



EUROPRICE Initiative – Phase 2

Guidance Paper 2

Consultation with the Business Community

November 2002



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Guidance Paper, commissioned as part of Phase 2 of the EUROPrice Initiative, presents the findings of a study into consultation with the business community on road pricing projects. Drawing on the experience of the participating EUROPrice cities and the findings of relevant research literature, some guidelines are provided on how to conduct effective consultation with the business community. The paper also presents a summary of business community views towards the road pricing projects in each of the respective partner cities.

The study identified two central points for effective business community consultation:

- Establish an ongoing relationship with the business community
- Develop a mutually agreed, long-term strategy for future consultation activities

In addition to these two requirements, further suggestions have been provided to aid in the achievement of effective business community consultation. These include:

- Make use of existing representative organisations
- Build on the representativeness of existing organisations by establishing new bodies and by developing links with individual businesses
- Establish a single point of contact within local government
- Ensure that the business contact has sufficient seniority to represent the company
- Create different entry points for businesses at different levels of engagement
- Design engagement activities to accommodate business community schedules
- Present all information in an accurate, concise format
- Ensure that the consultation activities fulfil any legislative requirements

The consultation activities conducted in each partner city have provided valuable insight into the views of business community towards road pricing. It appears that businesses are concerned about congestion and there is widespread agreement that “something must be done” to address this. Road pricing is acknowledged as a potential solution, and receives some in-principle support. However, when actual road pricing schemes are discussed, the business community tends to be opposed, citing a number of significant concerns, including:

- Road pricing will add to the existing cost burden borne by companies
- Road pricing will reduce the competitiveness of businesses inside the charged area, with customers diverting to uncharged areas
- Suitable public transport alternatives will not be in place before charging starts
- All road pricing revenues will not be reinvested in transport improvements
- (Thus) exemptions are required to alleviate the negative impacts of road pricing

Despite these common concerns, EUROPrice partners have achieved some positive outcomes from their consultation work. Bristol has made a significant commitment to business community consultation, and has been rewarded with a high level of support for their project. Rome and Genoa have both been able to use their consultation work to address specific design issues, resulting in Rome’s coach management system and the provision of uncharged access to private car parks within Genoa’s charging area.

Clearly, effective consultation is essential if the concerns of the business community are to be understood and realistic solutions developed. Experience from the EUROPrice



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cities suggests that, with sufficient investment of resources and the use of appropriate consultation techniques, this can be achieved.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The EUROPrice Project

Cities throughout Europe are facing the increasingly serious problem of traffic congestion. The European Commission is aware that something needs to be done to address this problem, and sees the use of road pricing, as part of a package of transport improvements, as a potential solution. Despite strong theoretical potential, attempts at the implementation of urban pricing schemes¹) have usually been unsuccessful due to a failure to achieve the necessary public and political backing, and there are only very few examples of implemented projects worldwide.

The EUROPrice network was established in 1999 as a cross-national group of major cities, lead by Bristol City Council, all considering the implementation of road pricing initiatives. The objectives of the EUROPrice Initiative are:

- To undertake a series of joint studies addressing key issues involved in implementing road pricing schemes
- To develop a common position on road pricing in European cities.
- To inform and support the National and European policy debate on road pricing.
- To take a co-ordinated approach to demonstration and research in road pricing.
- To disseminate the experience gained to other cities in Europe who are considering road pricing in order to speed up the process of wider implementation

Phase 1 of the EUROPrice project involved seven cities (Bristol, Belfast, Copenhagen, Edinburgh, Genoa, Rome, Trondheim), with three technical papers being produced:

- Technical Paper 1 – Current status and policy objectives of road pricing initiatives
- Technical Paper 2 – Policy Issues faced by EUROPrice cities
- Technical Paper 3 – External Stakeholders

Phase 2 of the project aims to build on the work undertaken in Phase 1, focussing on public and political acceptability aspects of road pricing. Participating cities include Amsterdam, Belfast, Bristol, Edinburgh, Genoa, Leeds and Rome. Five guidance papers were commissioned as part of this phase:

- Guidance Paper 1 – Marketing Controversial Issues
- Guidance Paper 2 – Consultation with the Business Community
- Guidance Paper 3 – Technological and Operational Issues
- Guidance Paper 4 – Complementary Measures
- Guidance Paper 5 – The Development of a Successful Organisational Framework

¹ In this paper, the terms road pricing, congestion charging, area pricing, etc are all used to describe the policy instrument whereby vehicles are required to pay a fee in order to gain access to certain urban areas at certain times of day. Therefore, these different terms all have essentially the same meaning, and are employed in order to retain consistency with the local terminology.



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This paper presents the findings of the study into effective consultation with the business community (Guidance Paper 2).



1.2 Guidance Paper 2 – Consultation with the Business Community

The business community is a key stakeholder group in any major city, with obvious importance to the economic viability and prosperity of its inhabitants. Obtaining the support of this group is essential if a road pricing scheme is to be implemented. However, this group is often one of the most opposed to road pricing measures. Effective consultation is clearly essential if business community concerns are to be identified and addressed, but it has often proved difficult to engage this group and draw it into an effective dialogue.

This paper looks at the issues surrounding effective business community consultation, drawing on the experience of each partner city and also on the body of research literature.

The objectives of the paper are as follows:

- (i) To provide a set of guidelines for consultation with the business community
- (ii) To provide a summary of the each partner city's experience of business consultation, including accounts of business community views in each city and a discussion of how these views have been considered.

1.3 Partner City Input

Inputs from EUROPRICE partner cities have been obtained from two sources. At the Rome meeting in April 2002, a short questionnaire was distributed to representatives from each partner city, asking for summary information on business consultation. In June 2002, at the Amsterdam meeting, an additional request was made for each partner to submit a short paper on business consultation activities, to be used in the production of the final guidance paper.

All seven cities responded to the April survey, but Amsterdam was unable to provide a paper due to the relocation of key personnel. Therefore, this paper includes input from Belfast, Bristol, Edinburgh, Genoa, Leeds and Rome.

