

ANALYSIS BRIEF

TOLLWAY USE

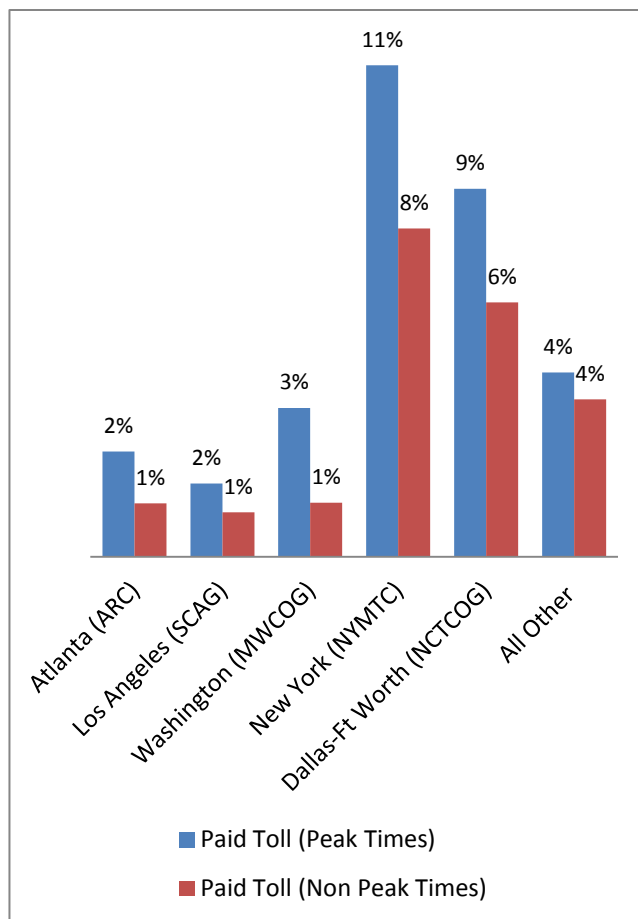
Tolls and other user fees are being considered by Federal, State, and local agencies as a way to finance new construction and capacity and/or manage congestion during peak periods of travel on the highways. Current fiscal concerns coupled with better electronic toll technology have combined to make toll roads more attractive to policy makers. This brief uses the National Household Travel Survey to examine the public’s use of tollways (passenger travel) in a selection of areas around the country.

Different areas have different amounts of current toll facilities. For example, Texas has more toll roads than California and New York the most tolled miles of any State¹. And different areas have different time of day profiles—in the Dallas Ft. Worth area 42 percent of all driver trips occurred in the peak period while in Washington DC area only 38 percent of all driver trips started during peak (these are the highest and lowest percents of the areas studied).

These differences and other local considerations create different proportions of toll-road use, as shown in Figure 1. According to the 2009 NHTS, in the New York region 10 percent of drivers paid a toll—11 percent for travel during the peak

periods and 8 percent during off-peak. In the Dallas-Ft. Worth region 9 percent of drivers in the peak period paid a toll while 6 percent paid during off-peak travel. Travel during peak period includes driver trips starting between 6 and 9 am or 4 to 7 pm.

Exhibit 1 – Percent of Driver Trips by Toll (selected regions)



1

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/tollpage/t1part3.cfm>

The NHTS is a unique data source that allows the analyst to examine the characteristics of the trips and the drivers on toll-roads during peak periods, and compare them to other trips and drivers. For example, in the selected areas the distance travelled on tolled trips was longer than comparable trips that did not have a toll (see Figure 2), especially in New York.

Figure 2 – Average Trip Length for Peak Period Driver Trips by Toll (selected regions)

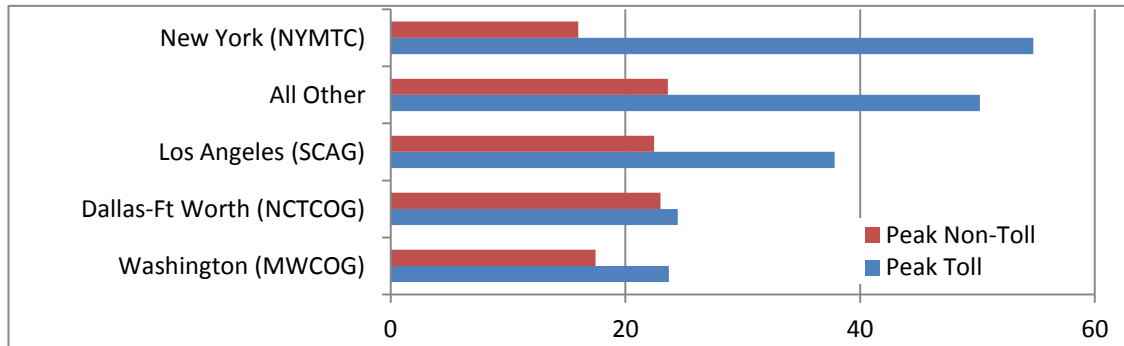
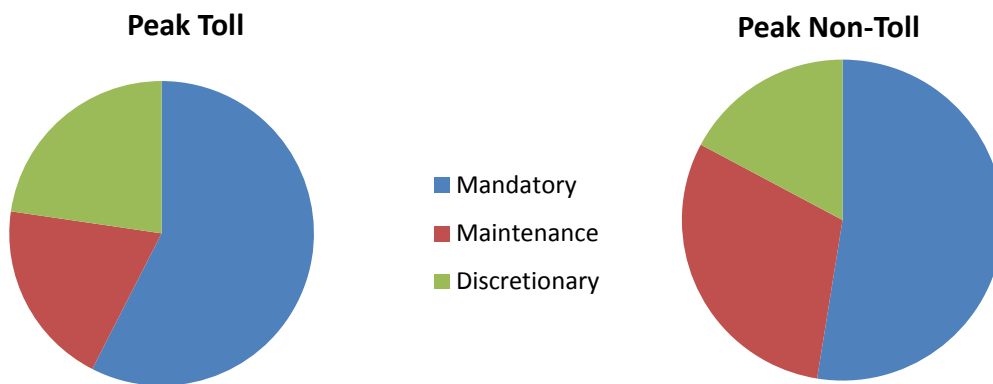


Figure 3 shows the purpose of trips made during peak by whether a toll was paid. It is not surprising that many of the peak trips that were not on tolled roads were for maintenance travel (shopping, errands, doctors, etc.). What is notable is that many of the tolled trips were for discretionary purposes (eating out, entertainment, social and recreational). This purpose is sometimes under-recognized as an important market for toll facilities.

Figure 3 – Purpose of Peak period Travel for Toll and Non-Tolled Highways



The NHTS data only allows a broad examination of the public’s use of toll roads, and further study on the types of trips, time of day, and purpose is critical to forecasting toll use in any specific corridor.