



# What Do People Think About Congestion Pricing?

A Deliberative Dialogue with  
Residents of Metropolitan  
Washington

Presentation on the TPB's Study on the  
Public Acceptability of  
Congestion Pricing

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# What is Congestion Pricing?

Tolling and pricing systems that charge travelers more to use transportation facilities when there is more congestion



# A decade of work on pricing at the TPB

## Regional Conference on Value Pricing (2003)



## Policy Principles for the 2009 Authorization of Federal Surface Transportation Programs

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

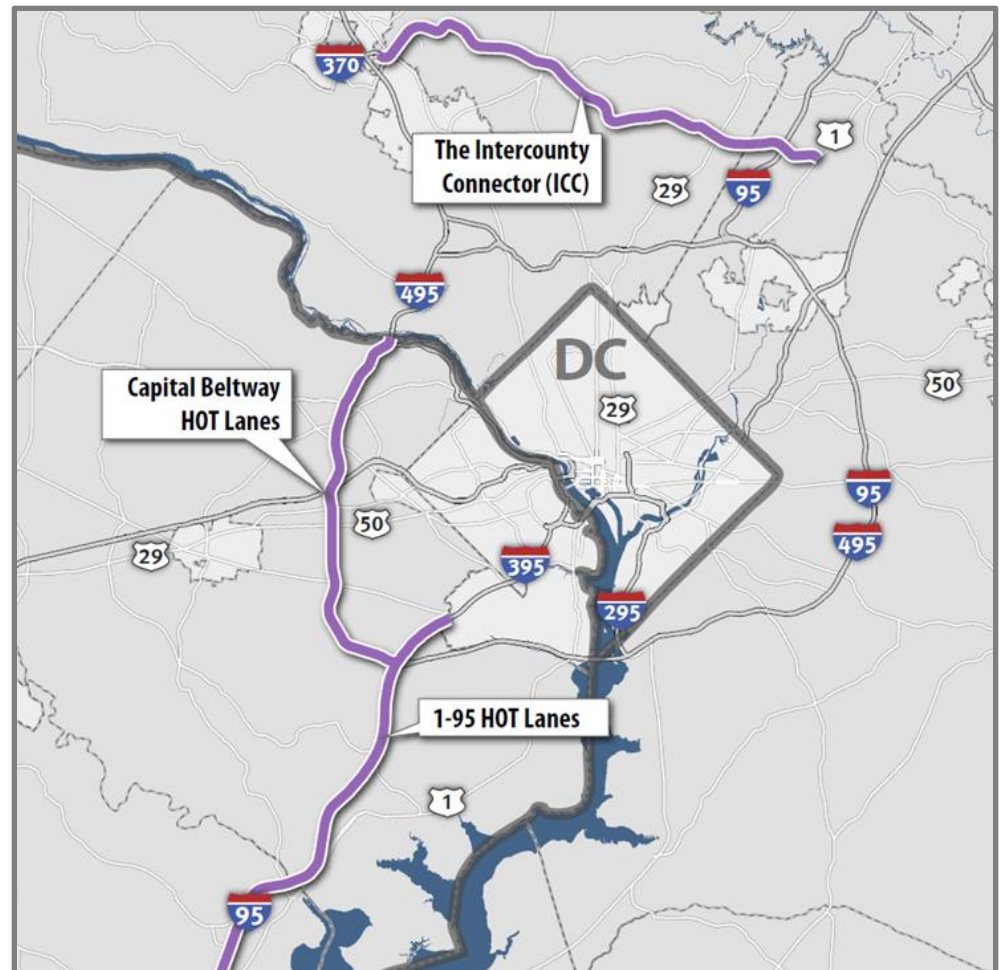
## TPB Policy Principles (2008)

- 1 Fundamental changes are needed in the current structure and funding of federal surface transportation programs: current planning, programming, and environmental processes are overly cumbersome and inefficient, and inadequate funding levels are resulting in serious under-investment in transportation.
- 2 An explicit program focus is needed to put and keep the nation's transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair, and to ensure that it is operated efficiently and safely.
- 3 Decisions on investment in new transportation capacity should be based on a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of economic, social and environmental benefits and costs, which assesses all modal and intermodal options with uniform evaluation procedures and criteria.
- 4 Federal transportation policy should provide for increased federal funding focused on metropolitan congestion and other metropolitan transportation challenges, with stronger state, regional and local...