1.4 Guidance Paper Structure

This paper is structured around six different aspects of business community consultation:

- Developing a consultation strategy
- Defining the business community
- Making contact
- Information dissemination
- Obtaining business community views
- Incorporating business community views



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Each of the above aspects is covered in a separate chapter.



2. DEVELOPING A CONSULTATION STRATEGY

2.1 Research Experience

Research has shown that developing a strategy for business community consultation can greatly enhance the achievement of effective consultation. Defining a strategy allows the following benefits to be realised:

(i) *Developing a **relationship** with the business community*

Forming an ongoing relationship is the most successful way of ensuring that businesses are effectively involved in the decision making process. Many businesses tend to view local government with a fair degree of suspicion, while others simply do not understand local government's role and how it affects the running of their own business. Forming an ongoing relationship allows the crucial element of **trust** to develop, ideally leading to a mutually beneficial relationship.

(ii) *Setting out a clear vision and set of objectives for future engagement*

A major reason why the business community is often reluctant to become involved in decision-making processes is that they simply do not regard it as an efficient use of their **time**. Often businesses do accept invitations to participate, only to find that little has been achieved, and are left feeling that their time has been wasted. Defining a clear set of objectives allows the business community to see what their participation is intended to achieve, and allows them to gauge the level of involvement that may be required. Such objectives can include:

- Developing a shared agenda and vision for engagement
- Defining the scope and nature of the engagement that is acceptable to both parties
- Highlighting current problems and how they can be addressed
- Defining clearly the objectives of the process
- Defining the timescale for the achieving these objectives
- Outlining and evaluating current links

Despite these benefits, producing a strategy does not appear to be a high priority for local government organisations seeking business community participation in pricing projects. In many cases it seems that many local authorities prefer to conduct “one-off” consultations, in direct relation to major events such as Local Transport Strategy development. A recent survey in the United Kingdom showed that less than half of local authorities had a corporate strategy for developing links with the business community (41%) (York Consulting, 2000ii). Even fewer stated that they had strategies related to consultation (28%) and information dissemination (22%). Clearly, the risk in these cases is that the business community will sense their participation as more of a statutory requirement than a genuine wish for engagement, and will act accordingly.



2.2 Edinburgh

Edinburgh has developed a strategy to cover consultation with a wide range of stakeholder groups, including the business community. The broad objectives of this strategy are as follows:

- To reflect a spirit of partnership between the Council and major city stakeholders
- To achieve consensus on the configuration of the city’s future transport strategy
- To ensure that the future programme of events is clearly focussed with relevant outcomes
- To maximise the feeling of “ownership” of future transport proposals within the stakeholder groups

A two-tier strategy was proposed in order to address these objectives, consisting of:

- (i) *The reconvening of the **Transport Advisory Panel (TAP)** at the strategic level.*
This panel is composed of a small number of senior representatives from the business community. The objectives of this panel are to provide the Council with a business view on its developing transport proposals, and to comment on the perceived impacts of the proposals on local businesses. The panel also advises on future consultation activities with stakeholder groups and assists in disseminating information from the Council to their own business networks. Meetings are held approximately every six months, as well as additional meetings at key stages in the transport strategy design process. A timetable of major project milestones was drawn up to allow important panel meeting dates to be arranged.
- (ii) *A series of **Stakeholder Sub-Groups** forming a second tier of engagement*
Below the strategic level TAP, it was proposed to establish a range of special interest stakeholder sub-groups covering the following areas of the business community:
 - Financial and professional services
 - The retail sector
 - Education
 - Manufacturing and distribution
 - Transport operators and providers
 - Social services, health care and public utilities
 - Tourism, leisure and recreation
 - Heritage, environmental and other interest groups

It was envisaged that each sub-group would meet to form a view on issues specific to their groups activities, and relay these issues to the TAP. Additionally, all the outcomes of the TAP meetings would be relayed back to the stakeholder sub-groups for comment. This two-way dialogue would be achieved through appointing one or two representatives from each sub-group to sit on the TAP. It was envisaged that these sub-groups could utilise existing associations or already established working groups.



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2.3 Rome

Rome has adopted a phased approach to consultation of both the general public and the business community, involving a panel survey approach defined in relation to key project milestones. The business community input has been addressed through obtaining a panel sample of 100 to 200 members from the following areas:

- Restaurants and hotels
- Artisans
- Retail sales

Surveys are planned in three discrete phases:

- Phase I - Before implementation of access control system
- Phase II - Before introduction of road pricing scheme
- Phase III - Following the introduction of the road pricing scheme

This panel survey approach is designed to obtain relevant information from the business community to feed into each stage of project development. Changes in business community views as the project develops can also be assessed.

2.4 Summary

There are a variety of potential benefits associated with the production of a strategy for business community engagement. A well developed strategy has the ability to give a sense of structure and overall purpose to future consultation activities, allowing the potential consultees to see exactly what the objectives of the engagement are, and what is expected from both sides. Furthermore, creating such a framework allows the business community to feel that they are being invited to participate in an ongoing, mutually beneficial relationship with local government. Developing trust is crucial when considering an issue with such a potentially large impact on business interests as road user charging. The business community needs to be able to trust that its concerns will be acknowledged and taken into account in the project design.



3. DEFINING THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

3.1 Introduction

One primary task to be addressed by local government seeking business community involvement is to first define the group they wish to engage. The business community is a difficult group to define; some types of organisation are obvious members, while the inclusion of others can depend on the definition used. This section looks at the different definitions that have been used by EUROPRICE partners.

