

Time of Use Charging in Auckland

Background Information for Engagement

11 November – 11 December 2026

What this engagement is about

From 11 November to 11 December, Aucklanders will be invited to consider three potential Time of Use Charging options and share their feedback on what it means for them.

This feedback will help to inform future decision making by Auckland Council.

What's the issue?

Auckland has a traffic congestion issue that has real life impacts on commuters, business, productivity, the environment and our overall quality of life. The time we spend in traffic is time we're not working, learning or spending with whanau.

The average Auckland commuter spends 66 hours a year stuck in traffic, congestion costs the economy up to $2.6 billion annually, and traffic induced carbon emissions are impacting climate and air quality.

A steady increase in the number of cars on Auckland's roads has resulted in a big jump in congestion during the last decade. It is unrealistic to try to build our way out of it: Auckland doesn't have the space to do so, and even if we did, property and land purchases are prohibitively expensive.

Additionally, Auckland's population continues to grow, and congestion is expected to worsen as the number of people driving increases in the years ahead – even with extensive investment in public transport, such as the City Rail Link. It is expected that another 600,000 people will live here by 2048, increasing our population to nearly two and a half million people and putting more pressure on our land and road space, leading to more congestion and longer travel times.

While Auckland Council and central government continue to invest in new infrastructure and services, they also need to focus on 'non-built' solutions – solutions that make the best use of the infrastructure Auckland already has. One way we can do this is through time of use charging.

Time of Use Charging

What is it?

Time of use charging is a tool to help ease traffic congestion at the busiest times of day. Drivers who use certain congested roads at peak times would pay a charge. It can be targeted to areas, such as the centre of a city, or it can be applied to individual congested roads like a motorway. It could also be a mix of both.

The options outlined below propose that drivers would generally be charged on weekdays when crossing into the charge area during the morning rush (7am – 10am), or when leaving during the afternoon rush (3pm – 6pm).

Time of Use Charging would make us think more about how and when we travel – whether that's taking public transport, carpooling, or driving outside peak hours.

What have we learned so far?

Work carried out since 2024 has unlocked the following insights:



Congestion is a significant issue that needs to be addressed. In 2026, congestion costs us $2.6 billion a year – factoring the cost of lost time, as well as impacts like reduced business investment and consumer spending.



Time of use charging can provide significant congestion reduction and time savings benefits.



There are trade-offs related to the scale of each option being considered. Larger schemes can have a greater impact but are more complex. Medium scale schemes provide good benefits but may create network and acceptability challenges. Smaller schemes have less congestion benefits but can be simpler.



Time of use charging is a package of elements that need to work together. This includes the charging location, the price charged, additional transport measures that complement a scheme, and potential targeted mitigations.



Mode shift to public transport is more limited for schemes that charge outside the city centre, reflecting the fact that public transport serves the city centre well. Public transport alternatives are particularly important to stakeholders and the public.



Some of the options studied saw significant traffic diversion, even as overall regional congestion decreased. Charging on both the motorways and local roads in the same area is typically needed to minimise diversion impacts.



A charge should be set at the minimum level to achieve the congestion reduction goals.



Revenue should be reinvested in enhancing the benefits and minimising the impact of a scheme. This is reinforced by the legislation which requires any surplus to be prioritised for transport investment into and around the charging area.



Complementary measures, mitigations and revenue allocation have been critical to the public success of international schemes.

International Examples of Time of Use Charging

Several cities around the world have explored schemes similar to what is being considered in Auckland, but few have implemented them. The schemes that are most often held up as success stories are in London, Singapore and Stockholm. These cities are different to Auckland in many ways – for example, London and Stockholm had higher public transport use, Singapore has low vehicle ownership – but the examples can help to build a picture of the choices our region faces.

