Report on Traffic Congestion Pricing
June 5-9, 1995

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves: and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.

-Thomas Jefferson
INTRODUCTION

We at the Jefferson Center were first approached by the Humphrey Institute nearly a year ago about conducting a Citizens Jury on congestion pricing. At that point we were still unsure if they meant traffic congestion or the common cold. We rapidly became immersed in the issue, however, and realized it was a great opportunity for an innovative application of the Citizens Jury process.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Council partnered with the Humphrey Institute in sponsoring the project. The first two organizations had been directed by the state legislature to study congestion and road pricing and used the project as one method of collecting informed public opinion. The Humphrey Institute will use this information as part of their national study on the institutional and political issues in congestion pricing. Until this project the Citizens Jury process had not been used by a government agency to get information early in the planning process. It is a natural fit, however, as our goal has always been to assemble a microcosm of the public and present them with both sides of an issue to gauge public opinion. The project was by all accounts a success, and we hope to do more Citizens Juries along this same vein in the future.

I’m continually impressed with the seriousness with which each jury takes its charge. This group of jurors was no exception. Throughout five full days of hearings and over twenty witnesses, the panel maintained its enthusiasm for grappling with a complex issue. And although they rejected congestion pricing as a panacea, they provided transportation planners with a multitude of insightful observations. The jurors were introduced to the concept of congestion pricing as a solution to two problems: a revenue shortfall and traffic congestion. The group was unanimous in its acceptance of the financing problem but voted 16 to eight against a current traffic congestion problem in the Twin Cities. Twenty-two jurors agreed that traffic congestion will be a problem in the future, and in the post-jury survey a majority indicated they thought congestion pricing could be part of an effective solution in the future.

The jury thought it best to tackle our state transportation funding problem head-on. After considering alternative financing strategies, the group returned to the tried-and-true gas tax, voting to increase the tax and broaden its constitutional dedication to allow transit funding. They unanimously rejected new highway construction as a solution to future congestion and realized the importance of changing travel behavior. A majority thought, however, that simply pricing highways during rush hour would not cause a significant change in traffic patterns, and they were unconvinced of the cost-effectiveness of a pricing scheme. They came to the conclusion that increasing our investment in transit and making the public aware of its advantages are acceptable alternatives to congestion pricing and would be as effective at inducing travel behavior change for the time being.

I want to thank everyone involved in the project for all their hard work and guidance along the way. The combination of many individual efforts helped make the project both enjoyable and successful.

Laura Sether
Project Director
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Project Objective
The Citizens Jury on Traffic Congestion Pricing was conducted to learn how Twin Cities' residents view transportation policies. It was part of the Humphrey Institute's independent national study on congestion pricing and will function as one component of the Legislature-directed Mn/DOT and Met Council study on using congestion and road pricing to finance transportation projects.

Jury Selection
A random telephone survey was taken of the 13-county Metropolitan area. Twenty-four jurors have been selected to represent the region in terms of age, race, gender, education, geographic location and commuting patterns.

Charge
The jurors were given the question: Can congestion pricing be an effective strategy to address present and impending problems of traffic congestion and provide stable financing for surface transportation improvements? If not congestion pricing, then what alternatives may be acceptable?

Hearings
The first day provided background information on our surface transportation system and its financing. The second and third days consisted of expert testimony on different aspects of the problem and recommendations of potential solutions. Time was allotted for the cross-examination of each witness.

Findings
The final two days of the week were set aside for deliberations. Jurors made recommendations as to the viability of congestion pricing in the Twin Cities and its potential advantages and disadvantages.

Previous Citizens Juries
The Jefferson Center has conducted seventeen Citizens Juries to date. The most recent project was the 1994 Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Citizens Jury. The first in a series of Citizens Juries for Congress was held in the summer of 1994 with then-Rep. Tim Penny. National Citizens Juries to date have looked at health care reform and the federal budget.
CONGESTION PRICING: A Brief Description

Congestion pricing is viewed increasingly by transportation policymakers and economists as an important part of the solution to the ever increasing traffic congestion in urban areas. It works like this: drivers would be electronically charged a toll when using a road during rush hour. The toll is designed to induce a change in travel behavior, be it the mode, route or time of travel. Many services, both public and private, use this strategy, commonly known as peak-period pricing, to manage demand. Air travel, public utilities, long-distance telephone service and vacationing destination all charge a higher price to use their services during peak periods of use.

Congestion pricing would spread the demand for road use out throughout the day and alleviate the need for widening highways. It would also address mobile source air emissions and energy consumption through increases in average vehicle occupancy levels. Revenues generated from congestion pricing could be used in a variety of ways in addition to improving and maintaining highways, including funding mass transit, reducing existing taxes or compensating those economically disadvantaged by the toll.

Policymakers have taken a new interest in congestion pricing with the advent of new technologies, coupled with the need for new revenue sources for infrastructure investment. State and local governments, however, have met with strong resistance whenever congestion pricing has been proposed. Critical political and institutional issues include public resistance to additional taxation, the regressivity of the fee structure, difficulties in regional coordination and ensuring the availability of alternate modes of travel.

