



STAFF REPORT

DATE: 01/21/2026
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
FROM: Public Works Department

2026-23

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

SUBJECT:

REQUEST FROM VICE MAYOR SPEAKE TO EXPLORE CORDON PRICING FOR THE GREEN RIVER ROAD/FOOTHILL PARKWAY CORRIDOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This presentation asks the City Council for direction on exploring a Cordon Pricing program for the Green River Road/Foothill Parkway corridor to deter cut-through traffic.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council provide feedback and direction on the procurement of a consultant to prepare a feasibility study to determine the possibility and legality of a Cordon Pricing program along the Green River Road/Foothill Parkway corridor between the State Route 91 (SR-91) to Interstate 15 (I-15). Additionally, the study would monitor how other Cordon Pricing programs are progressing, monitor vehicular volume of cut-through traffic within the city, impacts from the State Route 241 (SR-241)/State Route 91 (SR-91) and SR-91 Eastern Corridor Operations Projects (ECOP), and determine potential revenue sources and expenditures. The purpose of the program would be to deter cut-through traffic in Corona.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

Vice Mayor Speake submitted a Future Agenda Item Request Form, requesting staff to explore a Cordon Pricing program for the Green River Road/Foothill Parkway corridor and other east/west connections to I-15 to deter cut-through traffic. Green River Road/Foothill Parkway is commonly used as an alternative route to/from SR-91 and I-15 when freeway volumes are heavy. This causes vehicle congestion in the city from non-residents and accelerates wear and tear on city streets. With the new SR-241 to SR-91 toll connector project, an increase in toll road fees, continued state of construction, 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 a designated zone must pay a fee. Vice Mayor Speake envisions a program implemented within the city in which license plate readers would be set up at strategic locations at on/off ramps to capture vehicles entering and exiting the city over a period of time. Those motorists would pay a fee equal to the rate on the SR-91/I-15 toll roads; however, Corona residents will be exempt.

ANALYSIS:

The variations between Cordon Pricing and toll roads are further noted below.

- The primary goals of Cordon Pricing are to manage traffic demand and reduce congestion, emissions, and noise in a specific, dense urban area. The primary goals of toll roads are to generate revenue for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a specific road, bridge, or tunnel.
- Cordon Pricing charges drivers for crossing a defined boundary or "cordon" around a city center or highly congested zone. Toll roads apply to a specific road. Drivers pay for the privilege of using that particular piece of infrastructure.
- The Cordon Pricing fee structure is often a flat daily fee to enter or drive within the zone. Some schemes use variable pricing that changes based on the time of day. The toll road fee structure can be a fixed fee or vary by distance traveled, vehicle type, or time of day.
- Cordon Pricing is typically found in city centers. Toll roads are implemented on highways, bridges, and tunnels.
- Cordon Pricing encourages the use of public transit, cycling, and walking within the city center. It can also reduce traffic delays and improve air quality. Toll roads provide a faster travel option for drivers willing to pay and can fund transportation projects without relying solely on general taxation.

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

San Francisco began exploring Cordon Pricing in 2019 but paused the study in 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, reduce air pollution, and advance equity.

Los Angeles began exploring Cordon Pricing in 2019 and 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 3 or more passengers, and a “transit credit” reward program would be offered to motorists who choose alternative transportation. 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 downtown Manhattan. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) has attempted to shut down the project, 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 for low-income motorists, people with disabilities, organizations that transport 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 preliminary analysis of the Green River Road/Foothill Parkway corridor and potential challenges of implementing such a program envisioned by Vice Mayor Speake are further explained below.

1. 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 a procured consultant and the City’s legal team will be needed.
2. Although public buses and bike lanes are currently provided along the study corridor, it falls short of the scaled public transportation infrastructure found in other cities that have/plan to implement Cordon Pricing.
3. The City would need to hire a fee collection company with technology to easily identify vehicles that enter and exit the corridor and verify who qualifies for a discount.
4. Green River Road/Foothill Parkway is more of a corridor than 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.

5. The 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 affected by fewer patrons passing through the City to/from their out-of-area destinations.
6. A fee exception is currently recommended by Vice Mayor Speake for Corona residents. Other cities use a 50% or less discount for zone residents. With the proposed fee exception applied to all Corona residents, the program may struggle to achieve financial sustainability.
7. Coordination with Caltrans is required for the location of license plate readers at SR-91/I-15 on/off ramps. Additionally, neighboring agencies should be included in the discussion, as SR-91/I-15 access could strain their existing infrastructure.

Direction from the City Council is requested by staff, providing the following options for Cordon Pricing:

- A. Do not proceed and keep status quo:
Pros: No additional resources and funding required.
Cons: 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, with a future discussion with City Council to revisit potential implementation in Corona:
Pros: 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.
Cons: Congestion and increasing maintenance costs on Green River Road/Foothill Parkway continues due to cut-through traffic.
- C. Prepare a focused case study by procuring a consultant:
Pros: The study will help provide a holistic understanding of congestion data collected and determine if Cordon Pricing may work in the City.
Cons: The study cost ranges from \$300K-\$600K (not budgeted), which would reduce available funding for other projects.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with the approval of Option A or B listed above. However, for Option C, the cost to procure a consultant to prepare a preliminary Cordon Pricing study within the city is estimated range between \$300,000 and \$600,000 and was not budgeted as part of the current fiscal year. Therefore, if this option is chosen, the City Council will need to make a future appropriation. The financial impact of implementing full Cordon Pricing would be determined through the feasibility study.

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. This action involves the decision to potentially move forward with a feasibility study, and there is no possibility that proceeding with a study will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

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ATTACHMENTS:

1. Exhibit 1 – Presentation
2. Exhibit 2 – Future Agenda Item Request (Updated)