by about five per cent' (Grayling *et al* 2004: 1; also see Foley and Fergusson 2003). While this modelling, and other work by Glaister and Graham (2006), presents a challenge for a future scheme design, it is beyond the scope of this report to discuss them in any detail as it focuses on public attitudes towards road pricing.

Despite this elite consensus, it is clear that the public is not currently convinced of the case for road pricing (also see Bird and Vigor 2006). As the research presented in this report will demonstrate, while congestion is seen as a growing problem in the UK, with increasing acceptance that radical solutions may be required to address it, road pricing is not instinctively seen as the appropriate response. As Alistair Darling acknowledged, this is a key issue for the introduction of road pricing: 'Public support is important. If you can't persuade the public that there is "something in it for you", then we are unlikely to get off the starting blocks. So building a consensus is therefore important' (Darling 2005).

The gap between the elite and public opinion on road pricing remains the last major barrier to its introduction. There are inevitably some technical issues that will need to be resolved before a national scheme of road pricing can be introduced in the UK. But because there are already schemes up and running, employing a range of technologies, and because there are likely to be further significant advances before any UK national scheme starts, technical barriers are less important than public acceptability.

The rest of this report seeks to investigate public attitudes towards road pricing, and to identify key concerns. To do this, it will first move on to review evidence of public attitudes towards existing road pricing schemes

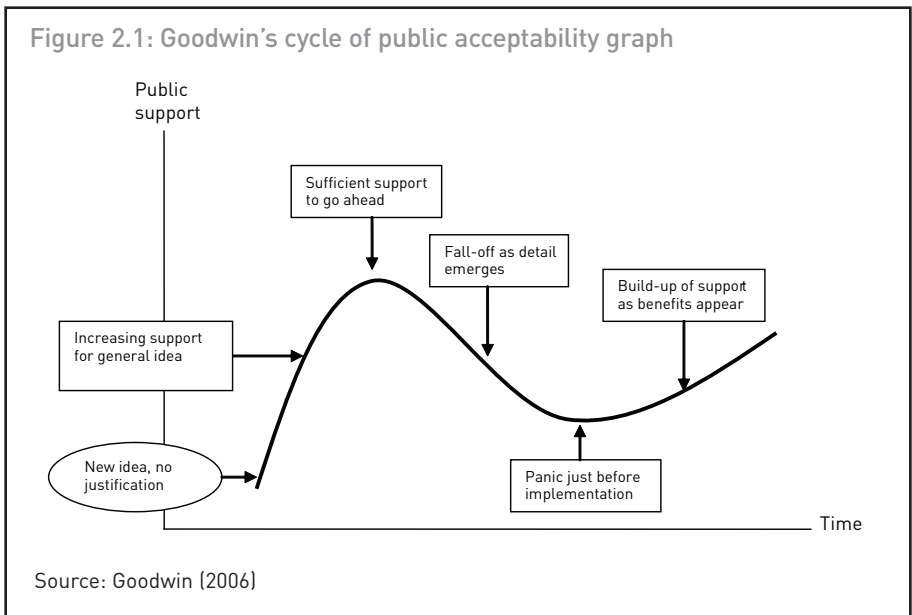
and the attitude formation literature. Drawing on the evidence from existing schemes and Goodwin's (2006) analysis, we propose a 'cycle of the road pricing debate' which, together with the review of the literature on attitude formation and change, highlight the scale of the public acceptability challenge for road pricing. Chapters 3 and 4 present the results of our public engagement work against this cycle of the road pricing debate.

2. Public attitudes and road pricing

Having identified public attitudes as the biggest barrier to the introduction of road pricing, this section reviews the evidence from existing schemes, and asks what they tell us about public opinion and the challenges that any new schemes would confront. It is clear from this evidence that advocates of road pricing should aim to reduce the opposition to road pricing, rather than maximising its support. In making this case, this section draws on and extends Goodwin's (2006) diagram of public opinion towards road pricing, and identifies five stages or conditions for the road pricing debate. The section concludes by reviewing the literature on attitude formation and change, to help inform any strategy to reduce the unacceptability of road pricing.

The road pricing 'cycle of acceptance'

In a recent article in *Local Transport Today*, Goodwin (2006) proposed a diagram describing the 'gestation process' for road pricing schemes. Goodwin draws on a number of research projects looking at the public acceptability of road pricing to produce a diagram depicting an S-shaped curve of public support over time (see Figure 2.1).

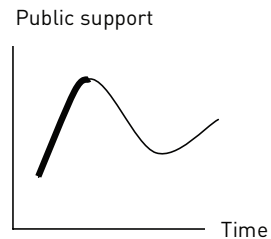


In Goodwin's analysis (2006), acceptability passes through three phases. First, increasing public recognition of the need to tackle the problem of congestion, and acceptance that something radical needs to be done, results in increasing levels of support for road pricing. This support peaks around the time when the principle of road pricing is presented firmly as a solution to the problem. As details of the scheme emerge, support wanes, and acceptability enters a second, downward phase. The final phase occurs only after the successful introduction of the scheme. At this point, personal experience takes over from speculation, and support rises again. These three phases are explained in more detail below.

In the following section, we will review the evidence from existing road pricing schemes, to see how accurately Goodwin's cycle of acceptability describes the schemes in question. Of course, not all the schemes exactly map Goodwin's graph. But international and domestic experience does suggest that most road pricing schemes do follow approximately the same trend. A note of caution on the data presented is required, however: it is difficult to find data on public opinions spanning the whole of this cycle, since most attitudinal monitoring only begins shortly before a scheme comes into operation. As more schemes are introduced internationally, the real strength – or otherwise – of this model will become clearer.

Phase 1: Recognition of the problem

As Goodwin (2006) makes clear, there is no latent desire for road pricing among the public. This means that acceptance for the idea will always be low to begin with. Two factors need to be acknowledged in order to increase openness towards the idea of road pricing:



- First, that there is a problem that needs to be addressed
- Second, that traditional measures will not be sufficient to solve it.

At this stage, road pricing may not have been put forward as a solution, so the trend is more for potential openness towards the idea than specific support for road pricing itself. The following examples suggest this claim is true.

PRoGRESS study

The Pricing Road use for Greater Efficiency and Sustainability in Cities (PRoGRESS) study, based on consultations in eight European cities, also concluded that recognition of a problem is important:

The introduction of road pricing will only go ahead where people feel that there are very strong reasons to do so. Whether there is a new section of road infrastructure or a congestion charge, people will only willingly pay for this if they perceive that the size of the

problem is such that something needs to be done.

(PRoGRESS 2000: 59)

In many cases, this 'strong reason' is the problem of congestion. Although there are many problems associated with transport, congestion is seen as being one of the most significant (Bird and Vigor 2006). The acceptance for road pricing is higher in large cities with severe congestion problems (Vagverket 2002).

Swiss Heavy Vehicle Fee

The Swiss Heavy Vehicle Fee (HVF) provides an interesting case study of how the materialisation of a problem can increase support for road pricing. The proposal to introduce a distance-based fee for heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on Swiss roads failed twice in referendums held during the 1980s. Freight transportation was nevertheless an important concern for the Swiss – in particular the issue of noise and air pollution along Alpine transit routes – and in 1994 a 'people's initiative' to transfer all road freight to rail was accepted in a referendum. (Swiss citizens can propose new legislation – technically, a change to the constitution – under a 'people's initiative' if they are able to collect 100,000 signatures in support of the proposal. The initiative is then put to a national vote.)

The introduction of an HVF was finally accepted when bilateral treaties with the European Union (EU) led to an agreement to raise the weight limit of trucks on Swiss roads from 28 to 40 tonnes. There was a widespread concern among citizens that this would result in a large influx in the number of HGVs using the road network. The Swiss Parliament passed legislation to allow the introduction of the HVF as a way of preventing this growth (Braathen 2005). This was actually challenged in a referendum, but the objection was defeated. (The Swiss are able to challenge any piece of legislation approved by the Parliament. If 50,000 signatures are collected within 100 days, a referendum is held on the new law, and its result is binding.)

A recognition among the public that congestion is a problem has also been high in other places where schemes have been successfully introduced, as in the examples given below.

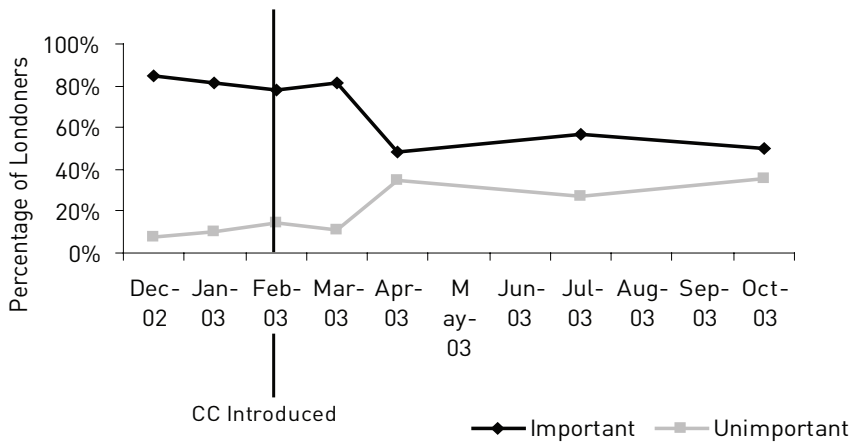
Oslo

It has been documented by Harsman (2003) that congestion was publicly recognised as a significant problem in Oslo before the toll ring charge was introduced.

London

Congestion was also perceived as an important problem in London prior to the introduction of the central London congestion charge. The 1999 *Lex Report on Motoring* showed that 80 per cent of motorists thought that congestion and air pollution in London were very serious (cited in ROCOL

Figure 2.2: Attitudes towards the importance of reducing congestion in central London



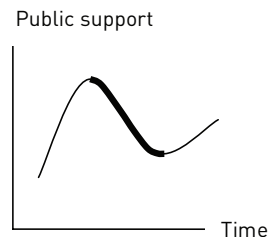
Source: Transport for London (2004)

2000). Further, 90 per cent of Greater London residents agreed with the statement ‘there is too much traffic in London’ in a survey carried out for the Review of Charging Options for London (ROCOL) working group (ROCOL 2000).

As part of its monitoring work, Transport for London (TfL) recorded attitudes towards congestion before and after the introduction of the congestion charge. As Figure 2.2 shows, the introduction of the charge does appear to have addressed these concerns.

Phase 2: Emerging details

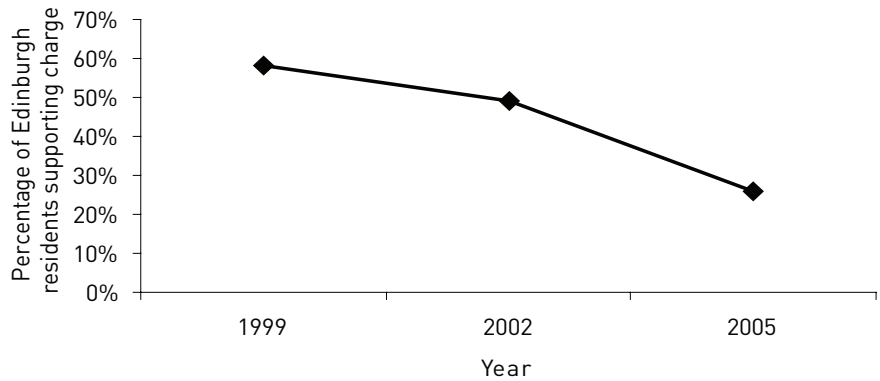
‘Support tends to erode as more detailed plans are presented.’ This conclusion was a lesson from the pan-European P_RoG_RESS project (P_RoG_RESS 2000: 6). Drawing on the lessons of road pricing proposals across eight European cities, the final report found that ‘the more detailed a design becomes, the less able it is to accommodate the preferences of all the different factions, resulting in a steady reduction in support’ (P_RoG_RESS 2000: 96).



Edinburgh

One of the cities included in the study was Edinburgh. Public-attitude monitoring data from the proposed Edinburgh congestion charging scheme presents a clear example, depicted in Figure 2.3, of how ‘in principle’ support can decline over time, as a general concept is replaced by more detailed proposals.

Figure 2.3: Support for the introduction of congestion charging in Edinburgh



Sources: City of Edinburgh Council (2004), Transport Edinburgh (2006)

The proposed Edinburgh congestion charge was developed in consultation with residents and non-residents of the city. A five-stage consultation was conducted between 1999 and 2003. Responses to these phases show how support waned over time as the proposals became more detailed (City of Edinburgh Council 2004).

In February 2005, the council held a referendum for Edinburgh residents on whether or not to introduce its ‘preferred package’ of measures, which included public transport investments as well as a double-cordon congestion charging scheme. The scheme would involve one cordon around the historic city centre and another at the ring road. Drivers passing one or both of these cordons in an inbound direction during charging hours would pay the charge. The referendum resulted in a vote of three to one against the proposal (Table 2.1).

Some of the loss in support can be attributed to people who supported the idea of road pricing in principle but who did not agree with the proposed detail. Research carried out by MORI Scotland following the referendum (Braunholtz and Cumming 2006) showed that 15 per cent of respondents supported the idea of introducing a congestion charge but not the

Table 2.1: The results of the post-referendum research into attitudes towards Edinburgh’s proposed congestion charge scheme

Which of the following statements apply to you?	All	Referendum result
I supported the road charging scheme	21%	74%
I supported the principle, but not the details of the scheme	15%	
I didn’t support road charging at all	48%	
Don’t know	15%	-

Source: Braunholtz and Cumming (2006)

detail of the scheme (Table 2.1).

Turnout also appears to have been a factor. Cain (2005) suggests that car users were more likely to vote in the referendum than non-car users, and that this created a bias towards a 'no' vote.

Existing schemes have attempted to address this increasing unacceptability by presenting road pricing schemes as part of a package of measures, and offering exemptions to certain groups and vehicles.

London congestion charging scheme

This scheme is a case in point. Prior to its introduction, a series of public consultations were held in order to gauge public opinion and gain feedback on the scheme design. Following the first round of consultation with stakeholder groups, a 100 per cent discount was introduced for Blue Badge holders and a 90 per cent discount for residents living in the charging zone. These changes were justified on the grounds that they made the scheme fair. Mayor Ken Livingstone acknowledged that making sure the scheme was 'perceived to be fair' was 'important to its continued acceptability' (Richards 2006: 103).

Further exemptions and discounts were added following the second and third rounds of consultation. These stages also clearly presented road pricing as part of a package of measures to tackle congestion, and highlighted the fact that all of the revenue would be put back into transport (Transport for London 2001).

It is worth noting that expansion of public transport – especially buses – has been very successful in London, and is often seen in the popular debate as a key part of securing acceptability. In Edinburgh, limited understanding of the proposal and scepticism that it would deliver the promised increase in public transport has also been seen as reasons for the 'no' vote (Gaunt *et al* forthcoming).

Stockholm congestion charging scheme

Stockholm's recent experience is also instructive. This congestion charging system differed to that in London as it ran as a trial scheme, introduced in two stages, with public transport improvements running from August 2005 and the charge starting in January 2006. The trial concluded on 31 July 2006, and in September 2006 a referendum was held among residents of Stockholm, alongside the country's general election, resulting in a majority vote in support of the system.

Before the introduction of the trial congestion charge in January 2006, a comprehensive communications campaign was carried out, which emphasised the additional public transport and congestion charging elements of the trial. This campaign incorporated a range of methods (Vägverket 2006), including:

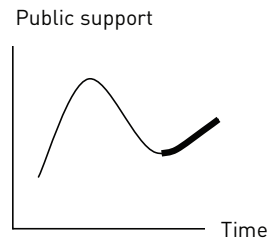
- a personally addressed letter to all vehicle owners in Sweden
- activities around Stockholm
- public meetings
- car park tickets
- a dedicated website
- a telephone hotline
- advertisements and media coverage
- a public information leaflet.

A number of exemptions were also included in the trial, including eco-friendly vehicles (electric, ethanol and biogas), motorcycles and holders of disabled person's parking permits (City of Stockholm 2006).

The evidence presented here supports Goodwin's (2006) claim that the second phase is marked by decreasing support. However, it is also clear that existing schemes have attempted to address this through the way they are designed (for example, by providing exemptions), the expansion of public transport and extensive communications campaigns.

Phase 3: Increasing acceptability

Goodwin (2006) does offer hope to advocates of road pricing. There is significant evidence that acceptability increases after road pricing has been introduced. In London, Norway and Stockholm, support for road pricing and congestion charging schemes has increased following their introduction.

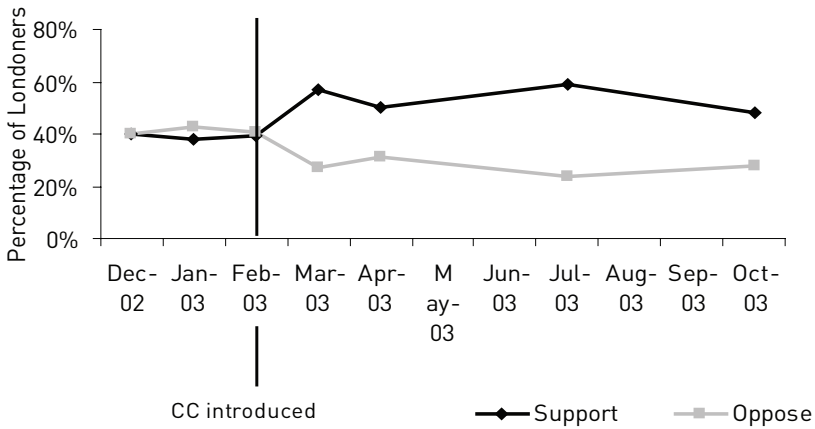


London's congestion charging scheme provides the best evidence for the cycle of acceptability. A survey of public attitudes was carried out as part of the ROCOL work into designing a possible congestion charging scheme for London between 1998 and 2000. This research showed that 53 per cent of respondents thought road user charges for central or inner London would be a 'good thing', while 36 per cent thought it would be a 'bad thing' (ROCOL 2000). Further attitudinal work was carried out on behalf of TfL once Ken Livingstone had been elected as London Mayor and had decided to pursue the option of a London congestion charge. These results are presented in Figure 2.4. They clearly show that support increased after the scheme became operational.