Congestion pricing has been implemented in Singapore and France and is currently being considered in several European cities. Sixteen U.S. cities developed congestion pricing proposals in response to a solicitation for potential funding from the FHWA. Seven cities, including Minneapolis/St. Paul, have received funding from FHWA to conduct feasibility studies on congestion pricing.
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Our findings and recommendations are presented in three sections. First, we summarize the process we went through to arrive at our conclusions. Second, we answer the questions put to us in the charge. In the third section we make our recommendations.

Steps in the Process

- On the first day we heard from a number of neutral witnesses, who outlined the development of our transportation network and the problems of traffic congestion and financing at the state level. At the end of the day, we broke up into small groups and discussed the problems.

- On days 2 and 3 we heard from congestion pricing advocates and opponents. We broke up into small groups at the end of each day.

- On day 4 we broke up into four small groups and were each assigned a congestion pricing model for analysis. Our conclusions, as observed by the staff, are included near the end of this report. Each small group listed the merits and drawbacks of the assigned model and decided how they would structure the model to reach the desired goals. We presented our conclusions to the full group and continued deliberations throughout the afternoon deciding what solution we would recommend to solve the problem.

- We finished our deliberations on the fifth day and moved into a focus group format for transportation professionals interested in our conclusions. The eight jurors who felt the Twin Cities area did have a congestion problem broke off into a small group. Their views as recorded by staff observers have been compiled into a Minority Report, printed near the end of this report. At three o’clock the full group presented their final recommendations.

Answers to the Charge

Is there a current problem with traffic congestion in the 13-county metropolitan area we represent? On this question, Eight of us voted yes and 16 voted no.

Will there be a problem with congestion in this area in the future? On this question, 22 of us voted yes, one voted no and one was unsure.

Is there a transportation funding problem? On this question, all 24 of us voted yes.

Can congestion pricing be an effective strategy to address present and impending problems of traffic...
congestion and to improve stable financing for surface transportation improvements? On this question, 7 of us voted yes and 17 voted no.

We were then asked why congestion pricing is ineffective in solving these problems.

First, 11 of us voted that congestion pricing would not result in a change in travel behavior. Six of us voted that it could and seven abstained. We agreed, however, that the answer to this question depends on the price being charged.

Second, 19 of us voted that congestion pricing is an inefficient way to raise revenues; five of us voted that it is an efficient means for raising revenues.

Third, 15 of us voted that congestion pricing would be a system for the elite and disproportionately hurt low-income users. Four of us voted against this idea and five abstained.

Fourth, five of us voted that congestion pricing would not address congestion and financing issues because revenues generated could be used the wrong way. Eighteen of us voted against this notion, and one abstained.

Lastly, five of us voted against the acceptability of congestion pricing because it would violate personal freedoms. Eleven voted against this argument and six abstained.

We were asked how many of us would want to see a pilot project on congestion pricing (funded by the federal government) tried in some other metropolitan area. On this question, 18 of us voted in favor, two voted against and four abstained. Those voting yes believed the study would be worthwhile because we could determine how it affects congestion, generates revenues and measures cost-effectiveness. Those voting no felt a study would be too expensive to undertake. Several abstained as they would support some pilot project models but not others.

As a follow-up to this question, we were asked how many of us would like to see the Twin Cities metropolitan area chosen for a pilot project. On this question, seven of us voted in favor, thinking if a project were conducted here in the Twin Cities we could actually see how it would work, while 11 of us voted no, believing that the public wouldn’t accept such a project at all. Four of us abstained.

Recommendations
We were offered the choice of working on several different methods to deal with congestion and financing problems. A clear majority of us preferred to build our own solution. The following is an idea we urge Minnesota legislators and transportation planners to seriously consider (The overall plan was supported by 21 jurors and was opposed by two jurors. One juror abstained. The support for different parts of this proposal is shown below):

We believe that action must be taken to deal with the funding problem. A constitutional amendment must be passed to broaden the use of the gas tax in Minnesota so these funds can be used for transit. We suggest this only if it can be done in conjunction with a statutory dedication which has the
following provisions:

1. Provisions must be taken to insure that rural Minnesotans receive the same percentage of the gas tax that they now receive.

2. We recommend a 5-cent increase in the gas tax and are willing to see this increase rise to 15 cents over a period of six years, as needed. (Our vote is unanimous)

3. In the metropolitan area, the additional revenues from this increase in the gas tax should be spent as follows: transit, 60 percent; improved and repaired roads, 25 percent; and new roads, 15 percent. (Our vote is unanimous).

4. These provisions should be adopted for at least a 10-year period. After that, we recognize the need for flexibility, which is why we did not want these provisions in a constitutional amendment. (Our vote is 16 in favor, four opposed and four abstain.)

