



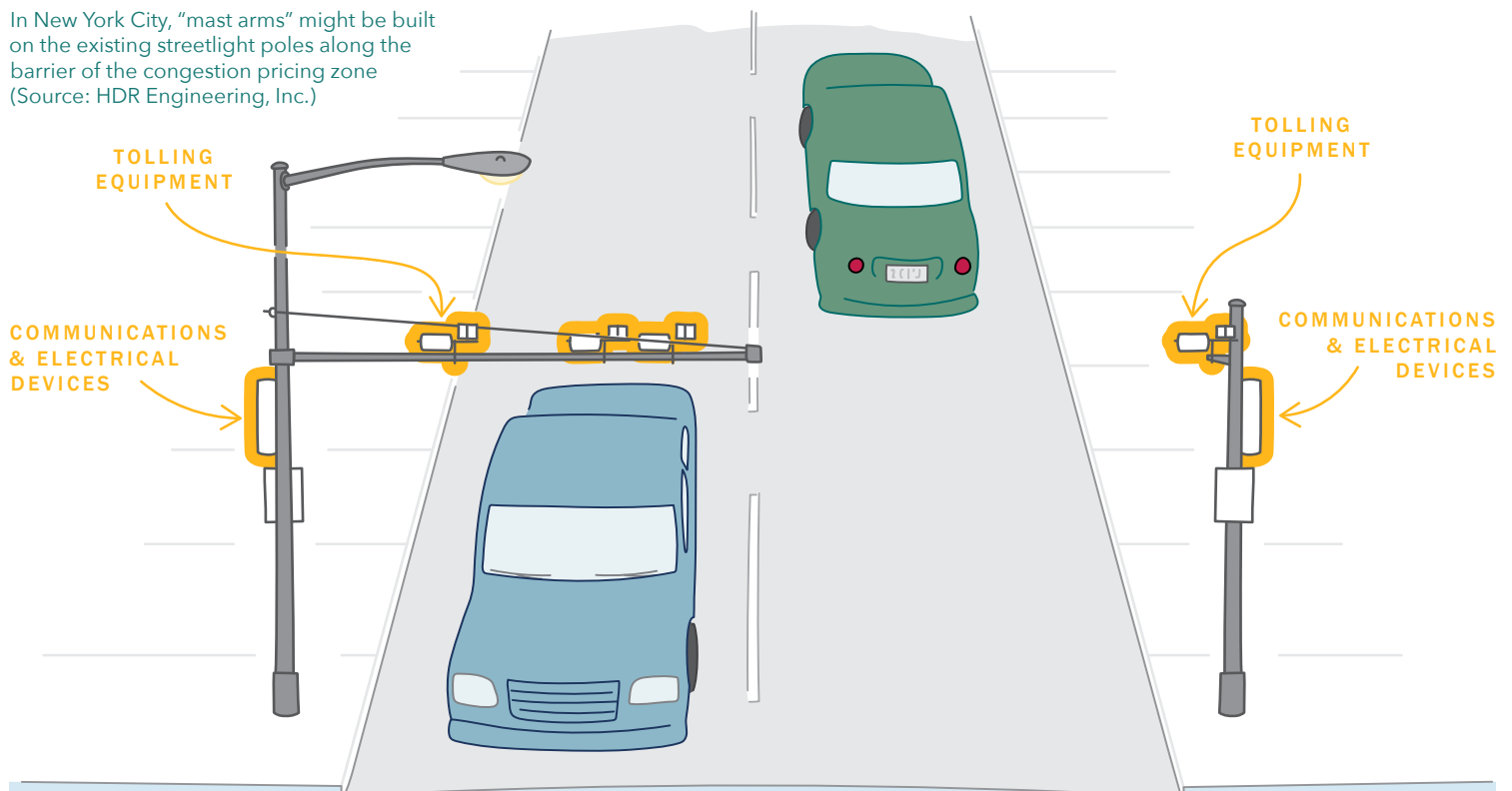
# How does congestion pricing work?

Congestion pricing programs are flexible and can be designed to meet local needs. This paper outlines some of the most common pricing strategies and highlights potential options for implementing a congestion pricing program in San Francisco.

## Where is congestion pricing used?

**Singapore, Milan, London** and **Stockholm** have all successfully implemented congestion pricing programs. In North America, **Los Angeles, Seattle, Vancouver,** and **San Francisco** are currently considering programs of their own. **New York City** will have an active program by 2021.

In New York City, "mast arms" might be built on the existing streetlight poles along the barrier of the congestion pricing zone (Source: HDR Engineering, Inc.)