Norway has introduced a number of road pricing schemes. Figure 2.5 shows that in Bergen, Oslo and Trondheim, acceptability increased, and opposition decreased, after the schemes were operational. In Oslo, opposition dropped from 70 per cent before the scheme was introduced to 64 per cent immediately after it was introduced. After eight years of operation, this figure had fallen further to 54 per cent (Vagverket 2002).

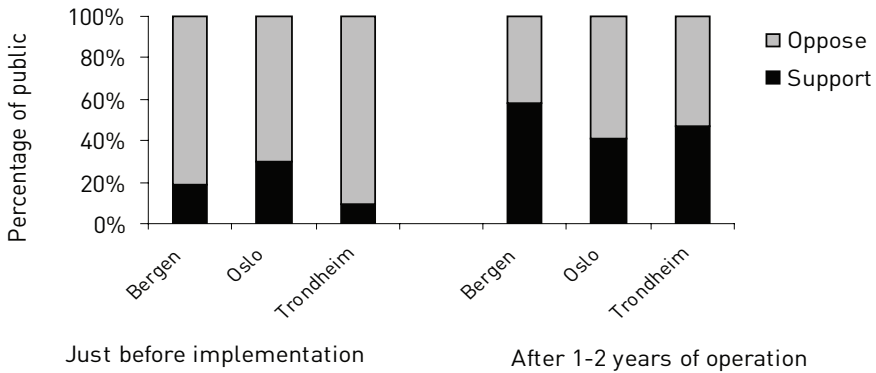
More detailed data for the Trondheim scheme is presented in Figure 2.6. It

Figure 2.4: Support and opposition for the London congestion charging scheme



Source: Transport for London (2004)

Figure 2.5: Public support for road pricing schemes in Norway, before and after implementation

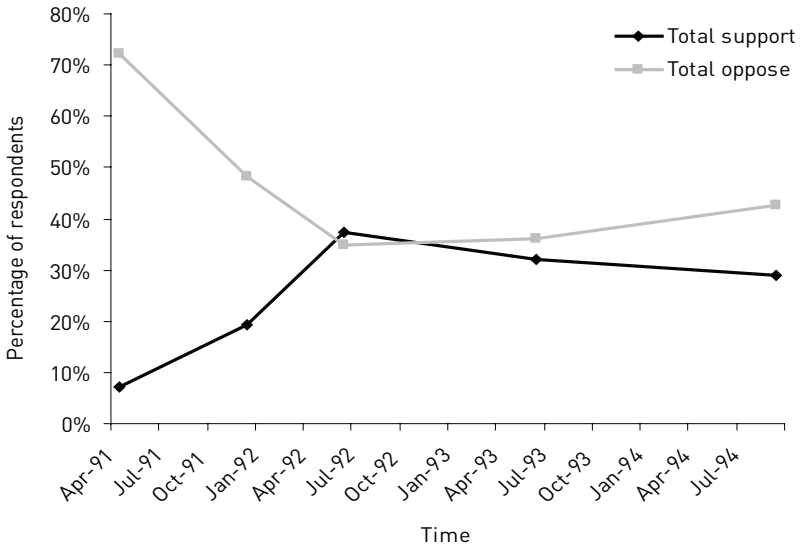


Source: Tretvik (2003)

shows that opposition was significantly lower, and support significantly higher, after introduction. This trend initially continued, with support outstripping opposition. Opposition did start to climb again, around a year after introduction, although we have not found any explanation for why this is. Even with this reversal of the downward trend, however, opposition was still significantly (around 30 percentage points) below pre-introduction opposition.

Support for road pricing in Stockholm has also increased since the start of a congestion charging trial in January 2006. Table 2.3 shows how support has grown as the trial has run its course, ultimately leading to a majority voting

Figure 2.6: Support and opposition for the Trondheim toll ring



Source: Tretvik (2003)

Table 2.3: Support and opposition for the congestion tax in Stockholm

Date	Results		Source
2001	Against road pricing in Stockholm: 51%	Support road pricing in Stockholm: 38%	Temo poll for <i>Dagens Nyheter</i> newspaper (Vagverket 2002)
Nov 2004	Against tolls: 50%	Support tolls: 43%	Temo poll for <i>Dagens Nyheter</i> newspaper (<i>The Local</i> 2006a)
Feb 2006	Would vote 'no' if referendum today: 47%	Would vote 'yes' if referendum today: 44%	Temo poll for <i>Dagens Nyheter</i> newspaper (<i>The Local</i> 2006a)
May 2006	Against Stockholm charge: 30%	Support Stockholm charge: 62% Undecided: 8%	Sifo poll for the Swedish Green Party (<i>The Local</i> 2006b)
June 2006	Plan to vote 'no' in referendum: 40%	Plan to vote 'yes' in referendum: 52%	Poll for Stockholm City Council's congestion charge office (Savage 2006)
Sept 2006	Voted 'no' in referendum: 46%	Voted 'yes' in referendum: 52%	<i>Transport Times</i> (2006)

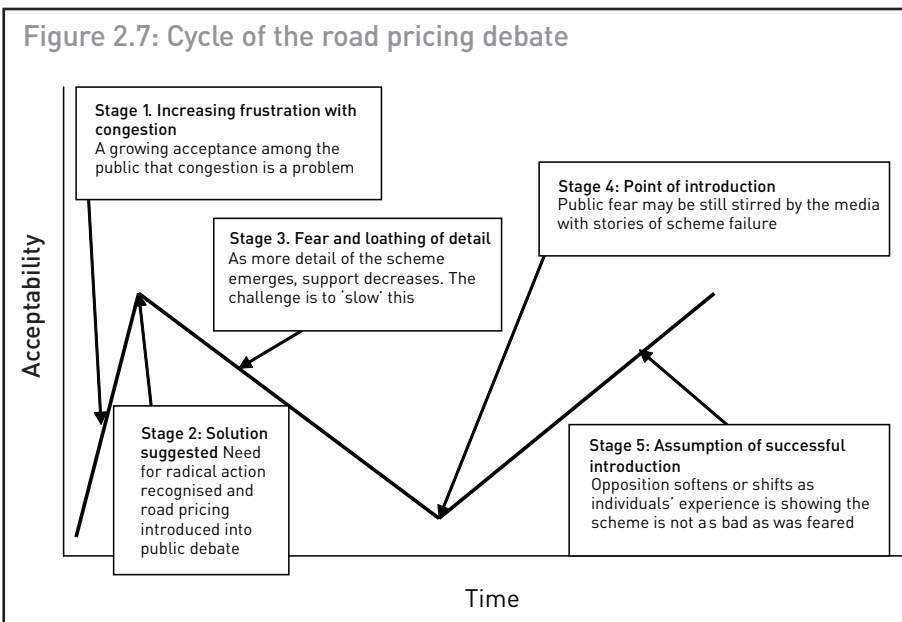
'yes' for congestion charging in the September 2006 referendum. It should be noted, however, that the data come from a number of different polls asking different questions, so results may not be directly comparable.

Stages of the road pricing debate

The evidence does, therefore, seem to support the three-stage process proposed by Goodwin (2006), although the first stage may be more about generic transport-related problems and solutions than road pricing specifically. Drawing on the analysis above, it appears that the successful introduction of road pricing is linked to five conditions:

- Condition 1:** The public sees congestion as a problem.
- Condition 2:** The public sees the need for a radical solution.
- Condition 3:** The public sees that road pricing is a viable solution.
- Condition 4:** Opposition is minimised as scheme details emerge and are adapted to meet public concern wherever possible.
- Condition 5:** There is sufficient political support for road pricing to ride out opposition and reap the benefits of increased support after its introduction.

Figure 2.7 presents an amended and annotated graph of public opinion that draws upon the five conditions outlined above. The first two conditions shown in Figure 2.7 – that congestion is a problem and that it requires a radical solution – are fairly self explanatory. The third explicitly recognises that road pricing could be presented as part of a package of measures to address congestion. Indeed, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, many successful schemes have done precisely this. The third condition will also involve the public accepting that road pricing would be an effective response to congestion.



The fourth and fifth conditions – that unacceptability is minimised and that the Government must ride out opposition – require more explanation. As the data presented above demonstrates, a perception of the scheme as being unacceptable often increases as the details of any scheme become clearer to the public and the introduction of a scheme draws nearer. As discussed, the challenge is to limit this perception of unacceptability as much as possible. Further, scheme design and the way it is presented (for example, as part of a package of measures) also seem to affect public opinion, so there is potential to address unacceptability through these routes.

The evidence from existing road pricing schemes is that proponents must accept that it is likely to be unpopular – at least in the short and medium term. Those introducing road pricing schemes have not been able to draw upon a public movement demanding its introduction. Instead, quite the opposite is true. Political will is required to ride out the initial hostility and then – hopefully – benefit from the increase in support and decrease in opposition that comes after the introduction of the scheme.

However, relying on the post-introduction increase in support is not enough in itself. Both the fourth and fifth stages are necessary to the introduction of a road pricing scheme, but neither is sufficient on its own. Political leadership requires a road pricing scheme to be presented in a way that resonates with, reflects and leads public opinion.

Given this, the final part of this section looks at people's attitudes: what they are, and how they are formed and changed. For example, if one of the main findings from the introduction of past road pricing schemes is the need to minimise unacceptability, how can attitudes be informed or changed in this respect? If somebody holds a negative attitude towards something, does this mean they are unlikely to act in a certain way?

How are attitudes formed, and can they change?

This is certainly a controversial area and is far from a settled science. For public policy, there seem to be lessons that can be drawn from the different theories, rather than one simple over-arching theory (for example, see Halpern *et al* 2004). There are many different models and theories of attitude change, and this section focuses on taking the key components of them all.

One of the most striking lessons for policymakers is that, whether we like it or not, exposure to 'good' arguments is often not enough to change attitudes. Simple information campaigns are often not enough to achieve attitudinal change. Attitudes are shaped by a number of processes: cognitive, affective (in other words, influenced by our emotions), social and behavioural.

In relation to cognitive processes, the elaboration likelihood model, or

'ELM' (Petty and Cacioppo 1981, 1986a, 1986b) identifies two routes to attitude formation and change. (The heuristic-systematic model, or HSM (Chaiken 1980, 1982, 1987) also identifies a similar cognitive process – see Morris (2006) for a review.)

The ELM identifies a 'central route' and a 'peripheral route' to attitude formation. The central route occurs when people actively think about the messages they are presented with (in other words, deliberation). With the peripheral route, on the other hand, attitudes are shaped by simple heuristic rules and automatic cues (for example, judging a book by its cover rather than the content). Attitudes formed through the central route are more stable, easier to call to mind, resistant to change and more predictive of behaviour. If policymakers are attempting to change people's attitudes towards something (or affect behaviour change – this is discussed further below), then positive deliberation is most likely to deliver sustained change.

The fact is, however, we are 'cognitive misers' (Taylor 1981). While we do form attitudes about most of the objects we encounter, we ration the cognitive resources devoted. People process information 'quickly and efficiently [and] rely upon cues within that new information to signal to them how to connect it with their stored images of the world' (Frameworks Institute 2006). As this extract implies, many attitudes are formed in a non-deliberative manner, meaning that attitude formation is a dynamic process – an interplay between our existing ways of understanding the world (affective processes are important here) and any new information. Communications that seek to change attitudes to road pricing need to be effective in a context where people form snap judgements rather than carefully weighing up the pros and cons of demand-management options.

Also important is the process of 'framing'. Frames provide 'a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them' (Gameson and Modigliani 1987: 143). They are, in effect, mental categorisations used to understand new events and information by linking them to current understanding and attitudes and then 'filing' them mentally as appropriate. Different categorisation schemes can contain the same information but interpret it in radically different ways (FWI 2002).

This framing insight not only applies to an individual's cognitive processes – it also applies to how a given issue or story is presented. The way in which an issue is (purposely or otherwise) framed can have a powerful effect over the way it is understood. Morris (2006: 61) argues that when it comes to road pricing:

... it appears there are at least three competing frames. Road pricing can be seen fundamentally as a way of tackling congestion, reducing emissions or raising taxes. Which frame is used organises information about price structures, impacts on driving habits, consequences

for public transport and so on. The frame itself does not provide information, but is instead a way of categorising information that exists. The categorisation scheme used has an impact on overall evaluations of the matter at hand.

Following Morris's analysis, if road pricing is understood within a 'taxation frame' – in other words, if it is perceived as an attempt by government to extract more money from drivers – then congestion arguments may be dismissed. The media has a particularly important part to play here in determining how road pricing is framed.

The media also has a role in priming judgements of road pricing (Kinder 2003) – in other words, in determining the relative importance of different components of attitudes to road pricing:

In many situations, people are unsure how to go about making overall judgements. For example, when thinking about the potential of road pricing to cut congestion, people may be unsure whether they should weight their negative attitude to increased taxation more or less heavily than their negative attitude to congestion. It is not clear which standard should apply. Media priming effects systematically affect that sort of decision: people tend to use standards that are in accordance with information salient in the media.

(Morris 2006: 61)

The complexity of the process of attitude formation helps explain why simply bombarding people with new information may have undesirable effects, as Jackson (2005: 112) highlights:

Just because I supply you with more and more reasons why you should reduce the use of your car and change to public transport instead, does not in itself make it any easier or indeed more likely that you will make such a change. In fact there are several reasons why my misguided attempt at persuasion may make it even harder for you. Amongst these is the fact that by and large people like to feel in control of their lives and resist feelings of helplessness. My attempts to impose more information on your already crowded life may simply reinforce your sense of helplessness about the situation.

This feeling of helplessness is a critical issue. The way in which information is presented can leave people with a sense that they do not have any agency over a situation. This leaves them feeling that any attempt to change what they think or how they behave is futile because it will not have any effect – it will not make a difference. Ereaut and Segnit (2006) have recently demonstrated this effect with relation to the way climate change is communicated and discussed in the UK. Ereaut and Segnit (2006: 14-15) argue

that an 'alarmist repertoire' is the most common way in which climate change is communicated in the UK:

The alarmist repertoire does try to bring climate change close to people's lives, through shock tactics such as the image of a boat in a UK suburban street (...). However, more often it distances people from the problem. This is because the scale of the problem as it is shown within this repertoire excludes the possibility of real action or agency by the reader or viewer. The dangers of alarmism include the implicit counsel of despair – 'The problem is just too big for us to take on.'

The framing literature is also instructive here. Iyengar (1991) identifies two methods of communication that are relevant to framing, each of which affects how individuals interpret the information conveyed: 'episodic' and 'thematic' framing. Episodic framing presents a series of disconnected stories, while thematic framing presents stories in context, providing information about trends and analysis underlying the story. Of the two, thematic framing is more likely to lead people to recognise that social or political action is necessary and relevant in a given situation. Unfortunately, Iyengar argues, television news is most often episodic.

As the discussion of the role of the media demonstrates, any discussion of attitude formation and change must not only focus on the individual. As Jackson (2005: iii) argues: 'Individual behaviours are deeply embedded in social and institutional contexts. We are guided as much by what others around us say and do, and by the "rules of the game" as we are by personal choice.'

Social norms play a very important role in shaping attitudes and behaviour, either by providing information about the nature of 'reality' or by sanctioning (for example, through social rejection) certain attitudes and/or behaviours (Morris 2006).

Any attempt to communicate must recognise the importance of social norms, and this applies both to the message deployed and the messenger employed. Messengers that are 'liked' by the audience are more likely to be listened to. As Morris (2006: 46) argues, 'We are more likely to be influenced by the views of people that we like than people we don't like, all other things being equal.' What is more, some attitudes will be formed in opposition to the views of someone that an individual presumes they should hold an alternative view to.

Summing up

Drawing this section together presents the scale of the challenge for those advocating the introduction of road pricing. Building on Goodwin's

(2006) analysis we have identified five stages of the road pricing debate. The fourth and fifth stages present the biggest challenges, and evidence from existing schemes suggests that opposition to road pricing starts high and increases near the scheme's introduction. However, opposition tends to significantly decrease, and support increase, post-introduction.

While this does demonstrate the need for political will to 'ride out' the hostility, this is not sufficient. As the success of congestion charging in central London, and Stockholm, and the failure in Edinburgh show, public consultation and adapting the scheme to reflect concerns is also necessary. This presents both a scheme design and communications challenge, which, as this review of the attitudes literature has shown, can be significant. The routes to communicating with the public on a complex issue such as road pricing are difficult. While the most effective route to attitude change and formation is through deliberation, people rarely engage in such cognitive processes.

As 'cognitive misers' (Taylor 1981), people look for clues for quick attitude formation or confirmation. Not only are attitudes often stable, but they are important shapers of subsequent attitudes. The media often reinforce this approach. The social context within which the debate will occur is also important and, as we have seen, road pricing starts from a position of opposition.

