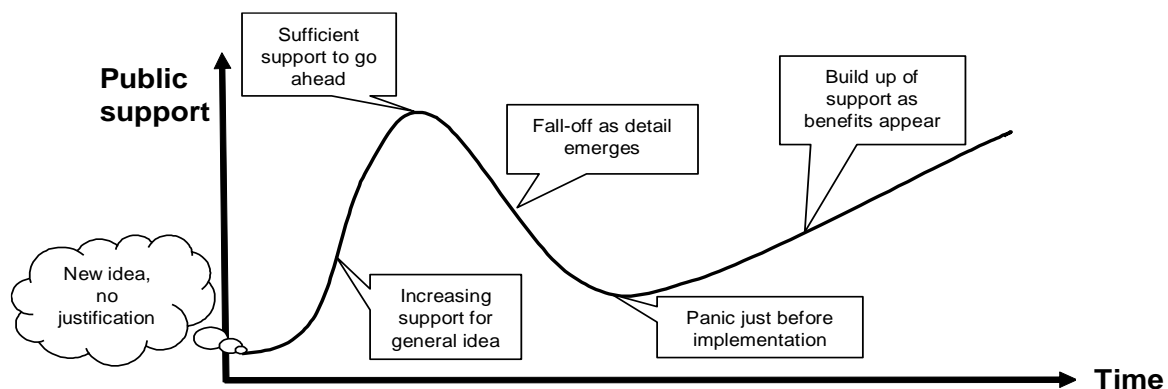


**To:** Transport & Health Policy Makers, & Practitioners  
**From:** Prof Adrian Davis, TRI, Edinburgh Napier University  
**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023  
**Subject:** Essential Evidence 4 Scotland No.71 Public support for sustainable transport interventions

Top line: Support for sustainable transport policies often increases after implementation. Politicians might benefit from being aware of such changes in support.

When considering public support, neutrality, and opposition to proposed sustainable transport interventions there has been little research as to how this may operate. Goodwin drew the graph below when considering the recent history of planned introduction of road pricing schemes.<sup>1</sup> Commenting on this in 2009 Musselwhite and Lyons noted that it is not intended to imply that in all cases such a trajectory has existed or would exist but to demonstrate the dynamic nature of acceptability, noting that acceptability does change and that it can be changed.<sup>2</sup> This 'Goodwin curve', it is noted, will only apply in those cases where there are genuine longer term advantages whose benefits do in fact become apparent over the years.

*Previously observed dynamics of public support for road pricing over time*



A 2023 study has specifically addressed the issue of support after implementation.<sup>3</sup> van Wee and colleagues say that support for controversial transport policies often increases after implementation. They note that politicians might benefit from being aware of such changes in support. They could, for example, propose policies even if the majority of the public does not (yet) support these policies.

The authors also note that a related implication is that communication is very important. Proponents of controversial policies could communicate the positive experiences clearly as well as the increasing support for comparable policies implemented elsewhere. Part of such a communication strategy could be how to deal with the media because the media can have a strong impact on what people think of candidate policies, but media outlets can easily be biased. In some cases, controversial policies are part of a wider package of policy measures. In such cases, it is important to inform the public about the whole package and the position of specific controversial policies in that package. For example, revenue allocation could be communicated clearly.

<sup>1</sup> Goodwin, P. 2006 The gestation process for road pricing schemes. *Local Transport Today*, 444, 1 June, 17. <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/local-transport-today/news/7207/the-gestation-process-for-road-pricing-schemes/>

<sup>2</sup> Musselwhite, C., Lyons, G. 2009 Exploring the public acceptability of road pricing, *Proceedings of the 41<sup>st</sup> Universities Transport Studies Group Conference*, University College London, January. <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/999958>

<sup>3</sup> van Wee, B., Annema, J., van Barneveld, S. 2023 Controversial policies: growing support after implementation. A discussion paper, *Transport Policy*, 139: 79-86.