

Drivers getting cash for driving less

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A groundbreaking study is aimed at finding out if people will change their driving habits if they had to pay a toll for almost every mile they drive.

Since July, 400 volunteers in the Puget Sound Regional Council's "Traffic Choices" study have been paying virtual tolls based on when and where they are driving.

Devices mounted on their dashboards track where they travel and transmit the information to a central computer, the Seattle Times reported Tuesday.

Charges are deducted from prepaid "endowment accounts." Participants, who will get to keep any money that is left over when the experiment ends in February, can save money by not driving as much, by choosing less-congested highways or by staying off the road at rush hour, the newspaper said.

The charges, designed to discourage driving on heavily traveled roads at peak times, range from 50 cents a mile on freeways on weekdays between 3 and 6 p.m. to nothing at all between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

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