However, this is not to argue that road pricing is not viable. Road pricing can change behaviour despite negative attitudes, and can then subsequently change attitudes. This is the great hope of road pricing, but relying on this would be foolhardy. Road pricing must resonate, reflect and lead public opinion. The rest of the report will outline how this could be achieved.

3. Where are we now?

This chapter sets out the progress made so far along the road pricing debate timeline, beginning with the extent to which people feel that congestion is a problem and that road pricing could be the solution to address this problem. Drawing findings from our public-attitudes work, it then outlines respondents' concerns with road pricing. As we shall see, perceived ineffectiveness, the idea of stealth taxation and curtailment of freedom are all important here. These are likely issues that will be encountered along the 'downward leg' of the debate. Quotes from the qualitative research carried out as part of the project are interspersed in the text (also see Morris and Bird 2006).

Does the public accept that congestion is a problem?

There is little doubt that congestion is perceived to be a problem for the UK. In the context of transport-related problems, congestion is consistently at the top of people's lists of concerns (Bird and Vigor 2006), as this participant argued:

We're going to be gridlocked in 10 years' time.

Workshop participant, Somerset

On the whole, people tend to see congestion as a bigger problem for the country, and for their area, than for them personally (DfT 2006e, Morris and Bird 2006). This is shown in Figure 3.1.

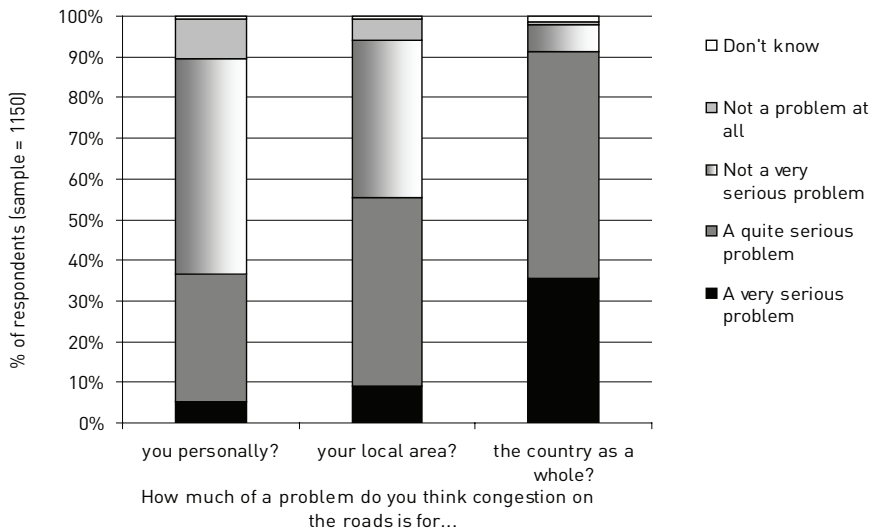
Despite not feeling congestion is a problem at a personal level, most people do have experience of sitting in a traffic jam. Over half (59 per cent) of the motorists surveyed on behalf of RAC said they were feeling 'more frustrated behind the wheel than ever before' (RAC 2006).

This resonates with the findings from our qualitative research. This showed that people felt congestion was more of a problem now than it had been in the past, and expected congestion to continue to get worse in the future (Morris and Bird 2006):

If we don't do something now, in 10 years' time we won't be able to move.

Focus group participant, Harlow

Figure 3.1 The problem of congestion



Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

Does the public accept the need for a radical solution?

Set against the belief that congestion is a growing problem that will continue to get worse is the acceptance that a radical solution to the problem is needed:

Something needs to be done. Not sure what, but something.

Focus group participant, Harlow

Over two thirds (68 per cent) of motorists interviewed on behalf of RAC were 'prepared to accept what they, themselves, regard as draconian measures to tackle congestion' (RAC 2006: 11).

Our qualitative research found that participants readily suggested radical ideas for cutting congestion, including banning cars in town centres, raising the driving age and even stopping the production and sale of cars (Morris and Bird 2006). It should be noted, though, that often those participants making such radical suggestions were those who would not have been affected personally by them.

However, perhaps the fact that people readily resort to extreme solutions does indicate a belief that there is no easy way out of the problem. Support for the more conventional approach of road building is low among members of the public. While previous governments have embraced a 'predict and provide' approach to tackling congestion, road building is now perceived by the public as being ineffective and, in some cases, impractical

(Bird and Vigor 2006). Our public-attitude work showed a similar response – people were not sure that building more roads would help tackle congestion, although there was significant support for making improvements to existing roads (Morris and Bird 2006).

Does the public support the principle of distance-based charging?

A common route into a discussion about road pricing is to consider the current ways in which we pay for road use – Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and fuel duty – and whether motoring taxes ought to reflect levels of road use.

It's fair [that] if people drive more, they should pay more.

Workshop participant, Newcastle

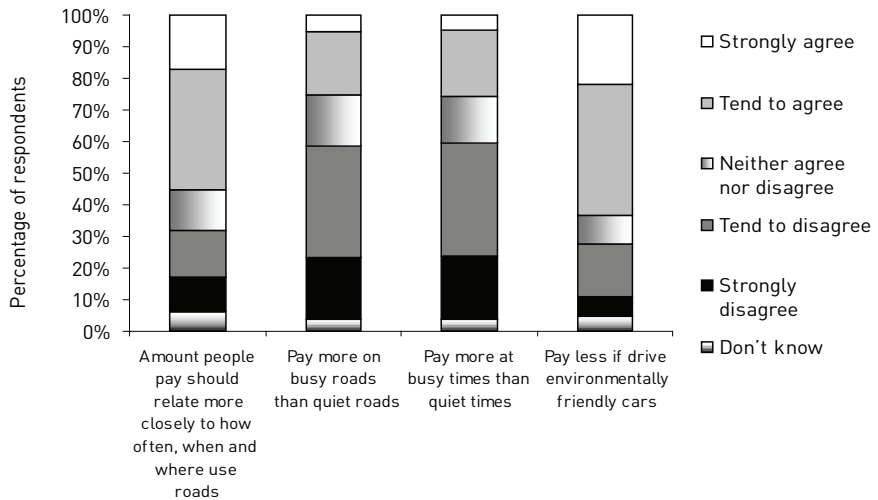
Clearly VED, as a fixed annual or six-monthly charge, does not relate to how frequently, or how far, people drive their cars. On the other hand, the amount of fuel duty that people pay does reflect the distances they drive, and also depends on the size and efficiency of their car's engine. Thus, owners of thirsty gas-guzzlers will pay more fuel duty than drivers of small, fuel-efficient cars, even if both parties drive similar distances.

There appears to be a good level of support for altering the current motoring taxes to a system in which payment is in proportion to how much people use the roads. A total of 55 per cent of respondents in a survey carried out for the DfT agreed that 'the current system of paying for road use should be changed so that the amount people pay relates more closely to how often, when and where they use roads' (Department for Transport 2006e). Our poll found that an even greater proportion (62 per cent) agreed that it was 'fair to pay for roads in proportion to the amount you use them' (Morris and Bird 2006).

While there is broad support for the principle of distance-based charging, using other factors to vary the charge is less popular. As can be seen in Figure 3.2, there is a much lower level of support for charging more on busy roads and at peak times. RAC (2006) suggests that these alternatives receive high levels of opposition because they are considered 'unfair'. Its own research showed hostility towards the idea of charges for driving during the rush hour, on town centre roads or on motorways (RAC 2006). The reasons for this perceived unfairness are discussed further in 'Other concerns' (p 40).

Interestingly, there seems to be a much greater level of support for charging according to environmental impact (Figure 3.2). This finding is reinforced by research carried out by MORI (2005), which found higher support for varying charges according to the size of a vehicle's engine, the exhaust emissions that a vehicle produces or the type of vehicle than for varying them according to the time of day travelled (Bird and Vigor 2006, MORI 2005).

Figure 3.2: Levels of support for possible aspects of a road pricing scheme, by driver status, 2005



Source: Department for Transport (2006e)

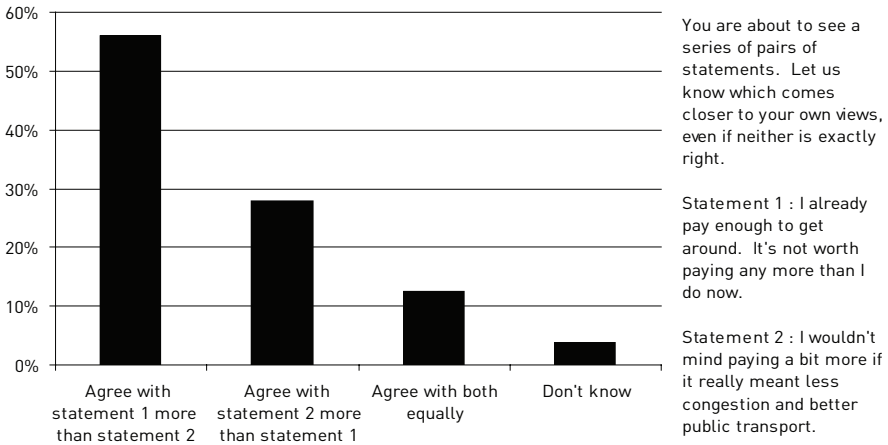
It is not clear why varying charges according to environmental impact should receive greater support than other options, although it may again relate to the idea of ‘fairness’, where people feel they are able to exercise control over whether they buy and drive an environmentally friendly car or not. Driving on busy roads at peak times, however, is felt to be out of people’s control, so it is reasoned that charging according to these criteria would be unfair.

Is the public prepared to pay more?

While there is clear support for the idea of making road taxes proportionate to use, there is also a sense that drivers already pay too much. That is, people feel that what they currently pay is more than proportionate for their road use (Morris and Bird 2006). Motorists feel they are an easy source of revenue for the Government, and that the current level of expenditure on roads and transport infrastructure does not reflect the large sums of money that they pay in the form of VED and fuel duty (Morris and Bird 2006). Those who felt that more spending was justified often argued that resources could, and should, be made available through efficiency savings. There was a perception that money is currently wasted through excessive bureaucracy (Morris and Bird 2006).

However, our research, set out in Figure 3.3, shows that there is some willingness to pay more for road use if this would really result in better pub-

Figure 3.3: Is it worth paying more?



Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

lic transport and less congestion. Although poll respondents showed lower levels of explicit support, around three-fifths of people had some sympathy with the notion of paying more in order to receive these benefits (Morris and Bird 2006).

However, this view does come with a major caveat: all the money raised should be spent on improving transport. The suggestion that most of the money could be spent on transport carried little favour. Sixty-nine per cent of poll respondents agreed that all the money should be spent on transport. This view was also strongly held in the focus groups (Morris and Bird 2006).

After recognising congestion as a growing national problem that requires a radical solution – as well as accepting the principle of distance-based charging – does the public meet the third condition identified in chapter 2? This chapter will move on to discuss the results of our public-attitudes work, where participants were presented with the idea of road pricing as such a ‘radical solution’ to congestion.

Does the public accept road pricing as a possible solution?

Although there is support for the idea of a radical solution to the problem of congestion, and a generally positive view to the concept of distance-based road taxes, there is some doubt over whether the public is yet ready to accept road pricing as a sensible way to tackle congestion.

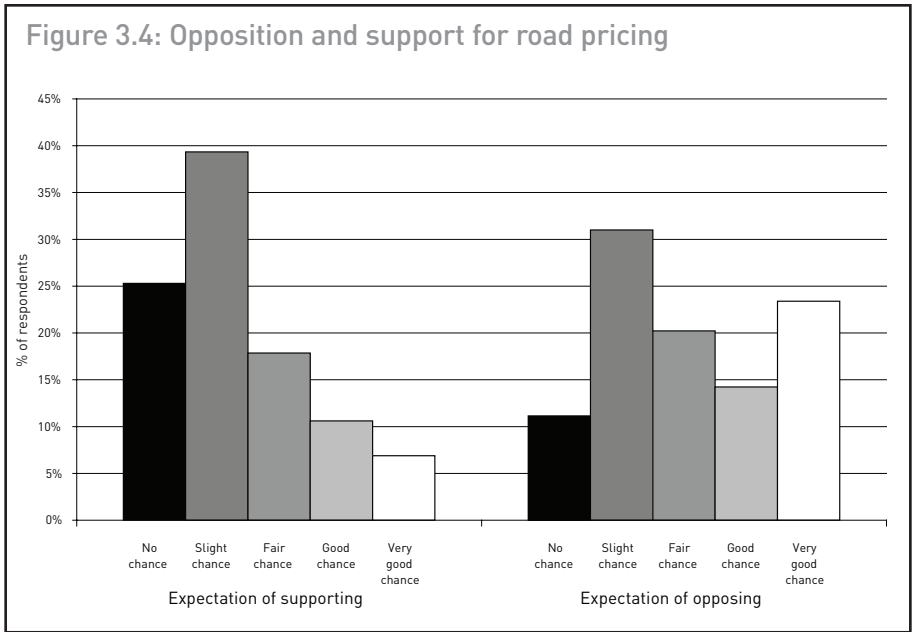
Research into public attitudes reveals a mixed picture. Previous studies

have shown that improving public transport is most commonly suggested by members of public as the way to address growing congestion (Bird and Vigor 2006). However, a recent RAC report concluded that ‘the debate may be moving on, even in the minds of many motorists, from “why is road pricing necessary?” to “how is road pricing delivered?”’ (RAC 2006: 4). Our public-attitude work found a less positive response. Although there was agreement that congestion was an important problem (see ‘Does the public accept that congestion is a problem?’, p 29), there was a great deal of scepticism about whether road pricing would be a preferred or effective solution (Morris and Bird 2006).

In contrast to our road pricing model in which public acceptance of the effectiveness of road pricing is established before entering a period of declining support (Figure 3.3), our research showed quite a fairly negative response from the start. This does not necessarily mean that the model is wrong – more that our research methods may not be able to simulate the course of the national debate. However, our research did enable us to reveal a more detailed picture of what people think about road pricing, and we will now discuss the reasons for this hostility in more detail.

What are the main public concerns?

The bad news for proponents of road pricing is that the ‘centre of gravity’ of public opinion on road pricing is negative. When asked how likely they would be to support or oppose road pricing, twice as many people say they



are likely to oppose the introduction of a road pricing scheme as say they would support it (see Figure 3.4). Also, when asked to rate the idea on a temperature scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being cold or unfavourable to 10 being warm or favourable, the average score is just 4, and the mode 1 (Morris and Bird 2006). Other surveys have shown similar hostility to the idea of road pricing (Bird and Vigor 2006).

Our research identified three main concerns relating to road pricing:

- **Concern 1: Ineffectiveness** – Road pricing is seen as an ineffective tool for tackling congestion.
- **Concern 2: Stealth taxation** – Road pricing is actually a stealth tax.
- **Concern 3: Loss of freedom** – Road pricing represents a restriction on personal freedom.

These issues are explored below, as well as a number of lesser concerns that were also raised during our public-attitude work.

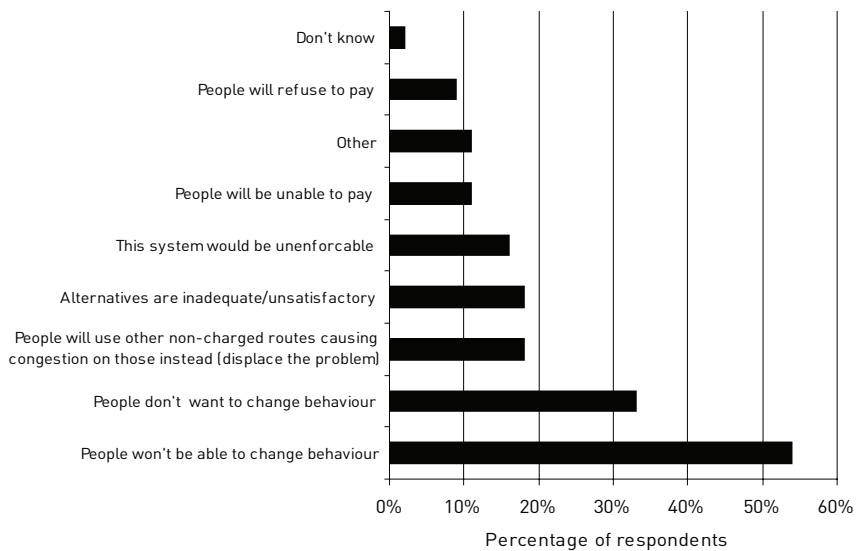
Concern 1: Ineffectiveness

Unlike the radical solutions that were put forward in our workshops, such as banning cars in city centres, it is not intuitively obvious to people how road pricing will cut congestion levels. There are two main reasons for this. First, it is commonly assumed that achieving a reduction in congestion will require an equally large reduction in traffic. In fact, this is not the case. The Government's road pricing feasibility study states that 'a significant reduction in congestion would require only a relatively small reduction in traffic' (Department for Transport 2004: 5). This was demonstrated in London, where a 15 per cent reduction in traffic – due to the introduction of the congestion charge – led to a 30 per cent reduction in congestion (Transport for London 2004).

The second reason that road pricing is not intuitive is that people cannot imagine how further behaviour change is possible because they believe that they are already doing everything they can to avoid congestion. A much more common response is to suggest improvements in public transport (Bird and Vigor 2006). Figure 3.5 shows that respondents to a survey carried out for the DfT highlighted people's inability to change their behaviour as the top reason why road pricing would not be effective (DfT 2006e).

