

PAY-TO-DRIVE OFF-PEAK

Description

A new alternative to congestion charges is showing promise, providing an incentive to drive outside of the peak-period travel times. Sometimes called “pay-to-drive off-peak,” the system essentially operates oppositely of a toll road: an electronic system credits drivers who avoid driving during the most congested times with cash or some other reward.

This method has been tested in The Netherlands, Stanford University in California, and Bangalore, India, using various incentives. The Stanford project awards credits to drivers who avoid the weekday rush hour during 8:00 and 9:00 a.m. or 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. by driving up to one hour earlier or later. Participants can receive a \$0.10 incentive for each trip or opt for an online game that allows participants to compete lottery-style for cash awards of \$2 to \$50.

Target Market

This method could work in any congested corridor or region in which a proportion of commuters may be able to flex their driving time away from peak travel times. So far, it has only been tested on a small scale.

How Will This Help?

- Reduce congestion during peak times by moving some traffic demand to alternate times when demand is not as great.

Like other strategies that reduce driving during peak times, pay-to-drive off-peak may only need to reach a small proportion of the market to improve traffic congestion and decrease emissions.

Rewards for off-peak driving can have the same powerful incentive that congestion charging has, by tilting the balance of people’s driving decisions financially.



Chinmoy Mandayam adjusts a scanner installed as part of Stanford University’s Capri project.

Cost:	●●○○○
Time:	Short
Impact:	Region
Who:	City/Private
Hurdles:	Personal Habits

Success Stories

- The Netherlands’ experiment with 341 commuters showed that incentives for driving off-peak do indeed work, and the type of reward can affect how long commuters’ behavior is changed.
- A pilot program in Bangalore, India, involving 14,000 commuters doubled the number of commuters to one company arriving before 8:00 a.m., and decreased their travel time to work.

Implementation Issues

As for now, the system requires special equipment or staff to monitor trip times and distribute rewards.