If it is politically impossible to accomplish the above, then we recommend that a sales tax on gas be seriously considered to accomplish these same goals.

We also discussed the limited use of spot tolls. The use of tolls for these purposes should be considered, but only if the proceeds are clearly dedicated for the original project proposal, with a sunset provision to end them as soon as sufficient revenues have been raised for the original project. There must be appropriate democratic consultation with those affected by the construction.

The exact details surrounding the use of this concept were difficult for us to decide upon. (Our vote is 12 in favor, eight opposed and four abstain.)

With regard to the present congestion problem, we felt there were three steps which should be taken: clean up the "loose edges" in the system (lanes which end inappropriately, etc.), expand the use of ramp meters and improve traffic management. To accomplish these and other changes, pilot projects and public hearings should be held.

In addition, we also wanted consideration to be given to:

* Encouraging changes in the mode, route and time of travel though education and training;

* Setting higher standards for new roads and highways if built;

* Creating more bike paths separate from traffic;

* Recycling of existing rail routes for transit;

* Designing multi-modal approaches to transit.
AGENDA

Charge: Can Congestion Pricing be an effective strategy to address present and impending problems of traffic congestion and to provide stable financing for surface transportation improvements? If not congestion pricing, then what alternatives may be acceptable?

Day 1 – Monday, June 5
8:30 a.m. Welcome and Introductions

Neutral Witness: Dick Braun, Former Commissioner of Transportation and Director of the Center for Transportation Studies.
Broad history of transportation in the U.S. and overview of how transportation affects other issues: economy, environment, etc.

11:30-12:30 p.m. Lunch in Room B-22

Moderators: Steve Sandell and Ann Kjelsberg: Interactive game.

Neutral Witness: John Williams, House Research.
Short history of transportation financing in Minnesota.

Neutral Witness: Ed Cohoon, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Financial Officer, Mn/DOT.
Current financial shortfall and problems with current level of gas tax.

Regional approaches to transportation planning.
1. Change in demographics and transport/driving patterns.
2. How transit use has changed and funding has become more difficult to secure.
3. Approaches to problem: Ramp metering and HOV lanes, zoning combined with mass transit, market and non-market travel demand management.
4. Met Council’s approach and how plan recently changed.

Neutral Witness: Bob Morgan, City of Minneapolis.
City’s role in transportation and efforts to alleviate congestion.

Small group discussions. Report findings back to full group.

5:15 p.m. Adjourn.

Day 2 – Tuesday, June 6
8:30 a.m. Congestion Pricing Witness: Herb Mohring, Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of Minnesota.
Introduce theory behind congestion pricing.


11:30-12:30 p.m. Lunch on your own. Cafeteria is located in the basement of the Capitol.

Opinion Witness: Alan Pisarski, Transportation Consultant.
1. Equity -- Creates a system of transportation have and have-nots.
2. Difficult to set the “right price” and direct benefits to losers in the system.
3. Just a new tax, not an efficient way to raise revenue.
4. Price will have to be set too high to get desired change in behavior.

Panel: Ohrn and Pisarski

Technology that makes congestion pricing viable.

Opinion Witness: Phil Agre, UCSD professor.
Potential privacy concerns of congestion pricing.

Small group discussion; report findings to full group.

5:15 p.m. Adjourn

Day 3 -- Wednesday, June 7
8:30 a.m. Congestion Pricing Witness: Ferrol Robinson, SRF Consulting.
Introduce congestion pricing models in the Twin Cities:
1. Area-wide pricing or cordon line around the MUSA.
2. Spot, facility or corridor pricing to finance new facilities.
3. Road pricing or mileage-based tax.

Transit funding problems and how congestion pricing could fit in.

Problems don’t merit this solution.

Opinion Witness: Jake Crandall, AAA.
Spend money we have more wisely; there are better ways to raise revenue.

Limits on state taxation; a better solution is to undedicate the gas tax.

Panel: Carl Ohrn, Lisa Peterson, Jake Crandall and Senator Ranum.

11:50-12:50 p.m. Lunch in Room B-22.
Congestion Pricing Witness: Bob Winter, Mn/DOT
HOV “Buy-In” model – selling excess capacity to SOVs in the HOV lane.

Opposition Witness: Heidi Stamm, Consultant, Pacific Rim Resources
HOV “Sell-Out” undermines spirit of the HOV lane.

Panel: Winter and Stamm.

Opposition Witness: John Kari, Met Council.
Alternative solution: Change land use patterns through zoning & encourage transit.

Small group discussions; Report findings to full group.

5:15 p.m.
Adjourn.

Day 4 – Thursday, June 8

8:30 a.m.
Small group discussions; Each group assigned a CP model.

Full group deliberations.

11:45-12:45 p.m.
Lunch in Room B-22.


Full group deliberations.

5:15 p.m.
Adjourn.

Day 5 – Friday, June 9

8:30 a.m.
Finish deliberations and begin Focus Group process.

12:00-1:00 p.m.
Lunch on your own. Cafeteria is located in the basement of the Capitol.

