



STAFF REPORT

DATE: 09/17/2025
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
FROM: Public Works Department

2025-353

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

SUBJECT:

REQUEST FROM COUNCIL MEMBER SPEAKE TO EXPLORE CORDON PRICING FOR THE GREEN RIVER ROAD/FOOTHILL PARKWAY CORRIDOR TO DETER CUT THROUGH TRAFFIC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks the City Council to provide direction on procuring a potential feasibility study to implement Cordon pricing along Green River Road/Foothill Parkway

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council provide feedback and direction regarding procurement of a consultant to prepare a preliminary feasibility study to determine Green River Road/Foothill Parkway Cordon pricing's legal feasibility, constructability, pricing strategy, implementation costs, potential revenue, and possible partnerships with other agencies.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

Council Member Speake submitted a Future Agenda Item Request Form, requesting staff to explore Cordon pricing of the Green River Road/Foothill Parkway corridor to deter cut-through traffic. The Green River Road/Foothill Parkway is commonly used as an alternative route to/from State Route 91 (SR-91) and Interstate 15 (I-15) when traffic

volume is heavy on the freeways. This causes vehicle congestion in the city from non-residents and contributes to accelerated wear and tear on city streets. With the new Route 241 and SR-91 toll connector project, an increase of fees of toll roads fees, continued state of construction, the state-mandated building of housing units south and east of Corona, and no alternative transportation proposed on SR- 91 or I-15 in the immediate future, motorists will continue to use Corona as a cut-through path of travel.

Cordon pricing is a type of dynamic zone-based pricing implemented during times of heavy vehicle congestion. In traditional Cordon pricing programs, any motorist who enters and exits the designated zone must pay a fee. Councilmember Speake proposed a program implemented within the city where license plate readers would be set up at strategic SR-91 and I-15 on/off ramps to capture vehicles that enter and exit the city within an allotted time frame. Those motorists would pay a toll equal to the rate on the SR-91/I-15 road; however, if a vehicle is registered to a Corona resident, a 90% discount will be applied.

ANALYSIS:

Cordon pricing currently exists in six international cities (Oslo, Stockholm, Gothenburg, London, Milan, and Singapore). Five American cities (Vancouver, Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles) and one international city (Auckland) are considering implementation. One American city (New York City) is in the process of implementing. San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City were researched as part of this request and are further summarized below.

San Francisco started to explore Cordon pricing in 2019, but has paused the study since 2021 due to “the changing and fluid conditions surrounding traffic conditions and transit use.” The proposed location is in their downtown area, where motorists would be charged to enter the specified zone during typical AM and PM vehicle volume peak hours. Potential fees would be based on the driver’s income and a 50% discount for zone residents. The project's goals are to get traffic moving, increase safety, clean the air, and advance equity.

Los Angeles started to explore Cordon pricing in 2019, but has been refining concept designs for potential pricing zones based on modeling results and public feedback since 2022. The proposed locations are in the Santa Monica Mountains, I-10 West, and downtown Los Angeles. Potential fees would be reduced for low-income motorists, exceptions would be made for vehicles with three or more passengers, and a “transit credit” reward program would be offered for motorists who choose alternative transportation options. The project goals are to reduce congestion, enhance economic opportunity, reduce air and climate pollution, make roads safer and transit faster, and reinvest in the communities.

New York City implemented the first phase of Cordon pricing in January 2025 in the downtown Manhattan area. After the change in administration, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) has rescinded its approval of the pilot program and is threatening to shut down the program, but New York City has maintained its legal justifications in court. Motorists are charged to enter the specified zone from 5 AM to 9

PM on weekdays and 9 AM to 9 PM on weekends. Fees are based on the type of vehicle, with discounts applied to motorists with low income, people with disabilities, organizations transporting people with disabilities, emergency vehicles, buses, and specialized government vehicles. The program goals are to reduce traffic and travel time, provide safer streets and cleaner air, reduce emissions, improve quality of life, and raise revenue for public transit improvements.

A successful Cordon pricing program relies on a few factors such as, but are not limited to, the following:

- Legislation allows applying fees to publicly funded and maintained roadways.
- A strong public transportation system.
- Robust toll collection technology.
- Easily identified and controlled entrance and exit locations for a specified zone.
- Visitors who travel to the zone for various attractions such as shopping and dining (typically a downtown area).
- A pricing schedule that advances equity while balancing operation costs and financial objectives to raise revenue for public improvements.
- Close relationship with neighboring agencies.

A preliminary analysis of the Green River Road/Foothill Parkway corridor would consider the following:

- Typically, highways constructed with Federal-aid highway funds cannot be tolled (23 U.S.C. § 301). The “Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act” may justify an exception per the New York City vs. USDOT case study. Further investigation from the procured consultant and the City’s legal team will be needed.
- Public buses and bike lanes are currently provided along the study corridor. Corona falls short of the scaled public transportation infrastructure found in other cities that have/plan to implement Cordon pricing.
- The City would need to hire a toll collection company with technology to easily identify vehicles that enter and exit the corridor and verify who qualifies for a discount.
- Since the Green River Road/Foothill Parkway is a corridor as opposed to a zone, providing a clear message to people about which entrance and exit points trigger a fee may be a challenge. An analysis of which locations will and will not trigger a fee will need to be carefully strategized since there are many access points along the corridor and may incur negative impacts to adjacent roadways.
- Per Councilmember Speake’s vision, this program is aimed at motorists who are cutting through the City as opposed to limiting how zone patrons access an area. If Cordon pricing were implemented within the City, local businesses may be negatively impacted by fewer patrons who pass through the City to/from their out-of-area destination.
- Per Councilmember Speake’s request, his vision is to provide a 90% discount that would be applied to Corona residents; however, other cities use a 50% or less discount only for zone residents. With a 90% discount applied to all Corona residents, the program may struggle to achieve its financial goals.

- The location of license plate readers at SR-91/I-15 on/off ramps requires coordination with Caltrans. Neighboring agencies should also be included in the discussion since SR-91/I-15 access could strain their current infrastructure.

Direction from the City Council is requested by staff, providing the following options on moving forward with Cordon Pricing in Corona:

Possible Options for Moving Forward with Cordon Pricing

Option	Pro	Con
A: Do not proceed and keep the status quo.	No additional resources and funding required.	Congestion and increasing maintenance costs on Green River Road/Foothill Parkway continue due to cut-through traffic.
B: Wait and observe how other programs are progressing	The City can analyze lessons learned from other cities that have implemented the program. This allows time to observe if upcoming RCTC/Caltrans projects positively address congestion in the city.	Congestion and increasing maintenance costs on Green River Road/Foothill Parkway may continue due to cut-through traffic.
C: Prepare a focused case study by procuring a consultant	The study will help provide a holistic understanding of congestion data collected and determine if Cordon Pricing works in the City.	The study cost ranges from \$300K-\$600K and is not budgeted. Funds would need to be pulled from another already funded project to pay for the study.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with the recommended action. The cost to procure a consultant to prepare a preliminary Cordon pricing study within the city ranges between \$300,000 and \$600,000, which was not budgeted as part of the current fiscal year. Should Council direct staff to move forward with the study, an appropriation would need to be approved by the City Council at a future time. The financial impact of full Cordon pricing implementation will be determined by a feasibility study and staff will return to Council at a later date with an appropriation request.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

PREPARED BY: LEAH COLMARD, ASSOCIATE ENGINEER - TRAFFIC

REVIEWED BY: SAVAT KHAMPHOU, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Exhibit 1 – Presentation
2. Exhibit 2 – Future Agenda Item Request