

May 2026

Road funding: Attitudes towards reform

The need to reform road user charging (RUC) is becoming more urgent as fuel excise declines.

To better understand Australians' readiness for this reform, Transurban partnered with Transport Australia and Q-Free to gauge public support for a new road user charge.

The findings offer a clear and timely mandate: investment in road maintenance, congestion relief and key freight routes is urgently needed, and Australians are increasingly open to a more modern, transparent and equitable funding system - if it is designed and communicated well.

Research and analysis undertaken by Talbot Mills Research, on behalf of Transport Australia, Transurban and Q-Free.

The Challenge

How Australia pays for its roads is changing



- Roads are used by **80% of Australians every or most days**
- Maintenance, congestion and safety concerns are widespread
- Fuel excise was designed for a different era – when fuel use closely tracked road use
- Electric vehicles (EVs) and more fuel-efficient vehicles are breaking that link
- Road funding is increasingly exposed to global oil markets - recent fuel price shocks have required substantial temporary government support

Insight

Fuel excise is not rising at the same rate as road use.

EV sales on the rise

Australian EV sales hit an all-time record in March 2026, making up 22.9% of light vehicles sold that month.*

*Electric Vehicle Council

What Australians think

Strong Concern, Low Awareness

 **78%** worried about road maintenance

 **75%** worried about congestion

 Only **33%** understand how roads are funded

 **Roads** are the top infrastructure priority across age groups

Insight

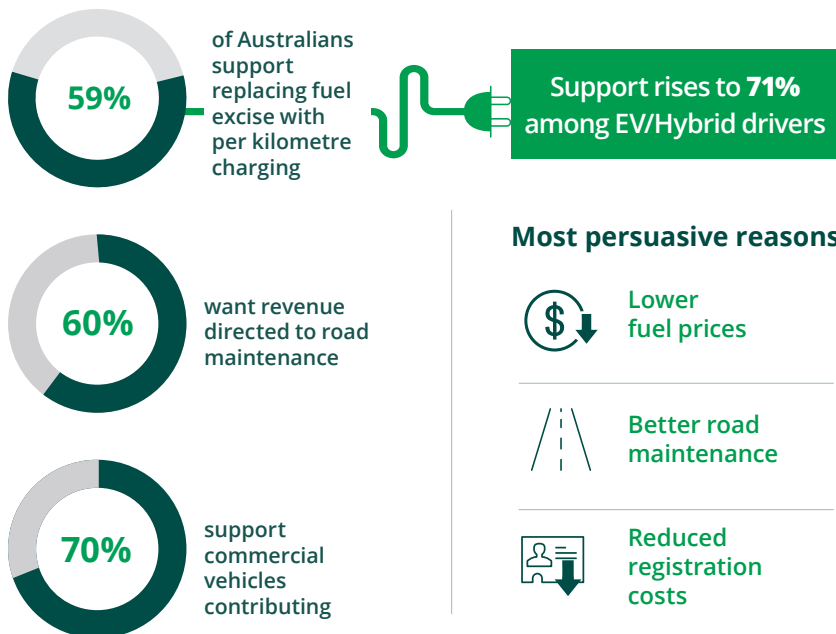
Australians value high-quality roads, but the vast majority don't know how they are currently paid for.

Did you know?

A sustainable road funding model can keep our cities moving and directly contribute towards the construction and maintenance of roads, while freeing up government funding for other transport priorities - including public and active transport.

Openness to Change

When the benefits are clear, support follows



Insight

People care less about theory and more about what improves their daily drive.

Designing reform the right way

What Australians Expect

- ✓ Choice in how charges are calculated (electronic or manual options)
- ✓ Strong privacy protections
- ✓ Fair treatment across vehicle types
- ✓ Gradual, staged introduction
- ✓ Clear link between revenue and road outcomes

What matters to drivers

- Outcomes, not ideology
- Visible improvements to roads
- Clear use of revenue (maintenance, freight routes, safety)

Insight

The public is open to reform if it is fair, phased, transparent and clearly linked to better roads.

Transurban's experience advancing RUC solutions

Transurban has a long history of partnering with government and industry to explore RUC solutions that balance policy objectives with the needs of drivers.

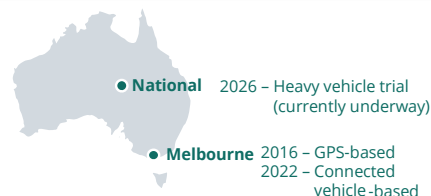
In the US, we've partnered with state governments to explore technologies that would make mileage-based transport funding a reality, and even processed real-money transactions.

4 USA on-road trials



In 2016, we undertook the first real-world test of user-pays road charging in Australia. A decade on, we're trialling an operational RUC system for commercial vehicles.

3 AUS on-road trials



We supplement these trials with regular research that we make available to our government partners, to support and shape road user charging developments.

10 years thought leadership



RUC Industry Report Urban Mobility Trend Reports

Looking ahead

Globally, distance based charging is becoming the norm as fuel excise declines. With careful design and public engagement, Australia can modernise the way we fund our roads in a way that is fair, resilient and future ready.