Finish writing up final report and present final recommendations.

3:00 p.m.
Present Recommendations.
JURY DEMOGRAPHICS

One of the key ingredients of any Citizens Jury is its demographic balance. The group is selected to be representative of the community as a whole. We therefore first assess the demographics of the community and balance the jury on up to six prearranged demographic variables. Our standard variables are age, race, gender, education level, and geographic location. The sixth variable is usually an attitudinal response to the issue at hand. In this case we decided to balance on jurors' response to the question: "Do you commute to work or school three or more times each week?" to ensure an adequate representation of commuters on the Jury.

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<td>Writer, graphic designer</td>
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<td>Lynne Cobb</td>
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<td>Elmer Descombaz</td>
<td>Retired, Telephone Const.</td>
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<td>Paul Wirth</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
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Citizens Jury on
Traffic Congestion Pricing

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Jury Recruiters
Peg Lonnquist
Gayle Zoffer

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Lee Munnich
Laura Sether
David Van Hattum

Oversight Committee Observers
Jim Fisher
Judith Thrane
WITNESSES

Phil Agre  Assistant Professor of Communication, University of California San Diego
Dick Braun  Former Commissioner of Transportation; Director of the Center for Transportation Studies, Minnesota
Ed Cohoon  Deputy Commissioner, Chief Financial Officer, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Jake Crandall  President and CEO, AAA Minnesota
Nacho Diaz  Manager of the Office of Transportation and Transit Development, Metropolitan Council
Jerry Dooley  Former Juror, Congressional Citizens Jury on Welfare Reform, 1994
John Kari  Senior Policy Planner, Metropolitan Council
Herb Mohring  Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of Minnesota
Bob Morgan  Transportation Systems Engineer, Department of Public Works, City of Minneapolis
Carl Ohrn  Planning Analyst, Metropolitan Council
Lisa Peterson  Vice President of Government Relations, Minnesota Trucking Association
Alan Pisarski  Transportation Consultant; Former Deputy Dir., Office of Transp. Planning, U.S. DOT
Ed Regan  Senior Vice President, Wilbur Smith Associates
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Chuck Sigglerud  Division Engineer, Metropolitan Division, Mn/DOT
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John Williams  Legislative Analyst, House Research Department
Bob Winter  Assistant Division Engineer, Metropolitan Division, Mn/DOT
Bob Zauner  Vice President, Hughes Transportation Management Systems
MINORITY REPORT

Staff Summary of Break Out Group: Eight jurors who thought traffic congestion is currently a problem or will be in the near future

The jurors in this group discussed their experience with traffic congestion in the Twin Cities. They defined “congestion” in a number of ways. These definitions included time delay, safety concerns, and congestion that has been diverted from the road to the ramp meter. They agreed that congestion is both time and place-specific.

Unlike the full group, these jurors were receptive to congestion pricing under certain conditions. They were particularly interested in projects on severely congested freeways and expressways where the revenue generated could be spent to improve travel conditions only in the immediate area. Some jurors suggested that in some circumstances, the money to pay for some transportation improvements could be provided through either a congestion pricing scheme or other kind of toll. This could finance both corridor or facility improvements and transit improvements that would attract riders from congested areas as well as mitigate the diversion of trips to arterials. Some jurors felt that care should be taken to ensure that a lane or parallel highways ought to remain toll-free to lessen diversion to neighborhood streets. Jurors also stressed “sunset clauses” in proposals so that tolls used for improvements could be discontinued when the improvements had been paid for. In addition, it was felt that if converting SOVers to transit was the objective, then tolls should be higher than the current transit fare.

35W and 494 were both mentioned as corridors for a potential congestion pricing project. A juror from south Minneapolis suggested that congestion pricing could be used to alleviate congestion and thus eliminate the need for widening the highway. This person thought that tolling could be part of a long-term solution that included dedicating a portion of the revenues to alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle use.
SMALL GROUPS

On Thursday morning we divided the Jury into four groups, who were each assigned one model of congestion pricing. A summary of what came out of each group follows. This is not a document prepared by the Jurors themselves, but rather a summary written by staff observers.

Cordon Line around the MUSA

Under this congestion pricing model, drivers of single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs) would be charged a fee as they enter the metropolitan urban service area (MUSA). The group saw some potential for this model but felt it wouldn't be as effective at reducing congestion as a full freeway pricing scheme. They raised important geographical equity concerns, for example where and how to draw the cordon line. There was a general sense that people shouldn't be penalized for living on the outskirts of town. Some participants were concerned that this model would not help to increase settlement densities, as companies and individuals would be encouraged to locate outside of the MUSA line. One participant vehemently rejected this model, asserting that it would disrupt the important flow of commerce into the city.

Cost-effectiveness and enforcement were major concerns. To effectively enforce this model there would need to be a collection point at every entrance point, a proposition of potentially enormous costs. When asked how to spend revenues from this model, the group unanimously felt they should go to enhanced transit service and park-and-rides for those living outside of the MUSA line. Similar to the full jury, this group felt greater support for the carrot rather than the stick approach, the carrot being more accessible transit services.