Our public-attitudes work suggests that a major reason that people do not believe road pricing will change behaviour is that they do not consider their car journeys to be optional. Many participants gave their journey to work as an example. They felt that it was not possible for them to choose another time to make this trip or to change the location of their place of work. They felt that public transport was not a viable alternative either, because none was available, or because it would take too long. The school run was another often-cited example of a non-optional journey.

Figure 3.5: Reasons why road pricing is not considered effective in reducing congestion



Source: Department for Transport (2006e)

People also felt that they already did all they could to avoid congestion, whether this was using alternative routes, travelling at less busy times of day or, where time was not an issue, taking public transport. This was reflected in the statement by a participant in our Newcastle workshop that ‘Nobody deliberately chooses to sit in traffic.’ Research carried out for the DfT (2006e) also shows that people already take action to avoid congestion: 51 per cent of drivers said they always or often avoided certain routes and 45 per cent said they often or sometimes avoided certain times.

A lack of viable public transport alternatives is another reason that people feel they will be unable to change their behaviour. A survey of motorists carried out for RAC showed that 65 per cent felt that fares were ‘prohibitively expensive’, and 64 per cent felt that buses and trains would leave them ‘stranded a “significant distance” from where they wanted to go’ (RAC 2006: 17).

Finally, people think that road pricing will not work because it will just displace congestion onto other roads. A total of 62 per cent of motorists interviewed for RAC thought that congestion charging would displace congestion elsewhere (RAC 2006).

Interestingly, displacement of traffic (as opposed to congestion) was also seen as a failure of road pricing by participants in our public-attitude work, even though incentivising people to use alternative routes is one way in which road pricing would achieve reduced congestion. This view seems to

be rooted in the belief that road pricing is actually designed to raise money rather than to cut congestion (as discussed in 'Stealth taxation', below). In this case, driving on quieter roads is regarded as a way of 'getting round' road pricing (Morris and Bird 2006).

Even though people do not believe that road pricing will be effective, there are numerous examples from around the world showing that road pricing does cut congestion: traffic levels in Bergen fell by 6-7 per cent in the first year after charging was introduced, congestion was cut by 30 per cent in London and traffic has reduced by 25 per cent in Stockholm (Commission for Integrated Transport 2006).

However, presenting these case studies does not appear to be an effective method of persuading people that road pricing reduces congestion. In our public-attitudes work, people dismissed these examples as 'special cases'. For example, they saw London's public transport system, particularly the Underground, as making the capital a unique place within the UK and they argued that road pricing would not work elsewhere in the country (Morris and Bird 2006).

Concern 2: Stealth taxation

[It's] just another stealth tax to get money out of the motorist.

Workshop participant, Newcastle

The 'stealth tax' narrative sums up a commonly held criticism of road pricing. In this scenario, the motive behind introducing road pricing is perceived not to be reducing congestion but rather raising more revenue from motorists. It is described as a stealth tax because it is felt that government is trying to disguise the 'genuine aim' (raising money) by claiming (dishonestly) that road pricing is being brought in to address other, more palatable, concerns. For example, during discussions in our workshops and focus groups, the suggestion that road pricing could also be used to cut CO₂ emissions from cars in order to combat climate change was perceived as a 'ruse' to hide the 'real' motive of levying another tax (Morris and Bird 2006).

There are a number of factors that can contribute to the view that road pricing is a stealth tax. The first is the fact that, as already discussed, road pricing is not an intuitive way of tackling congestion. If people do not believe that road pricing will cut congestion then alternative motives, such as raising revenue, are more plausible.

A second factor is that the belief that current motoring taxes are too high and that motorists already pay more than is proportionate for their road use (Morris and Bird 2006). In this context, road pricing is seen as just another example of government squeezing money out of motorists. Our workshops revealed a level of confusion about what happened to current

motoring taxes – people wanted to know where the money went (Morris and Bird 2006).

Third, the fact that people feel that many of the trips they make by car are not optional also resonates here. Respondents felt they would have no choice but to pay any road pricing charges, and this in turn was viewed as an opportunistic attempt by the Government to ‘milk’ more money from the motorist.

The final factor relates to pricing levels. Previous attitudinal studies have investigated opinions towards ‘revenue-raising’ and ‘revenue-neutral’ schemes. These have revealed a preference for revenue-neutral schemes and have demonstrated that a revenue-raising scheme would lead people to question the motives of the Government (Bird and Vigor 2006).

However, our own research showed that in fact, talking about revenue at an aggregate level did not have much of an impact because participants tended to make assessments at more of an individual level. This revealed a clear preference for low charges (Morris and Bird 2006).

We tested the following message relating to pricing levels: ‘The average cost would be 5p a mile’ (that is, costs would not be excessive). We found that on the whole, the message was ineffective in shifting people’s levels of opposition. This was because people were sceptical that prices would be low in the first place. Even if they did believe this, a counter message – that the prices would start off cheap but would soon rise once people were ‘locked in’ – was found to be highly credible and a powerful counterargument (Morris and Bird 2006).

A further concern relating to pricing levels is that any charge needs to be clear and predictable. People did not like the idea of being unable to predict how much their monthly bill would be. This was a particular concern for people on low incomes, who wanted the option of being able to pay upfront, as they already did for their energy bills and mobile phones in order to manage their budgets (Morris and Bird 2006). Participants were also keen that any charging structure could be simply understood, so that they could have a greater understanding of any likely costs.

Qualitative research carried out on behalf of the DfT concluded that ‘all things being equal, [people] would choose an option whose attributes they could predict’ (Bonsall *et al* 2006: 13). The report also acknowledged the fact that ‘different people preferred different payment mechanisms and that these preferences are not always based on a desire for best value for money’ (Bonsall *et al* 2006: 13).

Concern 3: Loss of freedom

The third major response to the idea of road pricing that emerged from our public-attitudes work was a feared loss of personal freedom. This view comprises two aspects. First, and most importantly, road pricing leads peo-

ple to think that their level of choice about how, where and when to get about will be restricted. Second, a lesser worry relates to the idea of a satellite-based road pricing scheme impinging on people's personal privacy:

It's 'them' telling us when we can move and charging us for it.

Workshop participant, Canterbury

An interesting finding from our public-attitudes work was that people often held the paradoxical view that road pricing would both fail to change their behaviour – leading them to pay more for driving – and that their freedom to drive would be restricted since they would be 'priced off the road'. Clearly it is not possible for both conditions to be true simultaneously, but it is important to note that this lose-lose scenario nonetheless existed for many of our participants (Morris and Bird 2006).

The fear of having one's freedom to drive restricted was largely an emotive rather than rational issue. Public transport is not currently seen as a viable alternative to the car, so people feel as if road pricing will restrict their basic choice on how to get about (Morris and Bird 2006).

Although concerns about privacy do resonate with members of the public – surveys of motorists carried out for the RAC Foundation showed that 58 per cent of respondents felt that 'the use of satellites to monitor the location of cars is an infringement of personal liberty' (RAC Foundation 2006b: 4) – they do not seem to be as important as concerns about costs and restrictions on people's mobility.

Previous attitudinal work has shown that, on the whole, privacy is not a major issue for most people. This has been reflected in the low uptake of anonymous registration options in European congestion charging schemes, for example (Bird and Vigor 2006). However, the idea of having your every move 'tracked' by satellite still produces a strong emotive response in the debate on road pricing.

The Government's road pricing feasibility study (Department for Transport 2004) highlights two privacy issues relating to road pricing:

- Personal autonomy – the right of individuals to go about their daily lives without intrusive surveillance from public authorities.
- Information privacy – the right of individuals to have some control over the way information about themselves is used.

Research carried out for the Information Commissioner's Office showed that privacy concerns about road pricing generally fell into the former category:

The idea that 'they' could trace their whereabouts at any time was uncomfortable, and seemed like an invasion of personal privacy – with no apparent benefit to the individual... Most were uneasy, left

wondering what other uses the information from satellite vehicle tracking might be put to.

Sharpe Research (2004: 32)

This was also found to be the case in our focus groups. However, although participants felt uneasy at the prospect, for most it was not a major concern. This was because the majority of people either believed that they had ‘nothing to hide’ and therefore were not worried about increasing intrusion into their private lives, or that the level of intrusion into people’s lives is already high – in other words, ‘they’ already know everything – so road pricing will not make this situation significantly worse. Only a small minority were concerned about increasing intrusion.

Although privacy is not a major concern, it is a strongly emotive subject, and proponents of road pricing need to note this. Indeed, it was striking how often participants, when asked to create advertisements arguing against the introduction of road pricing, used ‘Big Brother’ messages to try to convince people to oppose road pricing.

It smacks of Big Brother. I think if we’re watched it could cause problems. If you wanted to go to certain places you’d be tagged.

Workshop participant, Somerset

This privacy angle has already been taken up by the national press (as we will see in the following chapter), with many papers already dubbing road pricing a ‘spy-in-the-sky’ initiative.

Other concerns

Our public-attitudes work identified a number of other, less significant, concerns about road pricing, including:

- waste and bureaucracy
- fairness
- evasion
- who should run the scheme
- climate change.

The following sections address each of these in turn. Concerns about how road pricing may impact on road safety issues did not arise spontaneously in our workshops and focus groups. Further research is necessary to learn more about public attitudes and this aspect.

Waste and bureaucracy

Our public-attitudes work revealed a widely held concern about the costs involved in running a road pricing scheme. The technology was perceived

to be very expensive, and there were worries about whether the Government would be able to deliver such a large IT project where previous large-scale IT ventures were felt to have been unsuccessful and to have wasted taxpayers' money. Other projects, such as those carried out by the Child Support Agency, the National Health Service and the Driver Vehicle Licensing Authority were cited as evidence of this (Morris and Bird 2006).

A larger concern, however, related to the administration of the scheme. People imagined their money being wasted on bureaucracy and the 'paper pushers' who they thought would be involved in running the scheme (Morris and Bird 2006).

I don't like waste. I think we'll be paying a hell of a lot of money for another Whitehall office.

Workshop participant, Somerset

Fairness

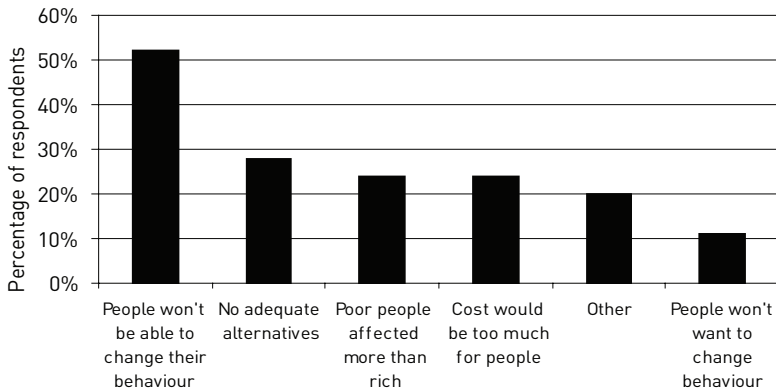
Research has shown that the perceived fairness of a scheme affects levels of public acceptability (Bird and Vigor 2006, Lyons *et al* 2004). However, in the context of the road pricing debate, people tend to think of 'fairness' on two different levels: first, whether road pricing will be fair to different groups of society and whether anyone will be unjustly disadvantaged, and second, whether road pricing would be fair to them, personally, given their particular circumstances and needs.

In our public-attitudes work, the latter thinking was far more prevalent, and there was a sense that road pricing was unfair because people would be charged for journeys that they could not avoid (Morris and Bird 2006). This opinion is reflected in research by other organisations as well. The DfT's latest report on public attitudes shows that the most commonly cited reason for why road pricing was unfair was that 'people won't be able to change their behaviour' (Figure 3.6) (DfT 2006e).

This concern could essentially be a proxy for individual concerns – the level of charge and the lack of viable alternatives. This seems to be borne out by research for RAC, which showed that higher charges for driving during the rush hour and on town-centre roads and motorways were perceived as unfair and were widely opposed (see Figure 3.2) (RAC 2006).

Nevertheless, research has also shown some concern for the impacts on other groups of people. Figure 3.6 shows that a significant percentage of respondents felt road pricing would be unfair because it would disproportionately affect those on a low income. Other studies have shown concern about the impact on people living in rural areas who have poor access to public transport (Bird and Vigor 2006). Our public-attitudes work also revealed a concern about people with disabilities (Morris and Bird 2006).

Figure 3.6: Reasons why road pricing is not considered fair



Source: Department for Transport 2006e

Evasion

There is a history of concern about 'free riding' in the context of motoring taxes, and people feel strongly that tax evasion is a problem with the current system (Bird and Vigor 2006). This concern is applied equally to proposals for a road pricing scheme.

Those in the know will find a way round it.

Focus group participant, Harlow

In order for any road pricing scheme to gain acceptance, people must believe that they are not acting in isolation – whether altering their behaviour or paying the charge – and that everyone else is subject to the same rules (Bird and Vigor 2006).

There are two reasons why people might feel that this is not the case. First, they are sceptical about whether the technology and system is up to the job of accurately billing motorists. Second, there is a belief that people will be able to cheat the system and find ways of avoiding charges.

Who should run the scheme?

Participants in our focus groups did not have a particularly strong preference for whether the Government or a private firm should run the scheme. The consensus was that the most preferable option would be whichever was most efficient (Morris and Bird 2006). Other research in this area has also shown mixed views over who should run the scheme (Bird and Vigor 2006).

The question of who should set the prices is not one that we addressed in our public-attitudes work. However, previous research has demonstrated

that there is support for the idea of an independent body taking this role (Bird and Vigor 2006).

Climate change

Of the problems associated with car use, climate change is not particularly salient among members of the public (Bird and Vigor 2006). Our research showed that there was still a significant level of confusion over its existence and consequences. This means that presenting road pricing as a means of cutting CO₂ emissions is not particularly effective in reducing opposition.

Even among those who do think climate change is a real phenomenon, discussions about the impact of road pricing on climate change still ran into the 'stealth tax' problem (see Concern 2, p 37). For many participants, lowering emissions from cars was not a credible way to tackle a problem as big as climate change. Several participants mentioned the futility of changing our behaviour if other countries, in particular the United States, were not doing anything (Morris and Bird 2006).

As a country we have little effect – have a word with the US.

Focus group participant, Sale

Factors that affect attitudes to road pricing

To identify key issues to help explain the respondents' attitudes, we used regression analysis on the results of our poll (using an ordered probit model – for more information, see Morris and Bird 2006). Our research suggests that there are three important factors in helping to explain people's attitudes towards road pricing. The first is frequency of car use, and the second two relate to frequency of use of, and satisfaction with, public transport.

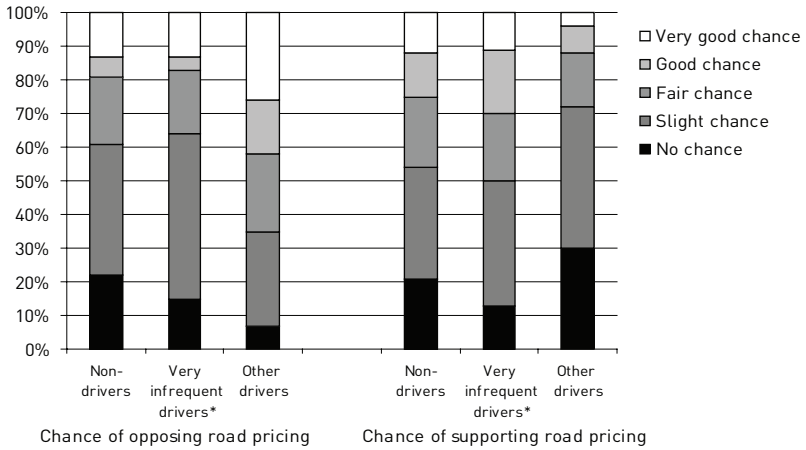
This section outlines the effect of these factors on attitudes. It also discusses other factors that do not seem to have such a significant impact, such as levels of congestion. It presents the 'raw' poll results and regression analysis together, to identify key issues that need to be addressed in the road pricing debate.

Frequency of car use

Frequency of car use seems to have an impact on people's levels of support and opposition for road pricing. Research for the DfT showed that infrequent car drivers were more likely to support a road pricing scheme based on how often, when, and where people use roads, with 40 per cent of respondents agreeing that the current system of motoring taxation should be changed. In contrast, just 27 per cent of those who drove every day agreed. Interestingly, those who did not drive at all were least likely to support the change, with only 25 per cent of non-drivers agreeing (DfT 2006e).

Our public-attitudes work supported these findings. The opinion poll

Figure 3.7: Support and opposition to road pricing, by car use



Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

*Note: People who drive less than once a week

showed that 63 per cent of those most likely to oppose road pricing, and least likely to support it, drove every day, or nearly every day. Only 15 per cent of the opposite group (very unlikely to oppose and very likely to support) were frequent drivers. Figure 3.7 shows the likelihood of opposing road pricing by car use. Regression analysis conducted by ippr on our own poll results (the results of which are available from the authors on request) showed that frequency of car use was a good predictor both of support and of opposition to road pricing. There was also a correlation with the 'temperature score' given to the idea, where an increase in car use correlated to a decrease in the temperature score.

