

Cambridge congestion charging: Lessons from previous experience

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Outline

- Introduction
- First attempt at road user charging
- Current situation
- Lessons learnt
- Conclusions

Introduction

- Growth of Cambridge sub-region impact on traffic congestion
- Recognition in 1980's that congestion was unacceptable
- Road user charging scheme as part of a comprehensive transport strategy
- Current pressure on Cambridge as the most sustainable location for growth

Aim

To consider the trial of a road user charging scheme in Cambridge in the early 1990's and to assess what lessons have been learnt since a road user charge is again being considered.

Lessons in terms of technology, presentation, alternative transport provision and conclusions that can be drawn which are of use to other cities considering the implementation of a road user charging scheme.

First attempt at RUC in Cambridge

- Smeed Report 1964
 - charges being made closely to the amount of road utilised and varying depending on the time of day and level of congestion

- ADEPT project
- Congestion metering
- Package of equipment
- Cambridge presented the ideal opportunity

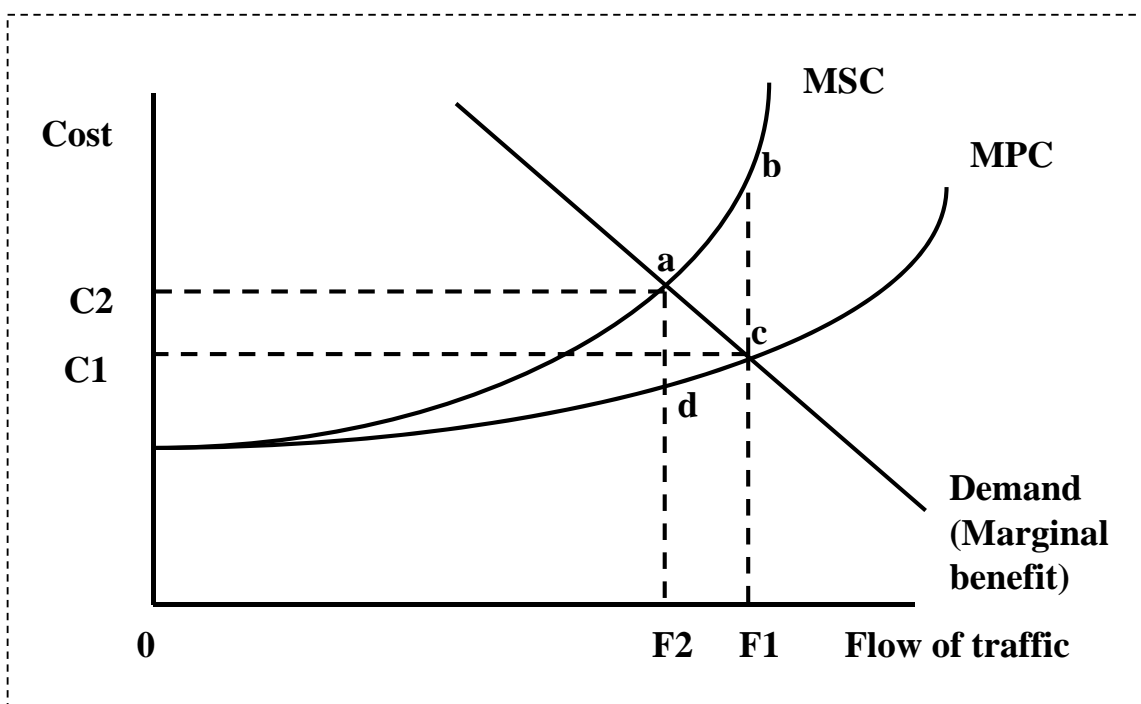
Congestion metering



Congestion metering



Economic underpinning



Failure to be implemented

- Lack of national policy guidance and suitable legislation
- Congestion metering technically complex and difficult to understand
- Safety issues
- Little engagement with the general public
- Funding

Failure to be implemented

- Scheme part of a wider package of measures, to which there was opposition
- Change of political balance

Current situation

- Transport innovation fund
 - A 10% reduction in current traffic levels;
 - A reduction in transport emissions, aimed at meeting air quality and climate change objectives;
 - Securing high quality sustainable alternatives to the car, in advance of congestion charging;
 - Improvements to the economy;
 - Creation of a scheme that is equitable.

