

Truck-Only Toll Lanes

Highlights of Tolling White Paper 7



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Truck-Only Toll (TOT) lanes are limited access toll lanes available only for trucks. All tolls are collected electronically and the TOT lane is usually barrier-separated from other lanes.

The purpose of truck-only facilities is to promote safer traffic flow, reduce congestion and increase freight-hauling productivity. Currently there are only a few truck-only facilities in the United States and none of them are tolled. TOT lanes could provide a funding source for a project, but they must provide value to truckers in order to be used (and paid for).

Three types of TOTs are discussed in this white paper: urban corridors (to reduce congestion) port access (to move freight in and out) and rural/long haul routes (to increase freight productivity).

Cost and Demand for TOT Lanes

The cost of TOT lanes depends on right of way requirements, design standards, whether an elevated or underground structure is needed, access/egress needs, and mitigation required due to environmental effects. Truckers would only use TOT lanes if they get value from using them, either because they provide a more reliable trip or increase productivity. The value of using the TOT lanes would need to be greater than the cost of the toll.

Long haul truckers would only pay a toll if the TOT lane increased productivity enough to offset the toll. Urban truckers would be most inclined to use TOT lanes to avoid congestion during peak hours, but might not pay a toll at other times of the day.

Seven technical tolling and pricing white papers were prepared for ODOT in February 2009 as a way to consider concerns and issues for Oregon to address prior to developing a tolling/pricing policy in the future.

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?
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?

This document highlights White Paper 7 about truck-only toll lanes. Find all papers online and provide your comments: www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/Tolling_Background.shtml

Projects would need to be evaluated to determine if TOT lanes would be cost effective given high construction costs and the potential for generating revenue only a few hours a day.

Conclusions

TOT lanes appear to have little utility in Oregon because Oregon already allows longer-combination vehicles (three trailer-trucks) on highways, so the ability to improve productivity is limited. In addition, limited urban right of way, high construction costs, environmental concerns associated with expanding highway capacity and insufficient demand would decrease the utility of TOT lanes.

- Long haul truckers with three trailers on their trucks already operate on Oregon highways and congestion is not high enough to warrant dedicated TOT lanes.
- Portland is part of the most congested urban area in Oregon, and conditions will continue to get worse as the region continues to grow. If TOT lanes were only available in Portland, or another urban center, it is likely they would not be able to provide their intended value:
 - Truck demand remains level throughout the day but congestion typically occurs during peak hours. TOT lanes would only offer limited time saving during most days.
 - Long haul truckers would not find enough value to their overall trip to pay a toll for a short-distance TOT lane.
- Improving truck access to ports is not a significant concern for the state.
- Many toll roads are built with a combination of toll funds and government funds. Government officials would need to determine if subsidizing a TOT lane was the best use of public funds. Other options might be able to meet similar objectives and be more cost-effective.

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