HOV “Buy-In”

The jurors in this group thought that this model would not significantly reduce congestion. They came to the conclusion that, at most, the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) “Buy-In” is a temporary solution for congestion problems. In the end, it would defeat the purpose of an HOV lane as it doesn’t encourage carpooling and transit use, and in fact makes it easier to commute from farther distances.

The group was concerned about the potential mode conversion of current HOV users to paying SOVs in the HOV lane. They were also concerned about the difficulty in selling the right number of passes and realized that the success of the “Buy-In” depended on the congestion in the SOV lanes. There were major concerns about the cost-effectiveness of the Buy-In. Revenue would likely exceed costs, but by how much? They came up with an idea that would reduce implementation costs, as the transponder method was thought to be expensive and potentially invasive (although it was recognized that anonymity is an option). The group thought that a symbol visible to other drivers, like a decal on a window, would be cost-effective and self-enforcing, as other drivers (perhaps with cellular phones) could report violations.

The group came up with a couple ideas that could make this concept somewhat more
acceptable. One was closing the lane off and making it reversible, with few entrance ramps. They were also concerned about the fact that it would become an elitist system that would contribute to the increased stratification of society, as the lane may be used almost exclusively by higher income groups. For this reason, they thought that charging the fee on a sliding scale would make sense. Selling a limited number of slots would give the decal a market value, so low income groups could potentially come out ahead by reselling their permit.

In the end the group decided that even with these modifications, the costs would outweigh the potential benefits. There was very little support for this model.

Spot or Facility Pricing

There was some support for using spot tolls to finance local highway maintenance and construction. Much emphasis was placed on the need for the community to make this decision democratically and to dedicate any revenue generated to a specific project with provisions to sunset the toll at the project’s completion. A flat-rate toll was more attractive to the group than was variable pricing.

There was concern that this particular model did not do too much to address congestion. There was also discussion on the difficulty of setting the right price and the potential for economic discrimination. To encourage changes in travel behavior, the group decided that carpoolers should travel free on the facility and alternatives should be available. It was suggested that a portion of the revenue could be spent on enhancing transit options, subsidizing low-income travellers, or reducing local property taxes.

Road Pricing

The group saw both advantages and disadvantages to this model. They thought there was some potential for behavior changes, as people would feel the impact of their trips more directly than with the current gas tax. One main advantage was that it would circumvent the legislative gridlock surrounding raising the gas tax and allow greater investments to be made in the transit system.

Potential drawbacks included the difficulties in implementing a new system, particularly the costs of enforcement and border crossing issues. There was some concern that this would promote a black market for odometer scramblers to cheat the system. Both the impact on low-income individuals and the possible privacy invasions were cited as disadvantages to the concept. Some people were concerned that increased costs to the trucking industry would be passed along in the form of higher prices to consumers.

The group discussed ways to compensate for the potential drawbacks, and came up with these ideas. They thought if this were implemented it should replace the gas tax and/or vehicle registration fees. There should be some way to mitigate the economic effects on low-income groups (sliding fee scale), and possibly the trucking industry. A smart card could remove the privacy concerns. There was some support for this model, but many legal and enforcement problems were perceived. In general, the costs of replacing the the gas tax would outweigh the benefits of this model.
JUROR EVALUATION

1. In general, how do you feel about your experience with the Citizens Jury on Traffic Congestion Pricing? (check one)

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<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations by advocates</td>
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<td>Presentations by opponents</td>
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<td>Deliberations</td>
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<td>Role of neutral expert</td>
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2. How do you feel about the different parts of the project (how useful were they to you)?

3. One of our aims is to have the staff and volunteers of the Jefferson Center conduct the project in an unbiased way. How satisfied are you with their performance in this regard?

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The Jefferson Center

The Jefferson Center is a non-profit, non-partisan organization conducting research and development into new methods of democratic decision-making. Founded in 1974 in Minneapolis, the Center is now the oldest of the six organizations which have been set up in America, independent of universities, to promote the betterment of American democracy. The major achievement of the Center is the development of the Citizens Jury® process, through which randomly selected, representative panels of adults meet for several days to examine public policy issues or to evaluate key issues in campaigns and present their findings to the community at large.

Citizens Jury projects currently under consideration include state and national public policy juries and election-issue juries; congressionally sponsored juries; and University conducted juries. The Jefferson Center has also created the Extended Policy Discussion and Values Review Exercise reforms.