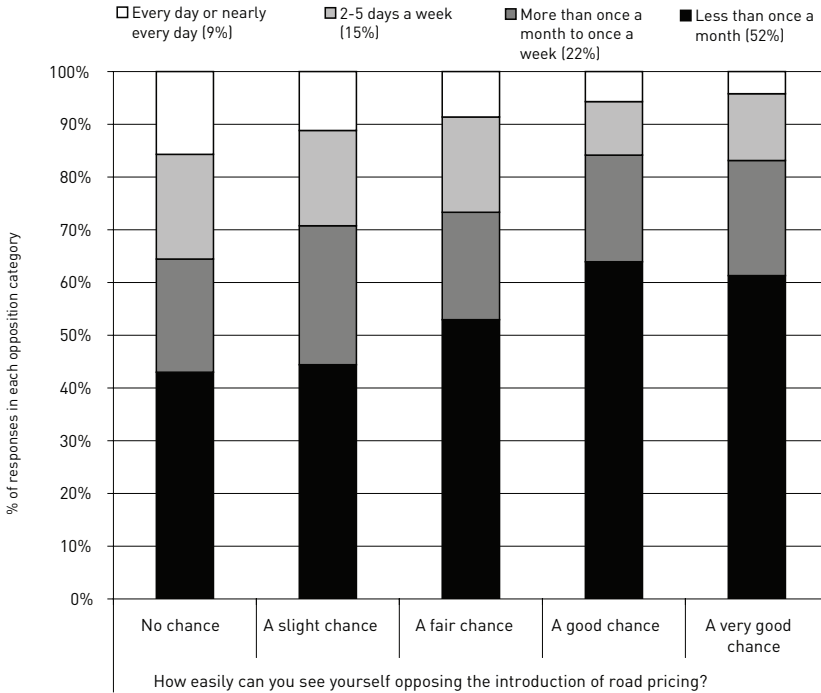
Like the DfT (2006e) research, our poll showed that non-drivers were less likely to support a road pricing scheme than infrequent drivers (see Figure 3.7). However, members of this group were also less likely to oppose road pricing. Our qualitative work suggests that, unlike infrequent drivers, non-drivers do not perceive any personal benefits from road pricing, so tend to be indifferent to its introduction (Morris and Bird 2006).

Public transport

Public transport also has an impact on people's reactions towards road pricing although the relationship is not straightforward. Levels of support and opposition are predicted well by people's satisfaction with public transport and, to a lesser extent, the frequency with which they use public transport.

People who use public transport frequently tend to be more positive towards the idea of road pricing. The poll showed that those using public transport every day or nearly every day gave the idea an average score of 5.3

Figure 3.8: Likelihood of opposing road pricing, by public transport use



Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

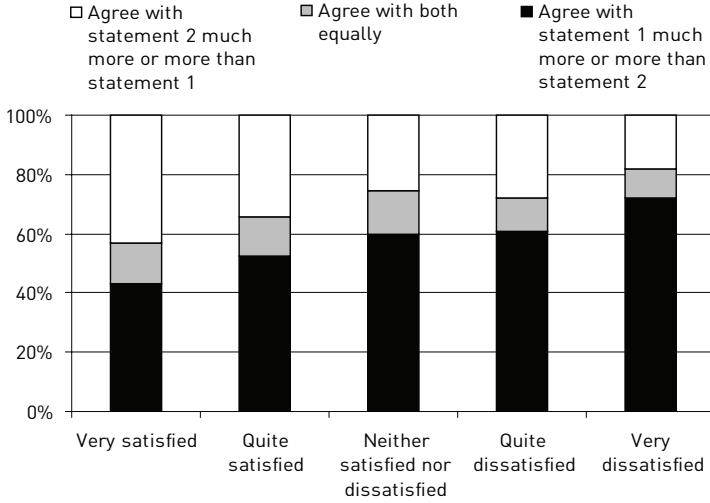
on a scale of 1 (cold/unfavourable) to 10 (warm/favourable) compared to an average score of 3.5 for people who never use public transport. Our regression analysis of behavioural variables confirmed that public transport use was a good predictor of temperature score.

The poll also appeared to show that frequent public transport users were less likely to oppose road pricing (Figure 3.8), although the regression analysis did not find a significant correlation between these two variables.

There was a more significant link between public transport satisfaction and attitudes towards road pricing. Our poll showed that people who were more satisfied with public transport were prepared to pay more for public transport improvements and reduced congestion (see Figure 3.9) and they also gave road pricing a higher temperature score than those who were less satisfied (see Figure 3.10).

Public transport satisfaction is also a good predictor of how likely people are to oppose road pricing. Those who are more satisfied with public transport are less likely to oppose, and those who are less satisfied with public transport are more likely to oppose. This was shown in the regression analysis and is depicted in Figure 3.11.

Figure 3.9: Willingness to pay more, by public transport satisfaction



Q. How satisfied are you with local public transport?

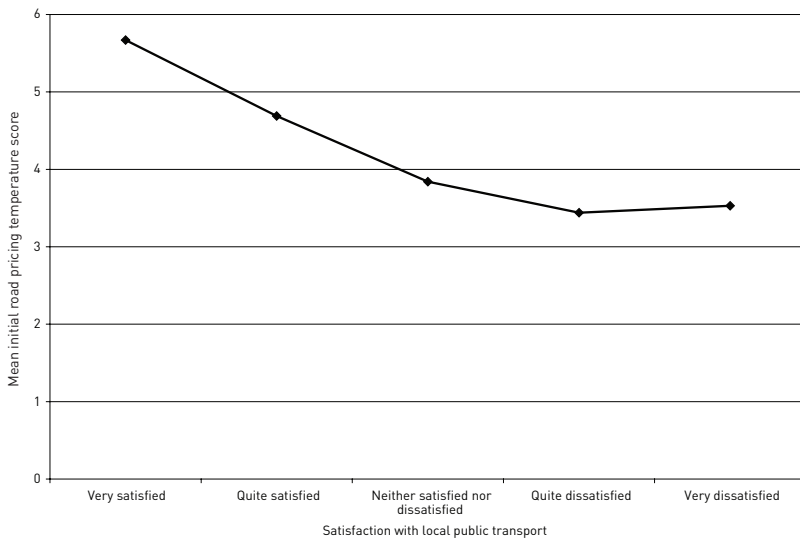
Question: Which of these two statements comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right?

Statement 1: I already pay enough to get around. It's not worth paying any more than I do now.

Statement 2: I wouldn't mind paying a bit more if it really meant less congestion and better public transport.

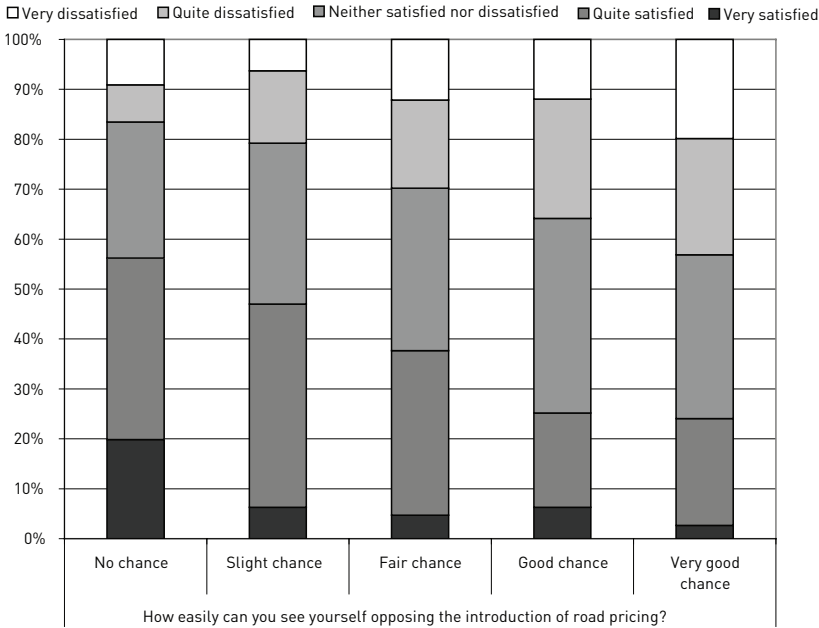
Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

Figure 3.10: Public transport satisfaction and temperature score



Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

Figure 3.11: Opposition to road pricing, by satisfaction with public transport



Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

Our qualitative work revealed a picture that was not quite as black and white as the poll suggests. In several of our workshops, we found that people who were less satisfied with their local public transport were actually more supportive of the idea of road pricing. The reason for this was that their support was highly conditional on the fact that road pricing would lead to significant improvements in local public transport, which were felt to be badly needed. In the poll, respondents were unable to specify this requirement (Morris and Bird 2006).

Again, regression analysis was used to try to identify significant factors in determining levels of public transport satisfaction. The results showed that both frequency of car use and frequency of public transport use were significant. This finding echoed research carried out by Ipsos MORI, which showed that public transport satisfaction increased with frequency of use, and fell with increasing numbers of cars owned at the household level (Ipsos MORI 2006a).

Ipsos MORI research also showed that high levels of satisfaction tend to be found in London and metropolitan areas, whereas rural areas showed less satisfaction. These findings may be expected, given that it is easier to provide public transport in densely populated urban areas. However, it is

important to note that satisfaction depends on expectation, not just on the level of service provision. The Ipsos MORI report suggests that social class may play a role in determining satisfaction, since expectations were found to be lower among disadvantaged groups, who were also more frequent users of buses (Ipsos MORI 2006a).

Other factors

Our research also found that geography and occupation had some effect on opinions, although these were not as marked as the factors detailed above. The poll showed that Londoners were more likely to be open to road pricing – a fact that seems to be attributable to the greater satisfaction with public transport satisfaction found in London (see above) rather than their experience of the congestion charge (Morris and Bird 2006). On the other hand, an RAC poll of motorists found that drivers in London were among the most strongly opposed to road pricing (RAC 2006). Our poll also showed that among the Standard Occupational Classifications, transport and machine operatives were more likely to oppose road pricing.

We tested a number of other factors to see if they had an impact on the likelihood of opposing road pricing, but none showed a significant link. Perhaps the most surprising of these was perceived level of congestion. People who perceived congestion to be a problem – whether at the personal, local or national level – were no more, or less, likely to oppose road pricing than those who did not. This may be explained by the fact that people do not see road pricing as an effective way of tackling congestion (as outlined in ‘Concern 1’, p 35) (Morris and Bird 2006).

Our research also found no link with gender, age, class, the number of children a household has, how those children travel to school, or how individuals travel to work.

Overall, this analysis provides a neat confirmation of where the road pricing debate is starting, and a significant route to addressing this. First, the correlation between increased car use and high levels of opposition/low levels of support demonstrates that road pricing appears to be an instinctively ‘anti-car’ idea. This correlation is likely to be due to a perception that car users will be adversely affected by the new scheme. Second, the fundamental role that public transport has to play in the road pricing debate is confirmed by this analysis. The importance of public transport satisfaction – as opposed to use on its own, although it is clear they are inter-related – is an interesting finding. This analysis suggests that getting people to use public transport could actually soften opposition to road pricing. This implies improvements in public transport before road pricing’s introduction could be very important.

Summing up

Our research has shown that while there is widespread acceptance that congestion is a problem for the country and that a radical solution is necessary, current attitudes towards road pricing as a means of cutting congestion are generally negative. We identified three key concerns that seem to underpin this hostility. They are:

1. That road pricing will not be an effective way of tackling congestion.
2. That road pricing in fact represents a 'stealth tax' imposed by government to penalise people for a behaviour that they believe they are unable to change.
3. That road pricing will result in a loss of personal freedom and restrict people's ability to choose how and when they get around.

Our regression analysis showed that frequency of car use and satisfaction with car use were good predictors of people's attitudes towards road pricing, highlighting the potential importance of public transport improvements in winning the debate on road pricing.

4. How can the Government win the argument?

Chapter 3 demonstrated that the results of our public-attitudes work suggest that the public is at the top of the 'downward leg' of our stylised road pricing debate diagram (see p 23). As chapter 2 argued, evidence from existing schemes demonstrates that opposition is likely to increase through time. The challenge for those advocating road pricing is to minimise unacceptability and in effect slow down the increasing opposition. Chapter 3 identified the three main public concerns that will affect this debate: ineffectiveness, stealth taxation and a perceived loss of freedom.

In this chapter, we will return to these three concerns and examine each one in turn. The chapter includes suggested ways of addressing them, with the objective of minimising unacceptability to road pricing and slowing the inevitable increasing opposition. It identifies issues of scheme design and communication strategies that could help address the opposition. Critically, this chapter argues that the road pricing debate is still at an early stage and this significantly impacts upon the possible policy responses. Options on scheme design and communication strategy are given, and a new national road pricing stakeholder body suggested.

Again, it is worth reiterating that the options that receive greatest public support are not necessarily those that should be adapted, but an understanding of public concerns and potential ways in which they can be allayed will be invaluable as the national debate goes forward.

Addressing the three main public concerns

Concern 1: Ineffectiveness

In chapter 3 we saw that road pricing is perceived as being an ineffective way of tackling congestion. This was primarily due to it not being an intuitive solution to the problem of congestion, and also because people felt there was currently a lack of alternatives, which meant they would not be able to change their behaviour. Providing examples of successful schemes was not effective in changing opinions because these examples were usually viewed as 'special cases'.

The introduction of the central London congestion charge is a useful example here. In the run-up to the introduction of this scheme, there was widespread scepticism about its likely effectiveness, with some commentators predicting chaos and failure as soon as the scheme went live. In fact, once the scheme was proved to be successful and had demonstrably

reduced congestion levels, attitudes shifted, resulting in a greater acceptance that the congestion charge was effective. Transport for London (2003) reports that six months after introduction, 70 per cent of London residents surveyed felt the congestion charge had been effective.

In order to probe ways of increasing the perceived effectiveness of road pricing, we tested the following message: 'Road pricing would give people a reason to think twice before getting into their cars. That's how it will cut congestion.'

While this message was plausible to the participants, it nevertheless provoked a negative reaction. This was because although it was conceivable that prices could be set at such a level that people would be persuaded not to use their cars, it was generally felt that this level would have to be very high and would therefore be unfair. Again, this was due to a perceived lack of alternatives. The idea also played to concerns about government policy impinging on personal freedom.

A more acceptable way of persuading people that road pricing is effective might be to provide alternative options upfront. This suggestion resonated with participants in our public engagement work (Morris and Bird 2006). As discussed above, this is both because people think that without an alternative, motorists will not be able to change their behaviour, and because people think intuitively that public transport is the best way of dealing with congestion.

Interim Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) schemes will also, clearly, have an important role to play. Any local-area schemes (most likely, congestion charging) will be important in building the case that road pricing schemes can reduce congestion. This assertion does come with an important caveat, however. As we have seen, case studies of successful schemes were seen as being due to 'special cases', such as the existence of the Underground in London and perceived better public transport in foreign countries. Successful interim schemes could also go some way to addressing fears over the procurement of large-scale IT projects.

This discussion of the perceived ineffectiveness of road pricing has demonstrated that the argument that must be won is that road pricing is an effective and non-punitive way of dealing with congestion. A balancing act is required here, however. Any messages that communicate the effectiveness of road pricing must not feed a fear that it is punitive in simply pricing people off the road. Public transport will again be important here, as the following discussion on Concern 3 (p 58) also demonstrates.

Concern 2: Stealth taxation

The initial discussion on this concern in chapter 3 showed that many people see road pricing as an extension of a 'stealth tax' narrative. The belief here is that rather than aiming to reduce congestion, the purpose of the

charge is to obtain more money from motorists. This view is based on three beliefs:

- That road pricing is not an intuitive way of cutting congestion, and hence is not a plausible motive for bringing in a charge.
- That motorists already pay more than they should in road taxes and are an 'easy target' for government fundraising initiatives.
- That motorists cannot avoid the trips they make by car and therefore the Government is simply charging them more to drive.

As we discussed in chapter 2, with relation to attitude formation and 'framing' in particular, stealth tax is a dominant and instinctive response that is potentially problematic for those advocating the introduction of road pricing. As we have seen, if road pricing is categorised as a stealth tax, any other information and arguments about congestion may simply be discounted.

As well as our public-attitudes work showing that road pricing is already being framed as a stealth tax (Morris and Bird 2006), the national media – particularly the rightwing press (see, for example, Ingham 2006, *Daily Mail* 2005) – have started to use the 'stealth tax' narrative extensively. This is significant given the powerful role that the media has in shaping the terms of national debate and the difficulty in changing attitudes once they are entrenched. A recent opinion column in the *Daily Telegraph* provides a good example of this:

Pay-as-you-go schemes and little black boxes may claim to ease traffic congestion, but no one will readily believe that is their primary purpose. The motorist has long been an easy source of revenue for the Treasury, and these plans are intended to prise another golden egg out of the goose.

(*Daily Telegraph* 2006)

The Conservatives have also labelled road pricing a stealth tax (Conservatives 2005, eGov Monitor 2006).

Our public-attitudes work has suggested three ways in which the 'stealth tax' narrative could be addressed. The first two, replacing existing taxes and hypothecating (ring fencing) any revenue to transport, relate to the design of any scheme. The third suggestion – providing other options – aims to ensure that people believe there are alternatives to driving their cars (and hence paying the charge). This refers partly to scheme design, but also shows the importance of communicating that road pricing is part of a package of measures.

Replacing existing taxes

Within the 'stealth tax' frame, replacing one or both existing motoring taxes

could to be useful in two ways. First, it would be an important symbolic gesture that the primary aim of road pricing is not raising additional revenue. Second, it would go some way to addressing people’s concerns that road pricing will lead to them paying more money.

The idea of paying more than the current levels of VED and fuel duty is clearly an unpopular one. Previous public-attitudes work in this area suggests that a ‘revenue-neutral’ scheme where the costs of road pricing are offset by equivalent cuts in motoring taxes is more favourable than a ‘revenue-raising’ scheme (Bird and Vigor 2006).

