Distance related electronic toll in Austria

For some time Austria had been working on basic plans for the introduction of a use-oriented system that will see users of the country’s high-level roads assuming a share of road costs. The main motivation behind the decision to introduce a road-charging system was primarily the aspect to involve as much as possible those drivers using the network’s toll roads in a fair cost coverage system. The Federal Highways Financing Act of 1996 and several amending statutes pertaining to it provide the legal basis for the collection of tolls on motorways and similar roads such as expressways.

All vehicles above a permissible gross weight of 3.5 tons - in other words mainly commercial vehicles but also big motorhomes and buses - will be obliged to pay toll. 2,000 km of the high-level-road network (motorways and expressways) – in the responsibility of the state owned Austrian Motorway Company ASFINAG—are subject to the new toll collection system.

Because the current EU-Directive 99/62/EC permits tolls only in relation to the infrastructure costs, it has been decided that these costs will at least be credited on the basis of the distance travelled.

Recipient of the toll-revenues is ASFINAG, also responsible for toll-collection.

The toll-rates - graduated in three classes according to the number of axles have been fixed in November 2002 in a decree by the Minister of Transport on basis of the law concerned.

The rate for vehicles with two axles is 0,13 €/km,
with three axles 0,182 €/km (+ 40 %) and
with four or more axles 0,273/km (+110 %).

The theoretical average toll rate is therefore 0,22 €/km (excl. VAT).
On the Alps-crossing mountainous sections which cause higher costs and had been tolled for all vehicles already in the past higher rates are fixed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>number of Axles</th>
<th>Class 2</th>
<th>Class 3</th>
<th>Class 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toll-rate (€ / km)</td>
<td>0,130</td>
<td>0,182</td>
<td>0,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation</td>
<td>1,0</td>
<td>1,4</td>
<td>2,1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the first year of operation ASFINAG expected (additional) toll-revenue of 600 Mio. € that could exactly been met. This revenue together with the revenue coming from the Vignette system (light vehicles) and from the alpine toll sections is earmarked for construction and maintenance of the tolled road network and also to cover the financial obligations from former road construction activities.

Also the EU-enlargement combined with the necessity of better links to the new member-states demand a lot of additional infrastructure-investments for Austria.

Toll collection takes place with an fully electronic toll-system, that allows payment in proportion to the distance travelled without an obstruction of the traffic flow (free flow, multilane).

The tendering and competition phase for the Austrian toll system was terminated in June 2002. Austria was looking for a system operator that operates the toll system with its “own” toll collection technology on the basis of a ten years service contract to be concluded with ASFINAG.

In order to exploit the full innovative potential of the industry and to achieve the most reliable and efficient toll system possible, companies bidding for the contract were not restricted to any particular system technology.

The company ASFINAG, responsible for the introduction of the EFC system, decided finally for Autostrade S.p.a. as the best bidder in the evaluation process. Autostrade, respectively its Austrian subsidiary EUORPASS, use for toll collection a microwave based 5,8 GHz DSRC technology with road-ride radio-antennas on gantries in each motorway section between junctions.
Interoperability to other electronic toll systems is possible from the very beginning with the Swiss (LSVA) On-Board-Units (3000 contracts with Swiss OBU-users). In the year 2006 the compatibility also with the Italian toll system (“Telepass”) is expected (bi-modal OBU); also with systems existing in Slovenia and France a cooperation is on the way.

With the German satellite based system interoperability will be possible in general; but there is yet an additional need for special technical adaptations in the German OBU’s.

In Austria, toll-collection is running in time since 1. January 2004. The Austrian On-Board-Unit, called “Go-Box” (cigarette-box-sized) is distributed since September 2003 for only 5 € handling-fee on a dense network of points of sales in Austria and on all access-roads from neighbouring countries.

Users can choose between two different methods of payment:

**The pre-pay procedure**

Users who rarely drive on the toll road network can choose to pay the toll using the pre-pay procedure. This procedure is similar to that of a prepaid telephone card; the user charges the card with toll credit up to a certain maximum limit and the toll is then automatically deducted from this credit as required.

**The post-pay procedure**

According to this procedure, the owner of the vehicle registers with the system and provides an authorised means of payment, which is later used to pay the toll as required. The money is collected by the relevant card issuer (Maestro card, petrol card or credit card like VISA, Mastercard etc.).
Almost 85% of toll-transactions are actually been done by post-payment.

Toll-enforcement happens on the one hand by stationary toll-enforcement-gantries and portable enforcement equipments and on the other hand by a mobile control unit ("toll-enforcement-officers"). Users can get information by a toll-service-team (Call Centre) round the clock in 6 languages or from the internet.

Since mid of 2005 EUROPASS is integrated into the company structure of ASFINAG.

The introduction of a kilometre-based electronic toll system in Austria is a significant step towards achieving a more just distribution of costs in the road transport sector. In addition, the electronics used for the toll system may allow Austria to improve traffic information and provide more effective traffic management in the future.

More and additional information you can find in the Internet:
web site of the motorway operator ASFINAG www.asfinag.at or
web site of the toll system in many languages www.go-maut.at