List of Citizens Jury projects to date:

- Traffic Congestion Pricing 1995
- Tim Penny Congressional Citizens Jury on Welfare Reform 1994
- Yale Citizens Jury on At-Risk Children 1994
- America's Tough Choices: Health Care Reform 1993
- America's Tough Choices: The Federal Budget 1993
- Hennepin County Budget Priorities 1991
- Low Income Housing 1991
- Arts in the Schools 1990
- 1990 Minnesota Gubernatorial Election 1990
- St. Paul Mayoral Election Issues 1989
- School-based Health Clinics 1988
- Organ Transplants 1986
- Agriculture and Water Policy 1985
- Peacemaking Project for the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area 1981
- 1976 Presidential Election Issues 1976
- National Health Care Plan 1974
The Basics of the Citizens Jury® Process

The major achievement of the Jefferson Center has been the development and use of the Citizens Jury process. A Citizens Jury brings together a microcosm of the community to learn about public policy issues and present recommendations on a particular issue. After extensive testing at local, state and national levels, this process is currently one of the most promising democratic reforms being used around the world.

Essential parts of the Citizens Jury process include:

- Conducting a survey
- Selecting jurors to resemble a microcosm of the community
- Setting the agenda and designing hearings
- Selecting witnesses
- Moderating the hearings in a fair and neutral way
- Ending with deliberations, evaluations and a final report to announce the results

Initially, there were four goals stated for the process: it should be representative of the community from which it is drawn, it should lead to reasonable conclusions, there should be the opportunity to express concern for those affected by the issue, and it should be viewed as a legitimate process by the general public. Along the way each of these goals has been defined more clearly:

**Representativeness:** This is achieved by randomly selecting a balanced panel of citizens, based on several demographic variables, typically age, education, race, gender, geographic location and a preliminary attitudes with respect to the question or policy issue at hand.

**Reasonable Conclusions:** This is achieved by ensuring that good information is presented from several points of view.

**Concern:** This is achieved by moderating the hearings and deliberations in a way that promotes mutual respect of the jurors for each other and for the points of view presented to them.

**Legitimacy:** This is promoted by presenting the process and its recommendations in a way that gains both the participation and respect of its audiences.

We are convinced that the Citizens Jury process provides a trusted, informed and responsible way for ordinary citizens to exercise their voice in the critical decisions that affect their lives.
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Citizen Jury to evaluate road-use fee plan; sessions open to public

Rush-hour pricing on horizon?
Panel to take road-use fee plan for a test drive

Citizens to review congestion pricing

By Laurie Blake
Staff Writer

A randomly chosen group of 24 Minnesotans will act as a "citizen jury" next week and deliver some of the first reactions to the hottest idea in competing congestion pricing, or charging motorists a fee to drive during rush hour.

Many transportation policymakers, who say the fees could reduce highway congestion by discouraging peak-hour trips as well as generating money for roads and mass transit, are eager to test the idea.

But popular acceptance will be critical to the idea's success. And what the jurors like and don't like about congestion pricing after they listen to three days' worth of pro and con presentations will directly shape its development in the Twin Cities and nationwide.

Meeting June 5-9 at the State Capitol, jury members will be asked: Can charging a fee for peak-time use of roads help reduce traffic congestion and become a steady source of income for transportation improvements? If not, what else would work?

The jurors will review several congestion-pricing possibilities.

They include allowing drivers with no passengers to pay a fee to drive in carpools/buses lanes during rush hour -- a concept that may be tested this year on Interstate Hwy. 394 or I-35W, which have center lanes reserved for multipassenger cars and buses.

Traffic continued on page 1B

Traffic

Continued from page 1B

The jurors, evenly represented by men and women, have been assembled by the Minneapolis-based Jefferson Center for New Democratic Processes, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public research organization.

Jury members were selected with the help of a survey company, which provided randomly chosen phone numbers and gathered information on personal characteristics such as age, race, gender, educational background, geographic location and commuting patterns. The Jefferson Center used that information to balance the jury and recruit members.

The center has conducted 17 citizen juries across the country, including a jury on a Minnesota gubernatorial race and two national juries on health-care changes and the federal budget.

The goal for the week is to educate jury members about congestion pricing, keep them free from the pressures of special-interest groups and allow them to reach conclusions that will guide policymakers.

Jury members comments and suggestions will be included in a national report by the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

The report, due out next spring, will focus on the issues and barriers involved in launching a congestion-pricing system.

The comments also will figure into next year's Minnesota Transportation Department report to the state Legislature about the prospects for collecting a mileage-based tax on congestion fees.

And the verdict will play into the Transportation Department's decision about whether to test congestion pricing on I-35W or I-394 this year, state engineer Bob Winter said.

Common questions about congestion pricing include what fee would be charged, how it would be collected and how the money would be spent.

To reduce traffic congestion, fees would have to be high enough to encourage some people to drive during non-peak hours, share rides or use other routes.

But what price is right? Jurors will learn about and comment on a range of numbers.

Congestion fees could be paid in advance through debit payments or paid like a bill after highway use is totaled.

Road use would be tallied electronically as vehicles equipped with radio transmitters pass a monitoring point. Jurors will see this technology demonstrated.

Money collected by congestion pricing could be spent on road and transit improvements or used to reduce taxes. The citizen jury will offer the first look at how ordinary people would like to have the money spent.

