Florida's Turnpike Enterprise

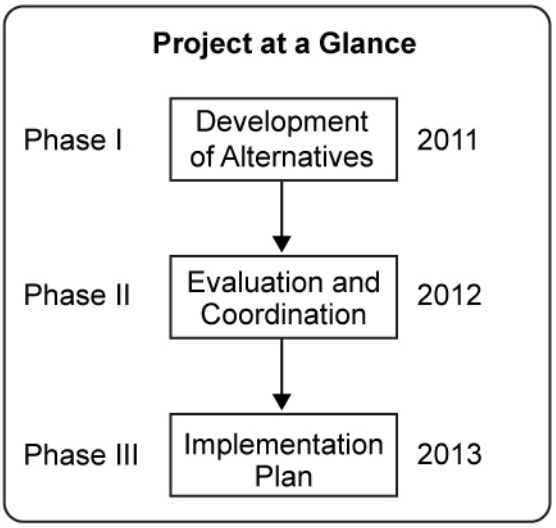
Integrated Congestion Pricing Plan
Project Overview

Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) systematically tracks the widening needs and congestion levels across its facilities. The latest forecast shows that several facilities are becoming severely congested, requiring the need for widening. However, these widening needs, in many cases, cannot be fulfilled because of geometric, right-of-way, or other constraints as determined by various environmental studies. In addition, the persistent shortage of widening funds has prompted FTE to look at value pricing as a way to extend the useful life of capacity-constrained facilities and to better manage congestion.

In February 2011, FTE kicked off a comprehensive study to evaluate the potential for implementing congestion pricing along the Turnpike System. The Integrated Congestion Pricing Plan (ICPP) is a multi-year, multi-phase project that will determine where, when, and how congestion pricing can be used on the Turnpike to improve mobility. Much of this effort will focus on large urban areas of the state that experience prolonged periods of congestion. This includes Turnpike facilities in Southeast Florida, Tampa, and Orlando. The Turnpike's ICPP is among the first in the nation to consider a large-scale program of value pricing on an existing system of toll roads.

The study will examine the opportunity to incorporate carpooling and transit services into the overall solution. The use of carpooling and transit on the Turnpike enhances the transportation system performance in the region, resulting in lower crash rates and fatalities on the roads (safety), better quality of life (livability), and a much healthier environment (sustainability). In order to assist in financing this project, FTE is seeking $1.0 million in federal funds.

Phase I of the project will identify candidate locations and begin the initial testing of various pricing options. These options include single-tier pricing, in which all the roadway lanes shift from fixed to variable tolls during the peak hours. They also include two-tier pricing, in which one or more toll lanes are priced higher offering premium service over the remaining adjacent lanes. In this case, the two types of lanes will be physically separated to eliminate any potential confusion by drivers. The single-tier and two-tier pricing scenarios will be evaluated on existing capacity, and also examined for situations where new roadway capacity can be added.



A sketch-level conceptual engineering design will be developed for each alternative, along with preliminary traffic, revenue, and cost estimates. In addition, a draft list of evaluation criteria will be prepared to include items such as safety, transportation system performance, cost requirements, policy issues, public acceptance, impact to low-income drivers, and revenue generation. Other criteria will include enticement for ride sharing programs and enhanced transit service to improve livability, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and noise pollution for better sustainability. This list will be revised later to include input from customers and elected officials before using to compare the different alternatives.

In Phase II, FTE will begin to solicit customer input and coordinate with local officials regarding the proposed alternatives. Specifically, a public outreach and education program will be launched to give stakeholders an opportunity to understand the circumstances in which value pricing can offer a workable solution to problems of congestion. As part of the public outreach effort, a total of 10 focus groups are planned for the various regions. Other forms of communication to be used include newsletters, a

media outlet plan, workshops, speakers' bureau presentations, a project video, and an informative website. In addition, FTE will coordinate with local governments, agencies, and other project stakeholders including FDOT Central Office, local and state officials, metropolitan planning organizations, and transit agencies. Close coordination with local FDOT district offices and other partners will be essential to ensure that congestion pricing on the Turnpike is compatible and interconnected with similar projects being considered or planned on other facilities in the region.

Based on consensus and feedback from the stakeholders, FTE will evaluate the different pricing concepts using the criteria developed earlier to choose the ones that fit the circumstances of each Turnpike facility under study. Depending on the evaluation criteria, it may be possible to have different alternatives for different regions.

The conceptual engineering designs and cost estimates will be further refined, and a detailed planning-level traffic and revenue study will be conducted for the different Turnpike facilities. The analysis will determine the level of traffic in the managed lanes, as well as the toll rates and the revenue potential.

Finally, FTE will prepare in Phase III of the project an overall implementation plan for the Turnpike's congestion pricing program. The plan will define the timing and order of projects, locations, pricing methods, toll plans, and the extent of multi-modal usage and impacts. It will also address key operational issues such as infrastructure needs, tolling requirements, and technology. Furthermore, FTE will create a process for monitoring and evaluating the success of these Turnpike projects through the use of performance measures. These measures, which will be updated periodically, will examine the effect of variably-priced lanes on overall levels of congestion, travel behavior, transit ridership, safety, and air quality.

The public outreach and coordination efforts that started earlier will continue through this phase. These efforts, however, will now focus on public education and acceptance of the plan. As such, pertinent information will be used to educate the public about the plan's far reaching benefits to the users and the general public.

The list of congestion pricing projects identified in this study will be included in the Turnpike's Master Plan and further used to develop a cost feasible plan that supports the implementation of these projects.

The success of the ICPP project depends, in part, on highly robust technology that permits variable pricing to take place accurately and efficiently. The deployment of all electronic tolling (AET) provides a powerful platform for simplifying and streamlining the variable pricing process much more effectively than manual toll collection. As such, congestion pricing on the Turnpike is best implemented on facilities that have already been converted to AET. As part of the Turnpike's AET Master Plan, several of these conversions are already programmed through 2014, following the conversion of the HEFT in February 2011.