Current situation

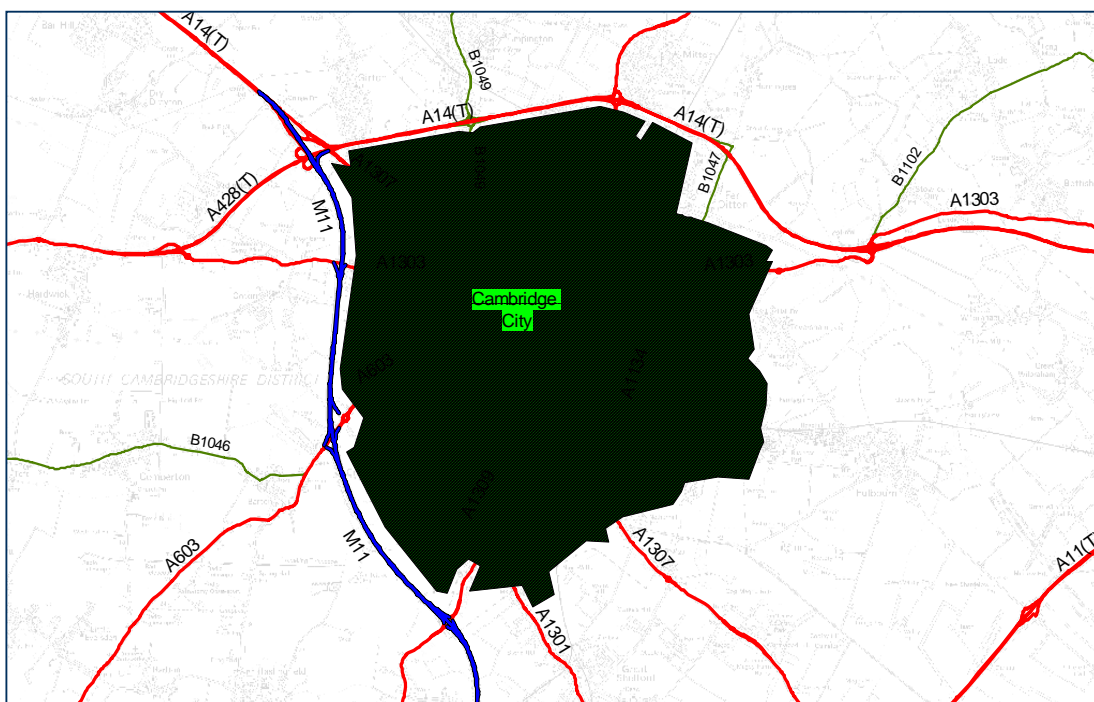
The Congestion Charging Scheme proposed for Cambridge as part of the TIF bid can be summarized as follows:

- An Area Licence Charge around Cambridge City, extending into part of South Cambridgeshire, the surrounding district area, covering an area approximately 6km by 6km;
- A charge in operation between 07.30 and 09.30 Monday to Friday;
- A daily charge in the region of £3 - £5, irrespective of the number of trips or distance travelled;
- All travel into, out of or within the charging zone will be subject to the charge;
- No exemptions.

The potential scheme

- In terms of the technology, a tag based scheme enforced by Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) is currently seen as the most attractive.
- The proposed Scheme includes a number of detection points within the city aimed at catching 'rat runners' as well as traffic on major routes.
- The charging points inside the boundary are expected to capture 95% of traffic using the network.
- It is estimated that the scheme would cost less than an equivalent system would have cost in the early 1990's.

The proposed charging area



A package of measures

- The congestion charge is seen as part of a package of measures identified as a way of dealing with the growth in traffic.
- These include:
 - improvements in public transport;
 - walking and cycling provision;
 - highway development where there is no alternative.

Congestion Charging

- Whilst the issue of the congestion charge is still being considered and debated fiercely, Cambridgeshire have made it clear that it will:
 - definitely not be introduced before real transport alternatives are in place and available during the charging period;
 - only operate at the times and in places where congestion is the most severe;
 - the very earliest it could be implemented along with the other proposals is likely to be 2014.

Public engagement and consultation

- The Council have undertaken a wide range of engagements with key partners: local businesses, the Universities, transport providers, key interest groups, seeking to discuss the issues currently facing the county and the potential solutions.
- 23 road shows.
- An online survey, in order to ascertain peoples views, stakeholder breakfast briefings, stakeholder opinion polling forums, focus groups.

Lessons learnt

- The simpler use of the technology in a system which did not try to be so sophisticated would be potentially more effective and deliverable, hence a tag based system enforced by ANPR in the current proposals.
- Presenting the system to the public needs to be better planned and the engagement needs to explain the key role of charging in the demand management tool kit.
- The need for the alternative provision of transport measures to cater for those choosing to change mode needs careful planning and programming.
- Motorists will need only simple pricing structures and need to know what the cost will be before setting off on their journey.
- There is a need for alternatives available to road users displaced by the road user charge.

Conclusions

- There needs to be a widely experienced travel and traffic problem that will grow and needs to be addressed.
- There needs to be one or perhaps two clear objectives for the introduction of any system of charging. These include:
 - reducing traffic congestion,
 - rationing road space,
 - improvements to the local environment,
 - linkage to climate change mitigation,
 - social inclusion, social equity,
 - raising funding, or
 - manage inevitable growth in activity, ie growth agendas
- The current congestion charging proposals are much simpler in terms of their objective, namely one of reducing congestion, with the hypothecation of revenue raised for improving transport facilities.
- There needs to be clear policy development and locally driven political support.

Conclusions

- The prospective charging system needs to be simple to comprehend,
- The privacy of individual users needs to be respected and protected.
- It requires significant investment in the charging system itself and alternative public transport and other modal facilities. This obviously needs to be in place ahead of the introduction of the charging system.
- There needs to be engagement at an early stage with major stakeholders and then with the general public.
- There are likely to be many direct gainers and some losers with the introduction of a congestion charging system. A congestion charging system will need to focus on the positives and prospective benefits to the wider public.

Contact

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