



Portland Metro Area Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis

Winter 2017-2018 Community Engagement – Executive Summary

OVERVIEW

House Bill 2017, also known as *Keep Oregon Moving*, directed the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) to seek federal approval to implement value pricing on I-5 and I-205 in the Portland metro area to address congestion. Value pricing, also called congestion pricing or variable rate tolling, uses fees or tolls to manage congestion.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) initiated the Portland Metro Area Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis to explore the options available, determine how and where value pricing could help improve congestion on I-5 or I-205 during peak travel times, and begin to understand potential benefits and impacts to travelers and adjacent communities.

Public review and input are essential components of the value pricing feasibility analysis. Members of the public can submit comments or questions at any time during the project. In addition, ODOT conducted focused outreach between January 17 and February 5, 2018, to share information and collect feedback. Input opportunities include:

- Three in-person community conversation drop-in events between January 23 and January 30
- An online open house and online interactive map
- A questionnaire available at in-person events and through the online open house
- Policy Advisory Committee meetings
- Project website, email address and voicemail line
- Presentations to community and neighborhood groups

Thousands of public comments were received and analyzed between November 2017 and February 5, 2018.¹ This Executive Summary highlights the key takeaways and themes from this public feedback.



Staff record comments at the Lloyd Center in-person community conversation event
Source: ODOT

¹ The goal of the outreach process was to engage and learn from as many members of the broader public as possible. Questionnaire responses are not statistically representative of the Portland metro area population as a whole. Clark County residents are over represented in the questionnaire sample, while

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND THEMES

Travel patterns

- Most questionnaire respondents use the highway frequently (30 percent every day and 31 percent several times a week). Recreational trips (62 percent) and visits to family and friends (54 percent) were the most common travel reasons, followed by commuting to work or school (51 percent).
- Around two-thirds (66 percent) of respondents travel alone.
- Respondents are most likely to consider trip length, congestion, time of day and predictability of arrival time, in that order, before traveling on I-5 and I-205.



More than 60 percent of questionnaire respondents travel on I-5 or I-205 several times a week or more
Source: ODOT

Key congestion impacts

- Questionnaire respondents consider congestion on I-5 to be worse than on I-205, but a majority of respondents think congestion is problematic on both highways (88 percent on I-5 and 80 percent on I-205).
- Most respondents (87 percent) think congestion will get worse over the next few years.
- In open-ended responses, most commenters said congestion has negative impacts on their lives, including loss of time that could be spent with friends, family or at work; increased levels of stress, anxiety and frustration; unpredictable trip length; unsafe driving conditions; and encouragement of poor driving behavior.

Value pricing expectations and considerations

- Questionnaire respondents indicate some flexibility in being able to adjust travel patterns if value pricing is introduced. Around 39 percent expect they would consider traveling a different route, 36 percent would pay the fee and expect a shorter trip, and 25 percent would try to change the time they travel.
- Overall, respondents say the price of the fee and the amount of time saved are the top two considerations that would influence their decision to use I-5 or I-205 if value pricing is implemented.

Clackamas County and Washington County residents are underrepresented. Questionnaire respondents are more likely to be male, white and older than the metro area average. Public input opportunities will continue throughout the project, and additional outreach is planned to further engage underrepresented groups.

Topics of greatest interest

Open-ended comments suggest several key topics and themes of interest that can inform future analysis and concept refinement, including:

- Experiences with congestion and potential of value pricing to relieve congestion and its related impacts
- How and where revenue will be spent
- Fairness of value pricing strategies, particularly for those with limited alternative options
- Transit accessibility and potential transit investments needed to make it a viable alternative to driving for some users
- Adequacy of existing highway capacity and the need for additional expansion and development of alternative routes
- Economic impacts of congestion and potential economic impacts of value pricing
- Disproportionate impacts to low-income residents and other groups
- Potential traffic diversion risks
- Environmental impacts of the project



Lloyd Center community conversation participants fill out the questionnaire
Source: ODOT

Commenters want more information about how and where revenue will be spent, and what mitigation options may be considered.

- Many comments suggested support for a value pricing proposal would be contingent on how and where revenue will be spent. Directly linking toll revenue to highway improvement projects was mentioned frequently.
- Mitigation is seen by many as necessary to address the potential for unequal distribution of benefits and negative impacts. Concerns exist around fairness and whether viable transportation alternatives exist for certain groups.

NEXT STEPS

The findings from this first phase of public engagement will be considered by the Policy Advisory Committee and technical team as they refine a set of concepts for further analysis. The project team expects to solicit feedback on these refined concepts through online platforms and in-person events in spring 2018.

The Policy Advisory Committee will submit its recommendations to the OTC in mid-2018. After considering technical findings and public input, the OTC will submit a final report and proposal to the federal government by the end of 2018 for review. The timeline for next steps after 2018 depends on direction from the Federal Highway Administration. Additional work from 2019 onward is likely to include additional public outreach; environmental, traffic, and revenue analysis; and the development of an implementation plan.