

# KEEP THE KERBSIDE FLEXIBLE & BOOKABLE

# KEEP THE KERBSIDE PROTECTED & FREE

## Aligning kerbside strategy to road pricing models

By Mark Coates

To help the transportation sector reach our climate change targets, the United Kingdom government has made a commitment to end the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030. As a result, the adoption of electric vehicles has risen, leading to a corresponding decrease in the revenue generated through fuel duty and road tax.

Meanwhile, countless motorcycles, vans, and trucks lose time and fuel trying to find a parking spot along the kerbsides to complete their deliveries, causing unnecessary congestions on both roads and kerbsides. Even when they do find a place, they risk disrupting others, such as a person trying to charge their electric vehicle. With the world now relying on deliveries more than ever, it is important to efficiently manage our kerbsides.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has predicted a GBP 40 billion shortfall from fuel duty and road tax because of this change, and road pricing has been touted as one possible solution. It can reduce the traffic congestion and offer a fairer way of charging drivers than an indiscriminate road tax. This situation makes it perfect to combine it with kerbside management strategies.

## The Kerbside Taskforce

A coalition of organisations led by TRL keen to stimulate a debate about the need for a fresh look at the issues surrounding use of the kerbside.

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- The question, however, is whether revenue generation is the focus of a road pricing strategy—and if we are missing the bigger picture. What if a road pricing strategy aligned with active travel strategies, kerbside management strategies, and decarbonisation strategies, providing greater benefits to society while still generating the necessary revenue fairly and aligned with current and future demands? It is possible to still reduce the carbon emissions while compensating the loss of revenue from fuel duty and road tax by combining road pricing with other strategies, such as kerbside management.

## Carbon reduction

### ► *Current carbon emissions*

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), transportation accounts for approximately one-fifth of the world's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. For more developed countries, such as the U.K., in 2021 it accounted for roughly 37% of all emissions.

As economies and populations grow, so does the need for personal travel and moving goods. This situation makes the decarbonisation of the transportation sector even more vital if we are to maintain economic growth while simultaneously tackling the climate crisis.

Fair outcomes need to be provided for both urban and rural areas, ideally with interoperability between locations. The challenges are different in urban and rural areas, so we need a joined-up strategy that works throughout the U.K. There needs to be a framework in which mobility pricing is just one part of a wider system that is addressing these concerns.

### ► *From case studies – has road pricing helped reduce emissions? Could there be improvements?*

Singapore, London, Stockholm, Milan, and Gothenburg all have congestion charge schemes in effect. The Area Licensing Scheme (ALS) in Singapore proved effective in lowering traffic volumes in the country's restricted zone. Traveling by automobile into the restricted zone fell by 18%.

The congestion fee in Stockholm has proved effective in decreasing traffic. The fee resulted in a 22% fall in traffic entering the charging region at first, followed by relative stability.

The major goal of the congestion fee for Gothenburg was to raise funds to help finance a train tunnel, although secondary goals included congestion reduction and local environmental improvement. The drop in traffic volumes crossing the cordon in both directions was initially 12% and dropped more in time.

A greater impact could be obtained if these successful schemes were also integrated with other transport strategies, such as kerbside management. A similar pricing scheme could be adopted, preventing the loss of revenue from taxes while caring for the environment. With reduction in traffic from a combination of kerbside and road pricing strategies, we could see a further reduction by 2030, which could help meet climate targets. In addition, fatal injuries occurrence would reduce dramatically.





## Societal benefits – it's not *just* about revenue generation

All transport strategies, including road pricing and kerbside, should be about social benefits. It is important to provide greater opportunities for people through an improved kerbside system, such as enabling accessible and active travel, creating places for people, increasing climate resilience, and improving air quality.

Transport strategies must have a long-term vision and be able to adapt to future changes and requirements. For example, reducing congestion and cleaning the air are not going to happen overnight but it will provide positive long-term social benefits.