3.2 Rome

Rome has divided the range of possible stakeholder groups into four categories as follows:

TABLE 3.1 – Definition of Stakeholder Groups in Rome

Transport Sector	Economic Sector	Social Sector	Environmental Sector
– Collective transport organisations	– Retailers’ organisations	– Civic society (interest groups)	– Environmental NGOs
– Private transport organisations	– Trade unions	– Hospitals	– Environmental organisations
– Freight transport industry	– Chambers of commerce	– National ministries: Public Works, Labour, Public Education	
– Cycling and pedestrian organisations	– Manufacturing organisations		
	– Leisure/ tourism-related organisations		

From Table 3.1, it can be seen that the business community has been defined as organisations making up the economic sector. In this case, the economic sector has been defined largely through representative organisations such as chambers of commerce and trade unions. Under this definition, the commercial organisations such as the freight industry have been separated into their own stakeholder group (the Transport Sector).

3.3 Genoa

Genoa decided at an early stage in the project to have separate consultations with different types of stakeholder group. Three broad categories were defined:

TABLE 3.2 - Definition of Stakeholder Groups in Genoa

Politicians	Economic Sector	Environmental Associations
– Representatives of the majority parties in the city council	– Representatives of the economic and commercial operators	– Representatives of environmental associations
– Chairmen of the Genoa districts	– Chamber of Commerce	
	– Associations of dealers forwarding agents and	



- taxi drivers
- Private parking companies

Table 3.2 shows that, in Genoa, the business community was generally defined by the “economic sector” term. Organisations included within this definition included representative organisations like the Chamber of Commerce, as well as individual organisations such as taxi drivers and private parking companies.

Thus, in contrast to the definition used in Rome, Genoa has included organisations involved in transport provision within its definition of the business community.

3.3 Belfast

The Belfast partners noted that it is not an easy task to separate the business community from other groups, and that in some cases it may not be practicable to do so. However, three consultee groups were defined by the Core Project Team for the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) consultation, based on categories from the European Social Partnership Model.

TABLE 3.3 - Definition of Stakeholder Groups in Belfast

Government Bodies	Business Sector	Voluntary / Community Sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Central and local government boards – Non-departmental public bodies – Public corporations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Umbrella” representative organisations, including the Confederation of British Industry, Institute of Directors and Trade Union bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Established voluntary organisations – Registered community associations and groups

Source: 'Delivering a Regional Transportation Strategy – Consultation Process Interim Report', Department for Regional Development Northern Ireland, 2001.

In Belfast, it can be seen that the membership of representative organisations has been used as the criteria for defining the business community. However, a number of individual businesses were consulted as part of the RTS consultation.

3.4 Bristol

Bristol has a range of stakeholders involved in the development of its local transport strategy. Representatives from these organisations form the Transport Plan Commission, who will be key consultees in the development of the road user charging scheme design. These organisations have been divided into the following groupings:

Transport Users & Voluntary Sector

- Bristol Transport User Group (BTUG)
- Transport 2000
- Bristol Dial-a-Ride

Business



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- Bristol Chamber of Commerce (BCCI)
- RAC (Royal Automobile Club)

Health

- Avon Health Authority

Education

- University of Bristol

Police

- Chief Inspector (Traffic), Avon & Somerset Constabulary

Public Transport Operators

- First Group

Trade Unions

- Transport & General Workers Union

Thus, in Bristol, the business community has been separated from other commercially related organisations such as public transport operators and trade unions. However, the RAC, a transport related business, has been included as a member of the business community in this case.

3.5 EUroPrice Phase I - Technical Paper 3 – External Stakeholders

In this study, the business community was not directly defined, but the broad spectrum of stakeholder groups were divided into two categories; those with a direct interest in road pricing and those with an indirect interest in road pricing (City of Edinburgh Council, 2000i). The definition used here placed some potential elements of the business community, including the retail sector, leisure/tourist organisations and employers in the direct interest group, while other business related organisations such as manufacturing, trade unions, chambers of commerce and financial institutions were judged to have an indirect interest.

3.6 Summary

The above analysis has shown that while each featured partner city has adopted a slightly different approach to business sector definition, there are some consistencies in each city's approach. In most cases, the basic definition has been that the organisation is engaged in some form of economic activity. Furthermore, the common approach has been to define the business community through representative organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, with membership of these organisations resulting in business community status.

The above analysis has also shown that one area of differing opinion is whether commercial organisations in the transportation industry should be included within the business community, or whether they should be separated into their own group. The



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definition used in Genoa included transport based firms like taxi drivers and parking companies, while in Rome the transport sector was separated into its own group.



4. MAKING CONTACT

4.1 Introduction

Making initial contact with businesses is the first barrier to effective engagement. A correct approach to achieving contact in the first instance can set a positive tone for future engagement. This section presents some of the issues involved in making contact, drawing on the experience of different partner cities and from research literature.

4.2 Use Existing Representative Organisations

Most urban areas have a number of established organisations representing different aspects of the business community. Engaging these organisations is a useful way to gain access to a potentially large number of member businesses, and these representative bodies provide an obvious link between businesses and local government.

Bristol has made use of a wide range of existing representative organisations to engage with businesses, including:

- The Bristol Chamber of Commerce
- Regional Development Agency
- Freight Transport Association
- Road Haulage Association
- Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
- British Retail Consortium
- Association of Town Centre Managers
- Property Agents Association
- Broadmead Board (main shopping centre)

Through such organisations, local government can obtain member contact information and then approach individual organisations directly. The representative organisation may also be able to provide the most suitable person within each business to contact.

4.3 Build on the Representativeness of Existing Organisations

Even the larger representative organisations only represent a minority of the businesses in each local authority area. Furthermore, the membership of such organisations tends to be made up of the larger organisations, with sufficient resources to commit senior personnel to such external activities. Thus, certain parts of the business community tend to be under-represented with smaller businesses often unable participate. This situation can be addresses in a number of ways:

- Help the existing representative organisations to boost their own membership
- Establish new bodies to relate more directly to specific projects
- Develop links with key individual businesses



- Consider other contact information sources such as Business Registers and commercial listings such as the “Yellow Pages”

Often local authorities have their own lists of business contacts that can be added to the membership of existing organisations, or used to form new bodies. Developing links with individual businesses can allow more specific issues to be addressed, and can make it possible to obtain the views of hard-to-reach businesses who do not have the resources to make personnel available on a regular basis.

In Bristol, the Transport Plan Commission has been formed specifically to provide input into the development of Bristol’s Transport Plan. The Transport Plan Commission comprises representatives from business, road user groups, academia, health, police, public transport operators, trade unions, transport users and the voluntary sector. The views of local employers have been obtained through the establishment of the Travel Plan Forum and Temple Quay Employers Group, while freight industry input has been achieved through the development of the Freight Quality Partnership.

4.4 Establish a single point of contact within local government

Many business groups are discouraged from becoming involved in consultation activities by the complexities of the local government organisation. One way to keep communication simple is to provide each individual business with one official responsible for their contact with the local government. This can also allow a personal rapport to develop (York Consulting, 2000i).

4.5 Ensure that the business contact has sufficient seniority within the company

It is important that the representatives of individual businesses are aware of the company’s stance on the issues under consideration. Thus, it is usually good practise to seek a more senior figure within the company. A major problem with mail-out style consultations is that the consultation document is often not addressed to a senior figure in the company. Thus, the document is often completed by a less senior member of staff, without the necessary knowledge of the company’s stance on the issues under consideration.

4.6 Avoid “one-off” Consultations

The methods discussed above all relate to the principle that the basis of engagement with individual businesses should be established before any consultation activities are undertaken. Mass mail-outs related to specific consultation events tend to receive very low rates of response as businesses sense that the exercise is part of a statutory requirement. Responses to this kind of unsolicited activity can be unrepresentative and are often hostile (York Consulting, 2000i).



4.7 Create different entry points for businesses at different engagement levels

The results of a recent survey of business perceptions of local government have shown that a shortage of *time* is one of the major difficulties in getting businesses involved in ongoing consultation activities (York Consulting, 2000i). Often, businesses wish to be involved, but cannot afford the time required for full panel style participation. Arrangements can be made, such as a mail-out newsletters or one-to-one meetings, so that these business can stay involved at a level they are comfortable with.

4.8 Plan engagement activities to fit business community schedules

The tight schedule in the business world means that business personnel can find it difficult to commit their time during normal working hours. Thus, it may be necessary to schedule engagement activities outside these times.

In Edinburgh, a brainstorming style “Breakfast Meeting” was held in October 2001 between City of Edinburgh Council officials and a cross-section of local business community representatives to discuss the reformation of the Transport Advisory Panel. This meeting was conducted informally between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., and incorporated the serving of breakfast to participants. There was a good attendance at this meeting, which was largely attributed to its innovative scheduling.



5. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Keeping the business community informed as the project develops is a key aspect of the engagement process. The informing process includes distributing information on developing proposals such as Local Transport Plans, as well as informing consultees of the outcomes of completed consultation exercises. Where possible, attempts should be made to disseminate information within the context of existing working relationships. A number of different dissemination methods are described below, along with examples from partner cities.

5.1 Mail-out Newsletters / Leaflets

Sending out newsletters or information leaflets to inform the business community of project status can be an effective information dissemination tool. Effectiveness is dependant on the coverage of the publication, and whether the newsletter can be addressed to a specific member of the senior staff.

The Edinburgh Outlook magazine has been used frequently as the vehicle for informing the city's public and business community of the development of the New Transport Initiative. The Outlook publication is distributed quarterly to every household and business address in the city (some 200,000 addresses), thus ensuring a high level of population coverage. In terms of consultation activities, Outlook has been used to publicise the major consultation activities, such as the Local Transport Strategy consultation, and has also been used to inform the population of the major outcomes of these events.

5.2 Meetings

Holding meetings with business representatives seems to be a popular form of information dissemination, and has the added advantage of being able to obtain direct feedback on the information presented. Arranging meetings is much more straightforward when conducted through an existing panel of business people, but can also be conducted with a wider range of businesses at important stages of project development.

In Belfast, meetings were held with 77 stakeholder groups as part of the Regional Transport Strategy development between January and April 2001. In Genoa, meetings were held in 2000 specifically to explain the road pricing project to representatives of economic and commercial operators and representatives of private parking companies. In Edinburgh, six monthly meetings of the Transport Advisory Panel are used to keep the panel informed of project development.

5.3 Conferences / Exhibitions



Holding conferences or exhibitions are another way of facilitating large scale information dissemination. Conferences have been used by partner cities to raise the profile of respective projects at key points in project development, allowing the information to be disseminated to a large audience of participants and the wider population through the media.

Bristol has hosted a number of such events, including:

- A Travel Plan Conference in June 1999, supported by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
- A major national transport conference “Moving On” in October 2001, which included a session on road pricing

Belfast also organised a Consultation Conference in September 2001 as part of further consultation on the Regional Transportation Strategy.

Clearly, such events raise the profile of the local authority within the city and provide an opportunity for a wide range of businesses to find out about the proposals, either through conference attendance or through the accompanying media coverage. Interested organisations should then be able to make contact with the local authority to continue their involvement.

5.4 Publications / Newspaper Editorials

Publications can be useful in informing businesses (as well as the general public) of the project development “story so far”, including the key decisions that have been taken and the issues that still need to be resolved. A number of local authorities have produced consultation documents as part of Local Transport Plan development, so that consultees can comment on how the strategies are taking shape. Bristol produced “Towards the Bristol Transport Plan” in January 1999, while Belfast issued “Developing a Regional Transportation Strategy – A Consultation Paper” to 700 stakeholder groups in January 2001. Clearly, such publications have allowed consultees to understand exactly where the design process has reached, allowing informed comment before any policy documents are finalised.

Newspaper editorials are also a useful way of informing the population at large (including business groups) of significant events. Exposure of certain topics can help fuel debate on important issues and help to address common misconceptions about pricing projects. Figure 5.1 on the next page provides an example from Bristol of how newspaper editorials can be used to disseminate information on business community views.

