

MEMORANDUM

May 5, 2022

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office
Patrice Impey, CFO/General Manager of Finance, Risk & Supply Chain Management
Margaret Wittgens, Deputy General Manager, Strategy and Planning
Paul Storer, Director, Transportation

FROM: Lon LaClaire
General Manager, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Transport Pricing – Spring 2022 Update

RTS #: 14240

In November 2020, City Council approved the Climate Emergency Action Plan RTS 13199, which included direction to assess the feasibility of transport pricing within Vancouver's city centre. It also directs staff to ensure a pricing strategy supports COVID-19 pandemic recovery and considers regional impacts in close collaboration with TransLink and the Province. This memo is in response to Council's request to report back before the end of 2022 on stakeholder engagement and feedback and to do so prior to bringing forward further recommendations related to transport pricing.

In November 2021, staff provided Council with a memo (Transport Pricing – Project Update) update on the planned first phase of work ("Explore") taking place between fall 2021 and spring 2022. The purpose of the current memo is to provide an update on the project, including work done to-date and a revised project timeline.

Staff, supported by consultants, completed the following work as part of phase 1 “Explore”:

- 32 one-on-one stakeholder interviews in the fall (one written response), out of 87 contacted groups
- Six focus groups, including one in Mandarin, to test understanding of pricing concepts and terminology
- Draft research reports analyzing current travel patterns into and through city centre, current practices in London, Stockholm, and other cities, and ‘building block’ research on technology, geographic boundaries, and other considerations
- Presentation to the Climate Equity Working Group
- Regional alignment sessions with Metro Vancouver and TransLink (ongoing)

The original plan for phase 1 “Explore” included three rounds of engagement, based on an expectation that COVID-19 impacts would be significantly reduced by late 2021. After completing the first round of interviews and observing impacts of the Omicron variant, staff delayed the next round of engagement in recognition that many organizations and associations were preoccupied with operational impacts, including staffing shortages.

With the arrival of spring and the lifting of public health restrictions, uncertainty persists regarding current economic conditions and the region’s adjustment to new public health orders.

Rather than launch a second round of engagement this spring, staff plan to provide more time for organizations and businesses to adapt to the new conditions. This will also allow time for staff to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on traffic patterns. Staff will provide an update to stakeholders engaged so far, and remain open to any conversations stakeholders would like to have. Key themes emerging from stakeholder engagement so far include:

Equity

Many groups expressed a desire that the policy be equity-based. More specifically, stakeholders wanted to understand potential impacts, mitigation measures and benefits for equity-denied groups, including those experiencing poverty, people with disabilities who drive, those who rely on services delivered by car, and people who rely on vehicles to earn their income.

Revenue

Stakeholders assumed that transport pricing would generate revenue for the City. Many people wanted to understand if this revenue could fund local and regional transit improvements, local cycling and walking infrastructure, and other mitigation measures for equity-denied groups.

Goods movement

Many groups emphasized the importance of reliability and certainty in the transportation network for moving goods throughout the region. There was interest in ensuring that transport pricing in Vancouver’s city centre would not put additional stress on supply

chains and cause geographic disparities. There was also interest in understanding how transport pricing in the city centre would align with and support a 'regional' approach.

Policy details

Some stakeholders wanted to understand the direct benefits from transport pricing that travellers, businesses and residents would experience. Some wanted to know how the City plans to measure success, along with details such as geography, cost, and the other policy options considered. Many felt that case studies would be useful to show how road pricing has worked in other cities and if the policy was successful.

Downtown impacts

Many groups were sensitive to potential impacts on businesses in the downtown area, particularly as the city recovers from the impacts of COVID-19. Some were concerned with how neighbourhoods on the boundary (not yet defined) would be impacted. Some considered potential impacts on services to those in the Downtown East Side with many support workers living outside the City.

Staff will continue to study these issue areas in this phase and future work. Staff plan to provide a report to Council in early 2023 with a summary of work to-date, along with a proposed approach for stakeholder and broader public discussion in 2023/2024, for endorsement.

As per Council direction from November 2020, staff will continue to assess the feasibility of transport pricing, by:

- Continuing discussions with Metro Vancouver and TransLink on regional alignment, as they plan to reduce emissions from light duty vehicles by 65% by 2030
- Continuing to monitor transport pricing planning efforts in other cities, such as New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles and participating in working groups with other cities
- Developing the scope of work to model and understand impacts of transport pricing (to be undertaken in 2023)
- Continuing to analyze the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on traffic patterns, current transportation system inequities and how transport pricing, alongside other policies and investments, could advance equity in the city and region

If you have any questions, please contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Lon LaClaire, M.Eng., P.Eng.
General Manager, Engineering Services

604.873.7336 | lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca