
Testimony to the Joint Interim Committee on the Interstate 5 Bridge

Joe Cortright
October 1, 2020



January 2014

“Investment Grade Analysis”

\$3.50 tolls on I-5 would gridlock I-205

The Oregonian

ALWAYS ON  OREGONLIVE.COM

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 2014

CRC to push gridlock east

A new, tolled I-5 bridge will lead to a big jump in traffic on the I-205 span, a report says



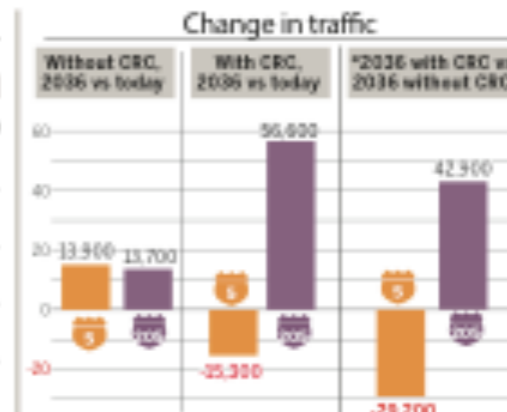
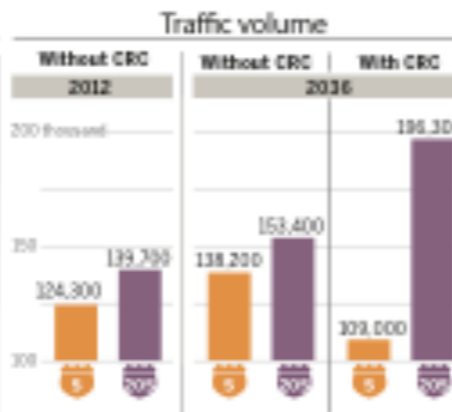
ASSOCIATED PRESS/2005



JAMIE FRANCIS/THE OREGONIAN/2012

A report says that if the Interstate 5 bridge (left) is replaced by a tolled Columbia River Crossing, daily traffic on the Interstate 205 bridge (right) is projected at 196,300 — 42,900 vehicles more than if the CRC were not built. That level of traffic would push the I-205 span to its capacity.

Columbia crossings



*Comparing traffic volume in 2036 with and without the CRC (i.e., 20,200 fewer trips on I-5 with CRC than there would be without it)

SAM HOLLEY/THE OREGONIAN

“The I-205 corridor is a crucial component of the region’s transportation system that can



IGA Doubled Minimum Toll

	<i>Final Environmental Impact Statement</i>	Investment Grade Analysis
<u>Transponder</u>		
Highest (Peak)	\$2.69	\$3.25
Lowest (Off Peak)	\$1.34	\$2.60
<u>No Transponder</u>		
Highest (Peak)	\$4.46	\$5.02
Lowest (Off Peak)	\$3.11	\$4.37

Diversion

- Tolling I-5, but not I-205:
- Will overload I-205 as soon as tolls are implemented
- Will result in the new 12-lane CRC being an underused white elephant for decades
- CRC will make the region's transportation system worse, and leave us poorer

I-205 Gridlock

- Today, I-205 carries about 139,000 ADT
- IGA predicts that tolling I-5 in 2022 will result in 50,000 more vehicles crossing I-205 than today.
- And in 2030, I-5 tolls will result 55,000 more vehicles crossing I-205 than today
- Meanwhile, I-5 will always carry fewer cars than today.

Massive Diversion to I-205

Average Daily Traffic, I-5 & I-205, Today, 2022, and 2030

	<u>I-5</u>	<u>I-205</u>	<u>Total</u>
TODAY	124	139	263
2022	85	191	276
<i>Change from Today</i>	-39	52	13
2030	98	194	292
<i>Change from Today</i>	-26	55	29