5.4 Internet / Television / Radio

As members of the population-at-large, the business community can also be reached through mass media such as the internet, television and radio. The internet is useful in providing up to date information on project development, while television and radio broadcasting is useful when publicising major consultation events.



5.5 Information Presentation

The business community does not have time to extract relevant information from lengthy reports. Consultation material needs to be presented in an accessible manner. Local authorities should evaluate distributed information based on the following guidelines (York Consulting, 2000i):

- Materials should be assessed for clarity, conciseness, accuracy and quality
- The information should be tailored towards business community interests.

MPs hear councillor's case for charging drivers

SHOPS 'WILL NOT FIGHT ROAD TOLLS'

RETAILERS in Broadmead will not fight plans to charge motorists to drive into the centre of Bristol, a leading city councillor has insisted.

Helen Holland, executive member for transport, staunchly defended the Labour-run council's proposals in evidence to a sub-committee of MPs at Westminster.

Councillor Holland admitted it would be going too far to say Broadmead's manager "warmly welcomed" the idea of tolls between the hours of 7am and 11am.

But she insisted shopkeepers understood why the city council believed it had no option, if chronic traffic congestion was to be cut.

And she promised the scheme would target commuters heading into the city in the early morning, rather than shoppers or shop staff.

She said: "Retailers acknowledge that we are trying to address the problems we have got, which is a commuting problem at peak hours."

"Most people don't set off at 8am to go shopping in the city centre and the people who work in the shops, regrettably on low wages, use public transport anyway."

"The Broadmead manager is fully conversant with our plans. I wouldn't say he warmly welcomes

by **ROB MERRICK**
Parliamentary Correspondent

them, but he understands what we are trying to do."

Under the city council's plans, motorists would be charged £1-2 to drive through any of 14 pay-as-you-enter gates around Broadmead between 7am and 11am.

But the council has pledged the tolls will not be introduced until the Supertram is operating – ruling them out until at least 2008.

Councillor Holland was responding to Christopher Grayling, Tory MP for Epsom, who claimed that retailers opposed any curbs on drivers, such as pedestrianisation.

She said that, far from opposing areas shut off to traffic, retailers were "clamouring" for them.

Councillor Holland and Richard Rawlinson, head of traffic and transport, were giving evidence to the sub-committee as part of its inquiry into the Government's 10-year transport plan.

They estimate that – even with tolls and the Supertram in place – congestion in central Bristol would be cut by only seven per cent between 2010 and 2015.

rmerrick@centralpress.co.uk



Tolls move: Transport chief Helen Holland, right, defended proposals to charge motorists for driving into the city centre

FIGURE 5.1 – Newspaper Editorials as an Information Dissemination Method in Bristol



6. OBTAINING BUSINESS COMMUNITY VIEWS

The overall objective of any consultation work is to gain an understanding of the views of the consulted group. EUROPRICE partners have used a variety of methods for obtaining business community views, as discussed in previous sections. This section presents a summary of the business community views in each partner city.

6.1 Belfast

The consultation carried out for the development of the Regional Transportation Strategy provided the opportunity to assess business community views towards the principle of a road user charging scheme in Belfast.

Consulted groups were asked if they thought that further funds (over and above existing Government funding) should be raised to improve transportation infrastructure and services. Eighty-one groups responded to this part of the consultation exercise, of which 8 were categorised as part of this business community. Only one of the business responses thought that no additional funding should be raised.

Of the potential funding sources mentioned, road user charging in Belfast was one of the most supported options, along with raising funds through tolling new roads, with both these options receiving support from three of the eight consulted businesses. However, the business community was considerably less supportive of road user charging than the other consulted groups, with over 60% of the consulted government bodies and voluntary/community groups supporting this option.

The consultation also found that business were even less supportive of raising additional funding from increased developers' contributions, although this option received the highest support from the other groups.

Other issues raised by the business community included the fact that charging may reduce the number of people coming to the city, thus impacting negatively on city businesses. If the charges were seen as an additional tax, businesses may decide to locate elsewhere, undermining commercial viability, civic regeneration and development.

6.2 Bristol

Bristol regards businesses as an integral part its transport strategy. Extensive consultation with the business community has been carried out over a number of years, with views being obtained using a wide variety of techniques.

The Bristol Traffic Restraint Study (Stage 2) was conducted in 1997, investigating the traffic impacts of different restraint measures such as road pricing, parking restraint and fuel price increases. An in-depth survey of 200 businesses found that businesses did not envisage much difficulty in adapting to a road pricing scheme featuring a maximum £2



charge level. Businesses did not expect to have to relocate as a direct consequence, but such a scheme could influence businesses considering relocations for other reasons.

In 1999, Bristol City Council published a consultation document titled “Towards the Bristol Transport Plan”. This document provided the core material for the most extensive consultation exercise ever conducted by the Council. The business community was consulted initially through a series of specialist meetings, which was followed by the general distribution of 5,000 questionnaires. The consultation process was concluded with a number of hearings before the Transport Plan Commission, which is made up of a cross-section of city interests including the business sector.

Having produced its Transport Strategy, consultation activities have continued on a number of topic themes and key elements of implementation. These activities have been based around discussions with a number of business related groups including:

- Bristol Chamber of Commerce
(In 2000, BCCI published a 12-point strategy, which expressed support for the introduction of road pricing)
- Travel Plan Forum (a local employers forum)
- Freight Quality Partnership
- Property Agents Association
- Temple Quay Employers Group
- The Broadmead Board (representing the main shopping centre)
- Bristol Tourism and Conference Bureau
- A number of other individual organisations within the retail and employment sectors

Engagement with these bodies has allowed Bristol City Council to achieve a continuous dialogue with the business community, structuring regular meetings around key events in the project.

Further input from the business community has been obtained through surveys conducted by business representative organisations. These include:

(i) *The Burgess Salmon Index (1999)*

This survey of senior business managers in the Greater Bristol area found a high level of agreement that congestion problems were primarily associated with “rush hours”, creating constant problems of heavy congestion in both the central and outer areas, with additional pressures on city centre parking. The survey found that 76 percent of respondents would be supportive of road pricing implementation if good quality, reliable public transport were in place.

