

Overview of ODOT Tolling and Pricing White Paper Development Process



March 2009

Introduction

The Oregon Legislature has given the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) broad authority over the construction of tollways and the application of tolls on existing facilities, consistent with federal requirements.

In response to this direction, the OTC is taking a deliberate and transparent approach to analyze and understand potential effects of tolling/pricing to determine if and how tolling could be applied in Oregon. The first step was to review and assess potential implications of highway tolling and pricing. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) hired Cambridge Systematics to develop a policy framework for considering a range of potential congestion pricing and tolling applications and types.

Tolling white papers

The next step was to commission seven white papers to evaluate and understand several technical tolling issues and their implications to motorists, the transportation system and communities in Oregon. The papers were completed in February 2009 and discuss the following concepts:

1. Is tolling an effective means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions?
2. Where, geographically, could tolling work and under what circumstances?
3. Forecasting change – how do we incorporate tolling and pricing into our regional transportation models?
4. What are the economics of transportation system reliability?

Concepts and terms

Tolling types

High occupancy toll (HOT) lanes – Travel lanes restricted to either qualifying high occupancy vehicles (HOVs) or solo drivers willing to pay a toll. The toll typically varies by time of day or traffic level and is collected electronically.

Managed toll lane – Any toll lane that uses variably priced tolls to maintain superior, less congested travel conditions.

Areal/Cordon tolling – Vehicles are charged to travel into or within a high activity center, such as a downtown or business district. Prices may vary by time of day to encourage motorists to enter the zone during less busy times or to use transit.

System tolling – Implementing tolls on all highways and major arterials in a region to reduce congestion, minimize route diversion and increase transportation revenue.

Tolling approaches

Flat rate – Toll rates that don't change.

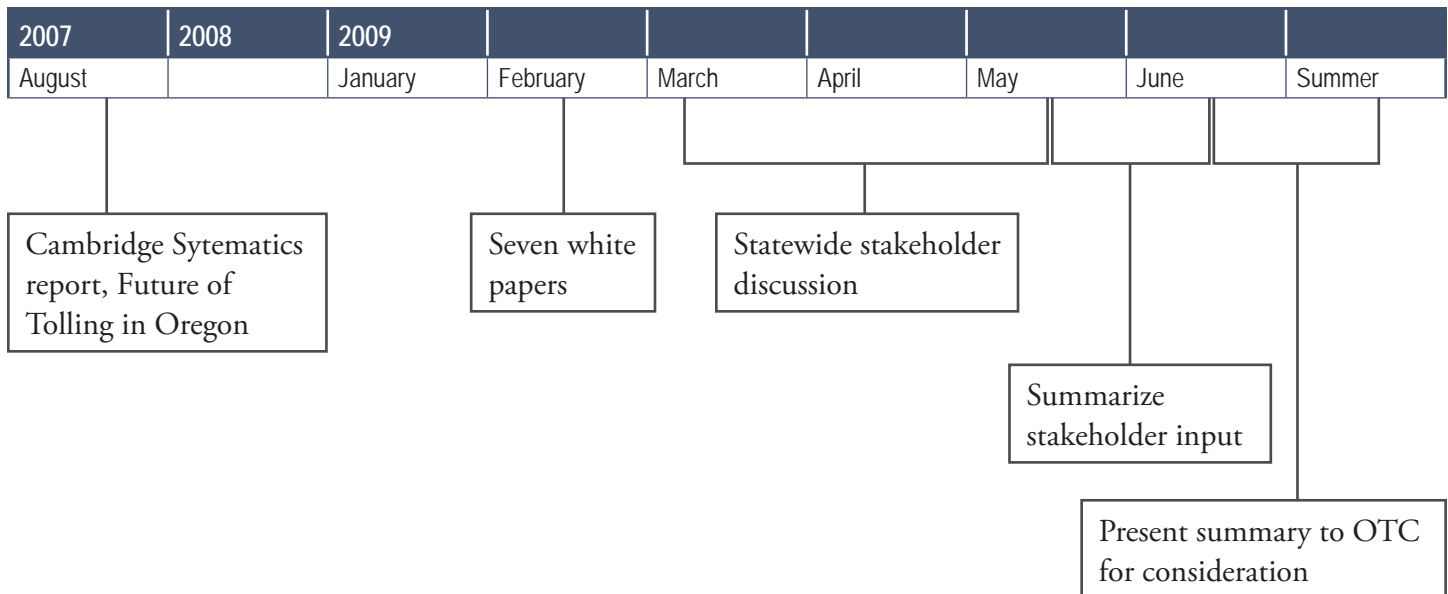
Variable/Dynamic – A toll that changes by time of day, traffic volume or other factor. Dynamic tolls change in response to real-time conditions.

Electronic tolling – Using technology to collect tolls from drivers without requiring them to stop and make cash payments.

5. How should the economic and social effects of broad applications of congestion pricing be assessed?
6. How do you determine if tolling a project is a better alternative than other non-tolled options and how would you choose between a number of tolled alternatives?
7. Are truck-only toll lanes a viable option for Oregon?

Schedule and next steps

The white papers are being presented to transportation stakeholders for feedback in spring of 2009. No decisions are being made at this time. ODOT is gathering information and narrowing the options for a discussion of tolling and pricing in Oregon. The OTC will review stakeholder feedback and then consider the next steps to take with regard to tolling and pricing for Oregon.



For More Information

- Visit the Web site to read the white papers and complete a comment form:
www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/Tolling_Background.shtml
- Email: Robert.A.Maestre@odot.state.or.us