



VIEWPOINTS | 2017

HNTB expert:

Matthew Click, AICP

National Director of Priced Managed Lanes

Priced managed lanes - a proven mobility strategy - are rapidly expanding nationally

Today, metropolitan areas across the country face the increasingly difficult challenge of providing reliable transportation alternatives in and around their urban core. Urban congestion results in wasted fuel and time for people and puts American cities at a disadvantage when compared to their surrounding suburban areas.

Fortunately, there is a solution to urban congestion. That solution is congestion pricing through delivery mechanisms such as priced managed lanes. Priced managed lanes work by tolling some lanes in an urban corridor. The toll rate varies to ensure a reliable travel speed is maintained and the lanes function without congestion. What was once an economic theory first offered in the 1950s has become a reality in 16 urban areas across the country. Cities such as Miami, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Seattle, Dallas, Houston, Austin, San Diego; Minneapolis; Denver; Los Angeles; San Francisco; Orlando; and Salt Lake City have priced managed lanes operating in their urban areas. Once a simple concept, using pricing to control transportation demand has now successfully been piloted, tested and approved by the motoring public.

When capacity is added to a roadway, it is immediately occupied by the existing latent demand in the rush hour(s). Or, the existing rush hour time period slightly contracts and consumes the new roadway capacity. When new transit service is added in a corridor, roadway capacity that becomes available by that modal shift is again consumed by latent roadway demand. In other words, there is no capacity-building strategy that can fully solve congestion, and even if there was, it would not be affordable or sustainable.

The only strategy that can solve for congestion is an operational strategy using the congestion pricing concept with deployment strategies like priced managed lanes. Not only do priced managed lanes provide a mobility option for automobile customers, they also provide a reliable transit corridor for buses at a much lower cost than traditional fixed-rail transit.

All trips in a roadway corridor are not the same all of the time. Therefore, all lanes on a roadway should not be operated the same all of the time. Roadway motorists and transit riders value their time differently depending on when they are making a trip and what type of trip it is they are making – whether driving to a job, getting to the airport to catch a plane or picking up a child at day care, versus more leisurely trips for shopping or recreation. Urban corridors need to provide choices for motorists and transit riders who can evolve into part-time customers of priced managed lanes, a mobility option available to motorists and transit riders when they need it.

Thirty-six successful priced managed lanes are operational and demonstrating value to their customers; they have proven the business case to the public and almost all of the urban areas that have tested a priced managed lane corridor now have several more corridors in operation or development. As urban areas like Miami, Atlanta and San Francisco deploy multiple priced managed lane corridors they are now looking to create seamless, interconnected networks providing even greater and more robust mobility options for their customers.

Now is the time for more DOTs, regional authorities and metropolitan planning organizations to consider, expand and implement priced managed lanes strategies in other urban, congested corridors across the country.

HNTB expert contact information:

About the author

Matthew Click is HNTB's national director of priced managed lanes. With more than 21 years of extensive experience in tolling, transportation finance, congestion pricing and priced managed lanes, Click is one of the industry's most recognized specialists in priced managed lanes, corridors and networks. He travels across the nation advising state DOTs and other transportation agencies about planning, financing and implementing priced managed lanes programs in congested urban areas.

HNTB expert contact information:

Matthew Click, AICP

National Director of Priced Managed Lanes
HNTB Corporation
(703) 999-8444
mclick@hntb.com

HNTB Corporation is an employee-owned infrastructure solutions firm serving public and private owners and contractors. With more than a century of service, HNTB understands the life cycle of infrastructure and addresses clients' most complex technical, financial and operational challenges. Professionals nationwide deliver a full range of infrastructure-related services, including award-winning planning, design, program management and construction management. For more information, visit hntb.com.

© 2017 HNTB Companies. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.