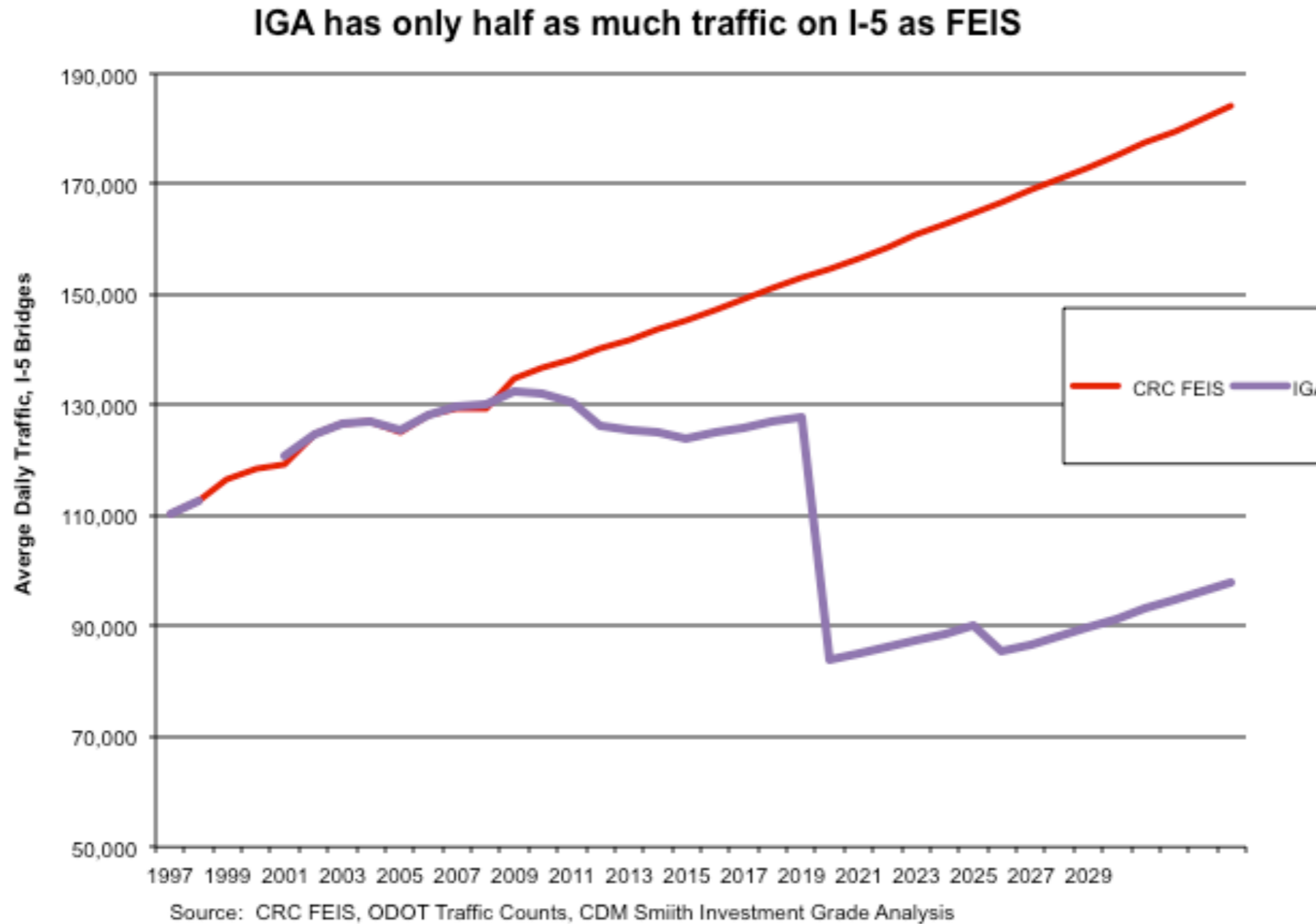
Source: Investment Grade Analysis, January 2014

ADT in thousands, 2030 data interpolated using 2022-2036 average growth rate

CRC = White Elephant

- Today, I-5 carries about 124,000 ADT
- CDM Smith predicts that in 2030, I-5 will carry between 109,000 vehicles.
- Two decades from now, after spending \$3 billion, we will have a 12-lane bridge that is used by fewer vehicles than use the current structure

IGA: Tolls Produce Permanently Lower Traffic on I-5



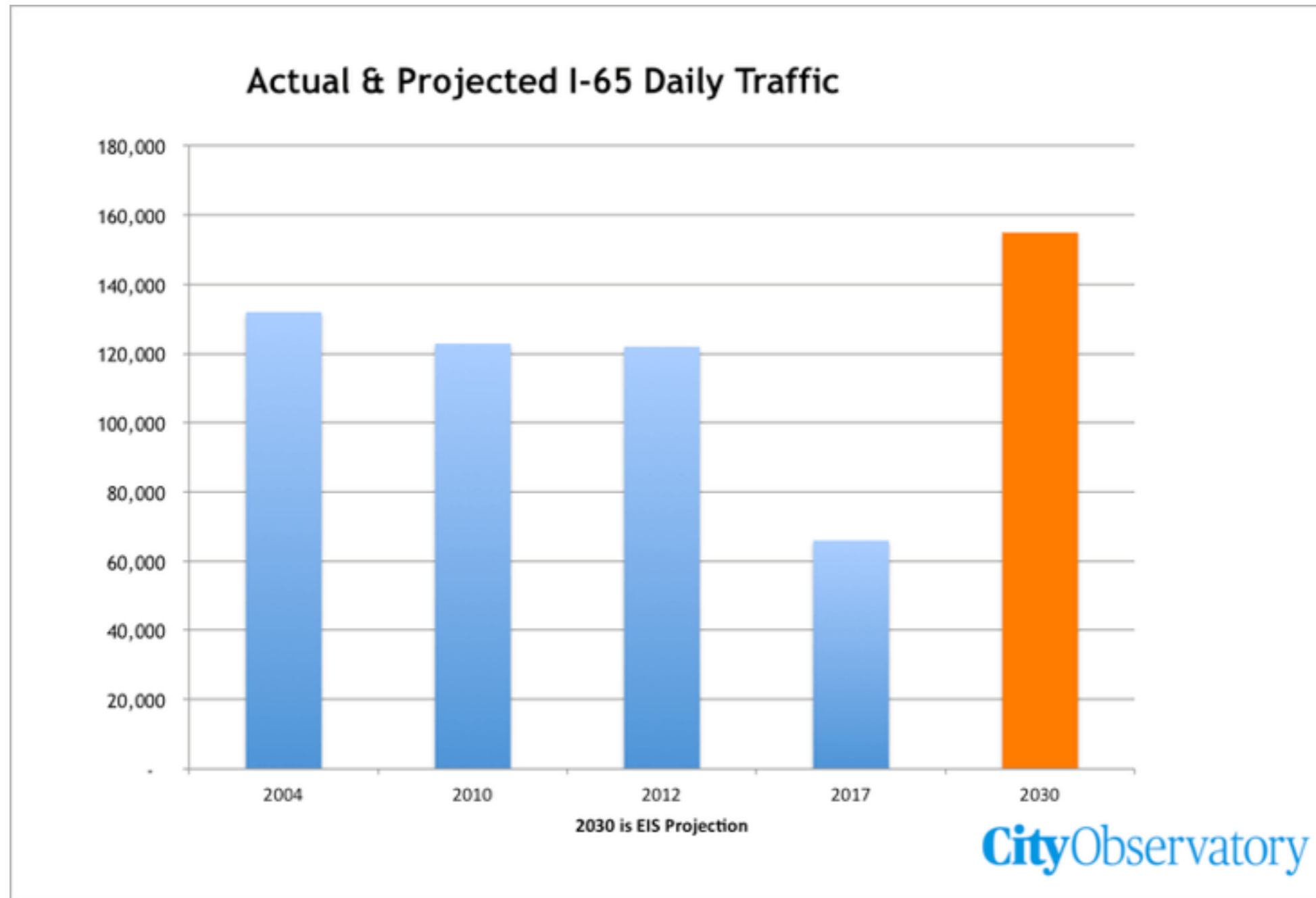
Lesson from Louisville



Spent \$1.3 billion to double I-65
Ohio River Crossing from 6-lanes to 12-lanes



They charged a \$1-2 toll— traffic dropped by 40%



They wasted \$1.3 billion



Price first, build later!



Synopsis

- **Why we have congestion**
- **Widening freeways doesn't work**
- **Value price first, build later, or waste billions**



Why we have congestion



The parable of Ben and Jerry



Once a year, it's free



Free ice cream!

Need we say more?