Recent research for RAC showed that drivers were much more likely to accept road pricing if reductions were made in VED and fuel duty (RAC 2006). These findings were echoed both in the qualitative and the quantitative aspects of our public-attitudes work (Morris and Bird 2006). Our poll demonstrated that introducing road pricing in addition to existing taxes was an extremely unpopular option – temperature scores were the lowest and the likelihood of opposition was greatest for this scenario compared to the other options. Options that involved replacing one or more existing tax were more popular (see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1).

What is less obvious, however, is how people interpret the term ‘revenue neutral’. Clearly, a scheme that is revenue neutral at a national level will result in winners and losers at an individual level. In fact, modelling work carried out for the Independent Transport Commission showed that a revenue-neutral scheme based on making offsetting cuts in fuel duty would result in only a small number of ‘winners’, who would pay significantly less, and a large number of ‘losers’, who would pay a little more than under the current taxation regime (Glaister and Graham 2006).

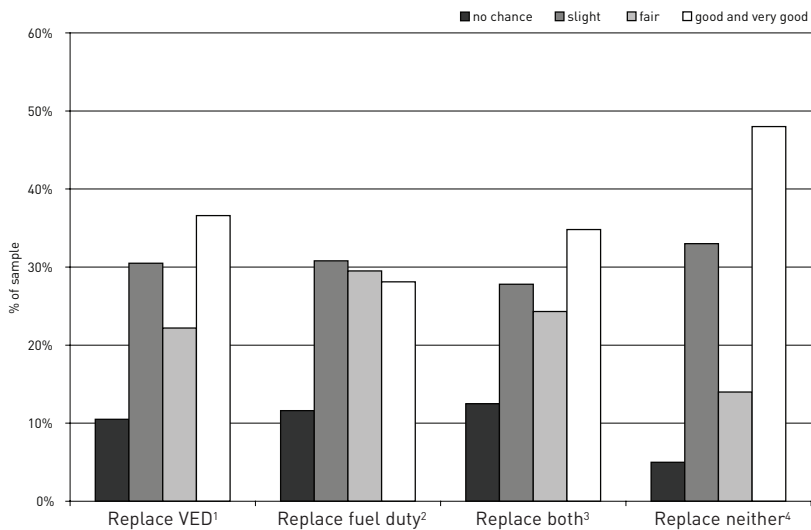
Our public-attitudes work suggested that people were more concerned about individual level cost impacts than arguments over whether a national scheme would be ‘revenue neutral’ or ‘revenue raising’. This was reflected in the fact that there was no clear preference over whether revenue neutrality should be achieved through cuts in VED or in fuel duty. A revenue-raising scenario, however, was perceived as a clear indication that individual outgoings would increase (Morris and Bird 2006).

The benefit of scrapping an existing tax is that whether or not it ultimately results in a revenue-neutral scheme, such a gesture would help give

Table 4.1: Mean temperature scores by tax scenario

Scenario	Mean score
Replace VED	4.1
Replace petrol tax	4.7
Replace both	4.4
Replace neither	3.3
Source: Morris and Bird (2006)	

Figure 4.1: Likelihood of opposing by replacing different taxes



Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

Note: 1. Sample = 1150; 2. Sample = 144; 3. Sample = 146 4. Sample = 100

credibility to the claim that road pricing is not about raising money.

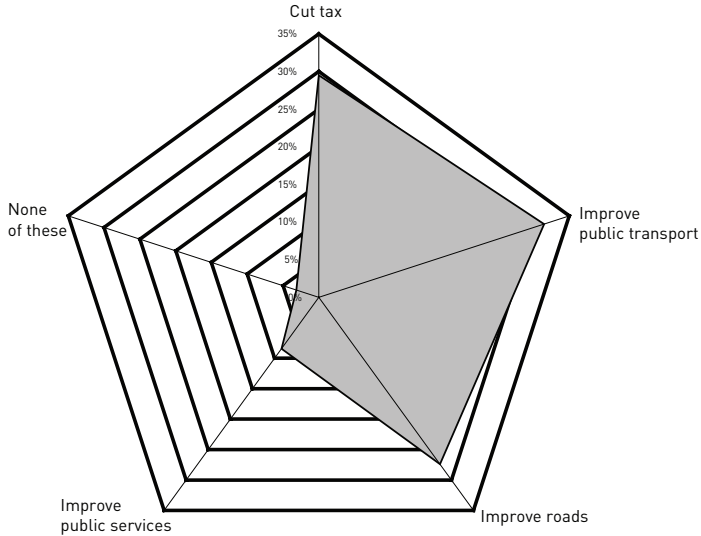
Scrapping taxes may or may not result in a revenue-neutral scenario, depending on the level at which road pricing charges are set. It is also very important to note that a revenue-neutral scheme is likely to lead to an increase in CO₂ emissions from road transport as a result of increasing total traffic levels (Grayling *et al* 2004). Scrapping VED without retaining a band structure for road pricing would mean the incentive for purchasing fuel efficient vehicles would be lost. These issues could be problematic given the DfT's statutory obligation to reduce emissions. Further work is necessary to address this matter in the design of any national road pricing scheme.

Use of any revenue

What to do with any revenue from road pricing is a difficult issue in this context. As we have seen, revenue neutrality at an individual level is an attractive idea for most people. However, people also have strong views on the need for more spending on transport. As we have seen from chapter 3, this is often rationalised through an 'efficiency' narrative, where the motorist is currently heavily taxed and more of this money should be better spent on transport (and not 'wasted', as much of it is currently). Arguments that more revenue might be required to spend on improving public transport, for example, are sometimes therefore dismissed, and feed a 'stealth tax' narrative.

A lack of trust in government and a confusion over how current motor-

Figure 4.2: Where should the money go?



Question: The money raised through road pricing could be used in different ways. Which of the following options do you prefer:

- Use any extra money raised to reduce petrol tax
- Use any extra money raised to improve public transport
- Use any extra money raised to improve the roads
- Use any extra money raised to help improve public services such as schools, hospitals and the police
- None of these options

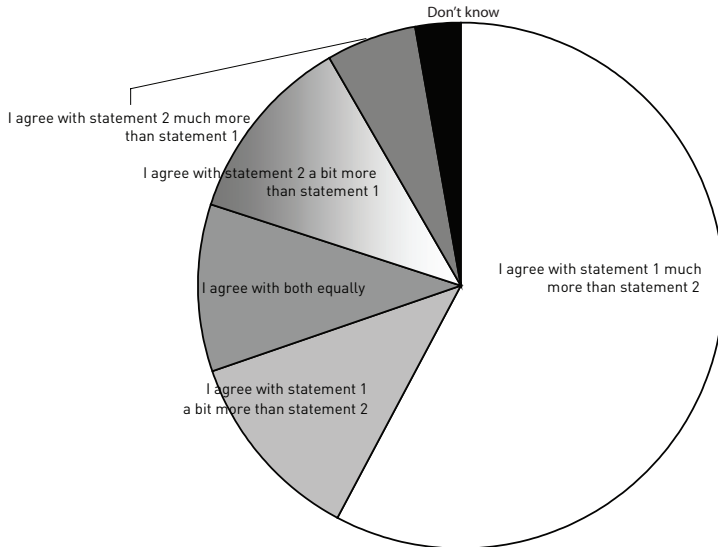
Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

ing taxes are spent reinforce the suggestion that road pricing is a stealth tax. Participants in our workshops felt that 'they' (the Government) were spending 'our' (their own/taxpayers') money on 'their' (the Government's) priorities (Bird and Morris 2006). Hypothecating revenue helps provide the necessary transparency to help mitigate the lack of trust in government, but is clearly not enough.

There is also a strong sense of what revenues should be hypothecated for. Results from our poll showed that there was strong support for the idea that money raised from road pricing should be used to fund transport-related projects only. This is depicted in Figure 4.2, which shows that the option of spending the money on other public services, such as health or education, is very unpopular. Our qualitative work suggested that a significant reason for this was that it was 'common sense' to people that money raised from transport should be spent on transport.

As already set out in chapter 3, our poll showed that the message that 'all' revenue should be spent on transport was significantly more popular than 'most'. As Figure 4.3 demonstrates, the 'most' message only secured 18

Figure 4.3: Attitudes to hypothecation



Question: Which statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right?

Statement 1: ALL the money raised from road pricing should be spent on transport and nothing else.

Statement 2: MOST of the money raised from road pricing should be spent on transport, but some should be used for other public services like police, schools and hospitals.

Source: Morris and Bird (2006)

per cent support, whereas ‘all’ secured 69 per cent.

Another reason was that, as Concern 1 demonstrated, people do not believe that road pricing can effectively tackle congestion if viable transport alternatives are not also provided. Hypothecating revenue towards providing these alternatives could go some way to alleviating these concerns. This also resonates with the intuitive response that improving public transport is the best way to cut congestion.

The act of agreeing to hypothecate revenue to transportation spending seems more important than the detail of which transport projects the money is spent on. Unlike some other studies in this area (see Bird and Vigor 2006), our public engagement work showed that there was support for spending revenue on roads as well as public transport. This support seemed to be more focused on road maintenance and improvement than building new roads. The poll revealed the greatest support for a 50:50 split between spending on public transport and roads, although those most likely to oppose road pricing favour spending on roads, while people who were least likely to oppose favour spending on public transport.

We also found greater support for spending on roads among those who drove most frequently. An RAC study of motorists found a similar result,

with drivers more likely to support road pricing if the money was spent on roads than if it went on public transport (RAC 2006). These varying responses to different surveys suggest that public concern is focused on the fact that revenue is spent on transport, rather than the particular form that it takes.

Providing other options

As Concern 1 described, people do not feel that the journeys they make by car are discretionary, so the introduction of road pricing will mean that they are forced to pay the charge because they cannot change their behaviour and avoid these trips. Ensuring that people feel they have alternative options would help to combat this view of road pricing as an unavoidable tax. A perceived lack of alternatives also gives credence to the ineffectiveness argument, since it is felt that road pricing could not possibly result in less congestion if no one is able to change their behaviour.

Public transport is seen as a key alternative to current trips made by car, as people think it would be difficult to change the times at which they make trips and the routes they take (Concern 1). Without public transport, motorists feel they will have no choice but to pay the charge.

Public transport also plays another significant role in determining road pricing acceptability. As described in Concern 2, a regression analysis of our poll results showed that public transport satisfaction is currently a significant indicator of support for, and opposition to, road pricing at the moment. Increasing public transport satisfaction might therefore help to reduce opposition.

The timing of any public transport improvements is also crucial. Developing the hypothecation discussion, simply promising the ring-fencing of revenues to fund increases in public transport was not popular. This is illustrated by the response to the following message that we tested in our poll and focus groups: 'Congestion is a problem and better roads and public transport are part of the solution. But they don't come for free. Road pricing is a sensible way of raising the money to make the improvements most people think we need.'

While there was agreement with the sentiment of the message, presenting the argument in this way implied that the improvements could only be made after road pricing had been introduced, which was felt to be too late. This demonstrates another important aspect of scheme design: that public transport alternatives must be provided up front. The referendum on Edinburgh's proposed congestion charge also provides evidence of the weakness of this message. Gaunt *et al* (forthcoming) argue that one of the significant reasons for the 'no' vote was that many voters did not trust the council to provide public transport improvements following introduction of the charge.

So, the need to provide public transport alternatives up front appears to be a very important part of any attempt to minimise opposition. As discussed above, a lack of alternatives leads people to believe that road pricing will not work and that it unfairly penalises drivers who have no option but to drive their cars. There was a strong consensus that these alternatives must be provided before road pricing is introduced. Just 5 per cent of the respondents to our poll agreed that improvements to public transport should be made after road pricing is introduced (Morris and Bird 2006).

The types of improvements to public transport that people wanted varied from place to place. In some areas, the focus was on providing more routes with direct services. In other (generally urban) areas, the emphasis was on cleanliness and safety.

Public transport is an obvious and intuitive alternative to driving one's car, but other initiatives could also provide alternatives to these trips. One example is are workplace travel plans, while another is school travel plans. It is an ambition of the DfT and DfES that all schools will have this in place by 2010. The interim target of 40 per cent was met in 2006 (Longes 2006).

As well as encouraging people to use public transport to get to work, workplace travel plans also provide a range of options for cutting down on car use. These include car-sharing schemes, teleworking and variations on the five-day week, such as compressed working hours. Cairns *et al* (2004) show that such schemes have the potential to be the most effective 'smart measures' in reducing car transport demand. Likewise, school travel plans encourage alternatives such as walking buses and cycle trains, cycle training, car sharing and special school buses (DfT 2005c). As well as providing genuine alternatives, they also visibly tackle two of the most commonly cited causes of congestion: the daily commute and the school run (Bird and Vigor 2006).

Based on our public-attitudes work, the 'stealth tax' narrative currently appears to be the dominant response to the idea of road pricing. This narrative is already being deployed by opponents to the introduction of road pricing. So, the argument that must be won is that the objective of road pricing is to reduce congestion. Our research has shown that there are aspects of scheme design (the replacement of existing motoring taxes and revenue hypothecation), transport policy (for example, public transport improvements and some 'smart measures') and communication strategy (road pricing is only part of a package) that are important here.

Concern 3: Loss of freedom

Concerns about the impact of road pricing on personal freedom were also important, and comprised two aspects. The first, and most important, was an emotive dislike of the idea of government 'controlling' people's behaviour and imposing restrictions on when and where they could travel. The

second, lesser, concern was that road pricing would invade people's personal privacy.

Our public-attitudes work suggests that road pricing is seen as a restriction on people's freedom (with government 'controlling' their behaviour) for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, people do not feel that they have any choice over when and where they drive their cars. This lack of choice leads people to a belief that they are being charged for driving on a road they have to drive on, at a time they have no control over. Second, roads are currently 'free' to use, so government is seen as imposing a cost on people's free will.

For these reasons, arguments suggesting that people would have some control over the costs that they paid under a road pricing scheme do not seem to wash. We tested the following message in our focus group: 'You will be able to control costs by choosing when and where you drive your car.' The response was that this was not a believable claim, for the reasons mentioned above.

However, a more acceptable message was the idea of getting 'something for something'. This did resonate with participants, and indicates an area where scheme design could have a positive effect on attitudes. This is clearly also relevant to the earlier discussion around the replacement of existing taxes and hypothecation: respondents are effectively arguing for something in return if road pricing is to be introduced. But, these options are explicitly not asking for anything from respondents. As the discussion of the need for more revenue to improve public transport – and that road pricing is an opportunity to provide this – proves, a 'something-for-something' argument that requires more money quickly falls into a 'stealth tax' narrative.

This said, among some respondents there was a grudging agreement that if road pricing really worked, it would be worth it. That is, some people would be prepared to pay a road user charge if they could genuinely benefit from reduced congestion and improved public transport in return. However, the impact of this line of persuasion is currently limited, as the effectiveness of road pricing is still not accepted and 'something for something' can still be seen as part of the 'stealth tax' narrative.

'Smart measures', such as school and workplace travel plans, which focus on 'soft' trips, where people have some element of choice in terms of timing, mode or whether to even make the trip, may also be useful here. As described in Concern 1, a small reduction in traffic can lead to a large reduction in congestion, and the successful implementation of such schemes may demonstrate that measures to tackle congestion can be effective without impacting on 'unavoidable' journeys and restricting people's freedom.

Privacy

In our discussion of Concern 3, we demonstrated that privacy was a significant concern only for a minority of participants in our public engagement work. However, there was a recognition that this issue could mobilise opposition to road pricing. Indeed, the issue of privacy has already surfaced in the media (Concern 2) and is being referred to extensively by those sections of the press that are hostile to road pricing. While privacy does not currently appear to be a major concern among the public, the media attention may make it a salient issue in the debate.

Where privacy issues were a concern among participants, these generally manifested as an emotive dislike of the idea of 'Big Brother' watching 'every move' people made. At a more practical level, people were also worried about their details being passed on to other parties. This was for two reasons: the fear of identity theft and the annoyance of receiving unwanted junk mail. (The example of the DVLA selling personal details was brought up several times in this regard.)

We tested two messages relating to privacy:

- 'Your payment records will be entirely private – not even the police will be able to see them.'
- 'Road pricing will be a massive invasion of privacy. The only way they can charge you per mile you drive is if the Government knows about every journey you make.'

As described above, the second message was not a major concern for most participants. In relation to the first message, people expected that records would be made available to the police in criminal investigations, and this was generally felt to be acceptable. On the other hand, people did not understand how technology would be able to keep their records entirely private.

This discussion of the freedom concern demonstrates that the argument that must be won is that road pricing is not about government restricting (and to a lesser extent, monitoring) people's mobility. While scheme-design issues are clearly fundamental here, the communication challenge seems more significant. Two important elements emerge from the discussion above. First, there is a need to install a sense of individual agency (that people do have some control over their travel choices – the time of day and mode, for example). Second, the need to emphasise that road pricing is not a 'Big Brother' project.

Discussion points and recommendations

The first part of this section has explored ways in which the Government might address some of the key public concerns highlighted by our research.

The rest of the section will address some of the wider implications of these points and put them in the context of existing policy on road pricing. To begin with we focus on specific elements of scheme design before considering how communications and stakeholder engagement can play a part in minimising opposition to road pricing.

