

In 2003, London became the first major European city to introduce a congestion zone. Stockholm followed three years later. Today, both cities have less traffic, quieter streets, cleaner air and fewer traffic deaths.

Voters in both cities have given the changes strong support. The former London Mayor Ken Livingstone, who introduced the congestion zone, says it's the only thing in his political career that "turned out better than I expected."

Stockholm had a similar but different experience. Facing public opposition, it held a seven-month trial in 2006. A few

months later, a public referendum made the plan permanent.

Stockholm has a congestion zone with variable pricing based on demand; London has a flat rate that allows multiple entries in a single day. After more than 10 years, Stockholm's system has proved more effective. London, one of the most expensive cities in the world, has too many people who simply pay the flat fee, which has been raised over time but not enough. London also shares New York's problem of congestion caused by Uber. But planners, engineers and urban designers in London and Stockholm

have used the eventual popularity of the congestion zone and the public focus on better streets to jump-start new designs for shared space, pedestrian streets and cycle lanes. New York can do that too.

NEW YORK, NEW AMSTERDAM

"We're not Amsterdam" is something people like me who work for better streets in America sometimes hear. Everyone reading this grew up in the age of the automobile, but in Manhattan and many other cities and towns around the country, walking is the new driving, and we're ready for something different.

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