## Scenario Analysis: VPL Network (2008) CLRP Aspirations (2010)

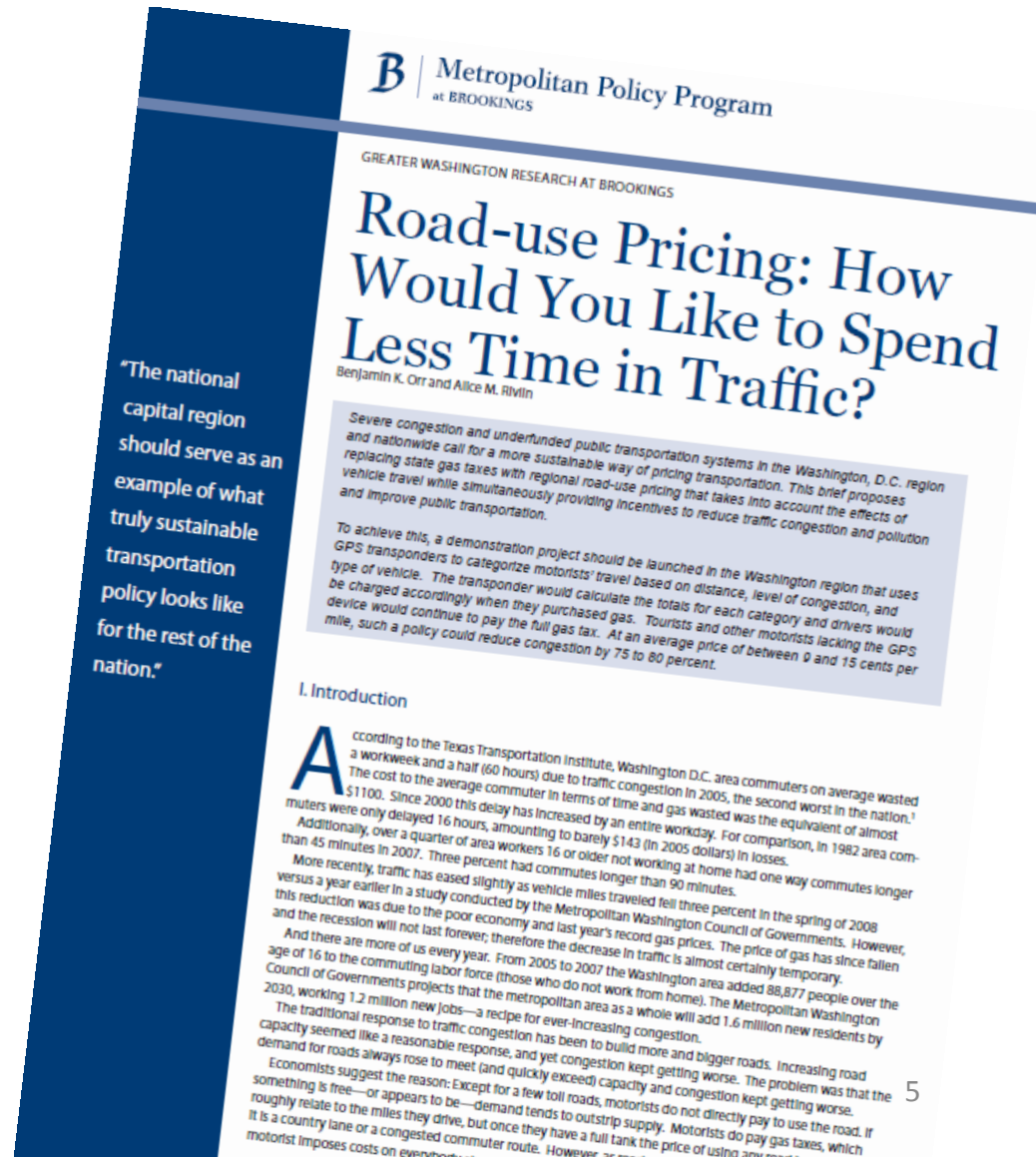
# Value pricing projects in the region

- **Intercounty Connector (ICC)**
  - Added to CLRP in 2004
  - Majority opened 2011
- **Beltway HOT Lanes**
  - Added to CLRP in 2005
  - Opened 2012
- **I-95/I-395 HOT Lanes**
  - Added to CLRP in 2007
  - Under construction (I-95)



# Brookings Institution proposal

- Authored by Alice Rivlin & Benjamin Orr in 2009
- “proposes replacing state gas taxes with regional road-use pricing”
- “A demonstration project should be launched in the Washington region that uses GPS transponders to categorize motorists’ travel”



# Joint research project

- Grant awarded in 2011 from the FHWA's Value Pricing Pilot Program
- **Research partners:**
  - TPB & the Brookings Institution
- **Public engagement consultant:**
  - *AmericaSpeaks*

# Research Problem

- Transportation revenues are decreasing and congestion is increasing
- Congestion pricing is a tool that could partially solve these twin challenges
- ***But officials assume that support for congestion pricing is very low.***

# Research Questions

- As people learn more about congestion pricing, will their attitudes about it change?
- Upon which factors (costs and benefits) does their acceptance hinge?
  - What factors matter to people?
  - How strongly do people feel about those factors?
  - What factors cause people to change their minds?