Scheme design

As chapter 2 demonstrated, the successful introduction of road pricing schemes has seen the authorities riding out hostility to their introduction, through consultation, and altering scheme design in the run-up to their implementation. Schemes have been altered from original plans to improve acceptability. The discussion above has argued that three scheme design elements would help improve the acceptability of a road pricing scheme:

- **Design element 1:** Replacing at least one existing motoring tax alongside road pricing (however, as discussed, this must have negative consequences for CO₂ emissions).
- **Design element 2:** Hypothecating revenue to transport raised from road pricing.
- **Design element 3:** Improving public transport before introducing a scheme.

We are at the start of the national debate on road pricing, which was initiated by Alistair Darling and has recently been moved from the 'why' to the 'how' by Douglas Alexander (2006a). This significantly affects the terms of the debate – which element of public concern can be addressed, and by whom. The focus of the Government's current strategy of using the Transport Innovation Fund to enable the introduction of interim schemes is where any debates about scheme design must be held currently.

Although there has been a recent announcement of some 'technology trials' (DfT 2006b) the focus of TIF is on local, probably congestion charging, schemes brought forward by local authorities. This approach provides only limited scope to address public concerns about scheme design. The three issues listed above will now be discussed in turn.

Replacing existing motoring tax alongside road pricing

How tax cuts would be possible through local area-based schemes is difficult to imagine. Stephen Ladyman, Minister of State for Transport, has floated the idea of council tax rebates alongside any local scheme (*Transport Times* 2005). Few details were provided, but the practical problems of such rebates are the same as those for motoring tax reductions: who would be exempt, and how would it be administered?

There may be scope through the recently announced 'technology trials'

to test new ways of paying motoring taxes, although this must be balanced by the fact that these trials are unlikely to lead to significant reductions in congestion (area-based schemes are likely to be more effective here) and that those involved in the schemes would do so for other reasons (fleet management, for example).

The potential impact of cutting motoring taxes on CO₂ emissions has been discussed under Concern 2.

Hypothecating revenue to transport raised from road pricing

A hypothecation at a national scale is similarly off the agenda. Further, the 'hypothecation' of any road pricing revenues at the national level also presents potential problems. As Chancellor Gordon Brown argued in the 2002 Budget, when announcing an increase in healthcare spending and an increase in National Insurance contributions to help fund this:

I have considered the hypothecation of revenues to the NHS. But I have concluded that it would make the public services subject to the ups and downs of the economic cycle and unpredictable changes in revenues. And it would achieve the opposite of what its supporters wish and the NHS needs: a sound long term and sustainable stream of funding.

(Brown 2002)

These arguments equally apply to road pricing and transport. To simply hypothecate revenues from road pricing to transport could make the transport budget unpredictable, especially as road pricing is a demand management measure. This unpredictability is likely to be the opposite to the objective of those arguing for hypothecation: sustained and stable transport spending that delivers an improved transport network – especially public transport.

While much of the work on public attitudes to road pricing reports very strong support for the principle of hypothecation, more work is required to really assess what the public means. Is their concern more a sustained increase in transport spending alongside road pricing?

The fact that tax cuts and national-level hypothecation cannot yet be addressed is likely to place a higher premium on improvements in public transport. The Transport Act 2000 obliges local authorities who introduce demand management schemes to retain the revenue and hypothecate 100 per cent of revenue to improve local public transport:

The congestion charging powers provide both new demand management tools, and a source of new guaranteed funding for local transport improvements. The Act provides that any scheme starting in the 10 years following commencement of the powers will bring 100%

hypothecation of revenue to improve local transport, including better public transport, for at least 10 years.

(Department for Transport 2006f)

This certainly provides the opportunity for hypothecation to public transport locally. Improvements to public transport are a key part of any road pricing deal, as it resonates with the public as an intuitive response to congestion and helps address the lack of viable alternatives and concerns about stealth tax.

Improving public transport before introducing a scheme

While hypothecating revenue from local schemes to improvements in public transport may reduce opposition to road pricing, there also need to be improvements to public transport before any scheme is introduced. Local hypothecation is clearly less useful at this stage. The 'congestion TIF' fund does provide the opportunity for some upfront funding in public transport, and it seems clear that any local authority bringing forward a scheme would receive funding to enable this. However, funding is not the only challenge. There is the important question of who will deliver these improvements in public transport – especially for buses.

Local authorities outside of London only have very limited influence over bus services in their areas. It is significant that bus patronage is declining in all regions of England except London (National Audit Office/Audit Commission 2005), with the largest decline in patronage in those areas where services should be most viable: the largest metropolitan areas (Department for Transport 2006e). Currently, bus services outside of London are largely run at the discretion of private operators, with a small number of services directly commissioned by local authorities.

Reform to bus regulation, with other major urban areas, at least, having more opportunity to acquire London-style powers than is currently possible under the terms of the Transport Act 2000 would significantly help in the provision of viable alternative transport options. Authorities could better co-ordinate and cross-subsidise routes (Every *et al* 2004, Grayling 2001).

The three design elements highlighted by our public attitude research could play an important role in minimising public opposition to road pricing. However, as this section has shown, implementing any one of these will not be straightforward, particularly at the national level, and other considerations such as the impact on CO₂ emissions and transport budget stability will also be important. In the short to medium term, TIF projects at the local level may be able to deliver two of these elements by using TIF funding to provide up-front public transport improvements and hypothecating any revenue to further improvements once road pricing schemes are up and running.

Specific elements of scheme design are not the only important factor in gaining public support, however. The rest of this section goes on to discuss the role of communication in winning the public debate and proposes the establishment of a national stakeholder group as one means of achieving 'credible communication'. It concludes by considering the issue of fairness and ensuring that any road pricing scheme is not regressive.

Communication

While reform to bus regulation is partly an issue of scheme design, it also demonstrates the importance of communication – that road pricing must be seen as part of a package of measures and reform. This is where the efforts of national government should currently be focused, and this issue must frame the road pricing debate. There is a danger that the media – especially the rightwing media – has been effective in framing the debate in terms of stealth taxation and privacy.

This research has demonstrated that while people accept that congestion is a growing problem for the country and are open to a 'radical solution', road pricing is not currently seen as an effective or acceptable solution. As already discussed, addressing the 'stealth tax' narrative head on is currently difficult.

This only strengthens the need to ensure that the debate is framed in an appropriate way, in relation to scheme objectives rather than presenting road pricing as an end in itself. Our research suggests that conducting the debate in terms of reducing congestion may be the best way to do this. While climate change is undoubtedly a critical issue for the transport sector, there was still a high level of uncertainty about this among participants in our workshops and focus groups (Morris and Bird 2006). Even for those who accepted that climate change was occurring, there was doubt about whether changing driving habits was the best way to address the problem, and participants looked to new technologies or to cuts from other, less personally costly, areas instead.

As a result of this uncertainty, presenting road pricing as a means of tackling climate change merely fed the 'stealth tax' narrative. However, climate change is an issue that is rapidly rising up the agenda and may therefore become a more salient message in the medium to long term.

While it is true that there is currently scepticism about whether road pricing is capable of tackling congestion, the need to change behaviours is more immediately obvious to people in tackling the problem of congestion than in addressing climate change. Thus, framing the debate in terms of congestion is in some ways the least worst option, as allowing the debate to be framed in terms of stealth tax or privacy would increase opposition.

National government needs to present a package of measures of which road pricing is one aspect, aimed at reducing congestion, and to communi-

cate this to the public. The public transport reform discussed above is important here. Other 'smarter' measures, such as school and workplace travel plans, are also important because they are potentially effective (Cairns *et al* 2004), they address intuitive causes of congestion, and they can reach a significant number of people. Meeting the 2010 DfES and DfT 'ambition' for school travel plans and a national campaign (with private-sector buy-in) on workplace travel plans, all presented as part of a package of congestion-reduction measures, could be very useful here.

Of course, establishing successful local-area schemes should also help demonstrate that road pricing (or congestion charging) is effective at addressing congestion, and is part of a package of measures that include public transport improvements. These schemes will need to show that they are a fair and effective means of addressing congestion. The public has rationalised the success of the central London scheme through the apparent 'unique' circumstances (principally the public transport provision). The public will have to be convinced that any TIF schemes are valid examples that can apply to other areas of the country.

A secondary framing issue is that the Government must ensure that the road pricing debate does not come to be seen as a constriction on the freedoms of individuals. Ultimately, the public accepting a 'something-for-something' argument (in other words, the argument that road pricing would reduce congestion and help fund alternative transport options that people can choose to use) would help build a strong case for introducing road pricing. However, it is not currently effective. Local-area schemes are effectively proposing 'something for something', as they are unlikely to provide tax cuts and will hope to provide reduced congestion and improved public transport as part of any charge.

Again, however, much of the Government's challenge here is communication. People will need to know and believe that interim schemes are effective at reducing congestion and that alternative viable transport options are available and they are not being 'forced' to pay to drive particular journeys at particular times. As we saw in the discussion of attitude formation and change in chapter 2, direct experience of these alternatives may be most powerful here. But equally important is the question of who is communicating with the public.

London benefited from the profile brought to the debate by Ken Livingstone, partly as an individual and partly as holder of the office of London Mayor. Indeed, a report by seven European local authorities considering the introduction of road pricing schemes argued that any 'charging scheme needs to be "fronted" by a political champion at the local level' (EURoPrice 2002: 2). This is a challenge for any subsequent interim TIF schemes, as there are not many similarly identifiable local political leaders.

The question of who provides national leadership is an important one.

The Secretary of State for Transport should clearly provide leadership on the issue, and will be required to promote and defend the policy to the public. However, this may not be enough on its own. Ipsos MORI (2006b) data on public trust in different professional occupations to tell the truth shows that politicians, and especially government ministers, are routinely among the least trusted (with journalists being the only professionals to consistently score worse). So, the national debate on road pricing could be well served by a 'congestion-busting' champion, or champions, who are not associated with the direct benefits from a scheme.

A new national stakeholder group

One way in which the Government could increase transparency in the development of a national road pricing scheme and identify potential independent spokespeople would be to create a new national stakeholder group. The handling of the 'Digital Switch Over' (DSO), where analogue television signals will be switched off by 2012, presents a useful case study here.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has involved key stakeholders, including critics, in the DSO development process. It has done this by establishing a stakeholders' group, which included industry and technical experts, representatives of groups who may require transitional support (such as older people), and potential critics. Although the group was supported by a secretariat from DCMS and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), it was run by an independent project manager. The chair was elected by members of the group, and therefore provided an independent voice in debates on the issue. In this way, DCMS has ensured that a range of views are taken into account but also that stakeholders were fully aware of – and could comment upon – the Government's plans.

Following the start of the 'operational phase' of DSO, the stakeholder group has evolved into the Digital Television Stakeholders' Group, chaired by Digital UK. Group membership is open to 'all those with a primary interest in digital television, including broadcasters, manufacturers, retailers and consumer organisations' (10 Downing Street 2006). There are also a number of smaller, issue-specific groups, including a consumer experts group, a housing and property group, and a targeted assistance group (Digital Television 2006).

The DfT has already established a Road Pricing Local Liaison Group. This group is made up of representatives from local authorities interested in developing local TIF schemes, and serves two purposes. It aims, first, to help 'develop consistent standards on matters where it makes sense to have a coherent approach across all schemes' (DfT 2006a: 5), and second, 'as a sounding board to identify, discuss and where possible resolve issues that arise' (ibid). This is a sensible move, and one that should be built on.

Along the lines of the DSO example, a national group of relevant stakeholders could be established to inform the development of any national road pricing scheme. It should reflect on the lessons from the interim schemes and provide technical advice as required. Having a nationally recognisable, independent chair may help in communicating with the public the lessons of the interim schemes. This could help build the case for road pricing as an effective and appropriate response to the growing problem of congestion.

Further, the Government should establish a sub-group on privacy. While this is not a major issue of concern among the public at present, sections of the media are attempting to exploit its emotional resonance. This means that in the short term, the Government must address 'Big Brother' concerns. This should be done in an open and transparent way, with interested stakeholders and critics invited to participate in a constructive dialogue.

The main stakeholder group would also help communicate arguments of efficiency to the public. In chapter 3, we identified a number of other concerns, which included fears of significant waste of resources – especially through bureaucracy. Concerns around efficiency are also relevant in discussions about who should run the scheme, with 'whoever can do it most efficiently', being the most frequent response from our research participants.

Addressing fears around efficiency is clearly a key issue. Again, the significant challenge here is one of 'credible communication' and who the public will believe. Government should, of course, ensure that taxpayers' money is being spent as effectively as possible, as a sense of inefficiency will confirm fears and contribute to unacceptability. Another important part of the national road pricing debate will be to ensure that interim schemes are efficiently run. The Audit Commission and National Audit Office will have important roles to play here. However, a question mark remains over how much the public would take account of the views of such organisations.

A credible, recognisable non-governmental road pricing stakeholder body would be well placed to argue that efficiencies were being achieved, or otherwise, and make a more publicly acceptable case. This could also apply to the issue of evasion. As chapter 3 discussed, evasion is a concern that rests on a sense of resignation that people will simply find ways of getting round any charge. This may be addressed in two ways. First, it may be partially addressed through personal experience of successful interim schemes (with people hopefully seeing that they are not the only ones paying any charge). Second, interim schemes will also, hopefully, provide evidence that road pricing technology can help deliver lower evasion rates.

But we must not underestimate the challenge here. Our public engagement work found that this concern around evasion was part of a broader narrative of other people breaking the rules (for example, driving unin-

sured or without a tax disc) without suffering any negative consequences. As well as feeling this was deeply unfair, people were also concerned about the risks posed – for example, having a crash with someone who is uninsured.

New technology did not offer reassurance that people would not be able to evade the charge. Instead, there was a certainty that people would somehow find a way to tamper with their on-board units or find some other way to fiddle the system (Morris and Bird 2006). This suggests that efforts outside of the road pricing debate – such as strict enforcement of vehicle licensing and VED payments – also have an important role to play. Ultimately, perhaps this is an argument that can only seriously be addressed following the introduction of a national scheme.

Fairness

A concern about fairness was highlighted in chapter 3. Members of the public expressed this concern in two forms. The first was personal unfairness, which is usually a concern that as an individual the person does not have the choice but to make the car journeys they do, and that therefore they are being charged by government to do what they have to do anyway. This relates to the arguments around providing viable alternatives covered within the ‘stealth tax’ discussion above.

The second concern relates to the potential impacts on disadvantaged groups in society – for example, disabled people who are heavily dependent on their cars. As the central London congestion charge example demonstrates, addressing these concerns as part of the debate and any consultation process, and providing exemptions to specific groups and types of vehicle is an important part of addressing public concerns.

However, there is a balancing act to be struck here. While it is only right to provide some exemptions, the effectiveness of a scheme must be considered at all times. If the ability of a local or national road pricing scheme to reduce congestion was undermined through too many exemptions, this would present a significant setback to the road pricing debate.

Some stakeholder groups are also, rightly, concerned to ensure that any road-pricing scheme is not regressive. This debate is at a very early stage, and any impacts cannot be fully understood until the details of any scheme – both the charging levels and the way in which any revenue is spent – are proposed. The debate must also recognise that there are likely to be winners and losers from any road pricing scheme, just as there are from the existing system of road taxation.

Making sure that those on lower incomes are not disproportionately disadvantaged by any scheme needs to be a key concern for scheme design. This is a very important area of future work, and must be a central part of DfT research into road pricing. Work in this area has already begun, with

the release for consultation of draft new guidance on modelling and appraisal for road pricing by the DfT in July 2006. This includes a unit on 'Measuring the social and distributional impacts of road pricing schemes', which provides guidance on the use of social research methods to assess the social and distributional impacts of road pricing (DfT 2006g). The consultation period closed at the beginning of October 2006, but at the time of writing, the new guidance has not yet been published.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Public attitudes are arguably the key barrier to the introduction of a national road pricing scheme. This report has argued that the public is hostile to the idea of road pricing, and that this hostility is likely to increase as the introduction of any national scheme becomes closer. Advocates must recognise that they are unlikely to ‘win’ the debate, in the sense that there is unlikely to be a popular movement arguing for the introduction of road pricing. Instead, this report has argued, the objective must be to not lose the argument, and to slow the inevitable rise in unacceptability.

This assertion is based upon an analysis of public attitudes to existing road pricing schemes. Drawing upon Goodwin’s (2006) cycle of road pricing acceptability, we identified five conditions in the road pricing debate:

- Condition 1:** The public sees congestion as a problem.
- Condition 2:** The public sees the need for a radical solution.
- Condition 3:** The public sees that road pricing is a viable solution.
- Condition 4:** Opposition is minimised as scheme details emerge and are adapted to meet public concern wherever possible.
- Condition 5:** There is sufficient political support for road pricing to ride out opposition and reap the benefits of increased support after its introduction.

Along our cycle of the road pricing debate, this report has argued that the first two of these conditions have already been met. There is already public support for a ‘radical solution’ to the recognised problem of growing congestion problem in the UK.

However, the public does not yet accept road pricing as the radical solution to the growing congestion problem. While the principle of distance-based charging – and therefore a change in existing motoring taxation – is acceptable, variable charging is not. Our public-attitudes work has revealed three major concerns with the idea of road pricing:

- **Concern 1: Ineffectiveness** People do not see road pricing as an intuitively effective way of tackling congestion. They feel they already do everything they can to avoid congestion. Other measures, such as improving public transport, are more readily suggested as effective solutions to addressing congestion. Examples of successful existing schemes are often dismissed as being special cases – particularly because public transport is perceived as being better in these areas.
- **Concern 2: Stealth taxation** The ‘stealth tax’ narrative is a common

frame through which road pricing is viewed. There are three reasons for this viewpoint. First, because road pricing is not viewed as an effective way of cutting congestion it is not seen as a plausible motive for bringing in a charge. Second, people feel that motorists already pay more than they should in road taxes and are an 'easy target' for government fundraising initiatives. Third, motorists do not feel that they are able to avoid the trips they make by car and therefore believe that the Government is simply charging them more to drive.

