



Bergen, Norway

Bergen is located on the western coast of Norway. With a population of close to 250,000 inhabitants, it is the country's second largest city. The Bergen region has a population of close to 350,000.

Bergen was the first Norwegian city to introduce a toll ring scheme in 1986. The fact that there had been toll roads in Bergen and the surrounding areas over a long period of time prior to the toll ring, may explain why Bergen was the first city in Norway to introduce such a scheme. At that time, Singapore was the only other city in the world with a somewhat similar system.

In 2003, the toll cordon was prolonged through the Bergen Programme. Due to both lower income and higher costs than expected, this new package was revised in 2005. The revised package has prolonged the toll ring until 2015 and added five new toll plazas. The Bergen package has two major projects: a ring road and a new city tram ("Bybanen").

Why was urban road user charging introduced in Bergen?

The goal of the original Bergen toll ring was to raise funds for road investments in order to speed up a solution to the increasing traffic problems in Bergen.

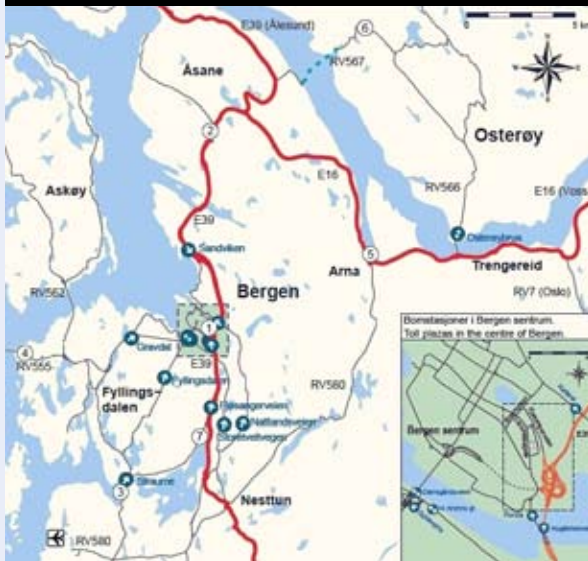
Similarly, the road user charging objective of the new Bergen Programme is also to raise funds for investments. This time, however, the use of the revenue will be split between road investments and investments in public transport infrastructure, primarily a new city tram. With the introduction of the Bergen Programme, road user charging has been discussed. However, the political parties all over Norway have been reluctant to introduce such schemes.

What are the features of the Bergen scheme?

On January 2, 1986, toll collection was introduced on the main roads into Bergen. Due to the geographical location it was possible to make a tight ring with fee collection at only six locations. Until 2001 the operation of the system was on weekdays from 6.00 to 22.00. Originally, the hours of operation were based on a cost versus revenue consideration not a road user charging approach. With the prolongation of the ring in 2001, 24-hour operation was introduced on weekdays. The 2005 revision introduced tolling on all days.

Gradually, the system has expanded to make the burden more equally split. The 2005 revision introduced

Charging area



a second ring and made the ring fully automated with the use of the AutoPASS system. All car drivers must pass the toll ring when they drive in the direction of the city centre. The toll must be paid 24 hours a day all year round including weekends and holidays. The fee is NOK 15 (€2) for small cars and twice that for large vehicles. Discounts up to 40% are available with a prepayment for 175 trips. There is no extra peak surcharge. Drivers are only charged for one trip per hour in the entire system and there is a maximum payment of 50 trips per month for users of the AutoPass system. The second ring is not part of a road user charging system, but introduced to make more people pay toll. The exemptions make sure drivers only pay toll once per trip.

How was the Bergen scheme implemented?

The background for the system was an increase in the traffic and a lack of public funds. The Local Public Roads Administration was a driving force behind this solution, both formally and informally. One of the slogans for the tolling system was "As many as possible pay as little as possible for the shortest period as possible for a common good — a suitable trunk road system". At the same time a local political coalition between the major political parties was established.

The broad compromise for the prolongation through the Bergen Programme has been based on a combination of road investments and one large public transport investment. This has allowed the different political parties to join forces. There have also been discussions of changing the toll system in a direction more in line with road



user charging. However, one of the major parties in the coalition is an opponent to anything resembling road user charging. Some of the other parties have also been sceptical.

Impacts of the Bergen scheme

One of the main reasons for the Bergen toll ring was to speed up the solution to the traffic problems in Bergen. This has been a success. The investments have clearly reduced congestion. On some of the main arteries the travel time has been reduced by almost 30 minutes. Without the additional funds from the tolls (and had public funding remained the same), congestion would have increased and the environment suffered. The system has changed over time to provide a more equal split of the economic burden enhancing the equity of the system.

Conclusion

Overall, the Bergen toll ring has been considered a success with regard to the goals of lessening the city's traffic problems. Politicians have also decided to prolong the system.