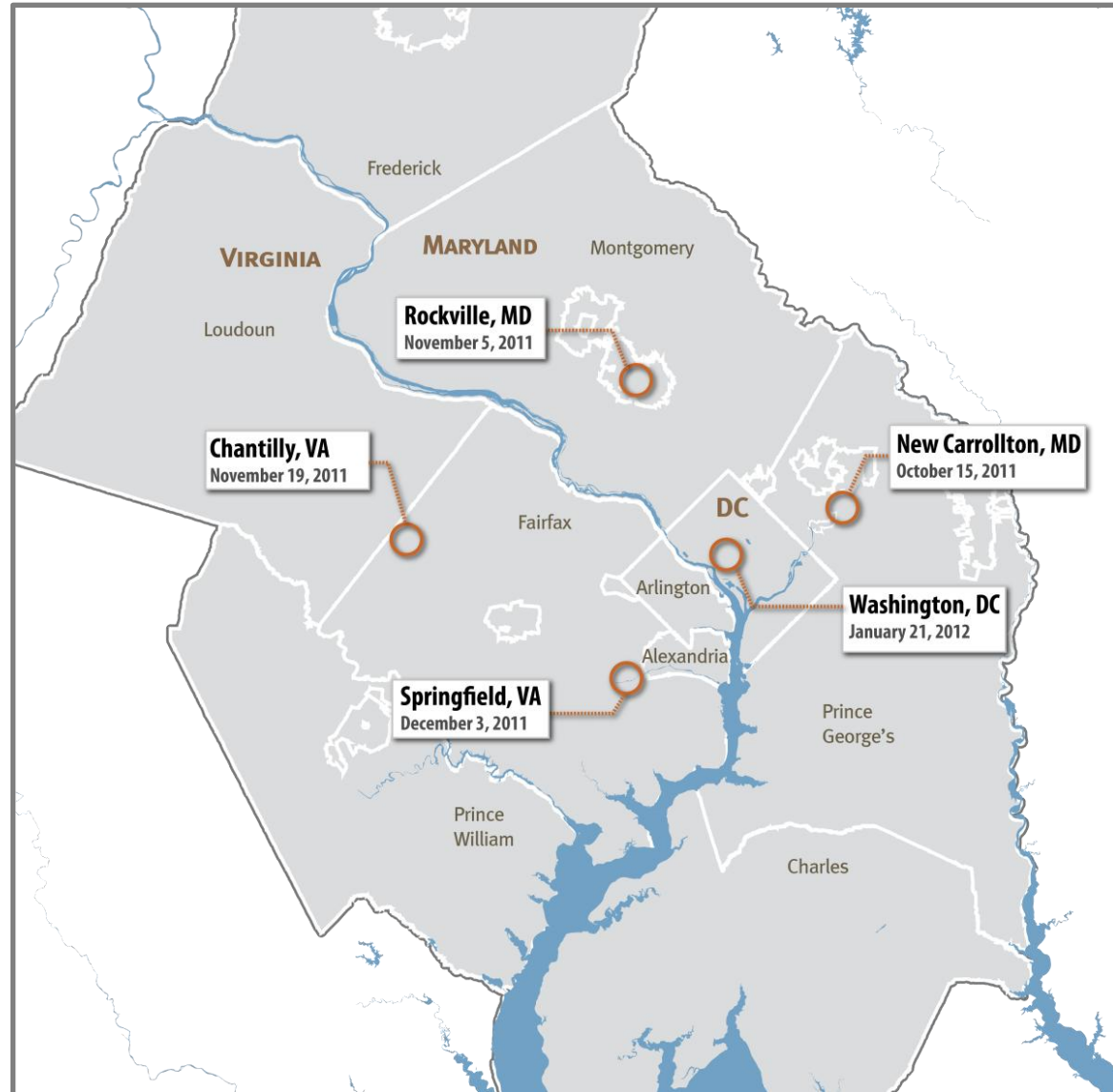


# Deliberative Forums



# Sampling the region

- Five forums
- October 2011 - January 2012
- Each forum lasted 4½ hours
- More than 300 paid participants
- Broadly representative of the region



# “Why are you here?”

How we explained the forums to participants:

- *Congestion pricing is a type of road tolling that could help solve our funding and congestion problems.*
- *But, do you believe the benefits are worth the costs?*

***Let's talk about it...***

# Baseline Information

## Big challenges ahead

- **Severe congestion**
- **Funding shortfalls**

## What are the costs of congestion?

For the average driver in 2010:

- **Time:** More than 100 hours of delay
- **Money:** Value of lost time is more than \$2,000