- **Concern 3: Loss of freedom** There is a – largely emotive – concern that road pricing will lead to restrictions on people's ability to choose how they get around. People do not like the idea of government 'telling them what to do', which is how road pricing is perceived. A related, but lesser, concern is that of privacy. Some members of the public are wary that road pricing might represent 'Big Brother' monitoring their movements. Significantly, those elements of the media opposed to road pricing have already used the privacy and 'stealth tax' arguments extensively.

This initial hostility to the idea of road pricing fits in with the third and fourth conditions of our cycle of the road pricing debate: that initial support for a radical solution declines as the idea of road pricing is first introduced, before further details are provided.

The fifth point on the cycle of the road pricing debate is that an increase in public acceptance occurs after a scheme has been successfully introduced. This happens because many of the worst fears voiced by the public have not been confirmed, and unacceptability is eased. This shows that an important part of 'not losing' the road pricing debate is for political leaders to ride out the inevitable hostility.

However, strong political will is not enough on its own. This report has argued that, based on our public-attitudes work, the road pricing debate appears to currently be near the top of the 'downward leg' of public acceptability. The challenge is to slow the inevitable increase in unacceptability. This should be done by addressing the three concerns outlined above (and other smaller concerns). Our public-attitudes results have identified some key scheme design elements that are useful here. Three in particular stand out:

- Replacing existing motoring taxes
- Hypothecating revenues from road pricing to transport
- Improving public transport before any scheme is introduced.

However, there are some important considerations that must be taken into account in terms of scheme design. Two in particular are the impact of scheme design on CO₂ emissions and the effect that a policy of hypothecation could have on the level and stability of transport spending.

At this stage of the road pricing debate, there is little that national gov-

ernment can do in terms of scheme design. The emphasis here is on any local authorities bringing forward schemes as part of the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF). National government does, of course, have an important role to play in supporting local schemes through TIF funding and, as argued in Section 4, public transport governance reform.

At present, the priority for national government is therefore a communications one. The Government must address the three concerns above by winning the following arguments:

- The objective of road pricing is to reduce congestion.
- Road pricing is an effective and non-punitive way of dealing with congestion.
- Road pricing is not about government restricting (and to a lesser extent, monitoring) people's mobility.

Those parts of the media opposed to road pricing have already attempted to frame the debate as one of stealth taxation and of 'Big Brother' monitoring car journeys. The priority must be to conduct the debate under the terms of reducing congestion, not the merits (or otherwise) of road pricing itself. To do this, whenever the Government presents road pricing it must be done as part of a package of congestion-reducing measures. Public transport improvements and 'smart measures', such as workplace travel plans and school travel plans, should form part of this package. Such measures may also help to demonstrate how small lifestyle changes can have an impact on congestion levels.

The successful introduction of interim schemes (which are likely to take the form of congestion charging) will undoubtedly be useful in demonstrating road pricing's effectiveness. This report has identified, however, that communicating with the public, and challenging and changing current attitudes, is a difficult task. Given the low level of trust that the public has for government, there is a need to bring new voices into the road pricing debate.

This is why we recommend that a new national stakeholder group should be established. It would be modelled on a similar group established for the Digital Switch Over process, and would build on the existing Road Pricing Liaison Group. A group of relevant stakeholders across the public, private and NGO sectors could help inform the development of any road pricing scheme. Further, with an independent, nationally recognisable chair to speak in the national debate, feeding in the (successful or otherwise) results of interim schemes, it would add a significant and credible voice into the national road pricing debate. This group could also have sub-groups to address key issues of concern, as required.

The introduction of road pricing rests on the delicate balancing act of reflecting the public's concerns in any scheme while leading the public

debate on the principle and effectiveness of road pricing. The public does not see road pricing as an intuitively effective or acceptable way of dealing with the growing problem of congestion, yet road pricing schemes often secure public support following their introduction. Strong political leadership will be required to ride out the inevitable hostility to any scheme. But by reflecting the public's concerns in the way in which any scheme is designed and presented, public unacceptability will be addressed and, hopefully, the inevitable increase slowed.

Summary of main recommendations to government

- Support local schemes through TIF funding and public transport governance reform.
- Ensure the road pricing debate is framed in terms of tackling congestion, by presenting road pricing as part of a package of measures to tackle congestion, including public transport improvements and 'smart measures' such as workplace and school travel plans.
- Establish a new national stakeholder group of experts, special interest groups and critical friends with an independent, nationally recognisable chair to speak in the national debate.

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Annex: Research methodology

This report draws on two pieces of research carried out by ippr: a literature review of research into public attitudes and road pricing (Bird and Vigor 2006) and primary public engagement work (Morris and Bird 2006). Both reports are available online. This appendix discusses the methodology used in this research.

The literature review, entitled 'Charging forward', aimed to investigate what is known about public attitudes towards road pricing within the broader context of attitudes towards transport and motoring and the problems associated with these activities.

The public engagement work sought to determine factors that would contribute to the least unacceptable form of road pricing. The research consisted of three phases:

- A set of three deliberative workshops
- A nationwide poll
- Six focus groups.

The methodology used in each of these phases is described in more detail in the following section.

Overview of public engagement methodology

The discussion below outlines what was done at each stage. The Annex contains all the written stimulus used in phases 1 and 2, and the poll questionnaires and are available online (www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports)

Research question: What mixture of scheme design elements, linkages with other policy areas, and communications results in the least unacceptable form of national road pricing?

Stage 1: Deliberative workshops

Given the low awareness of road pricing and the conflicting messages in the media about what it is and what is for, people were unlikely to have well-formed views around its acceptability. Deliberative workshops provided an opportunity for people to consider complex and new ideas, and go through the process of deciding whether road pricing is acceptable to them and what sorts of scheme would be acceptable. They also allowed us to probe issues in considerable depth and fill in some of the information gaps iden-

tified in the literature review of knowledge about attitudes to road pricing.

We held three one-day deliberative workshops. Each was on a Saturday, and participants were paid £90 to attend.

Geography

As road-pricing schemes are likely to have different impacts in rural and urban areas, workshops were conducted in three sorts of area:

- a large urban area (Newcastle upon Tyne)
- a rural area (North East Somerset)
- a small urban area (Canterbury).

This selection of research sites also gives us good national coverage, including the North East, the Midlands and the South East. Newcastle and Bath and North East Somerset are also TIF areas.

Fieldwork dates

4 March 2006: Canterbury

18 March 2006: Newcastle

25 March 2006: North East Somerset

Recruitment

Each workshop was purposively recruited using market research recruiters. The participants were selected to be roughly representative of their local area in terms of:

- gender
- age
- car usage
- ethnicity
- socio-economic group.

We used 2001 census data to determine these proportions. However, no group was allowed to fall below two participants, and there was a minimum of two people in households without a car, two people in households with one car and two people in households with two or more cars. In addition, at least two people had to drive for work.

Methodology

All the workshops were run using the same methodology. The discussion guide is presented below:

Introduction:

- I work for an independent research company and am here to find out

what you think.

- This is part of a project we are doing around the country looking at transport issues and in particular one issue, which we'll spend most of today talking about.
- At the end of the day, what people have said will be written up and when we've finished doing all the research we'll write a report which we will send to government, local council and anyone else who is interested. Your names won't appear in the report. Everything you say will be completely anonymous.
- We've got 12 people in the room from different backgrounds. We've tried to make it as representative of the population of X as possible. It's important you talk from your point of view. We're talking to lots of different people so for the rest of the day, you only need to worry about what you think.
- The most important thing is that everyone is honest and says what they think.
- No one here is an expert in any of these issues and every view is really important.
- People may well disagree with each other. If you disagree with what someone else says, please speak up.
- I've had nothing to do with the stuff I'm going to talk to you about, so don't worry about me. If you think it's great, then I'm happy. If you think it's rubbish, I'm also happy, as long as you are honest about what you think and we have a good discussion.
- I do have a list of things I need to talk about during the day. It may be that I have to stop discussion about other things so I can get through the stuff I need to do. If I cut people off, I'm not being rude, I just need to get through stuff. Also, I need to make sure that I hear from everyone, so I might cut people off to make sure I can do that. Again, I'm not being rude. It's just my job. Finally, you are all receiving £90, which we'll hand out at the end of the day.
- Before we start, it would be good if everyone could introduce themselves: name, job, family, and the best thing about living round here.

Transport issues:

- What are the key issues facing the transport system? That could be roads, railways, buses, airports, bicycles. Whatever you think of as transport. (Everyone to write down two issues. Can be just a word, definitely not more than a sentence for each.)
- (If not raised: some people have said that pollution is a big issue. What do you think about that? Especially probe carbon.)
- And focusing on the roads, what are the key issues facing the road system?

- (Facilitator compiles list of top three or four issues.) What can be done about each?

Introduction to road pricing:

- We've talked about some of the issues with the roads. A possible solution has been suggested. All three political parties have said they think it should happen but no one is quite sure how to do it. Within government and elsewhere there is a discussion about what to do, and today is about informing that discussion and trying to make sure that what is decided suits people.
- The solution they've put forward is called 'road pricing' or 'road user charging'. Has anyone heard of it? (As far as possible just get knowledge, not comment.)
- (Hand out factsheet on road pricing and ask people to complete.) Discuss findings.
- Who gave it a score below 50? Who gave it a score about 50? Why?
- (Assert that rest of the day is just about this subject. This is an opportunity to make the scheme suit you.)

Purposes of the system:

- We will talk about how this will happen this afternoon, but I want to talk a bit about what the aims of the system should be. When they are designing the system, what should they aim for?
- Hand out aims factsheets covering congestion, climate change, fairness and privacy. Each has arguments for and against prioritising this aim.
- Prompt discussion of each.
- Prompt hierarchy of aims. (Have five baskets, covered, with a hole in the top, and give everyone 10 chips to spend. The basket with the most chips will be priority 1, basket with second most will be priority 2, and so on. Instruction not to worry about what everyone else does.)
- Prompt discussion of results
- If another aim has arisen in discussion, give it a basket.

System building blocks:

- We've talked about whether road pricing is a good idea and about what we want out of it. Now I want to talk about how it might happen. As you can imagine, there are lots and lots of different ways, but we've tried to narrow it down to a few of the key choices. For each, I want to know whether you think the choice matters much and which option you prefer.
- Factsheet for each:
 - Revenue just spent on specific purposes, versus spent in general pot
 - Road pricing increases the overall amount people pay to use the roads, versus road pricing just shifts charges so that no additional money is raised

- Government runs scheme, versus independent organisation runs scheme
 - Records should be completely private, versus anyone with a good reasons should be able to look at records
 - Charging on congested roads only, versus charging on all roads
 - Prepared to pay more for less congestion and pollution, versus not prepared to pay more even if it works.
- Draw discussion together. Hand out form with all the options and get people to vote for one or the other. Break while votes counted.

Feedback on system:

- The aims were prioritised X.
- The most popular system is Y.
- Expert from ippr explains any contradictions and answers technical questions.

Communications:

- We've discussed road pricing. Understand what people think about it. Now we want to think about how you might talk about it to other people.
- Divide into four groups:
 - Three groups: I want you to think about how you try and persuade people that road pricing is a good idea. Think about everything we've heard today and, most importantly, what you think the best things are. Try and say a bit about how it would work.
 - One group: I want you to think about how you try and persuade people to oppose road pricing. Think about everything we've heard today and, most importantly, what you think the worst things are.
- We have 20 minutes. Need to pick a spokesperson to report back to the group. No more than five minutes each.

Each reports back. 'Anti' group goes second.

What were the strongest arguments?

Repeat initial written exercise.

Thanks, pay and leave.

The workshops were moderated by a single moderator. The majority of sessions were both simultaneously transcribed and recorded to an audio file. The workshop in Newcastle was also recorded by the BBC.

Stage 2: the opinion poll

The opinion poll was developed in response to the findings in the workshops. The focus was on assessing the scale of opposition and profiling opposers in terms of demographics, transport use and transport attitudes. We also looked at different elements of scheme design.

The dates of fieldwork

Fieldwork began at 13:00 on 19 May 2006 and concluded at 10:00 on 26 May 2006. Surveys completed after the fieldwork was closed were not included for analysis.

Method of data collection

Data was collected through an online survey. This used a non-probability sampling approach, drawing participants from a panel of 120,000 people who had indicated their willingness to take part in online surveys in return for payment.

The universe effectively represented

The universe represented was the UK population aged 17 and over, defined by four categories: gender, age, standard occupational classification and UK region of residence. Data relating to the make-up of the UK population was sourced from the Office of National Statistics.

Achieved sample size and geographical coverage

The achieved sample size, defined by the Market Research Society (MRS) as the total number of interviews or surveys actually reported on, across each of the four survey versions, is set out in Table i. The poll covered all UK government regions. Tables ii to v set out the number of completed surveys within each region.

Table i: Achieved sample size

Survey version	Total number of completes
Version A	1150
Version B	100
Version C	146
Version D	144

Table ii: Survey version A

Region	Total number of completes
North East	33
North West	120
Yorkshire and the Humber	119
East Midlands	94
West Midlands	96
East of England	76
London	121
South East	221
South West	115
Wales	49
Scotland	82
Northern Ireland	24

Table iii: Survey version B

Region	Total number of completes
London and the South	40
Midlands and Wales	25
The North, Scotland and Northern Ireland	35

Table iv: Survey version C

Region	Total number of completes
London and the South	59
Midlands and Wales	38
The North, Scotland and Northern Ireland	49

Table v: Survey version D

Region	Total number of completes
London and the South	60
Midlands and Wales	33
The North, Scotland and Northern Ireland	51

The sampling method and response rate achieved

A sample of contacts was drawn from an online panel of more than 120,000 UK residents. The sample was representative of the UK population (aged over 17), by age, gender, occupation and region. The organisation that carried out this research, efeedback, used standalone quotas when selecting contacts to survey. (Note: a standalone quota aims to achieve the required number of completes within a single category – in other words, 49 per cent completes from men and 51 per cent from women, and 12.4 per cent from the London area and 13.5 per cent from the South East. More complex projects require interlocking quotas, where completes within a category are related to each other – for example, 8 per cent of completes from men living in London.)

All eligible contacts were identified within the panel and then individual contacts were randomly selected to receive an invitation to participate.

The number of invitations mailed out was based on anticipated participation rates. Samples were selected with the objective of yielding 1000 completes for Survey version A and 100 completes for versions B, C and D.

Table vi sets out the total number of invitations that were mailed out for each survey version, the number of responses this yielded, and the response rate this represents.

Table vi: Overall response rate

Survey version	Total number of invitations	Total number of completes	Response rate
Version A	4221	1150	27.2%
Version B	400	100	25.0%
Version C	400	146	36.5%
Version D	400	144	36.0%

The questionnaire

To ensure that participants understood road pricing, a simple comprehension test was used. People were asked whether they would expect to pay more on a country road at night or a city street during rush hour. Less than 1 per cent of participants got this question wrong.

Weighting procedures

Where the overall number of completes produced too few or too many completes within a given category, efeedback weighted the results back against the target proportions that make the results UK representative.

efeedback calculated the appropriate weight to use for reporting the results for survey version A by dividing the target number of completes (calculated against the relevant proportion of the UK population) by the achieved number of completes.

Table vii shows the breakdown of respondents to survey version A, broken down by gender. The table shows that 579 respondents were male, representing 50.3 per cent of all survey respondents. However, male respondents should have only accounted for 49 per cent of the total number of respondents, which would have been 564. In this example, 564 would be divided by 579, providing a weight of 0.97.

Weightings have been applied to results of survey version A, reported by gender, age, occupation and region. Results for versions B, C and D have not been weighted, as they did not require breakdowns across respondent categories.

Table vii: Breakdown of respondents to survey version A by gender

Gender	No of completes	Survey %	Target %	Target no of completes	Weight
Male	579	50.3	49	564	0.97
Female	571	49.7	51	587	1.03

The research organisation conducting the survey

The ippr road pricing survey was conducted by efeedback Research Ltd ('efeedback'). All questions concerning the involvement of efeedback Research in this project should be directed to Chris Watt, Research Director, on 01761 408165.

Focus groups

Six focus groups were held – two in Sale, two in Hall Green, Birmingham, and two in Harlow. Based on the segmentation presented in this report, the groups were held with people who used their cars every day, or nearly every day. Group 1 in each location was made up of people who were very, or quite, satisfied with local public transport. Group 2 was made up of people who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The groups contained an even gender balance, and a roughly even split between classes B, C1 and C2. The discussion guide for the focus groups is presented in the timetable below.

Discussion guide for focus groups		
Topic	Time	Total time
Introduction	5	5
Names, occupation, family, newspaper	5	10
Transport issues, focus on road	10	20
Do we need dramatic change, gentle change or no change?		
What can be done about congestion?	5	25
Introduction to road pricing: written exercise	5	30
First things that came to mind and will it work? and who said likely to oppose?	10	40
Aims for road pricing. What problems should road pricing address?	8	48
Tax: does it make a difference which tax it replaces? What if it didn't replace an existing tax?	5	53
Revenue use: should revenue be spent just on transport? Should more be spent on roads, more on public transport or should there be an even split?	5	58
Test messages and rank them, 20 mins on 'pro' messages, 5 mins on 'anti' messages	27	85
Advice to Secretary of State on a postcard	3	90