Selected groups of people in the Twin Cities area already have weighed in on the issue through focus groups sponsored by the Humphrey Institute last fall.

The institute found that transportation professionals would spend most of the money for transit improvements; businesspeople preferred using it for road improvements; elected officials would use it for roads and transit projects, and community organizations would use the money for mass transit operations and to offset fees for the poor.

The jury sessions, which will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., are open to the public. The jury will deliver its verdict by the afternoon of June 9.
Jury: Lack of funds for highways, bus service part of problem, experts say

Citizen verdict is: Congestion pricing won't solve traffic woes
Rush-hour fees

Congestion pricing may yet be needed

The citizen jury that last week turned thumbs down on congestion pricing as a solution to Twin Cities area traffic congestion got it right in at least one respect: There are better ways to reduce rush-hour highway travel, including more car pooling and bus ridership. The trick is to get more commuters to switch to buses and carpools. And that is where congestion pricing might have to come in — as an encouragement to what predictably will be a needed change in workday travel habits.

The jury especially rejected a proposal to allow single drivers to pay a fee to use "diamond" or high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) freeway lanes now reserved for buses and carpoolers during peak morning and afternoon travel periods. The idea is obviously a no-no because allowing single drivers onto HOV lanes — even at a price — would only frustrate the lanes' twin purposes of enabling multipassenger traffic to move at a faster speed than adjacent single-driver traffic and thereby encouraging single drivers to take their cars off the road and use buses or carpools instead.

Congestion pricing ought to work better, however, if applied to rush-hour freeway travel in general — charging any peak-period commuter (except those in buses and carpools) a fee for using the road. That should encourage three positive changes in the commuting habits of at least some drivers: (1) greater use of less-congested alternate routes; (2) a switch of travel times to less congested periods and (3) increased transit and carpool usage.

So far, the Minnesota Department of Transportation has tried to achieve those same results with a variety of positive incentives, ranging from setting aside HOV lanes to downtown parking discounts for carpoolers to jawboning metro-area employers into staggering their work hours. It hasn't worked — at least not well enough.

That's why congestion pricing might become necessary — as a stick to go with the carrots already being dangled in front of people who insist on driving alone. The citizen jury may not like the idea — nor may most Twin Cities area commuters. But unless more people change their travel habits voluntarily, they may soon find themselves paying for the privilege of overcrowding the roads — like it or not.

The citizen jury reached another sound verdict as well: Increase the state gasoline tax and share part of it with transit. Those changes are at least three years overdue at the Legislature and should be at the top of the agenda in the 1996 session.

But even with more money for roads and transit, there could still be a need for congestion pricing to spread out rush-hour travel and thereby get the most efficient use out of the new money. It's either that or keep raising the gas tax to build more freeways so they would still be overcrowded four hours of the day and underused the rest of the time.
Road tolls part of Twin Cities future

Citizens jury will discuss congestion pricing option

DON AHERN STAFF WRITER

Would you choose to pay extra to use a Twin Cities freeway or take a private toll road if it would reduce congestion, get you to work faster and help rebuild roads?

A citizens jury will look into the pros and cons of that concept, called congestion pricing, this week in Room G15 of the State Capitol building in St. Paul. The meeting will be open to the public, but its entertainment value may be on a par with watching paint dry.

The “jury” consists of two dozen citizens who will be paid by the Jefferson Center, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, to devote a week’s time to examine the issue. It is being sponsored by the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota as part of the institute’s ongoing study of congestion pricing.

The Minnesota Transportation Department is also interested in what the jury may have to say.

The department received authorization from this past session of the Legislature to conduct a congestion pricing pilot project somewhere in the Twin Cities during the next two years.

“We haven’t determined where,” said Ed Cahoon, the department’s deputy commissioner and chief financial officer. “Generally,” he added, “what we are looking at is selling space in high-occupancy-vehicle lanes. They are located monthly on I-35W and I-94, so it’s likely to be one of those places. We will probably allow single-occupant vehicles to go into the HOV lane along with buses, vans, and pools when they pay for the privilege. In this case, they would probably buy a sticker in advance that would be displayed in the windshield. If a car with no sticker is in the HOV lane, it will be pulled over by troopers.”

Although congestion pricing has the potential as a revenue producer, the state at this point is primarily interested in its potential to manage congestion, Cahoon said. “We want to see if we can relieve congestion by moving more vehicles on the road and use the money we are currently moving. And we want to test technologies.”

Jury members include construction workers, self-employed people, teachers, an engineer, a writer, a jail employee, a caretaker, a nurse, a bartender, an armed-car guard, a student, a minister, a retiree and others.

The group’s findings won’t be binding. But they will be a good indicator of what plain folks might think about the concept after they hear all the details and both sides of the issue.

Congestion pricing is the newest buzzword in transportation finance. Its numerous variations include old-fashioned toll booths and high-speed, high-tech, no-stop remote billing. And it promises to be a lucrative supplement to local taxes for super-expensive freeway reconstructions as federal money dries up.