## Why is funding so tight?



*Gas taxes haven't been increased in years*

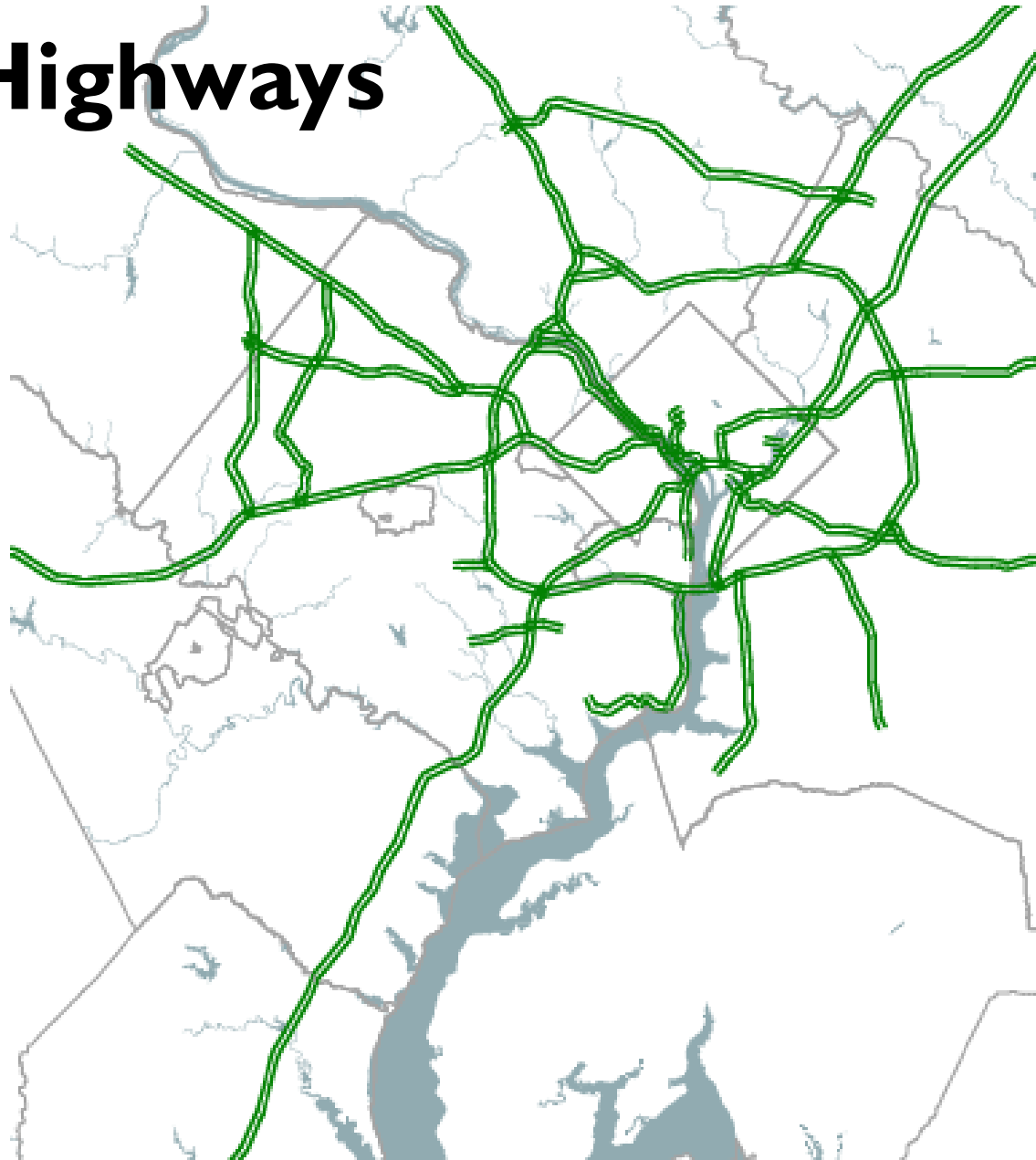
	Tax Per Gallon	Year of Last Increase
Federal	18.4 cents	1993
Virginia	17.5 cents	1986
Maryland	23.5 cents	1992
D.C.	23.5 cents	2009



# Scenario I: Priced Lanes on All Major Highways

*What if...*

All major  
highways had at  
least one tolled  
lane with **free-  
flowing traffic?**



