

Charging scheme really cuts the jam

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Congestion charging in central London is working, according to the first Transport for London report on the schemes effectiveness since its launch.

Overall the report indicates a 40% reduction in congestion within the zone. Typical savings on a round trip to and from the zone amount to ten minutes or so. Cars, lorries and vans coming into the zone have been reduced; cars by around 30%. There have been small increases in the number of incoming buses, taxis, motorcycles and pedal cycles.

After three months:

- **traffic levels inside the charging zone have reduced some 16%**
- **car journeys to and from the charging zone are quicker and more reliable**
- **the majority of ex car users have transferred to public transport**
- **public transport is coping with transfers of ex car users**
- **diverted traffic is being accommodated**

There are 150,000 fewer car trips made each day into, out of and through the charging zone, compared with spring 2002.

Transport for London say that 10-20% of this reduction is due to cars diverting around the charging zone. 50-70% of the reduction have changed to using public transport and 20-30% of the reduction have switched to taxi, motorcycles, pedal cycles and to walking or to travelling at different times of day or to different destinations, or car sharing.

Traders within and around the zone remain unconvinced of the benefits of the congestion zone. Many believe it has led to a decline in business as fewer customers are driving into London. Mayor Livingstone's response to this is to suggest that business revenue is down all over the UK as a result of slowing in the economy. The AA said that they thought that fewer roadworks and a change to traffic lights had also had an impact on congestion.

A report of the social, economic and environmental effects of the scheme will not be available until the spring of 2004.