(ii) *The Estate Agents Gazette Survey (1999)*

- This survey was conducted independently from the Council, and found that:
- 74% of respondents felt that road pricing would reduce traffic in the city
 - 21% of those who drove would not do so if a £5 per day charge were introduced
 - 18 % would consider cycling to work



A further source of business community views has been a study commissioned by the Charging Development Partnership and the British Retail Consortium into the impacts of road user charging on the retail industry. This study found that the retail sector was primarily concerned that charging implementation would result in less trips into the city, and that the public transport improvements would not be in place before charging implementation. Further concerns centred on the impacts of the scheme on turnover, property values and goods delivery.

Extensive consultation has allowed Bristol to obtain a good understanding of business community views and concerns with regard to road pricing implementation. It appears that the business community would be supportive of road pricing providing the following points are addressed:

- A high quality public transport system is put in place before pricing implementation
- Car travel into the city is faster following pricing implementation
- All charging revenue is reinvested in transport

The business community is strongly opposed to the introduction of workplace parking charges, as they feel that it would be unfair for them to bear all the costs of transport infrastructure improvement. It appears that the efforts of the Council to engage the business community have aided in the achievement of high levels of support for road user charging.

6.3 Edinburgh

In Edinburgh, business community views have been sought through regular meetings of the Transport Advisory Panel (TAP). As with other stakeholders, the business community has also been consulted at major stages in the development of the New Transport Initiative, generally in parallel with the public consultation activities.

Local Transport Strategy Consultation - “Edinburgh’s Transport Choices” - 1999

This exercise was conducted as part of development of the Local Transport Strategy in 1999, and aimed to obtain public and stakeholder opinion on three broad options for the basis of a future transport strategy. As part of the reporting of this consultation exercise, the TAP was asked to provide a formal statement of views towards the Local Transport Strategy. This statement was generally supportive of the Council’s proposed strategy, and endorsed the need for major improvement in the city’s transport system. The panel recognised that new sources of additional funding were required to make such improvements, and that the improvements should focus on providing realistic alternatives to the private car. However, the panel stated that it could only support the introduction of road user charging if the following criteria were addressed (City of Edinburgh Council, 2000ii):

- The charges are part of a coherent package of measures
- The revenue is used only for transport improvements
- The charges are flexible, varying over the day in relation to changing traffic levels
- The charges do not reduce accessibility in the city



The panel also stated its opposition to workplace parking charging as this would undermine the local economy and add a further cost burden onto businesses.

Edinburgh's Chamber of Commerce also provided a formal statement to this consultation, which was largely consistent with the above TAP statement. The Chamber of Commerce also stated that the charges should be targeted at day commuters, not tourists or businesses, that businesses and residents in the charged area should receive a full exemption and that charges should not be applied at business parks or out-of-town developments.

Further concerns were raised that road user charging would result in business being lost to other competing centres, with this being a particularly strong concern of retailers (City of Edinburgh Council, 2000ii).

Business Stakeholder Survey - 2001

A business stakeholder survey was conducted in 2001 as part of a regional market research exercise. The questionnaire presented a range of six different congestion charging based transport strategies, in addition to an option without a congestion charging scheme. The survey was sent to each member of the TAP via email, with 18 responses received from a total of 40 email recipients. The survey found that there was general agreement that traffic congestion in the city would get worse and needed to be reduced, and that substantial public transport improvements were required. The survey also found that respondents were supportive of congestion charging, with all but one of the charging based options receiving more support and less opposition than the no-charging option. As with the public responses, it was found that the options involving the lowest possible charge level (£1) received the most support. However, a difference in public and business views was observed on the issue of daily charging periods, with the business sample being much more keen to minimise the length of the charging periods, and was thus much more supportive of charging in the AM Peak only (Cain and Jones, 2002i).

Consultation on Edinburgh's New Transport Initiative - "Have Your Say" - 2002

This exercise was conducted in summer 2002 and was open to any individual or organisation in the south-east of Scotland that wished to respond. The exercise presented three transport strategy options; two involving different types of congestion charging schemes and one option based on a continuation of existing funding levels. The consultation leaflet included a section for people responding on behalf of organisations, with the categories provided including commercial organisations such as financial/business and wholesale/retail, as well as non-commercial organisations like charity/interest groups (Cain and Jones, 2002ii).

There were a total of 1698 organisation responses to the consultation questionnaire, with 1256 coming from Edinburgh and 442 from outside the city. However, it was found that the majority of these respondents had also completed the individual section of the questionnaire, and there were only 266 responses from people who had only responded on behalf of an organisation. It is thought that the 266 responses are more likely to be representative of organisation views. Considering these "organisation only" responses, the business sector (such as the finance/business category and the



wholesale/retail category) were found to be less supportive of congestion charging than other organisations and less supportive than the public sample (Cain and Jones, 2002ii).

Organisation respondents were also able to provide additional comments along with their questionnaire responses. Commonly made comments included:

- “Charging will discourage commercial activity / push businesses outside of Edinburgh”
- “People will be discouraged from going into Edinburgh / will become a ghost town”

Another frequently cited comment involved the need for additional exemption categories, suggesting that these respondents feel that their organisations should receive exemptions to the charge.

In summary, Edinburgh has conducted a considerable amount of consultation with the business community, primarily through its Transport Advisory Panel and through major consultation exercises. The business community recognise that something needs to be done to reduce congestion and substantially improve public transport, and that road user charging may be a way to achieve these goals. However, there is still significant opposition from certain sections of the business community, notably the retail sector, who are concerned that business will be lost to other competing centres outside the charged area. There is also a strong feeling here that the business community should receive exemptions to the charge in order to preserve the viability of the local economy.