	London	Singapore	Stockholm
Type	Central city zone to reduce private vehicle travel, established 2003	Central city and key sections of motorway network to manage congestion since 1975	Cordon charge around central city to reduce congestion, established 2007 after a six-month trial
Design	Daily charge of £15 (NZ$31) to enter or drive within the charging zone (7am-6pm weekdays and 12-6pm weekends)	Price varies depending on the time of day and area (NZ$7.60 maximum charge)	Price varies depending on time of day (NZ$5.50 maximum charge) from 7.30-8.30am and 4.00-5.30pm.
Exemptions	Emergency vehicles, buses, cabs and vehicles with a mobility parking permit are exempt. In-zone residents receive a 90% discount.	Emergency vehicles and buses only	Emergency vehicles, buses, cabs and vehicles with a mobility parking permit are exempt
Revenue	Revenue is ring-fenced to support the Mayor's transport programme. In the first five years, 80% of revenue went towards bus improvements.	Revenue from the scheme is used to support general government expenditure.	Revenue is invested into the transport system. It was first earmarked for a road tunnel and recently has been invested into rail improvements.
Results	21% reduction in traffic volumes when it was introduced.	15% reduction in traffic during charging hours; number of vehicles entering reduced 18%	20% reduction in traffic; 4-5% increase in public transport use; 10-15% reduction in emissions in the city

Potential Benefits

The international examples give an indication of what form a time of use charging scheme could take in Auckland, and what the benefits could look like. In the cities where time of use charging has been introduced, traffic volumes have typically fallen by around 20% where the scheme is active. Depending on the design of the scheme, Auckland could expect a drop in traffic to a similar level as school holiday conditions.

For those that can't alter their travel patterns, like some businesses, shift workers and commuters, the roads are less congested and journey times more reliable. Modelling predicts between three to eight percent of drivers traveling into the charged area will pay the charge. It is also important to note that up to a third of drivers who do not pay the time of use charge will experience small improvement in travel times and reliability.

Where time of use charging has been proposed around the world, public acceptance has generally been low before implementation but has increased once the scheme is in action, when the public is able to experience the benefits of faster and more reliable travel.

Although it is not a primary objective, the Government has also indicated that any revenue beyond the cost of the programme would be used for transport upgrades and improvements, including public transport into and around the charge area.

Potential Challenges

The impacts of time of use charging may not be evenly distributed. Some people may have fewer practical options to change when, where or how they travel, because of factors such as where they live and work, household and caring responsibilities, access to transport alternatives, or affordability. Understanding who may be more affected, and why, will be important when considering how a scheme could be designed fairly.

To help mitigate this challenge, the three options being considered concentrate on central Auckland areas where there are generally good public transport alternatives.

Auckland Council is also exploring options for targeted mitigations to address impacts on vulnerable user groups who can't easily change their travel, and engagement feedback will help shape this further. This could include recommendations for reimbursements via existing allowances, credits, or price caps.

How will it affect people?

During typical peak morning travel hours, the expected impacts of a time of use charging option on different travellers are:

- Around two thirds of drivers (those who don't travel near the charged area) will not be affected
- Up to a third of drivers (those who travel near, but not into, the charged areas) will experience small improvements in travel times and reliability
- Between three and eight percent of drivers will pay the charge and benefit from faster and more reliable trips
- A small number of drivers near the charged areas may experience increases in travel times due to changes in traffic patterns
- Public transport users will generally benefit from increased services and faster, more reliable journeys.

For example, under the City Centre Cordon option below, a person who currently always drives into the city centre during the peak period most days of the week and pays for parking might decide to:

- Take public transport one or two days
- Start work slightly earlier one day, or work from home
- Pay the charge on two days with the school drop, when the faster and more reliable trip reduces stress.

What we are asking for feedback on

Over the past two years, we have assessed different options for time of use charging and have now reduced the number of options being considered from 13 down to three. These three options focus on travel into central Auckland, while mitigating affordability and social impact issues and would result in a maximum of eight percent of vehicle trips being charged.

