

Notice how San Francisco transportation officials prevailed upon USDOT to change from a congestion tax to increasing on-street parking prices. This raises a few questions:

- ▶ Anyone recall a report that including that proposal (“Value pricing for curbside parking”) as an alternative to the NYC Congestion Tax USDOT insisted NYC must impose to qualify for federal dollars?
- ▶ Is there a double standard at play?
- ▶ Did certain state and city transportation officials fall down on the job when it came to working out a deal because they drank the *koolaid* that only congestion taxers need apply for federal aid?

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/08/12/MNEK12982O.DTL&hw=congestion+pricing&sn=001&sc=1000>

San Francisco Chronicle (SFGate.com)

Golden Gate Bridge congestion toll plan dies

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Commuters no longer face the threat of a congestion-based toll on the Golden Gate Bridge, which could have pushed the cost of crossing the span to at least \$7.

But in its place, drivers parking at meters along the route to the bridge - including on Lombard Street and Van Ness Avenue - will face varying rates that rise during the busiest hours and are designed to increase turnover and push long-term parkers to lots and garages.

Transportation officials agreed Friday to kill the congestion toll, Jose Luis Moscovich, executive director of the San Francisco Transportation Authority, said Monday evening.

"The important news is that there will not be a congestion toll on the bridge," Moscovich said.

Federal transportation officials - who had been pushing for the congestion-pricing experiment - agreed to shift it from tolls on the Golden Gate Bridge and Doyle Drive approach to city parking charges after a month of discussions with Bay Area transportation officials, Moscovich said. (*emphasis added*)

The plan to charge a congestion toll in which tolls would increase during periods of heaviest traffic, on Doyle Drive or the bridge arose last August when the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded the Bay Area a \$158 million grant that included money to replace seismically unstable Doyle Drive, synchronize traffic signals, test variable parking charges and increase parking for ferry users. But in exchange, a congestion-based toll had to be levied on Doyle Drive or the bridge. Money raised would have been steered toward replacing the fragile bridge approach.

But Golden Gate Bridge District directors balked at that plan to fund the Doyle Drive replacement, saying congestion-based tolls would hit North Bay commuters hardest. They called it "a Marin commuter tax."

Eventually, bridge directors agreed to charge a congestion toll of \$1 during the morning and evening commutes and busy weekend hours. The extra revenue would go to the bridge district. But federal officials objected to the plan, saying the tolls were not high enough to dissuade many motorists from driving during the most congested hours.

After a series of meetings, regional officials became convinced that the U.S. Department of Transportation wanted tolls of at least \$7.

"It became clear eventually that the (federal government) wanted a much bolder pricing experiment than we here in the Bay Area were prepared to do," said Randy Rentschler, a spokesman with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

So San Francisco officials pitched the idea of moving the congestion pricing experiment - a top priority in the Bush administration - from tolls to parking charges. Federal officials agreed, and the issue became how much of the original \$158 million grant the Bay Area could keep.

The Bay Area's proposal calls for \$145 million in federal funds, with \$47 million for Doyle Drive reconstruction, \$20 million to set up the SF Park congestion-based parking program, \$13 million for regional ferry improvements, and \$58 million for the SF Go program to synchronize traffic signals along many of the city's busiest boulevards.

Moscovich said federal officials have agreed to everything but the traffic signal money. In their letter to Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, Bay Area officials pitched that program as an effective way to reduce congestion and attract more riders on public transportation.

Details of the parking plan, such as meter rates and how often they would be adjusted, have not yet been released. But Moscovich said they would be continuously adjusted, with the goal of reducing the number of cars circling an area in search of parking. It would also aim to increase parking space turnover so that more spaces would be available for shoppers and diners.

While the regional accord may satisfy North Bay commuters and federal officials, it still leaves the \$1.1 billion replacement project for Doyle Drive short by as much as \$470 million. But Moscovich said the regional cooperation on congestion pricing could lead to an agreement that will get Doyle Drive rebuilt.

"We're pretty close to a deal," he said, declining to offer details.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/08/12/MNEK12982O.DTL>

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