Whatever proposal is taken forward, positive language is a must. Phrases such as “kerbside pricing” might polarise views and make it difficult for people to accept. It is worth mentioning that road pricing already exists in a limited form in schemes like clean air zones (CAZs) and congestion charging, which have already successfully brought about a change in drivers' behaviours. Similar success can also be achieved with kerbside pricing schemes, changing how society uses the kerbside.

## Public buy-in

Transport is facing a triple challenge right now: high levels of air pollution, the need for climate action, and the ongoing problem of congestion in urban areas. The latter has several negative impacts, such as the economic costs of lost time, increased accidents and deaths, and environmental and long-term health consequences. The current culture for kerbside usage is, at times, chaotic and stands as one of the major causes for congestion.

We need to prioritise establishing that link and drawing attention to the drawbacks of a road transport model that produces chaos. At the same time, we also need to recognise that different locations may require different solutions, understanding why and how different people need to use the road and the kerbside, and then providing viable solutions for them.

Only with an agreed plan can people start to understand the effects that kerbside management and pricing will have on their lives. While public acceptance is not impossible, the focus needs to be on articulating the benefits to public health, improved access, fair pricing, reduced waiting times, easy payments, the economy, and inclusion. We also need to be more explicit about how the income from road and kerbside pricing is invested, helping show an appealing alternative.

## What next – how should these things progress?

There needs to be a clear vision and an implementation plan showing tangible benefits to people's lives. If this change is about societal benefits, it should not be driven by the Treasury, but rather by the transportation sector.

To create this plan, we must understand our 2050 targets, as well as how to achieve them without creating further social inequities. As an industry, we have access to a range of best-practice ideas, both in the U.K. and abroad. We can take the lessons learned from road pricing schemes, toll roads, congestion charging zones, and other measures to help shape a viable solution and implementation for kerbside.

We will also need to garner support from other stakeholders who can help us gain widespread buy-in. Alongside policymakers, we need to reach out to the private sector, including finance and insurance, because they can drive change through interest rates and insurance premiums.

Health bodies and economists can also lend strength to our proposals, as they can provide the data needed for a compelling argument of why kerbside management is required.



## Wider impacts on stakeholders (road users)

By creating a financial incentive for drivers to reduce road usage, road pricing can help reduce traffic congestion and improve the flow of vehicles, leading to more efficient kerbside management. It can provide benefits for residents, businesses, delivery companies, and commuters, all of whom rely on well-managed kerbsides for safe and accessible sidewalks, improved access to establishments, and efficient delivery times. Road pricing can also generate revenue that can be used to fund infrastructure improvements, such as upgrading kerbsides to accommodate new technologies, including electric vehicle charging stations. However, as previously said, we must carefully consider the impact of road pricing on different groups of stakeholders, such as low-income households who may be disproportionately affected by higher costs.

Road pricing can have wide-ranging impacts on kerbside management and its stakeholders, and it should be evaluated to ensure that its benefits are realised, and drawbacks are minimised. Adapting kerbside pricing strategies with road pricing should be dynamic, ever improving and changing case by case. It is utterly unrealistic to come up with a general strategy and implement it for the entire country. Every local authority would require a different kind of strategy and management for their kerbside.



The Author

**Mark Coates**

International Director of Public Policy and Advocacy

At Bentley Systems, Mark helps to inform and guide government, policymakers, business leaders, and decision-makers globally on the benefits of digital transformation.

A former quantity surveyor with an extensive background in global project delivery, Mark first began working in the construction sector 33 years ago. He has worked with Thames Water, United Utilities, ICI, Highways England, The Olympic Delivery Authority, and Crossrail.

For the past ten years, Mark has been working in digital transformation and has seen the great advances made in sectors by adopting digital ways of working. He has worked on numerous infrastructure projects, consulting asset owners and their advisors on technology adoption to attain better project results while being conscious of time, cost, and quality.

Mark is a Fellow of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation and recently served as vice-chairman and chairman of the British Water Forum for the last two years. Mark also serves on the Strategic Board of the UK's Digital Twin Hub and is a member of the Institute of Government and Public Policy's advisory board.