A new way to make you pay

The concept of “congestion pricing” — charging a premium for the use of freeways during peak periods — has been made simple by new technology permitting the electronic collection of tolls.

Each vehicle is equipped with a transponder, an electronic device the size of a garage-door opener, which is mounted on the windshield.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How it works</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. As a vehicle approaches a toll point, an antenna on a gantry spanning the freeway transmits a radio signal, triggering a response from the vehicle that identifies it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The transponder relays the information to a computer, which records the vehicle’s location and tracks it. With each succeeding transmission, the vehicle’s location and time of day is electronically collected from a prepaid account or charged to a credit card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When the vehicle leaves the freeway, a user fee based on the length of trip and time of day is electronically collected from a prepaid account or charged to a credit card.</td>
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Source: Hughes Transportation Management Systems.

PUBLIC MEETING

The citizens’ jury will meet Monday through Friday this week from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in Room G15 of the State Capitol.
'Jury' rules congestion pricing not a good idea

DON AHERN STAFF WRITER

After pondering the issue for a week, a "citizens jury" decided Friday that congestion pricing on Twin Cities freeways is not a good idea, and that highway repairs and transit improvements should be financed by an increase in the gas tax or a sales tax on gasoline.

Congestion pricing is the term given to ways of charging extra for cars to use certain roads either all the time or during rush hours — high-tech, time-selective tolls. The concept is being studied nationwide as an innovative way of supplementing taxes to finance transportation.

The 24 members of the panel were selected randomly from 13 Twin Cities-area counties and paid $500 for a week of their time. The project was conducted by the Jefferson Center for New Democratic Processes, a nonprofit corporation, and sponsored by the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

The "decision" is not binding. Its significance is that it is one of the first times that the congestion pricing issue and all of its pro and con arguments have been presented to a citizen body. The decision is advisory to the Humphrey Institute, which is studying the issue.

The jury voted on several aspects of the issue. Here are some of the major votes:

- Can congestion pricing be an effective way to reduce traffic congestion and improve stable financing for transportation? In a 17-7 vote, the group decided it was not effective. By a 11-6 vote with seven abstentions, a plurality held congestion pricing would not result in a change in travel behavior.
- By a 19-4 vote, the majority held that congestion pricing is an inefficient way to raise revenues — it probably would cost as much as it brought in.
- Twenty-one jurors felt that a constitutional amendment should be put to the voters to broaden the use of the gas tax so revenues can be used for transit as well as highway construction. With these provisions:
  1. Rural Minnesota must receive the same percentage of the gas tax that it now receives.
  2. The gas tax should be increased 8 cents immediately and up to 15 cents over six years (the vote on that was unanimous).
  3. In the metropolitan area, the new revenues should be split 60 percent for transit, 25 percent for improving and repairing roads, and 15 percent for new roads.
  4. These provisions should expire after 10 years.
- If it is politically impossible to accomplish the above goals, then a sales tax on gasoline should be considered.
EASING FREEWAY DEMAND

Get used to concept of congestion pricing

The concept of "congestion pricing"—charging a premium for the use of major roads during peak travel periods—is not one that is likely to win ready acceptance from motorists. It seemingly asks them to pay a second time for roads they already have helped finance through gasoline taxes and other levies.

Yet, the concept—which was rejected by a "jury" of citizens after a weeklong, state-sponsored study—will likely become a routine part of Minnesota's traffic management and road finance systems in the decades to come.

The reason is that congestion tolls offer more promise than any other approach for encouraging motorists to shift trips out of the rush hour, join car pools or use mass transit—thereby alleviating congestion and reducing the demand for more lanes of freeway. These tolls also would force motorists to shoulder more of the true cost for heavily subsidized highway travel.

Indeed, these tolls could generate additional revenues to finance badly needed improvements in transit service, as well as the construction of additional high-occupancy vehicle (HUV) lanes for use by buses and car pools in congested freeway corridors.

Over the next few years, there may be opportunities to test the concept of congestion pricing in the Twin Cities. However, a regionwide system of tolls on all freeways is probably years away.

Blessed with two urban centers and a well-developed freeway system, the Twin Cities area simply does not have severe congestion problems that face many other large urban areas. The average commute time for Twin Cities workers is 21.1 minutes, compared with 28.1 minutes in Chicago, 29.5 minutes in Washington, D.C., and 30.6 minutes in New York City.

More immediately, as the citizens jury concluded, the governor and state lawmakers raise additional transportation revenue through more conventional means—to keep pace with highway needs around the state and to halt the mindless dismantling of the bus system in the Twin Cities. The jurors proposed raising the existing gasoline tax or imposing a new sales tax on gasoline, and using the revenues for transit as well as highways.

The citizens jury may have been a little shortsighted on the issue of congestion pricing. But its members were dead right in calling for an end to the five-year-long political deadlock on highway-transit funding.