# Scenario 2: Pricing on All Streets and Roads

*What if...*

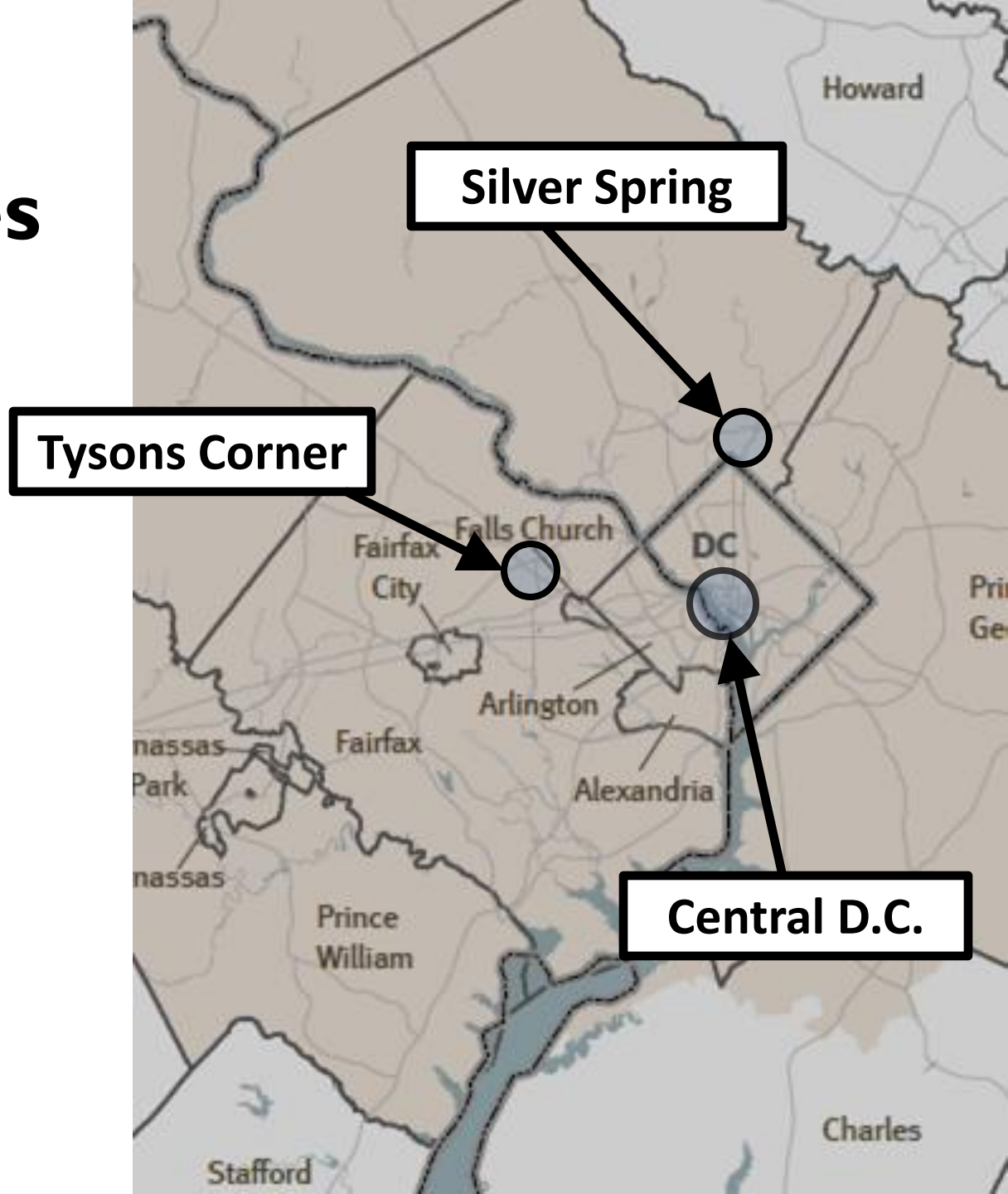
Instead of paying gas taxes, drivers paid per-mile fees calculated by GPS?



# Scenario 3: Priced Zones

*What if...*

Drivers had to  
pay to enter  
central  
Washington, DC,  
Silver Spring, or  
Tysons Corner?



# Data Sources

A combination of qualitative and quantitative data:

- Keypad poll questions  
(including demographics)
- Scribe notes
- Paper surveys



