



Congestion charge, tolls axed in Queensland road infrastructure plan

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A CONGESTION charge would replace toll fees under a bold plan to beat gridlock and pay for new roads.

Ahead of a federal review of future transport funding, the Queensland Government has been urged to embrace courageous new ways to build and repair the state's road network as traditional funding sources dry up.

The Infrastructure Association of Queensland wants an audit of Brisbane's busiest roads to determine a CBD boundary in which to charge motorists via electronic tracking of their cars.

But people would enjoy free travel on the underused Clem7, Airport Link and Legacy Way as a trade-off to encourage them to bypass busier arterials.

The call comes as the State Government reviews a scathing Queensland Audit Office report that found a \$9 billion underfunding of roads and public transport upgrades needed in the next decade.

IAQ chief executive Steve Abson said Brisbane was perfectly set up for congestion charging in the next decade, with the Riverside Expressway and other city ramps possible toll points.

Express lanes on busy routes could also be available for those willing to pay to glide past traffic, themselves contributing more to roadworks, he said.



Motorists drive over a painted C on a London road, indicating they are about to enter a congestion charge zone.

Mr Abson said it was incumbent on Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk – with the Government being the state’s chief road builder – to take a brave stance as electric cars carved out petrol excise and registration payments are tipped to fall as more people rent their rides.

While road user charging didn’t “ring with resounding appeal” to the public, people had to understand that without replacement taxes, sufficient roads would not exist, he said.

“To the public, it’s a conversation about queuing for the bus, getting stuck for an hour in traffic, and new ways of travel and not macroeconomics,” he said.

The RACQ backed calls for Ms Palaszczuk to take a lead role in the debate, although it is pushing for per kilometre charging, rather than a congestion tax.

Cars would be electronically tracked and motorists pay for how far they drove and when and where they drove, with peak hour and inner-city driving costing more than night and regional travel.

Spokesman Paul Turner said Ms Palaszczuk had a chance to explore new ideas rather than “stick our heads in the sand” and allow drivers to mistakenly feel it wasn’t their problem.

“They generally believe they pay enough tax to drive down a road for free,” he said.

“We’re getting to a point where we’re going to have to look for new ways of funding those roads or we just won’t have them in the future.”