## Pricing Strategies

Congestion pricing can take several forms. Fees can vary by vehicle type (e.g. private or commercial vehicles, cars or trucks) and by time of day. Different cities have also chosen to price different parts of their road network.

Stockholm has a system which charges drivers for crossing the boundary of the downtown area. This is also what New York City will implement in 2021.

London has a system which charges drivers that enter, exit, or drive within an eight square mile congestion pricing zone. This approach is best suited for geographically large pricing zones where vehicle trips within the zone may not cross the zone's boundary but still contribute to congestion.

Another strategy involves charging vehicles to drive on a select number of busy roads. This strategy is generally considered more complex because there can be many access points and intersections along a tolled road.

## What is Congestion Pricing?

Congestion pricing involves charging a fee to drive downtown during busy hours. It is one of the most effective tools we can use to get traffic moving, increase street safety, clean the air, and make our transportation system more equitable.



## Building blocks of a congestion pricing program

### Technology

Congestion pricing programs usually use electronic tolling systems. The City of Los Angeles, for instance, is currently studying congestion pricing and is planning to use toll tag readers along any proposed zone's boundaries to read FasTrak transponders. To complement toll tag readers, cameras that automatically read license plates can be used to identify vehicles without FasTrak transponders. In San Francisco, a combination of these technologies could recognize vehicles which drive into the congestion zone without slowing down traffic.

### Payment

The Bay Area already has operating toll facilities on regional bridges including the Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge. A congestion pricing program in San Francisco may integrate payment methods with drivers' existing toll accounts. It is possible that Clipper, the regional transit payment system, could be integrated as well.

### Payment options for unbanked individuals

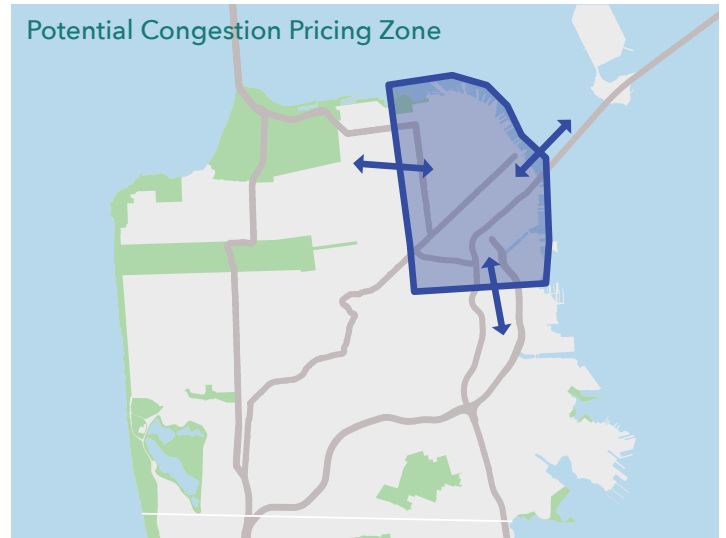
At the end of each month, the City of Stockholm sends a bill to vehicle owners who have driven into the downtown congestion zone. San Francisco could adopt a similar strategy to accommodate unbanked individuals who do not have a FasTrak transponder or account.

Here in San Francisco, all tolling on the Golden Gate Bridge is electronic. Drivers who wish to pay with cash can set up an account, receive a transponder, and make cash payments at the FasTrak customer service center downtown or at local retailers such as Safeway and Costco. Drivers can also make one-time cash payments at these locations without opening a FasTrak account.

Puerto Rico has several tolled roads which accept only electronic payment, yet 42% of residents do not have checking accounts. Transponders are sold at more than 200 retail and gas station locations. Credit can also be added to transponders at most gas stations.<sup>1</sup>

### Exemptions

A combination of discounts and exemptions can be used to reduce financial burdens, create a more equitable transportation system, and ensure that all travelers enjoy increased access to opportunity and jobs. Discounts or



exemptions could be implemented by offering special transponders to low income drivers, people with disabilities, or other vulnerable groups. Special transponders could be charged a reduced fee or no fee at all.

### Privacy

Any information collected through an automated license plate recognition system is considered sensitive information under California law and special precautions must be taken when handling such data. The Federal Highway Administration notes that tolling agencies have devised a method to protect the public's privacy by linking the transponder and the driver's personal information with a generic, internal account number that does not reveal the driver's identity and that is not disclosed to other organizations. Any motorist can open an anonymous account if they desire.

## How To Get Involved

Help us shape a congestion pricing program for San Francisco: learn more and get involved at [sfcta.org/downtown](https://sfcta.org/downtown)

## Contact Us

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<sup>1</sup> LACMTA (2010) Metro ExpressLanes Project, Draft Final Low-Income Assessment