And they have congestion



Which is the same thing that happens here, every day



You can't build your way out of congestion

**“Induced demand”:
With “free” roads, more
capacity simply generates
more traffic**



Fundamental Law of Road Congestion

American Economic Review 101 (October 2011): 2616–2652
<http://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/aer.101.6.2616>

The Fundamental Law of Road Congestion: Evidence from US Cities[†]

By GILLES DURANTON AND MATTHEW A. TURNER*

We investigate the effect of lane kilometers of roads on vehicle-kilometers traveled (VKT) in US cities. VKT increases proportionately to roadway lane kilometers for interstate highways and probably slightly less rapidly for other types of roads. The sources for this extra VKT are increases in driving by current residents, increases in commercial traffic, and migration. Increasing lane kilometers for one type of road diverts little traffic from other types of road. We find no evidence that the provision of public transportation affects VKT. We conclude that increased provision of roads or public transit is unlikely to relieve congestion. (JEL R41, R48)



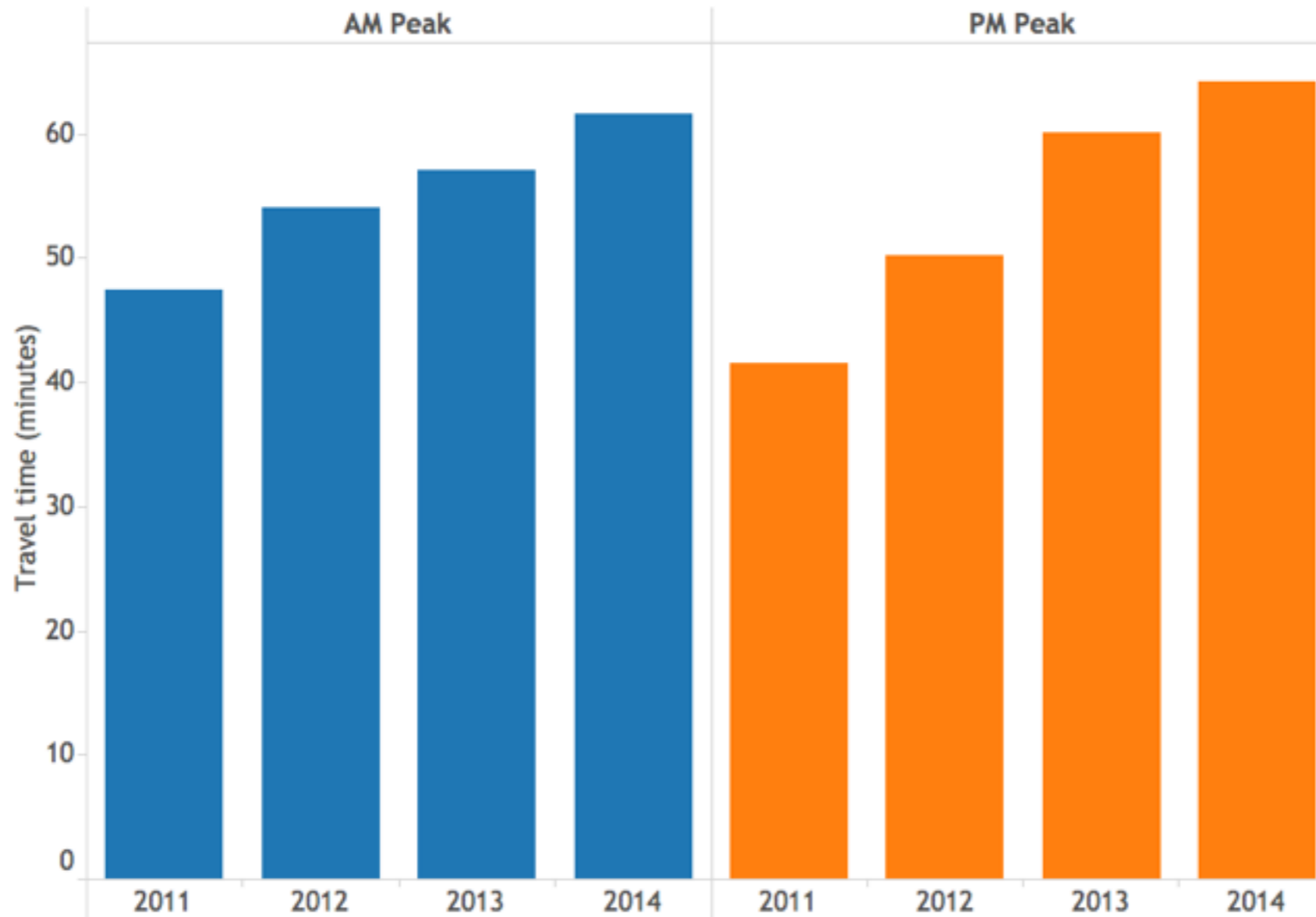
Fixing congestion: Katy didn't

Houston's 23-lane Freeway



Katy: Wider, but longer commutes

A highway "success story"
Travel times on Houston's Katy Freeway from Pin Oak to downtown grow after widening