6.4 Genoa

In Genoa, a series of informal meetings were conducted with business community groups including the Chamber of Commerce, Associations of Dealers, forwarding agents and taxi drivers. The meetings were used both to explain the details of the demonstration scheme and to obtain feedback on the proposals. Discussions also focussed on the charges that would be applied and possible exemption categories.

The business community were found to be the most unsupportive of all the groups towards the project. Retailers were very concerned about losing business to out-of-town shopping centres and other large commercial centres, which are mainly located in peripheral areas with easy accessibility and parking. Freight transport operators are generally supportive of the scheme, but are keen to obtain exemptions to the charge. Overall, a general distrust of the local authority was observed from the business community, which will have to be overcome if the project is to be successfully implemented.

Owners of the private car parks were very concerned that the scheme would impact on access to their facilities. They requested an integrated fare policy for the road pricing and parking fares. The design solution reached by the Municipality to address this request is discussed in section 7.1.

6.5 Leeds



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Specific consultation on congestion charging has not taken place in Leeds. However, some business community views have been obtained through:

- Local Transport Plan consultation
- The Vision for Leeds consultation
- The Integrated Transport Forum (a group of public and private sector stakeholders)
- Research linked to the DIRECTS project.

Consultation to date has shown that there is very limited support from the business community for congestion charging, freight transport operators being more supportive than the retail sector.

The Chamber of Commerce supported the Council's successful bid to host the UK Governments DIRECTS trial of road charging technology.



6.6 Rome

Rome's business community consultation has focussed on obtaining the views of shopkeepers in the Limited Traffic Zone and business operators in the surrounding areas. A panel survey approach has been adopted to allow business views to be tracked over the duration of project development.

When questioned on the significance of different transport issues, shopkeepers were found to view air pollution as the greatest concern (92.5%). Other concerns included noise pollution (91%), energy consumption (88.5%), traffic congestion (86%), visual impact (77%) and road accidents (55.5%).

It was also found that the shopkeepers held a slightly different view than the public towards different traffic restraint options. The shopkeepers were more supportive of a major control on access (83%), leading to pedestrianisation of the central area of the city (75%), but were less supportive of measures that would lead to a reduction in the number of circulating vehicles.

Following the introduction of the electronic Access Control System in October 2001, further surveys of retailer opinions were conducted. Shopkeepers thought that the new electronic access points were "a good idea" and 53% accepted the scheme. However, when asked about the effect of the scheme on commercial activity, only 26.5% saw it as having a positive effect. Sixty seven % of retailers agree with the implementation of future road pricing policies (CUPID, 2002).

More specific consultation with the Consortium of Local Tourism Operators has also been carried out to allow tourist coaches to pass into the access controlled area, but also to improve the coach circulation and parking within the controlled area. This consultation outcome is discussed in section 7.2.

6.7 Fulfilling Legislative Requirements

In many cases, obtaining the views of the business community is not merely an option for local government to consider, but a legislative requirement.

The legislation governing the introduction of road pricing schemes in the United Kingdom (the Transport Act 2000 and the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001) includes specific requirements for consultation with those likely to be affected, including the business community. The input from Bristol noted that the preparation of the formal scheme orders requires representation from various business-related organisations including the local Regional Development Agency, the local branch and national headquarters of the Freight Transport Association, Road Haulage Association, Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the British Chamber of Commerce, the British Retail Consortium and Association of Town Centre Managers.

In Rome, the legislation governing the implementation of the Access Control System has been in place since 1992 (National Act 122/89). The basis of the system has been in place since 1994 and the new electronic Access Control System is simply an automated



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version of this existing system. Thus, there is no specific legislative requirement to consult with any stakeholder groups on this new system.

7. INCORPORATING BUSINESS COMMUNITY VIEWS

The previous section discussed the views of the business community in each partner city. This section provides examples of how these views have been taken into account in each project design. In many of the partner cities, the project is still at the strategic design stage, and these projects are therefore not detailed enough to incorporate specific business community concerns. This section focuses on the instances where an understanding of business community views has resulted in specific project design amendments.

7.1 Genoa

In Genoa, the owners of car parks within proposed charging area were concerned that charging implementation would impact on the ability of car drivers to access their facilities. Their initial request was for the city access charges and parking charges to be combined using an integrated ticketing scheme. However, this was not feasible within the project timescale, so it was decided to design the access controlled area such that it was possible to reach the car parks without having to pay an access charge. This solution is only temporary, however, and as the scheme is enlarged it will be necessary to implement the integrated ticketing system.

7.2 Rome

Rome's central area is heavily reliant on its tourism industry, with a large number of tourist coaches driving into the city. Thus, it was necessary to incorporate a coach management system into the design of the electronic Access Control System. This system was designed through consultation with the Consortium of Local Tourism Operators, who represent the tourist coach operators and manage the system. This design divided the city into two Limited Traffic Zones; ZTL1 and ZTL2, as shown in Figure 7.1 below:

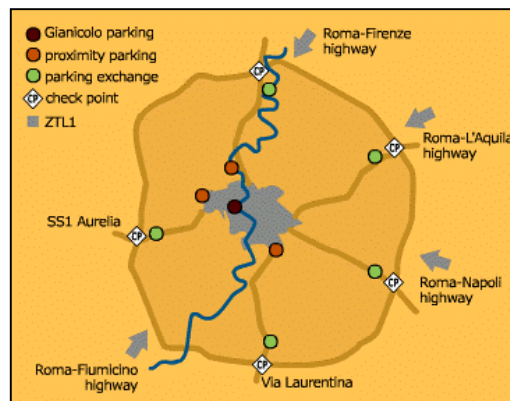


FIGURE 7.1 - Rome's Limited Traffic Zones



Tourist coach access was controlled using a series of different access permits, each allowing access into different areas of the city and permitting different kinds of behaviour once inside the controlled area. Examples of the different type of permits are provided below:



FIGURE 7.2 – Access Control Permits

The coach management system works by only allowing coaches to access the city via five check points around the Rome City Ring Road (see Figure 7.2). At the checkpoint, each bus has to stop and register for one of the available permits, before proceeding into the access controlled area.

