

ACCEPTABILITY OF TRANSPORT PRICING STRATEGIES

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

FOREWORD

Esko Niskanen, Coordinator Project MC-ICAM

The European Union has emphasised transport pricing as a promising approach to deal with urgent problems in urban traffic such as congestion or environmental damage etc. The EU has stressed the importance of policy reform in pricing of transportation so that the prices could better allow for the problems. However, practical experience from Europe and all over the world as well as findings of many studies and research projects have shown that public and political acceptability of urban road pricing in which users would bear the full marginal social cost of their activities is very low.

This fact raises several interesting questions: How can the different levels of public and political acceptability of pricing vs. other, non-price means of travel demand management be explained? Which factors lie behind the low acceptability, and how could acceptability be increased? What would be an optimal implementation strategy, in terms of optimal policy packaging and phasing of the introduction of individual measures?

MC-ICAM ("Implementation of Marginal Cost Pricing in Transport - Integrated Conceptual and Applied Model Analysis") is a research project funded by the European Union which has examined these questions. In particular, it has examined optimal implementation paths from a current situation with non-optimal pricing (level and structure of prices) of transportation to a situation with socially optimal pricing. It has evaluated alternative implementation or transition paths by examining how they affect social welfare over time, the technological and institutional changes which they require (or generate), and the public and political support which they induce over time.

This book is based on the *MC-ICAM* conference "*Acceptability of transport pricing strategies*", held 23-24 May 2002 in Dresden. The conference was directed to policymakers/politicians, transport experts, academics and consultants. The overall aim was to bring together the most advanced state of the art and to contribute to an interdisciplinary exchange for developing a commonly agreed theoretical and methodological framework for acceptance studies, which would cover all relevant aspects of acceptance, integrating economic, psychological, sociological and political points of view. More specific aims were to identify key factors behind the lack of public and political acceptability, and, based on these analyses, to propose policy recommendations for implementing transport pricing. This would

mean developing both new and innovative approaches to policy packaging and phasing as well as intelligent marketing strategies for the implementation of road user charging.

The conference succeeded in serving these goals very well. It provoked useful discussions between scientists from different research fields and disciplines as well as between practitioners and academics. This book can convey to the reader the results and spirit of the conference, and will provide him/her new thoughts and insights for further consideration, whether in research or practical policymaking.

Helsinki, February 2003