# Small groups discuss benefits and costs



# Scribes record discussions



# Theme teams summarize comments



# Polling questions throughout the day

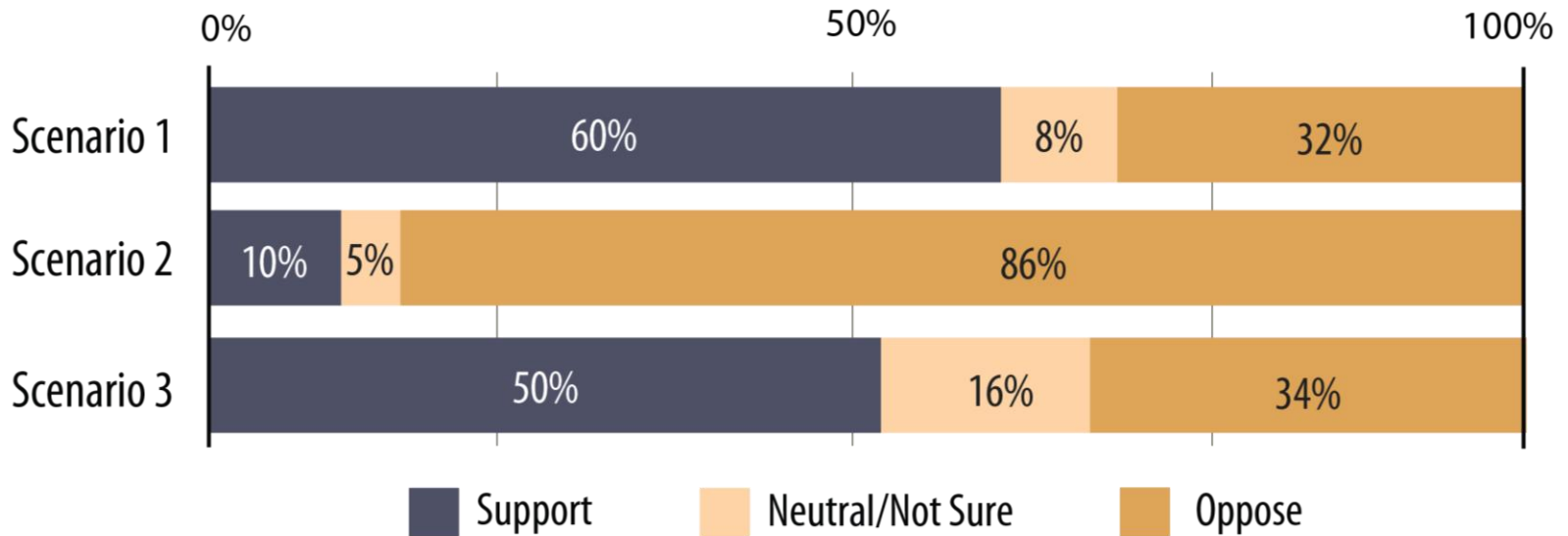


# How do people see the region's transportation problems?

- Congestion has deep personal impacts
- Funding shortfalls do not resonate
- Many people are unaware of how transportation is currently funded or that gas taxes haven't been raised in 20 years
- People lack confidence in government to solve transportation problems.

# How did people react to the pricing scenarios?

**Figure 1: Comparison of End-of-Day Support for the Three Scenarios**



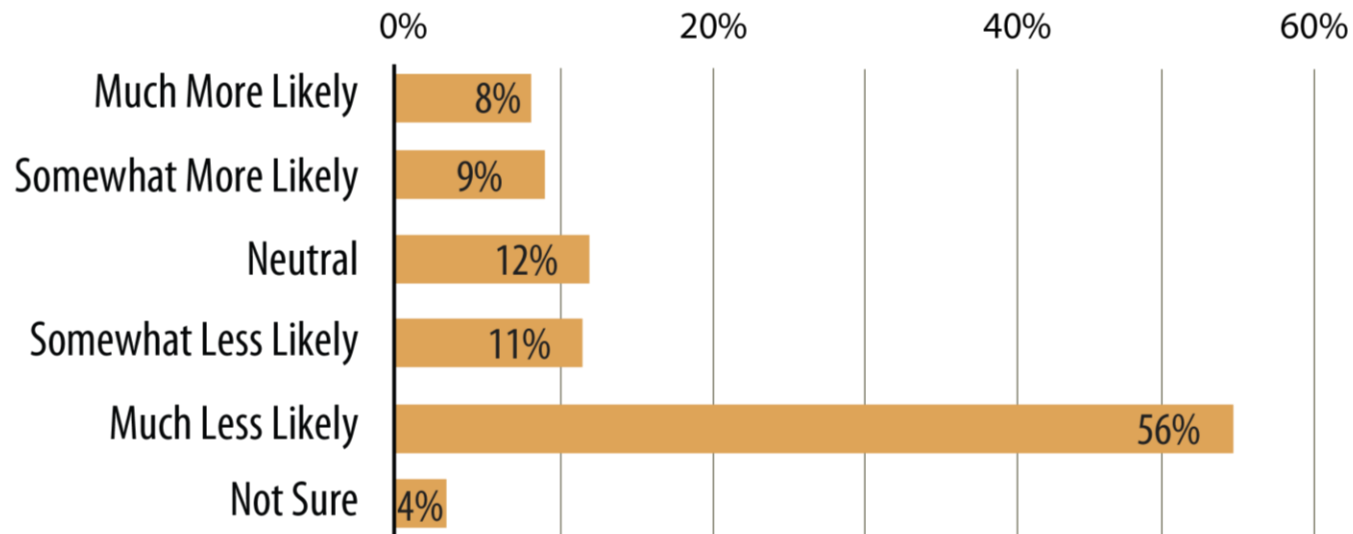
# How did people react to the pricing scenarios?

- **Scenario 1: Priced Lanes on All Major Highways**
  - Garnered the most support
  - Offers choice and predictability
- **Scenario 2: Pricing on All Streets and Roads**
  - Strong negative reactions
  - Concerns about privacy, complications, impracticality
- **Scenario 3: Priced Zones**
  - Seemed logical and straightforward to participants
  - Was not seen as regional

# How did people react to the pricing scenarios?

- **Scenario 2:** People did not support replacing gas taxes.