From 11 November to 11 December, Aucklanders will be encouraged to view the three options being considered for time of use charging and **share their feedback** on how they anticipate the three different options would impact them and their daily commutes into, out of and through central Auckland during peak congestion times.

This feedback will help to inform further detailed development of the options and future decision making by Auckland Council. If a proposal is taken forward, any final design must go through a public consultation process, so Auckland can have their say before any final decision is made.

The three options are summarised on the next page.

Option A: City Centre



Trips are charged when crossing into the cordon in the morning rush and leaving in the afternoon rush.

Motorway trips and travel within the cordon are not charged.

- Around 3.5% of Auckland's AM peak period trips pay the charge.
- Achieves a 4% reduction in overall congestion across the isthmus and lower north shore.
- Paying drivers save around 2.5 minutes on their commute, based on a low/medium charge level.
- Around 28% of non-paying drivers will have a faster and more reliable trip.
- Around 3% increase in AM public transport ridership.

Option B: City Fringe



Trips are charged when crossing into the cordon in the morning rush and leaving in the afternoon rush. Expanded area to include commercial areas and some neighbourhoods adjacent to the city centre.

Motorway trips and travel within the cordon are not charged.

- Around 5.5% of Auckland's AM peak period trips pay the charge.
- Achieves a 6% reduction in overall congestion across the isthmus and lower north shore.
- Paying drivers save around 4 minutes on their morning commute, based on a more medium charge level.
- Around 33% of non-paying drivers will have a faster and more reliable trip.
- Around 5% increase in AM public transport ridership

Option C: Core Motorways & City Centre



Trips crossing into the city centre or travelling on core motorway sections will be charged in congested conditions.

Only one charge if travelling from the motorway into the city centre.

- Around 8.5% of Auckland's AM peak period trips pay the charge.
- Best option for congestion reduction, lowering AM peak congestion by 28% across the isthmus and lower north shore.
- Paying drivers save an average of 7 minutes, based on a more medium charge level, and longer motorway trips can save up to 10 minutes.
- Around 29% of non-paying drivers will have a faster and more reliable trip
- Around 6% increase in AM public transport ridership.

How to have your say

This public engagement to gain your feedback on Time of Use Charging in Auckland will run from **Wednesday 11 November 2026 - Friday 11 December 2026.**

You can have your say online, in writing or by attending a feedback session at one of our drop-in events. More details on how to get involved are at the end of this document.

Share your views on Time of Use Charging

There are a number of ways you can share your views with us.

We will hold an online information session (webinar) on the evening of 19 November at 7:00 pm where you can find out more about the options and ask questions.

Written and online feedback

Provide your feedback online through the council's AK Have Your Say website (akhaveyoursay.nz), or by downloading and filling out a feedback form from the council's AK Have Your Say website and mailing it to:

Auckland Council
Attention: Auckland Time of Use Charging
Freepost Number 190198
Private Bag 92300
Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142

Regional Organisations and Interest Groups

If you are a member of a regional organisation or interest group and you feel that you have particular information to share you can provide feedback in-person at one of our Have Your Say Events. You'll need to register for these events and meet certain criteria to attend. The details of these events will be published online at akhaveyoursay.nz/TimeOfUseCharging

Please note these are not for individuals, only community group and organisations will be eligible.

What happens next?

Findings will be presented to Auckland Council's Transport and Infrastructure Delivery Committee in March 2027, which will consider public feedback and determine which option is recommended to progress further.

The committee will also be asked to formally initiate a scheme. A scheme board made up of Auckland Council and New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) will be established.

The scheme board will advance the chosen option, develop further detailed plans and formally consult with Aucklanders on the final proposal. The Transport and Infrastructure

Delivery Committee will then be asked to agree to a final proposal before it goes to the Minister of Transport for final approval.

We anticipate the final decision to be made in 2028, which would see time of use charging operational in Auckland in 2030 or 2031.

More information

Please visit akhaveyoursay.nz/TimeOfUseCharging for more information or Search AK Have Your Say