Source: Houston Transtar

CityObservatory



**There's only one solution
that works**

**Ask users to pay for
using the scarce,
valuable roadway.**



Road pricing works around the world

- **London Congestion Charge (2002)**
- **Stockholm (2006)**
- **Singapore Electronic Road Pricing (1998)**
- **Milan Congestion Charge (2008)**
- **Santiago, Chile (2005)**

Stockholm: Traffic down 22%

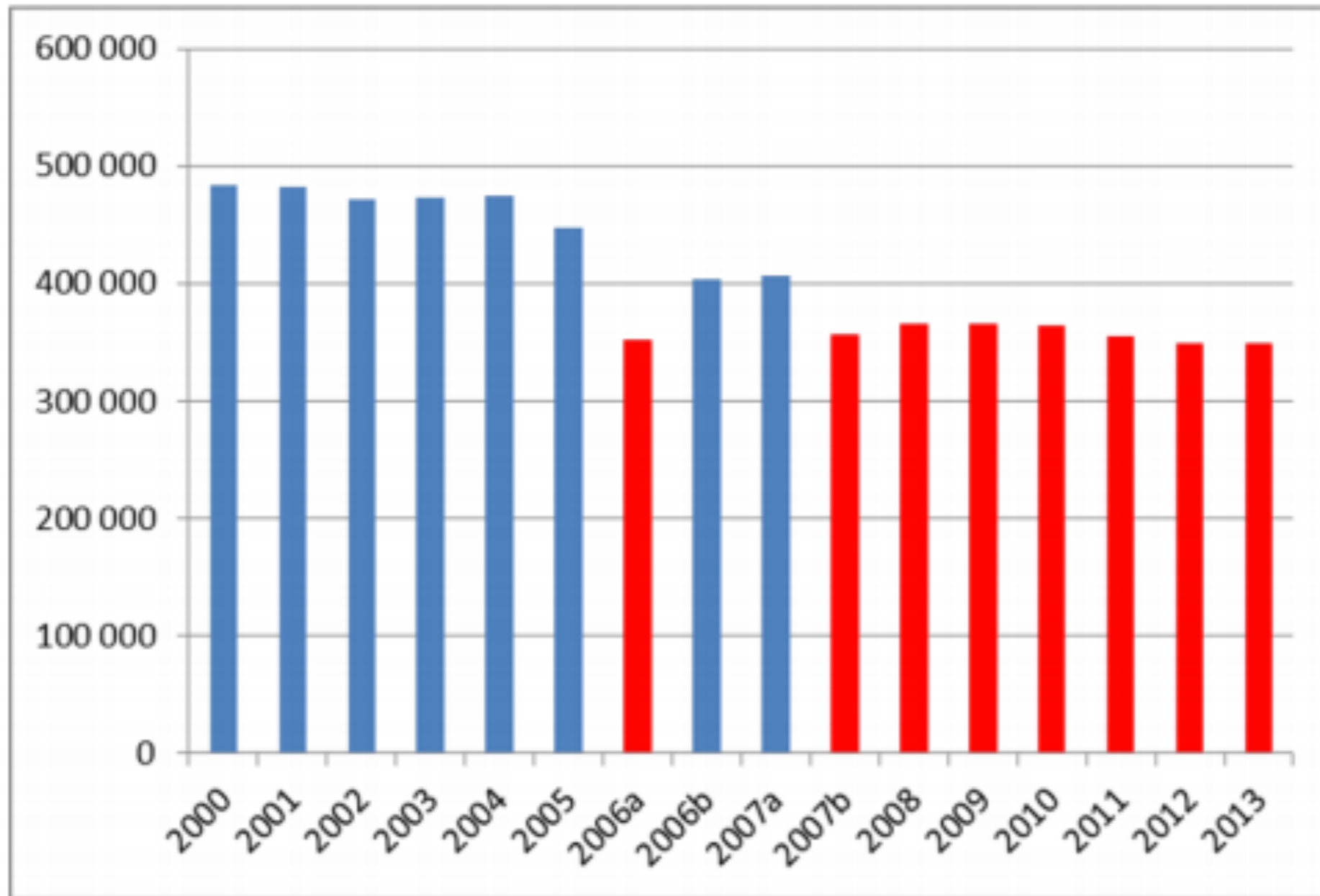
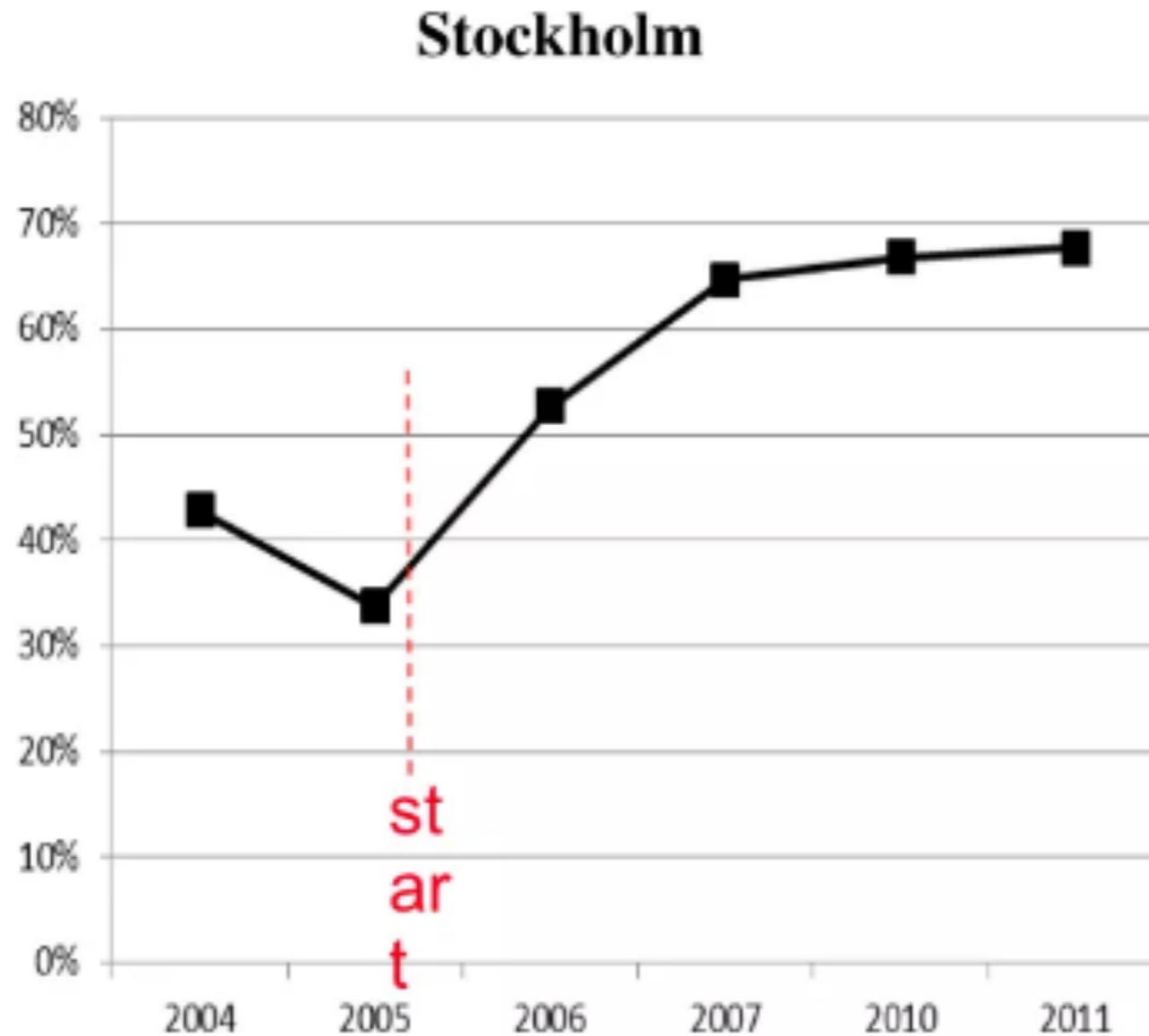


Figure 2. Average traffic volumes across the cordon, weekdays 6:00-19:00 excl. July. Blue: no charges. Red: charges. "2006a" is the trial period January-July 2006, and "2006b" is the remainder of 2006.



Seeing is believing



Support for congestion pricing among Stockholm residents increased dramatically once the policy was implemented.

Image: Jonas Eliasson



Conclusion

- **Congestion exists because roads are under-priced**
- **Widening freeways doesn't work**
- **Price first, build later, or waste billions**