**Figure 9: “Scenario 2 Would Entirely Replace Gas Taxes. Does This Make You More or Less Likely to Support it?”**

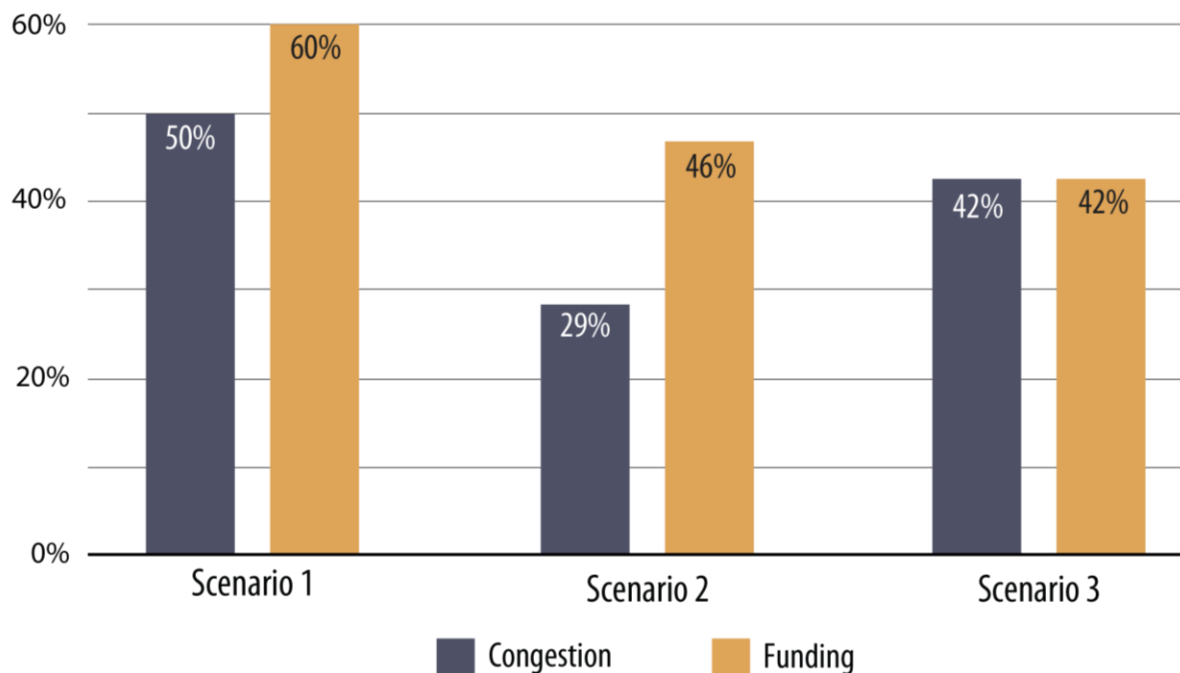




# How did people react to the pricing scenarios?

- **Overall:** People were skeptical about the effectiveness of the scenarios, particularly in reducing congestion.

Figure 6: Perceptions of Effectiveness at Addressing Congestion and Funding Shortfalls



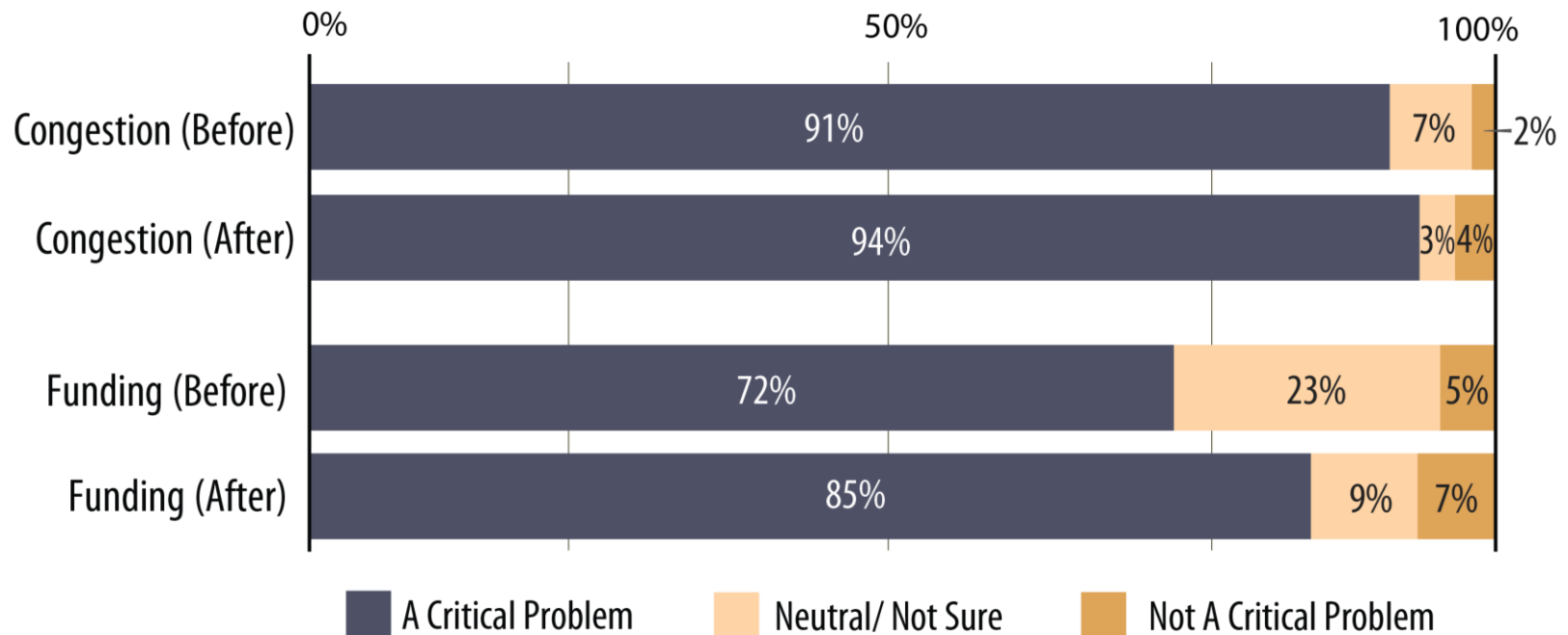
# What's the basis for people's opinions?