7.3 Incorporation of business community views in other cities

The above examples have focussed on specific outcomes of business community consultation. Business consultation in other partner cities has also had a significant effect on their respective projects, but at a more strategic level. These types of influence are discussed here.

The Edinburgh project is still at the strategic design stage, and is therefore not yet at the stage of incorporating specific business community concerns. However, at this stage of the project development, two very different charging designs are still being considered. One design involves one single cordon around the city centre, while the other design features an outer cordon around the city bypass, plus the cordon around the city centre. Although the city centre cordon would be the most straightforward to implement, a specific concern of city centre retailers has been that this design would create a competitive advantage for retailers outside the city centre. Thus, the city centre retailers regard the double cordon design as a more equitable alternative. Although it should be noted that there are other reasons why the double cordon option has been retained, such as its ability to impact on city-wide congestion problems and its ability to provide a wider geographical range of transport improvements, the views of these businesses have added weight to the decision to continue the investigation of the double cordon option.



In Bristol, the business community had a significant input in refining the initial “technical” proposal into a more pragmatic “political” scheme design. Involvement in this process has enhanced business community support for the final detailed design.

In Leeds, business community involvement has influenced the design of the charging cordon, particularly around the hospital, and has also had an impact on the treatment of other charging boundary issues.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has looked at the issue of how to conduct consultation with the business community in the design of road pricing schemes. The experiences of EUROPrice cities and findings from research literature have been used to provide some guidelines for effective business community consultation. The paper also presents a summary of the views of the business community on the road pricing proposals in each partner city.

The evidence suggests that there are two essential issues to address to be successful in business community consultation:

(i) Establishing a Relationship

The business community is often not aware of the role of local government, and there is often a general lack of trust between these two sectors. The business community have considerable concerns about the impacts of road pricing schemes on their economic viability and feel that the such schemes will be implemented irrespective of their views, creating an “us and them” mentality. In order to allow effective dialogue to occur, it is essential that an element of trust is developed. This is best achieved through the commitment to an ongoing relationship. This can be realised in a number of ways, including the establishment of boards and fora, featuring representatives from local government and the business community, or by regular engagement with other existing representative organisations. It is essential that the business community feel that they are being involved over the long-term, and therefore, “one-off” consultations are not recommended.

(ii) Developing a Strategy

Another major barrier to business community involvement is the lack of time and resources available for businesses to commit to non-essential activities. This shortage of time means two things:

- Businesses need to have an accurate understanding of how much of their time they will be required to commit to the consultation process
- Businesses need to be sure that their efforts will be worthwhile, resulting in tangible outcomes.

A useful way of ensuring that these concerns are addressed is by developing a consultation strategy, agreed upon by both parties. The strategy can include the overall vision for future engagement, the objectives to be achieved and the timescale for future activities. Defining a strategy also adds to the feeling of an ongoing relationship, adding to the development of trust as discussed above.



In addition to the two over-arching elements discussed above, there are a number of further points that can add to business consultation effectiveness:

- Make use of existing representative organisations
- Build on the representativeness of existing organisations by establishing new bodies and by developing links with individual businesses
- Establish a single point of contact within local government
- Ensure that the business contact has sufficient seniority to represent the company
- Create different entry points for businesses at different levels of engagement
- Design engagement activities to accommodate business community schedules
- Present all information in an accurate, concise format
- Ensure that the consultation activities fulfil any legislative requirements

The consultation activities in each partner city have produced a valuable resource of business community views towards road pricing schemes.

In Bristol, a large amount of consultation has been carried out with a wide-range of business groups. This appears to have had an impact on the overall level of support for road pricing, with the Bristol business community much more supportive of the project than has been achieved in other locations. In Edinburgh, consultation with the business community has been conducted primarily through its Transport Advisory Panel and through major public consultation activities. Here, there is some recognition of the potential of road pricing to alleviate the cities traffic problems, but high levels of opposition are still evident, particularly from the retail sector. Leeds and Belfast are still at the strategic project development stage, but initial business community consultations have brought findings similar to Bristol and Edinburgh, with general levels of support lower than among other stakeholder groups.

The business communities of Genoa and Rome appear to have similar levels of general opposition to road pricing as those in the United Kingdom. However, these cities have been particularly successful in using business community consultation to address specific project design issues. In Genoa, the concerns of the private car park owners resulted in the scheme design being amended to allow uncharged access to the car parks within the charged area. In Rome, consultation with the Consortium of Local Tourism Operators has resulted in a coach management system being incorporated into the design of the Access Control System.

Overall, this study has found that the business community is sensitive to the ever-increasing problem of congestion. Businesses are aware that congestion has a direct negative impact on their economic viability, and there is widespread agreement that “something must be done”. There appears to be an acceptance that road pricing could be a potential solution to the problem, but there are several significant concerns about implementing this measure.

Commonly voiced concerns typically relate to the financial impacts of road pricing implementation, including the fact that road pricing will add to the existing cost burden borne by operating businesses, harming their economic viability. Further concerns, particularly from the retail sector, involve the impact of road pricing on the competitiveness of businesses within the charged area, with fears that business will be lost to uncharged areas. These views, obtained from EUROPRICE partner cities, are



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reinforced by the findings of other research studies (PATS, 2000) which have again shown that the impact of road pricing on business competitiveness is a primary concern.

These concerns have led to a strong feeling from businesses that they, and their customers, should qualify for exemptions to any charges. The business community also shares the concerns of the general public that suitable public transport alternatives will not be in place before charging implementation, and that all the charging revenues will not be invested for transport improvements.

Overall, this paper has shown that although the business community is supportive of the principle of road pricing, there are a number of significant concerns to be addressed before this group will support the implementation of an actual road pricing scheme in their city. Clearly, effective consultation is essential to finding a realistic solution to these concerns, so that the support of this important stakeholder group can be retained.



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