

# **ROAD USER CHARGING IN NORWAY – UNIQUE IN THE WORLD? A PRESENTATION OF THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF RUC IN NORWAY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **1. ACCEPTANCE OF ROAD USER CHARGING**

The road user charging in Norway has its roots from the western Norway where tolling financed bridges or tunnels across the fjords. The people were used to pay for the ferries and would gladly pay the same, or even a bit more, to cross the fjords faster, at any time they wanted. They also knew that everything they were paying was going to finance the fjord crossing, and when the project was paid for, the toll station would be removed.

That principle has been continued in all the other toll projects in Norway, with clearly benefits for those who have to pay the toll and a limited period for the charging in each project.

Another factor that can explain the high level of acceptance is the AutoPASS-system. The tolling is fully automatic, based on on-board-units or photos of the license plate, a so called free-flow system. That means that the traffic can pass the toll station at the same speed they would have driven in if there weren't any toll station.

### **2. DIFFERENT SCHEMES OF CHARGING**

There are three types of schemes in Norway.

#### **2.1 Single road project**

One specific road section which is constructed first, loan financed by a toll road company, and then repaid by tolling, usually over a period of 15 years. Ex: a tunnel or a highway section.

#### **2.2 City schemes**

Toll stations placed in a ring around a city means that everyone travels in (or out) of the city is charged. The revenues is primarily used on road project inside the ring, but could also be used for measures in public transport.

#### **2.3 Charging on ferry**

Road-projects that shall replace ferries, like bridges or undersea tunnels. In the construction period the ferry charge toll (in addition to the ferry-ticket) to co-finance the road-project.

### **3. PROCESS OF PROJECTS**

All toll projects in Norway are based on a local initiative and local political consensus, but it is the Parliament that approves the tolling scheme. The benefit of such a scheme is the existence of a strong democratic basis behind every tolling project.

Collection of road tolls is conducted by a non-profit toll company owned by local authorities. The tolling period is usually up to 15 years.

### **4. USE OF MONEY**

Road tolling has a financial purpose, i.e. to maximize revenues and not to reduce traffic levels. Most of the income from road tolls goes to finance road infrastructure such as, bridges, tunnels, motorways and trunk roads.

In urban areas with toll cordons financing road infrastructure is important, but road tolls can also be used to finance a variety of projects within the overall transport system. This means that road tolls also can be used as grants for the operation of local public transport in these cities.

### **5. FUTURE OF ROAD USER CHARGING IN NORWAY**

5.1 Expand interoperability to include more countries in the EasyGO cooperation.

The EasyGo cooperation is fully interoperable tolling between Norway, Sweden and Denmark. From 2012 we will also include Austria in the collaboration, and we hope that we can include more countries in the next years, so the foreigners can use their OBU from their home-country to travel in Norway, and Norwegians can travel Europe with their AutoPASS-unit.

5.2 Increase the percentage of user with OBU

The most effective tolling is made from users with OBU. The higher OBU-ratio- the lower costs for the toll companies. From 2012 we will implement mandatory OBU for all vehicles over 7,5 ton. Because we can't reach every foreigner without OBU, transport companies from some countries can travel without paying toll. That means they'll get a competitive advantage.

5.3 More efficient organization

Today there is one toll company for each road tolling project. The toll companies are only responsible for financing the project. With over 40 projects that is an inefficient way to operate the toll collection. Therefore we intend to merge most of the companies into a few regional companies. These will be larger, more professional companies that can take advantage of scale economics and achieve better loan terms.