- **Choice:** Pricing must provide options.
- **Privacy:** Significant concerns. People are worried about government overreach and a loss of control.
- **Effectiveness:** Doubts about whether pricing will actually work.
- **Use of revenues:** Guarantee transparency and accountability.
- **Fairness:** Not pivotal.

# At the end of the forums, what did people think?

- Positions hardened.

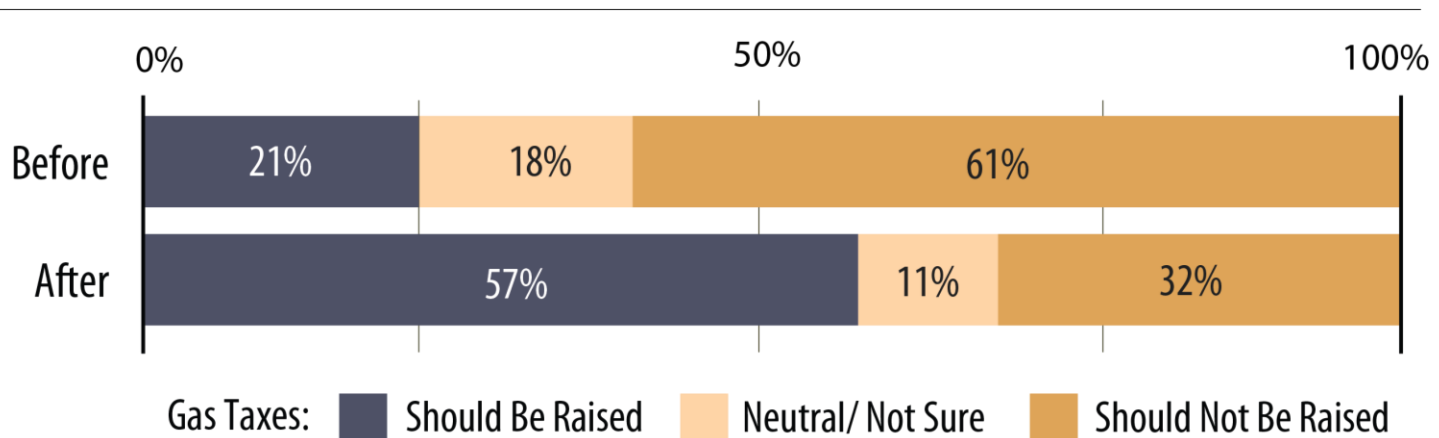
**Figure 2: Perceptions of Congestion and Funding Shortfalls as Critical Problems**



# At the end of the forums, what did people think?

- Support for raising gas taxes tripled.

**Figure 3: Change in Support for Raising Gas Taxes**



# At the end of the forums, what did people think?

- Cautious openness to pricing.
- If implemented, pricing must be integrated with wider strategies and existing systems.
- First things first: Make common sense improvements, including road and Metro maintenance.

# What does it mean?

- People are skeptical of pricing as an overall solution, but they may support specific proposals if they see direct benefits in their daily lives.
- People are more concerned about government overreach than they are about “Lexus Lanes.”
- People are more likely to support more obvious solutions – such as increasing gas taxes – than more radical approaches like congestion pricing.
- People want to know that congestion pricing is part of a wider strategic vision.

# For more information

[www.mwcog.org/CongestionPricing/PublicAcceptability](http://www.mwcog.org/CongestionPricing/PublicAcceptability)

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Thank you!