

Peak hour congestion a matter of choice for many drivers, finds national survey

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Parramatta Road, one of Sydney's most congested roads. Credit: Flickr/Tony Rodd

At least one in three drivers who commute to work during peak periods in most major cities do not need to do so and could significantly reduce traffic congestion by simply choosing a different time to travel, according to a University of Sydney Business School survey.

In Sydney, Australia's largest and most congested city, the number of peak hour drivers who said they could leave home at a different time in order to avoid [traffic congestion](#) was one in four.

The quarterly [Transport Opinion Survey](#) (TOPS) was conducted by the Business School's Institute of Transport and Logistic Studies (ITLS).

It found that a peak period (7am to 9am, and 4.30pm to 6.30pm) charge of around five cents per kilometre on major roads could encourage up to 35 percent of people who commute by car to travel at a different time or shift to public transport.

"We are often told that commuters have no flexibility in the time that they travel and yet these findings suggest otherwise," said ITLS Director, Professor David Hensher. "A fall of about six percent of peak hour trips would make a significant difference to our current levels of congestion."

The survey indicated that peak hour road pricing could encourage around 13 percent of [commuters](#) to shift to public transport and 22 percent to drive to work during an off peak period.

"This suggests that there is scope to reduce traffic congestion through road pricing while not impacting on work choices," Professor Hensher said. "As we search for ways to reduce congestion on our roads during peak travelling times, these findings are very encouraging."

TOPS also looked at attitudes towards transport and found that [Australians](#) are now less confident about the prospects of improvement in local transport than they were when first surveyed in March 2010.

However, Australians are slightly more confident than they were at the time of the last TOPS in September last year.

The latest survey also found that 53 percent of Australians saw [public transport](#) improvements as the highest priority.

TOPS is the only national survey to measure public opinion on transport related issues.

Provided by University of Sydney

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